



# **Parliamentary Debates**

**(HANSARD)**

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B

Wednesday, 21 October 2020

# Legislative Assembly

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## ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B

The meeting commenced at 9.00 am.

### **Division 36: Communities — Services 1 to 6, Child Protection; Women’s Interests; Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence; Community Services, \$931 467 000 —**

Ms S.E. Winton, Chair.

Ms S.F. McGurk, Minister for Child Protection; Women’s Interests; Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence; Community Services.

Ms M. Andrews, Director General.

Mrs R. Green, Deputy Director General, Community Services.

Mr N. Wijayadasa, Chief Finance Officer.

Mr M. Richardson, Director, Management Accounting and Financial Analysis.

Mr P. Payne, Executive Director, Regulation and Quality.

Mr D. Settelmaier, Senior Policy Adviser.

**The CHAIR:** This estimates committee will be reported by Hansard. The daily proof *Hansard* will be available tomorrow. The Chair will ensure that as many questions as possible are asked and that both questions and answers are short and to the point. If an adviser needs to answer from the lectern, will they please state their name prior to their answer. 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 only be examined in relation to their portfolio responsibilities.

The minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee, and I ask the minister to clearly indicate what supplementary information will be provided. I will then allocate a reference number. Supplementary information should be provided to the principal clerk by Friday, 30 October 2020. I caution members that if a minister asks that a matter be put on notice, it is up to the member to lodge that through the online questions system.

[Witnesses introduced.]

**The CHAIR:** Members, do you have any questions? Member for Carine?

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** Thank you very much. Minister, page 520, paragraph 13. Can I say up-front that most of my questions will be coming from service summary 1 and 2, homelessness and community services, but some will relate to other points, if I go back to that. But on that particular point, on page 520, in paragraph 13, it talks about the Housing First initiative, which the minister first announced on 4 December 2019 and then indicated she was bringing the program forward in May 2020, and we now obviously on 21 October 2020, 10 months later. I just wanted to know how many people, from that announcement on 4 December 2019, have been housed as a result of the Housing First initiative?

**The CHAIR:** Minister?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Thank you. I am happy to speak to this matter. The member is correct that late last year we announced a few initiatives, including our overall policy, a 10-year policy called “All Paths Lead to a Home: Western Australia’s 10-year Strategy on Homelessness 2020–2030”. Members may have heard me speak about this publicly, but I know, member for Carine, you in particular were critical of how long it took to develop that strategy, but I think now we have been vindicated in the amount of work that was put in to developing that strategy. First of all, there was a research piece that underpinned it, so we had good evidence of where homelessness is manifest throughout the state.

The University of Western Australia’s centre for social impact helped us do that analysis, and that research is currently and publicly available. The strategy drew on evidence from around the country and also around the world around the best approaches to deal with homelessness. It is divided into two sections; the approach to dealing with homelessness. The efforts over the first five years will be around those people who are rough sleeping. I know they are issues that have been given a lot of public attention, rightly. It is very distressing and frustrating to see people still sleeping rough in our metropolitan and regional centres, or anywhere, when we have such a lot of resources in our state.

In any case, the announcement released the 10-year strategy, but also funding for the Housing First homelessness initiative of \$34.5 million and the announcement was that that would be funded for 2020–21, so this financial year we find ourselves in now, not the financial year just gone. It is essentially a Housing First initiative, and I am happy to speak more about how Housing First works. I know members here have heard me speak about that at length. I understand your question was what —

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** How many people have actually been housed as a result of this initiative since October?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** The announcement at the time was that that money would be available for the financial year 2020–21 —

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** Well, it was not, actually. If you look at the announcement —

**The CHAIR:** Member for Carine, let the minister finish.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** That was the announcement, however, because of COVID and the need to fast-track activity as a result of COVID, we were able to get agreement that that project be expedited, and as a result, the contracts now to start putting that work on the ground have been issued. The lead contract is for Ruah Community Services. In fact, there was quite a bit of cooperation between the service sector providers to say we should not have an open tender for this work and we needed to get it out on the ground as quickly as possible. I had Shelter WA, Western Australian Council of Social Service and a number of the large not-for-profit providers involved in homelessness come and see me and say that they thought that made sense, and that contract has now been issued. So in answer to your question, member, there are not people on the ground doing that work yet, but I am confident that we will be able to build on the work of 50 Lives, 50 Homes. In Fremantle we have had a variation on that, 20 Lives, 20 Homes, which is a Housing First initiative, and I know in Fremantle, for instance, in both of those instances, they have had some very good results.

**The CHAIR:** Through the Chair, member for Carine. Further question?

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** Just to clarify, minister, that 4 December 2019 announcement, and the fact that you are bringing it forward because of COVID. As at 21 October 2020, even though it was starting on 1 July, according to you, but it was brought forward I believe because of COVID, not one single person has been housed in the four months since 1 July to 21 October. That is what you are saying, is it not—not one person has been housed?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** There have certainly been people housed as a result of the Housing First work. A significant number of people have been housed, both through 50 Lives, 50 Homes and 20 Lives, 20 Homes in Fremantle. Part of the approach of Housing First is that it is not a quick-fix solution.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** Obviously not.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** It is getting people on the ground to work with outreach workers to work with those people who are street present and to find suitable housing. Can I flag with the committee and also generally that we are concerned that suitable housing stock will be an issue? Part of the model of Housing First that we funded under this initiative and also trialled in the Fremantle 20 Lives, 20 Homes project was an element of rental subsidy that is given so that people can access the private rental market. We then have a community service provider that acts as a broker and helps maintain a steady tenancy so that the private landlord is not dealing directly with the tenant. For example, it could be Access Housing or Foundation Housing that manage the tenancy. Of course, we know that private rentals now are at a premium and there is just not many in the system. We are trying to build our capacity in the public system, but essentially if you are pushing those people, what you do then is you are pushing into a queue. Now, there might be times when we do that, but that is the dilemma we have.

To answer your question, member, these systems, which are more sophisticated ways of dealing with homelessness, take time to set up. One of the other delays for a lot of the service providers is that they were dealing with COVID-19 pandemic as well. They were having to manage the risks within their own organisations; how to provide emergency food relief and how to manage their own staff, who were fearful at the beginning of the pandemic. It was all those sorts of issues, as well as the crisis planning and scenario planning that we did with the sector early on. There has been a lot going on this year and I think we will be well placed and will start to see some good results of the Housing First initiative.

[9.10 am]

**The CHAIR:** Question, member for Carine.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** When will the first person under the housing initiative actually be housed; and also how many people will be housed under this initiative in the first year?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Yes. A number have been allocated and funded for 50 Lives, 50 Homes under the Housing First initiative. In the regional centres of Bunbury, Geraldton, Rockingham, Mandurah, Peel, it is 20 people per year, and in the metropolitan area, by memory, I think it is 70 people per year that will be housed under that approach.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** When will the first person be housed? When will the first person from this initiative that you announced back on 4 December 2019 actually find themselves in a home?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I cannot tell the member when people will first be housed, but I can tell him that the contracts have now been let for the overall management of the system and we are hoping to get people out on the ground before the end of the year.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** So, minister, this is your key plan for solving homelessness—one of the key initiatives you have—and you do not know when the first person will actually be housed. From an announcement back on 4 December 2019, you could not do the preparatory work to make sure that from 1 July, or bringing it forward, that this initiative could actually be implemented from day one. You have been dragging your feet the whole time, talking about it every day, but doing nothing, as far as I can tell.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Member, I absolutely refute that we have been doing nothing since that time. As I said, there has been a pandemic throughout most of 2020, so there has been quite a lot going on for both the department and government more generally and, importantly, our community sector partners. The Housing First contract that has now been let with the chief provider, which will be Ruah, will be the backbone to that work and they will look to getting outreach workers on the ground before the end of the year. It is important that we have a solid system where we know we are going to get good outcomes. I know the member has been critical of Housing First —

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** No, I support the Housing First initiative very much.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** — but we can look at Fremantle’s efforts with 20 Lives, 20 Homes, where I was able, as the local member, to get \$1 million from local businesses to support that two-year program. After the first year, 21 people in Fremantle are no longer street present as a result of that initiative. They are very good outcomes in Housing First, but they do take some time to set up. We need to make sure there is a good backbone in place, that there is good monitoring of the system, and I do not shy away from the challenge that we are going to have of finding suitable stock, either with public or private rental stock. Now, that is partly because some people want to live in metropolitan centres that are very popular, sometimes there is a demand for family, sometimes there is a demand for single-unit dwellings, so that can be challenging. But the results from Housing First, as we know, have been very solid and I think the background work and the foundations that we have put in place will pay good dividends.

These are the figures I was looking for while I was fumbling around in my papers, member. For 50 Lives, 50 Homes, which is a Housing First initiative, the independent evaluation of that program found in its first four years that 237 people were taken off the street and housed, and 92 per cent of those people—these are street present people; some of the most vulnerable people that are present in our community—were still in their house after 12 months. They are very impressive results. Getting those results is not easy and we need to make sure we put in good foundations. I understand the member’s frustration, which I hope is being driven by his concern for homeless people, but I also note we spend a lot of money now providing good services to people that are homeless. Over \$90 million a year is spent between the state and the federal governments providing services.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** You indicated that 90 people in total would be housed under this Housing First initiative—70 in the metro area and 20 in the country. Considering there are well over 9 000 homeless people and well over 1 000 rough sleepers, as your key platform for housing solutions for homeless people, how is 90 going into 9 000-plus? That is based on the 2016 census, but we know the homeless numbers are much bigger than that. Can you please explain that and, also, in relation to the cost increases are those figures based on the cost increases and the lack of availability of housing? I do not understand how you are going to help 9 000-plus homeless people with just 90 people being housed.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Can I clarify your understanding of our commitment. It was not 20 across the three regional centres, it was 20 in each of the three regional centres per year.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** That is 130.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** That is right. That is through the Housing First initiative. That is on top of the \$93 million that the government spends each year providing housing and homelessness support for those people who are street present. The approach of Housing First, and a strategic approach to dealing with homelessness, has not been done by a state government before, and we need to acknowledge that it has taken time to set up some of these systems. One of the other reforms that is encapsulated in the 10-year strategy is what is called a no wrong door approach. This is, if you like, the back-of-house systems redesigns to make sure that when vulnerable people go into different services they are picked up where they left off, and do not have to retell their stories, and that the services in organisations are more connected in their work. Quite a bit of detailed work has been done in that regard, and also what was funded when we made the announcement last year was an online portal, which is a modern approach that provides real-time access to real-time information for where —

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** Point of order, please?

**The CHAIR:** Member for Carine.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** I do not need to know all that detail. I understand all that perfectly well. I am asking specifically —

**The CHAIR:** Member for Carine! You cannot shout out “point of order” and then —

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** Sorry, through the Chair.

**The CHAIR:** What is your point of order?

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** My point of order is I am asking a specific question about now the 130 people who will be housed every year will solve our current homelessness problem of 9 000– plus people, if that is the main platform for this government initiative. I do not need to know the entry point and everything else.

**The CHAIR:** So your point of order is?

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** I would like the minister to focus on the question and not —

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, member for Carine. Minister, can I bring you back to the question.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** We have not got much time.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** We have four hours, member for Carine.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** I have a lot of questions. If you keep talking like that, we will never get through anything!

**The CHAIR:** Member for Carine, let us start out the way we hope to continue for the next four hours.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** I just want an answer!

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. We do not need your little side commentary.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** What I was attempting to explain to the member and others here is that some of the reform that we are implementing is an important investment in making sure that all of our systems are talking to each other, and that there is a modern approach to dealing with a very vulnerable and, I think everyone acknowledges, a very complex cohort of people. If the member thinks that this issue is straightforward to resolve, then I would welcome to hear what he did while he was in opposition on this matter, because we know that housing some of the people that we see street present in our metropolitan centres, in regional centres across the state, is some of the most difficult work that is done. I acknowledge the community sector organisations that put a lot of heart and effort and expertise into doing that work; and that applies to a lot of government agencies. But these are complex clients and we need to look at not only good work on the ground, but evidence-based approaches and also systems redesign, and I think that will yield results for us. That is what the evidence is showing us in other cities around the world and that is what we are drawing upon to apply our effort here in Western Australia.

[9.20 am]

**The CHAIR:** Member for Carine, do you have a further last question?

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** Further last question on this particular point. Minister, are you going to ask for additional funding for this program based on the cost blowout and the 10 000-plus homeless people out there? Is the minister actually going to ask for additional funding to help the most vulnerable people in Western Australia based on the fact that the government has a \$1.2 billion surplus projected for this year? Because the minister has not shown us how?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I do not know what cost blowout the member is referring to.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** You said it was the cost of housing. Remember you said the housing is not available.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Well, a cost of housing and the housing demand is a little bit different from a cost blowout. Perhaps you might want to be —

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** It will cost more money to get those places filled, so the funding you have may not cover —

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Do you intend to keep interrupting me while I am speaking?

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** No, I am just clarifying for you.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Member for Carine, I am clarifying for you that there has been no cost blowout. We have been very careful about how we are building these systems and on what. I have referred to what evidence we are using, but also what existing systems are in place. We have talked about the 50 Lives, 50 Homes approach in Western Australia, with over 20 not-for-profit organisations as partners in that, and the results have been very impressive. So, we will be building on that existing work. We are not starting from scratch, and I talked about Fremantle as well. We will look at what is an effective use of government spending. We always have to look at that; it is not just a matter of pouring more money into this. If we look at emergency accommodation for some of the people who are street present at the moment, unless it is effective, those people will stay in their accommodation for a very short period of time, and then leave again. But I do draw your attention, member, to page 526 of budget paper No 2, where there is an explanation in note (b), under "Homelessness Support Services" that talks about the number of clients who have been assisted and are envisaged to be assisted. The budget target for 2020–21 is 15 795 clients, and then as the financial years go on, 17 261 is the 2019–20 actual—I am getting this confused. I will just say that again. Over the financial years 2018–19, 2019–20 and 2020–21, between actual and budget, there has been an increase. Members will see that the budget target for 2020–21 is 17 300 people that we are projected to assist through our homelessness budgets.

**The CHAIR:** Member for Moore, further question?

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** The minister has referred to the rolling out of the Housing First homelessness initiative to the regional centres of Bunbury and Geraldton, and that there will be 20 people per year served. Can the minister outline, in those two instances, where the program is at, if it is commenced? Have the contracts been let and when does the minister expect to see some service provided in those two centres?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** In the overall planning, the services in Bunbury and Geraldton will be overseen by Ruah Community Services as well. As I said, we were hoping to get people on the ground before the end of the year. So it is the same system, they will then start to contract. As an overall system design Ruah is the main contract holder, but they will not do the work on the ground necessarily; they will start to work with service providers. Services have not been let for the regional work on the ground, but that will be occurring very soon, and we are scheduled to get people on the ground before the end of the year.

**The CHAIR:** Member for Moore through me; further, question, thank you.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** When you say “soon”, when is “soon” and what is the process to select the service provider in those regional areas?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I might ask the —

**The CHAIR:** Through the Chair. Mr Wijayadasa?

**Mr N. Wijayadasa:** Thank you, members. We are currently going through a computing process to understand how to play it out. We have some shortlisted parties and we intend to award in the next two months or somewhere there.

**The CHAIR:** Further question.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** When do you think the service may be commenced in those centres?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Our ambition is to have those people on the ground before the end of the year. That is what I stated before.

**The CHAIR:** Okay. Member for Moore, new question?

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** No, that is all.

**The CHAIR:** Member for Bunbury.

**Mr D.T. PUNCH:** I have a new question. I refer to page 518 of spending changes and the line item listed under “Ongoing Initiatives” titled “Child Protection Demand Growth” which indicates an additional \$10.5 million for child protection services in this financial year. Can the minister please outline how changes to the cost and demand model has resulted in extra funding, and could she explain how this funding is consistent with the McGowan government’s commitment to child safety?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Thank you for the question, member. This is an important matter and one that often gets public attention because child protection is important work. We are dealing with some of the most vulnerable members of our community and it is important that we have not only the right amount of resources on the ground, but that they have the right skills and support around them. Since 2007–08 there has been a cost-and-demand model agreed between the child protection functions of government. It has been called various names over the years, but it is under the Department of Communities at present. That is an analysis between the department and Treasury to understand what are the drivers of the demand in child protection and, as an obvious example, looking at its crudest measure, what is happening with population numbers in children. For example, about 56 per cent of our children in care at the moment are Aboriginal, what is the population growth number for Aboriginal young people. That is at its crudest measure, but in a more complex form the discussions also incorporate the feeders for, and understanding of the drivers of child protection so that we can better respond to not only concerns, but the supports for families.

As a result of that, we have seen significant increases in the budgets for child protection over years, but in 2019–20 the Department of Communities and Treasury agreed to have a deeper look at some of the drivers of child protection matters. As a result of that, we have been able to receive a higher amount than was previously allocated. So, as a result of that, we have an additional \$10.5 million allocated in the 2019–20 budget and a further \$7.9 million allocated in the 2020–21 budget. But that is just in addition to what would have been previously allocated. If you look at the cost-and-demand model more generally, I think just under \$30 million is allocated, so in 2019–20, including those amounts that I just spoke about, there was \$29.4 million of increased funding to child protection work, so that is child protection and out-of-home care services, and in 2020–21, it is \$29.7 million. I think it is worth people taking note that nearly \$30 million has been given each year to child protection and out-of-home care services as a result of a deeper understanding of what are the drivers. Far from sometimes people thinking there are cuts—there are always pressures on this work; this very, very demanding work—I think this demonstrates a commitment by government to understanding the contributing factors and to properly resource as a result. Again, I have said publicly, but at the end of the last financial year, since 2017 and the end of the last financial year, there were 153 new and additional FTEs put into frontline child protection work as a result of those funding increases.

[9.30 am]

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** Further question on that point. With regard to the additional funding in child protection, I note the distressing story on the front page of today's paper about a young girl taking her life because her perpetrator had been released on bail. Specifically with regard to perpetrators having access to their victims—I again bring the minister's attention back to Roebourne, which keeps coming up—can the minister guarantee that no children will come into contact with or have access to their perpetrators in Roebourne or through the school system there, or more generally; and what is the minister doing to protect the children there?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I am not sure that this was particularly related to the previous question.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** It is child protection, and the minister said she just got funding.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** It is the whole portfolio, member.

**The CHAIR:** Member for Carine, can you be a bit more specific in terms of —

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** I was being very specific. The minister spoke about massive increases in funding for child protection and caseworkers, and I am just asking about children who are victims of whether it be domestic family violence or sexual assault et cetera. I am just asking whether any of this funding is going to protect these children and whether or not they are still at risk.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I just want to make sure I have the current information in front of me. The member has jumped to talk about particular cases of child abuse, one very tragically reported *The West Australian* today. For a number of reasons, I was disturbed to hear about that case, not least of which I think there needs to be a lot of caution around reporting of suicides and child suicides. My thoughts—obviously, a lot of Western Australians share with me in this and I will be reflecting their sentiments—and our hearts are with their family and that community at the moment. I cannot imagine what they are going through. Suicide, particularly child suicide, is a very complex and difficult area, and where that intersects with child sex abuse is all the more tragic. Leaving that matter reported in *The West Australian* today aside, the member asked a question about Roebourne, and he raised a number of issues there. If I could go to the last question, perhaps the member could just repeat his last question?

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** It is more in terms of making sure that the victims are not coming into contact with their perpetrators and that they are being protected.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** That question was first dealt with when we came to government in 2017. At the Minister for Education's initiative a meeting was convened of all the agencies and ministers where these issues could intersect. In this regard it was the Minister for Police, the Minister for Education, and me, as Minister for Child Protection, and the respective agencies. There is now a protocol or system that is in place, whereby there is good information sharing, first of all, between the agencies. That has been in place since 2017. I hasten to say that there was no such system under the previous government. There was no such protocol or agreement of what would occur if there was a child with harmful sexual behaviours who may be attending a school, either with their victim or not.

I give members the assurance that the number of young people with sexual offence charges attending school continues to be very low across the state. Where a young person charged or convicted of a sexual offence attends a public school, every case is monitored, assessed and managed by the Department of Education, Western Australia Police Force and the Department of Communities and the assessments are based on what is best for the school community and the individual young people. The focus of the Department of Communities in regard to child protection is on creating safety for the affected young people by developing trust, increasing networks and protected behaviours around the young person, and providing information about sexual health and consent. This is distinct from labelling the young person as a perpetrator or offender. Often young people who are displaying harmful sexual behaviours are, in fact, doing that because they were themselves victims of sex abuse and that matter has not been managed or responded to effectively. That is part of the challenge we have in government and one that I am very alive to.

I also let the member know that in line with the findings of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, which contained a raft of recommendations for children with harmful sexual behaviours, the Department of Communities is undertaking a review and development of new policy to inform our response processes to child sexual abuse, including young people who commit sexual offences. I am in regular contact with some of the leading authorities on this matter nationally as well as my counterparts in other states to understand their initiatives and how we can better respond in Western Australia. An important point to make in regard to this is that we have some resources upon which we can draw in Western Australia. I refer, for instance, to the child advocacy centres headed by Parkerville Children and Youth Care. There are two of those in the metropolitan area now—the George Jones Child Advocacy Centre and the Stan and Jean Perron Child Advocacy Centre—where there is a co-location of community sector organisation, in this case, Parkerville, child protection officers, police officers and associated psychiatric supports that will work very much side by side and focused on the child themselves. This is considered world leading in terms of the joined-up approach. We have been able to use that sort of model to develop a WA centre for responding to child sex abuse. It is in its early stages, but we have partnered with the University of South Australia, Professor Leah Bromfield and her team, to begin the WA centre for responding to child sex abuse,

where we could in fact look at the evidence showing us how we can best work with children who are affected by child sex abuse or, for instance in this case, who are displaying harmful sexual behaviours. I think it is important that that is an opportunity for us, too, to work with Aboriginal-controlled organisations to make sure we are doing culturally appropriate and credible work in this space.

Because if you think about regional centres or remote communities, we need to start to understand how we interrupt this cycle of harmful sexual abuse throughout society that then creates young people with their own distorted views of sexuality and their own distorted behaviours that need proper therapy interventions.

[9.40 am]

**The CHAIR:** Member for Carine, further question?

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** Further question on that point, as obviously the minister did not answer my question. I specifically want to know whether the children there are safe—yes or no? And, second, are they coming into contact with the perpetrators? They are very simple questions.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Children where, member?

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** In Roebourne.

**The CHAIR:** Member for Carine. I understand the question you are asking. Perhaps you could direct or ask the question in terms of where in the budget —

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** It is on the budget funding that the member for Bunbury asked a question —

**The CHAIR:** I understand. So perhaps we can base the question around that and we will get an answer based on that as opposed to having long questions and long answers.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** I have a very short question.

**Mr D.T. PUNCH:** Point of order, Chair. My question was very specifically about demand growth in relation to child protection. It was not a question about a geographic specific range of possible issues.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** If the minister does not want to answer the question, that is fine!

**The CHAIR:** Member for Carine, I do not think it is a question that the minister does not want to answer. Let us give the opportunity for the minister to add anything.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I will take the point that has been raised by the member for Bunbury and yourself, Chair, and that is: what is the specific line item that the member is referring to, and can he be more specific in his question? Is he asking me whether every child in Roebourne is safe? Is that what he is asking me?

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** No, the ones that have been victims.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** And what line item in the budget is he referring to?

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** Okay. Let me refer the minister back to budget paper No 3, page 112. There is no funding for demand growth —

**The CHAIR:** Member for Carine, is this going to be a new question or is it on the specific question?

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** I will come back to this later; I will ask a new question.

**The CHAIR:** Before you do, I think the member for Moore would like to ask a new question.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Yes. I will just ask a fairly simple question and then perhaps we can go back to the member's question. On page 519 of the budget documents, under "Significant Issues Impacting the Agency", in paragraph 5.4, there is an allocation of \$2.6 million to extend the Kimberley family violence service trial by two years. If we look at page 518, where there are spending changes, there is a line item under the COVID recovery plan, titled "Kimberley Family Violence Service", with an allocation in the budget of \$1.3 million this year and \$1.326 million in the following year, but there is nothing in the actual spend for 2019–20. I was just wondering whether that trial ceased, or whether, as it says, this is an extension of a service. There was no funding for the service in the previous year, so had that service actually ceased? If it is a trial, are there any metrics available as to the success or otherwise of the money that has been spent so far?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Thank you, member. There are a couple of things about this. It appears on page 518 under "Kimberley Family Violence Service" without a budget estimate in 2019–20.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** Right.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I am happy to get advice about that. There has been funding for that service previously. This table is about a spending change. It was not that the funding was not applied previously. It was applied previously, but this particular table on page 518 reflects spending changes that occurred. We have continued this program for another two years, and I spoke about this when we had a community cabinet in the Kimberley recently. This is an acknowledgement of the particular circumstances in the Kimberley, with the high rates of domestic violence that

occur there, and what will be different about this particular spend. Up to now, Anglicare WA has been providing a service under this particular program. It will continue to provide that service while we put out the contracts for expressions of interest. We are particularly interested in making sure, after recommendations from an evaluation undertaken, that communities seek proposals from applicants to have place-based interventions that are flexible, culturally responsive, informed by local needs, but importantly, designed or where possible delivered in partnership with Aboriginal-controlled organisations. That will be our preference.

When we delivered that news recently in the Kimberley, when I was in Broome, that was a very welcome announcement because it is important that, where possible, we make sure that local providers who have good relationships with the local community, credibility with the local community and really understand their needs are providing those services. That is not to detract from Anglicare at all, but as with non-English speaking culturally and linguistically diverse communities, it is our preference to try to get CALD communities to get particular services to deliver their programs, and with Aboriginal people, if we get the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service to do that work, I think we will have better outcomes.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** The other part of the question I asked was around the metrics of how the trial had been assessed. The minister has spoken in fairly broad terms, but I am wondering whether she could supply me with some information about the success or otherwise of the trial thus far and what the performance requirements will be for the continuation of the trial.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** We have been very keen in any of our work to make sure that there is feedback from the ground on how those services are being provided. I have spoken a lot about our efforts being evidence based and making sure that there is a framework around the work being done. We are endeavouring to do some evaluation of how that is being done through a lot of our work. I am not sure whether that particular evaluation is available, and I just ask that the member put that on notice if he is interested in getting the particular outcomes of that trial. It has been a relatively small amount, but it is additional funding, so there are already existing services in the West and East Kimberley. As with many community services, there are in fact many services across the board, and particularly in the East Kimberley it can be hard to fill some of those places, but there is a lot of work done across the Kimberley to provide on-the-ground assistance. I just ask that the member, if possible, put that question on notice.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** I want to ask about the COVID response to homelessness and the Hotels with Heart program. That can be referenced to the fifth line item on page 518, the first significant issue impacting the agency on page 519, the first and second line items on page 123 and probably half a dozen other areas in the budget. The minister can pick which one she would like to look at.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** The member speaks very quickly. I know I do, too, but it would just be useful to find my papers if the member was a bit more specific.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** Sorry, yes. I am asking about the Hotels with Heart pilot.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I understand that. Is it on page 518?

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** It is not referenced specifically. It is homeless support services.

**The CHAIR:** Member for Carine, you are supposed to reference your question to a line item, so pick one if you like.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** I am. The first significant issue impacting the agency on page 519 will do. That refers to the COVID recovery pandemic response. I just want to ask a question about the response during the pandemic. Noting that New South Wales spent \$34 million housing the homeless, Victoria spent \$15 million and Queensland spent \$24.7 million, and, according to the statistics shown in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, in total they housed and took off the streets more than 33 000 rough sleepers as a minimum, how many homeless people, rough sleepers, did we help during that pandemic and how much money did we spend during the pandemic period?

[9.50 am]

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Can I just remind the member that we are still in the pandemic, we have not resolved the question of COVID-19 and we are still trying to manage the risk assessment across the community, but if I understand him correctly, he is talking about the period around Easter—around March, April—when we had a sort of relative close-down of a number of sections in the community. I remember that was the case around Easter and the weeks after that. There was a lot of concern then about how we worked to address the risks to people who were street present—are street present—and made sure that they were looked after. They are particularly vulnerable for a whole lot of reasons; I think that is pretty obvious. There are a couple of things: the department set up task forces through which it worked with the sector to understand those immediate needs and get feedback about how they could be dealt with. It is important to get feedback from the community sector on the ground to understand what the risks are, where those risks are physically and how to best manage what is a difficult cohort. One of the initiatives that the member referred to is the Hotels with Heart project. That was a trial. It was important to note that this was a health-based response, so it was not designed to have a long-term outcome for those homeless people. Of course, if it did, all the better, but that was not what it was designed to do. It was designed to address at a moment in time how we could get those people off the streets and keep them safe. It was put together with a range of people, including

people from Royal Perth hospital. The Homeless Healthcare group was part of the project design, as were a number of not-for-profit organisations and the Department of Communities. There was some publicity at the time because we had an offer from one of the large hotels in the CBD, Pan Pacific, to participate in the program. The program was that up to 30 people would be able to be given accommodation in the Pan Pacific. Even though they were not COVID positive, they would be asked to quarantine for 14 days to manage the risks, because at the time we did not deem it was safe for those people to move in and out of the hotel—that hotel was also being used as a quarantine hotel—but we would give quite a bit of support. For instance, there was security on each floor, and we used two floors. There were nurses visiting those clients every day. Preceding those clients going into the hotel, there were outreach workers who interviewed people on the street for who wanted to be part of the hotel trial. In fact, in my community in Fremantle I speak to some of the people who are street present and one of the women I spoke to said “I was asked to do that, it just wasn’t for me. I couldn’t stay in a hotel for two weeks and I decided not to take it up but my mate did and he said that it went all right for him.” People went into it voluntarily. To their credit, some of those people stayed in for the 14 days. As I have observed elsewhere, even the most seasoned hotel-stayers found staying in a hotel room for two weeks quite challenging, and we can imagine that it was in this case. In any case, people were asked to stay in their hotel rooms. They were given quite a lot of support, with nurses and doctors regularly visiting and community sector organisations visiting as well in a safe way. Can I just thank the Uniting WA, Homeless Healthcare, the Pan Pacific and Department of Communities and Ruah Community Services, which worked in the program.

Twenty-two of the 30 participants remained in contact with services following the pilot and 15 were assisted into accommodation. The cost of that was \$408 475, so it was quite an expensive intervention. I have to say, people really liked the idea of being able to use empty hotel rooms to assist homeless people and I know it was picked up in other states, but without intensive supports alongside that accommodation, it is not suitable. In fact, the evaluation was that if that sort of model was being looked at again, we might look at people being able to have a balcony or access to fresh air or some outside space if we were hoping to get them off the street quickly.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** Based on the very small sample size, can the minister tell me what the government’s plans are if we have a second wave in Western Australia to deal with the 1 000-plus rough sleepers and the 9 000-plus homeless people that we currently have? What is the government planning to do?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I might ask the director general to speak to this. She has a responsibility too, under the COVID-response plan for the state.

**Ms M. Andrews:** The emergency management arrangements are still in place, as the member knows, and there is important leadership coming from the health department and police around the emergency management and the state health incident control centre, which are coordinating the preparedness and outbreak planning. We are working with and supporting them in that process. Our responsibilities under the emergency management arrangements relate to the welfare-response component of that. What has served us so well up to this point has been the coordination across government and the leadership coming out of the health coordination centre. Within the Department of Communities we have the State Welfare Incident Coordination centre and we are partnering with it in the preparation of the outbreak plans. The focus has been on many of the different vulnerable cohorts, but, as we have seen in other jurisdictions, people are in congregate living and so on. That outbreak planning is being led out of the health department and we are contributing to it. It is not seen primarily as responsibility of the homelessness portfolio, but rather all that work is happening under the umbrella of the emergency management work, which we are contributing to.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** What does that actually mean on the ground? If tomorrow there was an outbreak and the 1 000-plus rough sleepers were infected with COVID, what would the response of the state immediately be to deal with that, and how much funding is set aside to deal with that issue?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I will ask the director general to address that point, but just to qualify when the member speaks about 1 000 people who are rough sleeping, good data collection is one of our challenges with homelessness. All sorts of figures get thrown around, and it is part of our strategy to have better data and understanding, not only of the accuracy of the data, but also the people sitting behind it and the case management of them. But 1 000 people rough sleeping, if that is correct, is around the state, so the situation could be very different in a remote community where we have responded very effectively, I might say, and the dynamics of that would be very different, too, if there was a so-called outbreak. I cannot help but remind the committee that it has been over six months since we have had any community contagion in Western Australia, but let us talk about that scenario of an outbreak, for instance amongst a particular cohort that was street present in the metropolitan area. I think the member needs to be more specific, because if there is an outbreak amongst 1 000 people, it could be anywhere. The director general will elaborate on that point.

**Ms M. Andrews:** In broad terms, the planning and the exercising is exactly what is going on now. We are making the most of this window that we have in terms of preparation. In regard to homeless people, our responsibility and that welfare response, what are the key things we need to have ready? It is going to be around homelessness and finding accommodation and food and services. Our preparedness relates to all of those things, but in particular the data sharing that we are now able to do across government. As the minister has indicated, the other message around

that is that we cannot take a cookie-cutter approach from what is sitting in those plans being worked on and think they can work across the state. We have local people on the ground, those local emergency management teams that are doing their version of the plans for their region, and they are doing the hard work with us, coordinated by us, around the accommodation options. It is understanding what the current services look like and how we maintain those if we are moving people into different accommodation. What do the health and other community services need to look like in that?

Remote communities have their own particular risks and challenges, and again, a team has been established. It was established under the emergency management framework and is called the complex task team for remote Aboriginal communities. In the first instance, it worked with Communities, Health and police to return people to country, and now it is doing the planning work for if there is an outbreak. That complex task force team is now sitting in the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, so we are working closely with it to support those preparations as well.

[10.00 am]

**Mr J.N. CAREY:** Is there a program still existing at Hostel G on Stirling Street? How many beds are currently operating as part of the COVID response right now?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** That is correct. Part of the allocation from Lotterywest to the \$159 million COVID allocation available for community services and other organisations that usually rely on lottery funding has been funding for Uniting WA to provide some emergency accommodation, and there is capacity. It has been a few weeks since I have heard an update, but there were beds available in that accommodation. There was \$1.1 million given to Uniting WA to provide emergency accommodation. We are aware of that. We are aware of the issues on the street at the moment, particularly in Perth and other areas, but I want to stress that without the proper supports for people and the case management, emergency responses will be very short lived. We will get people into some of that accommodation, they will stay there for a short time and then they will leave. We might need to get people into accommodation for a short time in the case of some sort of community contagion, but I think we all agree that we want the responses to be effective. We want them to be cost-effective, but we want them to be effective for those people. That is why we are trying to build the systems, to make sure we can follow those people with case work and get them into accommodation that suits them, and then provide the supports to stabilise those people.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Listening to the discussion here, I am aware, if we are talking about hostels et cetera which are being funded to provide homeless services, that now most of the backpacking facilities in the state are virtually empty. Is that something being looked at as part of an arrangement? I know from discussion I had with a party the other day that that is an issue for those hostels at the moment. They have no clientele due to the fact that there are no international travellers. Could that be a more appropriate placement than a city hotel, for instance, for a homeless person?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** It is part of the scenario of planning to look at all those sorts of accommodation options, and there are times that budget hotels or hotel rooms, motels and, in some cases, backpackers, are used for emergency accommodation because of geographical location in a regional centre, for instance, or when nothing else is available. There was public discussion about that, I think, late last year. That has been used by successive governments. In this scenario planning they are all possibilities. I hasten to add that appropriate accommodation is part of it, whether it is backpackers or Woodman Point—people might be aware we used Woodman Point for some time, for some Aboriginal people—but without proper supports and planning, those people will not stay in that accommodation because their needs are too complex. The reason that they are street present is that their needs are complex. They will stay there for a few nights and then they will leave. That is why we need to continue to work to understand what a better response is—what an effective response is. Not only in the case of the pandemic and if there is some sort of community transmission of the virus, but more generally. How do we make sure that we are responding effectively? Each state across our country, and frankly, the western world—each jurisdiction—is challenged to make sure they have effective responses for those people with complex needs.

My reading of how other states have gone with putting people into hotels and the response that the member for Carine spoke about is that they have not been able to sustain those rooms or that approach, not only because it is very expensive, but it does not work for people to stay in hotels for long periods of time. Whatever accommodation it is, whether a hotel or a backpacker or some sort of recreation camp, for instance, without very, very intensive supports, it will not work. That might be what is needed. We are trying to put that in place in the case of Uniting WA, and we are allocating a lot of money to doing that.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** I refer to page 522 of budget paper No 2, volume 2. Under the heading “Outcome Services and Key Performance Information” there is a table, and in the centre column under “Desired outcomes” the third paragraph reads —

Children and young people needing protection are safe from abuse and harm.

That is a key desired outcome. Given the Department of Communities has acknowledged that it is committed to working with police on Operation Timing Belt, what expenditure in the budget is directed towards the Department of Communities working with the police on Operation Timing Belt?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I will make two points about that. One is in relation to the cost-and-demand model that I spoke about. I think the member for Bunbury asked me about that early on and where we have increases in funding going into frontline child protection work. For instance, the cost-and-demand model, just in the new calculation, had over \$10 million of increases and then there was something like \$28 million. I have not got the exact figure but I quoted it earlier. It is something like \$27 million to \$28 million of new money going in each year, last year and this financial year to frontline work. This is very much the work of child protection workers to work with other agencies to make sure that we are dealing with vulnerable children. That is the first point that I make.

The second point is the one I referred to about the centre for excellence in responding to child abuse and neglect. That is where I spoke about the child advocacy centres. It is important to note that we are starting on the back of the work of the royal commission into child sex abuse. We are starting to do some of that work. The WA centre is a partnership between Parkerville Children and Youth Care and the Australian Centre for Child Protection. That is Leah Bromfield, whom I spoke about before. She is an academic based in South Australia, and she is part of the Australian Centre for Child Protection. That is a coming together of its work in WA. That centre has received initial funding from lotteries, but I think it is a real opportunity for us to start to understand how we can respond better, not only to identifying areas of risk with child abuse, but also properly responding by having good therapy after we know that young people have been victims of abuse. At the moment we do have some good responses. They are largely based in the metropolitan area. Some of those services are available from regional areas, but I think we could do a lot better, particularly around culturally appropriate responses.

The third point is about the royal commission. We are working through implementing those recommendations. I think it is important that people understand that it is not just me blithely saying, “We are implementing recommendations”, but this a very solid template that we have across Australia to start to put in place a systematic reform for improvements not only to prevent child abuse, but to respond to it quickly should it occur, and then make sure that anyone subject to that abuse is given proper therapy and supports in a culturally appropriate way. Sadly, we know that these are not just historical matters. These are very real matters that confront our society every day. There has been money allocated over the last couple of years to implementing the royal commission recommendations.

[10.10 am]

**Mr S.K. L’ESTRANGE:** She has not answered the question yet, Chair, so I am waiting for it. It was a specific question.

**The CHAIR:** That is why I am asking you, member.

**Mr S.K. L’ESTRANGE:** She is still going, Chair.

**The CHAIR:** Member, I was just asking you whether you had a further question or not.

**Mr S.K. L’ESTRANGE:** No, sorry, Chair. I am just saying she has not finished.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** My advisers are just pointing out to me that Operation Timing Belt is specifically a police operation, so it is funded by police, but when there are concerns and victims identified or, in fact, when any of the perpetrators are young people, they would then work with child protection. The numbers in the assessments and investigations are reflected on page 528 of the *Budget Statements*, where there is an average cost per child involved in child protection cases. For instance, in the 2020–21 budget, the average allocation is \$4 640 per child involved in child protection cases.

**Mr S.K. L’ESTRANGE:** Are any extra resources being allocated to support the police in their endeavours with regards to Operation Timing Belt?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** There are not in regard to that particular investigation. In fact, I think we should welcome the work of the police and acknowledge that these investigations are not one-off. The public should take some comfort in understanding that these investigations are more likely to be the norm throughout the state. The cost-and-demand model that I have spoken about talks about some of these feeders into investigations. Communities offers active support to victims through respective caseworkers. Some supports being offered include district psychologist counselling and support from school and carers. To answer the member’s question, no, there will not be a specific allocation for Operation Timing Belt. Sometimes these investigations get publicity, but often they are investigations occurring across the state and work that is done between agencies across the state.

**Mr S.K. L’ESTRANGE:** Was the minister briefed on Operation Timing Belt during 2019–20, and how often is she scheduled to be briefed during 2020–21?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I just want to make sure that I am clear about how I am briefed on these matters. Yes, I am regularly briefed on police operations, and of course I would be made aware of those investigations in regard to Operation Timing Belt. I am sorry, I do not have the particular details of any briefing. In fact, I am just reading through my notes to see whether I can give the member something more specific. I cannot give the specifics of when I was briefed on Operation Timing Belt, but I can assure the member that I have been kept up to date with that operation.

**Mr S.K. L’ESTRANGE:** Are we able to take that answer as supplementary information?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I just want to be clear about the sensitivities of some of these operations. Some of those cases that are before the courts and some involve young people in care, so I would not be able to talk about specifics or the details of any of those cases. I am happy for the member to put on notice the question about understanding how much information I was given about Operation Timing Belt and the implications for my portfolio.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** We need to get that written down, then.

**The CHAIR:** No, I just urge you to put that question on notice.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Yes. I am just requesting that the member is specific about what he wants in regard to Operation Timing Belt. He could perhaps put that question on notice so that I am clear about what is being required, because there is some sensitivity, particularly around some of the criminal matters that arise, the matters before the courts, and also sensitivity about individual cases, which we will not refer to or talk about.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** When was the minister briefed about the Macy case? We know Macy is not the real name; I guess it is a case name. I understand concerns were raised in 2017 and that Macy was sexually abused in 2018. When was the minister first made aware of the Macy case?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I am not able to answer specifically here when I was first made aware of that case. Again can I ask just say to the member that we are here to talk about the budget papers. I just want to understand what line item the member is referring to. We come to estimates understanding the budget and we are able to respond to it, and I am quite prepared to do that, but, it is very difficult to respond about a specific case at this stage in these proceedings.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** I will bring the minister back to page 522, which was the item I presented to the minister in the *Budget Statements*, which was the table under “Outcomes, Services and Key Performance Information”, and the column headed “Desired Outcomes”. It states —

Children and young people needing protection are safe from abuse and harm.

My line of questioning is directly relating to a line item in the budget.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, that is so. Member, I think that is clear but I think the minister is indicating that you might need to put that question on notice and that she is not going to be providing that information.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I am sorry; I just do not have information in front of me about when I was first briefed about that particular case. The member understands that a number of children are in care and a number of investigations are occurring. I know this has been potentially contentious at the moment. In my portfolio, it is always a balance of not wanting to talk about individual cases, notwithstanding that a young person might want to. It is about me not wanting to talk about those circumstances. I understand that there are issues that the public has an interest in, and I do not take away from that, but in these hearings I am not in a position to talk about that specific case or when I was briefed about it. I am quite prepared to take that question on notice. If the member wants to give some me some questions through the usual parliamentary processes, I would be very happy to have a look at them.

[10.20 am]

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** Looking for some data and statistics linked to that desired outcome, how often is it the case that, or how often has it been the case over 2019–20, that victims of child sex abuse have been housed in residential care with a person accused of being or known as being a sexual offender?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** My latest advice on that particular matter is that that information is kept on individual case files, and, I hasten to say, if it is the case at all, that it would be kept on individual case files and not available at a broad sort of data level across the department. I was asked a question by Hon Nick Goiran in the Legislative Council, which I answered yesterday I think. It referred to the department’s guidelines for accommodating children with harmful sexual behaviours. I can assure members as well as the public that those children with harmful sexual behaviours or who have charges or convictions against them are only housed with other children as a last resort. We are very much alive to the risks associated with that and the very difficult situations that the department confronts in which those children need to be accommodated. Quite rightly, they need to be put in the best environment that they can for themselves, but also so as not to put anyone else at risk in the process.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** There is a large budget number in the sixth line item “Care Arrangements and Support Services for Children in the CEO’s Care” in the service summary on page 523 of the *Budget Statements*. I think it is \$429.585 million, so it is a big number.

**The Ms S.F. McGURK:** That is right.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** The number for 2020–21 is \$529.585 million.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Yes.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** It is a big number. How much of that will be allocated to the prevention of placing children who are known to have been abused in the past being housed with other children or other perpetrators with a known history of sex abuse?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Can I just elaborate. It is a large number allocated to the care arrangements—just over \$400 million, nearly \$430 million, across the state for the coming financial year. I am not able to give a specific figure for how much will be allocated so that any child who has harmful sexual behaviours, has a conviction or has committed an offence is not housed with other children. I can give the member, as well as members of the public, an assurance that it is very much the priority for the department not to house or accommodate those children with any other children who are possibly at risk. I would like to say that would never be the case, but there are times, depending on the nature of that child's offence or their behaviours and the other residents, when they are put in a group home, for instance. That is the minority of children in care. It might even be in a foster carer situation when a judgement is made that the risks can be managed. Just looking at the policy—because I answered a question on it yesterday and because of the recent publicity it was fresh in my mind—and it says that a safety plan must be put in place if that situation does eventuate. I assure the member, as well as other members here, that that case would very much be the exception. We are very alive to the risks associated with managing over 5 000 children in care, many of whom have complex needs and a traumatic background. Whether they are harmful sexual behaviours, whether they are behavioural issues, whether those children have some sort of an impairment, they are very difficult matters to manage. The department does that day in, day out, to try to juggle conflicting demands.

I am trying not to be longwinded and I know I am not succeeding, but I am making the point that this is the day-to-day work of the department, and not only have we allocated a lot of money to making sure that there are safe placements for children, but we have put more money into the system, into the frontline work of child protection, to make sure that we are well resourced to do that. It is a constant challenge to properly house those children. In some cases, sadly—we are not the only state that does that—there will be cases in which children are put on a one-on-one situation with a carer, because that is the only safe environment to put them in—not necessarily because of harmful sexual behaviours, but because they might have behavioural issues or violent tendencies and that is the only way we can be assured of their safety. That is a very difficult situation; it is no place for a child in the long term. We work with specialists, professionals, child protection workers and partner agencies to look at the best environments for those children.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** The deputy director general, Rachael Green, is mentioned in a recent *WAtoday* article saying that the department is committed to working with police with regard to Operation Timing Belt. Has the department allocated a staffing group or a team to try and focus on Operation Timing Belt, so that we can prevent the Macy situation from reoccurring?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I was getting briefed on Operation Timing Belt, but there has not been a specific allocation of staff or people pooled, or of an extra allocation given in this budget so that that work can occur. That is not to say that the work will not occur. It will occur. We will work with the police, just as we have worked with them over in the west Pilbara or other places in the state to make sure that there is very much a joined-up approach to dealing with specific police operations, whether it is Operation Timing Belt or other police operations, in identifying risk and responding to that risk for children in care or identified or potential victims.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I refer to page 527 of the *Budget Statements*, and service area 4, "Preventing and Responding to FDV". I note that there has been an increase of funding in that area, partly due to the commonwealth funding flowing into the national partnership on COVID-19 domestic and family violence responses. In other areas we have seen a big uptake in the use of telehealth and telecommunications as a method of delivering service in health and mental health, for instance. Is the use of such services something being considered by the department under this increased funding?

[10.30 am]

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** It is true that we have had an allocation from the federal government as part of its national response, particularly as a result of COVID, and that has been very welcome. Can I also say that as a state, we have put in significant new money. I think out of the \$28 million of additional funding as a result of COVID that we announced, about \$5 million was from the federal government, but the lion's share was from the state government—so about \$23 million additional money has been put into responding to domestic violence.

To answer the member's question, I am not aware of the equivalent of telehealth methodologies being used to respond to domestic violence, particularly during COVID. We have looked at innovative models in the past, and the member has probably heard me speaking about keeping women safe in their home, or safe at home, when this is where essentially the victims are—for instance, a woman and the children. A risk assessment is done, the decision is made that they can stay in their home and a safety plan is put in place. The perpetrator is then moved out. Violence restraining orders, all those things, are very much risk based, so it might not be safe for that occur, but it happens if it is safe. That is a model we have not only supported but also put additional funding into. I was frustrated when the federal government withdrew its funding. We have propped up some of its funding to that particular program, which has been on the decline. In any case, that is an example of different ways of doing things.

Also as a result of COVID, part of our response was to put new outreach people in the joint response teams throughout the state. There are 17 family violence joint response teams throughout the state. We have allocated an additional outreach or community service worker in each one of those 17 teams for two years, so that is a very practical resource. Also, there will be additional outreach workers given to the different women's services throughout the state. That is an additional practical service on the ground.

I am laughing because just as I say one thing, I get a note from my advisers saying something quite different! It is always heartening, is it not, to get frank and fearless advice! That is good!

I was just speaking about the additional resources on the ground for the next two years. I know that that has been welcomed throughout the state, and sorely needed, sadly. I am advised that some of the FDV services do use video for some of their outreach, so that is a good thing. Obviously there are challenges, particularly in regional Western Australia, let alone remote areas. The move to telehealth-type services, whether it is video or phone, has been really welcome. Of course, sometimes it is dependent on connectivity, but we have been very alive to being prepared to be flexible to make sure that we are responding to the circumstances faced throughout the state.

Another example is the changes to how restraining orders can be served. One of the reforms in the family violence bill that was passed through Parliament was to try to make them more flexible for some regional areas—to take effect in regional areas.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I am glad the minister reconsidered the fact that those sorts of services could be of value throughout that discussion that she just gave. I thank her for the answer. She acknowledged the challenges that some regional people may face through that. The reason I am asking this question is that I recently had a discussion with a person by the name of Fleur McDonald, who started up a program down in the Esperance area to assist people in this position. Recently, an organisation that she started up received funding through the federal government to provide services within 16 shires or districts within the state. I am wondering whether the state has been approached at any stage to roll out a similar service, or whether it would consider expanding that existing service—which is now funded by the commonwealth for those 16 districts—to roll that out across the rest of the state? I think there is a great deal of value in what they are offering, and as a regional person, I can see how they could actually assist many families in working through these types of issues and problems.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Can I just be clear that I was not dismissing the use of telehealth or video for FDV matters—not by any means. I was just saying I was not aware how much they were used.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I have gathered that the minister had worked her way through that.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Yes, I was not saying they were not of value. I was trying to make the point, too, that I think we need to be open-minded and innovative about how we get good services to people throughout the state with our geographical challenges.

I am aware of organisation based in Esperance that that the member is speaking about. I am sorry, its name eludes me, but I am aware of it. One of our challenges in much of the community services sector is that people begin new ventures and then start to build up a whole program of work. We need to make sure that they are linked with other services and supports and have the proper expertise to do that work. That is the only qualification I would put on that request. We have requests for work to be done across the state in regard to domestic violence. There is a lot to be done; I have made that point many times. This is just in relation to crisis funding and proper supports. Where that crisis funding and those supports are in place, we need to make sure people have the proper expertise to do that work. That is very much what I am focused on if we are able to get new money. We have already put significant new money into domestic violence throughout the state and we will continue to do that—not only crisis money, but all along the continuum to make sure that perpetrators are held to account through the justice system and primary prevention. When we do have new money, there is some opportunity for the organisation that the member referred to. It might be Breaking the Silence. I am sorry, I cannot remember the name of the organisation. It might be called DV Assist.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** DV Assist is the current —

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** The current name.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** The federal government, yes.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** We want to make sure they have an opportunity to bid for those additional funds, and then that they have the proper expertise to undertake that work. I think they are doing some of that outreach work from Subiaco at the moment, so they have counsellors based in Subiaco doing that work to regional areas. We just need to make sure that they are properly linked in with different services throughout the state.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** My understanding is that the federal government has provided them with a fairly good base to provide those services within the areas that I have mentioned—the 16 different districts. But I would suggest that that indicates that the federal government at least has confidence that they are linked into those types of service arrangements, and it could be a good model to consider rolling out. Using the architecture that they have already developed would seem to be more sensible than trying to reinvent the wheel in the future.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** One of the challenges in any of this work is to make sure that people do not have a plethora of references or different groups to go to to get authoritative information. It concerned me a lot to hear that it might be that our mainstream DV information, online or by phone, was not accurate for people in regional areas. In fact, I do not think that is the case; I think it is very accurate. So I think we need to make sure that everyone has access

to good information that is evidence-based, that people have the skills to do that work, but not taking away from other efforts. I do not have line of sight on what the federal government's funding arrangements are for any of those organisations. I do not know about that. That is up to them and between them. I think it was organised through the federal member Nola Marino, so I am not sure under what portfolio. But, in any case, it is good that they have federal money —

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I think it is regional development.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** It is regional development, yes. I am not sure what their expertise is in regard to this particular subject area, but if we have extra money that is available, we will make sure that we look at all the different providers out there—they will have an opportunity to bid—and we will evaluate that as those opportunities come to hand.

**Mr R.R. WHITBY:** I refer to page 521, under the list of items under “Other Significant Issues”, paragraph 19. The minister is obviously aware that there was an independently chaired functional review covering the agency's policies and corporate processes. The functional review arose out of the machinery-of-government changes. I wanted to find out, rather than the impact on the internals of the agency, what actual impact the outcome may have had on the delivery of frontline services.

[10.40 am]

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** The department is committed to responsibly managing its budget—I hope it goes without saying—and it is very aware of its obligations to ensure that services are delivered to the community in an effective and efficient manner. As part of the budget process for 2020–21, the government identified improvements that could be made to ensure that the Department of Communities' budget is sustainable. As a result, there has been a functional review of Communities, with a focus on non-frontline functions, that will help shape the scope, scale and priority of the frontline activities. The functional review takes into account other workforce reform programs, such as the state disability services transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

The process was recently commenced, and updates will be provided as part of the midyear review for this financial year, as well as the 2021–22 budget process. I hasten to add that the frontline operations are not scoped within the functional review, and frontline services to the WA community will not be impacted by the review. But I think, as the member reflected in his question, in order to effectively provide good frontline services, have line of sight on the effectiveness of those services and how they can be best supported, having good back-of-house functions is crucial.

Of course, as a result of the investigations leading to the arrest of Paul Whyte, there have been a range of improvements that have been made around the department that will not only, I think, give the public some comfort around safeguards that are in place that public money is being properly spent, but also that any possible misspends or corruption that has occurred in the past is properly dealt with.

In regard to the functional review, the department has improved governance, including through a new finance and investment committee, with an independent chair and members, as well as appointing an independent chair and independent members to the audit and risk committee. Some of those things such as the independent chair to the audit and risk committee had already taken place through the middle of last year. There has also been the appointment of a chief risk officer. I think that is important to note.

I also wanted to perhaps take this opportunity to speak about our annual report. There was a qualified opinion given by the Auditor General, and I think it might just be an opportunity to address some of those issues. I think, as I say, that it is important that the public has confidence in the Department of Communities in not only how it is managing large amounts of public money, but also how it is best placed to deliver good services to the public and to vulnerable members of our community.

In January this year, the Department of Treasury made changes to Treasurer's Instruction 304 as a result of the fraud allegations against Paul Whyte. These are mandatory changes that the Department of Communities has been implementing, and they were made across the whole of government. The changes required Communities to transition to a different finance system, as the existing system did not allow the department to update the new Treasurer's Instructions requirements. As the Auditor General's opinion is based on transactions occurring from January, there was a period during which the department was not fully compliant with the updated Treasurer's Instruction.

Deloitte was engaged to assist with the rollout of the new financial management across the department, addressing the new requirements of TI 304 and subsequent issues raised by the Auditor General. PricewaterhouseCoopers has also been engaged to assist with the development of forensic reports on transactional processes to strengthen the controls of the department. In October this year, the department's single payroll system was introduced, and this will address significant concerns raised by the Auditor General. Work is continuing in this area to implement further controls to address the other issues raised. The department has also implemented the TI 304 changes to strengthen procurement controls, such as mandatory three-way matching processes, which will commence in this financial year. As an interim measure, the department acted promptly on moving from its legacy Prophecy accounting system to Microsoft AX 2012.

The department has made significant progress in improving payroll and procurement controls, and continues to do more. The department is committed to becoming a public sector leader in governance, integrity and financial management control because it takes seriously its responsibilities in child protection, housing, disability, and family and community services.

That was, again, a little longwinded, but I thought it was important to put on the record the changes that have been put in place now—not about to be put in place, but have been put in place now—and which we believe, the department advises me, address all the issues raised by the Auditor General’s qualified opinion. I think it was the first time we had had a qualified opinion from either the Department of Communities or any of its feeding agencies, in the case of Housing or Child Protection, over the preceding 10 years or so.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, minister. Just before we go to further questions, I want to get a bit of guidance. Are members all happy to have a slight break at 11 o’clock?

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** I am happy to keep going.

**Mr R.R. WHITBY:** I would appreciate a break.

**The CHAIR:** Minister, and her advisers—five minutes?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I would not mind five minutes.

**The CHAIR:** Okay; we will go to 11 o’clock.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** The minister indicated that the system changes were made in January. My understanding—the minister can correct me if I am wrong—is that this audit report and the qualifications were done for the period between April to October, so well after January. The minister is saying that the system changes came into effect in January, and as late as October this year the Auditor General was still finding problems with both the procurement and payroll systems. I just wanted to get some clarification on that to make sure that —

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Sorry, Chair. I think the member might be getting his financial years mixed up. I might ask the acting chief financial officer to answer the question.

**Mr N. Wijayadasa:** Thank you, member, for the question. In January, we starting implementing our controls. The auditors started doing their audit in April, on to October. But the way the audit is run is they look at it backwards, so they looked at it from July to March. Actually, they confirmed that for the majority of the year we were noncompliant because the fraud happened in November and the controls came after that. So, as at now, we have the controls in place, but since it is backwards looking, we got a qualified opinion because of that.

I do want to say that they did a review, and they said the numbers were fine, but our controls are weak, which we agree on, and we have worked towards rectifying that. But we have done a lot of work on our part to make sure that the numbers are accurate, and they were comfortable with that part.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** The annual report also refers to the misuse of credit cards and the number of times there was a misuse of credit cards, the fact that there is still some outstanding expenditure from credit cards and that a number of people have been referred for disciplinary action. Has that been fixed as well? Has the department chased up the outstanding funds, and, more importantly, how was this allowed to happen?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Member, I did take the opportunity to speak about the annual report because I was asked a question about the functional review of the department and how that affected frontline services. I just thought it was important to put some of those things on the record. I am happy for the chief financial officer to answer this particular question because they have done some work, but this is estimates on the 2020–21 budget and the budget papers, so I think we all probably need to have some discipline about how we relate the questions to a line item in here.

[10.50 am]

**Mr N. Wijayadasa:** With regard to credit cards, Communities has three systems. Historically, we have been doing a lot of this on a manual basis. One of the first steps we did in November was to bring it onto one single platform and to run automated processes through it. We now use NAB’s FlexiPurchase product the way it is supposed to be used. It has controls, warnings, red flags and all of the above. Previously, with Windows manual, the issue was that there were so many transactions, we could not really follow up. Now that it is automated, we actually get the red flags and we are following through. We are working through those controls so that when we start working through controls and implementing them, we actually start getting more alerts and we are starting to follow those through.

With regard to the credit card itself, there are breaches, which is the case even in my previous agency and wherever. They are small numbers we are just working through. Any big breaches, we are recovering the money. With the small breaches, at times we are taking action on the employee, or if it is a past employee, but recovering might be too expensive when we compare it with the cost of the money we are getting. For some, it could be like \$40, and going through a process will cost a lot more than that. There are a lot more actions, but we are following through and making sure we are closing it all, so we are in a much better position than what it was.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** Can the minister now guarantee that the systems are effective and that there are checks and balances in place to make sure there will be no further breaches?

**The CHAIR:** Member for Carine, I think you are asking a really generic question there. I am not quite sure where it fits into a line item.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** There is a line item there that refers to machinery-of-government changes and efficiency and effectiveness of delivering services. It is actually within that paragraph 19.

**The CHAIR:** I understand it is within that.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Perhaps the member could ask the question of me, and we will consider how we will answer it.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** Yes.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Could the member for Carine just repeat the question? What page are we on?

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** It is the same question that was asked previously on paragraph 19, which refers to a whole range of things, both functional review and machinery-of-government changes in delivering frontline services, and efficiency and effectiveness in prioritisation. It is a pretty all-encompassing paragraph actually. I just want to make sure, because of all the problems the department has had with the Corruption and Crime Commission and other investigations that have taken place, and failures, that the department is now functioning properly and we are not going to have any further failures of the department and money being misappropriated.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I just reiterate what I said before, and backed up by the acting chief financial officer, that in regard to the changes that have been put in place since the Auditor General's qualified opinion, or in the process, because that opinion was backward looking, in fact there are significant improvements to the systems that have been put in place in the department, and all of the areas that were identified in that qualified opinion. In fact, as the chief financial officer said, there were no concerns on the figures, on the numbers, and the finances of the department, and this was the first time that we had been given a qualified opinion by the Auditor General.

It would have been helpful, I have to say, if we had been given some of those qualified opinions previously, but this was the first time that we had been given one, and they have now been addressed. The system is in place. That is the best that we can do. It is the ongoing work of the agency to make sure that there are good systems and safeguards in place, and we are implementing not only the new standard for the public sector in regard to the Treasurer's Instructions, but also the work of Ernst and Young in its advice to the Public Sector Commission about systems that should be put in place across the public sector. Communities is working very hard and including some independent oversight of that within the department, so the two committees that I spoke about—the audit and risk, and the finance and investment committees—both have independent chairs and members.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** I am going to stay around the same line item for a little bit longer. I notice that the government's election commitment was to reduce the senior executive service by 20 per cent when it was elected. I note that in answer to a question on notice from me, the minister said that in 2017–18 the government had 37 SES; in 2018–19 it had 38 SES; and in 2019–20 it had 40 SES. I am just wondering why the government's SES numbers are growing every year. How does that align with the government's promise to cut SES numbers by 20 per cent?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** In regard to the senior executive service, the commitment given by Labor going into the 2017 election was across government. In terms of the commitment across government, I think that question is better put to the Premier as the minister responsible for the public sector. The department, as of June 2020, had 34 senior executive service officers, and effective as of 11 September 2020, the department had 31 senior executive service officers.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** I was given an answer to a question on notice by the minister on 15 September 2020—so just recently—which indicated that the Department of Communities, in 2019–20, had 40 SES.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** In 2019–20?

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** Yes. In 2019–20, it had 40; in 2018–19, it had 38; and in 2017–18, it had 37. It is a question on notice that the minister answered, so I am just wondering why the figures are now different from the ones that the minister answered on notice.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** That is right. I cannot see that question, and I take the member at his word. Perhaps I could just have a look. But I think what the member is saying is that that is the full financial year for 2019–20.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** Yes, that is correct.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** There were 40 SES. I am saying that as at 30 June —

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** No; that is 30 June.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I understand. That is right. So that was for the —

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** That is 2019–20—30 June, yes.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** That is right. For the financial year 2019–20, there were 40 SES. I am saying that as at 30 June 2020—as at that date—there were 34, so it has gone down.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** But is that not to 30 June as well?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** No. That is for the full financial year; there were that many.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** Okay.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** As at 11 September 2020, there were 31. This is for the full financial year. As at 30 June, there were 34 senior executive service officers.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** With regard to the redundancies that the minister is going to be instigating, can she tell me how many redundancies there are going to be and which positions she is identifying for potential redundancy?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I might hand over, just while I source all my advice on this—I do know in broad terms, but I want to make sure that I give accurate information—to the chief financial officer, and then I can supplement that information if need be.

**Mr N. Wijayadasa:** Essentially, the redundancies that we intend to offer—in fact, all—are as part of disability services moving to NDIS. There were 380 earmarked right at the beginning in 2017. That was put on hold until the transition occurred. The transition is now going to be completed at the end of this year. As at now, we have about 260 redundancies left. We intend to offer that 260 because there will not be any funding for that next year because those services are moving across to the commonwealth, so we intend to offer 260. I think there are about 50 expressions of interest so we might have about 210 left to offer across our footprint.

[11.00 am]

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** With regard to staffing numbers at the department and the machinery-of-government changes, I noticed again another answer to a question on notice given by the minister on 11 August 2020 that stated that in 2017 there were 6 137 staff in the new megadepartment; in 2018, there were 6 155; in 2019, there were 6 387; and in 2020, there were 6 380. Just looking at the growing staff numbers in the Department of Communities every year since the Labor Party has been in government, I am just wondering how that equates with the machinery-of-government changes to make things more efficient and streamline services when the department's numbers continue to grow.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Well, as an example I gave up to 30 June this year, and since coming to government, from 2017 to 30 June 2020, the additional FTE in frontline child protection work. We make no apology about protecting those people who are doing frontline work, child protection work, as an example, from any of those cuts, and that continues to be our position. So there have been some increases on the ground in relation to that frontline work. Trying to make sure we manage good service delivery, efficiencies and a modern way of operating the department is a constant challenge and is the work of corporate supports for the department. Of course, we have had, during the pandemic, a need to make sure we could respond across the state—for instance, a lot of frontline work is done now in assisting people into quarantine, and assisting people to get back to communities in remote Western Australia was done by Department of Communities staff, so there has been an extra effort, particularly over COVID. But to answer the member's question, some of the frontline workers in the Department of Communities were protected against any redundancies, and in fact we have put more FTE into that frontline work. We will continue to do that and make no apology for it.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. Members, I would like to suspend for five minutes to give everyone a comfort break.

*Meeting suspended from 11.01 to 11.17 am*

**The CHAIR:** Member for Carine, you are champing at the bit.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** Thank you very much. I refer to page 525, "Community Services" and the line item "Total Cost of Service". In the estimates hearings yesterday for both Police and Health, it was indicated that the Department of Communities has a responsibility within the hotel quarantining regime. I just wanted to ask: what was the minister's responsibility within that regime as it currently stands?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I might hand over to the director general who, I think, is living and breathing this today.

**Ms M. Andrews:** Thank you. Yes. As the member would know, the state of emergency was activated in March, and then in early April a welfare management plan was activated. In my capacity as director general of Communities, I also then take on responsibilities as the state welfare coordinator. We then stood up the State Welfare Incident Coordination Centre, and the responsibilities around that, I will say, are wide, but it is very much a coordination function. In the context of this emergency, one of the welfare responsibilities does extend to providing welfare support to people who are in quarantine, and that can take many forms. It depends on the individuals and what their needs are. We are part of the hotline that has been set up, and we then, depending on what the requirements are, whether it is practical welfare in relation to some particular needs that an individual or family might have or it is some mental health and wellbeing support, we have the ability to activate those services. So welfare under the emergency management legislation is broadly around what we would expect in the moment of an emergency in regard to accommodation, food, immediate support services, that sort of thing. In the case of the hotel quarantine, most of the accommodation and food are being looked after, so services can extend to other matters that individuals might have. It might be people with disabilities requiring some additional supports and so on.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** Once people leave and they get their account on their exit, does the department have anything to do with the payment of accounts and the collection of funds for payment of the hotel quarantine account?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I will ask the director general to answer.

**Ms M. Andrews:** We have a responsibility at the front end of the process, which is in relation to assessing applications, but the State Health Incident Coordination Centre manages the actual requirement and decision-making around whether waivers are granted or not. We do an assessment and provide advice.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** So the department does an assessment of all cases in terms of payment waivers?

**Ms M. Andrews:** Applications for —

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** Application for payment waiver?

**The CHAIR:** Sorry.

**Ms M. Andrews:** Yes. Sorry.

**The CHAIR:** Member for Carine, through the minister.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Applications?

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** Yes.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Yes. The director general is saying that they make an assessment of people who make applications for waivers.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** How many assessments have been made since the department has taken on this role and how many have been recommended for waiver?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** The hotel quarantine fee waiver assessments since 17 July 2020 to 16 October—so fairly current—are 1 813 received and 1 060 completed. Our fee waiver recommendations were, out of that figure, 609 for a full waiver; 209 for a partial waiver; 207, no waiver; and 35 of those applications were withdrawn. There are 378 applications still to consider.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** For the 609 who got a full waiver, how was that determination made? What process did the department go through and how many checks and balances did it go through to make sure that they qualified?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** We are just making sure that we give the member accurate information. I do not think I have the criteria here. We did take advice and did look at some of the systems operating in other states, but I do not have the specific quarantine criteria here. I am sorry; I do not have the criteria here.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** Can the minister provide, on notice, the criteria for the waiver assessments?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** There is an opportunity through the normal parliamentary questions for that information to be given, and I am happy to consider that. I do not think it is particularly sensitive information.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** Further to that, the minister does realise that that is not going to happen, because we have only three parliamentary sitting weeks left. If questions on notice go in for the first week, we will not be getting answers back within this Parliament if we go through that process. If the minister is happy to answer the question, she is happy to answer the question; if she is not happy to be transparent, then just say so, but it cannot go through the proper process.

**The CHAIR:** Member for Carine, I do not think the comment you just made is appropriate.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** But we cannot go through proper process.

**The CHAIR:** Yes. I am not —

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** The minister knows that.

**The CHAIR:** Member for Carine, I am going to call you to order for the first time. I think you were suggesting something about transparency.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** It is appropriate for you to make commentary about getting the information, but I think you were extending that a bit further.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** Okay.

**The CHAIR:** The minister has indicated that if you would like that information, you are to put a question on notice.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Can I also indicate that there are colleagues in the upper house who, I am sure, would be happy to ask those questions and who get them within a shorter period of time. But during the process of the next hour and a half, we will try to get the member that information here, because there is a criterion that is used as an assessment.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** The minister indicated that of the applications that have been assessed, the department is currently waiving just over 80 per cent of applications, either completely or partially. I think some 60-odd per cent are being fully waived. I am just wondering how that equates with the Premier's statements that everybody is paying for their hotel quarantine. He keeps repeating that continually, but is the minister not providing him with these statistics so that he knows that most people are not actually paying for their hotel quarantine?

[11.20 am]

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** The Premier is provided with this information and my recollection—that is all it is—is that when we said that people would pay for their hotel quarantine, we did say that there would be some hardship provisions that would be considered, that there would be some circumstances. We are happy to make that criteria available to the member, and we will undertake to do that before the end of the hearing. But, as I understand it, criteria have been adopted in other states. For instance, they have looked at an income limit— a family income limit below, say, \$60 000 a year whereby it would be considered that it would be difficult for people to pay for all or part of their hotel quarantine. That is an example. I am happy to try to get the member that criteria. But the majority of people are paying for their accommodation. I hasten to say that these were the applications. The waivers that I spoke about and the applications compared with the amount that was paid, they were the applications. So that is not all the people in quarantine; they are the people who made an application for hardship. A proportion of them did have their applications agreed; a proportion had their applications agreed in part, and a number were full rejections—not of all people in quarantine.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** With regard to that, does the department just take the information on face value that people provide in terms of their hardship or is there some process to investigate whether that hardship is genuine?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** My understanding is that there is a verification and that is partly why there is a backlog of applications that people want some evidence of the information that is given, for instance, of income levels, resources or circumstances, but, yes, the department does do its due diligence in advising the government that there should be a full or partial waiver for these fees.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** Thank you.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Minister, 1 800 people indicated that they wanted to seek a waiver. How many people is that drawn from in terms of a pool of people who have gone through the quarantine process? Do we know that?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Thank you, member. Since we had the policy of charging people? I do not have that information here, I am sorry. Our Department of Communities is just responsible for assessing the applications for a fee waiver.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** When we are talking about a waiver, are we talking about a waiver of some of the fees that were paid retrospectively because the legislation backdated the fees, or are these waivers for fees going forward with hotel quarantine, and what is the process for a person when they enter the system, so to speak? Do they have to pay within a certain time or do they have to pay before they enter hotel quarantine? Could the minister just give us a bit of an understanding of the system in terms of the payment process for the people involved?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I was just trying to get clarification on the back payment that the member was talking about— whether the policy was retrospective. That was not my recollection. I could be wrong, but it is not my recollection that any sort of retrospectivity applied. There was an announcement by government that hotel fees would apply from a certain date, and from that announcement, hotel fees would be recouped from a certain date, and then the legislation would be backdated to that announcement, not —

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I would consider that retrospective legislation.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I am sorry, yes. But it certainly was not since we have been putting people into hotel quarantine.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** No. Just for clarity, my question refers to the announced date and the fact that people would have already paid. I guess they have paid; I do not know. I am not sure about the process. How long do they have to pay? Is there a period of time before they are billed? What actually happens?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Our agency is not involved in collecting the information from those —

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** So it does not collect it; it just authorises the waivers.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** We make the assessment on the fee waiver, either in full or in part, and those are the statistics that I have given the member.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Okay; thank you.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** I refer the minister to two items in the budget. The first one is on page 523 of budget paper No 2, volume 2. On page 523 is the service summary table. Line item 6 is “Care Arrangements and Support Services for Children in the CEO’s Care”. I note that the actual spend for 2019–20 was \$466.023 million and the budget estimate for 2020–21 is \$429.585 million. That appears to be a drop of \$36.438 million. That is a significant drop. I noticed that drop and another drop on page 518 of the budget papers under “Spending Changes”. The fourth line item, “Children in Care Initiatives”, also has a drop from \$4.404 million down to \$306 000. These are significant falls. I also refer the minister to page 521. At the top of the page of 521 it says —

Over the past year, the total number of children in care has increased from 5,379 to 5,498 ...

So why the drop in spending when it appears that the demand is increasing?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Thank you, member, for the question. Can I just take those line items that the member referred to one at a time? One is in regard to page 523 that referred to the sixth line item.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** It is \$429.585 million.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I understand the point the member is making. The decrease largely reflects a spike in spending due to demand for services, which resulted in increased expenditure, including for frontline staff and some other costs, particularly regarding the complexity of children's needs. Additionally, costs were incurred as a result of civil litigation claims for historical child sex abuse. The member would be aware that we removed the statute of limitations, so there have been some costs associated with that, and also with the department's response to COVID-19. Costs increased by an estimated \$28.3 million as a result of those three items.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** Is the minister attributing that \$36.438 million drop to the three things she just mentioned?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Yes, that is right. I will just go to the other points the member raised.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** That was the children in care initiatives.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Yes, that is right. That is on page 518. The children in care initiatives funding provides additional relief to carers of children in care, families who might be at risk of having children placed in care and to mitigate against the impacts of COVID-19. This funding indicates the one-off payment to carers for the 7 358 children in care to address additional expenses associated with people keeping children safe and healthy during the pandemic. Carers received a one-off payment of \$500 for the first child in their care and \$250 for each additional child in their care. So that was foster carers, special guardianship orders, and the grandcarers who are registered under our grandcarers support scheme. There were also payments to do with additional therapeutic support and consultation support for carers to provide support to carers during this time, and Aboriginal family-led decision-making pilot over the two years to support and improve collaboration. I have referred to that in Parliament. There is additional money in there for the Aboriginal family-led decision-making pilot.

[11.30 am]

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** Is the drop of \$4.098 million because all those things the minister just listed cost \$4.098 million?

**Ms S. McGURK:** They are one-off initiatives. The \$3.769 million is for the one-off payment to foster carers and grandcarers, and \$316 000 of that amount is for additional therapeutic support and consultation for carers. Over two years, from memory, just over \$700 000 is for the Aboriginal family-led decision-making pilot. All those things are one-off initiatives.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** Thank you.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I refer to service 4 on page 527, preventing and responding to family domestic violence. The table presented there has an efficiency indicator with the average cost per family domestic violence case. We can see a significant increase in the actual amount and the budgeted amount in 2019–20 from \$3.116 million last year to \$4.980 million this year. I also refer to the notes to that table that show that the number of cases in 2018–19 that were dealt with was 15 996 and the number budgeted to be dealt with this year is 15 300. I note that the significant issues impacting the agency talk about an expected additional demand as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. I am wondering why the budget does not expect an additional number of cases, given that one of the significant issues outlined is the expected increase in family and domestic violence cases. Why has the minister actually budgeted for a decrease of those cases and is that extra income per case a little bit misleading?

**Ms S. McGURK:** No. The assumptions based in there—and certainly the dollars allocated—are not misleading. I have said publicly, and I am happy to say again, that there has been an increase in spending by us in regard to FDV. But the assumptions in regard to the number of cases in there for the coming year are partly in relation to the challenges we have got with FDV. On the one hand, the more we speak about domestic violence, the more we want people to come forward, and that is partly what the member is talking about. We actually want people to come forward and report, but obviously we are doing quite a bit of work to prevent domestic violence from occurring in the first place. In fact, during the pandemic, in the hook-ups that we have had nationally with my equivalents in other states and with the federal ministers responsible, we have seen very inconsistent data. In some measures we have seen increases; for instance, we saw an increase in the number of people coming to police, but in other cases we saw less reporting or fewer calls to helplines, but then that would be reversed. We were concerned that during the pandemic, we had people isolated at home and not able to reach out for help. The challenges of the assumptions within the budget of how many cases we are measuring are not an optimistic figure or a projection. In fact, they are really based partly on the agreements with the federal government. Some of the assumptions are based on that. The National Affordable Housing Agreement and the women's safety packages are some of the feeder agreements that have been put in place. Sorry, member, I am just making sure that I have the proper advice on this particular point. I might ask Mr Richardson to address that question, but I am advised that reaching those figures is not easy because, as I have said, just even in this year during COVID we have received inconsistent or varying messages from the different helplines and reporting mechanisms, such as police reporting, and the like. In any case, partly we are informed by some of the information that the federal government gives us through our federal partnerships with the homelessness agreement and the Keeping Women Safe in their Homes funding that we receive. I do not know whether I could ask Mr Richardson if he wants to give us any more clarity on how we arrive at those figures in terms of the number of cases.

**Mr M. Richardson:** Thank you, minister. Just to hopefully expand on the point the minister is making, it is very difficult to project the number of cases, but they are based on the trends that we are seeing and the contracts we have with different service providers. It is important to remember that there is an existing level of funding that runs through a lot of the family and domestic violence services provided by the agency, and it is from those that we derive and expect a core number of services to be provided. In addition, this year, as the minister talked about, we are seeing a significant increase both in state and commonwealth funding for extra FDV services. Some of those are expected to deal with an increase in the number of cases, unfortunately, as a result of COVID-19 leading to higher instances of family and domestic violence. It is difficult for us to project what those might be, but also a lot of that funding relates to better coordination and support to supplement those existing services. Some of the new initiatives we are seeing include a job retraining scheme for women who have, unfortunately, experienced family domestic violence, to help them become more financially independent. We have seen an increase in counselling and financial counselling for people who, unfortunately, have undergone family domestic violence, so that is more at the tail end rather than just the intervention side, but it also includes the recovery side.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I am still trying to come to an understanding. I think the question is still there: are we expecting an increase in family and domestic violence or not because of the COVID situation? I think the minister touched upon that in her response. If we are, why is there no serious attempt to try to quantify it, because it is actually a drop in the total number of cases? What concerns me is that we are not getting—well, maybe the minister is getting the true situation; maybe the process is working on reducing some of those instances, but I am not sure. It seems counterintuitive when the government is announcing a package to deal with an increased number of cases and yet the budget allocation seems to be showing a decrease in the number of cases.

**Ms S. McGURK:** I take the member's point. I think that our experience, particularly with domestic violence, is that it is very difficult to project exactly what is going to occur. As I said, the metrics of success with domestic violence is very difficult. We want incidents to go down but we want reporting to go up, as I have said before. The assumptions about what is going to occur are notoriously difficult to pin down. To get the settings right and to make sure that we have good data collection to provide a good evidence-based analysis of what is occurring on the ground is part of what we are doing. We are working in partnership with Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety, which is the national research body looking at domestic violence, on not only the feeders of domestic violence, but also how to respond to it. I think it is also worth pointing out that we have invested very heavily on early intervention and family support in our child protection areas. The reality for those families is that domestic violence will often be a characteristic of some of that work. Some of the early indications about investments in early intervention and family support is starting to look quite promising. The trend for children coming into care is starting to reduce and we are getting better outcomes, so we are also hoping that that will feed into a more effective result. But I hasten to say that the numbers in the budget are assumptions about how many people we can expect to be serviced by this, and the challenge of pinning down those numbers is not particular to Western Australia.

[11.40 am]

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** This may be a question or a comment, but I guess the thrust, or the importance, of the distinction between whether or not the government is planning for an increase in numbers is that it surely must influence where it would put services. If the government is expecting a vast amount of the same old, same old happening, it would put services in to address that pinch point or that crisis situation. Whereas what the minister has been talking about throughout the response is more of a qualitative response to the situation and dealing better with the situations that do occur. I would have thought that planning for and providing resources to meet those two situations are somewhat different. It seems to be a little bit of a conflict in the wording around some of the descriptions of what the COVID package is there to fund and what is actually happening on the ground. I am a bit confused about it.

**Ms S. McGURK:** I will just make a couple of comments about that. In having funding agreements with the federal government, whether that is for the women's safety package or the housing and homelessness agreement, in being clear with Treasury and our service providers about what we expect, we do underpin that by assumptions of what is going to happen with cases. But the reality of something like domestic violence and those sorts of social phenomena is that they are not actuarial exercises. There is no hard-and-fast rule about what is going to occur, and shining a light on what is occurring with domestic violence has been part of our effort. Getting better data and understanding the extent of the problem is part of our strategic work. As well as the homelessness strategy, we also released a domestic violence strategy called Path to Safety. That is also important for understanding how this is looking in different parts of our state and how we can respond to it.

The assumptions that are made in the budget papers, which is partly what the member is talking about, for the COVID prevention of FDV—the prevention money that we put out—is to decrease the number of cases. That is some of the early intervention work that we are doing generally but we are also making sure that there are extra supports out there. Mr Richardson spoke about job readiness, for instance, to lift women out of financial dependency on an abusive partner, current or future. It is also about sustaining those extra dollars to support cases during recovery at the end of the process, not just at the point of crisis intervention. They are some of the things that we are trying to do in our response to domestic violence. There are assumptions in the budget on the number of cases. I think I have indicated that they are difficult to pin down because of the nature of domestic violence, which is that it is underreported.

**Mr D. PUNCH:** Thank you. I refer to the line item “Respectful Relationships” on page 538 in the table of details of controlled grants and subsidies. Can the minister please outline how this investment across the forward estimates is indicative of the broader work in the prevention of family and the domestic violence portfolio and how it complements the government’s broad reform agenda in this important area?

**Ms S. McGURK:** Thank you, member. We have spoken in this hearing, and also heard from the Prime Minister and the Premier, about a lot of observations about the effect the pandemic would have on domestic violence and whether it would give perpetrators an additional opportunity to exercise control and violence in all its forms on their victims. We were very aware of this early on in the pandemic and, as we have just demonstrated, we have tried to work with the service sector and gather the best evidence of how we can respond to that across the state. Often the conversation about domestic violence is crisis driven; it is responding to an emergency. We need to get that right and put in proper supports not only during the crisis, but also in the longer term to make sure that we are keeping women safe, keeping their children safe and keeping the victims safe while also lifting them out of a situation where they might be exposed in the future.

We also need to prevent this violence from happening in the first place. That is a community challenge. One of our election commitments in 2017 was to agree to sign on to Our Watch, which is the national primary prevention body. At the time, WA had not signed on to that. Now all states have signed on to Our Watch. That is a program, or an effort, that understands that this is a long game. We use a health behavioural change lens to try to look at how we can alter community attitudes to violence against women and children, and domestic violence in particular. We agreed to sign on to Our Watch and we also committed to implementing respectful relationships teaching support in WA schools. We allocated \$1 million to that, and that has been rolled out in a number of schools across the state. That is where schools can put their hand up and say, “Yes, we want to be part of this program.” Supports are given to teachers to alter existing teaching programs. They are not new programs or new subjects that are given, but they are a tool that is used to alter the existing curriculum. We have been working our way through that. Schools are part of our work of primary prevention to change attitudes, but we all have a role to play in this. In not too long—in October or early November—we will be starting on 16 Days in WA. That will be the fourth time we have done that as a state government. That is an opportunity for all of the community, whether elected representatives, businesses, community or sporting organisations, or members of the public to step up and say, “Yes, we consider domestic violence and violence against women to be unacceptable”, and to raise awareness about what we can all do.

We are trying to work across all of those areas: emergency responses; keeping victims safe; systemic changes so that all our different systems are talking to each other in a joined up way; looking at long-term support for people affected by violence so that they get themselves on their feet and then look at addressing some of the drivers that may have led to them being in abusive relationships, where that is an issue; holding perpetrators to account; and making sure that there is law reform but also primary prevention. That is very much what we are alive to.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** Note 1 at the bottom of page 526 talks about the extension of contracts to provide funding surety. I refer to the minister’s media statement on 4 October 2018 in which she indicated that contracts would be given for five years into the future. My question is: since 4 October 2018, how many contracts have been extended for the five-year period and how many have been extended for a lesser period of one year?

**Ms S. McGURK:** Thank you, member. I am just trying to make sure —

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** That is all right. Find that, because in that announcement the minister indicated that the policy recommends a minimum five-year contract, which will ensure that sector organisations have greater funding security.

[11.50 am]

**Ms S. McGURK:** Yes, I am very aware of the policy and of our commitments around that. In fact, this was one of the commitments that we made before the last state election and was very welcomed by community services organisations. We have been working very hard to roll that out as quickly as possible. I will say a couple of things. In relation to COVID, there were particular challenges because a number of service agreements were due to expire in June. We were worried that because of the COVID disruption that occurred in 2020, and continues to occur, that would cause significant disquiet and interruption to service delivery if we were to proceed with the reissuing of contracts in June and so a number of contracts were extended so that organisations could continue to work uninterrupted.

That is the first thing. There has also been a challenge, or a tension if you like, in moving to a five-year contract delivery because in order to do that, if a service needed to be redesigned or reconsidered regarding who was able to tender for that service, that would take work. There was a tension about whether to hold off recontracting because back-of-house work was required to make sure that it got done properly. They have been the tensions, but wherever possible we have been moving to five-year contracts. The Department of Finance advice, which was bulletin issue 82, is in fact the issue that I was raising before about COVID. It said that the contracts that were due to cease in 2020 would be extended for 12 months. I said 2021, I am sorry; it should be agreements ceasing in 2020. The Department of Finance said to just give people another 12 months.

There is also tension when the contract needs to be redesigned or who is involved in the contract needs to be changed. That creates tension because simply moving to a five-year contract all the time would mean that some service providers would not be able to apply for funding. To answer the member's question about the number of contracts, the 190 agreements within the Department of Communities were extended to 2021 as a result of COVID. There are a large number of contracts. I am just seeing if I have got it. A large number of contracts were entered into by the Department of Communities, so I am not able to give the member a figure today on how many, since coming to government, have moved to a five-year contract within the Department of Communities, but I can assure the member that it is still our policy and we are working very hard to not only implement it, but also implement it across government in partnership with the not-for-profit sector.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** When will these 190 organisations, or service providers, know whether or not they will still be in existence at the end of this 12-month extension? The minister has obviously indicated that a lot of work needs to be done as to who is going to be in and who is going to be out. What surety can they have that within the next 12 months the minister will move to five-year minimum contracts for all service providers, or is the minister planning on doing this at some time in the future?

**Ms S. McGURK:** The member asked at the beginning of the question whether those organisations will know that they will continue to exist at the end of the 12-month extension. I assume, depending on the size of the organisation, that the organisations will be in existence. The member wants assurance about the funding. I just referred to the 190 contracts that were due to expire in June this year. I said 2021, but 2020 is correct. I can assure the member that there is a default duration of five years for any contracts that are entered into by the community with the state government in the human services sector. That is the default. But they are not uniform contracts. Some of them, by their nature, are one-off or time-limited projects. The member for Churchlands asked me before about a couple of line items where we had given, for instance, funding for a trial for an Aboriginal family-led decision-making pilot. We are not committing to ongoing funding. That is a two-year trial; that is all we are funding it for. In that instance, that is all that will be contracted. It will not be contracted for five years. But where there is ongoing work, the default is for five years. It is not possible, considering the hundreds of contracts that are entered into by the Department of Communities, for me to say how many have been transferred to five years. With the Department of Finance, we have now negotiated. A few years ago, the Minister for Finance and I put out a public media release at an event. That is now state government policy and the default is for five-year contracts, which has been welcomed.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** At the end of 12 months, with these extensions, if some of these organisations have been delivering their services for a long time and are going to continue into the future, can the minister guarantee them, irrespective of the department's ability to get on top of the assessments that need to be done, that they will continue on a five-year contract if, within 12 months, they are not time limited from the point of view of a specific project, but are an ongoing service?

**Ms S. McGURK:** That is certainly my hope. I know that in his position as an opposition member, he would like me to give a categorical yes or no. I know that people get frustrated —

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** It is not me; it is them.

**Ms S. McGURK:** That is right. They understand that there are times when they agree that we need to take time to refine or put improvements into the contract. To put it into perspective, the one-year COVID extensions, which is what I referred to before—the 190 contracts—represent a total value of \$12.7 million compared with Communities' overall contracting, which is for contracts, worth over \$250 million. The vast majority of those have longer agreements and where they are up for renegotiation, it is our default to have five-year contracts. That is something that we have worked very hard to implement across government.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** With the 190 contracts that were extended, was any additional funding given to them with regards to the equal remuneration order requirements, or were they just required to cut services to fit within the new financial regime that they have to operate in?

**Ms S. McGURK:** I will get my notes on the ERO, but there was no reduction in funding for the extension. There were no cuts, so that is important.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** Sorry, I did not mean a reduction, but were they given more money? Obviously, they have to pay their staff a lot more, which means that they have to cut their services because they have to fit within their budget and their budget means they can do less because, obviously, they are paying wages at a higher rate. Did the minister recalibrate their funding to allow them to deliver the same service based on the ERO requirements?

[Mr T.J. Healy took the chair.]

**The CHAIR:** Minister.

**Ms S. McGURK:** Thank you, Chair. It is nice to see the member for Southern River in such a nice coloured shirt as well.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** Hear, hear!

[12.00 noon]

**Ms S. McGURK:** There are two increases that we have given to accommodate the ERO requirements. One was for \$1.9 million for the 56 eligible 24/7 National Housing and Homelessness Agreement services and we also provided \$58 million for a number of agencies. In total, that was for 265 contracts across government agencies, but 176 of those contracts were related to the Department of Communities. We have allocated extra money, and I think that has been made public previously. I can assure the member of the extension. Of course, we have made an adjustment to the indexation measure under this government. That is a more generous calculation of the indexation adjustment that was made by the Department of Finance under our government compared with the previous government.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** The minister said that the ERO was applied to 176 contracts. How many contracts in total does the department actually have with the not-for-profit sector?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Thank you, member. I am sorry, but I do not have that figure. I gave the member a broad dollar amount here. I will see, as we are speaking, whether we have here the total number of contracts. I gave a figure of about 250.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** My gut feeling is that it is around 400 to 500.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I am advised that it is 714. That is across all services. It is not just my portfolio, obviously; as the lead minister, it is across all services—over 700.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** Of those 714, 176 have had adjustments for an equal remuneration order. Am I to assume then that the other 500-odd have had no adjustments based on ERO requirements?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** No, the member cannot assume that. Equal remuneration orders are in place as a result of a decision of Fair Work Australia, and there were contracts that were entered into prior to the ERO announcement being made, and so those contracts did not have capacity. Those organisations had not built the ERO higher salary components into their contracts, so they are vulnerable in ERO increases. I think the last increase might be in December this year, as a result of ERO decisions, and will be staged in for various classifications.

Different categories of organisations or contracts have been affected by EROs. For instance, if a person entered into a contract after the decision by Fair Work was made in 2012, they would be able to factor in higher wages or salaries because they would know what their salary was going to be for that period of time. In the majority of cases, new contracts would be entered into or retendered. But I understand that some organisations did not have an opportunity to factor those higher wages into their contracts, and they are the ones we have tried to accommodate in the additional payments.

I will also mention that the previous government under Premier Barnett gave a large amount of money—\$600 million—to the sector. I remember I was working for UnionsWA at the time. I think I was secretary of UnionsWA. The union was concerned that it was not clear how that \$600 million was going to be allocated by those organisations and there would be no accountability publicly of how that money was being spent and there would be confusion. The Department of Finance or the contracting agency did not spend time making clear how that \$600 million was to be spent. We have been vindicated in that view because years later, we have Finance or Treasury saying, “Well, you were allocated money under the previous government—\$600 million. You’ve already been given money for that”, and the organisations are saying, “We weren’t given enough”, or, “No, that is not what the money was for.” We have taken the time to be very clear in understanding those organisations that have, for instance, 24/7 staffing requirements that are very vulnerable to wage increases. They have penalties and 24/7 obligations, and the services are required. We have tried to take all of that into account. Having said that, I understand there was still tension in the sector. I am aware of that, and we are continuing to work with it to make sure that people are paid fair wages and that the sentiment under the equal remuneration order is honoured; that is, the community sector largely employs women, who are often not well remunerated for the skill and effort that they put in day in and day out in the community services area.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** The minister would be aware of the suspension of standing orders motion that we did back in June, asking about domestic violence counselling advocacy and support services. I will not ask the minister to name the 18 organisations that were part of that, because I am sure that she would struggle and need to read the list, just as I did. I want to know whether they have received any additional funding, which they were requesting, as part of the ERO process so that they can deal with domestic violence issues, because, as the minister would be aware, they were talking about cutting services.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I know the member will be pleased to hear that they did under the COVID recovery package—the \$28.2 million that we announced as part of the overall COVID recovery package. Some of that money went to domestic violence advocacy services.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** It is good that the minister changed her mind.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I have a list of the 18 organisations. Does the member want me to take time reading them out?

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** No; I have the list here as well.

**The CHAIR:** Member, I was waiting for the minister to finish her reply, then I will come back to a further question, if you would like.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** I would the minister to list them without reading from the list. I would like to see whether she could do that!

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** We allocated \$1.08 million to the counselling and advocacy services for the two years, 2020–21 and 2021–22. That is \$540 000 per annum.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** How much were the organisations actually looking for to be able to continue to deliver the services at the same level that they were prior to 30 June?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** It was that amount.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** It was that amount, so were they given exactly what they wanted?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** That is right.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** Okay; that is good.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** I refer to page 529 of budget paper No 2, volume 2, and the table headed “Care Arrangements and Support Services for Children in the CEO’s Care”.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Just give me a second.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** In reference to the explanation of significant movements, the third note says that the increase in cost reflects —

... an increase in the number of young people with complex needs who were not able to be placed safely in existing care arrangements, driving increased costs for interim arrangements while longer-term options were developed.

Why were these young people unable to be placed safely in the existing care arrangements?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I thank the member for the question. It is a challenge in estimates to listen to the question and then be trying to look for the answer at the same time. Did I understand correctly that at the end of his question, the member asked why these children were not able to be placed in safe arrangements?

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** Yes. I asked why these young people were unable to be placed safely in the existing care arrangements.

[12.10 pm]

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Thank you, member. This area of placing children with complex needs in our child protection system is one of the most difficult. I remember speaking about this particular matter in the last estimates hearing. They will be children with difficult behaviours, either an impairment—for instance, FASD—but some sort of cognitive impairment, behavioural issues, maybe harmful sexual behaviours. There might be any number of issues, and that makes them very difficult to place. Foster care placements breaking down is very difficult for the children because then they have to be upended and moved somewhere else. It is very difficult for the carers, too. I do not think anyone pretends otherwise. The work of the department, the different districts and some of our senior staff here is to support the carers and to support those children, with professional supports, to make sure that those placements are as stable as possible, and, by and large, that occurs.

In 2019–20, programs for dealing with children with complex needs, high-needs placements, delivered services to a total of 262 children and young people with high complex needs. Some of those children have a moderate to severe disability, as I said, or extremely complex and challenging behaviours. The services—just to understand how that is broken down—might be transitional high needs, disability placement and support, and specialised fostering. As of June 2020, there were 201 children and young people in specialised care arrangements. As of the end of the financial year, 30 were in transitional high needs, 75 in disabilities placement and support, and 98 in specialised fostering. I can give some of the dollar amounts. I do not know whether that answers the member’s question.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** The minister has given me some stats, which is good. Can the minister give an indication of what these interim arrangements look like? I kind of understand what they might look like for someone with a disability because, obviously, they need to have a certain style of home and somebody who is able to care for the child with a disability. What other types of care arrangements is the minister talking about—I mean, in terms of what does it physically look like? Are they in some sort of institutional care or are they all in foster care? Where are they put?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** It is a combination of those two things. I might see whether Deputy Director General Rachael Green wants to address some of these issues. Sometimes young people or children will be put into interim foster care arrangements. For instance, if their placement breaks down, they may go into interim foster care arrangements while a more stable solution is found for them. Those children might be put into group homes to try to settle them.

For instance, when I was in Broome recently, I visited one of the group homes that has children with very complex needs. That group home's name eludes me at the moment, but it was really heartening to see the work that it was doing at that time with two girls, and the challenges associated with those two girls in that home.

In fact, as a quick aside, when I was in Broome, I was really pleased to meet a young man who this year is head boy at Broome Senior High School. He had previously been a resident at that group home, which is an indication that he would have had complex needs. He would have had high needs, but he had set himself some goals early in high school, and he had worked with Clontarf and some of the other service providers. He had decided that he wanted to be head boy, and he had become head boy. I met him and had a cup of tea with him and spoke to him. That is an example of when some of those supports are put in place at the right time, we get really good outcomes. Sometimes, depending on where that young person is at, progress can be relative to how they might progress. I might get Rachael Green, the assistant director general —

**Ms M. Andrews:** Deputy director general.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Deputy director general—I always get that wrong. I will get her to supplement that answer, just to give the member an idea of the sort of supports that are put in for some of those young people with complex needs.

**Mrs R. Green:** Thank you, member, for the question. Absolutely, it is a significant increase in our spending over the last financial year, and it has been a difficult year. But particularly, the increase was around young people. We have a range of different placements, but the costs are particularly related to the individual young person. The minister has already mentioned this morning the challenges of young people, particularly around their behaviours. When we are actually looking to place a young person, it is not necessary that there is the availability. Indeed, it might not be a long-term placement, in which case it might be relatively short term.

Sometimes the agencies that we work with do not actually have the staff that are suitably skilled to be able to provide services to our young people, and therefore the costs escalate on the basis that they need to train their staff, as well as the complexity. It might be, as the minister mentioned this morning, that it is not actually a one-to-one service; it might be two staff to one young person. Again, that also exacerbates the costs. It is double-edged. First, it is the number of young people, but also, second, it is the availability of placements and the cost, which escalates.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** Minister, are any of these group homes or placement options or care arrangements purpose built?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** My understanding is that most of them would be, or there would be a combination of both. They might have been adjusted over time to make sure that they were appropriate for a group home environment. I have visited many of them. But again, just because of the nature of our capital exercise, I am advised that few of them are purpose built. There are times, with women's refuges, for example, when we are very alive to the fact that we need to make sure that our facilities are suitable for the cohort that we are dealing with.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** In light of the fact that the government acknowledges in the budget an increase in the number of young people with complex needs and that has caused the increase in cost, what is it allocating in the budget to group home facilities to cater with this increasing number of young people with complex needs?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I think the question the member is asking is about the capital expenditure in regard to group homes, for instance, and the like. That is something that is taken up by the department with Treasury as we need to increase the capacity of our system. Whenever possible, we would try to place children in a foster care environment in a family home. That is our preference. I do not have the figure in front of me, but the vast majority—I recall it is over 70 per cent—of our young people are placed in foster care arrangements and proper supports are in place. If there is a need to build a new facility, for instance, that would be taken up at the time in a budget bid by the department with Treasury.

A similar point could be well made about women's refuges around the state. I am very conscious of the state of many of our women's refuges and safe houses around the state, and I think people will be very pleased to see the new facilities that we are building in Peel and Kwinana, which are self-contained units, for instance, but still with proper security and oversight. Where we can, we are trying to build in not only new capital, but also different ways of care in women's refuges. We are also dealing with young people to make sure that the facility is both safe and therapeutic for them.

Anyway, to answer the member's question, that would be taken up with Treasury by Communities if need be.

There were challenges during the COVID pandemic in terms of the movement of children, for instance, and children being able to have contact visits and the like. There were all sorts of challenges. I have also talked about the frontline staff; that is, the extra FTE that will be available for the number of children with complex needs. I think the extra FTE for the cost-and-demand model will mean that staff are able to be allocated to do that work. For the increase in the number of children in care in 2019–20, the existing care arrangements were not available. But where we have been able to safely, we have put children in more temporary arrangements while longer term capacity was increased. Those longer term options are now available, which is reflected in the reduced average cost in 2020–21. That is the average costs reflected in the budget papers.

[12.20 pm]

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** The last part of that quote I referred to talked about the interim costs for interim arrangements. The minister has spoken of those. The paragraph goes on to say “while longer-term options were developed.” Can the minister help us understand how much of the budget has been allocated to developing these longer term options by her department, and what those longer term options look like?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I am just getting some advice to make sure that I am not barking up the wrong tree. I think it is an opportunity to talk about the specialist child protection unit that we are developing within the department under the new structure. Part of the establishment of that specialist unit within the Department of Communities is to make sure not only that child protection has its proper and senior place within the department to give good, specialist advice up to senior levels, to the director general and her executive team, but also that we have good support in place for the districts and the work on the ground with our partners. That specialist unit will have an outward focus as well to look at how other jurisdictions are managing these children with complex needs and how we can draw on best practice from not only around the country, but also around the world for some of these children of trauma, and a compromise for the reasons in their short lives, the other reasons that we have spoken about. At the moment, we are developing that specialist unit within the department’s existing budget.

I think it will also assist us to look at good models of how to deal with children with complex needs. I am very aware of our responsibilities to not only those children but also, frankly, their carers and the community around caring for those children. Sadly, we see cases of those children running away, to use a common expression. They will just simply leave their placements. People ask, “How can that be? Aren’t you responsible? Why aren’t you managing these children?” As any parent knows, if a child really wants to leave the house, they will leave the house. Their parents can lock them up. That might be an alternative a parent could choose to adopt, but I am sure they would do that as a last resort. When possible, that absolutely is our last resort, and we have the Kath French Secure Care Centre. Managing children and young people with complex needs is core work for the department, making sure that we have the right physical infrastructure, making sure that we have the right partners in foster carers, support for those partners, whether it is foster carers or our community sector organisations that we work with. A number of those manage some of those group homes and some of the foster care arrangements. But it is also making sure that we have kind of best practice, with looking at models and interventions. I have visited other states since being minister, and that has been very much part of my conversations with other jurisdictions, New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, and also New Zealand, to understand how they work with these children to get good outcomes.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** When does the minister expect that these long-term options will be in place?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Member, I do not think it will be a case of finding a set-and-forget system. We are continually looking at how to not only put in place alternative arrangements around the state, but also evaluate those and if necessary shift our approach. Making sure that we have culturally appropriate options available for young people is also part of what we need to do. I know the member participated in a bill that is before the Parliament looking at the Children and Community Services Act and how we make decisions about the right placements for those young people that are culturally appropriate. Getting the balance right, making sure that those young people can stay connected to their culture and their community and their country, but at the same time keep them safe, is something that is sometimes a very finely balanced exercise that we have to bring our best effort to. That is partly what is being considered in the amendments to the child placement principle that is before Parliament at the moment.

So to answer the member’s question, I do not see this as a set-and-forget system, but that is also our intention. Our objective is to have not only good therapeutic supports, but also stable supports and a safe and secure environment for those young people. Stability is absolutely core to that.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Minister, I refer to page 524, the outcomes table and the outcome “Children and young people in the CEO’s care receive a high quality of care and have much improved life outcomes”. I refer to the line item “Proportion of Aboriginal children in the CEO’s care placed in accordance with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle” and the fact that the budget target is considerably higher in the last year than the achieved target. Again, it is a budget target at 80 per cent, when I think the department is achieving just under 65 per cent at the moment. What are the barriers that the minister sees that need to be overcome, to ensure that placements take place in accord with the placement principle, which I understand is that children go to either extended family within their own communities or to other Aboriginal families elsewhere in the state? Why is it so hard to achieve a growth in this area? I might ask the minister some more questions depending on the answer.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Thank you, member. The member made a good point about why the target is consistently higher than what we have been able to achieve, although we do have a slight increase. By national standards, we do not do too badly, with two-thirds of those Aboriginal children being placed in accordance with the principle. But to be fair, each state has its own circumstances, including the number of Aboriginal carers who are available, geographical challenges and the like. It is difficult sometimes to make good comparisons across the country.

It is absolutely our intention and our ambition to increase the number of children who are placed in accordance with the principle. In part, the adjustments that we are making to the act that I just referred to are about making tweaks

to how we place those children to get better outcomes in accordance with that principle. The member would be aware that we are proposing that there could be a consideration by the court to place a child with a non-Aboriginal carer if it means that those children would stay placed in their community or connected to their broader Aboriginal family. But that has to be on advice from local Aboriginal organisations.

The reason that there is a difference between the actual and the budget target is that there is constantly a tension between making sure that we are clear publicly and to our partners that we want to increase the number of children placed in accordance with the principle, understanding that we have some constraints. Essentially, the constraints will always be that child safety is not compromised, so we will not place a child in accordance with the principle, for instance, with an Aboriginal carer if we do not think it is safe. If there are no safe options to place that child with an Aboriginal carer, then we will opt always to make sure that child is safe. Earlier, the member of Churchlands asked questions about children with complex needs. Of course, they have to have someone who can manage those needs and manage children. It is an absolutely heroic effort that many of those carers, whether they are family or not, take in caring for those children.

I make all of those points. We have had a slight increase, but about two-thirds of Aboriginal children placed in accordance with the child placement principle is how we have been tracking for a while. SNAICC is the national organisation for Aboriginal child protection and Indigenous children. I have just avoided spelling out what SNAICC actually stands for, but it is the national Aboriginal organisation advocating for children in care and child protection. It does an evaluation of how different jurisdictions are going, and it is not backwards in coming forward with areas we can improve on in regard to Aboriginal child care. SNAICC stands for the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care. It does an evaluation, and there are also a few other measures that are in place for how we are going under various child protection measures.

Earlier, I mentioned the Aboriginal family-led decision-making trial that we are putting in place and that we have now funded. We are starting to do some work on looking at alternative mechanisms to make sure that once a decision is made for a child to come into care, they are placed in a way that the broader Aboriginal family and community has eyes over, is comfortable with and feels is the best option for that child's safety. That is crucial. Of course we would prefer for those children not to come into care, and that is where our early intervention work comes into play. I have said that we are starting to get some early indicators that those investments are paying off. It is not in my direct portfolio, but we have in place a therapeutic conferencing model in the Children's Court. Between the Attorney General and the Department of Justice, an additional magistrate was funded to look at an alternative mechanism of mediation or conferencing to try to work with the family when child protection matters come before the court. Although it has been in place for only a number of months, we are getting some early indications that the parties there—for instance, the biological family—feel a lot more comfortable with a less adversarial mechanism of discussing the issues that have brought them to the court in the first place.

[12.30 pm]

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I think in part of her answer the minister referred to the Aboriginal family decision-making program, which is mentioned in the budget papers in the places highlighted as significant issues. I note that the minister's answer to the member for Churchlands referred to the two-year pilot that is being led in that program. I am wondering why there is a need for the pilot if there is an acceptance that that is the best way forward? I understand that SNAICC's view is that should be the standard approach. Why is the government not just taking up that as a standard approach in all Aboriginal child placements, rather than as a pilot or in three regional areas?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Thank you, member. First of all, Aboriginal family-led decision-making is a very broad term, so it is important for us to do some work with stakeholders, particularly Aboriginal organisations first and foremost, on how it will be applied in Western Australia. Primarily that is who we will be working with, but also experts working in this area, perhaps researchers and the like, to give all of us some advice on this. For instance, in different states there are different levels of involvement of their equivalents to the Department of Communities and the role of child protection workers from government in the decision-making. I think in Victoria, there is someone at the table from the department involved in the conferencing or the decision-making, whereas in Queensland that is not the case. I hope I did not get that the wrong way around.

Of course, WA is a big state, so there might be a different model of how that is approached in different areas throughout the state, and what maturity of Aboriginal organisations, or who are the right people to around the table to be involved in that. I think that is important for us to do. It is important for us to work with Aboriginal organisations to look at what is going to suit the cohort—for instance, infants at pre-birth planning, and the possibilities there of looking at this sort of model with pre-birth planning, or, alternatively, with reunification, so when a child might come into care for a certain amount of time, but we are working with the family to get that child back, how we would involve that model. It is not to say that there is not an ongoing commitment, but any work that we do in any of the human services areas, I actually think we do need to evaluate how we have gone and the results of our efforts. We have to get a lot better at doing that. What is intended by the trial, is that we make sure that it is a rigorous. Our effort in part is to make sure that there are external eyes on evaluating the success or otherwise of our efforts, not that there is not an ongoing commitment to that model.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Going back to the original situation with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child placement principle not quite meeting the targets, I guess there are two ways to address that. Perhaps reducing the 56 per cent of the children in care being Aboriginal for a start, but also increasing the capacity within Aboriginal communities to deal with these matters within community. Is the department taking that approach seriously, to produce a wider range of opportunity within the Aboriginal community to provide some of the resources necessary to keep that child within the community?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I can feel the director general next to me champing at the bit to address this issue, because improving our outcomes for Aboriginal people is very much something that the department is very focused on, and as a government we are focused on. The member might remember the amendments to the Children and Community Services Act. One of the primary objectives of that legislation is to have Aboriginal representative organisations and improved involvement of local Aboriginal organisations in the decision-making around child safety, and child placement in this case. Building that kind of infrastructure throughout the state is something that we are very committed to doing. That is what amendments to the legislation and our program of reform are all about. That is with child protection, but also extends to domestic violence, and there is still a lot of work to be done in the homelessness area. We want to make sure that Aboriginal organisations are first and foremost doing that work of working with Aboriginal people to prevent children coming into care, in the case of child protection, or if they are in care, to be involved in the most appropriate placement and to support that placement being safe and stable in the long run.

I have referred in passing to the early intervention and family support work that is being done in the agency and its contracts. The member might recall that we have given a large contract in the metropolitan area to a Wungening consortium to do some early intervention. Wungening is the old Aboriginal alcohol and drug service. It has a consortium of four organisations that are doing in-home support in the metropolitan area. These are families whose children are at risk of coming into care. We gave \$20 million to those organisations, over I think four or five years, to do work with those families, and we are starting to see some very good results. In the case of Wungening, as a result of its work, in a 12-month period, 90 per cent of the families that it is working with did not see children coming into care. Throughout the state, for a lot of that early intervention work, the preference was to give those contracts, to Aboriginal community-controlled organisations or to partner with ACCOs to do that work. I know the financial officer, in his time here, has been very good at making sure that we are aware that with these figures, this is starting to look like it is worth investing in from a financial point of view, obviously quite apart from a human point of view.

Finally on domestic violence, which is one of the big feeders to child protection cases, we absolutely have to look at different ways to approach domestic violence in Aboriginal communities in both the urban and the regional and remote communities, because at the moment, just viewing it as a sort of police-child protection issue, which is sort of the traditional way that we have dealt with it, is really expecting that vulnerable women, usually, are expected to come through to authorities that they have traditionally viewed with a lot of suspicion and it is not effective. We are trying to change that relationship, and alter it, but that relationship has been built over many decades by some very shameful government policies, like child removal. Looking at different ways of doing things on domestic violence and child protection is very much what we are open to. But I can assure the member that with child protection, child safety will not be compromised, but we need to partner with those organisations.

Again, I have very successfully answered that question in a very longwinded way, but I hope it gives the member an indication of the sorts of innovation that we are interested in exploring. But we need to assess how that goes. It is not just a matter of saying, “We’ll do this because it’s a good intention,” or, “That’s got some good signposts.” We need to actually evaluate whether we are getting better outcomes from that, and that is what we are very much committed to in any of the new work that we are doing. With the Housing First Homelessness Initiative, one of the big attractions is that we have been able to demonstrate some really good outcomes in the short term, as well as long-term outcomes for a very difficult cohort.

I do not know whether the director general would like to talk about department’s cultural capability program as well.

[12.40 pm]

**Ms M. Andrews:** Just to underpin a lot of what the minister was talking about there, this is clearly at the heart of a lot of our reforms, and what the member was asking us to speak to as well. We are very committed to what is a system change for us. We were talking about the pilot, just to use that as an example. I think we can all look to pilots in history, that of themselves have been successful, but they have not changed the system. We are designing this pilot from the get-go so that it is about changing the system, not just running a successful pilot on its own. To signify what that looks like, from the get-go it has to be doing it with Aboriginal people and Aboriginal leaders, designing the pilot with them—that is the big message they have given us—and from the get-go, not only having an eye to just evaluating it at the end, but also looking at how we redesign those services on the front line to be different. An underpinning principle to the Closing the Gap targets, which we now own as well, is that Aboriginal community-controlled organisations have to be at the centre of all of this also. We have a responsibility to work to develop Aboriginal community-controlled organisations around the state. That is a prerequisite of what we are trying to do here. We know that we cannot achieve the outcomes on our own. In fact, this is about developing ACCOs, handing power over to ACCOs, and doing it in a way that is fit for purpose for that local region and at a pace that is appropriate for that region.

To conclude, we have kicked off the pilot for Aboriginal family-led decision-making. The round tables are happening at the moment with Aboriginal leaders. The chair of our cultural council, Lawford Benning, called me yesterday afternoon to tell me he had attended one of the first round tables. We are extremely positive about working differently with Aboriginal people in genuine partnership to design this pilot that will signal a way of working differently going forward. It is a big job, but just talking about the pilot on its own, it is important to see it in the context of a wider reform program. As the minister indicated, that includes our own cultural competency as an organisation. Confronting the systemic racism, if I can put it that way, that operates within the policies, practices and processes of something that has been set up historically does not serve the majority of those kids who are in care.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I have a final follow-up question. In terms of the department's internal resources, does it employ any Aboriginal people at a senior level to help guide any of these types of programs?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I will hand over to the director general to answer that question.

**Ms M. Andrews:** In broad terms, our Aboriginal staff numbers are greater than those in the average public sector. Do we consider that adequate? No. The member's question referred to senior levels. When I was appointed to the role last year, I decided that as a leadership team we were diminished. We had no Aboriginal person at the leadership table, so I invited the most senior Aboriginal officer we had in our organisation to sit at our leadership table from May last year. That officer is a senior executive in our department and the most senior Aboriginal person. She is not there to be the only person thinking about Aboriginal outcomes; it is quite the opposite. She is there to hold us to account. It drives a different conversation; on every topic, every issue and every policy, it forces us to ask how we are shifting to better outcomes for Aboriginal people.

In May this year, I initiated a process of rolling out an organisational redesign that has very much been informed by what we learned about ourselves through Paul Whyte, and then what we learned about ourselves through the COVID-19 pandemic. In that redesign, we established a division of Aboriginal outcomes. This is the first time at the department that we have had a dedicated division. It does not exist yet. Again, to be true to those principles we were talking about, we are about to work through a process with our cultural council, central government and Aboriginal leaders to work out what functions need to sit in that Aboriginal outcomes division that will principally support and hold us to account, like the rest of the organisation and the partners that we work with. The Closing the Gap accountability framework that has been rolled out now will provide a really good context for the functions and the capabilities that sit in that new division. We should have that new division established by early next year.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Well done.

**The CHAIR:** The member for Perth has yielded his time. Member for Carine, do you have any questions?

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** Thank you very much, member for Perth. I refer to page 518, spending changes, and the Tranby Day Centre. Back in October 2019, the Tranby Day Centre received \$500 000. A couple of months later, after it was worked out that the facility was not capable of delivering that services that it was trying to deliver, it got another \$1.7 million to upgrade its facilities. Those renovations started in May 2020 and have, I think, been completed or were to be completed later this year. I note that the services were provided from 7.00 am to 7.00 pm, seven days a week, and that on 20 July 2020 the services were reduced quite considerably from 7.00 am to 2.30 pm during the week, from 7.00 am to 12 noon on Saturday, and from 12 noon to 5.00 pm on Sunday. A range of services were delivered from the Tranby centre from 7.00 am to 7.00 pm, and as a result, other service providers, especially those providing meals, pulled out of their service provision—Street Friends WA is one such organisation that comes to mind. Now that the service provision has been reduced, can the minister tell me who is looking after all those people? I was there on Sunday and a massive number of people were lining up in that area, in this case waiting for it to open at 12 o'clock. I was talking to one of the service providers who said that people were asking them where they could get dinner from. Their response was "We don't know." Can the minister tell me who is going to help all those homeless people who live around the Tranby Day Centre?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** The member for Perth looks as though he wants to answer the question.

**Mr J.N. CAREY:** I would be able to answer. The member is not informed.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** I am very well informed.

**Mr J.N. CAREY:** The member is not informed.

**The CHAIR:** Members, please! I will ask the minister to reply.

[12.50 pm]

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I will answer the question about Tranby. However, before we finish, I have undertaken to talk about the criteria for hardship provisions related to hotel quarantine costs. The criteria are found on the wa.gov.au website. There is a question and answer area—I hope I have got that right—called "Paying for Hotel Quarantine in WA Frequently Asked Questions". It was updated on 12 October 2020 and goes through who needs to pay, how

much it will cost, when it is payable, how to pay, and the payment plans available. It also goes through whether a person can have the quarantine fee waived; and, if so, who is eligible and how this can be done. The criteria for an individual state —

- Eligibility is assessed against criteria including, but not limited to: An individual is unable to meet current financial obligations (e.g. home loan, immediate living expenses)
- Unemployment or on Jobkeeper/Jobseeker or another relevant Centrelink service or an Australian studying overseas
- Loss of a business entity ...

Most of the criteria that we referred to should be there.

With regard to Tranby—again, I certainly make no apology, and I do not think the Member for Perth would either—although we have put in additional investments to deal with crisis and emergency response to homelessness in Perth and the surrounding areas, it is a very difficult area. As I have said many times, each year over \$90 million has been put into this area in Western Australia by governments, both state and federal. The additional funding of \$500 000 for 2020–21 was new money. It was not taken from other services. That is the first thing I want to say. It was an ambitious plan by UnitingCare West to open from 7.00 am to 7.00 pm, seven days a week. I think that it has realised that it has bitten off more than it could chew in that regard. It then proposed to adjust the opening hours so that it could better respond. Those new hours include the provision of meals, a drop-in centre, and case management services or the delivery of actual services.

It is worth saying that the coordination across services to make sure that one service is providing assistance, whether it is meals, beds, a drop-in centre or the like, is not causing a withdrawal of services or demand in other areas that then makes those other areas not sustainable; or, if services are withdrawn in one area, that it causes a peak in demand in another area. That has been one of the challenges. We are very mindful of the coordination across all the different service providers in the homelessness area, which is partly what No Wrong Door is about. That service ensures that whenever people come in, we pick up from where the previous service left off and that there is some information sharing between services, both not-for-profits, community services and government, and that we are providing the right sort of supports. There is also a role for local government in all of this. In my example of the “20 Lives, 20 Home” program in Fremantle, the City of Fremantle put in money for the tracking of how we were going with that effort to ask: “Did this work? Was this effort worthwhile?” Similarly, that is what we are hoping to put in place in all our efforts.

It is difficult; there is demand. I am pretty sure there was demand when the member was in government too. I do not remember homelessness being solved or there being no street-present people when the member was in government. It is an issue across the western world. In any capital city or regional centre there are street-present people. I have been very heartened to see local governments address this issue, whether it be the City of Bunbury or the City of Swan, or the City of Fremantle in my jurisdiction, and I think it will be the case with the City of Perth, too, under new leadership. Local governments are saying, “We understand that we have to be part of this conversation. What is going to be an effective solution?” We want effective long-term outcomes for those clients, but that is not an easy get. We also have to make sure that our emergency or crisis response is worthwhile. The member for Perth advocated for extra resources and, as a result, he got significant new resources put into the CBD and broader area. We continue to make sure that that is providing the best outcome where we can, but I do not pretend that that is easy. I do not pretend that working with some of those clients is easy. As I have said before, if anyone has the solution, I am all ears. Sometimes what seems like a quick solution is actually very short-term, and that is what is challenging.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** The Perth tent city has been set up within 50 metres of the Tranby Day Centre. I do not know if the minister has been to the Perth tent city yet, but I was there on Sunday. One of the consequences of the Tranby centre not being open for extra hours is that the tent city does not have toilet facilities. About 50 people live there; one group is south of the bike path and another group is north of the bike path. There was a toilet onsite but it was removed—I am not sure whether by the council or the department. There is also nowhere for them to put their rubbish. They are in desperate need of a rubbish bin or some sort of a facility to collect rubbish, and they are also in desperate need of toilet facilities. Because the Tranby Day Centre is shut, they now do not have access to those facilities. There is a pregnant woman there, as well as people who are extremely sick. I just wonder how they are going to cope in that tent city that they have set up next to the Tranby centre when the facilities and services have been taken away. I am not sure who did that, but I thought that was very inhumane.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Member, as I have demonstrated a number of times, we have put additional money into dealing with homelessness and looking at evidence-based long-term solutions. I understand that there is an emergency and a dire need to get people off the street now, but I actually am concerned about any sort of encouragement of people going to Lord Street, or any other congregation of people. I think that should be discouraged. It is not safe for either the people who are there, or the public. In fact, I have asked the department to work with other government departments and agencies to make sure that people are aware of the sorts of facilities that the member for Perth spoke about early on in these proceedings; that is, the emergency accommodation facilities provided by UnitingCare West using the

over \$1 million that was given to it by Lotterywest. Beds are available. I would ask providers or anyone who goes there to encourage people not to stay in those public places, which, as I said, are not safe for a very vulnerable cohort. They need to avail themselves of the emergency accommodation that we have provided and the beds, services and supports that we have made available. The Public Transport Authority, Main Roads Western Australia, the City of Perth, the Mental Health Commission, WA Police and community services, together with the Department of Communities, are all working with those individuals who are camping at Lord Street to understand their needs, move them to safe and stable accommodation, and get them the proper supports. That will include women like that woman who is pregnant. She will have been offered supports. We will continue to work with her or anyone else who is there to give them a bed and the supports that they need. That is our obligation and that is what we are working very hard to do. As I said, Lotterywest has made beds available now

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** They were asking for beds when I was there.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Beds are available now through UnitingCare West.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** I will tell them that.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Lotterywest has made additional funds available, and we have crisis beds. We are continually working with the service providers to make sure that those services will suit those clients' needs.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much, members.

**The appropriation was recommended.**

*Meeting suspended from 1.00 to 2.00 pm*

**Division 15: Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation — Services 1 and 3, Veterans Issues; Asian Engagement, \$103 766 000 —**

Ms J.M. Freeman, Chair.

Mr P.C. Tinley, Minister for Veterans Issues; Asian Engagement.

Mr R. Sellers, Acting Director General.

Ms S. Spencer, Deputy Director General, Strategy and International Engagement.

Ms L. Dawson, Deputy Director General, Industry, Science and Innovation.

Ms E. Fells, Executive Director, Invest and Trade Western Australia.

Mr M. Moran, Executive Director, Defence West.

Mr P. Carden, Chief Finance Officer.

Mr R. Sansalone, Chief Financial Officer.

Mr T. Fraser, Chief of Staff, Minister for Veterans Issues; Asian Engagement.

Mr B. McShanag, Principal Policy Adviser.

Mr J. Hilton, Senior Policy Adviser.

Mrs K. Giddens, Senior Policy Adviser.

[Witnesses introduced.]

**The CHAIR:** This estimates committee will be reported by Hansard. The daily proof *Hansard* will be available tomorrow. The Chair will ensure that as many questions as possible are asked and that both questions and answers are short and to the point. If an adviser needs to answer from the lectern, will they please state their name prior to their answer. 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 only be examined in relation to their portfolio responsibilities.

The minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee, and I ask the minister to clearly indicate what supplementary information will be provided. I will then allocate a reference number. Supplementary information should be provided to the principal clerk by Friday, 30 October 2020. I caution members that if a minister asks that a matter be put on notice, it is up to the member to lodge that through the online questions system.

I give the call to the member for Churchlands.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** Thank you, Chair. I refer the minister to the last line of the spending changes table on page 204 of budget paper No 1, volume 1.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** The transfer of veterans?

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** Correct. That is the line item “Transfer of the Veterans Issues Portfolio from the Department of Communities”. What was the reason for transferring the portfolio of veterans issues to the Department of Communities?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Being the second minister in the history of the state to hold that portfolio, I formed the view that there were two sides to veterans’ issues. One was the social support side, if you like, particularly around mental health. There were also, where relevant, some housing issues that seemed to be a persistent theme from time to time with veterans. I wanted to move it to the position where it talked about the productivity of a veteran to not only the public sector, but also the work we are doing around defence industries. Therefore, the natural thing for me to do was to move it. One of the key things under the veterans and families’ strategy was to make sure that we create an attraction–retention model that talks about the productivity of a veteran and the commonwealth’s invested effort into those skills and characteristics that are developed in a veteran to make them available to industry. The largest separation rate of the Navy, for example, is here in Western Australia. We do not get to retain as many of those good folk as we would like. Having a vibrant defence industry will be part of that, but also assisting other businesses in Western Australia, particularly those up and down the Terrace, to see the value of employing a veteran. We are very much moving away from that unfortunate characterisation of the wounded digger narrative: if a person has worn the uniform, they must be broken. That is just not true. We are making sure that we are moving into a positive territory in which they are actually contributing.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** How will that money be spent?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** The money that is listed there is, in large part, taken up by the provision of an FTE. That will then morph in future years into general sector spending. The money that is being spent in addition to that FTE will establish the position inside Defence West and also ensure that it is actually activating the programs from the strategy. I can get one of the advisers to tell the member about that in more about detail.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** It sounds as though it is a veterans portfolio issue that is being moved across to Defence West.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Yes.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** Will Defence West become the pseudo go-to for state-based veterans’ issues?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Yes.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** What will the minister’s role be?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** It will be just as it is for housing. I am the Minister for Housing; I have a department that provides the departmental support for it. The Minister for Asian Engagement similarly has a department that does that. In this case, JTSI will be providing support for the veterans policy issues of the state government.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** On the veterans portfolio and looking at ways to retrain and provide employment opportunities for veterans, I am interested to know if any funding has been allocated in this budget towards training opportunities or workplace participation grants or whatever it might be, to help re-engage veterans who find themselves unemployed or who want to retrain in order to seek employment?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Yes, a significant part of the strategy has been identified as providing that sort of support, obviously bridging the gap between the skills learnt in defence and making them translate into work skills. The human resources people, particularly those in the resource houses, have discovered that the big employers do not know how to handle a CV from a veteran. Quite often the skills and experience do not correlate with the job description that the veteran is applying for. The HR people have to sort out a pile of these applications and, invariably, the veteran’s application does not get onto the have-another-look file. How to give the veteran an opportunity can be split into two parts. One involves translating their existing skills into a relevant skill set and, in particular, a relevant career. One of the things that we also know about veterans is that the job that they go to on separation from defence is not necessarily the career that they suddenly decide they want to go into. This is anecdotal, but a veteran who has been in the defence force for longer than 10 or 11 years may suddenly realise that the job they took up, such as mine safety or something like that, which is a natural transition, is not exactly where they wanted to go; they wanted to work in administration or in the public sector. There are a bunch of different opportunities that allow that to happen.

We have started a program called the Defence Industry Veterans Employment Scheme, which is designed to get veterans into the workforce. It allocates \$400 000 over four years to assist veterans to achieve the qualifications they require to fully contribute to and benefit the Western Australian economy. In essence, it is a gateway for recently discharged veterans, along with other groups, to access a \$18.5 million program to grow the capacity of the Western Australian workforce to participate in the growing defence industry sector. It is very much defence industry focused. We also will be dovetailing future programs into existing state and federal government initiatives around the vocational education and training system, for example, because that is one of the fastest ways to readapt somebody’s skill set.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** Is that gateway yet to be established? I am just thinking of the various opportunities provided through the Aboriginal career centres and other career centres that people can go to to look at opportunities for career change. Is it likely that those career centres will be expanded to also cater to veterans, or is it too early to anticipate how that will look?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** As a deliberate pathway at the moment, it has not yet been contemplated, but I should add that any eligible person can go to those centres as well. It still sits there as an available reference for a veteran, for example, and to guide a veteran as well. We do not necessarily need a deliberate program for certain things. Sometimes it is just about knowing what is out there and guiding a veteran to it, which can sometimes be very complex and confusing for somebody who has just separated from defence.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** I have one further question. With respect to the interface between the FTE in the state government and defence, when individuals leave defence there is a separation of sorts. I know that the various sections of defence have their own repatriation programs. Is there any engagement in the minister's department with those different defence organisations?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Yes, absolutely there is. The defence welfare organisations fund the support inside defence. There is also the transition authority or the established arrangements inside defence that allow a veteran to transition out. There is a range of things that they do. I should add that a veteran must volunteer to go into that transition program. It is my sad experience that a number of them, depending on the age that we are talking about, just wander off. They do their discharge arrangements and just wander off and do not take full advantage of what is available. We are working as close as we can with the three major defence bases here to make sure that they are aware of what we have so that they can assist veterans to move into those programs.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** Finally, on this matter, when Anzac House opens I know that one of its key programs will be exactly this sort of program. Is it likely that the state government will look at having a partnership and funding arrangement with Anzac House, or will that function in Anzac House be funded from a federal source?

[2.10 pm]

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** We have not received any request from the RSL in relation to the programs. We have assisted the RSL in capital. I have just been advised that I forgot to mention the Anzac Day trust grant program, which falls under some long-established legislation that provides \$300 000 of grant funding to approved organisations. RSL has been a recipient of that, as have other organisations responsible for assisting in veterans' employment. The thing to understand is that a lot of this is the preserve of the commonwealth. We are talking about the twilight period between separating from commonwealth support through to being a normal human again and having another life. That area is a little grey. It becomes this constellation of ex-service organisations. The established organisations such as Legacy and RSL—those 100-year-old organisations—are providing the backbone to this. A lot of these ex-service organisations and unit associations, which are the alumni of those various units, all fit into a place. My ambition in this space is to ensure that we bring those groups together a bit more. That happens across other areas; for example, there are a lot of community housing providers. The best way to get value for money for the government is by bringing them together and having a peak-body approach. Bringing together the leadership and the coordination capacity of the government and the department to do that does not necessarily translate to needing a big raft of money, but grant money is available.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** What efforts is the minister taking to synchronise with the Department of Veterans' Affairs in this space of helping veterans with work placements?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** We were going well until COVID turned up and threw things into disarray. I had a good working relationship with the department and, of course, the federal minister. We now have a circle of veterans issues ministers around the commonwealth. Every state and territory has one now. We come together routinely in a type of ministerial council set up. That was getting some momentum to do exactly what the member just said about joining up some of this stuff. For example, with veterans' concessions we are making sure that we get harmonisation where it is appropriate across the country and that information is really well understood by the veteran community. Under the DVA changes around mental health, everybody exiting defence now gets a white card. If a person has served one day in a uniform, they are entitled to mental health support, no questions asked. It is a very good and generous system. The state mental health architecture intersects with the DVA-provider models and it has a pretty good and strong tie up. However, a bit more work needs to be done. One thing that I have always said, and that I think my predecessor, Joe Francis, always said, is that we will advocate not for individual veterans, but for classes of veterans, so where they are structurally excluded or there is an issue. For example, the nuclear veterans who went to the Montebello Islands before a certain date were given gold cards. All of a sudden, the veterans on any ship that visited the Montebellos after that, regardless of the clustering of cancers, were excluded from that sort of thing. We obviously went in to bat for them and we are still going.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** The funding allocation for this goes from \$131 million to \$133 million. I assume from what the minister said earlier that that is for the one FTE.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Yes.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** Is one FTE enough of a resource to achieve the synchronisation that the minister is talking about and the outcomes of this portfolio?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** One of the values of moving the veterans portfolio into JTSI and Defence West is that it bands up with a team of about 17 people, half of whom are veterans themselves. As usual with these sorts of things, they

flex on the extra effort depending on the task. Other bodies are also available, so we have used that. But the more direct answer to the member's question is no, we do not have enough. As the strategy starts to get momentum, we will need dedicated program managers to do that. That is an issue for consequential budgets to solve.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** Does the minister have a breakdown of how the other states are going in creating their own state veterans portfolio and how they are resourcing that portfolio? Can the minister give us a sense of how the Western Australian effort compares?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** I will give the member a characterisation. We are a bit off the pace compared with what is happening in places like Victoria and New South Wales. There is a rich area to work into. It is just a question of having the time in terms of the bandwidth, if you like, from a departmental point of view. More bodies is not necessarily the solution. It is just about making sure that we have structured policy breakouts. I will give the member an example. A veteran in New South Wales can go online with the equivalent of the public sector commission and punch in their skill sets. It will then provide an equivalency in the public sector for each of those skill sets and where the veteran sits. If a person wants to work in the public sector, they can get a sense of what jobs they would contend for at whatever level. That is just a web-based response and it is an outstanding piece of kit. I have said that I want that; it just takes time to get those sorts of programs going.

**Mr Y. MUBARAKAI:** I draw the minister's attention to page 210 of budget paper No 2, volume 1. The first line item is about the COVID-19 disruption. Can the minister explain how his Asian engagement portfolio has responded to WA's ongoing trade and investment relationships during these times?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Sure. Thanks for the question. International trade and investment obviously is the lifeblood of our state. Forty per cent of the nation's wealth has been sliced and diced in different ways. It contributes about \$180 billion to trade in Western Australia, of which 80 per cent is with Asia. When we were in opposition, we saw that having an Asian engagement minister and that cabinet-level representation was an essential component of a future cabinet to meet the aspirations of the business community and the Western Australian community and to take advantage of our time zone. We have discovered that WA trade equals WA jobs; it really does, straight up. In Western Australia, 500 000 jobs are trade related, and a significant number of that is directly with Asia because nine out of 10 of our top trading partners are in Asia. COVID-19 has clearly disrupted that, as it did across a lot of areas. International travel alone and the cargo movements that were happening underneath the seats were interrupted significantly. Obviously the lobster industry is a very good example. It lost 95 per cent of its business. That is the hazard of having a single market. The Asian engagement portfolio itself has had to rejig and I have asked the agency to have another look at it. We have pulled back on a few programs, but we are also looking at how we can activate and continue to keep the Asian engagement strategy moving, even during COVID times. Some of the things we have been working on that are really important is the delivery of market plans for all the key Asian markets. We want to do that by the end of this year. When the starter's gun goes off, if you like, and we can resume international travel in particular, and when businesses can get out there and do the work that they do, we do not want to be caught flatfooted. We know that other states are deploying additional assets into regions, even through COVID, to make sure that they are present to what is happening in the markets. One of the things the agency has been working hard on is understanding the disruptions to internal markets. A lot of the distribution of our products are taking a straight trade approach. A lot of the distribution of our products in these markets is made up of small-to-medium enterprises that have been affected, so there is a disrupted internal supply chain inside various markets. Indonesia is a good example of that. Understanding the nature of the disruption and the fragmentation of those distribution systems is really important. Of course the other thing that we are really acutely aware of is the potential for changing consumer tastes. COVID-19 has created a set of circumstances in which people take their food safety, for example, very, very seriously. That has always been a feature of the Asian markets anyway, but never more so than now.

We think that some might be transitioning away from live and fresh food products into a frozen or some other manufactured or processed food product. That is just in the food space, but there are other areas too, so a lot is going on. From the supply side, we are making sure that the various industry sectors, the priority sectors in particular, are still active where they can be on their networks. A lot of virtual stuff is going on as well. We are also making sure that particularly the business organisations, the relevant business councils, are still connected to their networks. We can provide information to the agency to make sure that we are re-balancing the Asian engagement strategy.

[2.20 pm]

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** I refer the minister to page 221 and the line item "Payment to the Anzac Day Trust". The minister made reference earlier to the \$300 000 allocated each year up until this year.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Yes.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** Obviously the minister is aware of the issue around veterans' gravestones at Karrakatta Cemetery.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Yes.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** I am not sure whether that issue sits in this part of the budget, but maybe the minister could give us an update on what he is doing to address the concerns of Western Australians who are really worried

about the graves of those veterans who returned home from Gallipoli, for example, and then died of wounds, be it psychological wounds or whatever, in their 20s. They are entitled to an official war grave. Those war graves existed, but now the headstones have been removed and new graveyards are being put into that part of Karrakatta Cemetery. That is a real concern for some people. How is the minister addressing that issue?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Just to be clear, that is not in this part of the budget. There is no allocation and there is no direct line of responsibility for me on this particular issue. Obviously, it sits with Minister Templeman in his area of local government and heritage. He has a long history in dealing with that issue and with the health minister and the various acts that he has responsibility for such as those around crematoriums and those sorts of things. The issue, particularly at Karrakatta, is that if it had not undertaken a renewal program, that cemetery would have been closed. It would have closed in 2005, according to my advice. As a result, it has had to undertake a program. It always had a longstanding program on how it was going to reorientate. No grave has been exhumed. It has moved in between those various graves. There is a protocol for the headstones that it goes through whereby it tries to contact the family to understand their wishes. Beyond that, I would get into a level of detail that I am not confident I would be able to provide here.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** I think this is probably the concern here, because, as the minister knows, the Department of Veterans' Affairs is a commonwealth department that manages most veterans' affairs. When the Labor state government created a veterans' portfolio, it did so with a view, I understand, to represent veterans. Therefore, it is an agency for overseeing and interacting with other departments. In that sense, this issue is a real issue. Notwithstanding the land space concerns that the cemeteries board might have, the fact is that there are obviously graveyards where official war grave headstones have been removed. I have visited the site; I am sure the minister has too. Why is the veterans' minister not looking to allocate money in the budget to assist in either exhuming those graves and moving them into the official war cemetery in close proximity to Karrakatta, or refurbishing the graves that have not yet had the drama of other graves staggered around them?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Just to make sure the member understands the point here, there is a commonwealth war graves segment, and not everybody who has a headstone with a rising sun is eligible to go there.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** Correct.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** They are an elected option for families to go to a uniformed headstone that is very similar to the commonwealth war graves, and there is a uniformed one. Some families opt for it. People could be given the impression that it is an official war grave. I just want to make that distinction.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** I am actually referring to the ones that come into the category of official, because the current commonwealth war graves site, as I understand it, was only created, I think, after World War II; therefore, we are dealing with these official war graves that existed prior to that. They are the ones that are currently having the headstones removed that are drawing the concern. I absolutely understand the minister's point of veterans who choose to have a headstone, but they are not in an official war grave. I am talking about the official ones that are having the headstones removed.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** There is a protocol to go through. I should say, also in reference to the member's previous question, that I absolutely do not walk away from the responsibility, tangential as it may or may not be, of making representations to relevant ministers around the treatment of veterans' war graves. The key piece here is to ensure that there is a communication with the family. That needs to be robust and exhaustive, and, as the member knows may not be fruitful because of the way families move on. Again, it is not in my immediate lane; I have seen a briefing note on it. There is going to be a review into the Cemeteries Act next year; I think it has already been instituted. Inside that review these issues will be canvassed. My views will also be represented there, of course, as will any other organisation. As the member can imagine, there are executive service office elements out there that would want to have an input to this.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** The review of the Cemeteries Act will create as many submissions as the review of the Dog Act, I would suggest. Anyway, I digress. On page 205 of budget paper No 1, volume 2, at the fourth dot point there is a reference to Asian engagement. It says —

... the Department has continued to implement the Asian Engagement Strategy and has hosted a series of business forums on key Asian markets including China, Japan, Indonesia, Malaysia and Philippines. The Department also launched the Access Asia Business Grants Program ...

Could the minister please advise what is the value of the Access Asia business grants program, who has participated in that grants program to date and the value of the grants that have been accessed, please?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Sure.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** Could the minister also provide an update on the business forums, how they were conducted, and if they were conducted with groups that are here, as in the chambers of commerce that represent those people —

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** The relevant country —

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** Or whether there were Zoom meetings into the countries of origin.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** I am just taking some advice. To break it down to the elements that the member is speaking of is not entirely possible, but I might ask Simone to maybe make a comment around how we have expended the Access Asia grants.

**Ms S. Spencer:** We have run a couple of rounds of the grants. We ran a grant round late last year. A grant round was suspended earlier this year because we learnt from the first round—those still currently in it—that a lot of the grants were for them to be able to travel to Asia. We postponed the second round while we allowed some reconfiguration of the program. We have consolidated the second round into a third round, which we have just released, and that is very much focused on giving businesses in WA the virtual capability primarily to do that engagement, which we have found is really useful because we have run a couple of virtual trade events. I will give the member an example of one we ran recently with our sister city Zhejiang in China, where we sent the products to China. We had our office in China arrange for the beef to be cooked, the wine to be served, and the seafood to be prepared in a hotel in Zhejiang, then we had producers in Western Australia talking about the product as people in China were tasting. We find that there are varying levels of, I guess, tech savvy and resource here, so sometimes it is a mobile phone in a winery talking about how the wine was produced. We felt like it was better to target the grants this time round so that they can continue that engagement, they can develop the collateral, but to be able to have the tech savvy to be able to do it well.

[2.30 pm]

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** The Leader of the Opposition had a lot of questions in there.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** Yes.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Did we get anywhere close?

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** The only other side of it is the value of the Access Asia grants that have already been acquitted, and what has been allocated for this year with respect to the virtual grants. I could not find the line item in here—maybe it is my astigmatism.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Simone, you can give a breakdown there?

**Ms S. Spencer:** Generally, the grants were around the value of \$10 000 for the first round. When we awarded them, we learnt that we needed a bit more of a sliding scale, so the next round of grants will have a higher value from \$10 000 to \$20 000. I guess we are still going through the process of acquittal, because some of those that were in the first round asked for an extension because they were unable to undertake their original business case. We have acquitted, I would say, half of those grants, but we have given extensions to those who still want to be a part of the program but were unable to undertake their activities. With this next round we are hoping that we will be able to allocate more. Again, it depends on the value of the grant sought, but we have roughly around \$120 000 set aside.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** There is \$120 000 that is been set aside. What is the total value of the grants that have been allocated so far?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** As in expended?

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** Yes, expended.

**Ms S. Spencer:** I have to take that question on notice because, as I said, some of them have been suspended and not acquitted yet. I can give the member the value. Yes, I will have to take that question on notice.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** By way of supplementary information, is it possible to get the total value of the grants program, those that have been expended, those that have been expended and acquitted, and those that have been set aside, obviously because of the inability to travel or whatever it might be? I would appreciate that.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Is that easily done?

**Ms S. Spencer:** Yes.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Yes, I am happy to give that as supplementary.

**The CHAIR:** Minister, you have to outline what you understand that you are giving as a supplementary.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** We are going to give the Leader of the Opposition information on the Access Asia grants, and the Asian engagement business initiatives that have been expended to date. Help me out with the rest.

**Mr M. HUGHES:** The total value of the program.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** And the total value of the program. Thank you, member. Are you happy with that?

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** Yes, very.

[*Supplementary Information No B13.*]

**Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE:** My question relates to the Asian business councils. I refer to line item 1 on page 210. Can the minister please explain to us what support has been provided to the Asian business councils?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** The Asian business councils are quite an important part of the constellation of engagement, if you like, both here with industry, people-to-people connections and the markets. Because they are either through their own business connections or their own cultural connections, those business councils have a natural connection to the market in question. Making sure we engaged with them when we came to government and launched the Asian engagement strategy was fundamentally important because it is our fastest source of feedback. In fact, so much market knowledge comes from those business councils. About \$250 000 has been approved to support capacity building programs in the Asian business councils. As the member can appreciate, some of the large ones, such as the Australia China Business Council—ACBC—is well supported. The newer ones such as the Philippines and Vietnam are not as well endowed. We need to provide some support to ensure they have capacity. That was part of the 2017 election commitment, which was to provide a total of \$2 million of funding over the term of the government to support the Asian business councils.

As a result, seven Asian business councils have developed strategic plans. The Western Australia Vietnam Business Council was pivotal in the development of the state's memorandum of understanding with Ba Ria-Vung Tau in the south of Vietnam, which we signed on 16 September by virtual connection. Those are the sorts of things that we support. I recently made a keynote address to the China WA bilateral engagement business dialogue presented by the Australia China Business Council, and the leader of the opposition has been to similar ones herself and made contributions there. As part of the funding support, the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation also leased, as it was an election commitment, an office for Asian business councils, so that those smaller ones have a location in the CBD to go to and conduct their businesses from. That is been up and running since 1 January 2019. For the record and for those who are interested, that location is level 12, 197 St Georges Terrace, and it is well attended. We are learning how we can make it more relevant to those business councils, particularly the smaller ones, in the form of training and function spaces, and places to set up and do some of the work they need to do.

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** The minister just mentioned the newly made relationship with the province in Vietnam of Ba Ria-Vung Tau. I want to ask him about how we have had a half-developed relationship with the province of Gyeongsangbuk-do in South Korea, but it has never really been developed by our side, or the minister's side of the government. I am just wondering whether there has been any progress on that relationship?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Unfortunately, my short answer is no. We have been focusing on the emerging markets. The three major trading partners—China, Japan and South Korea—are well catered for. The ones I have asked the agency to focus on is the emerging markets, because a diversified economy needs diversified markets. Our relationship with Indonesia, Vietnam, Malaysia and the Philippines are a good example of that tier of economy that is coming on and will be quite significant, making sure we have a presence in that. I am not sure whether that rings any bells for the member? No? Sorry.

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** Given that our three largest trading partners are China, Japan and South Korea, I think, I just would suggest that it might be good politics to treat the Koreans with the same respect that we have treated the Japanese and Chinese in having a sister province relationship with Zhejiang in China, and I cannot recall the name of the one in Japan, but it is —

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Hyogo.

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** That is right, thanks. I just suggest that I think it might be a sensible thing to do.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Yes; I thank the member for his advice.

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** Any time.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** He is right.

**The appropriation was recommended.**

[2.40 pm]

**Division 16: Primary Industries and Regional Development — Services 6 and 7, Fisheries, \$157 255 000 —**

Ms J.M. Freeman, Chair.

Mr P.C. Tinley, Minister for Fisheries.

Mr R. Addis, Director General.

Ms H.G. Brayford, Deputy Director General, Sustainability and Biosecurity.

Mr T. Fraser, Chief of Staff, Minister for Fisheries.

[Witnesses introduced.]

**The CHAIR:** This estimates committee will be reported by Hansard. The daily proof *Hansard* will be available tomorrow. The Chair will ensure that as many questions as possible are asked and that both questions and answers are short and to the point. If an adviser needs to answer from the lectern, will they please state their name prior to their answer. 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 only be examined in relation to their portfolio responsibilities.

The minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee, and I ask the minister to clearly indicate what supplementary information will be provided. I will then allocate a reference number. Supplementary information should be provided to the principal clerk by Friday, 30 October 2020. I caution members that if a minister asks that a matter be put on notice, it is up to the member to lodge that through the online questions system.

Question, member for Vasse?

**Ms L. METTAM:** I refer to page 225 of budget paper No 2, under “Other COVID-19” and line item “Fishing Stimulus Package”. Will the minister provide a list of all the initiatives that are being funded from this program, including the location of each project?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Can the member say again that line that she is referring to?

**Ms L. METTAM:** I am referring to the “Fishing Stimulus Package—Artificial Reefs, Recreational Fishing Promotion and Restocking” on page 225.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** The allocation for the budget estimate is \$1.25 million. Am I in the right space there?

**Ms L. METTAM:** Yes.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** And there is \$8.75 million in the out years. We recognise the impacts that COVID-19 had on the recreational fishing sector, particularly when we went into the phase 1 and phase 2 restrictions of people’s movements. As we did with the commercial sector, we wanted to make sure we support the recreational sector coming through that, once we removed some of the restrictions to ensure they had some initiatives, so we developed a \$6 million support package for that sector. It coming to the member’s question, it included the new fish stocking programs; the development of new and expanded recreational fishing activities; and fishing competitions and targeted tourism campaigns to display the great fishing spots regional Western Australia. They were funded on a fifty–fifty basis with the Recreational Fishing Initiatives Fund, RFIF, and some new money from the government. We obviously worked with Recfishwest to ensure that we were hitting the mark that we needed to. There are three core breakdowns the member might be interested in: the recreational fishing promotion was about \$375 000 in 2020–21; fish restocking programs was \$375 000 per annum in the 2020–21 to 2022–23 out years; and three additional artificial reefs, or \$500 000 per annum between 2020–21 to 2022–23. One has already been committed to Albany, the member might remember. The other two are yet to be confirmed, but we are working with Recfishwest on determining appropriate locations throughout the Western Australian regions. They are the sorts of things that we have undertaken, and they are the sorts of programs that Recfishwest has been working with us to make sure the recreational sector is out there and doing its thing.

**Ms L. METTAM:** The only location at this point in time for the selection of these initiatives is Albany?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** For the reefs?

**Ms L. METTAM:** For the program—the fishing stimulus package. I was just asking what are the locations for each of the projects that are involved in this project?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** They are not all yet confirmed obviously through all those years, because we are obviously working on a seasonal basis with Recfishwest about areas. There is stuff in Albany, for example, on the great salmon fishing competition they do down there. None of that changes. I might just pass to the deputy director general to give the member a little more info.

**Ms H.G. Brayford:** Thank you, minister. In terms of the artificial reefs, the current work is looking at a shallow water reef off Albany, as the minister said, and then two additional regional reefs. They are yet to be determined. That will be undertaken in consultation with Recfishwest and also the local community. In terms of the restocking, the focus on that is looking at stocking species such as the yellowtail kingfish to support the north metropolitan reef that is in place. The snapper guardian is an extension of the snapper guardians project, which was run previously, and also barramundi into Lake Kununurra. They are probably the three key areas at this stage that Recfishwest is working with us on.

**Ms L. METTAM:** In relation to the snapper guardian program, I imagine that is the snapper guardians program at Cockburn Sound?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Yes.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Further to that particular program, I note the comments made by Recfishwest in light of the outer harbour announcement. What assurance can the minister give that that particular project will not be catastrophic for the population or the fish stocks in Cockburn Sound? Is the minister satisfied that the investment in recreational fishing and the investment that the department has undertaken will be able to mitigate against the risks associated with the proposed development, but also be able to address what are the outstanding degradation issues in Cockburn Sound?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** The member is speaking about two sort of separate things, if you like. The first is how we are assisting the recreational fishing sector to get back to doing what it does and supporting a significant contributor economically and certainly socially to the community. I will park that. The Westport Taskforce was established to identify the most viable options from which it would take forward and do the additional studies. Obviously, the environmental impacts of those options that were taken forward is part of it. The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development generally, but specifically the fisheries science people, are there to help design the science and make a meaningful contribution to the understanding of the impacts of any of those chosen options on various fish stocks. Clearly, the pink snapper is material to that. We have put \$29 million towards the researching arrangements all in. We have committed \$21.4 million over the four years to develop a comprehensive understanding of the potential environmental impacts of the preferred option for a port development in Cockburn Sound. This includes \$4.31 million for research specifically on the potential impacts on the key recreational and commercial fish species. DPIRD, my agency, will be managing that research assisting in its design, of course, and be conducting some of it itself. It will retain oversight of all Fisheries projects and be responsible for delivery of project outcomes in liaison with stakeholders and collaborators. We are at the front edge of the expenditure of that sort of commitment to ensure that we completely understand a whole range of things, not just at the biomass of pink snapper, for example—there is the crabs, the seagrasses, and intersecting issues of flows—dealing with the issue, hopefully once and for all, around the perceived impacts of the causeway. There is a role for the commonwealth here as well, given it is a commonwealth structure, and its inflows and outflows for the sound.

**Ms L. METTAM:** In light of that and the investigation into Cockburn Sound, does the minister feel confident that the state will be able to mitigate against any further degradation of that area as a region of high fishing value?

[2.50 pm]

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** The state recognises the compatibility of uses and potential conflict of uses for Cockburn Sound. I remind members, though, not only are we looking at the impacts of a chosen option for a port, we are also talking about redressing 80 years of industrial use. The heavy industrial area of the place called Western Australia continues to be in the Cockburn Sound. We need to make sure we understand all of that. What I am confident and very happy to commit to is the fact that we have some of the best people looking at this across government and outside government, from the best science. I am confident we have enough allocation of resources to ensure that we are answering the questions.

One of the biggest challenges here is making sure we get the question right, rather than jump to a conclusion. There is no better than some good hard research, and applied research, because there has been a lot done in that sound anyway, that will be reviewed and poured into it as well.

**Mr M. HUGHES:** Just on the topic of recreational fishing, and in light of the increased internal tourism as a result of COVID, is there an increase of that activity resulting in pressure on the recreational fishing industry as such, in terms of the stock?

**The CHAIR:** I am not sure whether this is a further question, member or Kalamunda, but I will allow it. It was about the sound.

**Mr M. HUGHES:** I want to talk about recreational fishing.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Sorry, can the member just expand on that question?

**Mr M. HUGHES:** I am interested to know whether there is an increase in pressure on recreational fishing as a result of the increase in internal tourism, and if there is, what measure is the government taking to address that impact?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** The answer to that is that we are not yet sure. Where it presents itself is when we do the under the harbour strategy and we do the surveys of the impacted fish, with people recording and reporting bag limits and catches and so on, that will soon tell us. We do know that people did not go fishing during those first period. That had an obvious impact, and then when they could go fishing, we do not know whether they went in greater numbers or whether there was a catch up. We do not think so, but we are in a bit of a lag getting the information through and consolidating it.

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** Going back to that point on page 225, under “Other COVID-19” and line item “Fishing Stimulus Package” and on the question of artificial reefs, I am wondering whether the department is exploring the role that artificial reefs could play in helping with the issue of coastal erosion and looking at joint funding more artificial reefs by working with councils and other parts of the state government?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** I might let the DDG have a crack at that one.

**Ms H.G. Brayford:** I am not aware of any specific research in terms of coastal development and artificial reefs. Most of our research is looking at the actual impact of the artificial reef in terms of the movement of fish and the attraction of fish onto that site. I am not aware of any specific thing in relation to the coastal development aspect.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** I might just make a general comment that places like Busselton and all Geographe have all those breakwaters and so on. It is just the way the geometry works. The further we move away from the coast, the bigger

a structure has to be to influence the protection aspects it would have on the coast. Artificial reefs, by their nature, are not big structures necessarily and they have to go further out from shore to be present in the depths they need to be to be useful for fish life, as the DDG said. I just wanted to make that observation. It would be a low prospective sort of research target to say that artificial reefs of themselves could contribute, unless they are a near-shore sort of arrangement, like an abalone habitat or something like that; that would be the only one. I am speculating now, which is very dangerous in estimates.

**Mr M. HUGHES:** I refer to page 237, aquaculture funding by the WA recovery plan. Can the minister explain why the McGowan government has funded \$3.49 million of aquaculture initiatives under the WA recovery plan?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** One of the things we know that we need to do, as I said when talking about the Asian engagement portfolio, is be ready. We cannot be idle and waste our time when we are in this sort of hiatus that this global pandemic has basically created. We need to ensure that as we come out of this pandemic we have not wasted the time to ensure that the long turnover issues have got the momentum they need and be available to the market that they are relevant to in a timely way. The aquaculture initiative itself was under the \$5.5 billion plan WA recovery plan, the, with \$2.75 million of additional funding to fast track the construction and increase the Geraldton finfish nursery; \$700 000 for additional infrastructure for the Albany shellfish hatchery; half a million to provide additional infrastructure and resources to the department's Hillarys research facility, where all the science is done to support studies into developing tropical black-lip rock oyster and other shellfish species; \$125 000 for the construction of five floating upweller systems, which support oyster spat grow out inside the water, thereby increasing capacity throughout the Albany shellfish nursery. FLUPSYs have a particular technique, because they have to rotate the oyster cages all the time and work with them. It allows them to mechanise that arrangement and automate it to a certain degree.

We have focused on those initiatives and are funded because they represent the shovel-ready stuff, the near-target sort of things that we can do during COVID. They also represent a modest direct arrangement and jobs during the construction phase, which is sort of a 12-month period, particularly with that finfish nursery. The long-term growth in WA aquaculture, though, is something that I made a singular focus of my short time in the Fisheries portfolio. It represents, at a mature state, potentially 6 000 direct jobs, then the second and third order effect of that. We have 12 500 kilometres of coastline in Western Australia, some of the most prospective, pristine environments to do the sort of aquaculture that we know the world is going to want post-COVID. Again, I go back to my point about food provenance and security. Western Australia is in a very unique position geographically by our time zone positioning into Asia and those growing markets, but also our isolation, if you like, that creates the sort of environmental arrangements that produce some of the best in the world.

My example is the Albany shellfish and Albany oyster arrangements. It will be nearly 1 000 hectares. At 1 000 hectares, it will be the largest shellfish production zone in Australia. Coffin Bay, much known for its brand, is only 125 hectares. It will give members a sense of the scale that is going on in Albany and the sort of direct jobs, and then the consequential second and third order impacts of that.

**Mr Y. MUBARAKAI:** Just an example, when the minister was talking about the Albany shellfish hatchery and the funding allocated for it, he talked about how it is going to be one of the largest hatcheries in Australia. In terms of job prospects, what is the minister's estimated future in regards to this investment being made in the Albany shellfish hatchery?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** The Albany shellfish hatchery is really important because it provides the common-user infrastructure that was beyond the scope of any one commercial proponent to undertake themselves. There is too much risk in it. It is actually fairly modest—I do not have the exact numbers—just over \$2 million to establish the hatchery in relative terms, but we are reliably informed that there are about 2 000 jobs just from that alone for what it will do to allow not just spat into the Albany area but also right up the coast. They have been working on akoya and other species that will be used in other tropical zones right up the coast. It is a fundamental piece of aquaculture infrastructure no different than a port or any other piece.

**Ms L. METTAM:** I refer to page 225, "Spending Changes", line item "Extension of Shark-Management-Alert-in-Real-Time Drumline Trial". Can the minister confirm the membership of the ministerial reference group on drum lines that was created in response to this trial?

[3.00 pm]

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Yes. The ministerial reference group encompasses representations from organisations more than individuals. It will not be any surprise to many here that they are Surf Life Saving WA, Conservation Council of Western Australia, Sea Shepherd, Surfing WA, the Shire of Augusta–Margaret River, the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development and the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions. The DBCA sits there as an observer, just to keep them all informed.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Is the minister aware of any complaints from the community in relation to the members of this committee; and, if so, what is the nature of these complaints and is the Department of Fisheries or any agency of government investigating a matter?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** I am aware of some poor behaviour by one of the members, or several of the members, actually, around the whole shark mitigation team and this. There was a particular piece on social media by an individual. That happened 12 months ago and seems to have resurfaced at the moment for some reason. That matter was dealt with by the previous minister and the department on the recommendation of the department. I do not consider the matter to be relevant any more today.

**Ms L. METTAM:** When the minister says that the matter was dealt with by the previous minister, can he confirm that the individual involved in the particular incident, which I understand was of great offence to members of the Esperance community, has been stood down from that committee? Is that individual still on that committee, which is a ministerial reference group on drum lines?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Yes, that member is still on the committee. As I say, it was dealt with, I felt appropriately, at the time. There were a lot of contributing issues to that particular comment. To look at it in isolation would be an injustice to the individual. He was counselled and he issued a full apology to the individuals involved. We have seen no repeat of that behaviour, so I am satisfied that they are appropriately represented and we have dealt with the matter.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Can I confirm that the investigation in relation to that matter is now closed and that individual is currently on the ministerial reference group?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Yes, the former minister concluded that. I am satisfied with it.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Okay. I have a further question.

**The CHAIR:** A further question to this?

**Ms L. METTAM:** A further question to the extension of the shark management alert and real-time drum line trial.

**The CHAIR:** Yes.

**Ms L. METTAM:** What changes have been made in the second year of that trial in comparison with the first year; has the New South Wales government been engaged on this project; and to what extent has any advice been provided?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** I will answer the second part of the question first. No, the New South Wales government has not been involved.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Okay.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Our scientists are aware of the nature and structure of their drum-line arrangements. In terms of what the member is asking about the variation between the first 12 months and the second 12 months, is she asking about the conduct of the trial?

**Ms L. METTAM:** I am asking about the bait and the configuration of the hooks. Is there any difference between the way that the two trials have been conducted?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** No. There has been some tweaking. We extended it on the advice of the Chief Scientist, Mr Peter Klinken, to ensure that we get a more elongated set of data. I might just let the DDG make a few more comments on it, if you like.

**Ms H.G. Brayford:** Thank you. My understanding is that the trial is being continued, in essence, as it was previously. The only thing that might change, depending on availability, is the choice of bait. My understanding is that there can be some issues around availability so there is often a shift between salmon and mullet. I understand the trial is largely proceeding as it was.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Are there additional target species as well? Is it true that tiger sharks are now included?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Yes, that is right. The only real variation was that the number of tiger sharks we were capturing made a compelling argument to extend the tagging to them to understand their behaviours. Although they are not as active as whites in terms of attacking humans, they are known to be involved in attacks on humans, so we thought it was a good opportunity to understand shark behaviour, particularly in that species.

**The CHAIR:** Not on this?

**Ms L. METTAM:** Well, on shark mitigation.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, that is fine. You go.

**Ms L. METTAM:** I am referring to the shark mitigation strategies and initiatives. For 2020–21, there is \$100 000, and then \$4 million in the following year. Can I ask what these funds are for?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** There is a whole list of them. As the member knows, shark mitigation has been a significant effort undertaken by this government, some nearly \$37 million—\$36 million as it is listed there. More has been spent by this government on shark mitigation than by any other previous government in the history of this state. That is not a partisan comment; it is just a reality of what we see that needs to be made clear. We have been able

to put these sorts of initiatives into a range of areas. We are always listening. As the member is aware, in her own community, there was the recent deployment of the VR 4 receivers into Bunker Bay following an attack there. On that point, we are now up to 34 deployed receivers, and we have also deployed, in selected areas, those light and sound towers or warning towers on the beach. That is not the only thing. The shark response unit itself has been established in the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development. There have been enclosures at Falcon Beach and I think we have also announced renovation of the Albany shark enclosure or the beach enclosures. The personal shark deterrents—the \$200 subsidy—has been extended. All the arrangements that go to put shark hazard mitigation initiatives into place generally have also a key feature. The beach emergency number signs have been hugely successful in their deployment. I think we are now up to about 1 000 across the state.

**Ms H.G. Brayford:** It is over 1 000.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Community awareness campaigns are really important, as is the Shark Smart website and the mobile app, SharkSmart WA. The smart drum lines trial, of course, makes a large chunk of that. Although aerial surveillance has been an enduring feature of Western Australian beaches, we are very much refocusing some of the service delivery around shark mitigation. We are also assisting Surfing WA, which is a smaller group, in some of their education campaigns.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Does the Department of Fisheries own a VR 100? Does the department have VR 100 receivers; and, if so, was a VR 100 receiver deployed to determine whether there were any tagged sharks following the recent attack at Esperance?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Yes, we do; and, no, we did not.

**Ms L. METTAM:** No, you did not?

**The CHAIR:** Further question on this, member for Vasse.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Can you please explain the government's commitment to the imminent threat policy? Is that a policy that has been abandoned by this government?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** No, not at all. There has been no change to the imminent threat policy, as drafted on departmental advice, and, I might add, by the other various stakeholders. For the benefit of the members, I might get the DDG to slide past those key features.

**Ms H.G. Brayford:** Thank you. The serious threat guidelines still provide for the setting of catch gear if the situation justifies that, but, in essence, it focuses on a range of public safety measures that can be considered—for example, the closure of beaches; land patrols; on-water patrols; the public notification system through the shark monitoring network and the associated Twitter feed; media and Shark Smart announcements; and aerial surveillance, which can also include drones. A range of public safety measures are used to mitigate against that risk.

[3.10 pm]

**Ms L. METTAM:** Does that actually include removing the shark that has been involved in the attack from the area?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** If the setting of gear is determined and only on the basis of the guidelines that the DDG has listed, if there is an ongoing and enduring persistent threat to the community, it absolutely will be removed. I have no problem whatsoever in getting the best possible advice about how we create a safe area from which the rescue and/or recovery operations can be undertaken. That is my primary concern—those people in the ocean, and making sure they are safe. There is absolutely nothing in the guidelines that prevents me from doing it.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Can I confirm that in response to the recent tragedy in Esperance, that that was the response of the Department of Fisheries—that is, to pursue and to eliminate an imminent threat in that area?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** The first thing that happened, as the member is probably aware through even just the public reporting, is that there were assets on the water within minutes, effectively—surf lifesaving, water police, and fisheries got there as well. That is the first response, which allows us to see whether the area is safe. From that, the DDG will take advice from people in the field and the incident commander down there, about what would happen next in relation to the setting of any gear, in accordance with the guidelines.

**Ms L. METTAM:** I am surprised that the VR 100 receiver was not deployed on that occasion. That would pick up whether there was a tagged shark in the area.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** I am not quite following the member's logic there. We have a VR 4 in the water in the search area that it is still active; it does not get turned off. Why does the member think that we would need another deployed asset? The VR 100 is not there necessarily to augment an existing receiver.

**Ms L. METTAM:** I am trying to understand to what extent did the fisheries officers pursue or try to pursue whether there was a tagged shark in the area. My understanding is that with the VR 100 receiver there would have been greater scope to have been able to identify whether that imminent threat was still there. I appreciate that not all sharks are obviously tagged.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** I might remind the member, though, that the attack on Andrew Sharpe that occurred was not from a tagged shark. It happened within 150 metres of the VR 4, which has a 450-metre radius.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Right.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** I am going to stop my answering there, because we are getting into matters of operational technical detail that I am not across. Again, the logic of why we would put another receiver in the water when we already have one there would not necessarily be a step that the agency would take in this particular case.

**Ms L. METTAM:** It would be in the vessel, but we will move on.

**The CHAIR:** Can I make an apology, Ms Brayford? The document that was given to us had the wrong spelling.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Was it a parliamentary document, Chair?

**The CHAIR:** Whatever!

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** I refer to the sixth line item “Agriculture and Fisheries Biosecurity and Integrity” under “Service Summary” on page 228. There is a combined figure of \$83.884 million.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Yes.

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** With the line item “Agricultural and Fisheries Natural Resource Management”, it is a combined figure of \$73.371 million. Is it possible to have a split of those that relate to agriculture and those which relate to fisheries?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** I might defer to the DG firstly to get an overall assessment from him whether that is even possible.

**Mr R. Addis:** Thank you, minister. I think that inherent in those two services and the costs that are allocated towards them, we have essentially moved towards an integrated model across the department. Although there are still some dedicated fisheries-related activities and some dedicated agriculture-related activities, there are increasingly parts of both those services that can cover both bases. We are starting to integrate across the organisation. We see significant involvement from our staff who previously might have been seen as part of the regional development domain working on aquaculture industry development, which otherwise would be sitting in the fisheries domain. Likewise, we have our staff moving across compliance functions, across resource management functions, both at an operational level and at the management and science levels. It is not a simple matter to come up with a clear black and white answer to the question. We try to maximise the level of integration because we think that gives the best bang for our buck.

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** Minister, within the department, is that kept track of through internal accounting? Does the department have some kind of an idea of how much of its budget is going into biosecurity in fisheries and how much in agriculture, and, likewise, natural resource management in fisheries and agriculture? Is the government just now treating them as one indivisible industry?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** To answer the member’s last bit first, no. There are discrete functions inside the agency that attend to the unique nature of each of those things that the member has just mentioned. The whole reason to have a MOG-ed agency is to ensure we get efficiencies across either service delivery or the cost curve. That is certainly something the agency has been working on. Do you want to add any more on that, Mr Addis?

**Mr R. Addis:** I think that is exactly right. There are definite resources that are exclusively fisheries-related and exclusively ag-related, but, increasingly, there are resources that are genuinely across the two functions or across the whole department. It gets less and less easy to differentiate in a black-and-white sense. I think the main way we keep track of effort around the different portfolios is that we take a risk-based approach to where we put our service effort and keep track of how well we are going in terms of issues such as resource management and stakeholder feedback. Some of the KPIs, particularly in the fisheries domain, are extremely high and at a sustained level, which gives us confidence that we have got our house well and truly in order. The “State of the Fisheries” report gives us very strong evidence to support that view. I think the new model gives us some flexibility and the benefit of crossing skills and strengths across the lines that otherwise we would not have had.

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** Thinking of where the department is applying and spending fishermen’s or growers’—the producers in agriculture—compulsorily acquired levies, does the minister think that the funding bodies might be a little bit concerned if it does not have a budgeting or an accounting mechanism to account for where all their levies have gone because some fees are in this grey area between the two industries and it cannot be exactly accounted for how much of compulsorily acquired levies are being applied to fisheries or to agriculture?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** I think I understand where the member is coming from in that particular context. He is talking about the revenue side of the agency. The revenue comes from multiple sources, not least of which the consolidated accounts being the largest one. The levies or licence fees I think the member is talking about are the statutory payments people have to make. I can see the point where it might be said that there is not necessarily a dark black line between the fee paid and the service given. That is why we have KPIs across the agency. The fee paid and the service given is very much how we look at that. As the DG said, having the flexibility to apply those resources to achieve outcomes across the agency would be a minor component of it. Do you want to add anything to that, Mr Addis?

[3.20 pm]

**Mr R. Addis:** Yes, thanks, minister. Just to paint the picture, I suppose, on the agriculture side there is a range of producer levies that are raised that tend not to be subject to the sort of concern I think the member is getting at. Those are probably the Agricultural Produce Commission levies. There is a very clear way of managing the expenditure around those. For the recognised biosecurity group levies that are matched by the state, again, there is a very clear way to manage the separation of those in the accounts. Obviously, we get grower-funded levies through the research and development corporations. Again, they are accounted for on a project-by-project basis. I think on the agriculture side, it is probably not subject to the sort of concern that the member is getting at.

On the fisheries side, we have the rec fishing licences and the commercial fisheries resource access levies. That is subject to special purpose account requirements. There is a section in the accounts that accounts for the income and expenditure. I am not sure, but maybe Ms Brayford might have a bit more detail to add to that.

**The CHAIR:** Through the minister, Ms Brayford.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** She is good to go.

**Ms H.G. Brayford:** Thank you. The DG has outlined that quite well. There are special purpose accounts. All the recreational fishing licence receipts go into the recreational fishing account. That money is expended in accordance with that account and the act. Similarly, the commercial licence fees go into what is called the fisheries research and development account. That also needs to be used in accordance with the account and the act.

**The CHAIR:** Further question.

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** One final. Thank you, Madam Chair. I cannot find in the papers an actual figure for the number of employees in fisheries or in agriculture. I guess the minister is going to say the same thing; that is, if they are in a sort of blob in the middle, they do not apply to either agency. Down the track, is the government just going to give us one figure for employees in DPIRD that covers agriculture, fisheries and regional development? Will there not be a figure, if you like, of dedicated employees to each of those areas?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** In response to the member's question generally, there is only one agency. It is called DPIRD. As a result of that, it was a deliberate decision of government to ensure it had a focused approach to the areas that they are responsible for. It would be naive of me to say that I would accept the member's contention that there is going to be a blancmange of people just doing general stuff. That is not true and no organisational development would ever allow for that to occur. The DG could not lead that sort of arrangement. There have to be the discrete areas inside that agency. The total is around 1 600 FTE. It is impossible to lead an organisation as a singular entity without a definition of what their functions are and how they undertake those functions. I go back to my point: how we measure effectiveness is really important in these sorts of areas; that is, what are the objectives of government and the agency in operationalising the priorities and policies of government and how are we measuring them? From there, the DG will allocate resources in order to meet government policy. It is as simple as that. There will always be discrete divisions and there will always be objectives and missions laid out for those discrete divisions so the DG can lead them and report on them.

**Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE:** Can the minister please update us on how the government has assisted the commercial fishing industry during COVID-19?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Maybe I can. COVID-19 created a significant challenge right across the economy of Western Australia. Everybody knows that. It also created a significant challenge for the commercial fishing industry. I have already alluded to or referenced that the lobster industry lost 95 per cent of its market virtually overnight. Just vicariously, in my housing portfolio, foot traffic through display villages dropped by 95 per cent overnight. These are the sorts of things that nobody anticipated. The industry was reeling, so the commercial fishing industry came to us through the Western Australian Fishing Industry Council. WAFIC was really helpful in articulating the issues that the industry was having by geographic area, species and business size. It is quite a dense area to address. They had an average annual output of about 22 500 tonnes of seafood products, which equates to about \$600 million worth of value to the economy. I think about \$500 million of that is lobster, just to give the member a sense of scale.

We moved as quickly as we could, once it settled down, to understand the impacts of it. The rock lobster industry is the one we worked with closely because of its market challenges. I should say at this point a lot of people have criticised the rock lobster industry for having a single market focus. It is not without strategic thinking. It deliberately went into the China market to ensure that they were getting the most economic value out of the product, which it did—in spades. In so doing, it accepted the potential risk of a single market focus and owned it as well. As we sit here today, through different government assistance, they are back in that single market, probably at similar volumes now as they were pre-COVID. It is not at the appropriate price that it would want to be getting, but it is still getting an economic price. I just wanted to put on the record that the rock lobster industry is sophisticated, engaged and very much aware of what it is doing.

We did a range of other things because other smaller fisheries had a real challenge as well. A lot of those that were singularly impacted were, by and large, made of small family-owned businesses. Things like licence fees were really important. They were going to be an impost for no return so there were licence fee waivers for all commercial,

aquaculture, pearling and charter licences; and deferral of access fees for a 12-month period. That went on. An industry working group will be formed in 2021 that will review the impacts, so next year we will be forming that up to look at it. Boat pen fees, for example, were waived. Minister Saffioti was very good in coming to the table and waiving pen fees, which are quite significant for those larger vessels. We declared commercial fishing an essential service to keep people in work during the lockdowns. They never did not have the opportunity to go to sea and keep working. In the aquaculture space, we funded the expansion of the Albany shellfish hatchery, which I have already talked about, and the Geraldton finfish nursery.

We worked at a range of things. One of the most important things we do is we keep present to the markets to understand what is happening with consumer taste and in the distribution chains. We also work with the peak bodies—WAFIC and, where appropriate, Recfishwest. Marine Stewardship Council certification is very important to the provenance issue around food. We have some of the most well regarded fisheries in the world that are MSC certified. Those schedules had to continue. They are the sorts of support that the government has given to the commercial fishing industry.

**Ms L. METTAM:** The minister has talked about the pen fees. Have they not just been deferred and not frozen? My understanding is that what has not been paid this year will be paid next year, in addition to the existing pen fees.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** I cannot respond to that in the detail the member is asking for because that a matter for Minister Saffioti. The best advice I had was that they were waived.

**Ms L. METTAM:** I thought that was pretty unfair.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** If that is different, then I will correct the record.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Okay.

[3.30 pm]

**Ms L. METTAM:** I refer to marine park funding on page 225. First of all, what is the funding for; and when does the government plan to resolve the outstanding cases for compensation for commercial fishers who are impacted by the Ngari Capes Marine Park?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** The funding was \$750 000. It was provided to DPIRD's fisheries research and development account for compensation payment to the abalone managed fishery applicants. The compensation is unavoidable under the Fishing and Related Industries Compensation (Marine Reserves) Act. The member is obviously aware of the issues in relation to how the FRICMR act is applied and the arrangements for it. It is accepted that the Ngari Capes Marine Park process has taken a little bit longer than expected. We have to do a full consultation around these sorts of things because we only get to compensate once, so we want to get it right. We really are committed to the idea of fair compensation. I have to satisfy myself that that fairness is met. To ensure a fair process we have an independently chaired committee of advice that formed and developed a clear set of compensation eligibility principles. Does the member want to be more specific about her question about Ngari?

**Ms L. METTAM:** I am just asking when the minister thinks the outstanding cases will be resolved; and whether the minister is committed to following the FRICMR act, which the minister pointed to? I could throw in another one, but I will leave it there.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** We are committed to the act. At law, I have to—we have to follow the processes. My concern here is making sure we are getting everything in the consideration at once, not as an applicant comes through. We want to be able to deal with the totality of the fishery so we get the actual outcome that we are looking at. I might defer if the member is happy with the DDG to give her further detail.

**Ms H.G. Brayford:** I can confirm that one of the key fisheries impacted by the Ngari Capes Marine Park is the abalone industry. I am pleased that we have moved into a formal offer process with the abalone licensees now. As the minister said, it has taken some time, it is a fairly complex piece of legislation and the marine park has taken some time to reach this point for the purpose of the compensation act. For the abalone fishers, those negotiations are now well advanced.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Is the member more interested about the time frame?

**Ms L. METTAM:** No. Other commercial fishers are impacted by the Ngari Capes Marine Park. I should say that those that I have spoken to would very much like the government to take an approach that fits in with the FRICMR act. I am asking, on their behalf, when this matter is set to be resolved; and, also, how committed the government is to following the principles of the act.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Not only do I have to follow the letter of the act, if you like, and its legal impositions, but I also feel duty-bound to ensure that I follow the spirit of the act. That is, if somebody has a commercial endeavour inside one of these marine parks and consequently a government came along and removed it through an act—a legal act, of course—they should be fairly compensated. I fully expect this committee and the agency to be able to gather up anybody who has a commercial licence or a fishing access arrangement into that park. They have to fall under the FRICMR act.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Just on the timing, is the government committed to resolving these outstanding matters of compensation before imposing additional restrictions on the industry with the introduction of other marine parks, such as Buccaneer Marine Park and the expanded Marmion Marine Park—in particular, the south coast marine parks?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Well, the FRICMR act sits as an overarching piece of legislation that applies to any part of the fishery zones or where they are impacted. I do not look at them in totality; I look at them in isolation. The one we are up to is the Ngari Capes Marine Park. That will be resolved in accordance with the time line for the establishment of the marine park. Buccaneer and those other places will also be resolved in a similar fashion, relevant to their particular location and the fisheries there.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Could I get an indication of what the time frame might be? Are we expecting, perhaps, that those outstanding matters in relation to the Ngari Capes Marine Park will be resolved next year? Is there any indication of how long this process will take?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** We will let some advice get filtered through.

**Ms H.G. Brayford:** The scheme normally opens and then closes. It could be up to 12 months, for example, because that gives time for the processes, the offers, the acceptance and the relevant outcomes associated with that. In this case, from a departmental point of view, we are absolutely committed to finalising the Ngari Capes compensation process under FRICMR act as soon as possible. We have done a lot of work on the other fisheries after abalone and they are following quickly behind the abalone fishery. We are very committed to resolving these matters as soon as we possibly can and have been working closely with the fishing industry to do that.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** The member raised, I think, Ocean Reef marina, I think, as one of them?

**Ms L. METTAM:** I raised the Marmion Marine Park expansion.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Yes. That does not fall under the FRICMR act.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Okay.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** That would fall under the voluntary fisheries adjustment scheme.

**Ms H.G. Brayford:** Just to clarify, Ocean Reef marina is not a marine park. That, as the minister said, falls under the Fisheries Adjustment Scheme Act. Any extension of the Marmion Marine Park would fall under the FRICMR act if there are affected and eligible fishers. The compensation scheme is quite complex. It normally starts with what is called a relevant event, and that will dictate the timing that the compensation scheme can commence. Each of them will be different.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Okay. I just have a final question.

**The CHAIR:** Final questions.

**Ms L. METTAM:** The answer to my final question may well be provided as supplementary information. I refer to “Shark Aerial Surveillance” under “Details of Controlled Grants and Subsidies” on page 241. What is the extent of the service provided under this arrangement? How many days a year does it operate; when does the service start; and what area does it cover?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Shark aerial surveillance is budgeted at \$3.9 million. There has been a longstanding arrangement with Surf Life Saving WA. It provides three helicopters and one in reserve at all times. It costs roughly \$3.9 million a year, and it provides aerial surveillance across the metro beaches and further south. We do not have the relevant operational details in terms of dedicated hours and the seasonality of it. The member might want to put that question on notice.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Can we put it on notice?

**The CHAIR:** The member can put it notice.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Yes, put it on notice.

**Ms L. METTAM:** As a supplementary? I did not think we could put questions on notice anymore.

**The CHAIR:** The member can put them on notice separately. The member can walk out of here and put a question on notice.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** The member can, but she will not get the answer back until the next Parliament.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Okay. That is all right.

**The CHAIR:** Minister, are we finished?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** All done.

**The appropriation was recommended.**

*Meeting suspended from 3.40 to 3.50 pm*

**Division 36: Communities — Services 7 to 9, Housing, \$1 241 879 000 —**

Ms J.M. Freeman, Chair.

Mr P.C. Tinley, Minister for Housing.

Ms M. Andrews, Director General.

Mrs R. Green, Deputy Director General, Community Services.

Mr N. Hindmarsh, Assistant Director General, Assets.

Mr I. Kneeshaw, Chief Risk Officer, Keystart.

Mr N. Wijayadasa, Chief Finance Officer.

Mr M. Richardson, Director, Management Accounting and Financial Analysis.

[Witnesses introduced.]

**The CHAIR:** This estimates committee will be reported by Hansard. The daily proof *Hansard* will be available tomorrow. The Chair will ensure that as many questions as possible are asked and that both questions and answers are short and to the point. If an adviser needs to answer from the lectern, will they please state their name prior to their answer. The estimates committee's consideration of the estimates will be restricted to a 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 only be examined in relation to their portfolio responsibilities.

The minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee, and I ask the minister to clearly indicate what supplementary information will be provided. I will then allocate a reference number. Supplementary information should be provided to the principal clerk by Friday, 30 October 2020. I caution members that if a minister asks that a matter be put on notice, it is up to the member to lodge that through the online questions system.

I give the call to the Member for Carine.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** Thank you very much. I refer to page 535, “New Works”, “Other”, and the “Housing and Homelessness Investment Package”. I am not necessarily going to go through each one of those specific items, but I would like to know the following. According to the 2016 Australian Bureau of Statistics—but we know the figures are higher—of the current supposed 1 000 rough sleepers and 9 000 homeless people, how many of those will be helped by this housing and homelessness investment package and how many will find themselves in a home?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** The housing and homelessness investment package was a \$150 million commitment from the government to ensure that it was making an enduring contribution to social housing and to keep the asset moving. There are 42 000-plus dwellings in there—\$14.5 billion asset class. The homelessness stream that reports to my colleague the Minister for Community Services includes \$35 million for two Common Ground facilities, which commercial operations or assets has a role in delivering; \$34.5 million for a Housing First homelessness initiative; and \$2.3 million for the development of online homelessness services database. To get to the member's question more specifically, the houses that were built under this scheme were focused on the people sitting on the priority waitlist. We know that the people sitting on the priority waitlist are most vulnerable and most at risk of falling into homelessness. Therefore, the objective was to get into that. I might defer to the deputy director general on areas that the member is specifically interested in, about where the department is targeting and what the ambition is, so he can give you an update.

**Mr N. Hindmarsh:** Thank you, minister. Under the two streams that the minister mentioned, the housing stream constitutes \$125 million, which will provide the construction of 300 new social houses. It also provides \$19.2 million for 200 additional shared-equity homes for those individuals who are able to access that part of the housing continuum, and \$6 million for the maintenance and refurbishment of 70 social housing dwellings. Also, as the minister mentioned, within the homelessness stream, there is \$35 million for two Common Ground facilities, the first of which was recently announced by Minister McGurk to be located in east Perth, which will give us the opportunity to house, in each case, about 90 occupants.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** Over what period of time in the forward estimates will all that be delivered? Exactly how many people will it house?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** As it states, there will be 300 new social houses, so, obviously, there are more than 300, and typically, there is more than one person in that case. In the recuperation of the Common Ground project, how many units were there, Nigel—about 75?

**Mr N. Hindmarsh:** There are about 90 units per person.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** There are about 90 units, so doing the rough maths there —

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** That is roughly a minimum of 480.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** I would accept that contention, yes.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** I would suggest, from where we are today, that the Common Ground facilities will take between three to five years to build. I am not sure when these 300 housing packages will be delivered, but we are talking about 480 people getting off the waitlist and into accommodation over the next three to five years. There are currently 23 000 people on the waitlist, about 1 800-odd priority applications, with some 3 347 people on it. We know that there are 1 000 rough sleepers, and a number of those probably are not even on the waiting list. What are we going to do with the other 22 000 to 23 000-plus people over the next five years?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** I want to make sure that we clarify the waitlist for the record.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** Yes.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** There are people on the waitlist, and then there are applications.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** That is correct, so there are around 14 000 applications and 23 000 people.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** That is right. Without getting into a debate about relative waitlists, they have been persistently at or above that figure for the last 15 years—probably longer. During the term of the previous government, they rose to a larger number. Again, I do not want to get into a debate about it because that is just not helpful. The point I would make, in general terms, about the member's question is that there was always, in the history of all developed countries, a greater waiting list or a greater demand than the supply could ever provide. That is a factor. That is not a white flag; that is the reality of where we exist. I want to make this point really clear: not every solution to the housing situation that some people find themselves in is a publicly provided house. One of the things about the agency coming together to create a genuine human services agency is that we can now apply other treatments to people's causes for wanting to apply for a public house. Those treatments include bond loans and loans for rent in advance, and they are in the thousands—I will find the numbers in a minute for the member. Therefore, to look simply at the number of houses that are developed and then equate that to a particular outcome, sort of ignores the other treatments. I also want to make the point that the issues the member raised in his question span the spectrum from homelessness and sleeping rough to street-present people for which there are other treatments and crisis accommodation treatments as well, which are adaptable for them. Any and every government has applied a range of treatments to this particular challenge.

[4.00 pm]

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** I have a further question with regard to the minister's elaborated statement. In the current situation, rental vacancies are down to less than one per cent; we currently have a moratorium on evictions until next year; and we have JobKeeper and JobSeeker coming off in March next year and reducing up to that point in time. Does the minister think that we are heading for a cliff in terms of people being able to get rental accommodation and a house, with 1 000 people a month or a week—I cannot remember now—coming back to Western Australia as well? Where are they going to live, based on our current available housing stock?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** The member is asking a general question about the housing market as opposed to a specific question about the social housing area that I am responsible for. I do not think this is the appropriate place for me to give the member a commentary around the economics of the state and hard borders and the private sector provision and investors that would provide the accommodation the member is talking about. The previous government had a similar challenge of a greater number of arrivals in the state. Net migration was enormous and it put pressure on all sorts of services. This is not at that scale, but, potentially, it could be. I will reserve any commentary around the wider issues the member is raising for another time and focus on what I can do, which is bring half a billion dollars' worth of investment from the McGowan government into social housing to book in the fastest possible time.

The member raised questions on the \$150 million housing homeless stream, which when we came to government was off the back of the Metronet housing precincts plan, and of course the latest of \$443 million or \$319 million that has gone into social housing.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** I made reference to the broader picture because that will impact on the minister's picture. The more people who move into available housing stock, the less stock is available to the minister for other programs, whether it is the Housing First initiative or other programs. What is available to the people the minister is responsible for when there is nothing else left because the rest of the market has picked up everything else?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** I provide social dwellings. The community housing sector has a role to play as well and it works to the same list as we do. The only answer I have for the member is that we are putting half a billion dollars into the provision of social housing stock. I have to operate inside the constraints of the market that we all exist in, and in so doing, I can only go as fast as I can to deliver those dwellings.

I want to make this other point. When we came to government we had to make some hard decisions. Removing stock is easy, replacing it is hard. My best example is the long overdue decision around Brownlie Towers, which represented 300 dwellings in a single place. It was long past its economic life and, quite frankly, habitable use. It was not appropriate accommodation for anybody. So I made the decision to demolish it and we created a 25-hectare precinct that will give us the opportunity. It will take time to deliver houses onto that precinct—the member knows

about the throw forward. We do what we can with what we have. We are still dealing with the carry-forward effect, if you like, of Stirling Towers in Highgate, where 200 units were taken out. That was an appropriate decision of the previous government. It takes time to recover and put those dwellings in.

I will quickly pivot to the last program, which is the social housing economic recovery package—the most recent one—of \$319 million. One of the most important things that we are doing inside the SHERP, apart from keeping jobs in the industry, is refurbishing 1 500 existing dwellings. I was at one yesterday and I am almost counting those 1 500 as new dwellings. I do not quite have the number yet—the department is working through that while it gets its final asset review done—but a vast majority of those dwellings are at the end of their economic life. As a result, they were going to be disposed of by sale to the market or demolished and returned to vacant land. Again, it takes time and money to put those back. I went to one yesterday at 30 Mulligan Drive, Greenwood.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** I think I know it.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Yes, the member might know it, and, no, we are not putting it on the market!

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** Okay!

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** I asked the question: how much is this refurbishment costing? This is not paint and paper; it is a deep refurb and \$80 000 is going into that house that was otherwise going to be disposed of. The replacement cost of a house like that is \$400 000-ish.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** At least.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** That is \$400 000 versus \$80 000. What do I get for the \$80 000? A whole bunch of stuff that I will not bore members with now, but, basically, what I really get out of it is an extra 20 years of life, so I am counting that one as almost a new dwelling. The department has put together an outstanding program, and I am really proud of that particular one.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** The minister mentioned the SHERP and the 1 200 homes, I think the minister said, being refurbished.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** There are 1 500 homes.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** Where will the people who live in those homes go while their homes are being refurbished?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** There is a range. As I said, there are over 42 000 dwellings in the asset pool—it is a \$14 billion-plus asset. The ongoing challenge that the agency has to manage all the time is the thoughtful management of our clients, and I do mean clients and not tenants. A lot of those dwellings will be vacant, as they are now, as people move into other transferred areas. Again, this is the juggle that Nigel Hindmarsh has to undertake, and the agency generally. That adds time to the program as well. It takes time to move people and it has to be done with their consent, of course, and so that is a bit of a challenge. I might throw to the DDG to talk about the split of that, and anything else that he might want to add.

**Mr N. Hindmarsh:** As the minister alluded to, at any one time, the agency can have several hundred what we call void properties, which is usually when the property has been vacated by the previous tenants and requires, in this case, some major refurbishment prior to reoccupation or sometimes for sale. In the first phase of the 1 500 refurbishments, we have focused on those dwellings that do not require the relocation of tenants whilst we start planning out the sequencing of the natural movement that we would have amongst some of our tenancies. Where absolutely necessary, options will be provided for tenants to move out of those properties, but that is a last resort for us. Obviously, many of these tenants have close ties to areas; they have kids in school; and they use local facilities. So we are very focused on trying to sequence the program in such a way that we minimise the disruption for tenants through that in the way that we manage it. But in some extreme cases, due to the scale of the refurbishments being undertaken, we may need to temporarily relocate tenants for the program.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** To add to that, in the northern suburbs of the metro area, about 350 dwellings will need this sort of treatment. It is going to be a challenge.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** How many properties are currently void? Out of the 42 000 properties, how many are vacant at the moment?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** I do not think I have that.

**Mr N. Hindmarsh:** I do not think I have that figure.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** Can you provide that by supplementary information rather than a question on notice, if possible?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** No, we cannot. The reason being is that the number I give the member today is a moving target. I will undertake to give the member information about the range that they move in. As the member can appreciate, today it is X, and tomorrow it will be Y. It is not going to be super helpful unless we have something on the books here. There is a page getting ripped out. If we can just park that for a minute, I will return to it once we get the information, if the member wants to move on to something else.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** The minister said he is building two Common Ground facilities for \$35 million.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Yes.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** Recently, a document was produced by the sector and the City of Perth, and I think the member for Perth also made comments in this document, that stated that one Common Ground facility would cost \$36 million to produce. I am trying to work out how the minister will build two of them for \$35 million when a publicly available document states that one will cost \$36 million. Can the minister tell me how he will achieve that or whether the previous document, which was produced by the not-for-profit —

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** I will indulge the question, but, of course, I will defer to my colleague who is responsible for the delivery of that program, Minister McGurk. But since we have Common Ground facilities' people here, can you respond to that, Nigel?

**Mr N. Hindmarsh:** I can give an indication. Thank you, minister. The \$35 million is the capital funding currently held by Treasury, subject to a detailed business case being undertaken. Part of the work that is underway at the moment is looking at opportunities to partner with industry, as we have done in other projects such as Foyer Oxford in West Leederville, to bring additional capital funding or investment to the project. But, at the moment, that \$35 million is subject to a detailed business case, which is underway.

[4.10 pm]

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** Does the minister have a ballpark figure of how much it would cost to build two of these facilities once he gets a partner on board? What is the partner looking to contribute?

**The CHAIR:** Through the minister.

**Mr N. Hindmarsh:** Thank you, minister. No. That is subject to the detailed business case work that is underway at the moment, so I do not have that information at this stage.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** If the minister cannot get someone to go into partnership with for this project and the minister does not know how much it is going to cost, is this just a percentage put aside and it may not eventuate? I suppose that the minister is saying is that the project may or may not happen if he cannot get a business partner, and we do not know the true cost.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** I think that that is a hypothetical scenario. We do not anticipate any problems in getting a partner for this project. Almost every week we are approached by various parts of the development industry that want to participate in this. But I am not going to speculate about what will or will not happen, because that would be dangerous ground as opposed to "common ground".

**The CHAIR:** Further question, the member for Jandakot.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Sorry, before the member asks his question. I said I would respond to member for Carine.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** Thank you, minister.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** As of 30 September, there were 1 433 "vacants", as we call them now. That was the number at that time, but, as I said, it is a moving target.

**Mr Y. MUBARAKAI:** Thank you. Minister, what is the department doing to increase the supply for social and affordable housing in the electorate of Jandakot? Can the minister also give us a review and an update of the Treeby development?

**The CHAIR:** Minister.

**Ms L. METTAM:** And the member for Vasse at some time.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Everybody gets a prize—the member knows that.

For the provision of social and affordable housing, it is important to make the point of the distinction at the outset. We have been canvassing social housing here. People pay no more than 25 per cent of their income to support social housing. The affordable piece moves into a range, typically around home ownership, where the actual purchase price is at a point at which it is affordable—I have it, in absolute terms, regardless of where it is, at about \$380 000, so we have not really been idle in this area.

Relevant to the member's question, Treeby itself is partnered—it is a classic example of that partnership—with the LWP Group, which is responsible for the development of Ellenbrook, a world-class awarded master-planned community. Treeby has nearly 20 hectares out there and represents a great opportunity out in the corridor, just two clicks from Cockburn train station and that whole precinct there. It is a mixed-density development with a range of price points. I have been out there twice now to have a look at it. It is an exciting opportunity and a really good example where we will be able to drive the SHERP package into there as well, because it creates a prospective area for that.

In the south metro region, for those who are more interested, there will be about 30 new builds in that area and 300 refurbishments, not dissimilar to the northern suburbs. Again, that is provided for by local businesses where possible. We are making sure we get more businesses involved with the agency that have not previously been engaged.

**The CHAIR:** The member for Kalamunda said that he had a further question on this, but I am going to give him the question because I reckon that was not a further question. Member for Kalamunda.

**Mr M. HUGHES:** I want to go back to HHP Insure. The minister mentioned the work that will be undertaken in the metropolitan area. Unless I am mistaken, the minister referred to 350 additional dwellings. What is happening in the regions?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Sorry, there are 300 dwellings in the north metro and 300 in the south metro. There is so much going on!

**Mr M. HUGHES:** The minister mentioned 1 500 dwellings.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Regarding the Kimberley, the Pilbara, midwest, Gascoyne, south west, great southern, goldfields and Esperance—Perth metro is a region for this purpose, but we will park that for a minute—thus far we have had 50 new builds in the regions and 83 in the metro. They are allocated and in contract, underway and in various states of development. First construction was scheduled to be awarded around October—so we should be well into it by now—and commence within weeks after that. In terms of regional breakdown, if the member is particularly interested—the member for Geraldton might be interested; let us just maybe talk to the table. So far the economic activity generated in the midwest, Gascoyne area is about \$1 million. New builds have not yet commenced, but they are in train. We will refurbish 80 dwellings, two have commenced already, and I might mention the \$80 million maintenance for general government buildings of which we have started on 100 of those in the midwest.

Thus far, the south west—we have been down there a few times talking to new businesses that have never worked with the agency before—has generated about \$3.2 million worth of economic activity. Five new builds have commenced down there. No refurbishments have commenced yet, but, at the printing of this, which was at the end of September, we have 50 allocated for in the south west, and maintenance has commenced on 80 of 200 that we are going to be working on in that area. We have engaged, quite happily, eight new local businesses down there. I will not go through all the regions unless members are interested in a particular region. In the north metro —

**Mr M. HUGHES:** Metro-centric.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** We can ask on notice!

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** In the north metro, which the member for Carine might be interested in, nearly 400 jobs are supported and \$156 million worth of economic activity generated. We have commenced 310 new builds and we are into five refurbishments of 350, so there is a whole bunch to go yet. This stuff takes time to get momentum. I suppose the member wants to know the south east metro now?

**Mr M. HUGHES:** I am interested in the east metropolitan region of Kalamunda, but I do not suppose the minister has that figure there.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** I do not have the figures in specific terms for the south east metro, because we work within particular regions, but we commenced 153 new builds to the east. There will be 350 refurbishments, of which we have started five. Again, it takes time to get momentum on these things. Sorry, there were a lot of numbers there.

**Mr M. HUGHES:** No. It is interesting.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** My question is about DevelopmentWA.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Yes.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** Obviously, there will be a transfer of functions from housing in terms of land development and commercial functions to DevelopmentWA. The first question I want to ask is: does that mean that the department will lose an income stream? Can the minister confirm whether the department actually made any income out of —

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** I am making an assumption that this is referring to a line item.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** I refer to page 521, line item 18.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** For the purposes of accuracy.

**The CHAIR:** Well done, minister, for pulling him up; that was my job, but good on you!

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** I thought you were on top of it.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** No, I do not want to be pedantic. That is cool; I just wanted to make sure.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** No, that is cool I refer to page 521, line item 18.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** This was an announcement made by myself and the Premier around the transfer of some commercial operations of DevelopmentWA. A steering committee was formed of senior departmental heads across departments, and they will report back to cabinet in due course around their recommendations about what moves, when it moves and the circumstances under which it moves. That is in process now. I might add that that would have moved a little bit faster had it not been for COVID. We put that in abeyance whilst everybody, particularly directors general, had to focus on other things. The member asked about the revenue point.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** Yes, because I assume, minister, the department made some profit out of this program?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** I can, hopefully, say with some accuracy that the commercial operations of the agency working with development partners to leverage crown land will help cross-subsidise the provision of social housing generated around \$200 million to \$230 million a year —

[4.20 pm]

**Mr N. Hindmarsh:** It generated \$191 million this year.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Nearly \$200 million worth of revenue came back into the Department of Communities for the provision of social housing, along with the dividend from Keystart, I might add. I can assure the member that that revenue process will be preserved, firstly. I am involved in the process to ensure that we get better outcomes and not lesser or same-as outcomes with the transfer. Where the line goes about what is transferred is yet to be determined.

**Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE:** My question relates to the supply of social and affordable housing in the electorate of Thornlie. Can I have an indication of how the minister will ensure that that new and refurbished supply of affordable housing is energy efficient?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** In the electorate of Thornlie, 32 new builds are scheduled. Where we are at in that program, I am not quite sure, but that is via its normal operation, so that would happen anyway. They comprise three affordable housing properties in Thornlie, the suburb, and 29 new builds via the Metronet social and affordable housing package—that previous one when we first came to government. Those builds are in Beckenham, Kenwick and Thornlie, with eight builds being retained for social housing programs.

We are also delivering an additional three properties via the housing and homeless investment package that we announced late last year—two of those are in Thornlie and one is in Kenwick. That may change depending on further site identification, design and the approvals process, so they are not fully locked in yet. Beyond new properties, though, the important point is that the SHERP—social housing and economic recovery package—extends the useful life of a significant amount of properties, which I have mentioned before. It is a \$142 million refurbishment stream, so there will be houses inside the Thornlie electorate that will also be coming into this program. We do not yet have enough detail about which of those assets it will be, so it would not be accurate to do it.

In relation to the member's point about the renewable energy piece on the dwellings, I have collaborated with Minister Johnston to ensure that we are going to put solar panels on a significant number of social houses across the metro area via the use of Synergy.

**Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE:** Is there a way of ensuring the design is optimising solar-passive qualities?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Certainly on the new builds, we have a mandated requirement to achieve a certain level. I might just defer to the DDG on that one.

**Mr N. Hindmarsh:** As the minister mentioned, we have a very significant focus on this at the moment. Only recently in the last month, we have agreed, as an agency, to be an early adopter of the national construction code 2019, whereas the rest of the industry has paused on adopting that code. Part of that code actually relates to the energy efficiency of dwellings, with an aspiration of moving towards a seven-star nationwide house energy rating scheme across new dwellings. Most of the new social housing dwellings—where appropriate and due to location it is not always possible—will be targeting a seven star NatHERS rating, so the incorporation of the design and the energy efficiency of the specification itself with the dwelling will be incorporated in there. We are working very closely with Synergy on the \$6 million investment through the economic recovery package in the installation of the photovoltaic cells and the home energy management systems, which is actually a system inside the house that helps the tenants with the management of their use of energy, and we are currently investigating heat pumps as an option as well for those dwellings.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** I have a further question on behalf of the properties in the member for Thornlie's electorate, are the refurbished all going to be silver livable home standard?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** The answer is no, but where possible, yes. Do we have a number on that one? If I can defer to the DDG.

**Mr N. Hindmarsh:** Until we have undertaken the detailed property inspections of each of the properties we are not going to know the exact number, but there is an aspiration wherever possible through the refurbishment stream to make the dwellings more appropriate for a broader range of our tenants which includes the incorporation of silver liveable standard as a specification. It is currently a mandatory specification on our new builds for social housing, and 20 per cent of the product that we sell to the market through our affordable sales program as well.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** Fantastic. I refer to page 535, and asset sales under the category "Funded By". What assets is the government selling to get those figures and does that include, obviously, social houses as part of that?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** So you want to know the asset sales?

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** I am just trying to work it out because obviously if I look back at the answer to the question on notice that I received in 2016–17, there were 44 000 social houses. In 2019–20 there were 42 000. I am just wondering whether any more social houses going to be sold. Is the stock going to be reduced as a result of asset sales?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** It is important to understand this in the context, and I will get the ADG to make any expanding comments if he desires. Those 42 000-plus dwellings represent an asset class that has to be optimised and evolved. As we said before in the refurbishment, we put stuff to market that is beyond economic life so we do dispose of that to take the proceeds of that, then we go and undertake the activities of the agency or we go into a joint venture or some sort of business arrangement with a developer from which we will net out a certain number of social houses as a result of that. It is a market placing agency in that context, so there are property sales from time to time. The other point I would make is I go back to the fact we have taken out 500 dwellings. That is not an insignificant number to take out in such a short period of time and it takes a long time. For example, the SHERP package has a two-year delivery plan for 350 dwellings. That is probably taking up a large part of the capacity of the agency to do. To do any more than that with the other programs, the other streams, gives a sense of what the install capacity of the agency is to deliver on those projects. I might just defer to the ADG.

**Mr N. Hindmarsh:** Yes, that line item relates to a number of different forms of sales, so it includes our residential land sales from our joint ventures and other private sector operations. It includes the sale of affordable housing. It does not include the sale of established dwellings, which includes public housing and GROH properties that are no longer required. So by way of an indication, of that \$234 million for 2020–21, \$20 million, representing 90 dwellings, would be public housing, so about 10 per cent of that is public housing sales of properties that are not suitable for refurbishment or are of no longer of the typology or location required for our programs.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** The minister indicated that when the agency does these sales, it reinvests it back in. If property developers out there owned 44 000 social houses and they were to sell them and reinvest the money, in 10 years' time they would probably own 80 000 social houses because they grow their business and they grow their investment and they become very wealthy. So I am trying to work out why the department of housing, every time it does something, becomes poorer rather than wealthier in terms of the numbers of properties it has in its assets. Where is the money disappearing to, where the private sector would generate double the wealth over 10 years, whereas the public housing is reducing?

[4.30 pm]

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** I think the member is conflating two different ways of going about business. Firstly, the private sector operates on a for-profit model; we operate on a not-for-dividend model, if you like. So our approach is very much about generating an income. The member makes the simplistic assumption that what goes out comes in, so they are not an equal and opposite arrangement. We dispose of an asset; it does not necessarily mean that we replace it with an asset at the same or greater value. What we are doing, particularly on the renewal side, that is the 10 to 15 kilometre ring, if you like, is making sure that we are maximising the existing amount of crown land that we get. So in some of the older areas that the member might have in his electorate, and I certainly do in Willagee, where we have the classic fibro house on a quarter acre block with one occupant in it sitting next to another one of our dwellings with a single occupant, typically an older single woman, and they want to downsize but will not put their hand up because, as the ADG said, they do not want to separate from the social infrastructure that they have grown up with and become used to. What we really want to do is maximise the changing nature of their needs and making sure those two quarter acre blocks get converted to a number of units. That does take time, obviously looking after those clients, as well as creating or attracting a development partner to come up with it. So the member's contention that we have an equal and opposite arrangement and that we are profit driven to the purpose of actually creating something from nothing, if you like, is not relevant to the social housing scheme. Does the ADG have anything else to add?

**Mr N. Hindmarsh:** The only other factor I would mention, of course, is that commercial entity would be charging commercial rates for the rental of the properties during their occupation, which we are not, so the income streams through life are never going to be the same either whilst we are cross-subsiding those social outcomes.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** A for-profit company would get full back.

**Mr M. HUGHES:** I refer to the asset investment program and I recollect in terms of the contributions to the debate regarding the commonwealth support for remote communities. I am interested to know what impact the commonwealth's decision to walk away from funding remote communities has had on the department's capacity or ability to maintain the service in these communities?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** That is a relevant question to this, but I might just segue before I answer that to talk about the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement. We get from the commonwealth about \$100 million a year for the provision of social housing under the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement, so that is a separate bilateral agreement with the commonwealth. We also are responsible for the delivery of services to about 165 remote communities across Western Australia. The point I always make about this, and members might have heard me talk about it, is that we are a third of the continent, 10 per cent of the population, 2.5 million square kilometres of dirt, with 2.6 million people. To deliver services of a civil standard to 165 communities from here to the South Australian border is beyond the capacity of this state, and probably any state, without assistance. The Rudd government, when it came to power, put a \$10 billion program together, of which we were guaranteed \$100 million a year for the provision of new housing to offset overcrowding and challenges in those communities. I will also say that we have put over \$90 million a year just running normal municipal services into those communities. So there is a deep

challenge because that is the only gross numbers, not to mention all the other government services and the capacity of the government to actually deliver those services in those sorts of remote areas to a standard that we would expect is a desperately difficult task. The agency does an outstanding job to do what it does. We have committed another \$209 million of additional state funding to attend to some of these issues. It is a deeply troubling issue. COVID has created an additional challenge around overcrowding as people move back to country and that has created other significant problems. So it is not a wicked problem, it is a very easy problem. Where we put more resources in, we are going to get a better outcome.

There is a final point, not to belabour the point, but we want to look at it as an end to end thing, so encapsulated in this is the normalisation of what used to be called town camps. At One Mile at Kennedy Hill in Broome they are all working with those various landowners—the Aboriginal Lands Trust might be the owners—to actually normalise those into suburbs, if you like, and deliver the appropriate services to them, but also to provide a genuine move to town option for people on community so they can come into a wage-based economy and participate if they want to, or for other services such as education.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** I refer to page 520, item 11. With regards to the Metronet build of 831 social houses between 2020–21 and 2023–24, I am just wondering how achievable that is. Is that a rock solid guarantee that by the end of 2024 there will be 831 houses? Obviously, it has been given a time frame. I am not sure how well the Metronet project is going ahead, but I am just conscious—where are those 831 going to be located along the Metronet network?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** To answer the first point, no member in this room, no elected member in this room will ever give an ironclad guarantee and I will tell members why. This year we saw a really good example of why it is difficult, and that is called COVID. The pandemic has disrupted a whole range of issues. I am not suggesting for a second that it has disrupted the Metronet project, but it is a good indicator of why I would not give the sort of rock solid guarantee that the member is seeking from me. But what I can say is that the government has stepped up to produce one of the largest investments in rail infrastructure in this state's history, quite frankly. I look at the Metronet network, like my friend and colleague Rita Saffioti does, as being not just the new lines but obviously the heritage lines, as we might call them, so the Armadale line, for example. The other point I would make is the market conditions. As I said before, the agency is in most part, not in a dominant part, but in large part, market facing. That is, it must do its developments where the market will take out some of those sales to market for the cross-subsidising of the social and affordable. So when the market is in a downward trend, then it is going to be a challenge to actually achieve the targets, but we are making in my estimation very good progress. So far in streams 3 and 4 of the program to date we have 540 contracts awarded to builders. That represents 143 dwellings and 397 for sale for market. The contracts awarded is that number, so we are well on our way to the 750, near 800, target. Additionally, 183 dwellings are completed in that program, so 51 social and 132 sale to market—48 dwellings are under offer at the moment as and 69 dwellings have been sold.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** I refer to page 523 and the seventh bullet point, rental housing. I notice that there is a downward trend from \$923 million in 2021 to \$818 million in 2023–24. Can the minister explain to me why that is decreasing?  
[4.40 pm]

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** No, I cannot, but I can find somebody who might.

I will just read this out for the benefit of the record. The 2018–19 actual to the 2019–20 actual is a \$3.7 million variation. The actual is less than the 2018–19 actual, mainly due to a change in the accounting standards. AASB 16, which refers to leases, and the 2018–19 all rental expenses associated with GROH properties were recognised all in the income statement. From 2019–20 onwards, the new accounting standard recognises GROH leased property as expenditure partly in the income statement and partly in the balance sheet. This is marginally offset by increase in maintenance expenditure and increase in water charges in the 2019–20 as a result of the prior year adjustment. So when we go to the out years that the member is referring to, the decrease largely reflects additional temporary spending in 2020–21 to stimulate the economy against COVID-affected write-downs. In the 2020–21 financial year, Communities will receive and spend \$83 million appropriation for maintenance and other related expenditure for the social housing economic recovery package. The investment in 2020–21 for maintenance has been developed to protect and create jobs and boost industry confidence while providing investment in housing assets in the regional areas. The SHERP program also provides additional investments in 2021–22 but this is largely capital rather than recurrent expenditure which is not identified in the operational service costs. Moving forward to the 2023–24 forward estimates period we are talking about a 1.68 per cent decrease. The 2023–24 budget is less than the 2022–23 the preceding year due to funding under the national rental affordability scheme ceasing in 2022–23 Communities will continue to work with the state and commonwealth governments to identify ongoing opportunities for funding rental services in a future budget process.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** I refer to page 524, and the average waiting times for accommodation. In 2019–20 the average actual time was 94 weeks; then in 2020–21 it is budgeted to be 95 weeks. I am just wondering with COVID and all the other issues happening around housing and housing availability, how can the department increase the wait time by only a week under such dramatic conditions that we find ourselves in at the moment as opposed to going back to the normal average of around 120 weeks?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Yes, I do draw the member's attention to the challenges of averages.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** Yes, I understand that.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** They can be quite distorting. One might rather simplistically want to just apply an additional week, but this is not, it is the averaged effect. Will the member remind me of the years he is talking about?

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** What I see here is that in 2019–20 the average was 94 weeks, or the median was 48, and then in 2020–21 it has gone up by a week. I think historically it has been around the 120-week average in the past years.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** I am reading the 2019–20 budget year is 120 weeks and 60 weeks is the median. Is that the one the member is in?

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** I am looking at 2020–21.

So it has basically gone up an extra week from last year, but what I am saying is that the conditions are significantly different in 2020–21 than they were in 2019–20, and I am not sure how the department could have only budgeted for an extra week wait time when I would have thought the wait time would be growing to 120 weeks or maybe even further than that.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** I might take some advice on that one. The advice I have received is the variation reflects also the number of applications received. The member might have actually noticed that over time they have been reasonably steady, which is an interesting point he raises as to why that is so, given the nature of the thing. The assessment is that the people just are not moving, so anybody who has any sort of accommodation now is not even—not anybody, but as a general trend that affects these figures, people are staying particularly in the general market, kids are moving back to home, share accommodation is much more prevalent than it has ever been before and so people are not actually putting their hand up for a social house.

**Ms L. METTAM:** I refer to page 535, and to the crisis accommodation program under “New Works”. I also make a reference to the completed works of the crisis accommodation program. Is there any investment in either the completed works or in future works for crisis accommodation in Busselton?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** I cannot respond to that myself because it falls in the lane for Minister McGurk. Stand by; we might have something for the member.

**Mr N. Hindmarsh:** Within the crisis accommodation program, there is no capital budget for new builds, but under the SHERP refurbishment program we are trying to identify any crisis accommodation that does require a new life, effectively, so accommodation beyond pure public housing is in the scope of the SHERP refurbishment and maintenance programs for an opportunity to improve and in some cases re-life those facilities. I am afraid I do not have the specific data for that region, and would need to take that as a supplementary.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Could I take that as a supplementary?

**The CHAIR:** It is another minister's portfolio.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** I cannot give that commitment. Is the member interested in a specific location, or just generally?

**Ms L. METTAM:** Well, within the city of Busselton area.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** But not an address as such, just a general provision?

**Ms L. METTAM:** No.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** I would be happy to take that up with Minister McGurk.

Can I just correct the record quickly? When I referred to the number of vacancies as at 30 September, I misspoke. I said 1 433; it is 1 483, just for the purposes of accuracy.

#### **The appropriation was recommended.**

##### **Keystart Housing Scheme Trust —**

Ms J.M. Freeman, Chair.

Mr P.C. Tinley, Minister for Housing.

Ms M. Andrews, Director General.

Mr I. Kneeshaw, Chief Risk Officer.

Mr T. Fraser, Chief of Staff, Minister for Housing.

[Witnesses introduced.]

**The CHAIR:** This estimates committee will be reported by Hansard. The daily proof *Hansard* will be available tomorrow. Members may raise questions about matters relating to the operations and budget of the off-budget authority. Off-budget authority officers are recognised as ministerial advisers. The Chair will ensure that as many questions as possible are asked and that both questions and answers are short and to the point. If an adviser needs to answer from the lectern, will they please state their name prior to their answer.

The minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee, and I ask the minister to clearly indicate what supplementary information will be provided. Supplementary information should be provided to the principal clerk by Friday, 30 October 2020. I caution members that if a minister 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.

Member for Carine.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** How many of the properties that are financed through Keystart are in negative equity at the moment?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Is there a line item?

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** No, it is an off budget item.

[4.50 pm]

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Okay, thank you. I will defer to Mr Kneeshaw.

**Mr I. Kneeshaw:** From Keystart's perspective, negative equity is something that affects the broader industry, it is not something that is specific to Keystart, so all the major banks and financiers out there are affected by negative equity. I would not be able to give a specific number. We do index valuations so we do not actually get true and proper valuations on a property on a regular basis, so I cannot give you an exact number. But what I can say is our current index average loan-to-value ratio across our portfolio is 88.63 per cent, but because that is an average there will be a number of customers that will be in negative equity position. As I said, that is something that has affected the industry since 2015 as the property market has moved against property owners.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** What about with mortgage stress, how many are behind in their mortgage payments?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** Define mortgage stress.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** Obviously there is a definition of that in terms of income. I suppose let us just work on those who are behind in their repayments.

**Mr I. Kneeshaw:** From Keystart's perspective, as at the end of September customers who were in arrears by more than one month on their payments, and this will include customers who have been subject to hardship provisions, were about seven per cent of our portfolio.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** So in the last 12 months how many properties have actually been repossessed by Keystart?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** So take mortgages in possession?

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** Yes.

**Mr I. Kneeshaw:** For the last 12 months I do not have the exact number, but I do have the numbers that have been taken since, and we have not taken repossession of them we have taken possession of the properties since March. So last reported for the minister to the end of June, there were 29 where we received properties back through either a voluntary surrender or a customer had to abandon the property, and since then there have been a further 26. So to the end of September, the last six months, it has only been about 60, and we have not evicted anyone and we have not taken repossession apart from when it has been abandoned by customers.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** What is that as total number of loans out there?

**Mr I. Kneeshaw:** That is 20 700 loans at the moment, minister.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** And how many have we have taken into possession?

**Mr I. Kneeshaw:** Sixty.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** As part of this COVID relief package, have mortgage repayments for Keystart clients also been frozen?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** No. What we have is a hardship arrangement for clients. The member has to understand that Keystart operates differently than a bank, so it is much more active and it is monitoring the point. It also says the vast majority of people are ahead in their mortgage payments by significant amounts, and what we did put in place was a hardship arrangement where a client could come to us and we could suspend their payments and we could, in certain hardship cases, even extend their loan, so they would repay it over a longer period of time so it is a break. In extreme cases, and I am not sure we have even done this, where we have forgiven some repayments—that has not happened So that is the sort of treatment that are happening around those sorts of things.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** I believe there was a recent announcement about people being able to draw down up to \$100 000 from their Keystart loan to be able to reinvest back into their property. One, how many people have done that and how much roughly on average have people taken out over the portfolio? Secondly, if people are taking out \$100 000 or whatever the figure might happen to be, does Keystart go back and revalue the property to make sure that the loan to value ratio is within the parameters?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** That has been a longstanding arrangement which Keystart has had which was a surprise to me at the time, when there was an existing program that we sort of relaunched, if we want to put it another way, to

allow people to drawdown where they have equity. So the valuations in basically in the equity component that they have they would redraw and they can actually service the additional money, so I want to make it very clear that the creditworthiness, if you like, or the capacity for the client to actually service the additional payments has to be there. So that is very standard. In terms of the numbers that have taken it up, I am not sure. Does Mr Kneeshaw have any of those?

**Mr I. Kneeshaw:** Not to hand, I am sorry.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** When people do draw down, is there a market valuation of the property done at that point in time of them wanting to drawdown against that asset?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** The answer is yes. It will be a desktop valuation that they will identify. The equity comes from the valuation, not just of course from the investment of the individual and their payments, but also they will do a desktop. If that triggers a concern of any kind, then they will do an additional investigation on it to make sure that there is an appropriate spend or leverage on the property.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** Is that desktop valuation done by a licensed valuer?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** I defer to Mr Kneeshaw.

**Mr I. Kneeshaw:** Yes, we would use a licensed valuer.

**Mr M. HUGHES:** My question was about how Keystart has responded to the financial challenges faced by customers in relation to COVID-19. I think the minister has probably adequately answered that, unless he has something else to add? I would be interested if he has.

**The CHAIR:** Member for Kalamunda, just ask your question.

**Mr M. HUGHES:** Does the minister have anything to the response he made to the member for Carine with respect to the way Keystart has responded to the financial challenges felt by many of its customers?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** This might be interesting for the member for Carine as well. There was a range of things put in place to make sure we could respond to any hardships so we bolstered the team internally, on the risk side, or what is the term—anyway, the crew, the financial fitness crew, and they are very, very good at working with the clients. So additionally to that put into the arrangements where they could defer repayments where they are in hardship, and again they worked with us on that. We put in free financial counselling as well on top of that so they can get independent counselling to ensure they have a really good understanding of where they are at and they can make decisions. One of the biggest challenges they had was where the mortgages fell into risk, it was around employment; people fell out of employment but they had no knowledge of how they would be coming back into employment. I am very proud of the agency for being able to work with those to actually identify where they can come back into the employment market and at what rate, including adjustments to their repayments if they picked up part-time or casual work. So the whole objective is to keep the house going.

The member for Carine referred to negative equity. I want to make the point that the idea of Keystart is to get people into a home, not to make an investment. Ideally, the two act in the great Australian tradition of providing a long-term wealth vehicle, so looking at negative equity in a particular period must be taken in context of the overall life of the asset and what its return is. It is typically seven to 10 years in Australia that we have seen a doubling of house prices. These things come and go with the various challenges of the cycle. We have all lived through that ourselves, potentially with home ownership, so this is no different. The concept of negative equity only becomes a significant challenge if it cannot be serviced or they go to sell the property.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** In terms of the interest rate charged by Keystart, has the minister given any consideration to reviewing how that rate is calculated or determined? I know it works on something to do with average of the banks et cetera, but it is quite a high rate relative to where everything else is sitting at the moment, and obviously these are some of the most vulnerable people potentially in terms of financially where they find themselves to get one of these loans, so has the minister given any consideration to reviewing the rate on Keystart loans?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** We did. The average of the big four is the one that is used. The challenge was—it is still just an average—that the big four did not move as one, as they do. Typically, they move up and down on the cash rate. I will make this point, that when somebody comes into Keystart, they pay two per cent of a deposit. They also do not attract lender's mortgage insurance, and they typically qualify for a first home owner's grant and the aggregate effect of that actually extends to about a five-year discount on what they would have paid if they had gone and done it on the open commercial market. The other point is we need to provide an incentive for them to come off the book. We are not a bank that wants to keep a customer for life; we want to get them out and into the retail market. So having an incentive to move to a better rate at that four or five-year mark is really important.

**Mr A. KRSTICEVIC:** So how many have come off the book in the last 12 months?

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** I do not know.

**The CHAIR:** That completes the examination of the Keystart Housing Scheme Trust. Thank you very much.

[5.00 pm]

**Division 26: Education, \$5 013 410 000 —**

Ms J.M. Freeman, Chair.

Mr P. Papalia, Minister for Tourism representing the Minister for Education and Training.

Ms L. Rodgers, Director General.

Mr S. Baxter, Deputy Director General, Schools.

Mr J. Peckitt, Deputy Director General, Education Business Services.

Ms K. Properjohn, Executive Director, Statewide Services.

Mr J. Fischer, Executive Director, Infrastructure.

Ms P. Beamish Burton, Executive Director, Finance and Commercial Services.

Mr J. Bell, Executive Director, Strategy and Policy.

Mr A. Blagaich, Executive Director, School Curriculum and Standards.

Mr D. Stewart, Executive Director, Workforce.

Ms M. Sands, Executive Director, Recovery Coordination.

Ms. F. Hunt, Executive Director, Professional Standards and Conduct.

[Witnesses introduced.]

**The CHAIR:** This estimates committee will be reported by Hansard. The daily proof *Hansard* will be available tomorrow. The Chair will ensure that as many questions as possible are asked and that both questions and answers are short and to the point. If an adviser needs to answer from the lectern, will they please state their name prior to their answer. 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 only be examined in relation to their portfolio responsibilities.

The minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee, and I ask the minister to clearly indicate what supplementary information will be provided. I will then allocate a reference number. Supplementary information should be provided to the principal clerk by Friday, 30 October 2020. I caution members that if a minister asks that a matter be put on notice, it is up to the member to lodge that through the online questions system.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** Minister, I refer to page 386 and the psychology services grant in the table under "Expenses". Obviously, the psychology services grant is one of the programs being offered. Can the minister give a breakdown of the number of school psychologists that are funded through this grant, and what is the spread of those between public and private sector schools?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Okay.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** It is \$4.605 million.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Yes. The line item to which the member refers is for non-government schools. There is no change in the funding for those schools as the levels of funding provided under current service level agreements are due to continue under new agreements effective until 2020–21. Was the member's question on the breakdown?

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** Yes, my question was on the breakdown between the Catholic and other schools with respect to the psychology services grant, and also how many psychologists are funded through that program, and if it is at all possible to get a list of the schools that are receiving assistance through that program, that would be really helpful.

[5.10 pm]

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Because they are not government, we do not have the granular breakdown of which schools are in the different sectors, but we do have a percentage. Funding has been allocated in accordance with student numbers. Catholic schools receive 53 per cent and other independent schools receive 47 per cent. That results in \$2.419 million being allocated to Catholic education and \$2.186 million being allocated to independent schools for 2018–19, and it looks as though, as I indicated earlier, that is unchanged. What was the member's question on the state schools?

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** I presume that there is matching funding within the Department of Education budget. What is the value of the psychology services program to the government-funded schools?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** That is embedded, so that is why the member cannot see it; it is not this line.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** Yes.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** But it is the highest number of school psychs that has ever been supported. In 2019, it was 355.7 FTE; in 2020, it is 362.71.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** Is there a value attached to those?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** The cost associated with the psychs is embedded in the overall budget, but that is the number of psychs that are funded. No, I cannot give that information.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** There is not actually a line item attached to the amount?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** No, it is embedded within the department's funding.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** With it being embedded within the department's funding, are those psychologists funded from the individual school's allocation, or is there a separate bucket that the department provides to the schools on top of their single budget allocation?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** It comprises a central allocation, but, in addition to that, individual schools can choose to fund additional psych services, and some do. The overarching observation is that it is the biggest number of school psychs in history by a significant number. If we look retrospectively at funding for school psychs in the public sector, the numbers were substantially lower. For example, we currently have 362.7 FTE. In 2012, there were 277.2. It is a really serious increase, and it has increased every year.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** Further to those psychologists, my understanding—correct me if I am wrong—is that a unit within the Department of Education comprises a group of psychologists who can be deployed to schools for particular circumstances such as suicides and that sort of thing.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Yes, in times of trauma.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** Yes, and trauma. Does that group have a name? People call it the “flying squad”, but obviously it does actually have a name within the department. I would like to understand the number of psychologists that are in that program, and how schools get access to that program.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** The team to which the member refers is the statewide School Psychology Service. It provides support not only in the event of a traumatic incident, but also for disabilities, and other advice and support services.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** Just to clarify further, I am trying to understand this. I know that schools sort of band together and employ a psychologist between them to support their students. I want to know whether those psychologists who are employed by the schools are called in to form part of this unit if required, or if there is a separate unit that is dedicated to specific incidents in schools?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** I am informed that it is a team. It is an asset and a resource that can be called upon. The member is probably familiar with incidents herself. When there was quite a horrific car crash incident at Comet Bay College, the college had its own psych and drew on other psychs who were appropriately trained. It was a combination.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** This is probably my final question on this; I expect others have questions that they want to ask, and I am not going to hog all the time. Minister, how many psychologists are employed as part of that group, and are all positions filled at the moment?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** I am going to have to ask the member to put that question on notice. The advisers here do not have the answer.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** Is there any way we could have that information provided by way of supplementary information? That would give the minister a two-week time frame to provide it. Parliament will prorogue before questions on notice can be answered.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Yes, I guess so. I undertake to provide to the member the number of psychologists in the statewide School Psychology Service.

*[Supplementary Information No B14.]*

**Ms L. METTAM:** I refer to page 382, line item “National School Chaplaincy Program”. That has been a valued program in my community, and I notice that it is only funded until 2021–22. Can the minister explain why there is no funding beyond this period, and can we expect this program to then cease?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** As I am getting the answer, I can tell the member that that is a Labor program that was initiated by Kim Beazley Senior, I believe, and the Beazley family have a great sense of ownership over that initiative. We have been very supportive of it throughout our term of government. At a time when nationwide school chaplaincy was under some degree of pressure on the eastern seaboard, we defended and supported it. As the member is probably aware, it is part-funded by the federal government as well.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Yes.

[5.20 pm]

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** At the moment, there is no intention at all to cease school chaplaincy. That line item is just the federal government funding. The state government also funds it. This government has always supported and will

continue to support school chaplaincy. I will make the observation, though, that in Western Australia, our chaplains do not proselytise. They are not there to recruit people to specific religions or religious beliefs. They provide a great asset to individual schools in terms of mentoring support to both students and the teacher body.

**Ms L. METTAM:** That is why we like it.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** That is right, and everyone in Western Australia understands that. There is some controversy on the eastern seaboard because that is not the case. Historically, on the eastern seaboard, school chaplains have gone into schools and attempted to convert people to a particular religious view. That is specifically not what they do in Western Australia. It is a commendable service that is wholeheartedly supported by the McGowan government and has been since before we were in office, and there is no intention of it being under any threat.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** Minister, just a little bit further on the mental health support programs offered by the department, at page 369, the fifth dot point specifically refers to —

... improve positive mental health in schools ... further expand training to staff through the Gate Keeper Suicide Prevention and Youth Mental Health First Aid programs.

I understand that this has been an area of focus for the department. I would appreciate a breakdown of the existing health support and programs that are being offered to schools, and, if possible, an indicator of the schools that are availing themselves of the programs that the department has developed.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** I can imagine that providing details of the specific programs that are available will not be that challenging, but breaking it down to every single school and which schools are adopting which programs is going to have to be a question on notice. There are over 800 schools.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** I am not expecting a list of all the schools, just an indicator of the percentage buy-in of the schools into the programs, if that is available.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** With the response to suicide and self-harm, all school staff and agencies interacting with youth at risk of suicidal behaviour can access Gatekeeper suicide prevention training. The Department of Education employs two FTE school psychologists to coordinate and deliver the program, which is funded by the Mental Health Commission. The school response to suicide and self-harm in schools involves strengthening interagency partnerships to support public and non-government schools and young people, and the Gatekeeper suicide prevention training, coordination, delivery and support across the three education systems or sectors. In 2019–20, the school response program trained 620 participants in Gatekeeper suicide prevention workshops, including 318 department staff. For the coordination and delivery of teen mental health first aid, in 2019–20, 2 963 students from 26 statewide public and non-government schools completed the teen mental health first aid course. The school response program also activates the interagency communication process to facilitate support for vulnerable students upon the verification of a suspected suicide of a young person. It oversees formalisation of a suicide postvention feedback and learning process to enable continuous improvement of service coordination when responding to a suspected suicide in schools across the systems or sectors. It is responsible for updating and embedding the “School Response and Planning Guidelines for Students with Suicidal Behaviour and Non-Suicidal Self-Injury”. The Gatekeeper suicide prevention training is for professionals or paraprofessionals whose roles bring them into regular contact with people at risk of suicide. Teen mental health first aid training increases awareness, reduces stigma and encourages help-seeking in year 10, 11 and 12 students. Schools require 10 per cent of their staff to be trained in youth mental health first aid to be eligible to access teen mental health first aid training.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** The minister said that there were 620 participants, including 318 from the department. Were the departmental staff teachers in schools? I am just trying to work out if this training is available to all teachers or if this is a specific Department of Education public school initiative.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Sorry; what was the last bit of the question?

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** The minister said that there were 620 participants, including 318 from the department. I want to know if the program and this training is available to non-government schools as well as government schools, and if that variance reflects that.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** It is across the entire spectrum, so public, independent and Catholic schools.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** Okay. My understanding is that the Mental Health Commission provides the program; is that right? Does the commission then collaborate with the education department to provide that program to all of the school sector, or does the school sector access it through the Mental Health Commission?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** As I said at the start, two FTE school psychs coordinate delivery of the program, which is funded by the Mental Health Commission.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** I have a final question on this issue. Obviously, they are the two key programs. I am interested to know whether other mental health support or training programs are offered to teachers to generally assist with the health and wellbeing of students. Obviously, primary schools and high schools need different approaches. I am just interested to know what mental health programs are available to our kids via their schools.

[5.30 pm]

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Those are the two programs that are targeted at students, but schools also have access to the positive parenting program, or Triple P, which is a comprehensive multilevel parent training program that provides universal and targeted parenting support. That is support for parents more broadly. Also, the government made an election commitment to provide additional resources for mental health in schools, and 300 schools have been provided with the equivalent of 0.1 FTE level 3 classroom teachers to implement a coordinated whole-school approach to mental health. Participating schools have been provided with access to professional learning, which is through the Gatekeeper suicide prevention and youth mental health first aid programs, and access to evidence-based mental health and social and emotional learning programs and resources. I will give the member a little more information about the extent of the reach of those two programs. By the end of 2019, 97 per cent of the 300 participating schools had undertaken either or both of the Gatekeeper suicide prevention and youth mental health first aid professional learning programs.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** With the interruptions to schooling due to COVID, what has the participation rate been for training for teachers in this area this year? Obviously, they have had a lot to do and lots of responsibilities thrust upon them. I just want to get an understanding of whether we have fallen behind and whether some catch-up is needed.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** We need to remember that education in Western Australia did not really stop. In Western Australia, we kept our schools open. There was a short period before the Easter school holidays when, for a moment—probably less than four days—people were told, “If you can keep your kids at home, do.” On return from the school holidays in April, within a week, the schools were back at 93 per cent attendance, as I recall. That is from my memory. At that time, Victoria, for instance, was at about three per cent attendance, and New South Wales and Queensland had pretty low numbers as well, and for many weeks if not months afterwards, those states were staging return to school in different weird combinations of primary and secondary and different classes and different return rates. But Western Australia led the way in ensuring that our schools remained largely open therefore enabling people to keep their kids in school and parents to go to work. In term 2, when we probably would have expected the greatest impact, there was only one teacher-only day. The Western Australian Department of Education’s response was extraordinary, actually, and we should be really proud of and thankful for what it achieved, because that is a big contributor to our economy being so strong compared with those states that are trailing us.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** Has there been any interruption to the training for these programs? I know that the department and schools, notwithstanding that they were open, have still had to gear up with COVID safety plans, COVID cleaning programs and all those sorts of things. It is not a trick question; I just want to understand whether the training of those teachers has continued or there is a backlog that might need to be caught up?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** The member should remember that, as I was informed earlier on, our election commitment targeted 300 schools, and at the end of 2019, 97 per cent of them had completed the training. We are talking about a very small number of non-completion. I am informed that continuity was maintained throughout this time, but most of the people in those schools had been trained prior to COVID.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** That is terrific; well done to everyone involved. With ongoing training that might be required, obviously these programs get updated quite regularly. Is there funding in the budget for an ongoing retraining commitment with respect to the implementation of these programs?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** We have the two FTE psychs in the department dedicated to delivering those services and that training, and they are funded. That has not changed. They were the people who delivered the programs in the first place.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** Yes. Is that training delivered as part of the professional development days that teachers have within schools, or do the teachers need to go offsite to receive it?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** It is a bit of a combination, so, yes, they do both.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** My question is on page 381 and the income statement table, under the heading “Total Income”. I refer specifically to the agricultural education farms provision trust fund and the 20 per cent dividend that the Department of Education takes from that fund.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Which line is the member referring to?

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** It is under “Other revenue”.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** In the income statement table?

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Yes.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Where is “Other revenue”? Oh, down the bottom—“Income from state government”.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Yes, that is it. I am asking about the agricultural education farms provision trust fund and the 20 per cent dividend that the Department of Education takes from that fund. What was the total figure taken out for the period July 2019 to June 2020?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** I am sorry; the matter that the member is referring to is not covered by that line item. That line item is \$0.9 million approved to cover expenses held over to pay the Insurance Commission of Western Australia

with respect to civil legal claims through the court system on childhood sexual abuse alleged to have occurred or related to activities of any government school or former country high school authority, so it is not the matter the member is referring to.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Can the minister pinpoint where that figure appears in this budget? It does not appear to be listed.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** The problem the member has is that he has to identify what part of the budget he is referring to.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** That is why I referred to “Other revenue”.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Yes, but that “Other revenue” refers specifically to money that has been allocated for potential civil action and the consequences of those civil actions, not to what the member is talking about.

**The CHAIR:** Do you want to come back to it, member for Roe?

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** I think I might have to.

**The CHAIR:** Okay. Member for Thornlie.

**Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE:** Thank you, Chair. I refer to page 370, and the thirteenth point, which mentions the Aboriginal girls engagement program. I must say that there is an ambiguity about that term that I am uneasy with. In my electorate, there is a Clontarf Academy at Yule Brook College, and it does a fantastic job with the young men. I know it has made a huge difference in our community. Can the minister please provide further information on this program—perhaps we could call it the “helping Aboriginal girls stay at school” program—and how it could support female Aboriginal students?

[5.40 pm]

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Sure. I thank the member for the question and for his interest in this matter. School attendance is the single most important factor in a student’s success at school. We know from research that if a student does not feel safe and supported at school, their risk of disengagement increases, which leads to non-attendance. A number of outstanding service providers are working in our schools every day to keep kids engaged and at school. Their approach and supports vary based on the cohort they work with in order to provide targeted support. In 2019–20, the Department of Education provided funding to Glass Jar Australia, SHINE Inspire Achieve Belong, the Wirrpanda Foundation and Ricky Grace’s girls academy. I know that organisation; Ricky is great and it is a brilliant program. It is Role Models and Leaders Australia Girls Academy; I did not read the entire name of the program. Ricky Grace runs the marketing around “What about the girls?”, which is a fair cop. It is a fair observation. That organisation delivers programs for young Aboriginal women in schools. The 2020–21 budget provides an extra \$11.6 million over four years for engagement programs for young Aboriginal women, which includes \$1.5 million in 2020–21. Maybe they will call it “young Aboriginal women” in the future; it might make the member less uncomfortable.

**Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE:** Yes, rather than an engagement program!

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Yes. The funding will go towards a variety of programs that encourage health and wellbeing, post-school pathways to employment, developing leadership skills and celebrating connection to traditions and culture. The Department of Education is undertaking a procurement process to appoint a panel of service providers for engagement programs for young Aboriginal women. The panel arrangements will improve the number of programs available for students and ensure continuity of service. I think that is probably enough for the member.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** I agree; let us call it the “girls empowerment program”. Minister, is it possible to get a rundown of the towns and schools that the programs are being delivered into?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Where they are located? I am sure that is something that could be achieved.

**The CHAIR:** To Balga?

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** Yes, and Girrawheen!

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Hang on, I might have over-committed. We do not have it here, but I do not think that is any great challenge. I undertake to provide to the member by way of supplementary information the school locations, or the town or community locations —

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** The school locations would be fantastic, because that is probably a bit easier.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** The school locations of the following programs: Glass Jar Australia, SHINE Inspire Achieve Belong, the Wirrpanda Foundation and Ricky Grace’s Role Models And Leaders Australia Girls Academy.

[*Supplementary Information No B15.*]

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** Thank you. Minister, I refer to page 377, under “Miscellaneous”, which is a heading about halfway down the page, line item “High Priority Maintenance and Minor Works Program Capital Component”. I am asking this on behalf of one of my colleagues. An incident occurred last month at Hillarys Primary School whereby several students were hit by ceiling panels that fell from a classroom roof. Can the minister confirm that the repairs to the ceiling of Hillarys Primary School will be included in that high priority maintenance program?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** I am really happy to talk about the high-priority maintenance program, because this is an extraordinary initiative the likes of which the Western Australian education system has never seen. The scale of the investment coupled with the recovery package is the single biggest investment in infrastructure and maintenance that has ever been undertaken. It is extraordinary. I can return to that in a moment.

To answer the member's question about Hillarys Primary School, the ceilings in block A and the staffroom were replaced and the block C ceilings were remediated during the October school holidays. I am told that more work has been identified and is being investigated as a matter of urgency. The block in which it was thought there is still work to be done was immediately isolated, and the work has already been funded through the recurrent maintenance budget, so it does not need that additional maintenance blitz money. That aside, I do want to talk about that. The maintenance blitz comprises \$200 million, so every single public school across Western Australia has received additional funding. I can attest, as the member will no doubt know as she has some new schools in her electorate, that even the newer schools got a boost of maintenance money out of that blitz. By virtue of it being controlled by individual principals, that will create 3 150 WA jobs, including 1 890 in metropolitan Perth and 1 260 in regional WA, all undoubtedly going to subcontractors and small businesses in local communities. This was before COVID; this was when it was needed as a boost to the economy. The member will be aware that subsequently there has been an announcement of an enormous recovery package of \$492.2 million for 63 public schools across WA over the next four years, which continues that measure. We are essentially seeing an extraordinary pipeline of work for small businesses right across Western Australia, and we are seeing a massive uplift in the state of our school infrastructure right across the state. It is an incredible contribution, and I am very proud that that has been possible, not just at this time, but at any time. It is extraordinary.

**Ms L. METTAM:** I have a question on the high-priority maintenance and minor works program.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** The maintenance blitz?

**Ms L. METTAM:** The minister's maintenance blitz, yes.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** The biggest maintenance blitz in the history of Western Australia—that one?

**Ms L. METTAM:** Yes.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Okay.

**Ms L. METTAM:** I note that Derby District High School recently had some unfortunate press and a lot of community pressure around the need for new toilet, shower and laundry facilities. I assume that was funded as part of this program?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** I know the report to which the member refers. The project to replace the toilet, shower and laundry facilities for secondary students has been funded, but not as part of the blitz. That is another contribution in addition to the \$200 million blitz. An amount of \$900 000—that is not insignificant—has been dedicated to that task.

**Ms L. METTAM:** While we are on that topic, the minister would be aware that the school is in a state of disrepair. As I understand it, there is an issue with the condition of Derby District High School. What plans does the Minister for Education have to make further improvements to Derby District High School?

[5.50 pm]

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** The minister is all over this; as the member for Vasse knows, she has already announced the biggest maintenance blitz in history for education infrastructure in Western Australian. That \$200 million saw money go to every single school, including Derby, so in September 2019 they were allocated a further \$1.3 million as part of the maintenance blitz stimulus package, including that amount I just told you about, the school's primary wing getting additional funding, and a secondary building also receiving additional money. That school did receive in previous years, not too far in the past, some \$15 million in infrastructure upgrades, so I have no doubt that the most sensitive, the most critical, infrastructure upgrade requirements were featured in that story at that school and that, as the member knows, has been rectified, or is funded for rectification.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Is a report on the condition of the buildings generally at that school publicly available, or is that possible to be tabled as supplementary information?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** What does the member mean?

**Ms L. METTAM:** I imagine, in response to the issues that were raised by the community and by the media —

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** They are getting \$900 000 to rectify it, and I am assuming that that \$900 000 has been costed, so they know.

**Ms L. METTAM:** The minister is talking about funds to fix or provide a toilet, shower and laundry facilities. What has been highlighted by the community is that there are significant issues with the state of the school. In response to the minister's suggestion that the Minister for Education and Training is all over it, I suggest that the minister had to respond after some pretty negative media about this particular school. The question I am asking is: is there a report or is something available that the minister can table, whether by supplementary information, that can confirm that the state of the Derby high school is now up to standard?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** If the member wants to put it on notice, I will see if there is one.

**Ms L. METTAM:** We actually cannot put it on notice because we can only seek that the minister provide that information by supplementary information. I do not think we are able to put questions on notice.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** Questions on notice is closed because the submission time has passed.

**The CHAIR:** Members, just so you know, you can still put them in, and ministers may answer them before the required time, but the required time obviously goes after the period of time. But you can still put them in. I have just been instructed —

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** That is right. The standing orders are the standing orders, so whether the member does it or not is up to her. It is the bit relevant to them.

I am informed that the school has its infrastructure condition reports, or the element of that. This is a really massive document for all the schools, but a component of it refers to that school, so it has it. If the member wants to get it, she could ask the school, but the school has it.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Are we able to request that from the school? Is that possible? Is that a direction of the minister? Is he suggesting the opposition ask the school for the information?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** I am just saying that if the member wants it from me, she can put it on notice, but there might be another avenue for her if she is concerned that they are not adequately supported.

**The CHAIR:** Shall we move on? Further question.

**Ms L. METTAM:** I am just wondering whether the minister can provide the information as supplementary information?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** No. I said put it on notice.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** I refer to page 375, “Secondary Schools”, line item 14. This is in regard to Hedland Senior High School. Considering its infrastructure works, can I also congratulate John Fischer on his public service medal earlier this year. Well done, John! Minister, Hedland Senior High School is listed with \$15 million worth of upgrades, and in the notes it says the construction of new sports hall is listed as having commenced and due to open in 2021. What has happened to the following upgrades and construction commitments, which were listed on the 5 June 2020 media statement, including staff facilities, four general learning classrooms, STEM facilities, IT labs et cetera.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Yes, I remember that massive investment that was put into that school. I will just get some advice.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Now we seem to have contained it to two areas, a sports hall and student accommodation.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** I am pretty certain the school has seen more investment than any time in its history since the buildings were put up, but I will just get some advice.

I remember when that happened and that commitment. It was extraordinary that we inherited such a disaster from the previous government. I remember the significant contribution that was required to address some serious issues that appeared to have escaped the local mayor when the member for Roe was in government. It suddenly became apparent to him when we were in government. That aside, part of it has been completed. The remainder will be completed at the time that the sports hall is completed in 2021.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** So the four general learning classrooms, the STEM facilities, the IT labs, the home economics lab, the ed support centre et cetera.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Does the member want to know which bits?

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** They were a part of the 5 June press release from the Minister for Education and Training.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** From 5 June, when?

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** It is 2020; but they are not included in this budget.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** That is not that long ago.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** That is right.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** What is the member saying?

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** I am saying that only the sports hall and student accommodation are included as part of this budget. Just \$15 million is listed, and they are the only two items listed, so the question is: what is happening to the four classrooms et cetera?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Yes. The four classrooms, general learning areas, are in the sports hall package, so they are part of that package.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** They are part of that package?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Yes; and they will be completed in 2021. It is a lot of work. It was not that long ago.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** It is just not detailed at all in the budget, that is all.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Yes.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Is the \$15 million funding from the government or is this part of the BHP royalty deal?

**The CHAIR:** Given the time I will vacate the chair until 7.00 pm. Thank you very much, people.

*Meeting suspended from 6.00 to 7.00 pm*

**The CHAIR:** Members, we are still dealing with division 26. The Member for Roe is still asking questions of the minister, I gather.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I partially asked a question just before we suspended. Is the \$15 million that I pointed out part of the BHP royalty—

**The CHAIR:** Can you just give us a page reference considering we have had a break?

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** That was page 375, “Secondary Schools”, line item 14.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** I recall your question being something about the money from, I am assuming consolidated or some sourced from BHP or something? Is that what you said?

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** That is correct—part of royalties.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** It is all taxpayers’ money. Regardless of where it was sourced, it is taxpayers’ money and when it was delivered to the school, it was taxpayers’ money.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** What I am really asking is what was the source of the money, the BHP royalty —

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** I know the agrarian socialists like to break the budget up into fragmented —

**The CHAIR:** Minister, it is early on in the evening.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** I am allowed to answer the questions, Chair.

**The CHAIR:** I think you are flattering the member.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Okay, sorry—yes, good point. No, but I know the Nationals WA, like to break the budget up into unmanageable thousands of components, and we never know with the Liberals and Nationals who is in charge of what bit of the budget. They make claims. We are about to enter an election campaign where they will make their own promises and duplicate each other. If we added them all up, they would bankrupt the state again. We have just taken a long time to partially repair the damage that they inflicted last time round.

**Ms L. METTAM:** The government would want to shut down Moora college.

**The CHAIR:** Member!

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Can I say, there is a budget, and the money in the budget is taxpayers’ money.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Minister, Hardie House is listed in the media statement.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Pardon?

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Hardie House is listed in the media statement of the minister.

**The CHAIR:** Is it somewhere in the budget?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Is the member referring to a new question?

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** I refer to part of my previous question which was relating to the media statement.

**The CHAIR:** Line item and page, and member for Vasse, you are next.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Number 14, page 375, relating to the fact that Hardie House is part of the upgrades and construction. It is \$1 million to \$1.5 million, according to the estimated tender. Does that mean that the remaining —

**The CHAIR:** Is that linked to Hedland Senior High School?

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Yes, Hedland Senior High School—Hardie House is part of that. Is the remaining \$13.5 million for only the sports hall, or have we got an allocation for four general learning classrooms?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Member, I have already answered that. Part of the package that will be delivered with the sports hall will be the four general learning areas, and it will be delivered in 2021.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** It will be 2021. Is the minister comfortable that that the whole suite will all be delivered?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Yes. So there will not be any need for the member’s candidate to make any commitments on it because we will have already done it.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Yes. I refer to page 376 where a commitment is listed at item 34, under the WA recovery plan, where there is the funding for the Roebourne District High School, \$42 million. Is the minister aware that the member for the Pilbara is purported to have stated that the improvement to —

**The CHAIR:** Member, we are really dealing with the budget, not hearsay.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** It is not question time. The member has to be accurate and reflect the budget. She has to ask a question about the budget.

**The CHAIR:** You can interrogate the budget allocations; you cannot allege —

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** The member cannot make up stuff like she normally does.

**Ms L. METTAM:** What is wrong with you?

**The CHAIR:** Normal standing orders apply. Have you got some question about that other question?

**Ms L. METTAM:** Yes, I do have a question about this.

Minister, I refer to the investment stated for Roebourne District High School. Will this have any impact on the investment in this high school. Is there likely to be any impact on the future operations at the school in Wickham?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Wickham?

**Ms L. METTAM:** Yes.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Look, member, I am not sure I understand the question. The member is asking about, a commitment to the infrastructure at Roebourne high school—a massive \$42 million commitment. Wickham is not mentioned there. I know it is located down the road, but where is it relevant to this line?

**The CHAIR:** Member for Vasse, would you like to clarify that for the minister?

**Ms L. METTAM:** What I seek to clarify is that some concern has been raised in the community that the upgrade, while supported, may have an impact on the future of the Wickham high school. I would just like to know whether there is likely to be any impact there?

**The CHAIR:** So, member, what you are asking the minister is whether there is an impact on the viability of the Wickham school; is that correct?

**Ms L. METTAM:** Yes, as a result of that —

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** The member is referring to some hearsay, gossip or whatever in the community. I do not think that is relevant for the budget process. If the member has a specific line in the budget to which she is referring and there is a relevant question, I am fine to answer it. But the gossip down the corner shop about some school is not really relevant for estimates.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** If there are two schools and one is having a lot of money spent on it, it could have an impact on the other school, and I would have thought the department might have something to say about that.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** The interesting thing, now that the member, has raised it, is that it is not one school that is getting money spent on it. It is the most significant maintenance commitment, infrastructure commitment to the education department. The member was not here earlier on, so I will be able to reflect on what is actually being done by the government. It is in two tranches. It is the biggest investment in school infrastructure in the history of Western Australia. We are talking about a maintenance blitz, pre-COVID of \$200 million. Every single school received a component. The member for South Perth's schools got more than mine, but every single school got a share of that \$200 million blitz. Beyond that, the COVID recovery package is \$492.2 million for 63 public schools across WA over the next four years, an extraordinary commitment. The suggestion that somehow some unnamed source of gossip is something that I should be responding to in respect of one particular school listed here that is receiving \$42 million, I do not agree is a relevant matter. I think it is not relevant. If the member for Vasse can quote someone—a specific source that is credible, is reasonable and is asking about a matter of concern—that would be fine, but that is not what is happening.

**Ms L. METTAM:** I am stating that they were public comments made by the member for Pilbara.

**The CHAIR:** Member, we need to talk about how the allocation of funds impacts on the programs nominated in the budget. So to the extent that you are asking that, the minister should be able to answer it. Quotes from third parties is not useful.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Alleged quotes.

**Mr Y. MUBARAKAI:** Minister, I refer to the fourth paragraph on page 374 regarding the new primary schools. As the minister is aware Harrisdale and its surrounding suburbs have seen a continuous amount of exponential growth. I am pleased that North Harrisdale primary will open in 2021. Would the minister please give us an update on what is being done to ease the current pressure that is on the schools in the area?

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** That is a dorothy dixer.

[7.10 pm]

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** We can actually do that.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** Really?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** That is a good question, member, relevant to budget item 4 on page 374. It is a good opportunity to talk about the multiple new schools in the member's area, one of the fastest growing parts of the state. The government is focused on delivering education infrastructure, including new schools where they are most needed, including in the member's electorate. North Harrisdale will become the third school the McGowan government has opened in the Jandakot electorate since we came into government in 2017. Last year the Minister for Education and Training announced another one set to open in Treeby in 2022. It is amazing how fast that place is growing. As the member has indicated, new schools are important for growing suburbs, so I am pleased to know that the member's community is excited for their new school. The member also asked what we are doing to ease enrolment pressures in the area. This a consistent theme with respect to questions about infrastructure. It is extraordinary that opposition members have the gall to confront this matter, but we inherited an incredible amount of neglect with regard to proper planning in the significant area, and possibly why there was such a massive swing when the member won his seat.

**The CHAIR:** Minister, I think —

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** No; please!

**Ms L. METTAM:** Hot air—come on!

**The CHAIR:** As they say in *Dragnet*, “Just the facts, ma'am”.

**Ms L. METTAM:** He does not want any questions from us.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Seriously! The government has invested \$466.2 million in 2020–21 to build new schools and expand existing ones to meet the student enrolment across the state. That includes an allocation of \$28 million in this budget for the acquisition of land for new primary schools. That funding will allow the Department of Education to acquire sites for new schools earlier and ensure they are ready for development when a new school is needed. We are also committed to reviewing the planning methodology for new schools and the Minister for Education and Training and the Minister for Planning and their respective agencies have been working together to identify a better model for predicting the need for new schools and growth and infill in areas like the member's.

**Mr M. HUGHES:** I refer to item 15 on page 370, “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency”. We have touched on some of this. I am referring to the \$489.3 million outlined for capital projects across Western Australia. In doing so I just have to make a comment about two schools in my electorate.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Go for it, I would appreciate that.

**Mr M. HUGHES:** Lesmurdie Primary School, 100 years old this year—it is much like Port Hedland—and Kalamunda Senior High School, which has its sixtieth. Can the minister provide me with an information update as to how this investment will benefit students across the state, including those in Kalamunda?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Thanks, member. It is another part of this incredible investment. It is really important that some of these older schools receive some much needed care and attention. In September 2019, the member will remember the Premier and Minister for Education and Training announced about a \$200 million maintenance blitz. The member's electorate got more than mine—\$2.5 million in funding. That included \$399 237 for Kalamunda Primary School and \$583 267 for Gooseberry Hill Primary School. On top of that, post-COVID, we have had the incredible contribution with the recovery plan—\$5.5 billion across all manner of fields of endeavour across the state. In education, there is \$489.3 million in capital projects across WA schools over the forward estimates. The Minister for Education and Training, I am told, visited Lesmurdie Primary School on 12 August and said that they were thrilled to be receiving a school rebuild at \$15.2 million. Lesmurdie Primary School was built in 1920 and this year, as the member for Kalamunda said, it celebrates 100 years. The funding will deliver a new primary school for 370 students on the same site and will include new general and specialist classrooms, administration, recreational and play areas, covered assembly space and car parking. Kalamunda Senior High School is also receiving an \$18.3 million refurbishment as well as new purpose built facilities for both Kalamunda Senior High School as well as the Kalamunda Secondary Education Support Centre. The new build includes—is that the school that Rita Saffioti went to? The new build includes new classrooms, new library, information technology and laboratory, as well as the conversion of existing classrooms into new visual arts studios. The minister has made many visits to Kalamunda over the last three and a half years with the member, and it is great to see such strong advocacy for his community after years of neglect under his predecessors. The government is committed to providing high-quality education facilities for students across WA regardless of where they live.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** I refer to halfway down page 377 under “Land Acquisition: General”. Minister, I refer to the future land acquisition planning for agricultural colleges. What is the plan for future expansion or acquisition of surrounding land to improve the agricultural college footprint?

**The CHAIR:** Member, is there any indication that that line item includes that?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** That is what I am checking.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Well, this would be the only scenario that—as I understand it.

**The CHAIR:** So you are asking the minister does it include that? Yes.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Yes. I can advise that no component of the money reflected in that line item to the purchase of agricultural land.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Related to this, there is land next door to the Western Australian College of Agriculture, Narrogin, which is available. Has the department got a plan or a fund to actually access this type of opportunity to make sure that the agricultural colleges are still viable?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** I think what the member is talking about is something beyond specific annual budget allocation in the event that there is no money in this line item allocated to purchasing of land for that purchase. I suggest that if the member is talking about policy, longer horizon planning, he might want to put it on notice.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** I can refer to page 233 under the —

**The CHAIR:** In which case it is not a further question, because you have gone to another line item.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** I said investment program, if you like, in budget paper No 3.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Budget paper No 3?

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Yes. This is part of the asset investment program of education on the top line where it says “Education” under the asset investment program and the amount of \$456.2 million. I am trying to get to whether there any is opportunity under that particular investment program when opportunities like this arise?

[7.20 pm]

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** I think that is a component of the aforementioned biggest investment in education infrastructure in history by this government, or the biggest investment in history by any government. There has already been the \$200 million maintenance blitz for every school. I got a component of that. But beyond that there is a \$492 million allocation to 63 public schools across WA over the next three years. So that is the line that the member is referring to, I think.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** I think the minister is just adding to it, Madam Chair.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** That is it. I am just saying I think it is not really what the member is suggesting. This line is about that other investment that I have already referred to, which does not incorporate a purchase of land near Narrogin.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** That is right. As opportunities arise with farmland —

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** I think the member is speculating about what might be future policy, and I suggest he put that one on notice.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** It is not future policy; it is there and available. But I will leave it at that, Madam Chair, and I put my name on the list.

**The CHAIR:** Questions on notice would be your best bet, member. Member for Thornlie?

**Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE:** Thank you, Chair. I am referring to page 379 and the continuation of new works. The question really relates to education support in schools, and I refer to the new funding for education support facilities at Lakeland Senior High School and Canning Vale College. A very common issue raised with me by constituents is the need for support for students with disability. Can the minister advise how the government is supporting these students and their schools?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** I can find the Lakeland one. Is Canning Vale on a different page or something?

**Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE:** No; it is on page 379, and it is fairly alphabetical.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Yes, I can see it, sorry.

**Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE:** There is \$3.9 million for Canning Vale College education support, and \$5.4 million for Lakeland Senior High School education support.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** I thank the member. It is an issue that has been raised by parents and teachers everywhere. The schools are doing a great job to cater to needs of all their students, including children with disabilities, who require extra classroom support. In the 2020–21 budget, we have provided, as the member said, \$3.9 million to Canning Vale College, and \$5.5 million for Lakeland Senior High School. These facilities will be ready for the 2022 school year and will provide new teaching blocks with general and education support classrooms, associated storerooms and facilities, and an independent living skills classroom. With the growth in population in the southern corridor, Leeming Senior High School Education Support Centre has come under increasing enrolment pressure. These two new facilities will provide modern and inspiring facilities for all students, regardless of their needs. Through the WA recovery plan we have also invested \$2.5 million for an education support facility at Pine View Primary School

in south Baldivis, which the local member is very happy about. The member for Baldivis has been arguing for that for some time. He is celebrating that he has been delivered the funding. The government provides supplementary funding for students with disability through the individual disability allocation and educational adjustment allocation. At 30 June 2020, the total amount of individual disability allocations delivered to schools was \$355.4 million, up from \$332.8 million the year before. These allocations allow schools to target their resources so that students with disability can receive the classroom support they need to succeed. Supporting students with a disability and equipping schools with the resources they need to ensure success is a key priority for the government, and definitely front of mind for the minister.

**Ms L. METTAM:** I refer to page 233, under the “Asset Investment Program” —

**The CHAIR:** So that is a different volume?

**Ms L. METTAM:** Yes, budget paper No 3, page 233, under the “Asset Investment Program”. In terms of supporting the asset investment program for the Department of Education, can the minister guarantee that the McGowan government will not be revisiting the —

**The CHAIR:** No, member; I do not think that is a proper question. It needs to be factual.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Why not?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** It is estimates, not question time.

**The CHAIR:** It is about the content of the budget and how that money is going to be applied. It is not about seeking guarantees from someone who is in fact not the actual minister.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Okay.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** The member has to refer to a page and a line item, and refer the question to that specific point related to the budget.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Okay.

**The CHAIR:** If you want to ask a further question, put it a different way.

**Ms L. METTAM:** I will ask a different question.

**The CHAIR:** You will have to go on the list then. Member for South Perth.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** Minister, I am referring to budget paper No 2.

**The CHAIR:** Sorry, is there a problem, member?

**Ms L. METTAM:** Yes, there is a problem.

**The CHAIR:** Member for South Perth.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** Page 379, under “Additions and Improvements to Secondary Schools”. It is interesting that the minister flagged earlier that I might raise this, so I am not going to disappoint him. Regarding Como Secondary College, I met with the school council about 12 months ago and they had a wish list of things that needed to be done at this school. It is a 51-year-old school; it is growing and it has 900-odd students. Its wish list was \$26 million: \$12.5 million for a new performing arts centre; \$4.5 million for a new administration block; and, \$9 million for a new classroom block. The administration block has probably been there since the day it was built. While the \$1 million is appreciated by the president of the school council as a start—\$400 000 in this budget and \$600 000 in forward estimates—can the minister identify what this \$1 million will be spent on? Is the department able to tell us where this money will be spent?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** I will see whether I can do that. The member is referring to two components. Is one part of the maintenance blitz and one part of the big investment across the 63 schools?

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** No; I think the \$1 million was flagged earlier, in the first announcement.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** As part of the maintenance blitz?

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** Yes, I think so.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** I have a bit of detail around what that money is for. Is this part of the \$200 million maintenance blitz? No, it is not part of the maintenance blitz; it is part of the recovery package. The member did very well to get some; not every school got some in the recovery package. Some 63 schools across the state shared in that. I am told it is refurbishment to specialist classrooms, including materials, technology and textiles. Specialist classrooms in its performing arts area will also be refurbished. I remember the member asking about it in his grievance.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** No; it was in my speech on the budget.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** We talked about it and the member did reflect on the fact that those were elements of what they had hoped for, but obviously they had an aspiration for a greater amount of money. Not every school got money in that allocation in that package.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** There has been some talk about one day possibly amalgamating Kent Street Senior High School and Como Secondary College. When the department makes these decisions on spending money on schools like Como Secondary College, does it also look at the future, the demographic and the size of the catchment area? Como sits alongside Kent Street, which I notice has been given no funding. I am not sure whether it needs it because it is not in my electorate anymore. They are two old and well-known schools in fairly close proximity. Obviously, the department would have forward planning for the future for all our schools and how they are going to sit as the population and the density changes in certain areas, especially in some of the older areas where these schools were built many, many years ago. Some of them are bursting at the seams.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Was the member involved in any consultation around those schools?

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** There was some talk with the Treasurer, the member for Victoria Park.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Kent Street is in his electorate, is it?

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** Kent Street is in his, and both he and I looked at a possible amalgamation of two schools and building a new school.

[7.30 pm]

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** I am informed there was very wideranging consultation around the two schools, and that is still under consideration. The feedback has been received. It was a significant consultation and it is under consideration. I have not been informed about the specific detail of that consultation or the feedback. I think the department is aware of those matters that the member has raised in terms of two older schools and potentially consideration around future growth and the like.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** There was also some consideration in the time of the previous government, and the minister at the time was looking at the possibility of turning Como Secondary College into a K–12 school and including Curtin Primary School, which is a little primary school on a very valuable piece of land. Most people were quite acceptable of that, even though Curtin Primary School would have liked to go across to Como Secondary College and turn it into a K–12 school. Does the department like K–12 schools?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** It has some K–12 schools, but I am informed that that was not part of this consultation.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** No, it was separate.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** It aims to try to reduce transition disruption. That is an objective and an aim, but that particular option was not part of that conversation.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** It was not proceeded with.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** It was not part of the consultation, that I am aware of.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** My question relates to page 368, and the third line from the top under “New Initiatives” is “DETECT COVID-19 Schools Study”. Considering that \$1.1 million has already been spent in the 2019–20 year, are there any interim results; and, if not, when will the public be seeing the results of this study?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** What was the question again? Sorry; I was just reading the briefing.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Considering that \$1.1 million has already been spent in the previous financial year, are there any interim results; and, if not, when will the public see the results of this study?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** When it is completed. The entire study is not yet completed, but a module was completed in September. No cases of COVID were detected through the testing that was conducted. There are elements of the study that involve doing a baseline wellbeing survey across metropolitan and regional areas. Analysis is being undertaken by the consultants, the Telethon Kids Institute. There has been a very big reach with the survey across parents providing consent, and a very significant number of eligible students have attempted the survey, but the whole study has not yet been completed. When it is completed, the minister is planning to release the results.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Could the minister just briefly quantify what was asked in the survey?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** On 1 May 2020, the DETECT COVID-19 schools study was announced. Staff and students from 79 public schools, education support settings and residential facilities were participating in a research study partnership with the Telethon Kids Institute and the Department of Health to track the impact of COVID in schools. The aim of the study was to provide greater certainty around the COVID situation in WA schools and an understanding of the impact the pandemic has had on student wellbeing and mental health. The study includes swab testing a random sample of students and staff at each participating school and a wellbeing survey.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Is there a predicted time frame for the release of the results, considering that we are now four months after the end of the —

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** The key result is that there has been no COVID detected, quite obviously. We have had a fantastic result in Western Australia, having managed to have more than six months of no community transmission. All our schools and all the parents of children in those schools have benefited as a consequence of the efforts by the government to keep WA safe and strong. Undeniably, there is no community transmission in WA. There has been

demonstrably no COVID cases in schools. That is the primary indication from the study to date. Obviously, there are other elements of the study that incorporated the assessment of mental health and the like and those impacts. Those are the sorts of things that are being undertaken now in terms of the continued study. When that is complete, the minister will release it.

People anywhere else in Australia right now, certainly those in any other state, would not have had as good an outcome in terms of mental health for students in a pandemic. That is undeniable, because our schools were the least impacted. As I said earlier on, we did not really shut. For a very small period of time, people were advised that if they could keep their children at home, they should. That was in the order of four days, before the April school holidays. Immediately post the school holidays, we asked them to come back, and in very quick time people demonstrated the confidence they had in the system and in our state's protections and sent their kids back to school. Some of the outrageous claims made by high-profile commentators at the time were proven to be completely baseless.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Certainly, I congratulate the director general and the deputy director general on their handling of COVID in our school system and on giving confidence to a lot of our principals.

[7.40 pm]

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** I congratulate all the team, and that includes all our executives and also all the public servants right across the state. There is no one department that has contributed to this outcome; it has been an incredible achievement. We have to remember also in those early days, when there were really heartfelt and widespread concerns around the potential extent of the threat, the whole of government—I am talking about the whole of the bureaucracy; all the public servants in WA—was thrown at the effort of supporting, sustaining and protecting the people of WA against the COVID threat. A lot of that was about keeping people comfortable and informing them. I am going to make an observation. I do feel right now that this clear decision by the Liberal Party of WA, not the Nationals, to pursue the Premier in an outrageous and unfounded fashion is undermining —

**Ms L. METTAM:** What budget paper is that? What line item is that?

**The CHAIR:** Minister!

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** I am answering the member's question.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** I have not even asked my question yet.

**The CHAIR:** Minister!

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** It is undermining the confidence of the Western Australian community.

**The CHAIR:** Minister!

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** I have not even asked my question yet, Madam Chair.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** One of the pillars of public health is confidence in the public health system and confidence in the decision-making.

**The CHAIR:** Minister! I hoped I would not have to use that. Minister, I remind you that according to standing order 78, answers need to be relevant. I have given you a bit of leeway, but when I call you to order, I would be grateful if you could at least give me the courtesy of listening. Now, would you like to complete your answer?

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Madam Chair, I have not actually asked the question. The minister started making a speech before I asked my question.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Chair, I would like to refer to the nature of the studies about the mental health impact of COVID on students in our education system and their parents. Undeniably, what is being done by the Western Australian Liberal Party at the moment is undermining that mental health. That is a dangerous step, and I am disappointed in the members of the Liberal Party. I have great respect for people in the parliamentary party, but I think they made a bad decision, because when they undermine confidence in public health decisions for base political purposes, they undermine our ability to respond to the threat. It requires confidence in the wider public in the decision-making process and our initiatives.

**The CHAIR:** I will ask the member to repeat his question.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** I have not even got to ask it yet, Madam Chair.

**The CHAIR:** Do that, please.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** What provisions are in place should there unfortunately be a second wave? That is my question.

**The CHAIR:** That is a bit broader and it covers a number of departments.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** It is pursuant to this study, which has not been released.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Okay —

**The CHAIR:** Member, the question deals with a specific DETECT COVID schools study.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** I think it is more precise than the minister's answer, Madam Chair.

**The CHAIR:** The minister has said that the final results are under evaluation. I do not think there is anything more he can usefully add. Member for Jandakot, have you got a further question on that?

**Ms L. METTAM:** Can I have a further question on this topic?

**The CHAIR:** The member for Jandakot got my attention first, so he has a further question, and then you can have a further question.

**Mr Y. MUBARAKAI:** I refer to page 389 of volume 1 of budget paper No 2.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Stick to the question.

**Mr Y. MUBARAKAI:** It is regarding COVID. I am just asking a further question.

**The CHAIR:** I have just done a ruling on that. We are dealing with that specific line item, so you can ask it down the track.

**Mr Y. MUBARAKAI:** I will then. Thank you, Chair.

**The CHAIR:** Have you a further question on that particular study, member for Vasse? Go for it.

**Ms L. METTAM:** When will the evaluated study be made public, and can the minister confirm that it will be made public?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** I have said already that when it is completed, it will be made public by the minister.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Is that next year? Is it this year?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** It is probably early next year, understanding that the initial phase focused on determining whether we had COVID in our education system, and it confirmed that we did not, along with a lot of other testing in the community and a lot of other measures to determine whether we had community transmission, which are ongoing. There is an ongoing testing regime. There have been some ridiculous claims by people like Mathias Cormann and the member for Dawesville regarding Western Australia's preparation for —

**The CHAIR:** The question was —

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** This is specifically responding to the question about —

**Ms L. METTAM:** No; the minister answered it.

**The CHAIR:** No. The question was: when is it going to be released and when will it be public?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** I have told her.

**The CHAIR:** All right. If you have answered the question, we will move on.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Good.

**The CHAIR:** Member for Vasse, you have a different question on a different matter.

**Ms L. METTAM:** I refer to page 374 and “Asset Investment Program”. I note that it says that in 2020–21 \$456.2 million will be spent on capital works in education. Out of the \$456 million, how much has the commonwealth provided? Can we get a breakdown of the state and commonwealth contributions for that year in forward estimates?

**Mr Y. MUBARAKAI:** That is a good question.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Yes, it is a great question. With regard to the biggest capital investment in our education system in the history of Western Australia, the lion's share—the vast majority—of the money being invested is from the Western Australian state government, and there is a commonwealth grant of \$12.79 million.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** I refer to page 369 and paragraph 9, which refers to demand for online resources and the like. What upgrades are being made to ensure that regional students have access to online technologies? Obviously, this would have come to the fore during the COVID situation.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Yes, for the four days when they were not at school.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** There was a period of two or three weeks when the schools had to prepare.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** It was in the non-government sector. Yes, they had to prepare.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** I know about the non-governments, but I am talking about when the preparation levels were set up in case it had to go on for another term et cetera.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** The Department of Education funds bandwidth services for all public schools, with bandwidth representing around 20 per cent of the total ICT budget. Demand for online content and cloud services in schools continues to increase each year—regardless of the pandemic; it was happening before then—putting constant pressure on bandwidth and related budget items. Bandwidth is a finite resource, with varying availability costs and constraints across the state. The department started a project in 2019 to increase bandwidth at over 650 schools, and that was completed in September this year. Available bandwidth has tripled in more than 500 schools, and a further 18 schools will be upgraded by the end of 2020. ICT helps schools to manage and monitor their bandwidth consumption locally. It is an ongoing investment.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Can the minister tell me what is being done to enhance last-mile connectivity? Is the department involved in any way?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** The federal government finally funding an NBN that might be useful is probably going to have an impact.

**The CHAIR:** Can you just repeat your question?

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** What is being done to enhance last-mile connectivity? We have heard about bandwidth et cetera.

**The CHAIR:** That is fine; we heard the question.

[7.50 pm]

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** My glib answer may be quite accurate. As the member knows, last-mile connectivity is reliant upon the potential changes to federal government policy around the NBN. Like everybody else, we were delivered an inadequate service with the Turnbull government's response on the NBN, No, it was Abbott with Turnbull as the architect, I think. The federal government has conceded now that that is not going to work, so the education department is reliant on local services—what service is available.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Now that the government has reinstated the Schools of the Air, I wonder whether the minister could explain to me how School of Isolated and Distance Education will be used in a better way to improve both the Schools of the Air and potential connectivity and online resources for our regional students?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** SIDE became a registered training organisation in 2020. Students can access a number of vocational education and training certificates through SIDE—certificate I in skills for vocational pathways, certificate II in skills for work and vocational pathways, certificate II in information, digital media and technology, and certificate II in business. The range of vocational education and training certificates offered by SIDE will increase in future years. There has also been a number of things delivered in this part of the system, including 98 online professional learning sessions have been delivered, 2 834 participants completed professional learning, 1 242 support calls were resolved, and 279 new connect support community discussion posts were registered. On connections, with Cisco Webex, 19 online professional learning sessions were delivered, 1 136 participants completed professional learning, 74 support calls were resolved, and 47 new Webex support community connect discussion posts were made. With regard to Microsoft Office 365 and Teams, 85 online professional learning sessions were delivered, 2 557 participants completed professional learning, and 65 support calls were resolved. I am informed that lessons have been learned from the COVID environment and the response, and they will be informing additional effort for supporting isolated or regional students.

Also as part of our election commitments, the member would recall that independent learning coordinators were appointed at 10 regional schools and a regional learning specialist team was established with the intention of increasing the likelihood that students will remain at their local schools and achieve optimal outcomes from their education. Feedback from the schools suggests that both components of the quality education in the regions initiative, which was our election commitment, are valued by students and teachers. A 2020 review by the public school accountability team confirmed the implementation of the independent learning coordinators has enhanced the effectiveness of the schooling experience for students and enabled the study of a broader range of School of Isolated and Distance Education courses. The reports are that it is improving.

**Ms L. METTAM:** I refer to the table of outcomes and key effectiveness indicators on page 371. I note that the 2019–20 actuals did not meet the—

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Which line is the member talking about?

**Ms L. METTAM:** It is the table of outcomes and key effectiveness indicators on page 371.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** That is the whole table.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Yes. It refers to, for example, year 9 public school students achieving proficiency in numeracy and year 5 public school students achieving proficiency in numeracy. There are a number of areas in which the actuals did not meet the budget parameters across those NAPLAN areas. Can the minister explain why?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** I think it is a consequence of ambition and setting the target high, meaning that what was achieved exceeded what had been achieved in the past but did not quite make the target. Although the Department of Education achieved only four of its objectives around those key effectiveness indicators, representing 36 per cent of its 11 key effectiveness indicators for 2019, those results in all the key effectiveness indicators were the highest or second highest since 2016. It is good to set a target, and I would endorse aspiring for a greater achievement, but that does not mean that because the department did not achieve that target, it has failed; in fact, it has significantly improved the outcomes over the last four years.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Do we know how these results fit in with the results in other states?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** We have a changed target for proficiency., The eight new NAPLAN indicators are not comparable with the results for the national minimum standard NAPLAN indicators that were replaced in 2018–19; it has changed. To achieve proficiency, students here must meet higher standards of reading and numeracy than the national

minimum standards reported under the department's old outcomes-based management framework. The proficiency standards were set by the department based on provisional work conducted nationally. Proficiency standards represent challenging but reasonable reading and numeracy achievement expectations for a typical student in year 3, 5, 7 or 9. Proficiency standards represent better indicators of the quality of students' learning than national minimum standards reported under the department's old structure. As I said earlier, aspiring for a greater achievement and not quite getting to that is still a better outcome than in 2016. We have improved our performance.

[8.00 pm]

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** It is good to see the Leader of the Opposition arrive for first her first stint on the committee, as a former Minister for Training and Workforce Development. I have a general question about the significant issues impacting the agency referred to on page 369. Paragraph 4 states that engagement and educational outcomes for Aboriginal students remain disproportionately low in comparison with those of non-Aboriginal students. It goes on to state that embedding Aboriginal histories, cultures and languages in classroom practice is also a priority, which I agree with. I think we need to learn more about Aboriginal history when we are young children. It also states that the department will continue to support aspirant Aboriginal leaders to identify their career and leadership goals. I am interested in this because I have quite a few Aboriginal students in my electorate, and I also have the Clontarf Aboriginal College, which is mentioned —

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** We are very fortunate to have that.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** Yes, it is a good college, and it is mentioned in paragraph 13 in relation to the Aboriginal girls engagement program. This is a big issue in society. We need to advance Aboriginal kids. We need them to be educated and we need them to take on leadership roles in society. How does the minister think we are travelling in this regard, especially with regard to what was mentioned in paragraph 4?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** I appreciate the member's interest in this matter. The Aboriginal cultural standards framework, which is referred to in that paragraph, continues to inform the work of all department staff in the research, design, implementation and evaluation of services, policies and programs for Aboriginal students, and supports schools to promote reconciliation by embedding Aboriginal histories, cultures and languages into classroom practice. The department provides professional learning, advice and guidance to schools across the state to create culturally safe, welcoming and engaging learning environments for Aboriginal students; to develop their understanding about culturally responsive approaches that recognise the strengths of Aboriginal students; and to ensure that the efforts of all staff are informed by the framework. The department delivered 101 workshops to 4 506 school leaders, teachers and Aboriginal and Islander education officers between 1 July 2019 and 30 June this year.

The Prime Minister's "Closing the Gap Report 2020" was tabled in Parliament in February 2020. The member asked about how we are going. Of the four Closing the Gap education targets across public and non-government schools, Western Australia is achieving the 2025 target of 95 per cent of Aboriginal four-year-olds in early childhood education. We are already achieving that. The attendance target to halve the gap by 2018 was not met. From memory, I do not think it was met anywhere in the country. There was improved performance of Aboriginal students between 2008 and 2018 in reading and numeracy at years 3, 5, 7 and 9. However, Western Australia met only the year 9 numeracy 2018 Closing the Gap target. The year 12 attainment target for 2020 is on track for WA. Actually, that is pretty good, depending on what the target is. In March 2019, a formal partnership agreement on Closing the Gap established the Joint Council on Closing the Gap to ensure equal participation and shared decision-making between Aboriginal people and governments. The new National Agreement on Closing the Gap was launched by the Prime Minister and the Minister for Indigenous Australians on 30 July 2020. The new agreement reflects an important shift in the way that governments work by encompassing shared decision-making around policies and programs that aim to strengthen life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The agreement is an ambitious 10-year commitment by the national coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak organisations, the commonwealth government, all state and territory governments and the Australian Local Government Association to improve the life outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander citizens. There are five targets relating to education in the new agreement: early childhood education enrolments, on-entry developmental readiness, year 12 certification, tertiary qualifications, and engagement in employment, education or training. Additionally, there is an Aboriginal languages target that has implications for schools. Each jurisdiction will develop implementation plans to support achievement of the agreements, objectives and outcomes. It is intended that WA's Closing the Gap implementation plan will be tailored to local contexts and developed in collaboration with Aboriginal Western Australians. In WA, this work is being led by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet working with the Closing the Gap senior officers group and Aboriginal Western Australians.

I might have some more.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** Just quickly, because I know there are other questions to be asked, but it appears there is still a lot of work to be done.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Yes. There is work to be done everywhere. I have some other results that I think give reason for optimism. The 2019 NAPLAN results were the best ever for Aboriginal public school students. For year 3 reading and writing, the mean score percentage achieved national minimum standards; for year 5 writing, the mean

score percentage achieved national minimum standards; and for year 9 numeracy, the mean score percentage achieved national minimum standards and was the second best ever after 2018. In all those categories, students achieved the best results ever. That is not pretending that it will be the outcome that we want.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** Is truancy still an issue among Aboriginal students?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Yes. I am trying to make sense of the tables. Attendance rates for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students have decreased slightly in the last two years. The decrease in the public school semester 1 attendance in 2019 was caused, at least in part, by the early onset of the flu season, which usually does not substantially affect schools until semester 2. The 2019–20 annual report details all the attendance rates. It is comprehensive. It covers all the different years and looks at attendance in different categories: regular, 90 to 100 per cent at risk; indicated, 80 to 90 per cent at risk; moderate, 60 to 80 per cent at risk; and severe, less than 60 per cent. If the member wants to look at the annual report, that is available. The answer to the member's question is yes.

**Mr M. HUGHES:** Further to that, I refer to the fourth paragraph on page 369, which refers to the Kimberley Schools Project. Do we have any data yet, pointing to the effectiveness of the Kimberley Schools Project and improving engagement in educational outcomes for target students? I have a particular interest in this.

[8.10 pm]

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** When was it running for? When did it commence?

**Mr M. HUGHES:** It had a late start but it is up and running.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Was the member's question: do we have any results?

**Mr M. HUGHES:** Does the minister have any data about the effectiveness of the Kimberley Schools Project actually improving student outcomes and engagement?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** The Kimberley Schools Project uses a range of assessments that track student progress throughout the year. End of year results in 2019 indicated that students in project schools made sound progress in all assessments. These include the dynamic indicators of basic early literacy skills, which monitor individual student progress and determine lesson content and are administered by kindergarten to year 2 classroom teachers twice per term. Participating schools are requested to complete the progressive achievement tests, reading, and the South Australian spelling test at the end of each year. However, there were inconsistent completion rates in 2019. The South Australian spelling test results indicated that year 1 students were matching Australian averages in nine of 13 age ranges, and year 2 students were matching Australian averages in nine of 12 age ranges. Program coordinators undertake a range of assessments with kindergarten to year 2 students in terms 1 and 4 each year. Sixty-two per cent of year 2 students were able to read 90 to 100 Fry high-frequency words correctly at the end of 2019. The member knows what I am talking about, does he not? In the letter sound test, 54 per cent of preprimary students, 71 per cent of year 1 students and 82 per cent of year 2 students were in the average to above average percentile range. The Yopp–Singer test of phoneme segmentation indicated 27 per cent of kindergarten students, 73 per cent of preprimary students, 80 per cent of year 1 students and 91 per cent of year 2 students could segment individual phonemes.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** Is this in the annual report?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** No, I am just reading out the results of this program that the member was talking about. It provides a summary of the tests used in the Kimberley Schools Project and the frequency of administration, as well as assessment descriptions. If the member wanted a greater insight into the results of that program, noting that he has specialist knowledge and interest—or anyone else, as well—I urge him to seek a briefing via the minister.

**Mr M. HUGHES:** Okay. I will do that.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** My question relates to the fifth paragraph on page 369 of budget paper No 2, which relates to the behaviour of children and issues that may impact on the safety of students and staff in schools. What are the numbers of suspensions and expulsions or, as I now understand it, exclusions, statewide for this school year?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** A total of 16 149 students have been suspended and 39 722 suspensions were recorded. That would reflect our determination, in recent times, to be far more robust in response to antisocial and inappropriate behaviour. As the minister has stated many times, there will be a lot less tolerance of some of the behaviour that had been accepted in the past when these measures were not being implemented. It is expected that we will now get more suspensions and individuals suspended than in the past.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** The minister gave one figure of 16 000.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** That is the individual students being suspended. The other figure is the number of suspensions. Obviously, individuals can get suspended more than once.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** And the exclusions?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** The number of recommendations for exclusions have dramatically increased in recent times because of our policy. As a result, the number of students being excluded has also increased. In 2019, there were 82 recommendations for exclusions and, of those, 65 were excluded.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Those figures are for 2019. Do we have figures for the 2020 school year?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** As at 16 October, there were 54 exclusions.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** For this financial year?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** It looks as though it is on target to be similar to the number for last year.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Is the minister implying that these rates have improved in comparison with last year? I suppose he is saying that we have had an increase in the number of suspensions and exclusions since the minister's 10-point plan came into effect?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** The minister stated publicly and clearly that she would be much tougher on antisocial and violent behaviour, in particular, and that is being implemented.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Can the minister give the numbers of both staff and students who have been threatened or been on the receiving end of physical violence in schools statewide?

**The CHAIR:** That is a very broad question. It may well be better to be taken on notice.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Could I receive that as supplementary information?

**The CHAIR:** Why can it not go on notice, member?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** I suggest the member put it on notice. It is a comprehensive, very large dataset.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Will the minister undertake to provide that before the end of the parliamentary sitting?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** No. I just asked the member to put it on notice.

**The CHAIR:** Member, it is your obligation to put the question on notice. The minister then has a certain time frame within which he has to answer.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** My question refers to the total cost of services on page 367. I am interested in the approved specialist sporting programs, being the soccer programs. I understand that those programs are at Darling Range Sports College, John Curtin College of the Arts, Lynwood Senior High School, Safety Bay Senior High School and Woodvale Secondary College. Is actually a funding allocation to the schools for those programs?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Sorry; could the member repeat the question. I was just finding the page.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** There is no specific line item for the actual specialist sporting program. The line item is in the table on page 367, under total cost of services for the 2020–21 budget, at \$5.466 million.

[8.20 pm]

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** What is the question again?

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** What is the value of the funding to the five high schools that offer the specialist soccer programs, being Darling Range, John Curtin, Lynwood, Safety Bay and Woodvale? Will the soccer programs in those schools continue beyond 2024? I understand that one of those schools is winding up its program.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Is the member a fan?

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** I have been contacted by a constituent who is a bit upset about one of the schools closing its program.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** I will try to find out. I will undertake to answer that by way of supplementary information. I do not think that is too onerous. Is the member talking about four schools?

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** There are five schools—Darling Range, John Curtin, Lynwood, Safety Bay and Woodvale.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** I undertake to confirm whether the funding for the soccer programs at Darling Range, John Curtin, Lynwood, Safety Bay and Woodvale will continue.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** Yes, and if any of the programs are winding up; and, if so, why?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Yes, and if any of the programs are ending, what is the justification, if that is the case.

**The CHAIR:** That is the converse of whether they are continuing. The minister is right.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** That is true.

[*Supplementary Information No B16.*]

**The CHAIR:** I give the call to the member for Roe.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** I refer to the total cost of services on page 381. My question is pursuant to the budget allocation for agricultural education.

**The CHAIR:** Whereabouts on page 381?

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** I am referring to the line item "Supplies and services" under "Cost of Services" and "Expenses". I am looking for the budget allocation for agricultural education. I am really looking for the amount of funding allocated to the re-established directorate of agricultural education, which I am very pleased about.

**The CHAIR:** Minister, I do not know whether it is contained there but you can give it a go.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** That is going to be difficult because the overall allocation is not separated from the budget. I will see whether I can find something. What is the member actually asking?

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** How much funding is allocated to the re-established directorate of agricultural education.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** It is one FTE as far as the directorate goes. The budget resourcing is just part of the global allocation. It is not something we can isolate and say that amount is dedicated to agriculture.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Can the minister explain why the directorate has been re-established, given that it was removed in 2017? As I said, I am very much in favour of it; I think it is a great initiative. I would like an explanation of what prompted the re-establishment.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Does the member want to join in celebrating the fact that it has been re-established?

**The CHAIR:** Moving forward, member.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** I will let the minister answer.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** I do not know. I am not the minister. I am informed it is not actually a directorate in the terms that the member is referring to. An agricultural support team will be established. It will have a different structure and will be a different initiative. It will obviously support agricultural education but it will not re-establish the directorate. The member should write to the minister and ask her. If I suggest that the member puts the question on notice, he will say that he will not get the answer in time; if he wrote to the minister, he might.

I can say that the objectives of that team are to ensure that education links into opportunities with the government jobs and skills package. The intention is to ensure that there is a greater focus on getting young people jobs in the agricultural sector as a consequence of that training.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Will at least one FTE in the education department also be working with the PRIMED project, which is part of the DPIRD/education department program, I gather, over the next three years?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** With respect to the member's observation that one FTE will be involved, by way of comparison or perhaps providing some insight, for the entire defence sector, we have a workforce development team of two that was established under the Department of Training and Workforce Development. They look at not just defence, but also the demand for similar skill sets across other sectors, such as resources, mining and offshore oil and gas. That is actually a significant contribution. If an individual has the skill sets to identify job opportunities and ensure the end result of a job through the training and delivery of the training targets, that is a significant contribution.

PRIMED is a collaborative project between the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development as the lead agency, the Department of Education and the Department of Training and Workforce Development. They are collaborating on that project. It aims to provide secondary students with a better understanding of primary industries, inform secondary students about opportunities to meet their career aspirations in the range of primary industries, particularly in professional roles, and improve delivery of primary industries-related curriculum through teacher professional learning and industry-aligned teaching resources. The three agencies have each committed resources to deliver the project jointly and in partnership with industry. Over the five-year period, the government's investment in the project through each agency's contribution is almost \$5.3 million. The Department of Education's commitment is over \$2 million. As I indicated earlier, one FTE is quite significant. As the requirements for agricultural education are developed and more collaboration is worked out with the ag colleges, that FTE number will grow. Yes, it is integrated with PRIMED.

[8.30 pm]

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** To wrap that up, will the department be tracking the progress of the PRIMED collaboration, if you like and any results?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Yes. I commend PRIMED for doing this. This is similar to the activity that we are conducting in other sectors, to ensure that the training that we are delivering is pragmatic and practical and that the outcome is jobs for the people being given the training. It is about integrating the activity of the government and the education department and other departments with industry to find a result at the end for the individuals, the students, because of course we have to measure whether what we are doing works.

**Ms L.M. HARVEY:** I refer the minister to page 377, which lists new primary schools and other builds. I want to get an understanding of the variance in the values attached to these builds. Alkimos (Shorehaven) Primary School is estimated to cost \$26.395 million and Caversham Valley Primary School is estimated to cost \$17.3 million. I wanted to get an understanding of the difference in capacity of those schools. Will they each have the same facilities with respect to science labs, STEM and art facilities et cetera?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** We will check.

**The CHAIR:** Member, is that in the table "Works in Progress"?

**Ms L.M. HARVEY:** Yes, it is.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** It is under “New Primary Schools”. Those schools will have different capacities. What was the first one the member asked about?

**Ms L.M. HARVEY:** The first one is Alkimos (Shorehaven) Primary School.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Shorehaven is being built for 650 students, with three specialist rooms. Caversham Valley Primary School is being constructed to accommodate 430 students, with two specialist rooms.

**Ms L.M. HARVEY:** What are specialist rooms?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** I assumed the member was talking about the science rooms.

**Ms L.M. HARVEY:** Are they the science rooms, for STEM?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** They are specialist rooms.

**Ms L.M. HARVEY:** I will beg the indulgence of the committee and ask about two more schools, while we are on assets and rebuilds. Could I get the same confirmation with respect to Alkimos College? The fifth line from the top of page 378 shows a commitment of \$48.4 million. The other one I want to know about is Willetton Senior High School—a \$12.5 million commitment for upgrades. The note is not specific about what will be provided there.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Where is that?

**Ms L.M. HARVEY:** Willetton Senior High School is at the bottom of page 379.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Okay. What was the member’s question with regard to those schools? Does she want to know their capacity?

[8.40 pm]

**Ms L.M. HARVEY:** I would like an understanding of the capacity of Alkimos College and what the build is making provision for.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** I am informed that it is a new classroom block.

**Ms L.M. HARVEY:** Does the minister know how many students that will be for? I know that there are capacity constraints at both Willetton and Rossmoyne. I am trying to get an understanding of the capacity extension. Mike Nahan is not here; I am asking that question on his behalf.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Yes, okay.

**Ms L.M. HARVEY:** They are his two babies!

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** The Alkimos College line item is cash flow for stage 1. Stage 1 will be built to accommodate 750.

**Ms L.M. HARVEY:** Is that going to be from year 7 to year 12, or year 7 to 10?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** If it is stage 1, I am assuming it is. It is a new school, so they start off in year 7 and they work their way up, so it will be like that, I imagine.

**Ms L.M. HARVEY:** Excuse my ignorance: is that 750 year 7s in the first intake, or will that be full capacity, potentially?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** I will check. Bob Hawke College was built with a greater capacity than just the year 7s. There are normally around 200 a year for a normal average school.

**Ms L.M. HARVEY:** I know that was the case for John Curtin College of the Arts.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Yes, so we will just check, but I am assuming they do not build for just year 7. They build for up to year 10 and beyond that; or even a small school, going to year 12, and then growing after that; but I will check. So, the new classroom block—for Mike Nahan!—is for 300 students. We can also confirm that the 750—the normal number of year 7s is a couple of hundred—is going to be over three years’ worth —

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Is that for Alkimos?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Yes, for Alkimos. They are anticipating something like 175 year 7s in the first year, so they are exceeding demand for the first five years, probably.

**Ms L.M. HARVEY:** On behalf of my good friend Mike Nahan, are there capacity constraints at Rossmoyne Senior High School, with a view to looking to have some expansion at that school in the near future?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** That is not actually listed, is it?

**Ms L.M. HARVEY:** It is not listed, but it is in the context of Willetton Senior High School. The two schools sort of balance between each other.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** With regard to Rossmoyne, there is assessment being done on future growth at the moment. There is work being done on demand.

**Ms L.M. HARVEY:** Okay. Thank you so much for all your help.

**The appropriation was recommended.**

**Division 27: Training and Workforce Development, \$430 638 000 —**

Ms M.M. Quirk, Chair.

Mr P. Papalia, Minister for Tourism representing the Minister for Education and Training.

Ms A. Driscoll, Director General.

Ms G. Husk, Director, Finance.

Ms K. Ho, Executive Director, Policy, Planning and Innovation.

Mr R. Brown, Executive Director, Service Resource Management.

Mr G. Thompson, Executive Director, Corporate.

Mr P. Wyles, Director, Service Delivery Strategy.

Ms M. Stanley, Director, Training Regulation.

[Witnesses introduced.]

**The CHAIR:** Member for Scarborough, you have the call.

**Ms L.M. HARVEY:** My first question relates to new works on page 401. At paragraph 3.2, there is reference to some upgrades for heavy haulage driver training at the South Regional TAFE Collie campus. I just want to know whether the department has identified any skill shortages that are specific to the south west area of the state, including the areas of Vasse, Collie and Bunbury. Is there any detail the minister could provide us with on that?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** The work that is being done at the TAFE in developing this heavy haulage driving operations skill set course looks at the entire state. It addresses the requirements across the entire state. Collie is a great location for establishing that training. Clearly, there are benefits for the community as it transitions from coal into the future, creating jobs and opportunities around the training centre, but it is not isolated to any one region—both the demand and the requirement.

[8.50 pm]

**Ms L.M. HARVEY:** With regard to heavy haulage driver training, can the minister advise me how many students are expected to go through the program, and the length of the course?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Its length I can tell the member immediately: it is a five-week heavy haulage driving operation skill set course. There will be between 12 and 15 trainees per course and the initial course is starting this month. I imagine that once the TAFE conducts one and gets a sense of how appropriate the numbers it is training are, it might adjust that, but it is pretty incredible to see that happening so rapidly—a new initiative.

**Ms L.M. HARVEY:** The department is very good at that.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** They are!

**Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE:** My question refers to page 389, under the heading, “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency”. I notice—and it is, indeed, the experience in the electorate—that a number of course fees at my local Thornlie TAFE have been significantly reduced. I ask the minister to provide an update on how training numbers in those fee-reduced courses have been tracking since last year.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Definitely. The member is right. Everywhere, the reduction in course fees attracted attention and got people interested again. The McGowan government has cut fees by up to 70 per cent across 73 high-priority courses, and some of them are offered at the Thornlie TAFE campus, in the member’s electorate. Because fees went up by as much as 500 per cent before for some courses, we know there was a massive reduction in enrolments, so it is interesting to see that people are getting interested again now that there is a much more attractive fee regime.

In October 2019, a \$53.5 million package was announced, which halved the fees for 34 high-priority qualifications from 1 January this year. Since 1 January, there have been more than 28 400 enrolments in these courses. Of those, WA TAFE reported around 17 000 enrolments, which is up 22.5 per cent on last year.

In July this year, a second \$57 million package was announced as part of the WA recovery from COVID plan. This funding supported a further 39 qualifications under the lower fees, local skills program, bringing the total number of qualifications with reduced fees to 73. Some of the courses with reduced fees offered at the member’s local Thornlie TAFE campus are: certificate IV in business, with fees reduced by 67 per cent; certificate II in construction, reduced by 67 per cent; certificate III in painting and decorating, or decoration, reduced by 50 per cent; diploma of project management, reduced by 72 per cent; and diploma of early childhood education and care, reduced from \$10 075 to \$2 400, or by 72 per cent.

Since the introduction of the second tranche of lower fees, local skills courses, TAFEs have reported around 3 200 additional enrolments since the start of July. Around one-third of enrolments have been by students living in the regions—Peter Rundle will be applauding! Forty-one per cent of students are female. I have one other additional stat: the courses have been even more popular with younger students, with 60.7 per cent of all enrolments undertaken by students aged 24 years or under.

**Ms L.M. HARVEY:** Is it possible to get commencement information for a couple of the different trade areas from the department? I have trades in occupations in the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations group. I do not know when the latest available data is; I am assuming probably March 2020.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Which group is the member after?

**Ms L.M. HARVEY:** There is a group of trades commencements around apprentices. There is a grouping of them called the ANZSCO group. I do not know whether that is still the national acronym. Is it?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Yes.

**Ms L.M. HARVEY:** I am interested in commencements for apprentices in engineering and construction trades. Can we get that data for the last three years? I think the agency would have that.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** We do not have that here. The member might have to put that one on notice. I can give the member some indicative numbers. If we look at apprenticeship commencements, we see that they have increased steadily since 2017. Noting that we just went through a pandemic, or still are in a pandemic, the significant impact of that occurred in the second quarter of this year, and we dropped by only two per cent in the 12 months to June 2020, which is incredible. New entrant traineeship commencements actually increased in 2019, by 714 more places than in 2018. Again, there was a fall in 2020 as a result of COVID, but the numbers that the member is asking —

**Ms L.M. HARVEY:** Which apprentice numbers increased?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Apprenticeship commencements? That was a global one, I think—total.

**Ms L.M. HARVEY:** Okay. I was specifically looking for the trades, engineering —

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Yes, as I said, we do not have that. The member would have to put it on notice.

**Ms L.M. HARVEY:** I can probably find it through a national reporting agency, I would expect, if the minister does not have it with him today.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Possibly, I do not know.

**Ms L.M. HARVEY:** I refer to page 229 of budget paper No 3. Under the heading “Training and Workforce Development”, the line “Tuition Fees — Vocational Education and Training Courses” has some values there under “General Subsidy”, “Concession Card Holders” and “Severe Financial Hardship”. I am seeking some clarification from the agency. It looks to be that general subsidies are averaging \$4 525 per person; concession card holders, \$769 per person; and severe financial hardship comes in at an average of \$1 471 per person, which does not seem consistent with the value one would expect regarding the subsidy. I am just seeking some clarification on the actual recipient numbers there, and whether there may be a doubling up of the general subsidy in some of the concessions.

[9.00 pm]

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Yes, unless they are eligible for a number of them, or more than one of them.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** That is right.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** I am not sure about the detail that the member is requesting and/or whether her hypothesis around individual allocations is accurate; I do not know. I do not know that the advisers can tell me right now. What is the actual question?

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** Obviously I will need to seek further clarification, perhaps by writing to the minister. No-one has the answer here.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Yes. That might be a better way of doing it, because I am not sure how the member would couch that as a supplementary question.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** I am interested to know whether the number of recipients for each of these subsidy category areas has been revised down from the expectation from last year. My understanding of these concessions is that they normally hover around 60 000 recipients for the general subsidy, and usually around 15 000 to 16 000 for the other two concessions. I am just interested to know whether, over the last financial year, we have actually seen a reduction in the number of individuals seeking these concessions and subsidies.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Because of the reduction in costs.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** It is actually less the value and more the numbers of applicants that I am interested in.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** It is not directly comparable. Given our previous experience of the subsidy uptake in any one of those categories, and noting that there has been a significant change in fee levels, we are anticipating elevated enrolments, and that has been demonstrated. The indications are that that is going to happen because of what we have witnessed, even in the midst of a pandemic. Such a small reduction in enrolments in some of those categories of training to the middle of the year would suggest that there is going to be a much greater uptake. I think the best thing to do with regard to the member’s question is to write to the minister and ask for clarification.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** My understanding was that last year's budget estimate was for a higher number of recipients applying for subsidies, so I am trying to ascertain whether that has dropped off and whether there might be a reason for that. I am going to have to write to the minister, clearly. I will do that.

**The CHAIR:** I do not think the member can assist with that. Member for Roe.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** I refer to page 392, under the heading "Services and Key Efficiency Indicators", service 1, "VET Workforce Planning and Policy Development". My question really relates to the department's strategies for improving the quality of our TAFE lecturers and encouraging industry-trained practitioners into TAFE. I refer also to the minister's press release of 18 September about a \$57 million investment in training driving demand for an increased skilled workforce. It said that applications were open on 18 September and closed on 5 October. Therefore, my question is: How has the response been? Does the minister have any numbers for applications et cetera?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** There has been a very positive response to the recruitment campaign: almost 1 500 applications for more than 900 individual positions. Almost half of all applicants applied to teach in more than one of the 16 industry areas—for example, automotive, business, those sorts of areas—resulting in multiple applications to be assessed for many applicants. There were no industry areas in which no applicants were received, and 75 per cent of applicants wished to be considered for employment with more than one college. Every TAFE college received at least 50 first preferences. Forty-eight per cent of the applicants were female, 51 per cent male and one per cent other.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Yes, where is the other one per cent?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** It is one per cent other.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Okay.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Only two per cent—15 applicants—were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, but the department is looking at strategies to build future recruitment of Aboriginal people with other human resources leads.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Thanks, minister. Is the department looking to increase salaries to compete with industry?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** I think that right now a job is a very attractive proposition, right around the country. Our trainers are well paid, and our policy in government is to make people permanent and ensure that people get all the benefits associated with permanency. There are a lot of positive, attractive things about being in the public sector.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Is the government exploring avenues for co-contribution from industry for salaries?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** The Nationals WA really are high taxing, are they not? It is just like tax and spend.

**The CHAIR:** We had been going so well, minister!

[9.10 pm]

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Tax-and-spend Nationals! There are no free market players in the National Party!

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** Come on! Fifty more minutes of politeness—we can do it!

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** I am politely taking the piss!

**The CHAIR:** It was a Post-it note answer, too!

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** Have you got your calculator out!

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** So, we already get contributions towards equipment in kind, which is what one would expect I guess, and it is not many of these sectors. I am informed that there have been some indications of potentially doing something of that nature, but it is being assessed. This is not a simple matter.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** My concern is that sort of competing with the mining sector, with the likes of our mechanics in the south west. We are losing a lot of people to FIFO in the mining sector. Is the minister comfortable that industry is making—obviously, he talked about in-kind support—enough of a contribution to ensure an ongoing workforce at a more local level?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** The numbers, as indicated, would suggest that it is an attractive proposition. There were more than 1 500 applications for 900 positions. Tradespeople age, and over time the attractiveness of FIFO diminishes, as does the impact on lifestyle associated with drive in, drive out or remote work, and working in an environment where there is no certainty over a long period. People often have to move around from site to site to ensure their employment. The attractiveness of that diminishes over time, particularly as people age; they have families and they become physically less capable, so TAFE or training positions of this description become more attractive, I think, as people age and as they change their phase of life. I think also there is a lot of genuine desire on the part of many tradespeople to convey their knowledge, to contribute to younger people's lives and to foster and mentor people. There is a lot of return out of that. There is a great deal of benefit to people in being able to do that, so it just is an attractive proposition.

I am not sure that there is necessarily evidence that we are losing people; quite the contrary, with respect to the response to the advertised positions. But it is also potentially a different market that the member is talking about.

The ones being poached might be poached from other industry players to go and work in the resources sector, for instance, as opposed to manufacturing in Perth or working in construction or something. We are potentially looking at a different demographic.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** I refer to page 389, under “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency”, and the heading “WA Recovery Plan”. Paragraph 2 talks about the financial incentive that has been introduced to encourage employers to re-engage displaced apprentices. I have been asked by a constituent whether there is a requirement for a percentage of apprentices to be employed in respect of companies getting government contracts, or contracts that have any component of government funds. Does the government have any requirement, when companies tender for government projects, for them to have a certain number of apprentices?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** That is a consequence of the Western Australian Jobs Act. It is incorporated in the jobs act as an obligation on proponents seeking government contracts in Western Australia that there are threshold levels of apprentices employed.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** Can the minister explain that threshold?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** It is not my portfolio; I do not think it is even the education minister’s portfolio. As an example, the Priority Start policy came into effect in Western Australia on 1 April 2019, replacing the previous Government Building Training Policy. The new policy meets the state government’s plan for job commitments to maximise opportunities for apprentices and trainees on all major state government-funded building, construction and maintenance contracts. Priority Start aims to ensure a sustainable construction trades workforce for WA by increasing overall numbers of apprentices and trainees in the building and construction industry. To achieve this, the policy requires companies that are awarded state government building construction, civil construction and maintenance contracts valued at over \$5 million to meet the industry’s average target training rate for apprentices and trainees.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** What is the number for a project worth more than \$5 million?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** It is the industry’s average target training rate for apprentices and trainees, so it depends on which sector it is. For general construction, it is 11.5 per cent; for civil construction, it is five per cent. As a component of this policy, contractor appointing has been reduced to once a year, and there is an expanded range of in-scope qualifications for construction and trades worker occupations.

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** So, that is one out of 10 for general construction—one apprentice to 10 tradesmen?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Well, 11.5 per cent is a little higher than that, yes. I make the observation, though, that that is the minimum, and the competitive process for winning government contracts recognises the desire of the government to increase apprenticeships and traineeships, so any proponent seeking to get a government contract is going to be aware of that and seek to maximise —

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** The opportunity to win the tender.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Yes, so it will get recognised.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** I refer to page 389. In paragraph 5 there is a reference to international students, which is obviously a problem, given the current world environment. I seek some clarification from the minister about the number of international students who were enrolled in TAFE colleges in 2019, and where that figure sits for 2020.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** For 2019, enrolments totalled 2 371 and for 2020, it is 2 052.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** Is that across all the TAFEs?

[9.20 pm]

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** That is for the TAFE sector, yes. That is not much of an impact, though, considering that we endured COVID impacts at the start of this year and there has been a reduction of only 320 or so.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** There is also reference there to a recovery strategy being developed. When is it expected that the recovery strategy will be finalised, and does the minister have any indication of some of the measures that might be included in that strategy?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** There is a range of elements to the strategy, all of which will be subject to the environment we find ourselves in with COVID. I can read out what the elements are, but until such time as international borders are opened and it is viable for international students to return to Australia, a lot of this strategy is not going to be applicable. The plan for when the borders open is to integrate skills and employability pathway courses across WA’s TAFE and higher education sectors through packaged offers with universities; to enhance university articulation arrangements for students not on a packaged university pathway; to promote WA university and VET study opportunities to WA international school and TAFE students; and to provide student support and experience activities through the TAFE International Western Australia student network, which offers career and employability sessions, mental health support, friendship and networking, and engagement with local community groups. I can confirm that in my other portfolio, citizenship and multicultural interests, we were actively engaging across government with the team around Study Perth and Training and Workforce Development looking for ways that our

local Western Australian culturally and linguistically diverse communities could contribute to this effort. We were engaging with the biggest source of international students in WA, which last time I looked was India, which slightly pipped China. We have large communities from both of those nations, and we were engaged very directly with peak bodies representing those communities. They were enthusiastically embracing the opportunity to help the state through making it a welcoming and positive environment for students from their home nations. More recently, during COVID, both of those communities' peak bodies undertook to assist students who were here already and were not returning to their home countries. They assisted in ensuring that they are having a better experience than they might otherwise have because they were not eligible for any support from the federal government.

**Mr M. HUGHES:** I refer to page 389. My question is about the support for the training of young people. The minister may feel that he has already substantially covered over this, but I am interested to skip to —

**The CHAIR:** Member, you mean “covered” rather than “covered over”, do you not?

**Mr M. HUGHES:** Sorry, covered; yes, I do.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** It may have been a Freudian slip!

**Mr M. HUGHES:** I think that is what I meant. I think I know where I am!

Can the minister tell me what the government is doing to support young people in training, and to address industry priority skills?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Far and away, the biggest contribution has to have been the reduction in TAFE fees. I have probably mentioned a couple of times already that there has been a huge reduction in fees across a range of courses in a couple of different tranches to ensure that young people in particular are in a far better position than a few years ago with regard to training. The amount of \$268 million was injected into WA's training system over the four years from 2018–19 to 2021–22 via the National Partnership on the Skilling Australians Fund, which includes \$110 million from the commonwealth government. This partnership agreement funds growth in apprenticeships, traineeships and pre-apprenticeships to enable young people to transition into jobs after school. WA's employer incentive scheme provides an \$8 500 payment to employers for a four-year apprenticeship and \$2 125 for a 12-month traineeship, with additional loadings for priority groups such as those in regional areas, Aboriginal people, apprentices with a disability, and priority qualifications. There is also a 50 per cent commencement loading for apprentices aged 21 to 30 years to encourage employers to train young people who have reached adult wage rates. More recently, the state recovery package included specific initiatives to help apprentices and trainees who have been displaced by the economic disruption brought about by COVID. We have established a new free, out-of-contract register available on the Jobs and Skills WA website, which helps employers locate and re-employ apprentices and trainees who have been stood down. The sum of \$4.8 million has been allocated for the apprenticeship and traineeship re-engagement incentive, with one-off payments of \$6 000 for hiring an apprentice and \$3 000 for hiring a trainee displaced by the economic disruption brought about by COVID. Over 100 apprentices and trainees have already found jobs with new employers.

Free short courses have been developed in consultation with industry for displaced workers, women and young people to prepare them for immediate and emerging skill requirements as the economy recovers. These free skill sets will provide a launch pad for students to get skills ready for new jobs and provide pathways and credit towards full qualifications. There are courses in hospitality, logistics, cybersecurity, agriculture, civil construction, and small business. These free short courses were made available in July 2020. As at 14 September, TAFE colleges have already reported over 970 enrolments in the job-ready skill sets. In the future, the Labor government has announced the biggest capital works program in history for TAFE campuses across the state as part of the \$5.5 billion WA recovery plan. The McGowan government also commissioned and delivered the urgent review of skills, training and workforce development. It identified a range of medium to longer term initiatives to support the training needs of the state's young people and address industry skill priorities. The review's specific recommendations include strategies to increase the number of young people employed on government projects, and options for improving the delivery of vocational education training delivered to secondary schools.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** My question relates to the agreement on the national infection control training fund, which is found below the heading “COVID-19 WA Recovery Plan” under the spending changes on page 388. Can the minister explain to me why that has gone from \$3 million to \$6 million?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Sorry, where is that?

**The CHAIR:** That is the first line under “COVID-19 WA Recovery Plan”.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Okay, up the top.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** It is the second line down.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Sorry, what was the member saying?

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** The amount next to the agreement on the national infection control training fund has gone from \$3 million to \$6 million. What does that entail?

[9.30 pm]

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** It is actually a really good initiative. It is targeted at short-term skill sets being delivered to support immediate needs of industry to respond to COVID. Understandably, we will need more of that as time goes on, as we move into some environment where COVID is still a threat everywhere. We continue to have the most open economy in the country. Skill sets that were identified in consultation with industry are offered as low-fee or free courses, including the COVID-19 direct care skill set. The skill sets are essential to operate in a COVID-safe economy and to support economic recovery. Training has been prioritised for workers in the retail, tourism, transport, logistics, hospitality, cleaning, and security service industries, and to increase infection control skill levels in sectors such as aged care and disability care. A \$9 million allocation has been made for the skill sets funding through the state's contribution of \$4.9 million repurposed from general training funds. I think the only reason there is \$3 million and then \$6 million is that we ran out of time in the previous financial year.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** The minister will see a bit further down the page the line item "JobTrainer Fund National Partnership Agreement". Is that basically in the same category? It is about 10 lines down from the previous item I referred to. Is that the same sort of scenario or is that a contribution that has to go to some sort of co-federal-type fund?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** It is unrelated to that. The Premier signed the commonwealth heads of agreement for schools reform on 24 July. That outlines the approach to developing a new five-year national funding agreement. It was just the renewal of our funding agreement. It replaced the National Agreement for Skills and Workforce Development. As a consequence of the Premier signing that, we can access \$51.7 million in commonwealth funding under the JobTrainer fund. The WA Treasurer signed the national partnership for the JobTrainer fund at the beginning of September, and WA's plan to implement the JobTrainer fund is to significantly expand the range of courses in the lower fees, local skills initiative and to expand the range of free skill sets to be offered to young people and jobseekers. We access that federal funding and there is a rolling series of agreements.

**Mr Y. MUBARAKAI:** I refer the minister to the heading, "Significant Issues Impacting the Agency" on page 389. I am very pleased to see that a brand-new TAFE campus is being built in Armadale, which will benefit the people of my electorate. Could the minister please provide an update on the project?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Yes, I can, surprisingly enough!

**Mr J.E. McGRATH:** I am sure you can!

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** That project is a \$22.6 million investment in the Armadale TAFE campus. The current training delivery in the Armadale area is dispersed across three leased premises located across Armadale that are ageing, overcrowded and outdated. Currently, the Armadale region has a high need for easily accessible vocational training programs to provide pathways into long-term employment for youth and older unemployed seeking retraining. I am sure that that observation would apply to the seat of Jandakot as well.

There are 12 secondary schools in the Armadale area. With future population growth forecast to increase from around 94 000 in 2020 to 151 000 by 2023, it is critical to ensure that there are appropriate facilities and courses to accommodate the growing number of students seeking quality educational training opportunities. As part of the rebuilding our TAFEs program—the biggest investment in TAFE infrastructure in the state's history—a brand-new, state-of-the-art consolidated TAFE campus will be built in the Armadale town centre. It is anticipated that the new multistorey campus will provide training in the areas of child care, community services, mental health, business, education support and general education, and specialist areas for logistics, IT, emerging industries and cybersecurity.

The campus will be in a prime location, within walking distance of Armadale train station. We expect the land on which the campus will be located to be transferred from the Department of Communities by the end of 2020. The lead architect has been announced as a local firm and the first designs are expected to be completed in February next year. We expect construction to start by the end of 2021 and to be completed in 2023.

I am told I have to reiterate that, of course, it is part of the biggest TAFE capital works program ever. The sum of \$178.4 million has been allocated across 21 new capital projects to develop new and upgraded contemporary training facilities across the state and address the urgent need to stimulate the WA economy. There are dual outcomes—both of them wonderful.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** I refer the minister to service 4 under "Service Summary" on page 390. For 2018–19, there was an actual of \$7.3 million for apprenticeship and traineeship administration and regulation. The budget estimate was \$18.354 million, although the actual was \$15.170 million. Could the minister explain the fluctuation between the \$18 million and the \$15 million?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** I expect it is something to do with fees. It is as a consequence of a bit of a lag in employers claiming the Jobs and Skills WA employer incentive scheme because of COVID-19. The member would have noticed that there was a big uplift between the previous year and 2019–20. There was a significant increase. That was because of the introduction of the Jobs and Skills WA employer incentive scheme. There was then a lag on applications to that scheme in 2019–20 because of COVID. Does the member get what I am saying? At the end

of the 2019–20 financial year, or the third quarter of it—I think it was the third quarter—there was COVID, so applications for that scheme diminished. There was a lot of concern. People did not even know whether they were going to have their businesses or not. They were not rushing to take on trainees and apprentices.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** Does the minister anticipate a more than twofold recovery for the next financial year?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Absolutely. That is what is projected there, is it? Yes. We are leading the nation in growth in all manner of categories. Of most importance in this regard is employment—jobs. Our big employers of apprentices and trainees are going to be fuelled by massive state government investment over the next couple of years, which will then diminish as a proportion of the overall economic activity in the state as private enterprise lifts and scales up, and takes a greater role. From memory, the Treasurer, in his post-budget address, or even in his budget speech, suggested that growth as a proportion of economic activity of state government spend—I am trying to remember what the first figure was— was 5.5 per cent or something, up to around 13 per cent, or even higher. There is a lot of construction work for the next two years. There is also a lot of manufacturing work associated with projects like Metronet and all the road construction around the state. We anticipate even more growth through private sector investment, which is lifting.

[9.40 pm]

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** I just have one more question and then I think we need to go to TAFE for the member for Roe. My question relates to the procurement of training on page 396. I refer to the total cost of service. Is it possible to get a breakdown of the value between the private training providers and the procurement through the TAFE colleges for 2018–19 and 2019–20, and the prediction for 2020–21, please?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** I am informed that the approximate proportion of places with TAFE was 75 per cent in 2018 and 2019, and we do not know about this year. In 2018 and 2019, approximately 75 per cent of places were with TAFEs.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** And 25 per cent with private providers?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Yes.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** Thank you.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** It is approximate.

**The CHAIR:** Member for Roe, do you want to go into TAFE?

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Yes. I am ready to go to TAFE.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Okay. We will swap advisers.

**The CHAIR:** We are dealing with division 27. The question is that the appropriation be recommended.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Is division 27 the next one, as well?

**The CHAIR:** The other one is an off-budget authority, as I understand it, minister.

We are dealing with division 27. The question is that the appropriation be recommended.

**The appropriation was recommended.**

**TAFE Colleges —**

Ms M.M. Quirk, Chair.

Mr P. Papalia, Minister for Tourism representing the Minister for Education and Training.

Ms A. Driscoll, Director General.

Ms K. Ho, Executive Director, Policy, Planning and Innovation.

Mr G. Thompson, Executive Director, Corporate.

Mr R. Brown, Executive Director, Service Resource Management.

Ms T. Durant, Managing Director, South Metropolitan TAFE.

Ms M. Hoad, Managing Director, North Metropolitan TAFE.

Ms S. Lapham, Managing Director, South Regional TAFE.

Mr B. Swetman, Managing Director, Central Regional TAFE.

Mr K. Doig, Managing Director, North Regional TAFE.

[Witnesses introduced.]

**The CHAIR:** This estimates committee will be reported by Hansard. The daily proof *Hansard* will be available tomorrow. Members may raise questions about matters relating to the operations and budget of the off-budget

authority. Off-budget authority officers are recognised as ministerial advisers. I will ensure that as many questions as possible are asked and that both questions and answers are short and to the point. If an adviser needs to answer from the lectern, will they please state their name prior to their answer.

The minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee, and I ask the minister to clearly indicate what supplementary information will be provided. I will then allocate a reference number. Supplementary information should be provided to the principal clerk by Friday, 30 October 2020. I caution members that if a minister asks that a matter be put on notice, it is up to the member to lodge the question on notice through the online questions system.

I give the call to the member for Roe.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** I refer to note 3 on page 398 under “Explanation of Significant Movements”. That note talks about temporary vacant positions. How many positions remain vacant in regional campuses?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** The numbers the member referred to do not relate to TAFE. They are numbers for the department.

**The CHAIR:** That was the last division, member.

**Mr M. HUGHES:** We should be on page 408.

**The CHAIR:** TAFE is page 408.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** It is page 408; sorry.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, member for Kalamunda, for waking me up.

**Mr M. HUGHES:** I was half asleep before, covering myself up with my blanket.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** All right. I might just come back to that one.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Does the member want me to talk about how much money we are pumping into TAFEs around the state?

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** No. That is quite all right.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** That is a really good subject.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Does anyone else want to ask a question? If not, I will go on to “Works in Progress” on page 408, related to the Esperance TAFE college.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** I drove past there the other day.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** That TAFE was originally announced in 2016 by my colleague on my right-hand side here, alongside Terry Redman at the time. How is the Esperance TAFE college going and will it be built to the same size as originally planned?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** When I was down there about two weeks ago, it had a big fence around it and it looked like work was going on. With regard to whether it is going to be as planned, what does the member mean by “as planned”?

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Will it be as per the original plan when the tender went out? Is it due to cost rises over the last —

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** The member is worried we are going to diddle him after the commencement!

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Will it be the same size?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** It is being built according to plan and I am informed that it is going well. It looked like it was going well when I was down there. A lot of work was going on.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** But is it going to be the same size as was originally planned?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Yes, it will be as planned.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Is the minister happy with that?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** That is what that says.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** I have a further question about that project, minister. Can the minister confirm whether it will have a hairdressing and beauty therapy training centre, as well as one for metal trades and construction trades? It was going to have some enrolled nursing programs run through there. Are those all being catered for in the new facility?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Yes.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** Cool.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** We look after the member, yes—almost as much as the member for South Perth!

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** I am very pleased to hear it, minister.

Is everything on track to have an excellent combined working arrangement with Esperance Senior High School?

[9.50 pm]

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** I am going to unleash the managing director, Sue Lapham, to brief the member on that.

**Ms S. Lapham:** Thank you, minister. Good evening, everybody. We are on track for a fabulous facility in Esperance, which the community is looking forward to. We have been working with the Aboriginal community as well and we will be offering a good range of courses. I have forgotten the question.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** How has the relationship with the high school been going during the preparation?

**Ms S. Lapham:** The relationship with the high school is good. We have worked very hard on that, as we have across the region with all of our high schools. Clearly, we have to coexist and make the most use of all of the government facilities.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** My question relates to the works within the regional sector—north and south regional TAFE. In the royalties for regions budget, there is a line item “Vocational Education Regional Subsidies”, and that figure is \$181 million over four years—\$44.9 million per year. Can the minister confirm what the funding in that line item will be used for across the forward estimates?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Which line and page number is the member referring to? I suspect the member is actually talking about the department’s budget, and we have already passed that division.

**The CHAIR:** It is page 408.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** It would not be outrageous for the member to write to the minister and ask! I am sure she would tell him.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** The asset investment program that is presented on page 408 does not seem to include the new works from the COVID-19 recovery plan. Will the asset improvement plan for the range of different TAFEs be managed by the department and then handed over to the TAFEs? It does not look as though those amounts have been populated into the TAFE budgets.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Yes.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** The department will do it?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** Yes. Is the member referring to the self-funded remedial works —

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** Yes.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** — on the page that she referred to?

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** And that is the page that is funded, really, from the TAFE’s own retained earnings.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** The recovery program works are departmental, yes.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Further to that question, if I can go back to page 175 in budget paper No 3, about six lines from the bottom is the line item “Vocational Education Regional Subsidies”. What is the funding in that line item going to be used for across the forward estimates?

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** It is very apt use of royalties for regions funding. It addresses regional premiums associated with loadings to fund salary award conditions for staff, including district allowances, country incentives, the remote allowance, the air-conditioning allowance and things like that; class size loadings to ensure that small class sizes remain viable, otherwise we would not have them; base cost loading to recognise the lower economies of scale in base costs, including step rate program management for casual and non-casual ratios; housing costs to cover the difference between GROH housing and tenant rentals; and goods purchase leading to recognise the high cost to purchase goods in regional areas. That is essentially to ensure that we can deliver the same quality of TAFE training to regions with a lower population density as we deliver to the metro area.

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Can the minister confirm that this is really a substitution out of what should be consolidated spending, using the royalties for regions program?

**The CHAIR:** That sounds like an allegation, inference, imputation or an epithet and therefore is contrary to standing orders, member.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** No, I cannot, because, clearly, that is a very apt use of regional royalties for regions funds. It is employing royalties for regions funds in the regions to provide quality education and training for regional students who would otherwise have to travel from their regions to get that training in a metropolitan area. I cannot understand the member’s criticism of that process.

**The CHAIR:** That completes the examination of the off-budget TAFE Colleges. We do not need to vote on that. The committee is adjourned until 9.00 am tomorrow. Thank you very much and well done on your marathon effort, members and minister, and of course all the advisers.

*Committee adjourned at 9.57 pm*

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