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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A

Tuesday, 20 October 2020

Legislative Assembly

Tuesday, 20 October 2020

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A

The meeting commenced at 9.00 am.

Division 1: Parliament, \$68 783 000 —

Ms L.L. Baker, Chair.

Mr P.B. Watson, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly.

Ms K.M. Robinson, Clerk of the Legislative Assembly.

Mr R. Hunter, Executive Manager, Parliamentary Services Department.

Ms P. Traegde, Deputy Executive Manager, Parliamentary Services Department.

Ms B. Corey, Director, Parliamentary Information and Education, Parliamentary Services Department.

Ms E. Ozich, Chief Finance Officer, Parliamentary Services Department.

The CHAIR: Good morning, members, and welcome to committee A, division 1, part 1, “Parliament”.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIR: The estimates committee will be reported by Hansard. The daily proof *Hansard* will be available the following day. The Chair will ensure that as many questions as possible are asked and answered, and that both questions and answers are short and to the point. Estimates committee’s consideration of the estimates is restricted to the discussion of items for which there is a vote of money 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, rather than asking that question be put on notice for the next sitting day. I ask the Speaker to clearly indicate what supplementary information he agrees to provide, and I will allocate a reference number if the supplementary information is to be provided. I seek the Speaker’s cooperation in ensuring that it is delivered 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 that member to lodge the question on notice through the online questions system.

The Leader of the Opposition has the first question.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: In relation to division 1, page 46, and spending changes relating to the parliamentary precinct project, could Mr Speaker please outline the time lines for this project’s commencement?

The SPEAKER: I will get Mr Hunter to answer that.

Mr R. Hunter: Thank you, Mr Speaker. In terms of clarification, the question was in regard to the parliamentary precinct?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: On page 46, under “Spending Changes”, the estimate for the “Parliamentary Precinct Project” is \$169 000.

Mr R. Hunter: The parliamentary precinct project is a government-initiated project to deal with a purpose-built building across the road, to knock down 1 Harvest Terrace, amalgamate between 1 and 3 Harvest Terrace and provide a new building. Our understanding from our involvement is it would include five electorate offices for local members accommodated in West Perth. It would also include the Leader of the Opposition’s office and the opposition’s second party office staff as well, and our IT area, our library staff, and both committee offices of the Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council. The funding is for us to establish a project manager to run the project on behalf of the three parliamentary departments. That funding contribution was put into our budget for that purpose.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Through you, Mr Speaker, what is the estimated total cost of that project and when is it anticipated that the funding might flow for the project to substantially commence?

The SPEAKER: Mr Hunter.

Mr R. Hunter: Bearing in mind that we are not running the project, and we are just one of the stakeholders in the project—a little like the Leader of the Opposition’s office—we understand that the project funding is a \$13.8 million fit-out to accommodate all those places I just referred to. The project is a long-term ground lease, so it is a 49-year

program. I understand that the Pivot Construction Group owns the property at 3 Harvest Terrace—the two properties on either side, 1 and 5 Harvest Terrace, are government owned. Part of the arrangement would be that that parcel of land would be given back to government, and the build would be done by the private developer, the Pivot Construction Group, and in 49 years, the whole property would revert to government.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I understood there was a \$13 million fit-out. What is the total construction cost?

Mr R. Hunter: The construction cost —

The CHAIR: That should be directed through the Speaker—just to put that on record.

Mr R. Hunter: I would not know the construction cost. That is something that the government is running. As I said, we are just a stakeholder. Essentially, for us, and for the Parliament in particular, there is no gain, because at the moment we have offices in West Perth. As you know, we have 18–32 Parliament Place for the Council, 11 Harvest Terrace for the Assembly and our IT department, and 1 Harvest Terrace for the library. Essentially, we are just moving to a new location. There is no net gain for us. We are just a stakeholder.

The SPEAKER: Following on, there is no benefit to the Parliament going across there. There will be no extra rooms available in Parliament House.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: More generally, Mr Speaker, on page 46, under “Delivery of Services”, can you outline what has been done to ensure documentation and data of members of Parliament are being kept in a secure and safe location, and whether there have been any cyberattacks on Parliament this year?

The SPEAKER: Mr Hunter.

Mr R. Hunter: We do a number of things. First of all, we have quite a few protections in place in terms of our IT security. We have some fire walls. We have two layers, if you like, of security in our network. We have a public-facing layer, which is our internet activity, then the second layer looks after the parliamentary network. Obviously, that is not members’ information; it is just staff information at Parliament House.

The question was whether we had a cyberattack. Yes, we did. We had a cyberattack in 2018. It was a particularly sophisticated one. It hit both us and the federal Parliament almost simultaneously. We have a relationship with the Australian Signals Directorate cybersecurity unit under which we have monitoring and now a response capability so that it can detect and respond to any cyberattack and then alert us to that. We are also working closely with the Department of the Premier and Cabinet to have an understanding of shared information in case there is an equivalent breach within government.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Further to that, Mr Speaker, what was the nature of the attack and were there any breaches with respect to information being gathered by the proponent of the attack?

The SPEAKER: Mr Hunter.

Mr R. Hunter: No, there were no breaches—nothing was compromised. My understanding—a layperson’s understanding—is that a “Trojan”, or a sleeper, was sitting inside between our outward-facing servers and our network. Some code had been planted in there, which sat there waiting to do something. It did not harvest any information. During that time, we made some changes to our public-facing server so that we could still monitor what the Trojan was proposing to do, but it could not continue to do what it intended to do. Nothing was compromised, and that was confirmed by the Australian Signals Directorate. We take a parcel of data, we give it to the Australian Signals Directorate to analyse and it tells us whether it has or has not been compromised.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Mr Speaker, who was the author of the attack? Does the Speaker know where it came from, which entity or any information like that?

The SPEAKER: We do not really know.

Mr R. Hunter: Unfortunately, no.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: The annual report shows an allocation to add some improvements to the website. Could we get an outline of what those improvements might be and whether they result from the attack or are part of continual improvement of the website?

The SPEAKER: Always, when there is an attack, you try to upgrade your system, but I will get Rob to answer that more forensically.

Mr R. Hunter: I will answer it generally and then defer to Belinda Corey because that is her area of specialty. In terms of our website, we are currently running some fairly old databases and concerns are raised about database searches—*Hansard*, the Parliamentary Library et cetera. Some of those things need to be reviewed. We also have concerns about making sure the website is accessible and that it meets all compliance requirements. We need to do a numbers of things, which we have not been able to progress through lack of funding. As you know, the website was redeveloped only two years ago. I refer to Belinda Corey about what the focus for our website will be.

[9.10 am]

Ms B. Corey: Our website was redeveloped to go live last April, 2019, and that is for the presentation of the data. The ongoing project that our cross-parliamentary website steering committee is looking at is how the database is presented and how that is searchable for our users and members, and also improving accessibility to the website for users with disabilities.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Mr Speaker, are the ongoing improvements dedicated towards the website resultant of any complaints about current usability? Secondly, as an avid POWAnet user, I am hoping there will not be any changes to the POWAnet interface until we iron out issues with the public website. Could you enlighten us about the process of when or if POWAnet will be altered during the redevelopment of the website?

The SPEAKER: Belinda.

Ms B. Corey: We do not intend to make any changes to the POWAnet in terms of navigation and usability. We have had some feedback. We have member and staff surveys and general-use feedback regarding navigation of the website, and that is what our committee is actively looking to improve.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Mr Speaker, on page 41, under “Service Summary” is an allocation to “Support the Operations of the Legislative Assembly”. Could you provide a breakdown of the allocation for the overall support to the operations thus far?

The SPEAKER: I am just finding who I can handball it to—the Clerk.

Ms K.M. Robinson: The items under “Support the Operations of the Legislative Assembly” include such things as services and contracts, including committee travel and projects, accommodation and employee benefits. It covers those costs.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Thank you, Chair; thank you, Speaker. Does that also include an allocation for hospitality provided by Parliament and the Speaker?

The SPEAKER: Yes.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Is there a list or any sort of record of the hospitality that is provided by the Parliament? I assume that allocation is shared between Mr Speaker and the President, in the case of a joint event, and then obviously any official hospitality that is provided by the Speaker in the suite is provided by the Speaker directly. Is that a fair assertion?

The SPEAKER: Yes.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Does the Speaker have a breakdown for the last financial year of the hospitality that has been provided by the Parliament and then by the Speaker?

The SPEAKER: Yes, sure. We can answer that as a supplementary question.

The CHAIR: Mr Speaker, could you confirm, for the new system this year, exactly what you are going to provide?

The SPEAKER: Was it the cost of the Speaker’s dining room and the President’s dining room?

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Effectively, for hospitality across the Parliament generally, and then confined to official functions that Mr Speaker hosts.

The SPEAKER: Not as many as there could be!

The CHAIR: So it is providing a breakdown of costs for official functions by the Speaker and Parliament.

[*Supplementary Information No A1.*]

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: There have been discussions over many years about the potential establishment of a parliamentary budget office. Has the Legislative Assembly done any work on what that cost might be with respect to the establishment of such an office?

The SPEAKER: No.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Thank you.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: On page 42, under “Cost of Services: Expenses”, a number of line items are listed, including accommodation and the like. I am curious whether the allocation for “Accommodation” includes any money toward the establishment of a family room about which members have been surveyed. If so, what plans have been put together by the Parliament to establish such a facility?

The SPEAKER: No official money has been put aside. We recently sent out a survey to members. It is something that a lot of members want, but space is always a big issue in Parliament House. At the moment we are looking at a site in Parliament. As I said, we sent out a survey asking people what they wanted and we are pretty sure that it will happen in the next term of Parliament.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I appreciate that, but, at the moment, there is no allocation toward refurbishing or refitting that space for that?

The SPEAKER: No. We think the space we have will be okay, with some minor changes. We are pretty confident we will have something for the start of the next Parliament. It is a bit hard to get anything done now. There is a lot of demand for something like this, but we have to be very careful how we do it because the facility has to be safe and also close to the members. We think we have a spot, but we are still working out the size and what we have to do. We are waiting to get feedback from members to finalise what we will actually do and then we will allocate money when the time is right.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I assume the requirement is that it is within the confines of the building and close to members, rather than a separate facility on the grounds?

The SPEAKER: There is no room for something like that at the moment. It has to be in the building, close to security and to the members. The member probably realises the building has very limited space, but we think we have found a spot. It will be safe, it will be inside the building and will be accessible to members.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: In relation to accommodation, has any money been spent thus far in the last financial year, or is forecast in the coming financial year, on a refurbishment of members' offices or for the Parliamentary Services team and the like?

The SPEAKER: It is very hard to get money from the government to refurbish the building. That has been a worry for me ever since I have been in this job. At some stage down the track it will cost a government a lot of money to refurbish the building. I will get Rob to follow up.

Mr R. Hunter: In response to the question about accommodation, particularly around office spaces: yes, we have a plan. We have a 10-year strategic asset management plan, which includes upgrading all the members' offices. There are 81 members' offices or thereabouts that need to be upgraded. The staff offices are not included in that. The last time they were upgraded was in 1999, other than little pieces of furniture being put in from time to time. To give an example of the quantum cost, because we need to route IT and power et cetera, it would be \$800 000.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Is that per office or in total?

Mr R. Hunter: No, in total for those 81 offices, so about \$10 000 per office. That would really be for new furnishings, carpets, well finishes, and data and power routing—that is it. It would be the same location and no expansion.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Thank you very much, Mr Hunter. Could you confirm the expenditure thus far on accommodation has not included refurbishing or refitting members' offices or the offices of the Parliamentary Services team?

Mr R. Hunter: We have had some changes to the staff offices, particularly around the Parliamentary Services centre. There has been a basic reconfiguration there, but nothing major.

The SPEAKER: Hansard was transferred downstairs and the space down there was reconfigured.

[9.20 am]

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Mr Speaker, the income statement table on page 42 shows "Other revenue" of \$21 000.

Ms E. Ozich: The \$21 000 income in each year is mainly a contribution from the Parliamentary Services Department and the Legislative Council to the Legislative Assembly for their portion of the contribution to the purchase of artworks. It also includes about \$4 000 for conference fees, some insurance recoveries and motor vehicle contributions.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I have a different question on the same page under "Expenses". On the same table, under "Finance and interest costs", there is an allocation of \$49 000 in 2019–20 versus \$1 000 to \$2 000 budgeted for out years. What is that variance about?

Ms E. Ozich: In the budget, the financing cost relates to a new accounting standard for leases, Australian Accounting Standards Board 16. That particular charge was for the interest on what is called right-of-use leases, so it is an accounting treatment. Most of that belonged to the lease of accommodation. During the last financial year, it was determined by government that the accounting treatment would not continue, so that was reversed out of our books and explains why that \$49 000 is shown there but not in our actuals or forward forecast.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: On page 42, looking at the cost of services and expenses, there are a couple of interesting variations between the 2019–20 budget and the 2019–20 actual expenditure. For example, depreciation was \$402 000, but ultimately expenditure will be \$22 000. There was a budget for "Other expenses" of \$1.4 million, but only \$88 000 in actual expenditure; and "Supplies and services" of \$1.9 million, but \$1.6 million in actual expenditure. I assume much of that is a result of the impact of COVID-19 and the change in operations of the Parliament. Would it be a fair assertion that that is for things like supplies and services?

The SPEAKER: Yes. The reason for the underspend is obviously because there has been no travel this year, including the cancellation of the Speaker's delegation to India. I will get Elma to respond but, because of the year we have had, obviously the budget will be all over the place.

Ms E. Ozich: As I just mentioned, we did not end up with a charge for interest with the ROU leases for accommodation. It is the same thing for depreciation, with right-of-use depreciation for accommodation, which was also reversed out. As Mr Speaker said, there was some underspend during the year as well because we had much less

travel. Also, we have had a slight change in treatment in where we put what we call our free-of-charge cost, which previously was shown under “Other expenses” in the budget but which has now been moved under “Supplies and services” for actuals. That is why there is a little bit of a flip.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Further to that, is that why, for example, in 2018–19, “Supplies and services” were effectively \$1.449 million and for 2020–21 are \$2.79 million?

Ms E. Ozich: Yes. That is the right-of-use charge moving from “Other expenses” into that line item.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: For those of us who are not familiar with what that technology might mean, Mr Speaker, is there an example of what that would entail?

The SPEAKER: Mrs Ozich?

Ms E. Ozich: The resources received free-of-charge by the Legislative Assembly is a charge from PSD and is basically a portion of our IT, finance and HR expenses that we re-charge. We do not actually get money for this; it is a nominal entry that we do in the books.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Can we get answers to questions with respect to the Legislative Council as well?

The CHAIR: No.

The SPEAKER: Please, no.

The CHAIR: That is their problem.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I have just a quick question. Going back to page 40, under “Delivery of Services”, the estimated actual is \$5.907 million for 2019–20, going up next year to \$5.996 million. I am curious about the increase for next year. My understanding is that because it is an election year we will be sitting fewer days. This year, I think we sat in the order of 69 days and next year we will be sitting far fewer days. I would have expected a cost saving, given we have fewer sitting days as there would be less overtime and related costs. I am curious to know what the increase is for.

Ms E. Ozich: We still have staff here for the full year, so \$52 000 of that increase of \$89 000 would be for salaries and wages. That is the \$1 000 per year per employee increase. We also have non-salary cost escalations of about \$20 000, which is about a one per cent increase on our normal charges. Most of it relates to everyday running costs and small items such as that.

The SPEAKER: Also, retiring members are in there too.

Ms E. Ozich: Yes, but that would be under the salaries and allowances line.

Mr R. Hunter: In relation to sitting days—I understand that we are talking about the Legislative Assembly—when we look at the Parliamentary Services Department and the Assembly, the total number of days this year is 82. That is because the Legislative Council and the Legislative Assembly do not sit congruently, so the costs for the organisation such as power, air conditioning, utilities et cetera exist even if one house is not sitting. That is why we start to see escalations, as well as the \$1 000 per year per person for wages.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: This probably requires more detail than is contained in the budget papers, but do we have an estimate of the actual cost of running the Parliament on an hourly basis on each sitting day versus a non-sitting day?

Ms E. Ozich: The average cost for PSD of a sitting day is \$50 000.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Further to that, what is the average cost on a non-sitting day?

Ms E. Ozich: It is \$42 750.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I refer to the parliamentary precinct project that we have spoken about, which is on page 46. Mr Speaker, given the statements that both you and Mr Hunter have made that effectively there will be no net benefit to the Parliament itself because there will not be an increase in the overall accommodation in this building and the services contained within it, who initiated the parliamentary precinct project, if it was not the Parliament?

[9.30 am]

The SPEAKER: I will ask Mr Hunter to answer.

Mr R. Hunter: We have been concerned about accommodation, or lack of accommodation, at Parliament House for some time. Those matters have been raised with successive governments over many years. The project to amalgamate the electorate offices and the LOOP offices in the building was initiated by government; it approached us. We had hoped that that would realise some vacancy in Parliament House so that we could then reprioritise our existing accommodation. Our ideal, what we had asked for, was a new building on the reserve. I guess that became untenable in terms of cost so we ended up with accommodation across the road. The net result is that we hoped we would have realised some offices but it is really about the LOOP offices. At the moment, both LOOP offices have staff in the building, whereas previously, as you know, some were in offices on Hay Street. A long time ago, the Nationals WA were in off-premises leased accommodation as well. When those staff are relocated, they will keep the same space, because all they have done—both opposition leaders understand—is just cram their staff into an existing allocation. When they relocate across the road, it will not free up space to reallocate to us, so there is no net gain for us.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: To clarify, was it the Department of the Premier and Cabinet or the Department of Finance that initiated this precinct project?

Mr R. Hunter: It was the former. It is run by the Treasury government accommodation office.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I refer to page 47 and the provision of infrastructure and facilities under the service summary. I note that we have revised forecourt security arrangements at the moment, with sliding gates and the like and that the septic tanks that were out the front have gone.

The SPEAKER: Withdraw!

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Is there an ongoing plan for the provision of security services to the forecourt and what will that look like?

The SPEAKER: I will get Mr Hunter to answer. We put up those bollards in the first place because of a threat. We had to do something really quickly. It had to be cost effective because we were given no money. We did that and obviously people are unhappy. We then found out that school buses and seniors could not get through. We were looking at using the area at the top where the tennis courts were and changing things around so that buses could come in, but then Mr Hunter found a way to do it with the facilities that we have at the moment. We have security gates there because we want to make the forecourt an area where people can come to protest. Schoolchildren come through there all the time. We want the forecourt to have no parking so it is a space just for people to protest, which everyone has a right to do. A certain person was driving around Parliament House at speed and we had to do something, so that is what was done. I will get Mr Hunter, who has done a tremendous job on this, to answer.

Mr R. Hunter: The bigger picture is that the parliamentary precinct—the reserve—needs considerable work to make it accessible for a start. It needs to be safe in terms of security, and also for people to alight from buses and for people with disabilities to be dropped off without having to make their way down stairs. As members know, a restaurant owner was killed in the Bourke Street tragedy in Melbourne. The intended target was the Parliament of Victoria. We had that information fairly early, we also had a threat against the protective security officers, and we established on our CCTV that a particular person of interest had been driving to Parliament House in the early hours of the morning and doing turning circles. Until now, this information has not been publicly available. We had a serious threat and, with the Presiding Officers' support, I hastened to put in the bollards—the soak wells—which of course became a bit of a joke for most people.

If we look at today as an example, we expect to see 200 people from the embassy protesting, and they will walk across the front. No vehicles will be travelling through that area so it will be safe. The 17 parking bays out the front will be removed eventually; they have been duplicated already, just outside the barrier. We put in 14 bays and three universal access bays. We have duplicated those parking bays and will move them out. At the moment, people say that it is very sparse on a sitting day with no cars out there. That is the intention so that the people behind those barriers, if you like, will have a card credentialed by us—that is, members and staff. That means that the chances of a hostile vehicle attack have been minimised, and that is the purpose. In terms of security and what we intend to do, we are pretty much at the end of the process now. I feel less concerned about security than I did when I sat here last year. Ultimately, we still need to do a few things. We need to get a platform lift at the southern entrance so people can get down to the forecourt. We are getting parking for buses and doing some work on bus drop-offs now. It is a longer term plan.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I appreciate that is the end of the security arrangements for the forecourt area, if I read Mr Hunter correctly. First, are ongoing security improvements needed throughout the rest of the building? Second, on car parking, I understand that, for example, ministerial staff are not able to use the forecourt parking and in some cases, particularly when Parliament sits quite late, ministerial staff have to walk from Dumas House to Parliament House, and although I realise protective services officers patrol the area between here and Dumas House, no parking is provided for ministerial staff on the precinct. Will that be looked at by the Parliament? First, are there ongoing security arrangements that are being looked at for the rest of the precinct; and, if so, what are they? Second, what are the parking arrangements for ministerial staff?

The SPEAKER: There are ongoing issues. We do not want to let people know about some of the security things that we do. But we are looking at increasing security. It is very hard to get everyone onto the precinct. I will let Rob finish that one.

Mr R. Hunter: In terms of security, most of the visible stuff has been done. We are now talking about intelligence sharing between the various parts of the police force. We are very grateful to the government for giving us the protective security officers free of charge. That is a bonus for us. To keep it in context, there were 91 incidents this calendar year.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Were they security incidents?

Mr R. Hunter: Yes, there were 91. Several involved police interventions and 24 were with a weapon of some description. These things are mostly invisible to people inside Parliament House. Obviously, some of those incidents escalate to arrests or whatever else. Some were personal threats by people who want to self-harm and others were

by people disaffected with particular portfolios or who had mental health issues. It is real, but we think we have the controls in place to deal with them. In terms of what will happen now with security, we will perhaps install some security gates at the north and south gallery entrances like the ones we have on the south, north, lower and front entrances. It is a good way to have pedestrian traffic control.

The second part of the question was about parking. Again, putting that in context, we have increased the number of parking bays available in the members' car park by 16 bays. There was always a bit of a crunch point, particularly in the car park. There is enough parking for members of Parliament now. We also introduced another 21 bays on the tennis court less than three years ago, so there is parking there. As I said, we replicated the parking bays at the front of Parliament House on the southern side. We have done that as well. If we have a dedicated parking bay, it costs us somewhere between \$1 956 and \$2 400 per person per bay. The fringe benefit tax cost for the Parliamentary Services Department was about \$260 000. I do not employ ministerial staff and I certainly do not want to be paying FBT for their parking.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Can I have clarification of the statement made by Mr Hunter that there were 24 incidents with a weapon? Was it that Western Australia Police Force protective service officers had to use a weapon or was it individuals who came to the precinct armed?

The SPEAKER: Most of those incidences were people coming into Parliament with a knife in their bag or something like that and probably not realising they had it there. There were none against the protective service guys at all. Mr Hunter will answer further.

[9.40 am]

Mr R. Hunter: The majority of them were knives. There were a few things like mace and pepper spray. We thought one person in particular had fuel to self-harm. One person claimed to have a knife, but, when his bag was searched, we found he did not have a knife. He then came back and said that police had taken his knife. There were a few incidences like that, but mostly it is to do with people who have come in through screening and who might have something for their own personal protection that they were endeavouring to bring into Parliament House, which obviously we can grab when we screen them.

The SPEAKER: On that, a lot were people who have mental health issues. We have a system in place by which we can get people down to Parliament very quickly. We had a gentleman at the front of Parliament House recently who would not go away. The mental health unit came and calmed him down.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Has there been an increase in the number of threats to members of Parliament?

The SPEAKER: There has been. We had one with a member just recently. One of their constituents threatened to come to Parliament House and cause harm. We have a very good system now with the police parliamentary protection officers. We are trying to get members to find out about threats early on. We have had some courses on fixated threats. If members are not sure about someone attending their electorate office, which is where threats come from mainly, they can report it to the dignitary protection unit, and it will keep a record. The unit can also tell the member whether the threat is escalating, because they and their staff might not know. I have had violence restraining orders on one particular person who has stopped me in the street and threatened me. I just thought that was okay, but I was told it could escalate very quickly, so that person is on the unit's files now if anything happens. Mr Hunter will answer.

Mr R. Hunter: This is a really important issue. I think the first answer is yes, there has been a noticeable increase in the number of threats against members of Parliament, not that we would get all those reports, because some would be dealt with in electorate offices. I will outline some of the work that we are doing. We had a meeting with a group of people who are working with police and forensic and clinical psychiatrists to look at the antecedents of the behaviour. If we look at that tragedy of Jo Cox in the United Kingdom, we see that if we start detecting the behaviours early before they escalate, potentially we can prevent something very sad or very bad from happening. We are now working with the police to have both a mental health and a police intervention—a triage of an incident—early to start to detect some of those cues. The training, which some electorate office and office staff may already have had, is to identify what might seem like an aggravated person so that they can report that and feed the information into a database so we can collect the data. In the forty-first Parliament, we will be looking at making sure that all members are aware of the things to look for and do some dedicated training. However, more importantly, the police made an observation—which I thought was very good—that if a member of Parliament ceases to be a member and vacates their electorate office, any of those disaffected people in their constituency will not be known to the next member, because there is no handover in which they can say, "Watch out for this person." We are looking to try to capture that information so that when the next member comes in, they are not relying on the leaving member to tell them about those people. The police will say, "Mr Smith and Sally are really big problems. They are here, and this is what they are going to do." Electorate offices are experiencing this, but it is not being captured. There is lots of work to be done in that space, but, yes, there is an escalation of it.

The SPEAKER: I suggest all members get their staff to do the training, because it flows on. That person is still around after a member leaves office, and they do not target just the member; they target the job.

The appropriation was recommended.

Division 2: Parliamentary Commissioner for Administrative Investigations, \$8 073 000 —

Ms L.L. Baker, Chair.

Mr P.B. Watson, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly.

Mr C.J. Field, Parliamentary Commissioner for Administrative Investigations.

Mrs G.M. White, Deputy Parliamentary Commissioner for Administrative Investigations.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIR: This estimates committee will be reported by Hansard. The daily proof *Hansard* will be available the following day. The Chair will ensure that as many questions as possible are asked and answered and that both questions and answers are short and to the point. The estimates committee's consideration of the estimates will be restricted to discussion of those items for which a vote of money is proposed in the consolidated account. Questions must be clearly related to a page number, item, program or amount in the current division. Members should give these details in preface to their question. If a division or service is the responsibility of more than one minister, a minister shall be examined only in relation to their portfolio responsibilities.

The minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee rather than asking that the question be put on notice. I ask the Speaker to clearly indicate what supplementary information he agrees to provide and I will then allocate a reference number. If supplementary information is to be provided, I seek the Speaker's cooperation in ensuring that it is delivered 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.

The Leader of the Opposition has the call.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I refer to the "Spending Changes" table on page 53 and the line item "Section 25 Transfer—Expanded Child Death Review Function from the Department of Health" under the heading "Ongoing initiatives". How many child deaths have been investigated in the past year?

The SPEAKER: Mr Field will answer.

Mr C.J. Field: Thank you so much, Mr Speaker and Madam Chair. Thank you so much for your question, Leader of the Opposition.

I think there are two parts to that question. The first is on the expanded child death review. That was a process whereby a range of stakeholders, the Department of Health and a number of others, were very keen to see my office undertake an expansion of its existing child death review role—I think the Leader of the Opposition will know from past briefings to her from me that that is the investigation of child deaths in the state—to look at all child deaths that occur to get the most holistic possible idea of child death reviews. On the second part of the question, we have thus far been looking only at triaging historical child deaths. We will commence that expanded child death review process next year. At the moment, we are doing the formative work, developing up databases, stakeholder engagement and a range of other work. That initial funding tranche was to do all the preparatory and development work. Certainly, going forward we will be looking at and examining every child death, not just investigable child deaths.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: With respect to historical child deaths, are investigations by way of reference or of particular years? I am curious to know the range of historical child deaths and how many of those deaths are being investigated.

Mr C.J. Field: The Department of Health gave us a number originally of, I think, around 80 child deaths going back over several years. At the moment, we are working with a range of stakeholders, including the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages, the Department of Health and others, to ascertain exactly what that number should be and exactly over what time frame. Obviously, for the Leader of the Opposition's purposes, my desire is to make sure that the state and this Parliament—obviously I am an officer of the Parliament and report to the Parliament; I am reporting to the Parliament—has the best possible information on child deaths that hitherto may not have necessarily been investigated by anybody. Some may have been the subject of certain internal or other investigations, but in terms of investigations from my office, I will ensure that as many as possible of those child deaths that historically were not part of my jurisdiction are investigated. Although I cannot give a precise number now because the exact number we will investigate is still developing, I can certainly assure the Leader of the Opposition that it will include all child deaths over a period for which it is as reasonable as possible to gather the data that we can to investigate those deaths.

[9.50 am]

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Were the 80 child deaths that the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administrative Investigations is currently looking at predominantly children under the care of or known to the Department of Communities, or are there also other referrals—for example, suicides or deaths of children that were not known to the department? I am interested to understand what the break-up of that is.

The SPEAKER: Mr Field.

Mr C.J. Field: That is an excellent question. To give context to the answer, the history to this is that the Department of Health was concerned that a range of the child deaths that occurred in the state were not being investigated by any body, or a body, to a sufficient extent. Of course, my office has been investigating all the sorts of matters to which the Leader of the Opposition referred, and has been for a decade—that is, the tragedy of child suicide, and deaths of those otherwise known to the department. I suspect that the majority of those 80 deaths or, indeed, it could potentially be more, would not be deaths that would otherwise have historically been investigated by us. They will be deaths in which a child may have died in what appears to be natural circumstances and causes in the care of, for example, a general practitioner or otherwise. Therefore, it is very unlikely that those deaths or, for example, a suicide, are ones that otherwise would be known to the department, because we would have investigated those deaths and they would have been known to us; and, indeed, they would have been mandatorily reported to us over the previous decade.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I am interested to know about this, because obviously we have seen some tragedies of children with meningococcal disease misdiagnosed by GPs, for example. Is the commissioner saying that his function is to review the deaths of children who may have been misdiagnosed by a GP or not referred appropriately to emergency services?

Mr C.J. Field: I cannot necessarily speculate at this stage, because we have not commenced those investigations as such. That commencement date will be into next year. The original piece of work we are doing at the moment was always about establishing databases, networks and an advisory panel, and building capacity in the organisation to expand on that. We will have a date next year for commencing those investigations. We are doing some triage on what would effectively be historic cases. I can say that the cases will not be investigable deaths that were otherwise known to the department and otherwise would qualify as an investigable death under the Parliamentary Commissioner Act. They also will not be cases like, for example, youth suicide, because those would have otherwise been captured in matters that would have been investigated by my office. Indeed, of course, matters like youth suicide, which are utterly tragic, as the Leader of the Opposition knows, have been the subject of significant investigations by my office. Indeed, the most recent own-motion investigation was tabled a few short weeks ago. What will constitute those 80 cases? There may be some missed diagnoses in those cases, correct. I can assure the Leader of the Opposition that we will fully, substantially and transparently report on all those matters in our annual report so that there will be a very holistic picture of every child death that occurs in the state.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I think this is a really important function. I am unsure of what the reporting mechanism might be at present, but under this expanded function would the commissioner be looking at deaths related to drug overdoses and those sorts of things, or are they already being investigated?

Mr C.J. Field: It will depend. The very simple answer is: the intention is to expand child death review. I agree with the Leader of the Opposition that it is a fundamentally important function that fills a real gap in the state. That is said with humility, obviously, in terms of the work that we do; it is the Parliament that gave me the role. I think there has been a very significant and expansive child death review jurisdiction undertaken by my office in this state during the last 10 years. Of course, others also do fundamental important work in that space, such as the coroner. However, for many years, clearly, there have been gaps in that system. There are children who are not investigated necessarily by my office; therefore, I think all stakeholders are keen for there to be a holistic review. However, that does not mean that those deaths were not investigated by anyone. For example, hospital internal investigations and other potential investigations may have occurred on those deaths, but they would not necessarily be reported in my annual report or with the level of depth of own-motion investigations, for example, about systemic issues, patterns and trend type-issues. That is not to say that there were no investigations, but they would not have been investigations of the sort that we would have undertaken, and there may be some for which there were no investigations at all.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Further to that, under this expanded review function, will the commissioner be investigating every death of every child known to the Department of Communities or in the care of the CEO?

Mr C.J. Field: Unquestionably. Leader of the Opposition, that is an excellent question. We should, we do and we will.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Thank you.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: In 2016–17, in Western Australia, 177 child deaths were identified as part of the commission's functions that, as the commissioner alluded, were subsequently referred to the coroner, whether by a non-relative or a notifiable entity under the Department of Communities and the like. Is there a figure for 2017–18 and 2018–19 or is there usually a lag between collating and providing that information?

Mr C.J. Field: I thank the honourable member for his question. All those numbers should be in my annual report, and if I or my deputy can find them very quickly, I will provide them, but rather than take up the Assembly's time —

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: If it is in the annual report, Mr Field, that is okay. The information I have might be older, and I apologise.

Mr C.J. Field: Without speaking for too long, Madam Chair, can I just say that if those figures are not immediately available in the annual report, which I think they are, I personally would be delighted to provide that as a matter of supplementary information or otherwise.

The SPEAKER: I think we will have it as supplementary information. Have we got the numbers?

Mrs G.M. White: I do have available the 2019–20 annual report that was just issued.

The CHAIR: Mrs White, would you like to give us that data?

Mrs G.M. White: Our annual report shows that in 2016–17, there was a total of 181 child deaths in WA; in 2017–18, 138; in 2018–19, 175; and in 2019–20, 135.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I have a question on mental health and the issue raised by Leader of the Opposition on the suicides of our young people. I understand that issue was highlighted in the budget allocation with the commission undertaking its own review into Aboriginal youth suicide. I am keen to understand whether that is an ongoing piece of work of the commission. Is the commission seeing an unfortunate trend of increasing numbers of suicide amongst our Aboriginal children?

[10.00 am]

Mr C.J. Field: I thank the honourable member. I recognise through his shadow portfolio his significant interest in these matters, and I appreciate that interest. There is no more significant issue, along with family domestic violence fatalities, upon which my office works. Can I say specifically in relation to the member's questions that we effectively do two things on suicide by children and young people: we undertake investigations of all matters referred to us, and then we undertake own-motion investigations into those matters as well. There was a major piece in 2014, and then just recently a tabled piece a few short weeks ago, which was examining the implementation of the recommendations of the 2014 report and making seven new recommendations.

The CHAIR: Sorry, we need to interrupt. The question is that the appropriation be recommended.

The appropriation was recommended.

Division 16: Primary Industries and Regional Development — Services 1 To 5, Regional Development, \$348 901 000 —

Ms L.L. Baker, Chair.

Mr M. McGowan, Premier representing the Minister for Regional Development.

Mr D. Addis, Director General.

Dr M. Sweetingham, Acting Deputy Director General.

Ms A. Taylor, Chief Financial Officer.

Mr C. Binning, Managing Director, Capability and Performance.

Mr N. Grazia, Deputy Director General, Industry and Economic Development.

Mr P.A. Gregson, Manager, Funds Management.

Mr C. Thurley, Chief of Staff, Minister for Regional Development.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIR: This estimates committee will be reported by Hansard. The daily proof *Hansard* will be available the following day. The Chair will ensure that as many questions as possible are asked and answered and that questions and answers are short and to the point. The estimates committee's consideration of the estimates will be restricted to discussion of those items for which a vote of money is proposed in the consolidated account. Questions must be clearly related to a page number, item, program or amount in the current division. Members should give these details in preface to their question. If a division or service is the responsibility of more than one minister, a minister shall be examined only in relation to their portfolio responsibilities.

The minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee rather than asking that the question be put on notice for the next sitting week. I ask the minister to clearly indicate what supplementary information he agrees to provide and I will then allocate a reference number. If supplementary information is provided, I seek the minister's cooperation in ensuring that it is delivered 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 Leader of the Nationals WA.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I have a question about page 225. Footnote (b) under the table "Spending Changes" says —

These initiatives have been funded from the reprioritisation of other projects within the Royalties for Regions program.

Could the Premier provide us with a list or an outline of which of those projects money was taken from to fund the projects noted in that table?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Just so I am clear, is the member referring to (b), which relates to the line item "Funding for the Royal Agricultural Society of Western Australia", with a total of \$1.65 million?

Ms M.J. DAVIES: It refers to a number of line items within that table. If these initiatives have been funded by the reprioritisation of other projects, I am wondering which projects were cut to provide funding to those projects noted.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Just to put a bit of context around it, obviously, early this year, in February and March, COVID hit the state and we had to deal with lots of different situations. One of the examples the member referred to was the RAS and the Royal Show. We were keen for the Royal Show to go ahead. Subsequent medical advice indicated that we had to cancel it, and the RAS obviously incurred some costs as part of that—that is, \$1.65 million. We are working with the Royal Agricultural Society to ensure that it continues to operate and has not endured any losses due to a decision of the state government. The member can see the RAS, the northern beef development, which was allocated a relatively small amount of money, and a range of other things. In order to fund a range of urgent COVID initiatives, I think predominantly to assist in our building program, regional workers and the like, the Expenditure Review Committee approved some savings, which was largely a cash flow response. That was a provision for the government's strategic priorities—north west Aboriginal housing initiative, Pilbara Aboriginal town-based reserves, regional aged accommodation program, some parts of the Country Age Pension Fuel Card and the southern forest irrigation scheme. In other words, some of the spend on those initiatives went sideways to the right—it is not as though they were cancelled, they went sideways to the right. The Country Age Pension Fuel Card scheme was undersubscribed, so that allowed us to put some of those undersubscribed resources or money into some of the COVID-response initiatives that the government announced.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Just to clarify, the Premier said the money went sideways to the right. Does that mean that the funding is still in the budget somewhere in the forward estimates and has not been cut?

Mr M. McGOWAN: It has predominantly been pushed out, and some may have been reduced to a degree. The allocation to the Country Age Pension Fuel Card in the budget was higher than the take-up, so it allowed us to free up some money each year to put into the COVID response, and some of the other programs basically went to the right. When I say “went to the right”, we will re-cashflow. Often, we find that these sorts of programs are not ready anyway, so, because they are not ready for money to be spent, we can re-cashflow into further out years.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Could a list be provided of the programs the Premier just mentioned and how they have been re-cashflowed? I imagine that some of those funds would have been re-cashflowed to beyond the forward estimates. Would that be correct?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Just to explain, I have advised the member of all the programs that this applies to or that have been used for the COVID response. The first one, the provision for government strategic priorities, was a \$60 million global amount that had not been allocated towards anything; it had not been allocated towards any project. There are these funds in royalties for regions, as there are in other agencies, that are set aside for whatever might emerge, whatever grant program we might come up with or whatever it might be. In this case, that money had not been allocated to anything, so the government decided—which I think is entirely understandable—that government strategic priority was responding to COVID in the very dark early days of this year. That is \$60 million of the full amount of \$95.5 million. The north west Aboriginal housing initiative was \$5 million. The second component of the north west Aboriginal housing initiative was \$1.9 million. The figure for the Pilbara town-based reserves was \$980 000. The regional aged accommodation program was \$1.295 million. The Country Age Pension Fuel Card was \$14.4 million, but that is because, as I said, it was not fully subscribed. The southern forests irrigation scheme was \$11.94 million, and it has gone sideways to 2023–24. As I said, some of these programs or projects are not ready for investment. The bulk of them, \$60 million of the \$95 million, had not been allocated to anything, so we allocated it to the COVID-19 response. The government has done that in a range of areas. We worked with Lotterywest to ensure that it reprioritised its grants program to a COVID response. We have done that in a range of agencies.

[10.10 am]

Mr D.C. NALDER: I refer to the Yamatji Nation Indigenous land use agreement on page 225, which is a new expense. Can the Premier explain what that is about?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Is that about three-quarters down the page—the \$1.562 million and \$8.572 million et cetera?

Mr D.C. NALDER: Yes; that is correct.

Mr M. McGOWAN: On 30 July 2020, the Yamatji Nation Indigenous land use agreement achieved registration, enabling the Yamatji Nation alternative settlement package to be distributed to agencies. Base funding from Treasury global provision of \$13.9 million was reallocated to the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development over 2020–21 to 2029–30. An amount of \$12.3 million was allocated across the forward estimates in accordance with the Yamatji Nation ILUA, namely \$5 million for business development, and \$7.3 million for tourism development of Pink Lake and Lucky Bay. The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs worked hard to get to a resolution on this. It is an agreement on the scale of the Noongar settlement that was reached in the south west of the state.

Mr D.C. NALDER: The numbers the Premier just expressed seem to be far greater than those in these line items. If I heard correctly, the total line items here add up to about \$13 million.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will read it out again: base funding from the Treasury global provision of \$13.9 million was reallocated to DPIRD over 2020–21 to 2029–30. An amount of \$12.3 million is allocated across the forward estimates in accordance with the Yamatji Nation ILUA, namely \$5 million for business development, and \$7.3 million for tourism development of Pink Lake and Lucky Bay.

Mr D.C. NALDER: Okay. I refer to page 94 of budget paper No 3, *Economic and Fiscal Outlook*, which details the increases for the same line item—Yamatji Nation Indigenous land use agreement—as that on page 225. That line item is also included on page 94 as part of the major spending changes. That is how we can see that it is a new spend.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Just so I am clear, do we deal with budget paper No 3 separately or do we deal with that now?

The CHAIR: Premier, you can refer to budget paper No 3 to clarify.

Mr D.C. NALDER: It is just to clarify; it is the same line item.

The CHAIR: That is fine; it is a breakdown

Mr D.C. NALDER: The question that arises for me is that it seems as though it has been transferred across to DPIRD, yet there is a heap of new funding for the Yamatji Nation Indigenous land use agreement under the Department of the Premier and Cabinet as well. I want to understand why there has been this split of funding so that some has been funded by DPIRD and the rest by Premier and Cabinet. What is the overall commitment to the Yamatji agreement from the state government? I understand that this is part of a bigger pie; I am just trying to understand what the whole pie is.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I defer to the director general to comment on this.

Mr D. Addis: The Yamatji overall settlement is primarily led by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. The respective agencies, DPIRD being one of them, have roles within that overall package to deliver it. The \$12.5 million or so that the Premier outlined in DPIRD's specific budget covers our role in delivering on that in the next four years. I am not familiar with the overall package off the top of my head. That would be a question for the Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: Greetings, Premier. Thank you for taking my question. I refer to page 237 of budget paper No 2, volume 1, and the COVID-19 WA recovery plan under "New Works". The COVID pandemic has impacted heavily in regional areas. What recovery initiatives, including the industry development projects and infrastructure initiatives, will the government deliver in my electorate?

The CHAIR: I am just checking that we are in the right service area. Are we still in services 1 to 5? I think you might be in service 6, member, which is in another section, somewhat confusingly, but I am sure the Premier could make a comment if he wanted to.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I do not want to breach standing orders. Can we do that bit next? I am more than happy to answer it; we have lots of material.

The CHAIR: No, it is not next on the sheet. This is restricted to services 1 to 5. Section 6 is on page 237.

Mr M. McGOWAN: But we are not in this section, Madam Chair.

The CHAIR: Section 6 will be discussed in Assembly Estimates B this afternoon from 5.00 pm to 6.00 pm. It picks up on Agriculture and Food, services 6 and 7, this afternoon. That is as I have it timetabled in the budget estimates.

Mr M. McGOWAN: If we come back to the member, he might be able to find another area inside the budget we are dealing with through which to ask me that question.

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: I will ask a different question. I refer to "Service Summary" on page 228, specifically item 3, regional technical and technological development, and item 4, regional skills and knowledge development. Those items will get dramatically less money in the forward estimates. In 2023–24, the amount will be less than the pre-COVID 2018–19. Can the Premier please advise why the government is committing less money to those areas, when page 226, item 1, line 1 states that regional Western Australia and primary industries are key drivers of the state's economy?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Is the member talking about regional technical and technological development and regional skills and knowledge development at the bottom of page 228?

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: Yes, Premier.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will say something, and then I will ask the director general to elaborate. The member is referring to this year onwards. I will let the director general answer. He will have a better idea.

[10.20 am]

Mr D. Addis: Thank you, Premier. Unfortunately, the answer is necessarily a little bit complicated by the sort of organisational journey we have been through in the last two to three years. In the early years of this government, following the integration of the new department, we made some estimates across the different service levels because we did not have a good baseline of data when we started this journey. During that time, we have improved our

ability to estimate and allocate costs across the services, so they are starting to become more accurate as we go. That is part of the answer. The other part of the answer is that, as members may be aware, during last year, we completed a very substantial restructure of the organisation to better align ourselves with the new overall organisational form and government priorities, and that meant essentially some reshuffling of the way things were organised. That is reflected in the current budget estimates but was not reflected in the old cost-of-service estimates. The old figures and the new figures have been developed on a different information and structural basis. I think in terms particularly of the regional technical and technological development commitments, the large proportion of that is in the agricultural research and development space. I think we have managed to strengthen and shore up the level of effort that is going into that critical area of endeavour. I am not sure whether Dr Sweetingham has anything to contribute to that, but certainly that remains a very strong priority for the department, and particularly Minister MacTiernan. We have done a good job of maintaining capability and effort.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Dr Sweetingham, do you want to elaborate?

Dr M. Sweetingham: I think what could also be going on here—the CFO, Mandy Taylor, will correct me if I am wrong—is that when we look at the forward estimates in this area, we tend to receive up to \$20 million per annum from commonwealth and industry levy funds from the likes of the Grains Research and Development Corporation, Meat and Livestock Australia and Innovation Australia, and we put figures into the forward estimates only when we already have a locked-in contract for that period.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will invite Mandy Taylor to say a few words.

Ms A. Taylor: Thank you. I refer to the movement in the out years. If we look at the bottom line, which is the total cost of service, we see that 2021 is very high because we have all the COVID-funded projects coming into that year. We also have a number of royalties for regions projects that have been carried over into 2021 from 2019–20. We had difficulty delivering on some of those projects due to the COVID pandemic. Likewise, in the out years, as the total cost of service drops, it is just a symptom of the movement of RforR projects finishing without new ones coming on at this stage because they have not been allocated or there have been no bids for new RforR work. Most of it relates to movements in COVID-funded projects coming off and the funding for those projects being removed or finishing, and also royalties for regions projects that are finishing at the same time.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I have a further question on the organisational restructure.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Sorry, what page is that?

Ms M.J. DAVIES: It was in reference to a comment that the director general made on organisational restructure, so it was broadly in line with the question that was being asked, but I can give the Premier a reference. I refer to page 230 of budget paper No 2, volume 1. Note (b) refers to an organisational design to restructure the agency.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Note (b) to the line item “Total Cost of Service”; is that it? Yes, I have it.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: In terms of organisational restructure, has that machinery-of-government organisational restructure been completed? As we have been through estimates over the last three years, there has been ongoing change within the department that has not been finalised. We have not been able to get an organisational structure for the department in total.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The amalgamation of the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development’s previous departments with the regional development commissions has provided an opportunity to boost primary industries, identify opportunities for innovation and grow our regional economies. Through its redesign process, DPIRD has enhanced its capability to deliver efficient and effective services for the Western Australian community. DPIRD continues to proactively identify opportunities to permanently resolve its remaining registrable employees, including identification of vacancies to move roles into the regions. As members know, we made a decision in 2017 to bring the agencies together. I think it makes sense to bring regional development and agriculture together. Western Australia had way too many government agencies compared with that in any other state in Australia, and there were all sorts of efficiency losses over the COVID period. I have learnt that agencies working together is a much better outcome for everyone. Joining together agencies with natural synergies is a good thing. But I will hand over to the director general to comment.

Mr D. Addis: Thank you, Premier. In a strict sense, the restructuring part of the integration of the department was completed in November last year. We took a view fairly early on that going for an integrated structure was one of the things we can do to bring the department together with the most impact and move us forward as a whole. Obviously, restructures are never easy, but we got through that, and now the focus shifts to how we empower the leadership group and bring those parts of the organisation together on, I suppose, those matters that are most important and require work across the structure. That is going fairly well, I think. It has been tested during COVID when we had to be pretty agile and responsive to what was going on. By and large, I have been very pleased with the way that the department has stepped up to that, worked across the lines within the department, and engaged with our industry and communities, as well as with other departments of state at a time when we kind of needed to. I think that has worked very well. Clearly, there is a lot left to do. These things take several years to really get to a settled state, but the restructure per se is well and truly settled now.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: There was a comment just then about there being more to do to complete the restructure and bring together the organisations. Perhaps the Premier could elaborate on that. What more is there to do to complete and finalise that organisational restructure?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will let Mr Addis comment.

Mr D. Addis: Thank you, Premier. In bringing together three agencies, we have continually worked to strengthen our leadership across the organisation and make sure that the leadership group is well and truly empowered. That is a big focus for this year and next. We have work to do to complete our core systems and make sure that our IT environment reflects the needs of a modern and integrated organisation. We expect to be making very substantial progress on that through this financial year. Broadly, the culture of an organisation is an ongoing piece of work. I think we are starting to see some good signs of progress and momentum on that front. I suppose I would say that these organisations are never a settled state. We will tweak the structural piece as we go; we will have to tweak other parts of the organisation to make sure that we are able to deliver the best that we can.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Premier, has an organisational chart been published for the department, with all the roles filled?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will let Dr Addis comment.

Mr D. Addis: Thank you, Premier; that is overstating my skill set! I might ask Mr Binning whether he can comment on whether the organisational chart is available online.

[10.30 am]

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will hand over to Mr Binning.

Mr C. Binning: I am aware that there is a high-level organisational chart available on our website. I can check what level that goes to, but it covers the key leadership roles. I think the remaining is available internally but not externally at this time.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Mr Addis has something to add.

Mr D. Addis: I will just clarify. I am pretty sure the publicly available chart goes down to branch level, which is about the standard that would be visible externally. But we have a detailed chart that we work from internally.

Mr D.C. NALDER: I note that the director general talked about the restructuring having been completed. I refer to page 225 and the line item “Reallocation of Funds to the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation”. If the restructure is finished, why are funds of about \$8.5 million in this year’s budget and the forward estimates being diverted from the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development across to the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Whereabouts is that on page 225?

Mr D.C. NALDER: It is on page 225, about 10 line items up from the bottom. It is \$2 642 000 this year and then about the same number the following year, \$3 million the following year and then \$145 000. If the restructure is finished, what is the need for there to be a diversion of funds away from DPIRD?

Mr M. McGOWAN: This reflects the transfer of the function for the renewable hydrogen strategy project from DPIRD to the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation. This is the money that was formerly in this agency for renewable hydrogen going to the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation because it is largely a resources project. As the member might be aware, the Minister for Regional Development is also the minister assisting me for state development, so it makes sense. As the member knows, she has a passion for this area. This area of endeavour—renewable hydrogen—is an area of opportunity for the state in the future, so we are investing more and more resources into this.

In terms of what the government has done in that regard, we established the Renewable Hydrogen Council in 2018, chaired by Minister MacTiernan, which is designed to provide strategic advice and general leadership to the state government on this issue. We developed a WA renewable hydrogen framework to support the delivery of the project, and we commissioned CSIRO Futures to provide research and analysis to inform the project. We established the \$10 million renewable hydrogen fund for these purposes and a couple of months ago we made some announcements, as part of the state recovery plan, in the hydrogen area to get more hydrogen production in the state.

Mr D.C. NALDER: Therefore, there is still reorganisation and reprioritisation going on of where this gets undertaken. Can I therefore assume that there is no redundancy program for any existing staff? Will they just move with the program if there is any staff allocated to it?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I do not know the answer to the second part of the member’s question, but I think the assessment is that renewable hydrogen sits more appropriately within the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation, which, intuitively, we think makes sense. I will hand over to the director general to comment on the member’s exact question.

Mr D. Addis: Thank you, Premier. This was a decision as part of last year’s budget process—no, actually; it was the year before that—and the responsibility for the hydrogen strategy and hydrogen initiative shifted on 1 July 2019.

Some staff went across; some went elsewhere. There were no redundancies as part of that. It was not actually a restructure-type issue; it was a reallocation of responsibilities between agencies and it is, I think, now performing very well.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Following on from the impeccable manners of the member for Kalgoorlie, greetings, Premier. I refer to page 225 and the line item “Northern Beef Development”. Can the Premier provide an update of the McGowan government’s plan to drive a more profitable, resilient and diverse northern beef industry?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I thank the member for Armadale for the question; he has a deep knowledge of the beef industry of Western Australia. As part of our recovery plan, we are investing \$8.3 million over four years through the Northern Beef Development program to support productivity improvements across pastoral lands and the northern cattle herd, and to increase Aboriginal capacity in job opportunities. The northern beef industry makes a big contribution to the regional economy, with a production value of around \$250 million each year. The Northern Beef Development program aims to grow the future value of the industry and position it as a supplier of choice across diversified and high-value markets, demonstrate environmental sustainability and create regional jobs. New projects include a grant scheme to increase the adoption of technology and innovation and assistance for Aboriginal pastoral enterprises and assessing and transitioning to improved business models that attract investment and create job opportunities. Thank you, member, for the question.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Thank you.

Mr K.M. O’DONNELL: I refer to the heading “WA Recovery Plan” on page 227. It states in part —

The Department will deliver a range of recovery initiatives, including industry development projects and infrastructure initiatives.

What industry development projects and infrastructure initiatives will be delivered into my electorate of Kalgoorlie?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Under the recovery plan, there will be around \$5.5 billion of activity across the state. If we add the credit that will go onto everyone’s electricity bill, that takes it up above \$6 billion. I will do my best to narrow what we are doing to the member’s electorate, but, obviously, the government does a great many things, not all of which are captured in every document that we might have.

Across the member’s electorate, everyone is receiving the \$600 credit on their household electricity bill, rolling out from 1 November. The member’s electorate will be a beneficiary of the 800 police officers that the government is employing on top of the 150 this year. There is \$2 million for the creation and management of the Helena Aurora National Park. There is \$10.2 million towards projects at Esperance port to help expand port capacity. Technically, that is not in the member for Kalgoorlie’s electorate, but everyone goes on holidays there, including some from the member’s electorate, so I am sure they will enjoy that. There is \$7 million to expand the capacity of the Joe Lord Core Library in Kalgoorlie, which stores core samples which contain valuable geoscientific information for exploration companies. As the member might recall, I went out there with the Minister for Mines and Petroleum and launched that. Basically, the facility is full and this will expand its capacity—it will double or maybe triple in size. There is \$5 million going to the exploration incentive scheme, which is largely a goldfields project which will help the mining industry. There is \$16.6 million towards a new power station for Esperance. Once again, the member for Roe’s electorate will benefit from the Labor government.

There is \$600 000 to install a battery energy system in Menzies, which is in the member for Kalgoorlie’s electorate. There is \$3.81 million to upgrade electricity infrastructure in regional WA, especially in Menzies. There is \$9.9 million for Horizon Power to deploy standalone power stations, including 39 systems across the goldfields–Esperance region, a number of which will be in the member’s electorate. There is \$5 million for the regional road safety program to upgrade 275 kilometres of goldfields–Esperance roads. This program will include upgrading the shoulders, sealing and the installation of audible lines, and will create around 25 jobs. There is \$1.5 million for upgrades to Laverton Police Station. The regional land booster package, which makes residential, commercial and industrial lots cheaper, will have projects in Kalgoorlie, Coolgardie, Laverton, Leonora, Menzies, Norseman, Esperance, Hopetoun and Ravensthorpe. There will also be industrial lots in Kambalda and Ravensthorpe. For the targeted maintenance program on government worker housing, 100 homes in the goldfields–Esperance region will receive support out of the \$80 million funding. The \$141 million to refurbish social housing will include 30 houses in the goldfields–Esperance region, and five to 10 new properties will be built under the new social housing initiative in the goldfields–Esperance region. There is \$8 million towards the Kalgoorlie city centre project to transform the Kalgoorlie city centre. On that note, as the member for Kalgoorlie knows, I was out there last week. I have never seen Hannan Street looking so good or more active, which is great. There is \$20 million towards the Aboriginal ranger program, including in the goldfields and Esperance. There is money to upgrade shed 4 at the port of Esperance. There is \$6.9 million towards the state barrier fence to Esperance. The list goes on. If the member wants me to read them out, I have four pages of them and I can keep going if he would like. The member for Kalgoorlie’s electorate really gets a lot of support from the government. He should be very appreciative. When I was out there the other day, I saw the step-up, step-down facility under construction in Kalgoorlie, and that is terrific. However, some of these projects we have announced before.

[10.40 am]

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I refer to paragraph 14 on page 227 of the budget papers, which refers to the government's plan to shift sections of the department to the Perth metropolitan area. Could the Premier tell us whether any of those functions or parts of the department that will be shifted to the city centre were considered to be shifted to regional locations?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The facilities in Kensington are old, and doing something about it has been talked about for many years, but no government has done so up to this point. The last government certainly did not do anything about it. There has been some significant water ingress at the facility and that has caused some issues for the staff; therefore, the accommodation has some problems. What we have had to do has been a matter of urgency, and I think it has resolved the issues, certainly in the short term. As I understand it, we had to act urgently because of the water ingress and the storm damage at the South Perth site, which resulted in building closures and disruption to operations. We had to urgently come up with a solution. Five hundred office-based staff have been relocated to suitable accommodation within the Perth CBD. We have allocated \$20 million for interim accommodation and laboratory upgrades and \$1 million to develop a detailed business case for a lasting accommodation solution for the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development's laboratory and technical services. We will consider that in the future. There never has been an overarching or long-term solution to the problem of the accommodation, but obviously we had to act quickly.

I understand the sentiment that it would be terrific if we could move all those people to a regional location, but suddenly moving the 500 people who work there to Bunbury, Geraldton, Kalgoorlie, Albany or Merredin, or wherever it might be, is just not a solution that could be delivered or that I would expect anyone would suggest could happen. If the Leader of the Nationals is suggesting that, I would be interested to hear how she would make that work. We had to move very quickly to come up with a solution, which we have.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Can I just confirm that the 500 staff who have moved are in temporary accommodation at the moment and that a longer term business plan is being developed to move them permanently into a facility in the Perth metropolitan area?

Mr M. McGOWAN: We are leasing a property. The expectation is that they will move within the next couple of months. It is a difficult thing to have to deal with, but the jobs of the 500 people in Kensington, who have houses and families and children at school and everything else, will be moved to the CBD. I understand that some would prefer to stay where they are, because, as I have been informally advised, they have windows they can open and they like the fresh air, as opposed to an office block in the city. There might also be some parking issues, but public transport into the city is better. No doubt the CBD accommodation will not have the issues of age and water ingress that the Kensington site does. I expect that they will not be moving more than five kilometres as the crow flies, so it is not as though they are moving from a regional location into the CBD; they will move from one part of the inner city to another part.

The 20-hectare Kensington site has been occupied by this agency since the 1960s. The Brand government, the Tonkin government, the Court government and the governments of the 1980s, 1990s, 2000s and 2010s did not move it. I recall the member's comments that we should suddenly move all these people to a regional location. That was not feasible. Clearly, over time, there should be options through which we can come up with good long-term outcomes for the state-owned Kensington site, which is 20 hectares. That is why we have set aside \$1 million for a detailed business case for a long-lasting accommodation solution for the laboratories and technical services. That is something that the government is working on.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Can I just confirm that the 500 staff are in temporary accommodation at the moment and a business plan is being developed for them to be shifted into a permanent solution in the Perth metropolitan area? No?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Not entirely. I will let the director general comment.

Mr D. Addis: There is a committed plan to shift about 500 of our staff who are currently based at the South Perth campus and who do not depend on access to specialised scientific laboratories. They will move in the first half of next year to a yet-to-be-leased premises somewhere on the fringe of the CBD. As the Premier said, from South Perth to there is a matter of a few kilometres as the crow flies. That is in train. Staff who work in the laboratories, which have been the epicentre of the impacts of the rainfall event that we suffered and the asbestos issues that were kicked off by that rainfall event, are in a mix of temporary premises around the site. There are about 100 buildings on the Kensington lot, all of which are mostly in the 60-year-old bracket. Those staff have been redeployed in temporary arrangements for now. Of the commitment, \$19-odd million is to make good the most critical science facilities and to put in place some temporary, workable science facilities to make sure that we can continue to deliver in a sustainable way for the next several years. The business plan is to put forward a proposition for a purpose-built science facility; that will be the long-term aim for the science functions.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Are the 500 people who will ultimately shift to the metropolitan area still on site out there?

Mr D. Addis: Yes, in the metropolitan area.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: They are not the ones who have been at Kensington and have been impacted by the water and other events; they have not been shifted yet. In the business case that is being developed to shift those 500 people, did the government consider shifting some or all of the functions to regional locations?

Mr M. McGOWAN: As I understand it—I will get the director general to comment—the business case is looking at a long-term solution for lasting accommodation for the laboratory and technical services. This is for the scientists. Where they will be located in the new facilities is being worked on at the moment. The \$20 million is for interim accommodation and laboratory upgrades to keep the existing laboratory services going. The office-based staff will go to accommodation somewhere on the outskirts of the CBD. That will happen shortly. In terms of the business case for a lasting accommodation solution, I do not know what it is currently looking at and whether it is agnostic on where they will be located. I will ask the director general to comment on that.

[10.50 am]

Mr D. Addis: The business case for the core science and diagnostic facilities that need to be built is agnostic of site, but much of it is essentially related to biosecurity functions and/or trade certification functions. Those functions are not well suited to being moved to regional areas given the services that they are required to provide; essentially, we need a metro-located science facility for those critical functions. We expect that some of the functions, and the people who perform those or other functions, that need to be located in the metropolitan area will be moved to regional areas over time. However, it is a transitional approach, which takes time, and it is part of the overall workforce management approach of the department.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I would comment by saying that I like the idea of regionally focused agencies being located in regional locations. Obviously, it is difficult sometimes because it is not easy to come up with a location that will suit everyone. I understand that scientific laboratory functions need to be located close to suppliers, universities, academics and the materials that they use and all that sort of stuff, so I understand that there are difficulties with that. But where we can, I like the idea of getting people who work in regional development or who serve regions into the regions. We did that with the Bushfire Centre of Excellence. Despite one option that was considered being Kalamunda, we placed it down in the Peel region. Does the director general have any further comment on that?

Mr D. Addis: I make the point that the department has about 600 staff regionally and that makes us pretty unique amongst the state agencies in our regional footprint for an economic agency. We expect that to be a real strength, which we want to grow.

Mr D.C. NALDER: I am trying to reconcile the WA recovery plan and other COVID-19-related spending.

The CHAIR: Page?

Mr D.C. NALDER: I refer to line items on page 224 and 225, but also reconcile them against the major spending changes on page 94 of budget paper No 3.

The CHAIR: Can you pause for a moment while we get that all organised. I think you can put the question now, member for Bateman.

Mr D.C. NALDER: The first part of the question is: on page 94 of budget paper No 3, there is an increase in spending changes in this current financial year under COVID-19-related spending, but further funds are being taken away from DPIRD in the forward estimates. Although there is a \$22.3 million increase in 2020–21, there is actually a \$36 million or \$37 million decrease over the forward estimates because of COVID-related spending. Why will DPIRD's spending reduce given that it is considered to be a priority area that will broaden our economy and reduce our reliance on mining? I would like to understand why, because of COVID, there is a reduction in overall spending for the department.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will get the director general to comment; he might want to refer to his finance person. But, firstly, often the spend is bumpy depending upon what is happening in any given year; and, secondly, it might be due to an expectation of commonwealth support that is put into the budget. I will ask the director general to comment.

Mr D. Addis: The member for Bateman will notice there has essentially been an uptick in the total cost of spending from last year to this current budget year.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Whereabouts is that?

Mr D. Addis: On page 224, there has been an uptick of about \$55 million in the total cost of services from \$450 million to \$506 million. That uptick reflects two key things. One is an allocation of between \$25 million and \$30 million as part of the COVID recovery plan and commitment—so that ticks us up—and a similar amount in the prior year for projects funded by royalties for regions that could not be completed due to the disruptions of part of what we have been dealing with, which has been pushed forward into the current financial year. That is the reason for the uptick. One of the peculiarities of RforR is that projects only become part of DPIRD's total cost of services once they are allocated to a project over which we have administrative control—we actually deliver the project.

In the out years, there are still funds in RforR that have not been firmly committed to for those sorts of projects; therefore, our share of RforR essentially tails off in the out years. All of that occurs around a pretty constant base

for DPIRD. The stable base further down that page is the service appropriation, which is essentially our capital appropriation. That is now fairly stable into the out years. The ups and downs tend to be in the RforR project space, which, as I said, has not yet been allocated because we have to wait until we get towards the out years for that to happen.

Mr D.C. NALDER: The overall expense for DPIRD in 2020–21 is \$506 million, but over the forward estimates it drops to \$431 million next year, \$414 million the year after and \$400 million the year after that. At the start of this term, a key election commitment of the Premier in agriculture was to broaden our economy, so how is the government broadening the economy into agriculture whilst reducing the overall expense budget of the department by 20 per cent?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I think the director general explained that reasonably well. There has been an increase this year, 2020–21, on last year because of projects that were not able to be concluded last financial year being brought into this financial year, which sort of pumped up the amount, plus a range of COVID projects have been brought forward. A lot of spending has been brought forward into this year, which all governments have done. What often happens—we see this throughout the entire budget—is the estimate for the out years grows because additional funding comes forward, or projects are cashflowed into future years, as the budget rolls out. I think that has been going on forever, but I might ask the director general to comment on that.

Mr D. Addis: I think that is it exactly; the Premier has explained it very clearly. That is exactly what happens.

Mr D.C. NALDER: I am still struggling to understand. Last year's total cost of services was \$483 million and the actual was \$450 million, so we are \$33 million short. That has increased by another \$26 million—so nearly all of it, but not all of it. The overall budget then reduces by a greater extent moving forward. That is the first part. The second part is that COVID-related spending and increases in COVID-related spending can have occurred only since February this year, because COVID did not exist before then, yet in this financial year COVID-related spending in this budget increased by \$22.3 million, but COVID-related spending will reduce by more than that in the out years. How can that be when COVID did not exist before February?

Mr M. McGOWAN: This year is enhanced because projects that could not be completed last year due to COVID have been brought into this financial year.

Mr D.C. NALDER: That is \$30 million.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Half is due to projects that could not be completed—\$56 million—and half is future projects being brought forward into this financial year to keep economic activity strong. That is what we are doing. For future years, of course, the budget often has underspends—this has been going on for decades—so we find that future budget years are often enhanced by underspends in past years. We may well receive additional commonwealth moneys, which will enhance or grow the budget in future years. Just so that the member is aware, when we came to office the forward estimates were estimated at \$336 million. The current budget is \$170 million or thereabouts higher than the forward estimates we inherited.

[11.00 am]

Mr D.C. NALDER: I can only operate from the numbers that are sitting in front of me.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I know, but it is important that the member knows.

Mr D.C. NALDER: The total cost of services in 2018–19 was \$447 million. The government's budget was \$483 million in 2019–20, which was not delivered in its entirety because the total expenses actual was \$450 million, but the 2023–24 forward estimate is \$400 million. We are seeing a sizable reduction in either the funds available to operate the department or the capital available to invest in infrastructure. I am trying to understand why it will reduce so significantly over this period given it is such a priority.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I have explained it now three times, but I will explain it again, if the member likes. This year the budget is significantly enhanced because projects could not be completed last financial year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We have brought forward some projects into this financial year because of the need to respond to the economic situation in Western Australia, which I might add is significantly better than in most places around Australia or the world. We have brought forward projects as part of our recovery plan and hence this year's budget is significantly enhanced. The member will find that in future years, often commonwealth grants will roll in and that will enhance the budget over time as we apply for them or work with the commonwealth on various projects. That means the budget goes up in future years. I repeat: the 2020–21 budget that we inherited was \$336 million and the current budget is significantly higher.

Mr D.C. NALDER: I have a question further to that.

The CHAIR: Is this a different question on this issue?

Mr D.C. NALDER: Yes.

The CHAIR: Okay, go ahead.

Mr D.C. NALDER: To clarify, the government's budget was \$483 million but it spent \$450 million, so it is bringing forward an unspent budget of \$30 million or thereabouts if it is bringing all of the money forward, but it is then dropping it by \$100 million. The Premier just mentioned that it is possibly to do with capital coming from the commonwealth. Can the Premier please explain where this budget shows a reduction in capital from the commonwealth for the department?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will let the director general answer that.

Mr D. Addis: The Premier made the point that part of the explanation for the tailing off into the out years is that we cannot yet budget with confidence for commonwealth grants and other externally generated revenues that we expect to get into the future. We have consistently historically budgeted quite conservatively around that, which is prudent. That is part of the reason. As we get closer and have a higher level of commitment and confidence from some of those externally funded sources, we budget accordingly. A range of projects, particularly in the royalties for regions program, expire over the out years and have not yet been replaced by committed projects. That is a normal part of doing business. As I said in my earlier response, they become part of Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development's budget only when they are committed as projects that we have administrative responsibility to deliver. That reflects projects that are likely to come into our budget in future budget processes but are not yet able to be reflected as part of DPIRD's budget.

The CHAIR: Member for Bateman, do you have a further question?

Mr D.C. NALDER: Yes, I have a further question on this element. Where can I see the commonwealth grants and how that is being forecast at a much lower rate? A cannot see that in the —

The CHAIR: That is the same question that you asked a minute ago, so —

Mr D.C. NALDER: I cannot see the number.

Mr M. McGOWAN: We can budget conservatively. As the money arrives or if we have a strong expectation or certainty that the commonwealth grants are the source revenue or whatever it might be—sometimes it is scientific developments, sometimes it is revenue from business partners—we add it to the budget, so we budget conservatively. We do not put into the budget large amounts of money that may not arrive. The agricultural part of the budget has been significantly rebased and lifted during our time in office.

Mr D.T. PUNCH: I refer to page 226 of budget paper No 2 and the department's local content adviser network. Can the Premier please outline some of the industry capacity and capability building programs being offered by the network in regional WA?

[Mr S.J. Price took the chair.]

Mr M. McGOWAN: Thank you for this. I meet our local content advisers regularly when I am out in the regions. In fact, I met one in Kalgoorlie the other day who is doing a terrific job. To support regional jobs and local content outcomes, our government introduced the Western Australian Jobs Act in 2017 that enabled both the Western Australian industry participation strategy and the WA Industry Link. Part of the department's commitment to the WA Industry Link was to establish the local content adviser network. The department's local content advisers are located in each of the nine development commissions to take a lead role in maximising local content opportunities including goods, services and jobs for state government-funded projects and to support local businesses to focus on local content to create job opportunities in regional Western Australia. In 2019–20, the local content adviser network undertook 4 781 engagements across regional WA, an increase of 1 430 engagements from the previous year. Engagements included targeted industry meetings, WA industry participation plan development, government agency engagements, tender opportunity promotion, Aboriginal business opportunity development and business capacity building initiatives. The network has been instrumental in driving forward positive regional procurement outcomes. As an example, in the south west, a year of intensive work alongside Main Roads Western Australia on the Bunbury Outer Ring Road resulted in a local content target of \$300 million, which equates to around half the project's construction costs. This was an increase of \$200 million from the initial suggested local content target of \$100 million.

In the Pilbara, our local content adviser is involved with the Port Hedland Spoilbank Marina through the implementation of a local business capability register that concentrates on the Pilbara region in line with the scope of work. Since opening on 12 June 2020, more than 90 businesses have registered their interest to work on the project, 87 of which are based in the Pilbara. At last count by Tenders WA, the business capability register has been downloaded over 40 times by prospective bidders. In Kalgoorlie the other day, I was able to launch a local content portal in conjunction with the local Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia and the Chamber of Minerals and Energy. It allows local jobs, local businesses and local tenders to be advertised. This involves not only the government, but also industry with a view to expediting local contractors receiving those jobs in the local mining industry in Kalgoorlie. The government and the local content advisers—at least one has been allocated to each regional development commission—are doing their best to ensure that local businesses benefit from local contracts, particularly from some of the more successful industries such as gold and iron ore around Western Australia. I launched the Kalgoorlie portal with Paul Everingham, Ron Mosby and some of the local identities. They are all very happy with this sort of work that the government is doing.

[11.10 am]

Mr D.T. PUNCH: You are doing a great job.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Thank you.

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: I refer to the regional aged accommodation program on line 12 of page 225. Can the Premier explain why no funding is allocated in the forward estimates of this year's budget for that program?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The program itself has concluded and any of the remaining funds have been allocated to the COVID-19 pandemic response. I will hand to Mr Grazia to explain that.

Mr N. Grazia: There is an allocation in the forward estimates, but we can see that it does not continue. Consistent with previous discussions about whether future projects are being approved in this area, at this time, they have not been approved. Therefore, it is tailing out in the forward estimates. Some savings were identified for the COVID response.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The savings identified for the COVID response was \$1.295 million. Over the last three years, the project has delivered the Waroona Housing Options Village; stage 1 of the Bedingfield Park expansion; the Bridge Street affordable housing project in Donnybrook; the Armstrong Village project in Dunsborough; the Dongara age appropriate accommodation facility; the great southern housing initiative; the Brunswick River Cottages at Brunswick Junction; the Avon Well aged housing project; the Wheatbelt South Aged Housing Alliance project; the Leonora Ageing in Place project; and the Laverton aged-care project.

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: They are very good projects. That leads me to another question: is there any funding anywhere else in the budget or has any consideration been given to continuing these types of projects in future, or are they now dead in the water?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The projects that were allocated funding are concluding. We will obviously look at further projects in the future.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Premier, I note that a wild dogs action plan is referred to right at the bottom of page 241, under "Details of Controlled Grants and Subsidies". That will come to an end. Is there any intention for that to continue in any format, and is it listed elsewhere in the budget? Is the Premier aware of the serious concern, particularly in the eastern wheatbelt, about doggers on the fence line being impeded from doing their job due to the very large number of people who are travelling illegally along the fence line? Is there a proposal to deal with that challenge?

Mr M. McGOWAN: That is a good question. The wild dogs action plan provides actions to build capacity to enable industry to manage the threat to livestock. Actions include upgrading the barrier fence, I think to the east of Esperance; incentives for exclusion cell fencing; funding for contracts for wild dog control; and the sterilisation of dogs in Aboriginal communities. Funding of \$500 000 is allocated for 2021. Further details can be found at the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development's 2020–2021 royalties for regions almanac report. From recollection, in 2018 or thereabouts, we had to inject some funding to continue the project. The government has invested \$21.9 million over four years to manage the impacts of wild dogs and support the reintroduction of small livestock into parts of the state. That funded the action plan and the extension of the state barrier fence. As the member correctly identified, that is the situation at this time. Obviously, the midyear review will allow us to consider any further activity for this program.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Can the Premier confirm that there is no funding at this time to continue that wild dog action plan either in this budget or anywhere else? The second part of my question went to why it is important for the funding on that front. Doggers out on the eastern wheatbelt fence line are unable to carry out their role due to the large number of people travelling up and down that fence line now. The doggers are therefore unable to lay traps and they cannot use their weapons. It was expressed to me, when a member of the Premier's own government was sitting in the meeting, that that is of serious concern to them. We had invested a significant amount of money, but no money is allocated in the budget—I cannot see any money in the forward estimates—and a serious problem out there needs to continue to be managed.

Mr M. McGOWAN: These projects are often considered further. The midyear review is coming up. Obviously, our focus has been on dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic and everything else over the last 18 months, since the last budget. We will consider this further in the lead-up to the midyear review, which is not unusual. I have not heard about people travelling up and down the fence line; no-one has brought that to my attention before. How and why people are doing it is not something I understand. I would not have thought the fence line, where there are wild dogs, was the most appealing of places to travel. If people are doing that and it is impeding doggers using their firearms—I can understand how that impedes them—I am interested in the member's suggestion for how to stop people doing that.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: To that end, if consideration is being given to providing funding going forward, in light of the significant fines that have been increased, it is necessary for anybody caught travelling on the fence line to be prosecuted. Someone should be out there policing the fence line so the doggers can do their job. They have made a tactical decision to pull back into the reserve, away from the fence line. People go there because they cannot go

anywhere else at the moment. They use the fence line to travel with their caravans out the back of the eastern wheatbelt and through that part of the world. It is actually quite pretty, but they are not allowed to travel on that fence line. There is quite a significant fine, but no-one has ever been fined.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will take that question on notice. The issue of people driving their caravans on the barrier fence impeding wild doggers has not been brought to my attention. Obviously, we do not want anyone to be shot, so, clearly, I will ask the agency to look at that. So that the member is aware of the funding, \$21.9 million has been spent on this program, of which \$16.6 million has been spent since 2017–18. That is a significant allocation. Obviously, the construction, repair and maintenance, and completion of the border fence were the major parts of the project. It seems to me that most of the funding that might be needed in the future is operational funding to fund the desexing of dogs program in some parts of the state and to fund the doggers who destroy the dogs. That is obviously something we will consider carefully in the lead-up to the midyear review.

[11.20 am]

Mr D.C. NALDER: I am looking at the table on page 229 of the *Budget Statements* and the line items “Percentage of exotic terrestrial weed, pest and disease threats resolved appropriately” and “Percentage of invasive aquatic pests and exotic diseases resolved appropriately”. This has probably always been the same, but why have we set ourselves the target of 60 per cent for getting rid of toxic weeds and aquatic pest problems as a budgeted outcome if we put such a high standard on the quality of our agricultural produce and the potential threats that can come from that?

Mr M. McGOWAN: If I can clarify, this is obviously an agriculture issue; it is not a regional development issue. Are we dealing with agriculture this afternoon?

Mr D.C. NALDER: It comes back to a question I have about the budget. Is this not under services 1 to 5? I thought we were still on services 1 to 5? I get confused by this, so apologies if it is not, but it is in this part of the budget papers.

The CHAIR: Yes, it is.

Mr D. Addis: It is service 6.

The CHAIR: The director general is saying it is in service 6, but in the budget papers it is under part 4.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Is this something we are dealing with as part of this section?

Mr D.C. NALDER: I am happy to take it up in the next one as well, but on pages 224 and 225 there are some budget items that come off the back of this and are related to it.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Why do I not do my best to answer? This key performance indicator measures the number resolved within the year as a percentage of the number open during the year. For pests and diseases that are not considered to be present in Australia and that are considered to be an emergency pest under the appropriate national deed, “resolved” means “according to the national agreement”. This may include pests and diseases incidents in other jurisdictions that WA is required to respond to. For pests and diseases that are not considered to be present in Australia and that are not considered to be an emergency pest at a national level, “resolved” means “according to state policies and programs”. For pests and diseases that are present in Australia but not considered to be present in WA or parts of WA, “resolved” means “according to state policies and program determination”. The budget target is 50 per cent, as not all threats can be resolved within the space of a year or less, depending on the date of detection. Some may require ongoing or seasonal surveillance to declare resolution. That makes sense. For pests and diseases that are not considered to be present in Australia and that are considered to be an emergency pest under the appropriate national deed, “resolved” means “according to the national agreement”. This may include pests and diseases incidents in other jurisdictions that WA is required to respond to. For pests and diseases that are not considered to be present in Australia and that are not considered to be an emergency pest on a national level, “resolved” means “according to state policies and programs”. The budget target is 60 per cent, as not all threats can be resolved within the space of a year or less, depending upon the date of detection. Some may require ongoing or seasonal surveillance to declare resolution. That is the answer to both of those notes.

Mr D.C. NALDER: Further to that—the Premier may not be able to answer this question—given that we are saying 60 per cent and they potentially cannot be resolved in a year, does some tracking occur to ensure that there is follow-up by the department so that if it takes longer than a year, these things are monitored and reported on, or, otherwise, are they forgotten?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I think this is saying that 60 per cent can be resolved in a year, but I will hand over to the director general to answer.

Mr D. Addis: In the session later today, we will have our agriculture and biosecurity experts who deal directly with these matters, but, broadly, “resolved” does not always mean that we have gotten rid of the pest. In many cases, it is not economic or feasible to eradicate new incursions; therefore, the transition is to management, which is the Premier’s description of the policy framework within which those decisions are made. Absolutely, all incursions and pests that come into WA and are identified are tracked through to an appropriate resolution, whether that means eradication or transition to management, or something else in accordance with the various policy regimes. The member can get a more fulsome answer to that this afternoon.

Mr D.C. NALDER: Further to that—this just takes a different angle to it —

The CHAIR: Even though this is in the right part of the budget papers, if the member wants to put this back to the agriculture session later on, he is within his rights to do that as well.

Mr D.C. NALDER: I am happy to do that as well; I am happy to take this issue up further. I refer to page 225 and the sixth line item from the bottom of the table, “Declared Pest Account”. Obviously, this started last year, but given concerns about the threats to our agricultural sector, can I please have an understanding of why this account seems to have received a significant reduction in the spending allocation in the current budget over the forward estimates?

Mr M. McGOWAN: With the declared pest account, as part of the 2019–20 midyear review submission, a reduction in regulatory fees across the forward estimates period of \$6.587 million was approved. This reduction relates to the cabinet submission approved in October 2016 on implementing the “Western Australian Wild Dog Action Plan 2016–2021”, which erroneously included an increase in regulatory fees from recognised biosecurity groups and an increase in appropriation and matched funding under the Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007. This error was not identified during the financial capability review. Therefore, it refers to a mistake that was made in October 2016.

Mrs R.M.J. CLARKE: I refer to page 241 of budget paper No 2 and the regional economic development grants scheme. Can the Premier outline how this program is delivering benefits for regional communities?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The regional economic development grants scheme is investing in community-driven projects across regional WA, supporting jobs and economic diversification. Funding of \$25.77 million is allocated in the 2021 budget over the forward estimates. Approved investment across the first two rounds of the scheme has been \$13.17 million, providing funding to 135 projects and leveraging more than \$59 million in co-contributions. That has been a good outcome. The scheme has invested in a range of projects, including manufacturing, workforce development, construction, tourism, horticulture, information technology, primary industries and cultural industries. In the goldfields, \$249 960 was awarded to the goldfields migrant employment project to attract a workforce to meet labour shortages in the goldfields. Through engagement with culturally and linguistically diverse community members in Perth, to date approximately 60 people have received or are receiving services through this program. As a result of this grant, 31 people to date have been relocated and employed in the goldfields, and 93 people from 22 different countries of origin have been attracted or supported in the goldfields. In the Peel region—this will of interest to the member—Capogreco Farms received \$10 000 to expand its cooling facilities used by growers across regional WA, supporting fresh produce exports. As a result of this co-investment, produce sourced from the Gascoyne area has doubled to nearly 1 700 tonnes this season, creating demand for jobs not just in the Peel region, but also up in Carnarvon. An amount of \$150 000 was provided to Southern Forests Honey for the construction of a colony concept honey centre of excellence and a honey processing distribution and retail facility near Margaret River. As we know, Western Australian honey is hotly sought after around the world, especially in China. The project created eight full-time equivalents during its construction and fit-out phase and provided ongoing direct and indirect employment. Dongara Marine was provided with \$68 500 to purchase and install new cutting machines, enabling the business to expand its commercial and recreational vessel manufacturing capability, supporting a workforce of 30 full-time employees and six apprentices. From memory, I think that business built the new ferry for the South Perth run. These grants are resulting in some terrific economic outcomes.

[11.30 am]

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: The second dot point on page 226 of budget paper No 2 refers to COVID-19 and the agency’s business in managing overseas workers et cetera. Can the Premier advise when he became aware that two Australians had disembarked the *Al Messilah*?

The CHAIR: I do not think that is a budget-related question, Leader of the Opposition.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Are you ruling it out of order? It is about the management of workers coming in and out of the state during the COVID-19 pandemic, which is directly related to the second dot point.

The CHAIR: I will seek advice to provide more clarity on this. Premier, the question is not budget-related, but it is up to you whether you choose to answer it.

Mr M. McGOWAN: What is your ruling, Chair?

The CHAIR: You do not have to answer it.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Before I get to the question, I have advice on the issue. The Leader of the Opposition asked me about the second dot point. The COVID-19 pandemic has had an ongoing impact on the agency’s business. To date, international and interstate travel restrictions have impacted access to export markets, particularly through airfreight and access to primary industry workers. There were dramatic impacts on some industries early on due to COVID-19. The state government has worked cooperatively with the commonwealth government to resolve those issues.

In relation to the sheep export trade, obviously it has been difficult. Issues arose earlier this year with the *Al Kuwait* around trying to deal with affected crew members on board. We then found out about the *Al Messilah* on the weekend,

and there were significant issues on that ship with affected crew members. Sheep ships these days often have Australians on board. A vet and someone to monitor the health and welfare of the animals are often on board. Two Australians were on board that ship. I became aware on Sunday that those people had left the ship and that measures were being put in place to test their health. The measures have worked. The people were required to quarantine, and testing found them to be negative. The Western Australian woman who went to Busselton has gone into hotel quarantine. Our measures have worked. Ships around the world change crew over at a far greater rate than they did before. Basically, the crews of ships all over the world are changing over and going home. A lot of them have been on board for a year. Being on board a ship and not getting off for a year would be a difficult experience for many crew members around the world. They are now changing out and going home. The shipping companies are not doing as much as they should to check whether the crew members getting on board are COVID-free. We have called on the federal government to take international action on these matters. That is what is happening. The good thing is that our systems have worked. The people involved have been tested and are COVID-free. The Western Australian involved is certainly in hotel quarantine as an additional precaution.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I have a further question.

The CHAIR: Is this about what that question was on, because that question was not a relevant question and the Premier chose to respond. If you are going to ask a question, it needs to be related to the budget.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: It is with respect to the Premier's answer. I want to get some clarification on his answer. Perhaps I can ask the question and then you can rule it in or out of order, Chair. The Premier said that those individuals had been tested. Can he please advise where they were tested? Did they present at a COVID clinic or were they tested through another means?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I can comment on the Western Australian. She was going into home quarantine, which many people do. I do not have the exact details, but I think she was tested at her home by a public health team. The system has worked. The people are not COVID positive. But we are putting in place additional precautions for Australians coming off ships. There is not a huge number of Australians who work in this way, but there are some, and we are putting in place additional precautions to ensure that they quarantine in hotels. I expect that some of the individuals involved will not be happy with this and I expect that some of the shipping companies will not be happy with this. We will send the bill to the companies. The individuals who might have spent months at sea will now have to spend another two weeks in hotel quarantine, which they probably will not be happy with. However, in the environment in which lots of ships have changed over their crews, we have to ensure that we put in place the appropriate precautions.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I have a further question.

The CHAIR: Once again, Leader of the Opposition, the question is not budget-related, so you can ask it and the Premier does not have to respond to it.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Thank you for your advice, Chair. I appreciate the Premier responding to the question. Just to be clear, did either of those two individuals present at any of our hospitals, or were they privately tested at home? Can the Premier clarify whether they are in hotel quarantine or are both quarantining at home?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I have answered that, but I will answer it again. The Western Australian woman was quarantining at home in accordance with the direction she was given and in accordance with the protocols that existed at the time. I understand that a public health team tested her at her home in Busselton, but I would need to get more clarification around that. Her test came back negative. Therefore, the advice of the Chief Health Officer is that there was no risk and there was never any risk. In order to add to those precautions, she has gone into hotel quarantine. On top of that, the government is now ensuring that Australians returning from those ships in that way will also go into hotel quarantine.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Premier, I refer to the same page, page 226, under "Significant Issues Impacting the Agency", the second dot point, and probably the third as well, and the work out yonder campaign. Do I have that name right?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Is this the same number, page 226, the second dot point?

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Yes, the reliance on overseas workforce and workforce shortages. I am trying to think of the name of the program. Is it work out yonder?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Work and Wander Out Yonder.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Can the Premier confirm that that campaign was in response to the fact that the agricultural sector required 7 000 people for its seasonal harvest work in both the broadacre and horticultural sectors, so it was in response to the fact that there is a shortfall of around 7 000 positions that need to be filled?

[11.40 am]

Mr M. McGOWAN: I cannot confirm that. My memory of the advice I have received is that around 7 000 people are needed across the agricultural sector, whether for horticulture, agriculture or harvest, all over Western Australia, as the member knows, from the very north to the very south and from the very east to the very west, but a number

of those 7 000 people are already here. A whole range of backpackers, tourists, travellers and seasonal workers are already here; they have not left and they are available. However, there is still a shortfall. Although, from memory, the total number needed is around 7 000 people, a number of those 7 000 people are already here and prepared to do that work. That is why we ran the Work and Wander Out Yonder campaign, with incentive payments of up to \$4 000 per person, and why we called on the federal government to do more in this regard. It is obviously an issue. We are not opening our international borders to allow in people from Sweden, Germany, Italy or other places who normally do this work, for obvious reasons, so there is obviously an issue. I think it is a verifiable fact that this state government has done more than any other state government to get people out there to do this work within the levers that we have.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: When the Premier set up this Work and Wander Out Yonder program, how many of those 7 000 positions was he aiming to fill? What is the number and how was that budgeted for?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Obviously, we want to fill as many of the positions as possible. We want to maximise the number. If we came up with an exact number of 1 000, 2 000, 500 or whatever it might be, people would say it is too low or too high. We want to maximise the number of people out there. That is why the Work and Wander Out Yonder campaign and the payments we are making are very important. We estimate that there is half the usual number of overseas workers available; therefore, we need to attract Western Australians into this field. We made an announcement last week to allow for greater exemptions from the east—in particular, for some of those seasonal workers who might have come from Vanuatu and who have been working in the Northern Territory to move across into Western Australia to undertake this work. At any given time, there are already a number of workers here. I have been advised by the Minister for Agriculture and Food that a number of East Timorese workers are currently here and are undertaking this work. A number of backpackers are still here. I was at a tourism venue recently and met an Italian backpacker who has been here all year since COVID hit; he is still here. All these people are still here, but the advice I have is that it is less than half the number of overseas workers that we would ordinarily expect. That is why we are doing our best to get Western Australians out there to do these roles.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: On the same line, there must have been some modelling done when the program was set up. All I am trying to get to is: how many workers was the government targeting? I appreciate the Premier says that it is as many as possible, but a finite figure must be attached to that because a finite amount of money must be set aside in the budget. How much is attached to the program, and how many people did the department advise would be targeted to fill those jobs through that program?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I think I have answered the member's question as best as I can. I want to give her a bit of further advice about it. More than 50 000 people have visited the Work and Wander Out Yonder campaign websites. The advertisements on Seek have had 80 000 views. We have connected more than 500 job seekers to employers through Studium—another website that is predominantly for university students. We have had almost 600 pre-registrations for our incentive scheme; 86 people have submitted their first claim, which they can do only after the first two weeks of work—we do not want people to claim, do one day's work, and then decide that it is too hard and go home—and 156 additional people have started an application. We had hoped that the commonwealth government would do more to incentivise people on JobSeeker to work in agriculture. The federal budget included some relocation assistance, which we welcome, but we have not seen huge action from the commonwealth in this regard. We want to enable Western Australian growers to access the seasonal workers who are available in other states, especially those currently in the Northern Territory. There are currently 300 seasonal workers from Vanuatu in the Northern Territory who are either working or going through a quarantine period there. As they complete their work in the Northern Territory—the harvest may well finish earlier there—there is an opportunity for them to come to parts of Western Australia. We are working with other states to get people in as best we can.

I have answered the member's questions about this numerous times in question time. I cannot bring down the international border. The international border is the main problem, but I support the international border. Although we get a lot of criticism from various people about the measures we have taken, I have supported the commonwealth in what it has done, and although it has created some difficulties for some people and businesses across the state, the alternative scenario of having COVID-19 running rampant throughout our state, destroying our economy and destroying lives, is not acceptable.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Just to clarify, because it was in a big long list of things that the Premier read out, less than a hundred people have accessed that Work and Wander Out Yonder program to date.

Mr M. McGOWAN: We have had 600 pre-registrations for our incentive scheme; 86 people have submitted their first claim, which they can do only after two weeks of work on a farm; and a further 156 people have started an application.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Was that 156?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will read it out again. We have had 600 pre-registrations for our incentive scheme; 86 people have submitted their first claim, which they can do only after two weeks of work; and a further 156 people have started their application.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Thank you.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I refer the Premier to pages 224 and 225 of budget paper No 2 and the heading “COVID-19 WA Recovery Plan”, and specifically the line item “Residential Facility for Martu Students (Newman)”, which I think is a great initiative. Can the Premier please tell us what are the hopeful benefits of having a residential facility for Martu students?

[11.50 am]

Mr M. McGOWAN: I thank the member for the question. The residential facility for Martu students is about a quarter of the way down the page. It is a significant investment by the state. We are putting in \$4 million. I know that the Minister for Regional Development has been working very hard on this. I went to Newman and had a look at the proposed facility with the local school people and some of the local elders. We put \$4 million into this project. It is in partnership with the Western Desert Lands Aboriginal Corporation and the Martu Schools Alliance representing remote Martu schools. The project involves the conversion of three houses to provide separate accommodation for male and female students and a common administration and meeting place. The houses are owned by BHP and will be leased to the Western Desert Lands Aboriginal Corporation. Martu elders have expressed a desire for their young people to be educated both in Martu law and in the modern Australian curriculum.

The Martu student residential facility will significantly support young Martu people to access a broader suite of secondary and vocational learning opportunities while staying connected with family, having the chance to walk in both worlds. The new facility is expected to be ready to house up to 12 students from early 2021. As I said, I visited the facility, the school, some elders and BHP. The houses have been converted so the students can come and stay and attend Newman Senior High School, as I recall, so it has some significant benefits for students who might not otherwise have the opportunity for more traditional education while remaining connected to their families, their culture and their country. It is a very exciting project. Hopefully, it makes a significant difference to Martu students’ academic and educational outcomes. These facilities in other parts of the state, particularly the one in Broome, have made a big difference, so, hopefully, the new one in Newman will make a big difference as well. Obviously, \$4 million is a lot of money and I think, from memory, we inserted that money as part of our recovery plan.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Page 226, paragraph 8, refers to some biosecurity incidents and some pest and disease incursions. Can the Premier please explain or outline to us what is being done about the emerging prevalence, from May this year, of ehrlichiosis in dogs, which has come in through the Kimberley? I understand that it is now as far south as the Gascoyne and Pilbara region. I am interested to know whether there is any prospect of eradication of this bacterial disease and what has been allocated from the department about dealing with it?

The CHAIR: Thank you, Leader of the Opposition. But, Premier, this is one of those ones that is actually in service 6, even though it is tucked into the tail of this part.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will say what I can, if you like, Mr Chair.

The CHAIR: Yes. Premier.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Ehrlichiosis in dogs was first detected in the East Kimberley in May 2020. Surveillance has confirmed that the disease is established in dog populations in the Kimberley, with small numbers in the Pilbara, Gascoyne and goldfields region. Further surveillance will determine the limit of the infection. Ehrlichiosis is transmitted by brown dog ticks, which are prevalent in northern Australia. DPIRD is working closely with private veterinarians to identify cases and manage them. DPIRD is actively engaging in a remote community engagement project to improve Indigenous dog welfare by reducing *E. canis* infections through better tick control and to reduce the spread of *E. canis* in the Pilbara. Tick treatments have been distributed to dogs in the East Pilbara by rangers. Infected dogs do not directly transmit the illness to people; however, in rare cases, infected ticks may transmit *E. canis* to people. DPIRD is conducting an emergency response program, including surveillance to delimit the distribution of *E. canis* in WA and control to reduce the establishment of *E. canis* in communities south of the Kimberley. The estimated budget for the response stands at \$222 000.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Premier, has the source of this outbreak been identified at this point in time?

The CHAIR: Premier—same preamble.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The member might have to ask this in agriculture.

Mr D.C. NALDER: Can I seek a point of clarification first because I do not want to trip over?

The CHAIR: Yes.

Mr D.C. NALDER: I understand that we are doing sections 1 to 5 and that later this afternoon we are doing sections 6 and 7. But referring to all the tables up the back of this section—cash flow statements, details of controlled grants and subsidies and the works in progress—how do we determine which are for now and which are for later this afternoon?

The CHAIR: If the question is related to fisheries, agriculture or biosecurity, it is later this afternoon, even though it is contained within the information within these section.

Mr D.C. NALDER: Can I have a go at one, then, and you can tell me whether I am on the wrong track, Mr Chair?

The CHAIR: Yes.

Mr D.C. NALDER: If I refer to page 237, under “New Works”, “Industry Attraction and Development Fund—Collie”, is that now?

The CHAIR: Yes.

Mr D.C. NALDER: Thanks.

My question on this is to do with a couple of things. When I looked at this line and I compared it with last year’s budget, it has been reduced significantly. The Premier obviously does not have last year’s budget but he may refer to the director general. The spend for this has been decreased from \$30.1 million in last year’s budget for this year down to \$11 245 000 and for 2021–22, last year’s budget had \$12 008 000 and now it is \$10 632 000. Can the Premier please explain why it has been dropped from an overall spend of just over \$42 million to just over \$21.5 million?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The member will be pleased to know there is a very, very positive answer here. The industry attraction and development fund has been designed to attract industry to Collie. Funding for the program is administered by the department through the Minister for Regional Development. The fund aims to attract substantial new industry initiatives to Collie to promote economic diversity, job creation and sustainability. In the period that the member refers to, the following projects have had money allocated to them: Collie emergency services vehicle manufacturing project; Collie regional processing centre project; Collie delivery unit; Collie adventure trails; Collie tourism readiness and economic stimulation project, which is three separate projects; Wellington Dam mural and Collie art trail; Lake Kepwari, stage 2; and Koolinup Emergency Services Centre, based in Collie. All those projects have had that money allocated to them, which explains the reduction in the amount.

Mr D.C. NALDER: Given this was a significant change in spending, why was it not listed in the major spending changes on page 94 of budget paper No 3 for the department?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The page that the member refers to here is recurrent spend, whereas budget paper No 3 refers to capital. But there are some great projects there. The vehicle manufacturing facility, which I turned the sod on a few months ago, will be terrific.

Mr D.C. NALDER: Sorry, I will clarify that question. I refer to page 143 of budget paper No 3 on the major spending changes. Given this is a significant change in major spending, why is it not listed in the capital expenditure changes for the department?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Because, as I just said to the member, this is recurrent and budget paper No 3 refers to capital.

[12.00 noon]

Mr D.C. NALDER: No, that is not true, Premier. Page 89 of budget paper No 3 refers to recurrent expenditure, but it is not listed there, and page 143 refers to the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development’s capital expenditure, so budget paper No 3 has both recurrent and capital expenditure and it is not listed on either page.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The advice I have is that Treasury prepares the significant items and did not include the Collie spend, if you like, for whatever reason. The answer is there and I outlined it to the member. I have been to Collie numerous times this year to announce or open these projects, so that is where the spend has gone.

Mr K.M. O’DONNELL: I refer to the table of outcomes and key effectiveness indicators on page 229. The third outcome is “Regional Western Australia has the skills and knowledge to grow and create jobs” and the indicator states, “Percentage of clients satisfied with Department’s capability initiatives”. It is budgeted to be 70 per cent. To improve that, surely the budget should not be reduced by up to 30 per cent over the forward estimates, as referred to in the service summary at the bottom of page 228, which indicates that the budget will go from \$22.5 million down to \$17 million, and then down to \$16 million and then to \$15 million. To improve that satisfaction rate —

Mr M. McGOWAN: The member is mixing two items together. What is the other line item?

Mr K.M. O’DONNELL: It is mainly about how to improve the percentage rate. I referred to line item 4 in the service summary, which indicates that the budget is being reduced over the forward estimates. I apologise for the mixed question.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will let the director general comment on the member’s question.

Mr D. Addis: Again, one of the complexities with the cost allocations for our services is that in the initial couple of years of the department, the cost allocations were based on the best available information. We are getting more accurate as we go, so they are becoming more accurate. The other complicating factor is that, as I described earlier, during the course of last year we completed the restructure, which meant that the base for the service costings changed. That is the primary explanation for the change in trends. They are becoming more accurate against what we do now. It should not be interpreted as a backing off of effort in those services.

Mr K.M. O’DONNELL: How can we improve that 70 per cent rate? In other areas, we have rates of 80 and 90 per cent, but a satisfaction rate around the 70 to 75 per cent mark for the department’s skills and knowledge is unacceptable. How can we try to improve that?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will hand to the director general.

Mr D. Addis: Did the member say that it is unacceptable?

Mr M. McGOWAN: How can we improve it?

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: How can we improve that? It has been around the 70 to 75 per cent mark over the last four years, whereas other rates are 80 or 90 per cent. How can we improve that, or is a 70 per cent satisfaction rate with the department's skills and knowledge acceptable?

Mr D. Addis: I am not sure that I have a well-considered answer to that. Dr Sweetingham or Mr Grazia?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will hand to Mr Grazia.

Mr N. Grazia: The only thing I would add that is consistent with the director general's comment about getting more accuracy in the figures is that the key performance indicators are relatively new. We develop our KPIs in consultation with our internal auditors and the Office of the Auditor General in terms of whether they are appropriate. There has been some discussion about what sits within the ranges of satisfied and very satisfied for what is reasonable, and the target that is there reflects those consultations. I cannot explain why 80 per cent is satisfactory for one area but 77 per cent is satisfactory for the other; I am sorry, but I do not have that with me. Those KPIs are carefully constructed in consultation with the subject matter experts.

Mr M. McGOWAN: KPIs exist across the entire budget and have done for the entire time I have been in Parliament. Agencies work on their best estimate of what they can achieve and hopefully improve over time. They are a very broad tool, as far as I can tell.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I refer to the royalties for regions expenditure outlined on page 176 of the *Economic and Fiscal Outlook*. I assume that the country water pricing subsidy is the subsidy that is being paid to the Water Corporation for the community service obligation that it has historically received directly from consolidated revenue. Can the Premier confirm that that line item shows \$1 billion of royalties for regions going directly to the Water Corporation to fund the community service obligation?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The country water pricing subsidy is provided to support the ongoing commitment to provide water for country residential users at the same cost as it is for metropolitan residents, despite the significantly higher cost of providing the service in regional Western Australia. As the member can see, we are ensuring that that program continues and that country water prices continue to be subsidised.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Can the Premier confirm that that CSO has historically been paid for from consolidated revenue? He says that the government is guaranteeing that it will continue to be paid. Is there any risk that it would not be paid if royalties for regions funds were not being used?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I think the major risk of it not being paid would be if there were a change of government.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Can the Premier please confirm that the CSO has been historically paid for from consolidated revenue prior to him coming to government?

Mr M. McGOWAN: A range of things in the royalties for regions program that were funded from the consolidated account were funded through royalties for regions. They have moved around over time. As I outlined to the member the other day during question time, under the previous government, a whole range of things that were historically considered to be part of the consolidated account were pushed into the royalties for regions program, and the reverse has happened under this government. We are putting far more effort into capital works for schools, hospitals and roads funded from the consolidated account than the previous government did. These things move around, but I can guarantee for regional Western Australians that the country water subsidy will continue and that the cost of water will continue to be subsidised so that residential customers in regional WA pay the same price as those in the metropolitan area.

[12.10 pm]

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I still did not get an answer whether the Premier can confirm that it has been paid historically from consolidated revenue. Does the Premier agree that using royalties for regions to fund that \$1 billion will allow the government to spend \$1 billion from consolidated revenue free of the restrictions that the Royalties for Regions Act provides for? The government essentially is freeing up \$1 billion to spend across other budget areas without the restrictions that are imposed by the Royalties for Regions Act—that is, having to spend that money in regional WA.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I cannot confirm that, but I can confirm that under this budget there is a record spend on infrastructure in regional WA.

Mr D.T. PUNCH: I refer to page 170 of budget paper No 3. How will the \$852 million for the Bunbury Outer Ring Road create local jobs?

Mr M. McGOWAN: An amount of \$852 billion will be spent on the Bunbury Outer Ring Road. That very significant project is expected to create 4 500 jobs. Construction is anticipated to begin in January 2021, and we have managed to bring it forward as a COVID-19-response initiative. The member for Bunbury might recall that we have also done

some work on Bussell Highway, which was talked about forever. We secured funding for that. We did part of the initial works on a little bit of a build-it-and-they-will-come plan, and it has worked. The Bunbury Outer Ring Road is the biggest infrastructure project ever to be undertaken in Western Australia's south west. It will be constructed by a consortium comprising Acciona, NRW Contracting, MACA Civil—the Australian company with the best name ever!—AECOM and Aurecon, which has been named the South West Gateway Alliance. Local employment and business opportunities are the priorities, with a target spend of \$300 million to maximise local south west industry participation. Promoting and maximising Aboriginal participation is also a priority for the project. There is a \$20 million target spend for Aboriginal businesses and an employment target equivalent to 60 full-time Aboriginal people engaged in the project over its three-year construction period. Investment in well-planned transport projects will keep the greater Bunbury region moving and boost its status as a major economic regional centre, while providing better road infrastructure for locals and visitors. The project will deliver significant benefits for the economy both during its construction and once in operation, unlocking thousands of local jobs. Once complete, new connections on Forrest Highway to Bussell Highway and South Western Highway will greatly improve freight capacity, efficiency and productivity across the region. It will also mean that tourists heading south will save up to 15 minutes' travel time and, I might add, it will make it significantly safer.

The \$852 million Bunbury Outer Ring Road project is jointly funded, with the Australian government contributing 80 per cent, or \$681 million, and the state government contributing 20 per cent, or \$170.4 million. I want to thank the commonwealth government for its contribution. I want to thank the Minister for Transport for pushing it. I want to thank the members for Bunbury, Murray–Wellington and Collie–Preston for their efforts in securing this project. Obviously, as there always is with these projects, there has been some controversy around it. The reservation for the road was put in place decades ago. The direction of the road is in accordance with the existing reservation that was put in place, from memory, back in the 1990s. I have to say that I cannot recall a bigger single infrastructure project in regional WA by the state than this one. Obviously, some oil and gas projects and mining projects have been bigger, but I cannot recall a state project of greater scale and greater employment opportunity than this one. It is very important. We are very happy that we are able to deliver it.

Mr D.C. NALDER: I am surprised that came under here rather than under Transport. I could not find it in the royalties for regions spending. I do not know what it has to do with this.

Mr M. McGOWAN: It is in budget paper No 3.

The CHAIR: Question, member for Bateman?

Mr D.C. NALDER: My next question relates to page 237 of budget paper No 2 and the north west Aboriginal housing initiative. It is just three items below the line item "Industry Attraction and Development Fund—Collie". There are significant reductions in expenditure in this budget compared with last year's budget. Last year, for this current year and next year, there was a total of just over \$35.5 million, and now it is just over \$15.5 million. This, again, is another major change. I would like to understand the reasons for the significant reduction this and next financial year?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I spotted the Collie one—which line item was it?

Mr D.C. NALDER: It is about three below that—the north west Aboriginal housing initiative. There are the amounts of \$7 774 000 this year and \$7 774 000 next year. According to last year's budget, there was going to be \$21.448 million for this year and \$14.186 million for next year. This is a massive reduction and I would like to understand why it has dropped in priority.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I think in my answer to the first question I outlined that some of that project was pushed sideways as part of our COVID-19 response because it was not particularly ready for construction. As part of our COVID-19 response we looked for money that was sitting in projects that were not shovel-ready, so this item has been pushed sideways on that basis. I do note, however, that this significantly enhanced spend is part of our Aboriginal housing response to backfill the gap that has occurred from the commonwealth withdrawing hundreds of millions of dollars.

Mr D.C. NALDER: Can the Premier say that last bit again?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The member will recall that the federal government, under Tony Abbott, withdrew hundreds of millions of dollars. That was brought to a final conclusion, I think, under Malcolm Turnbull, but maybe under Scott Morrison. The commonwealth withdrew its funding from remote Aboriginal housing. The state has had to backfill that spend.

Mr D.C. NALDER: Further to that, and on the same principle, this is another major change in spending but it is not listed in the capital expenditure programs on page 143 of budget paper No 3 under "Major spending changes since the 2019–20 Mid-year Review".

Mr M. McGOWAN: As I outlined before, this document is prepared by Treasury, and Treasury sets the priorities as to what is listed here.

Mr D.C. NALDER: Would the Premier admit that it is most unusual to have major changes to the allocation of spending but Treasury does not provide an explanation?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The member is the shadow Treasurer so he can ask that question during the Treasury estimates. My expectation is that that will be changes in spending in all sorts of agencies and all sorts of programs on an annual basis, in the hundreds if not thousands —

Mr D.C. NALDER: This is millions.

Mr M. McGOWAN: If I can just finish my answer. The member might want to ask Treasury about that, but I suspect that if it were to list every single change in spending, we would need another volume of the budget.

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: I refer to page 173 of budget paper No 3 and the line item “Regional Events Program—Larger Events”. Funding for that stopped after 2018–19, when it was allocated \$10 million. Since then, nothing has been budgeted for that. Can any funding for that be found anywhere else or has funding for that completely stopped and there is nothing in the forward estimates at all?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The advice I have is that the project had a name change and that it continues under the heading “Brand WA—Event Tourism” as a regional events program. That is another program. As I recall, these events are funded all over the state. The total funding for the Brand WA event tourism regional events program is \$25 million. It is designed to attract visitors to spend in regional Western Australia, maximise job creation, improve career opportunities and provide services to regional WA. Ten events have been approved for 2020–21. To date, only one event has been held—Shinju Matsuri in Broome. Four events have been cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A Trolls World Tour event was going to be held in Dawesville but, unfortunately, we had a problem getting the people from overseas who were part of that event; I think they were from Denmark. The Busselton Festival of Triathlon that was scheduled for 2019–20 has been rescheduled to 2020–21. Obviously, COVID has disrupted a range of these events but we are doing our best to put them on. I suspect that we are holding more events, per capita at least, than any other state in Australia.

[12.20 pm]

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: I am so glad that it was not a dead program. What has the line item “Regional Events Program—Larger Events” been rebranded as now, Premier?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The regional events program?

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: Yes.

Mr M. McGOWAN: It is on page 172 and the sixth line item, “Brand WA—Event Tourism”.

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: Thank you very much.

Mr D.C. NALDER: Last year, the line item “Global Provision” had a funding expense for this year of —

Mr M. McGOWAN: Sorry, on what page?

Mr D.C. NALDER: It was the line item “Global Provision” on page 214 of the previous year’s budget paper No 2, volume 1.

Mr M. McGOWAN: In last year’s budget?

Mr D.C. NALDER: I know that the Premier does not have last year’s budget, but I am just about to get to the question. The line item was allocated \$16 million to spend this year and another \$9 million to spend in 2021–22. It was described as —

Funding mainly for election commitments where further planning is required to deliver the proposals.

That line item has disappeared from this budget. Can the Premier please explain where that expenditure has gone?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I answered this in response to the first question that I received this morning. The global provision for what was termed government strategic priorities has gone into the COVID-19 response.

Mr D.C. NALDER: I beg your pardon?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I was asked about these matters in the first question this morning that was asked by, I think, the Leader of the National Party. The provision for government strategic priorities, which is a global provision, was not specifically allocated to any particular project. It has gone into funding the COVID response. The COVID response is more about getting projects out the door that are shovel ready or ready to be implemented. Some of the COVID response projects that that money has gone towards include the Aboriginal pastoral training program; the Bunbury Port inner harbour access bridge; the remote Aboriginal communities COVID-19 emergency relief fund; the roadhouse assistance package; the Trolls event—there are a few problems with that one; the “Transforming Bunbury’s Waterfront” project, which is obviously shovel ready; the Royal Agricultural Society of Western Australia to backfill its expenses because the royal show could not be held this year; and regional accommodation for seasonal primary workers.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I refer the Premier to page 225 and the third line item “Help Grain Growers to Better Manage Risk (e-Connected Grainbelt)”. Can the Premier provide an update on the progress of the highly successful e-connected program in providing critical weather data to farmers, travellers and emergency service workers in regional Western Australia?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The government is investing \$8.1 million over the next—can the member tell me where it is on the page exactly?

Dr A.D. BUTI: It is the third line item on page 225.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Yes, I have got it. The government is investing \$8.1 million over the next four years to continue the successful e-connected program that underpins essential digital information of weather data supplied to Western Australian primary industries, emergency services, academia and the regions. The funding will secure the program's digital platform, which provides state departments and commercial app and software developers with access to data sources to develop a range of online tools, models, programs and decision-making aids. The funding also includes an allocation to upgrade and maintain the state's network of 187 automated weather stations on which farmers, travellers and emergency services have become increasingly reliant. Digital data and real-time weather information is a crucial component of modern agribusiness and essential to make accurate, timely data-driven decisions, while emergency services use the resources to improve response to firestorms and sea rescues. The automated weather stations have become an integral resource, with more than 11 000 visits per month to the department's weather website. The platform processed more than 92.2 million data requests in 2019, more than double that of the previous year, reflecting the hunger for digital data by primary industry enterprises to improve business performance. The ongoing commitment of the e-connected program will enable further work with industry and public and private partners to adapt and develop new technologies that boost agribusiness capability and capacity, which drives regional economic growth and jobs. These programs are very heavily appreciated by regional communities and in particular by farmers—I have seen them in operation—who use the technology to improve productivity and reduce costs.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I refer to page 241 and the line item "Regional Telecommunications Project". It is found in the table "Details of Controlled Grants and Subsidies" and it is about two-thirds of the way down the page. Can the Premier outline what the priorities will be under this program and what is happening beyond 2020–21? There does not seem to be any funding for that project in the out years.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The regional telecommunications project is delivering improved telecommunications coverage across the regions and closing the digital divide between urban and regional WA. The RTP continues to leverage co-contributions from the commonwealth and the telecommunications industry. It is about appropriate mobile telecommunication services in regional WA. The project will improve telecommunication coverage in WA through the establishment of mobile telephone towers within small communities and at strategic locations across regional WA. Funding of \$11.345 million in grants and subsidies has been allocated in 2020–21 for the completion of the project. Further details can be found in the royalties for regions almanac report. The project is delivering 348 new or improved infrastructure sites; I do not have that list. A total of 264 new and improved mobile base stations have been established in partnership with the commonwealth, Telstra, Optus and Vodafone. These projects have significantly reduced the mobile black spots and improved mobile coverage across the community. The project has also provided support to the pilot Tjuntjuntjara community wi-fi project completed in May 2019, providing connectivity over the entire community. That project is rolling out around the state. It is amazing how many of these towers or base stations can be provided for the amount of money that we are putting in.

[12.30 pm]

Ms M.J. DAVIES: The Premier said he did not have the list of the sites. Is it possible for that list to be provided to us on notice?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I am happy to provide that by way of supplementary information.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Thank you.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will provide a list of the 348 new or improved infrastructure sites.

The CHAIR: That is on the condition that the Premier can provide that information.

[*Supplementary Information No A2.*]

Ms M.J. DAVIES: We stand next to them and put a big sign on them when they are open, so I am pretty sure it is okay. We can see them from the road; it is all good.

What is the royalties for regions almanac the Premier referred to?

Mr M. McGOWAN: It is a document held by the department outlining all the royalties for regions projects.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Is that something that can be made public? The Premier referred to it in answer to a question.

Mr M. McGOWAN: It has been around since royalties for regions has been around, but apparently it has not been released.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Can I confirm that the Premier referred to something in answer to a question during estimates, but he cannot provide that information to us?

Mr M. McGOWAN: It contains a number of commercial-in-confidence information about partners and so forth, which is why I assume the last government did not release it.

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: I refer to “Aboriginal Youth Transitions” on the last line of page 175 of budget paper No. 3. The amount of \$200 000 was allocated in 2018–19 but there is nothing since, and there is nothing in the forward estimates. Has that been re-branded under another program, or has it stopped?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The project is now complete. It was to improve employment opportunities for the Aboriginal help-keeper project. A total investment of \$987 000 was aimed at improving the rate of post-school transitions in further education training or employment for Aboriginal students. The funding is aimed at addressing service gaps and expanding services to the goldfields and south west regions. As the member knows, these projects are sometimes time limited and the government puts effort into other projects that might achieve better outcomes.

Ms E. HAMILTON: I refer to page 172 of budget paper No. 3. Can the Premier provide an update on how the highly successful digital farm program has been able to bridge the digital divide and deliver high-speed broadband right across the grain belt to help our farmers stay competitive?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Thank you. The digital farm grants project has been a success. High-speed broadband right across the grain belt is helping our farmers stay competitive. For the first two rounds of the program, \$7 million has been invested across 15 projects. It has rolled out broadband services to more than 1 400 farm businesses across 65 000 square kilometres, from the Kimberley to the great southern. The third round of the digital farm grants is currently open, with an additional \$7 million available to boost broadband in priority areas across the central south east and Esperance grain belt areas. Areas targeted under this third funding round face highly variable bandwidths, download limits and service quality. The failing of the NBN Sky Muster service is holding back these regions. The program has had great success in attracting commercial investment to deliver fast, reliable, affordable and scalable broadband to new areas. I went to the opening of the one in Chapman Valley, or at least had a look, and announced some funding there. I saw some of the work and assistance it provides to some of the businesses there, particularly the use of remote cameras to determine what herds are doing and the water levels in dams where cattle feed and the like. It is remarkable in allowing farmers to operate from their lounge room as opposed to driving all over the farm all day. It is an amazing program.

Mr D.C. NALDER: I refer to the footnote on page 239 of budget paper No. 2 and the changes in FTE. I see that the department is budgeting a growth of 70 FTE over the current year. It is a reasonable increase. Given the government has just finished a redundancy program, I would like an explanation for why these additional staff are required—the basis for the increase.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will let the director general comment, but, more broadly, sometimes voluntary targeted separation schemes reduce the numbers across the public sector. Often the people who leave have been in roles that might change; hence people to fill different roles are employed in the future. It also means that if 3 000 had not taken the voluntary targeted separation scheme, there would be 3 000 more in the public sector than are currently there.

Mr D. Addis: I make the point at the outset that future estimates of FTE numbers are very much based on average salaries. It is not a precise science. I make the point also that that variation is about a 4.5 per cent shift in the FTE base, if that is the way it actually turns out, which is relatively modest in terms of the overall workforce. There are some additional FTEs for some of the COVID recovery work that we will be doing over the next year or two, and that is likely to explain some of it. My advice is that it will be mostly in the ups and downs of the estimation method we use. The member will see that the total employee benefits cost is pretty stable throughout that period.

Mr D.C. NALDER: The footnote refers to the full-time equivalents for 2018–19 and 2019–20, and the budget estimate for 2020–21. The number has increased from 1 540 to 1 574 and will grow to 1 644. It is not an over and under; it is the budget. The number of full-time equivalents for the department will be 70 positions higher than it was last year, which was higher than it was the year before. I did not ask why it had increased the year before. It shows a continual increase as does pretty much every department, which is up by 8 500. It would be up by 11 500 if there had not been a \$300 million redundancy program. An increase of that much begs the question about the value of the redundancy program. I am trying to understand the reason for the additional 70 staff. How many will be used for the COVID program and what are the others required for in the department? The figure is 70 extra FTE.

[12.40 pm]

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will let the director general explain again.

Mr D. Addis: I again make the point that essentially we work to salary budget rather than to numbers of people, which I think is a more appropriate method of managing our resources. The member will note that the actual last year were \$202 million. This year we are budgeting up a couple of hundred thousand dollars, and it is stable for the next two or three years. In terms of dollars spent on staff, it is a very stable base.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The employee benefits at the top of the page show that the figure climbs reasonably slowly across the forward estimates. Often, when people at a higher level leave, more people can be employed at a lower level, particularly if graduates or whatever it might be are employed. The other thing is that we have put a big effort into agriculture. More people are getting back into the agriculture component of the budget. As the member knows, there was significant concern across industry and significant cuts, so we have reinstated the base for the agriculture part of the department.

Mr D.C. NALDER: If the Premier runs the argument that people on a higher salary are leaving and they are being replaced with more people on a lower salary, is this not creating a future potential problem by which everybody's salaries are being increased? There is \$1 000 limit on salaries, but there are now more people, so a future problem with salary increases will be created because ultimately there will be more people.

Mr D. Addis: I suppose the member could make that argument, but if we run the numbers, 70 people at \$1 000 is \$70 000, which is a very minor fraction in the overall scheme of the salary budget of \$202 million.

Mr D.C. NALDER: My point here is that when that is looked at individually, it might be able to be justified, but when the same practice is applied across every agency in every department within the state government, it becomes a very big number. Total salaries account for 43 per cent of the total spend of state government, so full-time equivalent management is a critical component. I have not had an explanation other than it is overs and unders, yet every year it goes up. I do not see it coming down, so I am concerned about why there are an extra 70 FTEs here. I find it inappropriate for that to be explained away as being because cheaper people can be employed when people in higher salaries have left.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I do not know why the member would find that inappropriate, but just to explain a few things, firstly, when people on higher salaries who have been employed for a long time leave, graduates are often employed and perhaps more people can be employed; secondly, we have had a conversion-to-permanency program put in place across the entire public sector. We have allowed lots of people who had their annual positions renewed for years to be converted to permanent employees. The reason for that is that it was obviously very debilitating for those individuals and for agencies having to go through that churn every year of re-employing people who were on fixed-term contracts of one year. As I have said a number of times, I have met numerous public servants who have had 20 years of fixed-term contracts on an annual basis, and that is not exactly the best thing for people's mental health or the stability of agencies. We have deliberately provided more people with fixed-term employment if they meet certain criteria. The criteria were, firstly, that their position had to be funded across the forward estimates—secure funding; secondly, they had to have been employed for two years; thirdly, they could not have had any employment issues or issues related to performance were they to be employed permanently. They go through an application process. This happened in every agency across government. It was predominantly in health and education where lots of people were renewed on an annual basis, and it was not a great way of working—many employers do things that way, actually—so we deliberately did that. That has meant that thousands of people who before were just on a rolling contract on an annual basis have a permanent job. No doubt, that happening across the entire public sector has explained some of these increases.

Mr D.C. NALDER: Further to that —

The CHAIR: Member for Bateman, you have asked the question and it has been answered a number of times.

Mr D.C. NALDER: The Premier just made a statement and I would like to ask a question on the statement, if I may, please. Is the Premier saying that somewhere we will see a reduction in contracted staff for the state?

Mr M. McGOWAN: That is across the board. It is not just contracted staff; it is also part-time employees and casuals.

Mr D.C. NALDER: No, the Premier said that the contractors had moved to permanent employment, so we would see a reduction in contracted staff.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I have said that thousands of people were on fixed-term rolling contracts on an annual basis.

Mr D.C. NALDER: The government has made them permanent FTEs.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The member for Bateman can say what he wants to say.

Mr D.C. NALDER: The Premier is saying that they have been shifted from rolling contracts and then made full-time equivalent staff, so I am asking whether there is a reduction in contract staff across the state.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The member's question is probably better directed to when I deal with the Public Sector Commission this afternoon. I am explaining a broad point of what the government has done to provide more security of employment for thousands of people.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I refer to regional school bus services under royalties for regions expenditure on page 175 of budget paper No 3, *Economic and Fiscal Outlook*. Can the Premier confirm for me that that is ongoing operational funding being paid to the Public Transport Authority within the Department of Transport for school bus services and the running of the regional school bus network in regional Western Australia?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The point of this is to ensure that regional school bus travel continues to be provided free to students to travel between their home and school. The funding is obviously significant, but this guarantees the service for regional WA.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Is this something that the state government has always provided?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Under the last government, this was partly funded out of royalties for regions. Obviously, that principle is being applied here.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Is this something that the government has always provided? Is it correct that there have always been free school bus services to regional students?

Mr M. McGOWAN: That is not what I said. I said under the last government —

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I am asking the question, Premier.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The member can say what she wants.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I asked the question. The question is: has the government always provided free travel on school buses for schoolchildren in regional Western Australia on its own school bus network?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I do not know whether the government has always done that, but certainly under this government that is what is happening.

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: I refer to page 178 of budget paper No 3. The sixth line item down is “Regional Community Childcare Development Fund”. I notice there is no funding in this budget or in the forward estimates. Is there any funding whatsoever for regional community childcare centres or even to continue the development fund? I have looked through and have not been able to find any.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Stage 2 of the regional community childcare development fund supports the implementation of strategies in the education care services plan for regional WA via a grants program that enables customised responses to specific needs of a particular regional or statewide issue. That is the way the program worked. The program was for a fixed time. Eleven projects across nine regions were provided with funding. Six of them were targeted at addressing the sector’s engagement with Aboriginal families. It is an issue. I picked up the other day when I was in Kalgoorlie that some people cannot get to work. As the member knows, spare positions are available in Kalgoorlie. Some people, especially women, cannot get to work because of the cost or the lack of child care available, so we put a program in place. It has reached its expiry, but I think there are enormous opportunities for people who want to set up childcare centres in some parts of the state.

[12.50 pm]

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I refer to page 175 of budget paper No 3 and the line item “Vocational Education Regional Subsidies”. I understand that \$181 million will go to TAFE for regional students. Can the Premier confirm what the funding in that line item will be used for across the forward estimates?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The TAFE loadings are provided to recognise the additional cost of providing training services in the regions. A range of factors make up those additional costs, such as base costs, salary awards, class sizes, housing and consumables—all of those things that are potentially more expensive. The North Regional TAFE and Central Regional TAFE receive up to 80 per cent of these loadings and South Regional TAFE makes up the remaining 20 per cent. These subsidies have assisted in supporting approximately 37 500 training places, which is almost 7.5 million training hours. The cost of dealing with all those things is predominantly met from the consolidated account. The government has significantly boosted TAFE and significantly dropped fees all over the state. The cost to the state of providing TAFE services and the consequent increase in enrolments has gone up significantly. Over the past three years, TAFE has been a marvellous success across Western Australia and other states look with interest to see how we have managed to drop fees, increase enrolments and increase infrastructure. It has been a marvellous success and regional WA is benefiting.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: The first part of the Premier’s answer sounded as though it was funding going to TAFE lecturers, so actual salaries, and at the end it sounded as though he was talking about subsidies for TAFE fees. Can he clarify —

Mr M. McGOWAN: It is the overall cost of TAFE. The overall cost of providing TAFE services in regional Western Australia per student, per person, per employee, is higher than in the city, particularly the further away from the city and the further north people go. The overall reduction in fee revenue across the state has a significant impact on the budget. That is a fact. The state has improved the availability of TAFE across the state and reduced the cost of TAFE. Obviously, the state has to bear the cost of that.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Can the Premier confirm that this funding is being used to subsidise or pay direct salaries to TAFE lecturers and staff?

Mr M. McGOWAN: No, I cannot confirm that. I can confirm that we subsidise TAFE across regional WA to a far greater —

Ms M.J. DAVIES: How does the Premier make up that cost? Itemise it for me.

The CHAIR: Is that a further question?

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Yes.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I did not understand the question. Does the member want to ask the question?

Ms M.J. DAVIES: The Premier says it is costlier to deliver TAFE in regional areas, so a cost structure has to be involved with that. I would like to get an understanding of what it is and where that funding is going.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The member's question is difficult to understand, but the cost of TAFE across regional WA is significantly higher than in the city, so obviously the state has to pick up that cost. I do not really know how else to express it. Most of the additional cost is borne by the consolidated account.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: All I am trying to find out is whether royalties for regions is being used to pay TAFE lecturers. If the Premier says that it costs more to pay TAFE lecturers in regional Western Australia, are royalties for regions funds being used to pay the wages and salaries of people working in regional WA at the TAFE facilities?

Mr M. McGOWAN: It helps to fund the TAFE system, which has been remarkably successful across the state.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: That is the gold standard of transparency there, Premier!

Mr D.T. PUNCH: I refer to page 165 of budget paper No 3. Can the Premier provide an update on the transformative job-creating Spoilbank Marina project in Port Hedland?

Mr M. McGOWAN: As the member knows, this project has been talked about for many years. Spoilbank is an exciting project. I was there the week before last to look at the site. It will improve access and safety for the boating community and tourists in Port Hedland while creating a fantastic new amenity for the town. In June this year the government announced a final design for the \$136.5 million project. It includes a four-lane boat ramp; a 21-pen marina with capacity to expand to 80 pens in the future; a separate entrance channel to the main shipping channel; trailer parking for 200 vehicles; a maintenance hardstand; publicly accessible breakwaters with pedestrian path; public recreation and event space and public amenities; a public fishing jetty; shade structures at the swimming beach; a waterfront promenade to reflect the Yintha Kariyarra creation serpent story; public art; and a cultural gathering space. It will be incredible. As I said, it will be a great gathering area for locals and tourists alike.

We launched the Pilbara business register to allow local businesses to register their interest for contract opportunities out of this. We estimate that construction of the Spoilbank Marina will create 221 direct jobs during its two-year build. The government released the tender for bulk earthworks in September. I understand that tenders recently closed and are currently being assessed. Early works are scheduled to commence next month. It has obviously taken a while to get to this point with the environmental issues, the port, the location and consulting the local communities. It has been quite an ordeal to get to this point but the great thing is that it will be underway shortly. I expect that when it is finished, there will be huge excitement in Hedland that a state-of-the-art marina, a wonderful tourism facility and a great piece of fun will be available for the community that does so much for the country.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I know that there is an underspend of royalties for regions. There used to be an over-programming element in there. I cannot find it in this budget, but there was always a line that showed where the over-programming was. Can the Premier direct me to where that is and then explain from where the underspend has come?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I await the answer from the adviser. The underspends were significant over each year of the program. In 2011–12 it was 45 per cent of the entire budget. In 2010–11 it was 43 per cent and in 2009–10 it was 60 per cent of the entire budget. In each of the years of the last government it was significant.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I am glad the Premier has our figures. Does he have his own?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The advice I have is that it is at the bottom of the royalties for regions budget on page 180.

The appropriation was recommended.

Meeting suspended from 1.00 to 2.00 pm

Division 3: Premier and Cabinet — Services 1 to 3, Premier and Cabinet, \$128 687 000 —

Mr S.J. Price, Chair.

Mr M. McGowan, Premier.

Ms R. Brown, Acting Director General.

Ms E. Roper, Deputy Director General, Intergovernmental Relations and COVID-19.

Ms A. Kelly, Acting Deputy Director General, Recovery Implementation and State Services.

Mr G. Meyers, Director, Corporate Services.

Ms S. Black, Deputy Director General, Policy and Coordination.

Mr G. Italiano, Chief Government Information Officer.

Ms M. Inglis, Director, People and Governance Services.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIR: Members, this estimates committee will be reported by Hansard. The daily proof *Hansard* will be available the following day. I will ensure that as many questions as possible are asked and answered, and that both questions and answers are short and to the point. The estimates committee's consideration of the estimates will be restricted to discussion of those items for which a vote of money is proposed in the consolidated account. Questions

must be clearly related to a page number, item program or amount in the current division. Members should give these details in preface to their question. If a division or service is the responsibility of more than one minister, a minister shall be examined only in relation to their portfolio responsibilities.

The minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee rather than asking that the question be put on notice for the next sitting week. I ask the minister to clearly indicate what supplementary information he agrees to provide and I will then allocate a reference number. If supplementary information is to be provided, I seek the minister's cooperation in ensuring that it is delivered 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.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: On page 65, the table refers to total appropriations. Can the Premier please explain why the appropriation will increase from \$146 million last year to \$163 203 000 for the 2020–21 budget? It is a 12 per cent increase, and also a significant increase on the 2018–19 budget in which \$133.45 million was allocated.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will let the director general assist in answering this in a moment, but I refer the Leader of the Opposition to the bottom of that page, which shows the Aboriginal cultural centre planning project, the COVID-19 campaign phases 1 and 2, the remote communities COVID-19 emergency relief fund, and the Wellington Dam mural and Collie art trail. Perhaps the director general has more to add.

Ms R. Brown: There are a number of increases in appropriation between 2019–20 and 2020–21. The Premier has alluded to spending changes with regard to key recovery projects and additional funding for COVID communications. Further increases relate to the transfer of the Office of Digital Government, which is related to an increase in appropriation both for the ongoing operations of the Office of Digital Government and cybersecurity operations. There is a number of key increases for key initiatives in relation to Aboriginal affairs, including the Yamatji Nation Indigenous Land Use Agreement and aspects related to remote communities in the economic transformation project in Bidyadanga. There are a number of other increases for the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and changes in the Telethon donation.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: With respect to the COVID-19 communications program that the Premier mentioned, I notice \$2.63 million for 2019–20 with phases 1 and 2, with increases to \$3.3 million and another \$370 000 for this year's budget. Could the Premier please explain how that breakdown is allocated, how many staff are employed in those programs and how that nearly \$6 million worth of spending is broken down?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Broadly, when COVID hit back in February–March, we brought together people from across the public sector. In the bottom of Dumas House, a command centre was set up in a bunch of those large rooms, and people were brought together from across the public sector to manage a whole range of things in all sorts of areas—logistics, communications, coordination. There was a big group of people working.

When we declared the state of emergency, the State Emergency Coordinator directed that the COVID-19 information coordination centre be established. Those people were located in Dumas House. The team worked around the clock to ensure that the Western Australian community knew exactly what it needed to do to stay safe during a rapidly changing environment. If you remember, about three months back there was huge concern across the community. The team worked with culturally and linguistically diverse communities to access translated information. On 3 July, the majority of the information coordination centre team became the COVID-19 communications team in the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. The Western Australia Police Force continues to locate three ICC members with the COVID-19 communications team. The team's responsibility is to continue emergency response communications, as well as inform the public of recovery initiatives. It is prepared, if an outbreak were to occur, and continues to work closely with Western Australia police and the Department of Health.

Funding of \$3 million was allocated in 2019–20, which I think was one of the emergency funding initiatives we took, to provide public messaging on restrictions on television, radio, out-of-home print and social digital channels. If you recall, we had numerous restrictions in place back then. Of the \$3 million, \$2.63 million was spent and \$370 000 was carried over. All staff placed with the information coordination centre had their salaries paid by their home agencies, and at its peak, 52 staff from across government worked in the centre. When I went down there a few times, I met people from all sorts of agencies who had been seconded to do that work.

[2.10 pm]

I think that was a great demonstration of how the public sector works together in a crisis. Funding of \$3.2 million was allocated in 2020–21 to continue to provide emergency response and recovery communications over the course of this year, including \$150 000 for salaries to engage two staff members—a campaign officer and social media coordinator—on short-term contracts. The total amount spent on the two short-term contracts is \$24 857. Once those contracts are concluded, the total will amount to \$95 868. To date, approximately \$2.958 million has been committed to pay for all the newspaper, television, online and radio communication the government does.

A total of 19 staff now work for the COVID-19 communications team—13 staff are on placement from their home agencies, which are continuing to pay for salaries, and six staff are employed by the department. In addition, as I said before, the Western Australia Police Force has located three people to assist the team. An expression of interest—

I think this is where the Leader of the Opposition was going with her question—was recently launched and advertised to create a pool of staff should extra resources be required in the future. At this time, no staff have been recruited from the pool of people established should we need them in the future.

In other words, at the start of the COVID pandemic, a bunch of people came together in Dumas House to run communications across government and the community. The coms were a big deal and lots of effort went into it. Staff came from the Departments of Health, Education, and Premier and Cabinet, the Western Australia Police Force, and maybe the Public Sector Commission—all over the place. A number of staff had skills in other languages and the like so that communications could be across the board. Some were experts in TV and print advertising and some were social media experts. A whole bunch of people were placed downstairs in Dumas House. We did not, as far as I am aware, pay millions of dollars to some advertising agency to run it all for us; we brought people together from across the public sector. However, that does not mean that we did not have to buy or create advertising outside government. In other words, we kept the costs way down by using existing staff. The measures worked. It is hard to place now. It has been a tiring eight months, but the measures worked. People worked around the clock to make sure the messages were out there and that they were appropriate.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Premier, would it be possible to get a breakdown of the advertising spend for the newspaper, TV and online communications and any other contract agencies' spend?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Yes, I will provide that to the Leader of the Opposition now. The Easter stay-at-home safety message, a one-week radio and social media campaign, was \$29 454. The Anzac Day stay-at-home safety message—remember that everyone had to stay at home and could not go to Anzac Day events—a four-day audio streaming service and social media campaign, was \$23 534. We provided \$86 791 to support the federal government for a two-week press and radio hygiene campaign. We provided \$75 210 to support the commonwealth on the COVIDSafe app promotion on radio and in print. The easing of intrastate borders—that was when we were bringing them down—was \$149 454 for a three-week radio and regional television promotion. The COVID-19 safety plan for culturally and linguistically diverse communities was \$12 457. The continuous paid boosting of social media activity—that was emergency response messages—was \$8 330. Behaviour change campaigns, including the WA road map and telling people what they could and could not do on radio, television, press, digital out-of-home, social media and digital audio, was \$1 154 631. The “We are all in this together” brand and development guide used by all agencies to promote community cohesion was \$10 315. The “Thank you” campaign for essential workers and people across the community who continue to work during difficult times was \$285 271. The “Small business needs your business” campaign, which was designed to get people back into our retail outlets, on television, press, radio and social, was \$694 142. The associated costs, research and evaluation of all these campaigns to see whether they were working was \$100 600.

This year, the WA recovery plan phase 1 was \$576 395—sorry; that is the total amount for radio, press and digital, and \$420 880 has been paid to date. Responsive digital messaging to get messages to the community in a timely manner was \$69 000. The stakeholder engagement translation for culturally and linguistically diverse communities was \$5 574. The “Work and Wander Out Yonder” phase 1 campaign was \$220 618. That is part of a bigger campaign expected to cost \$1.66 million. Community sentiment research and monitoring was \$5 100. The total amount spent thus far on the two short-term contracts secured outside government was \$24 857. We expect the total cost of salaries to amount to \$95 868.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: For the culturally and linguistically diverse community safety messages, can the Premier outline which languages and communities were targeted?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I do not have that detail. I am happy to provide it to the Leader of the Opposition by way of supplementary information.

The CHAIR: To clarify, the Premier will provide —

Mr M. McGOWAN: What was the question?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: For the COVID phase 1 and 2 communications, can I have a breakdown of which CALD communities were targeted and which languages messages were translated into?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Which CALD communities were targeted and which languages campaigns were translated into? It may well be that the support for the famous Fiona and Diana, who assist me with sign language, came out of that as well. I am not too sure, but we will find out.

[Supplementary Information No A3.]

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Which of the radio advertisements that the Premier outlined to the house just now did he feature in and what was the cost of the advertisements he featured in?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The advice I have is that none—did the member say radio?

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: It was the radio ads, Premier.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I did some radio grabs in the earlier days of COVID but I do not have those details to hand. I am trying to recall what it was about. It was about encouraging people to stay safe and things of that nature. It would be covered by the amounts I mentioned.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I refer to page 74 of budget paper No 2, the heading “Expenses”, and the line item “employee benefits”. I note that in the chamber today we have three deputy directors general and the director general. The annual report provided to the house only weeks ago lists only two deputy directors general and the director general. I am keen to understand the roles of all the deputy directors general and the director general in relation to the COVID-19 response, particularly given that I believe at least two deputy directors general, plus the director general, plus Public Sector Commissioner O’Neill, are responding to the COVID-19 recovery. It seems that a lot of people are responding to that as part of the executive. Does the Premier have a breakdown of their roles and responsibilities, and perhaps provide the highest, considering that other individuals are in the chamber, and what their ongoing salaries and expenses might be?

[2.20 pm]

Mr M. McGOWAN: Whose salaries and expenses is the member asking for?

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: The deputy directors general, the director general, and those who have responsibility for the COVID-19 response.

The CHAIR: Member, which particular line item on page 74 are you referring to?

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I appreciate that, Chair. It is employee benefits under the heading “Expenses”. Clearly, they are paid staff as part of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Over the COVID period, the Public Sector Commissioner has assisted in a role that we have broadly termed COVID coordinator. The acting director general of the DPC has had a significant role in coordinating with the COVID coordinator, and Emily Roper has assisted in managing particular federal–state relations, which have been a big deal over this period. Obviously, we put as much resource as possible into dealing with it at a public sector level. As we have learnt and as we know, multiple crises and problems have emerged that we have had to deal with at a public sector level every single day as this has gone on. That is what the entire public sector has reoriented towards. In terms of what specific people such as the directors general have done over this period and what their exact roles have been, I will let the acting director general explain. If the member wants to know what people are paid, he can have a look at the report of the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal. I do not think it is traditional in these environments to embarrass people by saying in front of everyone what their pay is, but it is all publicly available information. I will let the acting director general comment.

Ms R. Brown: Thank you. As the Premier has touched on, dealing with the impacts of COVID and working collaboratively across the public sector with the key statutory roles, engaging with the commonwealth, and going into recovery has been a significant effort for not only DPC and the State Recovery Controller, but also all parts of the public sector. As the Premier has outlined, the Public Sector Commissioner is also operating as the State Recovery Controller, which is a strong recognition of the role of the public sector in leading, coordinating and, most importantly, implementing the state government’s recovery plan of \$5.5 billion with more than 500 initiatives, so it is a fairly significant effort. The role of DPC and my role in particular are to provide support obviously to the Premier and a number of ministers involved in both COVID and recovery initiatives, and obviously in the broader roles, in supporting the operations of executive government, including operating executive government through COVID, which required an intense effort, particularly around the increased volume of national cabinet meetings and the supporting subcommittee State Disaster Council. It is a critical role in enabling those operations to continue through to the fairly critical role in supporting the Premier and others in a range of commonwealth–state matters and, significantly, national cabinet at its peak of three meetings per week.

Deputy director general Emily Roper focuses heavily on commonwealth–state relations in all matters relating to COVID. That involves working regularly with the commonwealth on a number of issues that impact the nation, but also some of the aspects that enable us to work collaboratively with other jurisdictions on areas of interest—for example, shipping—and also working closely with state colleagues, particularly the State Emergency Coordinator, Commissioner of Police Chris Dawson, and working closely with the Chief Health Officer. Western Australia’s approach to the management of COVID has obviously been enabled by those statutory roles, but Emily plays a critical role in enabling that strategic forward-looking and coordination role in supporting the Premier and other ministers in that process. Deputy director general Stephanie Black continues to play a critical role in supporting other functions across the public sector in her role leading the policy and coordination division, which has responsibility for not only, most notably, infrastructure oversight and governance in a number of projects, but also supporting the state government’s asset investment program and delivery of it. There are more than 300 infrastructure projects within the recovery plan, and that involves a critical coordination role across the public sector to deliver against that.

Most recently, Angela Kelly joined the department on 29 September, after the sign-off of the annual report for 2019–20. Angela Kelly plays two key roles. The first is oversight of the recovery support implementation area in DPC, where we provide critical support to the State Recovery Controller, Sharyn O’Neill, and also our public sector colleagues in coordination and delivery of that large program. The second is oversight of the state services functions, including executive government and other aspects that enable the operation of cabinet and other features. That position replaces an executive position that will finish next month.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Thank you very much, director general and Premier. Premier, there will obviously be quite a lot of deputy directors general.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Which page?

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: We are on the same page, Premier; it is a supplementary question.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I have moved pages. Which page is this?

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: This is still page 74, employee benefits, under the heading “Expenses”. Further to the director general’s explanation, which I appreciate, in relation to the division of services across the executive, obviously deputy directors Roper and Kelly provide an important service in relation to COVID-19 recovery and policy, together with the director general, and together with the Public Sector Commissioner. I am keen to understand this. Clearly, there seems to be quite a lot of overlap, particularly with the recovery projects. The Public Sector Commission is now handling 500 projects, I think it was, that have to be delivered, together with 300 infrastructure programs that are being delivered through the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. It seems to me that a number of very highly paid people clearly have the responsibility to implement what is the recovery program, and that there is an expansive public service now answering directly to the Premier to achieve that. I am keen to understand where that division of labour starts and ends. When does COVID recovery go from being the responsibility of the deputy directors general to becoming the responsibility of the Public Sector Commissioner? Why has such an expansive role now been undertaken? The Premier has brought another deputy director general online to achieve this as well, so a large number of people report into the Premier. Given the annual report, I expect that they are particularly well paid. Why are such a large number of people doing that, and where is the division between the PSC and the DPC and the delivery of those programs?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will comment up-front and then I will ask the director general to provide more advice. Just so the member knows, we froze all the salaries of people at senior levels in the public sector.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: You are paying \$4 million a year for salaries!

Mr M. McGOWAN: I did not interrupt you. We froze all the salaries across the senior levels of the public sector, and for politicians and judges, which set an example for the rest of the public sector, to get our finances back on track. Thankfully we did that; otherwise, the state would now be in a very difficult position to undertake COVID recovery, because our financial position would be nowhere near as good as it currently is.

In terms of how it works, we are in a state of emergency. There is a worldwide pandemic. The member may laugh at that, but there is a worldwide pandemic. Countries all over the world are locking down. Mass numbers of deaths are occurring in countries all over the world. We have coordinated as a state, and, indeed, as a nation, better than most places around the world—certainly at the state level. Basically, for months and months, every morning there was a meeting of the emergency management committee. These days, the emergency management committee meets probably four or five times a week for one or two hours, and the people predominantly referred to by the member are there. That allows the coordination and discussion of who is going to have what responsibility. We obviously have to have people at a senior level in the public sector undertaking roles every single day, making sure that things happen and messages are coordinated. At this point, the evidence is that the people the member is referring to have done a great job. Clearly, we have not had some of the problems that other parts of the country or the world have had. I suspect other states and other countries have put far more resources in. We have better used our existing resources in a coordinated way.

[2.30 pm]

The Leader of the Opposition’s first question was about communications. Basically, in terms of that massive communications strategy, we brought together communications staff from across the public sector and co-located them, and ensured that we used existing resources to provide that huge amount of information in a coordinated and successful way to the community. That was an enormous effort that showed what the public sector can do if we use internal resources. Then, of course, we had to buy advertising and what have you; obviously, we had to pay for that. But had we outsourced all that work—as the last government used to do when it would pay money to get Robert Taylor to do its budget communications—it would have been a far more expensive proposition. We have successfully used the resources of government in a coordinated way far more effectively than past governments have and, I suspect, other governments around Australia. But I will get the director general to advise, and I think she already has, what the different roles were for people involved in these tasks.

Ms R. Brown: I will add to the Premier’s comments. I probably have a couple of key points of distinction. The state recovery controller chairs the public sector leadership council—so a reflection of the broader public sector effort in the delivery of recovery—which has been critical in supporting government and bringing the recovery plan together. In that regard, the Public Sector Commission provides secretariat support for that council for the state recovery controller role as chair. That is distinctly different from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, which provides overall support for the planning, coordination, monitoring and reporting functions of the recovery plan, which is a large undertaking of over 500 projects. There is a very clear distinction between the role of the state recovery controller and the role of DPC, and the deputy director general with oversight of that.

Probably the final comment that I will make is that the deputy director general, who has oversight for intergovernmental relations and COVID matters, is very much focused on the day-to-day aspects of engagement with the commonwealth, other jurisdictions, statutory officers around the day-to-day—almost 24/7—management of COVID, including supporting, with the statutory officeholders, advice to government earlier in the year around the road map and the management of directions and restrictions associated with it.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Thank you, director general. Premier, I appreciate the extensive explanation. Given the number of people who are now reporting to the Premier as part of the government's response to COVID-19, how does the Premier continue to have the oversights that he admitted to today when information clearly does not make its way to him—for example, people who depart vessels that are at port—and the Premier does not make that public? How is it that there are still these oversights, given that the Premier has such an extensive level now of executive directors and deputy directors who are reporting to him on COVID-19?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The opposition leader has already asked me this question earlier today, but I will provide the member with the answer. On Sunday, we had an emergency committee meeting. Obviously, lots of issues are going on and there is lots of work to be done. I was then advised—I think it was on Sunday—that there were two Australians who had been on the ship who were in self-quarantine and that we would be changing the directions, which I agreed with and I was very, very supportive of, to ensure that Australians leaving ships would go into hotel quarantine. Of the two Australians in question, one went to Busselton and one went to Sydney. Both of them were directed into self-quarantine by the authorities in accordance with existing protocols. It was nothing unusual. It was the normal process as it then existed as of Wednesday last week.

In the interim, of course, a case came to light late last week. I was advised on Sunday that there were two Australians who had left the ship in accordance with existing protocols, that they were in self-quarantine and that it was being managed appropriately. I was very keen that, in future, people leaving ships would go into hotel quarantine. That is not an easy thing for many people because if someone spends eight months at sea and then they get home and have to go into a hotel to quarantine for the two weeks, obviously, a lot of people will not want to do that or will not enjoy doing that, and we do get some pushback from people in hotel quarantine because they are not too happy about having to do that.

Obviously, on Monday, I had to release huge amounts of information about New Zealanders, the changes to phase 4 arrangements, the expansion of the number of people who were coming in through the international cap and the broader issues related to the ships *Key Integrity* and *Al Messilah*, and I did not think to release that information about two people who had followed the existing protocols. As I have said today, it was an oversight on my behalf. I probably should have released the information. My general rule is to release as much information as quickly as possible so that the public is well-informed. But both people have been tested and both people are negative for COVID. The Western Australian is in hotel quarantine now. We are very confident. The advice that I have had from the Minister for Health is that there is no risk involved here. Therefore, the existing protocols, as they were, were followed. They had been tested. There is no positive case of COVID and the advice I have is that there is no risk, as members understand, because there was a negative test result.

In terms of everything else, as I have said, I do not have to deal with the number of issues that Daniel Andrews has to deal with, but there are still enormous issues. We have all sorts of problems, I think to a greater degree than other states, because we are a major trading state and so the ships are a big issue now. It was not such a big issue before, after the cruise ships departed. It was not as big an issue for some months, with perhaps the exception of one ship or maybe two, but it is now growing, basically because the crew changeovers of foreign seafarers going home and new seafarers coming on and we are relying upon the quarantine arrangements in Manila or Dubai or wherever it might be.

That is a big threat vector for Western Australia and we cannot control that. The only way that we can really, absolutely control it is to close all the ports. That way the ships do not come in and we remove the threat vector. But if we do that, obviously, our economy will collapse, so, clearly, it needs better management, but it needs management at an international level. I cannot control the ship crew transfers in Manila or Dubai. Obviously, there are international organisations here that can help and embassies in those locations can help. But we are still looking at and getting as much information as we can on whether we can just turn around ships that turn up with infected seafarers so that we send a message to the shipping companies and to the importers and exporters. The problem with that, of course, is if we launch that policy, they then may not tell us that they have infected seafarers on board. Therefore, every time we have a solution, another problem can arise. This is an ongoing issue that we have to grapple with and we are doing our best in a very, very difficult environment when it comes to the ships coming into Western Australian ports.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I refer to page 67 and paragraph 14 under “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency”. The Premier has explained part of this in previous answers, but as it is very important, I would like him to elaborate on it, please. Can the Premier outline the measures put in place by DPC to effectively communicate the emergency response measures to the WA community and the extent to which existing public sector resources have played a role in informing the WA community, to keep it safe?

[2.40 pm]

Mr M. McGOWAN: Thank you for that, member for Armadale. I would like to thank the 60 public sector staff from across the whole sector who worked day in, day out and often nights and weekends to ensure that Western Australians knew exactly what they had to do to keep themselves safe. It was a very, very stressful period for three or four months there. People were having sleepless nights, as was I. I would like to thank all the agencies and departments that gave up their staff to help us. We have seen over east and overseas what can happen if governments do not communicate properly, and thank goodness that is not our story here in Western Australia.

Following the declaration of the state of emergency, the COVID-19 information coordination centre was set up at the bottom of Dumas House to deal with all these things. The team had to interpret a hundred directions. Members have to remember that the State Emergency Coordinator was drafting and issuing directions at a rapid rate, and we were approving them every day in large numbers. They all had to be interpreted and publicised to make sure that the public understood the rules. Then we had to bring off restrictions in an orderly way. The policy and communication on both those things involved a massive effort. I think the spend was around \$6 million. In light of what we actually achieved and the amount of work that was undertaken, it was an enormous effort and, I suspect, by comparison with other parts of Australia and the world, significantly cheaper.

The rules and all that sort of thing included where people could and could not travel, which businesses could not stay open and how many people could gather. The list grew every day. I suspect PhDs will be written about all this and how much was issued and how it all worked. Information went everywhere. We had COVID hotlines—we still do—and television, print and digital campaigns. We had to make sure that information was available to everyone from every background—Aboriginal people, the culturally and linguistically diverse and the like. There was massive interest in the information. I have never known a time when news and information has been so hotly sought after by the general public. There were 3.37 million views per month on our COVID-19 webpage. Since March 2020, there have been 23.6 million views of my department's pages on wa.gov.au. I reckon that would probably be the same as for the previous 10 years, but that is just an assumption. Our frequently asked questions were fantastic. They were drafted by these people in conjunction with lawyers and others across the sector. The call centre has fielded nearly 166 000 calls, or 830 calls a day, for information.

In 2019–20, \$2.63 million was spent. As we said before, there is a budget for this financial year as well. The communications have boosted recovery, kept people safe, boosted consumer confidence, got people back to work more quickly and ensured that the police had the support that they have needed over this time. I would like to thank everyone who made it happen.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I refer to pages 69 to 71 of the budget papers, which refer to various different services, including the administration of executive government services, parliamentary support, whole of government and Aboriginal affairs. Is it possible—I might need to get this by way of supplementary information—to get a breakdown of the number of term-of-government employees for each of those services, with a separate exclusion for the ministerial offices, obviously?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I do not understand the member's question. Is she asking how many term-of-government employees there are in ministerial offices?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: No—the number of term-of-government employees in the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, if there are any.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The best of my advice is that there is none in the department. Obviously, in ministerial offices, like in every government, there are term-of-government employees.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Could I get a breakdown of the number of term-of-government employees in each ministerial office, please?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I suggest the member put a question on notice about that.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Okay.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I do not have the information to hand. Obviously, I do not know.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Is there any way the Premier could provide it by way of supplementary information, because I will not get an answer to a question on notice until Parliament reconvenes.

Mr M. McGOWAN: No; we answer questions. Put the question on notice and I will do my best to get the member an answer as quickly as possible.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Premier, the deadline for questions on notice was last Wednesday. They will not be answered because we have only three sitting weeks left. I was hoping I might be able to get the information by way of supplementary information.

Mr M. McGOWAN: How many term-of-government employees?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: In each ministerial office.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I am sure questions about term-of-government employees have been asked before. I do not know; does the opposition ask these questions regularly? I am not going to provide supplementary information, but I give the member an undertaking that I will get her the last information that was provided in answer to these things.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I refer to paragraph 12 on page 67 of the budget papers and the WA recovery plan. It states —

The Department will coordinate and support delivery of the initiatives in the WA Recovery Plan ... This will be achieved through tracking progress and the early identification of potential issues ...

Specifically referring to the early identification of potential issues, I presume that this has been in place for some time. The worker shortage that we are experiencing now would have been one of those issues that were identified early on in the piece. When was that first raised as a matter of potential concern to government?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I cannot tell the member what date that issue first came to my attention, but I can tell her that during the first few months of the COVID pandemic, the main fear, in an economic sense, was mass unemployment—Great Depression—style unemployment. That was the advice we were getting at a national level and across the board—mass unemployment with basically the same situation that existed during the Great Depression. Our problem—it is a good problem to have—is that that has not happened, but we have the problem with the harvest in regional WA. The actual date that these things started becoming apparent was probably a couple of months ago. When we launched our recovery plan, it was about getting more people back to work and making sure that we fixed long-term problems with shovel-ready projects that had fallen through the cracks. It was about giving payroll tax cuts and that sort of thing. The issue of not having enough people in seasonal agriculture or regional tourism is a more recent development. Obviously, once that became apparent, we started working on projects to deal with it. I can tell the member that on at least two occasions—maybe even three—I raised the issue of employment in regional agriculture for the harvest with the Prime Minister and had conversations in person and at other forums. I said that we needed a national approach to this and that we needed national assistance in allowing people on any sort of welfare to keep their welfare benefit and work in regional agriculture. I think there is a reluctance at a national level about this. I think there is a belief that it would not work if we were to do that at a national level. I think it is worth trying to a greater degree than we have done. In any event, we know there is a problem. We are doing everything we can at a state level. I cannot magic up people from Sweden. We are doing everything we can at a state level to get Western Australians and Australians from interstate out into these fields of employment.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: How was information collected by the department in the early identification of potential issues? Information must have been coming from industry groups, individuals and members of Parliament. How was that collected, collated and brought to the Premier's attention? My understanding is that this issue was raised far earlier than just a couple of months ago, Premier.

[2.50 pm]

Mr M. McGOWAN: About?

Ms M.J. DAVIES: It is about the prospect of worker shortages and the fact that we are dealing with it now, and that it was raised very early on in the piece.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will get Emily Roper to comment for the record in a moment. It is part of the recovery plan, which was probably in July. We were the first state to launch a recovery plan, I think in August. We held 21 round tables. I went to a couple, and ministers held them with all sorts of industry groups, not-for-profit groups and the like. Someone at one of those round tables may well have raised this issue. Obviously, we spent some time trying to work out our recovery plan, which we then launched in July.

Ms E. Roper: Further to the round tables, impact statements were prepared on the impact of COVID-19 in a range of areas, which included regional communities. The information gathered through those round tables and other consultations, and other data that was available, identified that a problem seemed to be emerging.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: When were those round tables held?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Through me, when were they held?

Ms E. Roper: In June.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I think those round tables were held sometime in June or July. I chaired one with industry groups at Fraser's Restaurant. In fact, I did two with industry groups at which multiple issues were raised. Literally 50 representatives of industry were in the room and multiple issues were raised. That matter may well have been raised in one of those forums, but I repeat: the main or the overwhelming issue that was raised was unemployment; there were too many people without jobs. I understand that there is concern out there and I know that some people are criticising us over this, but short of opening the international border, I do not know what else those groups want us to do. I guarantee them that I do not support opening the international border at this point in time.

The CHAIR: Member for Dawesville.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Mr Chair, I have a follow-up question on this.

The CHAIR: Okay, follow-up question to the member for Armadale.

Dr A.D. BUTI: My question relates to page 67, paragraph 12. The Leader of the Nationals WA was talking about the WA recovery plan. That paragraph states —

The Department will coordinate and support delivery of the initiatives in the WA Recovery Plan across the public sector.

Can the Premier outline how the WA recovery plan was developed and what has been done to implement it?

Mr M. McGOWAN: It turns out that the date of the release of the Western Australian recovery plan was 26 July. There are 500 different projects in the plan, including 340 infrastructure projects and 200 non-infrastructure projects. The implementation of individual projects will be the responsibility of relevant ministers and agencies. A specialised infrastructure delivery unit to bring forward these projects has been created within the Department of Finance. Agencies will be required to report monthly on the status of their projects, including any issues, anticipated risks or achieved outcomes. To date, more than 25 projects have been completed and are being evaluated to confirm their outcomes and benefits. That reporting will inform the public sector leadership council, which is responsible for the oversight and implementation of the plan. Establishing a centralised oversight mechanism will allow the government to track the delivery of all recovery projects across government, ensure that there is ongoing focus to support those most affected by the pandemic and prepare contingency planning so that the implementation of specific projects can be adjusted to meet the changing circumstances of the pandemic.

There is a lot of stuff in the plan, but we went for things that were shovel-ready and worthwhile but may not have been done for a long time, such as maintenance of police stations, hospitals and schools; roadworks; and the stuff down at Henderson to make it ready for defence work. There are numerous examples of projects that were really quick to get off the ground. As part of the recovery plan, we did not want to announce funding for something that would take three years to design, because that is not part of recovery. It is about starting things that we can get underway and create a pipeline of work for over the next year or two. That is what the plan is. It turns out, Leader of the Nationals WA, that we launched the recovery plan on 26 July. I might add that we were, easily, the first state in Australia to do so.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I refer to page 74, “Expenses” and the line item “Employee benefits”. I will continue from my earlier question. There has been a \$4.1 million increase in employee benefits to the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. Can the Premier explain what that increase substantially deals with?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Where is that?

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Under “Employee benefits”, the 2019–20 budget of \$90 million, and then the 2019–20 actual, which goes to \$94 million in the 2020–21 budget estimate and then \$94.8 million in the budget actual.

Mr M. McGOWAN: That increase relates to staff increases in the Office of Digital Government. We constantly get reports about problems with actors of whatever description that are causing problems in the cyber world within government. There have been staff increases there to try to combat that. There have been increases in the Collie delivery unit for the massive array of projects we are putting in place in Collie. There have been increases after the royal commission into child sexual abuse, and for the remote communities’ economic transformation project. I will get the director general to explain what that will do.

Ms R. Brown: DPC plays a critical coordination role to progress and implement key initiatives of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The remote communities’ economic transformation project refers to work that has been done in Bidyadanga and on land tenure reform.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Does the Premier have a breakdown of how much of the employee benefits in the last financial year included termination benefits?

Mr M. McGOWAN: We do not have those details to hand, I am sorry.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I am sorry, Premier; you do not have termination benefit details?

Mr M. McGOWAN: No. That is the advice that I have.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I appreciate that. Is the former director general of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, Mr Foster, still attached to the department?

The CHAIR: That is not a further question.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: It deals with termination benefits. Mr Foster left the employment of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, I believe; I am trying to understand what that looks like.

The CHAIR: We will hear the answer, then.

Mr M. McGOWAN: There are no termination benefits.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Is Mr Foster still within the Department of the Premier and Cabinet or attached to it, or has he been transferred entirely?

Mr M. McGOWAN: He was transferred to the Public Sector Commission and then redeployed to the Department of Treasury.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Why did Mr Foster leave the department?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I explained that at the time. I explained it in the house and I explained it in the media. Those reasons have not changed.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I refer to the bottom of page 74, “Details of Controlled Grants and Subsidies” and the line item “Community Grants”.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Is the Leader of the Opposition referring to the regional community services fund?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: No. I refer to the bottom box, “Details of Controlled Grants and Subsidies”, and the second line from the bottom, “Community Grants”. There are figures there of \$4.209 million, \$3.149 million, \$7.999 million and \$6.199 million. Is it possible to get a breakdown of the 2019–20 budget of \$7.899 million and which organisations those grants were awarded to? Could I also get a breakdown of any anticipated allocations from the proposed 2020–21 budget?

[3.00 pm]

Mr M. McGOWAN: Community donations and community grants are the same thing and included grants to the following: Telethon, \$3.5 million; Western Australian Council of Social Service, \$281 000; Wheelchairs for Kids, \$50 000; the Duyfken 1606 Replica Foundation, \$273 000; Celebrate WA, \$500 000; the Kalamunda Community Centre, \$2.4 million; Brockman Community House, \$500 000; inspire Australian of the Year Awards, \$100 000; Activate Perth, \$200 000; and UWA ambassador for life sciences, \$50 000. Basically half the money went to Telethon.

Mrs R.M.J. CLARKE: I refer the Premier to paragraph 14 on page 67. The Department of the Premier and Cabinet obviously has a role in communicating the detail of restrictions under a state of emergency, whether imposing or removing them. Every jurisdiction has its own set of restrictions. How do Western Australia’s current phase 4 restrictions compare with the rest of the nation?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I can broadly say that this state is a far freer place than any other part of Australia, perhaps bar the Northern Territory. As I recall, the Northern Territory was the first place to return to having people stand and drink beer—probably a transitory thing for the Northern Territory. From 27 June, we have had no caps or limits on restaurants, cafes or pubs. The limit has been determined by the two-square-metre rule—not a number cap—and there has been no requirement for seated-only service.

New South Wales is currently subject to the four-square-metre rule inside with a cap of 300 people irrespective of the venue’s size. Sydney Town Hall is a massive building but it can have only 300 people in it. Outdoor areas are subject to the two-square-metre rule but they must use electronic methods such as QR codes to record and keep contact details if applying this rule. Group bookings are limited to 10 people. Venues must have a dedicated marshal to ensure that social distancing is maintained. It has seated service only with no dance floors, except for a wedding reception at which up to 20 people and the official wedding party can dance. Hygiene marshals must be on duty at all times in a venue that holds more than 250 people. That is the gold standard in New South Wales.

South Australia has imposed the one-person-per-two-square-metres rule but it has only seated service. Shared utensils and communal food places, such as salad bars and buffets, are not allowed. A COVID-19 marshal is required. Nightclubs can operate as a bar or pub and sell alcohol to seated patrons if they have a COVID management plan. That would be a fun nightclub!

In metropolitan Victoria, there is takeaway or delivery service only. People can travel up to five kilometres from home, but I think that has changed. In regional areas, seated service is allowed only for groups of up to 10 people with a cap of 50 people for outdoor areas under the two-square-metre rule. Indoor areas have a cap of 20 people under the four-square-metre rule and only 10 people per space are allowed. Smaller venues that have less than 200 square metres can use the two-square-metre rule with up to 50 persons at a time. People can eat and drink standing but there is no dancing, except for at a wedding reception, where the wedding couple may dance with each other and/or their parents.

Tasmania is subject to the two-square-metre rule and up to 250 are allowed in an undivided indoor space—that would be the biggest function ever in Tasmania—following the two-square-metre rule. Up to 1 000 people are allowed in an outdoor space. Tasmania has all sorts of rules around dancing as well.

Gyms also have all sorts of rules. In New South Wales it is interesting to note that gyms, fitness centres and studios, such as dance studios, are allowed to open for up to 20 people per class. The facility is capped under the four-square-metre rule. We have the two-square-metre rule in gyms and they do not have to be staffed. Contact sport and training has been in place for a long time.

In Western Australia, the numbers for outdoor gatherings are determined by only the two-square-metre. In New South Wales 20 people are allowed at an outdoor public gathering, 500 at community sport and 500 people can attend an outdoor seated music performance subject to the two-square-metre rule.

I could go on and on because this list is quite extensive, but as the member can see, the limits on people's activity and behaviour in Western Australia are very, very mild compared with those in other states in Australia. Our rules are largely determined by the two-square-metre rule. In other words, we have the freest society in Australia, certainly the freest state in Australia, by a long, long way compared with other states. It certainly appears that New South Wales is very, very restricted in what its people can do because it has had continual outbreaks and problems. It had the *Ruby Princess* issue and its economy has declining employment figures. All those sorts of things are happening in New South Wales, whereas Western Australia is in a very different situation.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I will stay on page 74. I refer to expenses in the table and the line item "Supplies and services". Has the Department of the Premier and Cabinet engaged the services of any market research or polling organisations in the last financial year or signed any contracts for the provision of those services in the coming financial year?

Mr M. McGOWAN: As I outlined before—I think I read it out to the member—a community sentiment survey was undertaken on the COVID response to make sure that people understood the rules and to work out whether we needed to change the messaging. I think that the department carried out a very small project that cost a small amount, but I will let the director general comment on that.

Ms R. Brown: There was a contract with Metrix for approximately \$25 000, which, as the Premier said, was about community sentiment. It pretty much ran during the peak of COVID and finished in July.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I appreciate that, director general. Premier, the department's annual report also included market research organisations called The KP Collective and Ipsos.

[3.10 pm]

Mr M. McGOWAN: Maybe we will come back to The KP Collective when someone finds some information about it, if that is all right, Mr Chair. Someone else might want to ask a question.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I assume we will come back to it.

Further to that, on the same page, I refer to accommodation under "Expenses". I note that the 2019–20 budget was \$6.2 million, and the 2019–20 actual was \$19.6 million. Going forward, there are, circa, \$20 million for each financial year ahead. Can the Premier provide an outline to the chamber of what that expenditure is for as part of the accommodation?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The budget reflects the proposed change in accounting treatment for accommodation leases under Australian Accounting Standards Board standard 16, which was reversed. Right-of-use asset was not recognised for accommodation leases, which would have resulted in costs recognised as depreciation expenses. Maybe I will ask the director general or someone to explain what that means. Gary Meyers can explain what that means.

Mr G. Meyers: Under AASB 16, we were required to recognise the right-of-use asset—and right-of-use liability. As a result, expenses transferred from accommodation down to depreciation expense in the budget year. However, the accounting treatment for departments and agencies was reversed for AASB 16, with the Department of Finance recognising the full impacts of AASB 16 for accommodation leases; hence DPC's usual accommodation expense in 2018–19 was approximately \$20 million, and that is what has been reflected in 2019–20 and the out years.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Thank you very much. I assume ROUs will be an issue across all the agencies now.

As part of the accommodation expenses, has any money been spent on the refit or refurbishment of any of the floors in Dumas House?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will get the director general to explain.

Ms R. Brown: There was a small expense to co-locate the COVID communications team, and to set it up with the necessary desks and information technology requirements.

Mr M. McGOWAN: That is in the basement of Dumas House. As we come out of the lifts at the bottom of the building, a bunch of rooms towards that major meeting room, the other end to the media room, were set up for the COVID coordination, with, I think, 52 staff or whatever, so there would have been cabling, computers, desks and so forth that needed some work. I do not know what the expense was but it was minimal.

Ms R. Brown: I am not sure that we have what the expense is, but we made the investment on the basis that if we needed surge capacity again, it is now equipped, but it is obviously a much smaller team at the moment.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I have no further questions except on the market research and polling organisations.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The KP Collective sounds like a 1970s band.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I refer to the Wellington Dam mural and Collie art trail under "Spending Changes". Can the Premier please advise whether that allocation of \$1.5 million was subject to a government tender process, or was this commissioned work?

Mr M. McGOWAN: It is an exciting project and we hope to have it completed later this year or next year. We are putting a lot of effort into trying to diversify in Collie, keeping a strong manufacturing or an industrial base,

but diversifying the local economy. We have therefore committed to the mural or the art project, as it was termed, on the Wellington Dam wall. We announced that \$1.5 million would be put towards this project and a bunch of other projects for Collie involving murals and the like. The Wellington Dam mural will be part of other murals throughout the town centre. The mural will be 7 300 square metres in size, the largest mural on a dam wall in the world, and the first mural in Australia to be painted on a dam wall. The project is being managed by the department. A project director is delivering the project. In an expression-of-interest tender process, a bunch of artists competed and a selection process was run by the project director. I have seen the design, which looks fantastic to me, and, hopefully, it will come to fruition later this year. I do not know whether people know that the dam wall has been cleaned. It is the most pristine looking dam wall we have ever seen. It has reached a conclusion, and painting and all that sort of thing will hopefully start soon. A further 12 murals will be painted throughout the town of Collie, pulling people into town and making sure the Collie economy is more diverse. These are the sorts of things people love these days. We are very excited to be able to create this amazing tourism benefit for the south west and for the Collie region.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I understand the dam wall project was awarded to a Queensland muralist, Guido van Helten. Can the Premier advise whether the other murals commissioned for Collie have been awarded to any of the Western Australian-based muralists, Melski McVee, Mike Shime, Daek Williams, Anya Brock and Paul Deej? They are all pre-eminent muralists, who were no doubt disappointed that they missed out on the main game, being the dam wall.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Twelve Western Australian artists are being engaged as part of the Collie mural trail to deliver a series of murals throughout the town. We are very keen on this. When we do something like this on the Wellington Dam wall, we want to get the best. A competition was held. Local artists competed with interstate artists and I think even international artists might have competed. The selection panel judged that Mr van Helten came out with the best and most deliverable product, so that is the one that was selected. We needed to come up with whatever was selected was the best. However, 12 WA artists will be engaged on the other murals throughout town. I think that is reasonable. If a process throws up an artist that has the best record and is the most successful at delivering an outstanding product, that is the outcome that we accept. If we had rejected what the process threw up as the best artist, I doubt artists would compete for any projects in Western Australia ever again.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I guess I am a bit parochial and disagree that the Western Australian artists are not the best, but that is a statement.

Mr M. McGOWAN: That is a pretty low way of putting words into my mouth.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: We are prepared to move on to the next division.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The director general has some information on The KP Collective.

[3.20 pm]

Ms R. Brown: The KP Collective is a WA communications company. It was engaged to do some social media work on COVID communications. There was a small amount in 2019–20 of around \$1 000. I can also update that in relation to work by Metrix Consulting, which was about COVID, the figure was around \$78 000 for 2019–20 and then there was a small amount in 2020–21 of \$18 000, at which point it finished.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: With respect to Metrix and the KP Collective, do we have an understanding of what the findings or questions were? Is that able to be provided to the house?

Ms R. Brown: I do not have the detail with me, but it was related to sentiment on the restrictions and the understanding of the implications on day-to-day life and other aspects of community wellbeing at the time.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Were questions asked about restrictions and borders as part of that sentiment analysis?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The amount for the KP Collective was \$800. It was about assessing community sentiment and whether people understood the communications out there about social distancing, the four-square-metre rule, as it then was, places closing, regional borders and all that sort of stuff. Did people understand what they were required to do? I think it is commonplace in advertising to assess whether the message is understood and whether it needs to be recalibrated. That was what it was about.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I appreciate that that is commonplace, but sentiment analysis occurs to understand people's perceptions of decisions that have been taken by government. Did the sentiment analysis about restrictions, which we have just heard from the director general was undertaken, also include things such as the borders? Was the government trying to assess how the Western Australian people, through the taxpayers of Western Australia, responded to the restrictions that the government put in place, including our border arrangements?

Mr M. McGOWAN: There is nothing to my knowledge along the lines the member is expressing. It was just about whether people understood the rules and whether we needed to change the advertising to ensure people understood them. We were worried about people dying, so we needed to make sure that the rules were well understood.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: If there is nothing to see here, would the Premier be willing to table the findings and the questions asked as part of the sentiment analysis provided by Metrix?

Mr M. McGOWAN: No. If the member wants to follow any other processes such as questions on notice or freedom of information, he can be my guest.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Was Ipsos polling also commissioned for the same purpose?

Mr M. McGOWAN: There was a small amount of money. I think it was all about assessing community sentiment. As the member has seen, we were spending \$6 million on various campaigns. We had 52 people collated from across the public sector, so we wanted to make sure that the message we were putting out there was correct. That is my understanding of what the research was about. It is not as though I ask for this research. These are the sorts of things that agencies do to find out whether the messaging is working.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: No other agency I have seen has spent as much on market research as the Premier's agency.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The member for Dawesville was a senior spin doctor in a government that was addicted to spin.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I was a policy adviser.

Mr M. McGOWAN: That is one interpretation.

The CHAIR: Member for Armadale.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Surely we are going to move on from government members asking dorothys on this.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Excuse me. I refer to the eleventh significant issue impacting the agency, again on page 67 of the *Budget Statements*, and the Perth City Deal with the federal government. I believe that Department of the Premier and Cabinet was the lead agency in negotiating that. Can the Premier outline how the Perth City Deal came about and some of the objectives and criteria determining what projects were in the City Deal?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I signed the City Deal with Malcolm Turnbull in, maybe, 2018. We did an event at the train station and jointly signed. We had maps there. I was showing him which parts of the city would be the beneficiaries of the various projects, and so it was a good process to get into. We concluded the package on 20 September this year. It is a \$1.5 billion partnership between state and federal governments and private industry. The projects in the deal will contribute to creating a hub of activity and offerings in the city. The main part of the deal, perhaps half of the deal, is the investment from the Western Australian government, the Australian government and Edith Cowan University into a world-class inner city campus. That will ensure that all of the artists and students from the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts will move into the city over time and have a world-class university campus there. That is a very exciting development. I expect when it is completed in five years' time, we will all be wowed by it, and perhaps some of our children might attend it. All members will have an appreciation that the Fringe Festival brings people in. The ECU development will be in a similar location to Fringe, so it will attract visitors from near and far. The government also listened to Murdoch University and Curtin University, which participated in the process, and we decided to allocate \$50 million to each. Murdoch's project is digital futures academy and eSport hub, and from memory Curtin has some significant business school it is establishing in the city.

There are seven other packages in the city, with some work on pedestrian and cycle infrastructure. There will be a new bridge across the river in East Perth. The cycling bridge will be very exciting, too. It will be well appreciated. As members know, the member for Armadale runs from Armadale to the city regularly, incredibly!

Dr A.D. BUTI: It will cut it down by half a kilometre!

Mr M. McGOWAN: The member for Armadale is going soft! The member for Armadale will be able to run across that bridge in due course.

The City Deal will also see significant investment in cultural activities, with \$20 million for the Perth Cultural Centre. As we are doing the Western Australian Museum and the Art Gallery of Western Australia development, which is happening now, the cultural centre in between is not of sufficient standard, so it will be completely revamped. That little amphitheatre will go—all that sort of stuff. It will be a massive revamp of the cultural centre. There will be \$42 million to develop the Perth Concert Hall. I thank Richard Goyder for his regular entreaties to me to undertake some work there and I thank the commonwealth government for its support. There is \$100 million to develop the WACA in conjunction with the commonwealth government and put in place a swimming pool. That will be amazing. There is \$20 million for the East Perth precinct and the East Perth power station redevelopment, which this government has reactivated over a 40-year hiatus. There is also \$4 million for planning for the Aboriginal cultural centre. In five or so years, these arrangements and developments around the city will massively enhance its appeal and attractiveness and unlock enormous amounts of private sector development. I thank everyone who has been engaged in this, particularly people in government such as Stephanie here. I formally thank Senator Cormann, who is shortly to retire from politics, for all of his work on the City Deal, amongst many other things in Western Australia. I thank the commissioners of the City of Perth for their support, and I thank the Minister for Transport. I look forward to the projects proceeding and I thank the member for his question.

The appropriation was recommended.

[3.30 pm]

Division 4: Public Sector Commission, \$25 594 000 —

Mr S.J. Price, Chair.

Mr M. McGowan, Minister for Public Sector Management.

Ms S. O'Neill, Public Sector Commissioner.

Mr D. Volaric, Executive Director, Integrity and Risk.

Mr S. McLeod, Manager, Corporate Services.

Mr L. Warner, Executive Director, Workforce Policy and Practice.

Ms T. Milici, Acting Executive Director, Workforce Data Analytics.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIR: This estimates committee will be reported by Hansard. The daily proof *Hansard* will be available the following day. The Chair will ensure that as many questions as possible are asked and answered and that both questions and answers are short and to the point. The estimates committee's consideration of the estimates will be restricted to discussion of those items for which a vote of money is proposed in the consolidated account. Questions must be clearly related to a page number, item, program or amount in the current division. Members should give these details in preface to their question. If a division or service is the responsibility of more than one minister, a minister shall be examined only in relation to their portfolio responsibilities.

The minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee rather than asking that the question be put on notice for the next sitting week. I ask the minister to clearly indicate what supplementary information he agrees to provide and I will then allocate a reference number. If supplementary information is to be provided, I seek the minister's cooperation in ensuring that it is delivered 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.

Are there any questions? Leader of the Opposition.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I refer to page 81 of budget paper No 2 under "Significant Issues Impacting the Agency". The second dot point states —

Information currently collected on the public sector workforce is limited and not timely, making informed decision-making that is data-led difficult.

Can the Premier explain what this significant issue is about with respect to data management on who is employed in the public sector?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will let the Public Sector Commissioner comment.

Ms S. O'Neill: Since becoming the Public Sector Commissioner I have been interested in the kind of workforce data that we collect about the whole sector—what we understand about the sector and its size and composition. Historically, the Public Sector Commission has put in place data collection methodologies. I am seeking to improve those so that we have a better understanding of the composition of the workforce. From time to time, having been a line agency and putting information into those collection systems, the agencies themselves do not get a lot of information back on which they can do their workforce planning. It is fair to say that some of the collections are incomplete and could be better. It is more from an improvement perspective so that we can make better decisions around the kind of development that staff might need across the sector and whether we perhaps seek to do more mobility across the sector. It really comes from a position of wanting to improve our knowledge. All agencies hold their individual data analysis, but as we have historically gathered information, doing that in a way that is more robust, we seek to have better reliability and validity with some of the data. We are reviewing all of those data collections to see where some improvements can be made.

One of the areas we are considering is developing a census approach by which we can ask on a voluntary basis from staff across the sector more information to understand better the diversity and then we can put better supports in place. As I said, it comes from an improvement perspective.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I am curious to know how workforce planning has occurred in the past in the absence of that data.

Ms S. O'Neill: I did not say that it has not occurred. All agencies undertake workforce planning and, as I said, this is a means to improve that information. Different agencies ask different questions. I suppose I am looking for some greater consistency so that we can look at trends and provide additional support and policy assistance to agencies. It is more to improve what we have. Other jurisdictions have collection methodologies in place that are more robust. Every agency has workforce planning. That is why we are in a reasonable position around workforce planning, but more can be done to make that more robust.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I refer to the third dot point on page 81. I am pleased to see that an integrity strategy is being put in place. With respect to misconduct and corruption, how many public servants have been the subject of criminal and integrity investigations over the past two years?

Mr M. McGOWAN: We have often been through this here. There is a division between what the PSC deals with and what the Corruption and Crime Commission deals with. Corruption is something that the CCC investigates. Minor misconduct is something that comes to the Public Sector Commission to deal with, but obviously the Public Sector Commission wants to encourage an environment and educate people to avoid misconduct and corruption. I ask the Public Sector Commissioner to comment further.

Ms S. O'Neill: From a minor misconduct perspective, which, as the Premier says, is the part of the CCC act that we administer, I think the question was how many matters had been received. In the financial year 2019–20, 473 matters were received by the commission. As the Premier said, the separation is between what the CCC will receive and what the PSC will receive. We work closely together because under the notification guidelines, individuals might send a notification or a report to the CCC. If it is the threshold for minor misconduct, the CCC would refer that back to us. Similarly, if we received a report that was more appropriately of a criminal corruption nature, we would pass that through to the CCC.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I refer to page 84 and the table at the bottom of the page under “Oversight and Reporting”. Significant increases have occurred in the cost of delivering that service, but there has also been a significant increase in the income that was expected in the budget. Income of \$13 000 was expected and \$249 000 was received. What is the breakdown of that income? Why has there been such a significant increase in what was budgeted in the total cost of service?

[3.40 pm]

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will let the director general comment.

Ms S. O'Neill: Are you looking at the “Total Cost of Service” and the difference between the 2019–20 budget and 2019–20 actual?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Yes, that is right. The budgeted amount was \$7.536 million and the actual was \$7.901 million, with a perceived glide path to go to \$8.6 million next year.

Ms S. O'Neill: If I can continue on, Premier. The differential there, as I understand it, is the cost of the review that was undertaken into the Housing Authority, under the Department of Communities, arising from the Paul Whyte matter.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Is it possible to get the cost of that inquiry, please?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The review of the Housing Authority was tabled in Parliament on 11 August this year. Obviously, there were some deficiencies that allowed Mr Whyte to get away with what he had gotten away with for many years. The commission is monitoring the implementation by the Department of Communities of the 56 recommendations. EY was engaged on 3 December 2019 and provided its report on 17 June 2020 at a total cost of \$220 400.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: That was Ernst and Young?

Mr M. McGOWAN: EY, yes.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Directly under “Total Cost of Service” is the line item “Less Income”. Is the income jump from lodgement fees for FOI applications or something of that nature? The income budgeted was \$13 000 but \$249 000 has come in. I am interested to know whether that relates to some sort of fee for service.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The Public Sector Commission paid for the review. The income is the recoupment of that cost from the Department of Communities. Obviously, that was a very distressing affair. Getting to the bottom of it and doing our best to prevent those sorts of things from occurring in the future is very, very important.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I have one more question before we move on. I refer to the impact of COVID-19 on the public service. Obviously, it has been a fairly stressful time, with many public servants being required to work from home, which adds strain. Has there been any increase in sick leave over the past six months as a result of the extra demands that have been put on our public servants?

The CHAIR: Leader of the Opposition, do you have a particular line item for that question?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: It would come under the delivery of services at the top of page 80. Within that breakdown, I would expect there would be an allocation for sick leave, compassionate leave or other forms of leave. I want to get a breakdown to see whether there has been an increase in sick leave taken as a result of the impact of the pressures placed on our public servants during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr M. McGOWAN: On 23 March this year, the government introduced up to 20 days paid leave for staff who contract COVID-19 or who are required to self-isolate or care for someone else. At least 326 413 hours of COVID-19 leave was taken between 2 March and 28 June 2020. Additionally, at least 104 000 hours of COVID-19-related personal leave was taken over the same period. This was reported across the public sector to the Public Sector Commission.

The number of people reported to have taken COVID-19 leave varied each week throughout the period. The leave peaked during the week of 30 March 2020, a fortnight after WA declared a state of emergency—the member might recall that was a very heightened period—both in the number of people and hours. During that week, 1 895 employees accessed 40 794 hours of COVID-19 leave.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Sorry, Premier, how many hours?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Over that fortnight, 1 895 employees accessed 40 794 hours of COVID-19 leave. It was a very, very difficult period across the entire public sector—across the entire workforce. There are some private sector offices that do not have staff back now. One of the things we are grappling with is trying to get these offices restaffed, particularly in the city. Since then, there obviously has been a significant drop-off in the number of people taking these forms of leave, but this leave was largely taken at the height of this period, in March, April and May this year.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: On page 80, under the “Spending Changes” table, is a line item called “Royalties for Regions—District Allowance”. Can the Premier explain what is happening across the forward estimates, and why?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will let the director general comment.

Ms S. O’Neill: This allowance is provided for the Aboriginal traineeships that we have in the Public Sector Commission, and a number of those traineeships are in the regions. It covers the costs for them, including their cost of living, so that they can access the program. In the last financial year, during the COVID-19 period et cetera, the starting group was a bit smaller than normal, so an adjustment has been made to the allowance.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I refer to page 81 and the significant issues impacting the agency. The fourth paragraph refers to the diversity of the workforce. I note that the government has set a public sector target of 50 per cent for women in the senior executive service. Can the Premier advise the current rate of women employed in the senior executive service and when we might reach gender parity within the SES?

Mr M. McGOWAN: On 4 March, the government announced a public sector employment target of 50 per cent for women in the senior executive service. This builds on our commitment to 50 per cent women on government boards and committees, which was announced on 14 February 2018. I think we have surpassed that now. In March 2020, the representation of women in the SES reached 42.5 per cent. This is the first time it has ever been that high. This is a significant increase from 2017, when representation in the SES sat at 34.2 per cent—a major climb of more than eight per cent. At the current rate of growth, gender parity in the SES will be achieved by 2022. Back in 2018, parity was not anticipated until 2035, so this is a significant improvement. The pay gap continues to trend downwards, which is good news. Gender parity has been reached for the first time in tier 3 leadership roles, which is executive director level, and was at 51.3 per cent in March 2020. This is a significant improvement, as is visually observable in the number of women in senior positions in the public sector.

[3.50 pm]

The CHAIR: Member for Dawesville.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Thank you. Are you sure you do not want to jump in on that one again, member for Armadale?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I do not mind. Would the member like the afternoon session?

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I look forward to the number of dorothy dixers the member will wheel out today!

The CHAIR: Members! Member for Dawesville!

Ms J.J. SHAW: I would love to hear more from the member for Armadale.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I am sure all of us would, member for Swan Hills.

I refer to page 87. My question is on expenditure for salaries and employee benefits under the heading “Expenses”. During the previous hearing with the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, the Premier noted that Director General Foster moved to the Public Sector Commission and then transferred to Treasury. I am keen to understand whether Mr Foster was redeployed from PSC or is still attached to PSC, and any on-costs associated with that.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Mr Foster is attached to Treasury. It is not unusual for people to move between agencies. His salary is met by Treasury.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: At any point did the Public Sector Commission bear Mr Foster’s salary and associated entitlements?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I am sorry; I could not understand the member’s question.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Did the Public Sector Commission at any point pay for Mr Foster and his associated entitlements; and, if so, what was that total package?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Again, I could not understand the member’s words.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Mr Foster was transferred to the Public Sector Commission and then transferred to the Department of Treasury.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I am advised the employing authority is the Public Sector Commission. He was put on to other functions and transferred to Treasury.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Thank you. I might not understand the Premier's words, but was he put on to other functions for a period of time within PSC and then subsequently transferred to Treasury?

Mr M. McGOWAN: It is a standard mechanism that is used when people move around agencies in the public sector. The "other functions" role is contained within the Public Sector Management Act.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: What was Mr Foster's role during the time he was performing other functions within the commission?

Mr M. McGOWAN: He did not undertake a role at the Public Sector Commission. The other functions role is a mechanism by which someone moves from one agency to another under the Public Sector Management Act.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: For how long was Mr Foster with PSC?

Mr M. McGOWAN: He was never with the Public Sector Commission.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Effectively, he was held by PSC for a moment before he was transferred. It was a transfer process that PSC facilitated.

Mr M. McGOWAN: It was a transfer from one agency to another, because the Public Sector Commission is the employing authority for all directors general.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: There seems to be an inconsistency, because of course the director general of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet suggested that Mr Foster moved to PSC, and PSC is saying that is not the case; he went straight to Treasury.

Mr M. McGOWAN: As I outlined at the time, I recall he had some sick leave, and then he went to Treasury.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: In that case, the statement made in the hearing with the Department of the Premier and Cabinet that Mr Foster was transferred to PSC is not correct.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I think the DPC DG was implying that the Public Sector Commissioner, as is standard, takes responsibility for DGs and allocated Mr Foster to other functions within Treasury.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Was Mr Foster transferred on the same entitlements that he had with the Department of the Premier and Cabinet?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Yes.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Did all the entitlements that Mr Foster had accrued during his time in the Department of the Premier and Cabinet—leave and the like—move across entirely as well?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Yes. That is standard practice.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Does the Premier have a figure for the value of that entire package to Mr Foster for now and his time serving in Treasury?

Mr M. McGOWAN: People in the public sector, like opposition spokespeople, people in the private sector and all employed people, are entitled to their entitlements. That is standard practice.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: It is unusual, of course, Premier, for a former director general to move to Treasury.

The CHAIR: Member, let the Premier answer.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Is the member suggesting a different arrangement? People's entitlements are guaranteed by law.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: So there is no value, Premier?

Mr M. McGOWAN: If the member wants to change the law, he should suggest that.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Sorry?

Mr M. McGOWAN: That is the law. People receive their entitlements.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I refer to the income statement on page 87, and in particular the heading "Cost of Services". Under "Expenses", there is a line item "Employee benefits". There is a discrepancy between these statements and last year's budget paper that bears some explaining. It states that the actual value for employee benefits for 2018–19 was \$14 348 000; whereas in last year's budget the estimated actual for 2018–19 was \$18 544 000. There is a \$4.2 million discrepancy between what was reported in last year's budget versus what is in this year's budget papers. I hope the Premier can explain what that \$4 million variation is about.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will do my best. The \$3 741 000 variance from the 2018–19 actual to the 2019–20 budget is due mainly to a carryover of employee benefits expenditure of \$913 000 from 2018–19 to 2019–20 for the commission's

implementation of high-priority public sector reform initiatives, including agency capability, leadership and talent; high performing CEOs; and investigating options for a sector-wide curriculum. A 2018–19 budget underspend of \$2.864 million primarily resulted from a number of vacant positions in the Aboriginal traineeship program of \$2.2 million, and in the strategic leadership and talent division of \$324 000.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Can the Premier explain why at the time of last year’s budget that discrepancy was not anticipated, given that last year’s estimated actual was \$18.544 million for that allocation? Why it has taken 18 months or so to correct these figures for those changes bears some explanation.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will let the director general comment.

Ms S. O’Neill: I am advised it is the difference in timing between when the estimated actuals are put in and then the final information.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Could the Premier advise when the estimated actuals are actually submitted with the finals being arrived at, please?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will ask the director general to outsource the answering of that question.

Ms S. O’Neill: I will ask Mr McLeod if he can give us the time differences.

Mr S. McLeod: Yes, the 2019–20 budget cut-off date was one month before the budget was tabled, so it was approximately 9 April 2019.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: In the explanatory notes on page 86, it says that the variance between the employee benefits reflects a significant number of vacant positions during 2018–19. Could the Premier please update us with respect to how many positions were vacant and what those positions were?

[4.00 pm]

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will let the director general explain.

Ms S. O’Neill: With the vacancies, a couple of things were in play at that time. When I arrived at the commission, there was a historical decision to keep understaffed, so it was never staffed to its full FTE and salary expense level. The McGregor review brought attention to that, because of the services that were perhaps not being provided on to the sector, so there is a lag here. We have that vacancy, so some understaffing; then we had the McGregor review, and, during that time, we structured in response to the McGregor review. There was a period of initial vacancy while we were restructuring and while we were filling, and my understanding is that it was around 20 FTE, and they were spread across all service areas. There was not a particular grouping of that number.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Just to confirm, have those 20 identified unfilled FTE positions now all been filled?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will ask the director general to comment.

Ms S. O’Neill: For this year, we anticipate to have pretty much a full staffing complement. Our actual at the end of last year was around 127, and we will have 129. Obviously, there are ups and downs, as people come in or people might leave, but we anticipate to have around 129, which is pretty consistent with what we had last year.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Thank you.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I take the Premier to page 84, under the heading “Oversight and Reporting”. This relates to the Public Sector Commission’s role in breach of public sector standards and its oversight role in minor misconduct and the like. In the year 2019–20, I understand that there were 473 minor misconduct matters that were assessed and actioned by the PSC. Does the Premier have a breakdown of those matters by agency?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I think the member referred to 474 matters.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: It was 473 matters, yes.

Mr M. McGOWAN: These are allegations rather than proven cases. Often, it is personal disputes, or it might be that someone accuses someone of taking some Post-it Notes or paper clips or whatever it might be, and at least a third of cases do not even meet the threshold for minor misconduct. In other cases, there might be some action taken in accordance with the relevant procedures and legislation. As to the actual agencies, I can give the member a breakdown of the numbers in agencies by way of supplementary information, except where there is one case in one agency that might then reveal the identity of someone. We will certainly not provide any details or identity information, but I can provide the member with some further information now. In 2019–20, in the Western Australian public sector, there were 315 matters; local government, 94 matters; government trading enterprises, 40 matters; public universities, 13 matters; and out of jurisdiction, 11 matters, totalling 473. That is roughly consistent with past years. If the member wants to know which agencies these complaints relate to, I suspect the big agencies such as health and education would be the major ones, but we can provide a breakdown by way of supplementary information of the numbers of matters within individual agencies, except, as I say, when it might identify an individual.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I note that supplementary information.

The CHAIR: Premier, are you happy to provide that as supplementary information?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Yes.

The CHAIR: Can you clarify exactly what you are allocating as supplementary information?

Mr M. McGOWAN: That is providing by way of information a breakdown of the agencies where there were matters of minor misconduct complaint made to the Public Sector Commission and the numbers within individual agencies, but not revealing any identities and not revealing agencies whereby there was one complaint that might identify the individual in question.

[Supplementary Information No A4.]

The CHAIR: That is ticket A4, for those playing at home.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I refer to public interest disclosure as well.

The CHAIR: Which page?

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: It is the same page, page 84, still under the heading “Oversight and Reporting”. In relation to the same thing, obviously, the Public Sector Commission has an oversight role in how it handles public interest disclosure. I understand through the annual report that the commission received one public interest disclosure, and three in relation to other agencies. I wonder if we might be provided the same breakdown of just the agencies, no further detail.

Mr M. McGOWAN: There has been one public interest disclosure finalised in the last financial year, if that is what the member is asking me. Maybe the director general can comment more broadly on what a public interest disclosure is.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: It is a defined term under the act.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will just correct that: there were three in the last financial year and one between April and June of last year, which is included in the three. That is for the year 2019–20. This is relating to whistleblowers. I am not sure we should reveal the agencies because that might reveal identities. I will let the director general comment.

[4.10 pm]

Ms S. O’Neill: Ordinarily, we would not disclose the agencies because, as whistleblowing legislation, that could lead to the identification of people, so we would not want to reveal a public interest disclosure.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Again, I will clarify the page number for the Premier because, undoubtedly, he will ask what page we are on. We are on the same page: page 84, oversight and reporting. As part of that, in pursuing public interest disclosures and these minor misconduct claims and the like, I assume that the process that the Public Sector Commission undertakes is to investigate those matters. It has a team of investigators to undertake and make further inquiry into those allegations. Is that a correct assertion?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will ask the Public Sector Commissioner to comment.

Ms S. O’Neill: When we receive a public interest disclosure, there is a process that we go through. We were talking before about minor misconduct and public interest disclosures. We have a team of people, but PSC is largely an oversight and education body. We have a small handful of investigators, but under the powers that we have we can engage other people to be involved in the investigation. Previously, with the Paul Whyte matter, we used EY. Therefore, it is not necessarily the case that we would undertake the investigative work ourselves. We may do that. We may do part of it. We may outsource part of it.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Commissioner, is that the reason that we have seen a discontinuation of the details of controlled grants and subsidies for certificates in government investigations—that is, that there is no more money in the forward estimates for that? Is that because the commission is now moving it to third parties to conduct those investigations?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will let the director general answer.

Ms S. O’Neill: The director general of every agency is the accountable authority for the investigating matters that come to them. There was a program, I guess by way of uplift, of trying to get more investigative capacity across the sector, and so there was an injection at a particular point in time. Since then, we have developed the first integrity strategy across all public sector agencies, and a fair amount of the work there will be to develop capacity as well. Therefore, it was never envisaged having certificates in government investigations as an ongoing investment, but that does not mean to say that agencies would not be doing it themselves; there was just some added benefit at the time to lead some of that work in that way.

Mrs R.M.J. CLARKE: I refer to budget paper No 2, page 84, service 2, “Assistance and Support”. It states —

This service provides advice, assistance and support to public sector bodies and employees ...

At the election, the government committed to cut the number of senior executive service positions by 20 per cent. How is the government tracking on that? Also, I understand the Public Sector Commission has been assisting the machinery-of-government changes. Can the Premier outline what benefits this has delivered?

Mr M. McGOWAN: We have delivered on our commitment in March 2018. We have reduced the SES to 413. We delivered the four-year pay freeze. It was not the most pleasant of things for people, but, under the circumstances, it was very fortunate that we did that. Members might recall that a lot of people voted against the pay freeze, because we had to legislate it to ensure that it was put in place, but I am pleased to say that no members of the government voted against it. The machinery-of-government changes have certainly helped us to return to surplus, and have also managed the COVID situation by having a more cohesive and coordinated public sector.

The public sector leadership council, which meets regularly, has become much more agile and collaborative. It would have been over 40 people under the former arrangements; it now has 20-odd people. That is an achievement that allows for more coordination in the public sector. The machinery-of-government changes made it easier to mobilise public sector staff across the pandemic, and, as I outlined before, a great many people came together in Dumas House. A whole range of emergency management groups came together, not only the one that I was referring to before in communications, but also the quite famous State Health Incident Control Centre, the Public Health Emergency Operations Centre and the State Emergency Coordination Group. A whole range of them came together to deal with COVID.

The coordination across government has allowed for easier approvals for applicants, whether it is for water licences, environmental approvals or whatever it might be. Amalgamation of land use, management and planning functions across government have been terrific, in addition to our planning reforms, which I am sure will be appreciated by people who want to get out there and build things. We have amalgamated regional development, fisheries, agriculture and food, creating the most significant regional footprint of any state economic agency. We have 600 regional staff and nine regional development commissions are part of that.

We have enhanced services in aquaculture, digital connectivity, regulatory compliance and risk-based approaches for natural resource management. We have reduced red tape because we brought the mines industry, regulation and safety together and have successfully implemented streamlined mining and environmental approvals processes. Mineral tenement applications are now processed ahead of targeted time frames, and we have a significant improvement in licences and all those sorts of things as a result of the reforms that we have put in place. Although it has been three and a half years of hard work, it has borne fruit.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: My question moves on from the excellent question asked by the member for Murray–Wellington on the assistance and support of the reform program that the government has undertaken. Premier, as part of the reform agenda that the government took as part of the public sector reform, a whole bunch of key performance indicators had to be established for directors general. Is that still a requirement; and, if so, does he regularly get reports on those KPIs?

Mr M. McGOWAN: We have in place individual performance agreements for directors general, which are regularly signed off by ministers.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Premier, as part of the public sector reform, a number of key recommendations had whole-of-government targets to focus on. They included KPIs for CEOs; changes to procurement practices; umbrella legislation that had to be brought before the house; data-sharing requirements between agencies; a digital transformation element that had to be undertaken; and, generally speaking, a strengthening of the budget process as well, to make sure there was a more collaborative approach between agencies. I assume that, as part of the Public Sector Commission, the Premier gets regular reports on where agencies are at with regard to the public sector reform agenda that he announced in 2017–18. Where are the agencies at now with meeting those goals and key recommendations from the review?

Mr M. McGOWAN: As the member knows, earlier this year, in light of the potential world economic meltdown and health crisis that we confronted, we suspended the Our Priorities program that we had brought in in 2018–19. We announced that publicly. I will let the director general comment on the other parts of the member's question.

Ms S. O'Neill: Following that decision, part of the government's policy, which was certainly put to me as a new commissioner, was to strengthen the CEO performance agreements and the way they were enacted. Therefore, right now, we are undertaking a trial with all the directors general of a new strength and performance approach. It is a two-year trial so that we can evaluate the whole cycle. It is more contemporary, and, in my view, having been a director general for 12 years, it certainly strengthens the approach. It introduces a contemporary practice in performance assessment, first of all, by self-assessment, and then by gaining insights into a director general's performance in two ways. The first year gains insights internally, and so for the first time we asked for a de-identified survey of performance from inside the agency. In the second year, we will ask for external validation from stakeholders. We have divided the performance agreement into two parts: the delivery, and the member would typically see in a director general's performance agreement the kinds of commitments that need to be delivered, including the initiatives and whether they are on time, on budget and effective; and the leadership characteristics. It is a strengthened agreement.

[4.20 pm]

Unlike before, as commissioner, I now meet with every director general. I have done that this year. I am part of the assessment process. Even though I have had the power to do it, it has not been a feature of the previous performance processes. Overall, it is a strengthened arrangement with DGs now getting direct feedback. They also get it obviously from their ministers. At the start of the process, we introduced a letter of expectation from their ministers outlining the expectation, which we have not had before. Overall, it is strengthened. It brings into play government priorities, so even though, as the Premier indicated, Our Priorities was paused during this COVID period, we have made sure that all the important aspects of the director generals' performances and their delivery are built into their agreements, whereas in the past it has been quite linear and not particularly focused on either the delivery or the performance aspect.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: This is my final question on the service priority review. There were 17 recommendations and, I think, 37 actions that had to be undertaken as part of that review. I imagine that the commissioner would track the implementation of those recommendations and actions. Can the Premier provide by way of supplementary information an update on where the government is at with the implementation of those recommendations and actions?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Where all those particular reform initiatives are at is more a question for the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. We put a range of them on hold at the beginning of the COVID pandemic so that the public sector focused on what was more important. Our Priorities was obviously suspended. A lot of the service priority review and its implementation and the ongoing implementation of the Langoulant recommendations has been done, but it would have been better had the member asked about where exactly they are at during the DPC division, because that is the agency that has responsibility for the implementation.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I appreciate that, Premier. The commissioner has called in agency CEOs as part of the new agreements that have been put in place. Can we get an understanding of how many agency heads the commissioner is yet to meet with as part of that process?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The commissioner advises me that she has met with them all.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Paragraph 5 on page 81 of the budget papers refers to strong leadership and capability being ensured by the Public Sector Commission to try to improve executive performance and development. Can the Premier elaborate on how that work by the PSC is going in trying to improve executive performance and development?

Mr M. McGOWAN: As we just referred to, we undertook the service priority review in 2017. Executive performance was amended to clarify the expectation of those in leadership positions. As a result, the Public Sector Commission has commenced trialling a new delivery and performance approach. Seventeen DGs are participating in the trial. It includes a performance and delivery agreement that runs over two years. The agreement was set in October 2019, the midyear review is in October this year and the assessment will be between June and October 2021. I am advised that feedback has been positive from directors general, in particular those relating to the support and feedback measures built into the approach. The approach is flexible. It has meant that new deliverables and priorities relating to the COVID-19 pandemic have been able to be incorporated. That also includes the implementation of the initiatives in the "WA Recovery Plan". We anticipate that the approach will be applied to all CEOs from 2021–22. The Public Sector Commissioner might want to provide any further information, or she has already. She already has.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I have a new question, but I am sure that the Leader of the Opposition has more questions on this matter. I refer to page 84 of the budget papers and the oversight and reporting service. As part of the oversight functions, the Public Sector Commission provides support to the ministers on their compliance with the Public Sector Management Act. I understand that the PSC might have a role to play in helping to support ministers and their offices with managing issues within their offices and their agencies more generally. I wonder whether the commissioner could speak to whether there has been much involvement in supporting ministers with their functions prescribed under the act on issues relating to their ministerial offices?

Mr M. McGOWAN: There has not been a great deal of call on the Public Sector Commissioner over the last financial year in respect of the matters the member is raising.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Does the Public Sector Commission provide support for ongoing investigations that might be undertaken? Obviously, in recent history, a matter from a minister's office ended up in the courts. Did the Public Sector Commission provide support as part of that investigation?

Mr M. McGOWAN: It was reported to the Public Sector Commission in accordance with normal practices, but as the member will recall, the matter was referred to the police and it has now been through the courts.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: How many matters relating to ministerial offices have been referred to the Public Sector Commission in the last financial year?

Mr M. McGOWAN: There were two. The member is aware of one. There was another matter.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Has that matter now been resolved?

Mr M. McGOWAN: It is a matter that we cannot discuss. It is currently under active consideration by other authorities.

The appropriation was recommended.

[4.30 pm]

Division 5: Governor’s Establishment, \$9 150 000 —

Mr T.J. Healy, Chair.

Mr M. McGowan, Premier.

Ms R. Hamilton, Acting Official Secretary.

Mr J. Kingston, Financial Accountant.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIR: This estimates committee will be reported by Hansard. The daily proof *Hansard* will be available the following day. The Chair will ensure that as many questions as possible are asked and that both questions and answers are short and to the point. The estimates committee’s consideration of the estimates will be restricted to discussion of those items for which a vote of money is proposed in the consolidated account. Questions must be clearly related to a page number, item, program or amount in the current division. Members should give these details in preface to their question. If a division or service is the responsibility of more than one minister, a minister shall only be examined in relation to their portfolio responsibilities.

The minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee, rather than asking that the question be put on notice for the next sitting week. I will ask the Premier at the time to clearly indicate what supplementary information he agrees to provide and I will then allocate a reference number. If supplementary information is to be provided, I seek the Premier’s cooperation in ensuring that it is delivered to the principal clerk by Friday, 30 October 2020. I caution members that if the Premier asks that a matter be put on notice, it is up to the member to lodge that question through the online questions system.

The Leader of the Opposition has the first question.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I refer to page 94 and the asset investment program. Under “COVID-19 WA Recovery Plan” is an amount for roof repair and reinstatement of \$2.5 million. I note that over the last two years, \$2.3 million has been allocated to roof repair and maintenance. I am curious to know why another \$2.5 million is needed.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will wait for further advice, but my recollection is that, as the Leader of the Opposition will know, Government House and the Government House ballroom are something like 150 years old. They have been continually patched up over a long time, so much so that there have been some significant issues. In the first budget of this government, or perhaps it was even the second budget, we put in a large amount of resources to redo the Government House roof and air conditioning. The advice we got at the time was that the air conditioning was in danger of catching fire and that pieces of slate were falling off the roof and could potentially injure—or worse—anyone walking around the building. Therefore, it was necessary to replace the Government House roof for safety reasons.

As part of the WA recovery plan, we elected to do some things relating to the ballroom next door to Government House. Repairs to the roofing structure were required. The terracotta tiles were replaced and the roof plumbing was fixed. That was a relatively easy project to put in place relatively quickly, and it was also necessary. As the Leader of the Opposition will know, the Government House ballroom dates back 120 or 150 years, so it needed that repair work done. That is the reason we did that. Those two projects are part of the ongoing repair of buildings, which, unfortunately, is the nature of things.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Does the Premier have a figure for the total cost of the roof repair and maintenance program once those works are completed? I think last year it was \$2.157 million and it is another \$2.5 million this year. Also, maintenance items last year included \$656 000 for the refurbishment of visitor and guest rooms and \$220 000 for the refurbishment of guest rooms. I would be interested to know what the total cost of the refurbishment program will be once it is completed.

Mr M. McGOWAN: From memory, the original allocation towards the roofs —

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: It was originally \$2.3 million, but it came in at \$2.157 million.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The original estimate in 2017–18 to do four stages of upgrades and repairs to what is one of the oldest buildings in Western Australia was \$5 million, and this is part of that. As I said, we had to do something about the air conditioning when we had advice that the building could burn down and we had to do something when we got advice that pieces of masonry could fall off the roof and kill people. The government had no choice. Obviously, we are following through on the original commitment made back in 2017–18.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I have some further questions.

The CHAIR: On this?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I have a new question. I refer now to page 91 and the total cost of services, which is in the table on the top half of the page. The last heading is “Cash Assets” and the heading above that is “Expenses”. The total cost of services for the 2019–20 actual is \$5.992 million, but the estimate for 2020–21 is \$6.738 million. Can the Premier explain the variance between last year and this year?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The major spending change for the strategic building maintenance plan is \$500 000 a year for four years. The priority maintenance projects are set out in the Government House conservation plan of 2016, which was prepared by a heritage architect. These projects can be traced back to the conservation plans that were written in 1999 and remain unfunded into the future. There will be some minor reassessment of the projects by structural engineers and architects and they will be addressed in order of priority. They include stabilising the first-floor chimney located on the residential promenade deck; repairs to the original north boundary wall; reparation of the eroded pointing on brickwork, including the investigation and repair of soft bricks; removal of renders from Government House cellar walls to stop water ingress and associated deterioration; repairs to cracking internally in Government House, the ballroom and the lodge; remedial action to stop damp within the ballroom; and repairs to the original wooden window sashes that are crumbling. It is an old building that was built, as I understand it, partly by convicts back when standards were not great. Fixing all this is very difficult but there is not much choice.

[4.40 pm]

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I refer to spending changes at the bottom of page 91 and the line item “Resources to Support the Governor—Contract Extension”. I note in last year’s budget there was an allocation of \$340 000 for 2019–20; \$364 000 for 2020–21; \$378 000 for 2021–22; and an estimate of \$189 000 for 2022–23. Those figures have dropped out of this budget, but we now have a contract extension for 2022–23. Can the Premier explain what those two figures relate to?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The expense over those two years is extended to FTEs to support the increasing and varied workload associated with the Governor’s strategic priorities. The original assessment was for a three-year term, but it has been extended for two years out to 2024. The Governor’s priorities, as contained within the annual report, are to promote the state in industry, minerals and energy, agriculture and fisheries; further the understanding and promote the wellbeing of Aboriginal populations; advocate for the state as a rich and vibrant arts, cultural, educational and tourism destination; promote Western Australia’s health system and medical research; promote education—science, technology, engineering, arts maths—and international engagement; promote Western Australia’s achievements in technology and development, particularly in the defence and space industries; and work collectively and be proactive and innovative to assist in the state’s recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The member may have noticed that the Governor is very proactive in all these areas every day. I do not think we have seen a Governor more engaged in all those advocacy issues for the state in a long time. His energy and activity is very, very high.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Can the Premier please provide the job description of those two FTEs?

Mr M. McGOWAN: A community and engagement officer and a research officer.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Could the Premier update the house on which level they are employed under the public sector award?

Mr M. McGOWAN: They are both level 5s.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: In last year’s budget, the budgeted figure for this line item was to be \$364 000 for 2020–21 and \$378 000 for 2021–22. Are these the same two FTEs who have taken a pay cut or has this contract extension provided an additional two FTEs?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The original allocation was for three FTEs. One is not continuing.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Has that employee received a redundancy payment?

Mr M. McGOWAN: No.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: On page 95 under the financial statements table, footnote (c) states —

The full-time equivalents for 2018–19 Actual, 2019–20 Actual and 2020–21 Budget Estimate are 34, 34 and 34 respectively.

On page 28 of the same annual report that the Premier has in front of him, it states that there are 32.6 FTE. What is the discrepancy?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The establishment had some vacancies at the end of the year.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: As part of those similar arrangements with expenses related to employee benefits that we talked about, I note that there have been six resignations and one retirement within the Governor’s establishment. What positions did people resign or retire from? I do not need the names, just the job titles.

Mr M. McGOWAN: A number of people in longstanding roles have left. It is not unusual.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: How many of those positions involved the official secretary?

Mr M. McGOWAN: One.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: One official secretary.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The longstanding official secretary left.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Subsequently there have been no resignations of any acting official secretary or the like?

Mr M. McGOWAN: No. There have been no resignations. One official secretary retired and there have been six resignations in total—people have come to the end of their working life or what have you.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I understand that two FTE were seconded to the Governor's establishment. What are those positions?

Mr M. McGOWAN: One FTE has been seconded to the Governor's establishment.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: The annual report says that it is two.

Mr M. McGOWAN: One contract worker was seconded for a little while but they have left.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: In that case, two were seconded during the annual report period but at this point in time there is only one.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Correct.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: What agencies do the secondees usually come from, or have come from, in this instance?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Ordinarily, it is the economic agencies because the Governor is promoting the Western Australian economy and activity and the like within the state, but they can change. Over a long time, secondees to Government House have come from everywhere—people get experience around the place.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I am dealing with just the employee side of this issue. The community engagement officer is a level 5 position. Is that the person who typically accompanies the Premier with his party to take photographs and provide updates on his engagement across the community?

[4.50 pm]

Mr M. McGOWAN: I think the member is referring to the Governor, not me. They have a special role for functions and events to ensure they are all run smoothly and that any issues are dealt with, and that a broad array of people from across the community are encouraged to attend and participate.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: State fleet policy and procurement initiatives are referred to under "Spending Changes" on page 91. The actual spend of \$11 000 in the 2019–20 budget did not form part of last year's budget. I am seeking clarification on what this relates to.

Mr M. McGOWAN: It is the Australian Accounting Standards Board 16 accounting treatment of leases.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Can the Premier please explain whether the Governor's establishment leases fleet vehicles from the state or why that accounting treatment is used?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Yes, it leases three vehicles from the state. The AASB 16, which came in, I think, before last year's budget, means that all the costs associated with leasing are brought to book rather than having them off budget and, therefore, in effect, pretending they are not part of government spend. That has occurred there and all over the public sector; therefore, the assessments of debt and all sorts of things have been driven up as a consequence.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Can the Premier please explain, because in previous deliberations in this chamber we heard that Treasury decided not to run with that assessment of the treatment of government leases. Was that decision because vehicle leases are somehow different from accommodation leases?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Accommodation leases are not treated that way but vehicle leases are.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Thank you for that clarification. I refer to the strategic building maintenance program under "Spending Changes" on page 91. Can the Premier please advise what these allocations will be spent on over the next four years?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I outlined this before, but if the member wants me to outline it again, I will. It is the stuff around the first-floor chimney; repairs to the north boundary wall; reparation of the eroded pointing on brickwork, including investigation and repair of the soft bricks; removal of the renders from Government House cellar walls to stop water ingress and associated deterioration; repairs to cracking internally in Government House ballroom and the Lodge; remedial action to stop damp within the ballroom; and repairs to original wooden window sashes that are crumbling. Obviously, a lot of maintenance issues are going on there. I do not know whether the Leader of the Opposition was here before, but I said that, basically, it is one of the oldest buildings in Western Australia and probably one of the most important, certainly in a heritage sense. Therefore, making sure it has longevity is unavoidable for government, and the right thing to do.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I refer to the income statement on page 95 and "Cost of Services". Under "Expenses", there is an allocation for "Supplies and services" of \$930 000 for 2018–19, and the estimated actual is \$763 000 for 2019–20. Can we have a breakdown of those supplies and services?

Mr M. McGOWAN: It is for all the normal things that go into Government House, for ever I imagine, whether it is food, equipment, stationery, computer equipment or some maintenance. It is just standard for Government House.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Thank you. Can the Premier explain why the 2018–19 actual amount is \$930 000 for supplies and services when the actual amount reflected in last year’s budget for this line item was \$588 000? That is a significant difference. Can the Premier please provide a breakdown for why there was over \$300 000 worth of variations between April and June?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Is the Leader of the Opposition asking me about the budget of a couple of years ago or is she asking me about this year’s budget?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I am asking about this year’s budget, but the opening figure in this year’s budget is significantly different from the closing figure in last year’s budget and I am seeking an explanation for why that is so. To illustrate that, in this year’s budget the 2018–19 actual figure for supplies and services is \$930 000. At the time last year’s budget was debated in this place, the estimated actual was \$588 000. That is a \$342 000 discrepancy.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I do not know whether we are looking at different budgets, because mine says \$589 000.

The CHAIR: Premier, you do not have to answer questions for previous budgets. Leader of the Opposition, maybe reword or clarify your question.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: With respect, there is a different figure here for the 2018–19 actual than was reported in last year’s budget, which is a \$342 000 discrepancy. I am seeking clarification for why last year’s estimated closing balance was \$588 000 and this year’s is \$930 000.

The CHAIR: Member, to give you some assistance, we are discussing questions as best we can about the existing budget papers. You might wish to speculate, Premier, but this might be a question on notice for another comparison.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: A question on notice will not give us a response because no time is left for them.

The CHAIR: If you would like a question asked about the budget papers before us, I am happy to field that as best we can.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I believe the Leader of the Opposition is referring to figures contained in the budget papers before us represented in 2018–19, and we are here to vote on the budget papers that are presented before us.

The CHAIR: If they are before us, but I thought the Leader of the Opposition said they were in a previous budget paper.

Mr M. McGOWAN: They are.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I am saying there is a discrepancy between last year’s budget and this year’s budget that is not explained by a spending change, so I am seeking clarification for that \$342 000 variation.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The Leader of the Opposition is asking about the difference between the 2018–19 actual budget and the 2019–20 budget.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: No.

The CHAIR: Members, just so I can record for Hansard, I will slow things down a bit. If you would like to repeat the question, I will go to the Premier in a second.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: The 2019–20 budget papers state under “Supplies and services” that the estimated actual for 2018–19 was \$588 000. This year the supplies and services actual amount has come in at \$930 000.

Mr M. McGOWAN: No.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: That suggests that this \$342 000 spending change occurred between when the estimated actual was lodged in around April last year and when the budget was discussed in May. I am seeking clarification for the difference.

[5.00 pm]

Mr M. McGOWAN: Is the member talking about supplies and services?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Yes, I am.

Mr M. McGOWAN: According to my budget—I do not know whether the Leader of the Opposition’s is different from mine—the 2018–19 actual is \$930 000, the 2019–20 budget is \$589 000, the 2019–20 actual is \$763 000, and the budget estimate for 2020–21 is \$604 000. The member seems to be going forward. The member is saying that \$930 000 is for 2019–20, when it was actually for 2018–19. Is that what the Leader of the Opposition’s budget says? She keeps saying \$588 000, whereas my budget says \$589 000.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Premier —

The CHAIR: I think the Premier has answered. Is it a further question to this, member for Scarborough?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I am somewhat frustrated, because the figure in front of me in this budget as the 2018–19 actual is \$930 000. That estimate figure in last year’s budget was \$588 000, so there is a \$342 000 discrepancy between —

Mr M. McGOWAN: That is a different year. The year 2018–19 is a different year from 2019–20.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: No; it is the same year, Premier.

The CHAIR: Members! Premier and the Leader of the Opposition, just so I can allow this very good conversation to take place, the Leader of the Opposition will ask the question, and I will ask the Premier to answer. He will answer, and then I will come back to you for further questions. You might not like the answer, but he will answer as best he can, and you can ask as many questions before the dinner break as you would like. I think the Premier has answered that question.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I think I will record that there is no answer. However, I seek some explanation of why there is a variation of \$200 000 or so for supplies and services between this budget, at \$589 000, versus the estimated actual of \$763 000. Where has that additional money on supplies and services been spent?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The total cost of services actually went down.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Can I draw the Premier to “Supplies and services” under “Expenses”? I am disputing that figure of \$930 000, but it is clear I am not going to get an answer on it.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The member is asking me about two budgets ago. I cannot answer the member’s questions about two budgets ago.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Under the 2019–20 budget, which is the paper directly in front of us, supplies and services —

Mr M. McGOWAN: No; we are dealing with the 2020–21 budget. We are not dealing with last year’s budget.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: With regard to the figures in the budget, I am seeking an explanation about last year’s spend and why \$174 000 extra was spent on supplies and services than was budgeted for. That is a significant budget overrun, and I seek some explanation of where that money was spent. I am happy to receive that by way of supplementary information, but I think it is a valid request.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The total cost of services went down.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I am talking about supplies and services—that specific item.

Mr M. McGOWAN: They move around each year. They move around everywhere each year. That is not unusual in any government agency. The total cost of services actually went down compared with the budget estimate.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Maybe this is an easier question, Premier. The figure for accommodation in the 2019–20 budget —

The CHAIR: Member for Scarborough, I am sorry to interrupt you. Are we all still looking at the same piece of paper?

Mr M. McGOWAN: That is not this year’s budget. We are dealing with the 2020–21 budget. The member should have asked me these questions a year or two years ago. The member is asking me to answer questions about budgets from a couple of years ago. How am I supposed to do that?

The CHAIR: Can I just clarify, member for Scarborough, that your page is 91?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: My page is 95, under “Cost of Services” is “Expenses”. Maybe if I ask about a saving, we might get an answer. There is \$428 000 allocated to accommodation in the 2019–20 budget, but the actual amount paid for accommodation was \$246 000. Will the Premier explain why there is a variation there and why that figure is jumping by \$680 000 in the budget estimate for 2020–21?

Mr M. McGOWAN: These are all maintenance issues; they move around. I am advised that accommodation is maintenance issues. These things move around.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: May I receive by way of supplementary information the variation in the maintenance budget from what was actually spent?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I invite the member to put a question on notice.

The CHAIR: Is there a further question on this, member for Scarborough, or a continuation?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: No. I do not think I am going to get any responses, so I might see whether someone else would like to ask something.

The CHAIR: The Premier said you could put the question on notice, if you like.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: If I put it on notice, Parliament will prorogue before it is answered.

The CHAIR: That is the response you have been given. Would you like a further question? Otherwise, I will open it up.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: So there is no answer. That is fine.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The member is asking about budgets going back in history. I have never seen this before—an opposition leader asking the Premier about two budgets ago.

The appropriation was recommended.

Division 7: Salaries and Allowances Tribunal, \$1 017 000 —

The appropriation was recommended.

Division 15: Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation — Services 1 to 3, State Development, Jobs and Trade, \$137 155 000 —

Mr T.J. Healy, Chair.

Mr M. McGowan, Minister for State Development, Jobs and Trade.

Mr R. Sellers, Acting Director General.

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

Mr C. Clark, Deputy Director General, Resources and Project Facilitation.

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

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

Mr J. O'Hare, Executive Director, Industry Development.

Mr K. Dawson, Acting Executive Director, Infrastructure, Planning and Economic Development.

Mr R. Sansalone, Chief Financial Officer.

Mr P. Carden, Chief Finance Officer.

[Witnesses introduced.]

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The minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee rather than asking that the question be put on notice for the next sitting week. I ask the minister to clearly indicate what supplementary information he agrees to provide and I will then allocate a reference number. If supplementary information is to be provided, I seek the minister's cooperation in ensuring that it is delivered 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 Leader of the Opposition.

[5.10 pm]

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I refer to page 204 under "Spending Changes". Midway down the page is reference to the local capability fund, under which is business recovery and PPE manufacturing grants of \$10 million for the 2020–21 budget. Can the Premier explain when those grants will become available and whether any applications for those grants are pending or have been awarded?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I thank the member; it is a good question. I was very keen for us to have additional personal protective equipment and mask capability in Western Australia. The Expenditure Review Committee approved \$10 million for 2020–21 to support small to medium-sized enterprises through the local capability fund as part of the state's COVID-19 recovery package. That led to the launch of three rounds of the local capability fund in July 2020 to support SMEs in their response to COVID-19, the PPE manufacturing round, the PPE market feasibility round and the COVID-19 business recovery and growth round. The objective of the PPE manufacturing round is to secure sustainable PPE manufacturing capability in Western Australia. The market feasibility round is to assist SME applicants with the cost of undertaking an independent feasibility study into their PPE manufacturing proposal. The objective of the COVID-19 business recovery and growth round is to assist Western Australians who have been adversely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and who supply to or are part of the following priority industry sectors: energy, mining, construction, defence, marine and state and local governments.

I will read this and then ask Mr O'Hare to make a few remarks. As of 22 September 2020, 46 SMEs have been recommended for funding for a total commitment of \$3.27 million. Forty-four of those recommendations were under the business recovery growth round and two were under the PPE marketing feasibility round. Applications under the PPE manufacturing round are yet to be assessed, as the closing date is 30 October 2020. I will ask Mr O'Hare to add to that.

Mr J. O'Hare: These rounds have been very well received by the local SME community, which is pleasing. As the Premier mentioned, a number of applicants have been successful and a number are still in the process. We have closed the rounds, so they apply under what is called a SmartyGrants program, which is an electronic lodgement version through which they lodge their application. We have a number in there. We will process those and look at those applications to see which are successful. Just because someone lodges an application does not necessarily mean that they are successful. We will evaluate those. We told them that even if they are first in, if the funds are no longer available and we run out due to the success, that is the way it is.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: As I understand it, around \$3 million has been allocated and released. Is it possible to get a breakdown of who has been successful? Obviously, it might be a bit sensitive to identify the individual businesses, but could we have an account of the value of each of the grants that has been issued at this point?

Mr M. McGOWAN: As I said, the PPE manufacturing round is yet to be assessed. The closing date is 30 October, which is 10 days from now. I am not sure that the other 44 under the business recovery and growth round have all been informed yet.

Mr J. O'Hare: A number have been informed that they are successful. When we write to tell them that they are successful, they receive a form to complete about what the funding is for. They must put their own money in and they agree to that. The scheme has been running since 2011 and what we have done in the past has been very successful. If we could give two grants from the metropolitan area and two from the regions, we would approach those companies and make sure they were happy with their details being provided.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I seek some clarification. I thought Mr O'Hare said that the scheme had been running since 2011.

Mr J. O'Hare: The local capability fund has been running as a fund since 2011. As the Premier mentioned, the \$10 million was specifically allocated to assist Western Australian businesses that were adversely affected by COVID-19. Although they were focused on COVID-19, we received normal allocated expenditure, which has increased again to \$2 million. We are running a round to support Aboriginal businesses. We also have a round looking at the importance of WA businesses being certified. We look at funding part of the certification for businesses to reach the International Organization for Standardization and Therapeutic Goods Administration standards and other standards. We are talking here about the COVID-19 recovery rounds. The department has also been running the local capability fund. We have had some 21 rounds since it was created in 2011 and it has been a very successful program in its support of Western Australian SMEs. One of the ways we can tell that a program is successful is that in the past we have received co-funding from one mining company and one energy company. They wanted to use this program in the Pilbara with its well-established governance structures and funding to respond to issues they had in Onslow. The other was in the Pilbara when working with the iron ore companies to assist local companies get into the iron ore market. Another example is working at specific government projects such as the ring-road around Bunbury. We will have a round in the local capability fund to assist SMEs in that region to come up to speed so that they can then tender for and win work from Main Roads Western Australia. The scheme was very successful for 2011. The member is talking about the \$10 million that was specifically applied for COVID-19.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: With regard to the applicants, can we get an idea of the range of PPE manufacturing that is likely to commence as a result of this fund?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The funding round does not close until 30 October, so that is 10 days away. We do not know who will be the applicants and then we have to have an assessment process after that. This is to set up a long-term capability in Western Australia so that we can deal with this issue should it arise in the future. We do not have their names. It is difficult to give the member the names when we do not know who they are.

[5.20 pm]

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Premier, turning to page 217 and "Details of Controlled Grants and Subsidies", I notice that funding for the line item "Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Strategy" will expire in 2021–22. I am interested to know whether a further STEM strategy is being developed to kick in to ensure that we do not drop the ball on this very important STEM strategy.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Science, technology, engineering and mathematics, or STEM, is obviously important. The state government is continuing its investment in STEM skills via grants supporting STEM professional learning. An amount of \$3.359 million was allocated over four years from 2018–19 to implement a select number of initiatives under the STEM strategy. This included \$2.698 million for grant funding for STEM professional learning for lower socioeconomic schools and their teachers in STEM enterprise schools. That was delivered by the Department of Education through an MOU with the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation. More than 70 schools and 700 teachers benefited from the program. The digital and technology skills program received funding of \$738 000, with eight projects awarded funding via digital and skill building programs to Western Australians under-represented in STEM and/or living in regional or remote communities. The STEM strategy implemented by JTSI is a statewide STEM marketing campaign funded with \$802 000 from June to August 2020. Funding will be fully expended by October this year. In 2019–20, there was higher digital and technology grant expenditure. All that has happened, I think, in the response to the STEM advisory panel recommendations that we have put in place, and that has been funded across the forward estimates. Obviously, what we put in place was a time-limited program, but across government there is lots of investment in various STEM initiatives in lots of different agencies, in particular through JTSI and the Department of Education, and also the Department of Health.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I refer to page 204 under "Spending Changes. The first item under the COVID-19 recovery plan package is "Attraction Incentives Package for Call Centres". Has there been any interest by, and how is the department engaging with, businesses that are looking to shift?

Mr M. McGOWAN: There is \$10 million to attract call centres here. They are not NASA-style jobs but they are reliable jobs, and jobs that suit many people's qualifications and lifestyles, and that are transferrable in terms of location. I received correspondence from a call centre operator who indicated that if there was an incentive program, there would be the opportunity for literally hundreds of jobs to be located in an important location in WA. Consequent to that, we looked at whether there was an opportunity for a fund so that we could have a competitive process and perhaps get more call centres to come here. This is in response to that obvious opportunity, because a lot of call centres are looking at bringing their operations back from overseas in the COVID environment. When they come back, we would prefer they located here, rather than Adelaide, Melbourne, Hobart or wherever it might be. This is a direct response to an opportunity we have identified based upon the fact that call centres are now looking at locating within Australia. I ask the director general to expand on that.

Mr R. Sellers: The processes are underway. The expressions of interest closed last Friday, from memory, so there is a period when we look at those, distil them down and run the business ruler over them, and then make recommendations to government. It is not at the stage at which we can share numbers or who are the likely recipients, other than it was well-subscribed.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Prior to expressions of interest closing, was there interaction with local regional development commissions and local governments to find whether they would add to the incentives that the state government is offering?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Regional development commissions operate with state government money, so obviously we would want to work with them on that. In terms of local governments, I do not know the answer to that particular question, so will hand that to the director general.

Mr R. Sellers: The only interaction with communities that I was aware of was with the proponents putting together their EOI with the areas in which they were interested in putting their call centre. Again, without going into detail, some of those were talking to particular towns, and sites within the towns, so that they could run their business ruler over it and get the numbers together that they presented to us on Friday. Did we take a communication role in that? No, that was the business part of that application process. It was not for us to try to seek money out of anyone as part of that; it was part of the group that was presenting their EOI to work out their strategy and how they would fit into that community.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Hundreds if not thousands of jobs could be created out of this initiative. We are very hopeful that we will get some significant activity out of this, particularly in lower socioeconomic areas with high unemployment rates. Expressions of interest closed on Friday, so hopefully we will get some outcomes soon.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Are you able to advise whether there has been any interest in setting up in regional locations?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The correspondence that came to me that spurred this interest was for an outer metropolitan location—an outer urban area—with high unemployment. It spurred this interest that perhaps there is an opportunity here, but we will wait for what the proponents come back with. As the member knows, we set up a call centre in Collie for the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety, and we set up another one, maybe in Broome, for another agency. Maybe Mr O'Hare knows the answer to that. We are waiting for an outcome here, so I will hand over to Mr O'Hare.

Mr J. O'Hare: Thank you, Premier. Member, Horizon Power has recently moved its call centre from Melbourne to Broome.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Yes, that is it.

Mr J. O'Hare: They advised us of that at one of our regional communications forums. The department has also had a longstanding relationship with Royal Life Saving, which runs a call centre in Bridgetown that was set up as part of the previous government's old-growth forest program.

Mr J. O'Hare: The one we own is in Bridgetown; there is one in Manjimup as well. We still have a lease, which we are currently negotiating with Royal Life Saving. I know it is keen to expand its role and, as the Premier mentioned, the number of jobs it has put through that regional community in 20-odd years has been substantial. It is a great employer in the Bridgetown region. That regional focus will be a focus of JTSI as we go forward to ensure as much as possible, where it is equal, that jobs in regional areas are considered as well.

[5.30 pm]

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Was there any differential to account for some of the additional costs that might be presented for setting up in a regional location?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will get the director general to comment but I think it is plain that under this government one has been established in Broome and one in Collie already. I will get the director general to respond to that question.

Mr R. Sellers: I have not been through the detail of what has come in. I have had only very brief conversations with our staff who are dealing with the proponents prior to lodging, but discussions have been happening since the announcement was made that the point of lodging it was to try to make sure that it is value for money and the sorts

of jobs they will create can be verified. It has a very clear value of what any subsidy is in it. They will bring into that a range of things that might be different between one applicant and another, and that is just part of the business component of their expression of interest. I do not have those details until we have sorted through the applications.

Mr M. McGOWAN: To be fair, I think the view would be that areas that have the highest unemployment are probably the areas where we want to establish these. There might be technical issues with bandwidth and things they have to have in order to connect appropriately. All those things would need to be considered. I doubt any operator would be interested in putting one of these into an area that already has a dearth of people available for other work, because they would not be able to attract employees. I think they would be more interested in areas that have a ready supply of labour that is perhaps not fully utilised at this time.

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: I refer to the service summary on page 208 of budget paper No 2, volume 1 and the first seven items: international engagement, project facilitation, industry development, science and innovation, destination marketing, event tourism, and tourism destination development. Except for event tourism, the budget for every one of those items goes backwards in the forward estimates for the next three years and will be less than is budgeted for this year. If the government's goal in those seven line items is to grow and diversify the economy, create future jobs and support skills development, how does the Premier envisage that can be done when the budgets for six out of those seven items are going backwards?

Mr M. McGOWAN: My observation whilst awaiting advice is that the 2020–21 budget estimate for this item is \$295 million. The member is correct that across the out years, it is not as strong, but we have brought forward to this year as much spend as we possibly could. That has been a deliberate strategy. I am unaware that that applies here. I will await further advice, but across the board, we have put as much effort into this year as we possibly could because of the external threats to the state's economy.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I refer to page 206 and the heading “WA Recovery Plan”. The first four items under the subheading “Western Australian Jobs” refer to how the Western Australian Jobs Act and the Western Australian Industry Participation Strategy are supporting local jobs. I have a two-part question. First, can the Premier confirm that the figures on jobs and apprenticeships in the third item are current; and, if not, can he provide an update on what the Western Australian Jobs Act has achieved on jobs? Second, I note that recently, some misleading and incorrect claims have been made about the WA jobs act. Can the Premier elaborate on its success and provide an update on how it is supporting WA businesses and suppliers?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I thank the member for the question. Yes, I can. The government undertook this important initiative over the course of 2017–18, and we are pleased to say that it has gone well for the state. Since the full implementation of the jobs act and the industry participation strategy in October 2018, 306 participation plans have been submitted. They have created 27 063 Western Australian jobs and 1 794 apprenticeships and traineeships for Western Australians. In regard to those jobs, 28 per cent, or 7 459, are in regional WA, and about one-third of the apprenticeships and traineeships, or 547, are in regional WA. Across the 306 participation plans, we have seen 90 per cent Western Australian content. The majority of individual participation plans have 100 per cent Western Australian content. I will highlight a few: Balcatta High School, Bunbury Regional Prison, Darling Range Sports College, Karratha–Tom Price Road, Utah Road, and Port Hedland pavement rehabilitation plan. Each of those projects has created literally thousands of jobs.

The jobs act and the industry participation strategy will be important in delivering the recovery plan and stimulating Western Australian businesses. We obviously have a very constructive relationship with businesses across the state to make sure that this has happened and worked well. I think it is a national example of how to put something in place to ensure we maximise local content in Western Australia whilst maintaining some competitive pressure and ensuring there is the opportunity for businesses in Western Australia to grow and expand into other locations, not remain stuck in one location, and get value for money. I think we have the balance right across the board. I know there were some naysayers about this, but I think it has worked really well.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I refer to page 214, works in progress, and the allocations for overseas offices and the overseas offices motor vehicle replacement program. Can the Premier update the house on what those allocations are currently spent on?

Mr M. McGOWAN: The advice I have for the second one is that it is a rolling program for overseas vehicle purchases. I assume that on occasion people in our overseas offices need a car. The cost is \$65 000 this year. The other allocation is for offices, I assume—I will get some advice in a moment. That \$45 000 for this year and \$75 000 in each of the out years is not a lot of money, but I will ask the director general to provide an answer on that.

Mr R. Sellers: Given that it requires a detailed answer; I might ask Renato to comment on that.

Mr R. Sansalone: Again, it is a rolling program for office and IT equipment replacement for overseas offices.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: The overseas offices motor vehicle replacement program is \$65 000 and then jumps to \$175 000 for each of the years in the forward estimates. I assume that is a broadening of the overseas motor vehicle fleet provided to those offices?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will ask the director general to comment.

Mr R. Sellers: I think it is more a reflection that when vehicles come up in the program, it might be multiple vehicles. For confirmation, we can check with Renato again.

Mr R. Sansalone: I would say that is correct, yes.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: What is correct; sorry?

Mr M. McGOWAN: To the director general.

Mr R. Sellers: That, depending on the year and when vehicles were leased or purchased, there is a cycle when we replace. In some years, two might be replaced, and in other years there might be one, so we get some fluctuation.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I appreciate that, thank you, but I wonder whether we have an understanding about what that might be. Is it for two offices; is it for two vehicles? Do we have an understanding about what that might be? It is not an insignificant sum.

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

[5.40 pm]

Mr R. Sellers: I do not have the detail of whether the \$100 000 plus was for one or two cars. We would need to check the replacement cycle process to answer that question for the member.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Sure. Is it possible, Chair, by way of supplementary information, to get a breakdown of the expenditure in the forward estimates for the overseas vehicle replacement program as to what offices they are and what vehicles they might be?

Mr M. McGOWAN: No. I invite the member to put a question on notice.

The CHAIR: Before I give the call to the member for Central Wheatbelt, I indicate that we have a couple of other divisions to get through before six o'clock. Make sure you spread your time as you seek to. Member for Central Wheatbelt.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I am on page 217 as well, the Ferguson Valley–Wellington forest marketing. Has there been a request for additional funding for that project or initiative, or has consideration been given to providing additional funding in this budget round going forward?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I do not know the answer to that question so I will defer to the director general.

Mr R. Sellers: If I can just check with the member, the Ferguson Valley–Wellington forest market was 2018–19. Is that the money the member is referring to?

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Yes, that is correct.

Mr M. McGOWAN: That obviously ceased a couple of budgets ago. I do not know if there has been a replacement program or otherwise. I will defer, again, to the director general.

Mr R. Sellers: In my time in the agency, we have not discussed any extension or application for extra money.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Is the Premier aware that there has been a request for additional funding or ongoing funding?

Mr R. Sellers: Sorry, I was not clear. I have not discussed it; I have not had a request come to me for extra funding.

Mrs R.M.J. CLARKE: My reference is to budget paper No 2, page 211, the third point, "Industry Development", and the reference to increasing the involvement of Western Australian businesses in the supply chain for government and private industry works and contracts. I note the WA recovery plan included investigation opportunities for manufacturing and maintaining iron ore railcar wagons. Can the Premier outline the work that is being undertaken to develop these opportunities, and what would be the flow-on benefits for local steel fabricators?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Thank you. Obviously, there is an opportunity with railcar manufacturing. We are doing it for our Metronet project in Midland. That will be the first time in 35 years that railcars have been manufactured in Western Australia. We are doing that for not only Metronet, but also the *Australind* rail service, and we are building a diesel maintenance facility there. I had a round table with the iron ore miners and the Chamber of Minerals and Energy, in which I said to industry that, where we can, this sort of work should be conducted in Western Australia. The iron ore industry uses 3 000 or so railcars. It is a big industry and obviously a big opportunity for the state. We are putting in place an action group, in conjunction with the Chamber of Minerals and Energy, the Australian Steel Institute, the Freight and Logistics Council of Western Australia, union representatives and iron ore proponents to look at the opportunity for further iron ore railcar manufacturing and maintenance to be done within Western Australia, the potential for the development of an industry, the use of the existing facilities we are constructing, the potential barriers, and the extent of local capability. We anticipate that there will be several options for us to consider and we want to get on and ensure that there is that opportunity for Western Australian manufacturing. I note that these days there is lots of discussion nationally about railcar manufacturing. Various people are saying various things

about it. What I find is that sometimes the east coast commentators and politicians do not realise that we are actually putting in place an industry here in Western Australia that New South Wales cannot do. We are already doing it, but we want to expand it and make sure that whether it is iron ore railcars, movement of grain or whatever it might be, we get additional manufacturing out of this industry. We are putting in place all these measures to see what can be done, building on our success in doing it for rolling stock for our Metronet program and for the *Australind*.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I also refer the Premier to page 211 and the third point, “Industry Development”, which refers to increasing the employment of local workers and the involvement of Western Australian businesses in the supply chain for government and private industry works and contracts. My question relates to the announcement as part of the recovery plan that the government will be exploring opportunities for local wind farm manufacturing. I note that the department has launched an independent feasibility study into opportunities for local business in the supply chain for wind farms. Can the Premier please provide an update on the feasibility study, including what it is seeking to deliver?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Thank you for the question. We have committed to more local manufacturing opportunities. We have launched an independent feasibility study into the wind farm supply chain across the metropolitan and regional areas. As members know, over the last 20 years there has been an enormous installation of wind farms in Western Australia; that has continued and actually jumped in recent years. Total funding for the study from the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation is \$100 000. It provides an opportunity for high-tech industry and manufacturing in Western Australia. Some steel fabricators have expressed an interest in providing some of the support infrastructure for a wind farm, and the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation has established the local industry participation wind farm supply action group, which includes a whole bunch of companies that are working cooperatively with government on this. The aim of the action group is to initiate discussion with wind farm proponent steel suppliers, fabrication industry and the like to look to develop this industry in Western Australia. This builds on our efforts in defence, submarines and lithium, and railcar manufacturing, which I spoke about a moment ago, to get enhanced manufacturing in Western Australia. The study will identify all the issues, the capacity and capability, the size of the market, local industry participation, training opportunities and the like. I expect it to be completed and handed to government by the end of the year. Hopefully, we will then have a better understanding of what we need to do in this area. Obviously, it is an area that is growing in importance, and one in which Western Australia has some advantage, considering our energy mix, our technical capability and our location in the world. This sort of long-term thinking in manufacturing is something we are working hard on.

The appropriation was recommended.

Division 22: Infrastructure WA, \$5 107 000 —

The appropriation was recommended.

[5.50 pm]

Lotteries Commission —

Mr Terry Healy, Chair.

Mr M. McGowan, Premier.

Mr J.S. Hubble, General Manager, Corporate Services; Chief Finance Officer.

[Witness introduced.]

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: I refer to page 581, “WA Recovery Plan—Other Initiatives”. Paragraph 1 states —

... Lotterywest, has allocated all available profits of the lottery (up to \$159 million) directly into the newly created COVID-19 Relief Fund.

Has that target of \$159 million been reached; and, if so, does the Premier have any plans to ask Lotterywest for any more funding?

Mr M. McGOWAN: In late March, maybe one month into COVID, or maybe less than that, I went to meet with the Lotterywest board and said that we were in extraordinary times and we needed to reallocate everything we could towards what was happening. A whole bunch of organisations were losing support because all their functions, events, concerts and whatever by which they raised money were going, and we were expecting huge additional demands on some of the relief agencies out there, such as food, housing and all those sorts of things. Therefore, the \$159 million COVID-19 relief fund was established in March 2020. A total of \$55 million has been paid to 524 applicants. A list of the grant recipients was published in Lotterywest’s 2019–20 annual report. I think further applications are being considered by the Lotterywest board at every meeting, which is monthly. Obviously, the whole trajectory of Lotterywest has changed from what it used to be, which I understand is sad for some organisations, and, eventually, it will change back. Currently, \$55 million has been allocated towards those projects, but, as each meeting comes, more money will be allocated, and I suspect the allocations will grow.

The CHAIR: Do you have a further question, member for Kalgoorlie?

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: I will have a new question.

The CHAIR: Now or later?

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Go ahead, member for Kalgoorlie.

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: Okay. Mr Chair, you will probably tell me whether I am drawing a long bow on this next question.

The CHAIR: Are you referring to a page number?

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: No, I am referring to this next question. I am still on page 581—that is the only page I have—and the grant management system. Am I able to ask a question about giving grants to charities? It is in relation to a query that I have.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Is it in relation to an individual application?

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: Yes, Premier. But I do not know whether this is the forum —

The CHAIR: Perhaps, member, if you ask the full question, I will see whether the Premier can answer it.

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: All right. It has been brought to my attention that a charity applied for funding and it was refused, allegedly based on its views about same-sex marriage. The church was denied the grant based on its biblical views on same-sex marriage.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Yes, I am aware of the case. The Lotterywest board makes decisions independent of the government. As I said, in late March, I went to see the board to say that we needed to focus on COVID and COVID recovery, which it agreed with. But in terms of its individual assessments on grants, it is independent of government. With the exception of one grant ever, I have signed off exactly what the board has recommended over the course of my three and a half years as the minister responsible for the agency. In the case of that particular grant—I think it was the Royal Agricultural Society of WA—in between the board making its decision and the document coming to me, the government, obviously, changed policy, so I had to reject the recommendation, which was agreed to by the Lotterywest board. In answer to the member's question, Lotterywest is a discretionary grant provider. The board's grant decision is independent of government. I can only support or reject. I do not have any role in the assessment of grants. I have approved every single grant that has come up to me in my time as minister, with the exception of the Royal Agricultural Society one, which was because the government's position changed between the decision of the board and the application arriving on my desk. The board made no recommendation for Margaret Court Community Outreach. Increasingly over this year, the board has made lots and lots of grants to emergency relief and agencies that provide support for people in need—more so than any year ever—so that is an ongoing program. Lotterywest is working with the food relief forum to confirm that any such decision that it makes would not affect those in need.

In summary, these are decisions for the board. It makes them in accordance with its constitution and its guiding documents. But this year, more Lotterywest money has gone to emergency relief than in any year ever.

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: Thank you, Premier. I accept that. Premier, am I able to have permission to converse with Lotterywest?

The CHAIR: Member, the best way is if you ask your question in full, I will ask the Premier to deliver his response.

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: Am I able to have permission to converse with Lotterywest on behalf of —

Mr M. McGOWAN: Member, you are a member of Parliament; if you wish to call Lotterywest, you are free to do so.

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: I did not know whether it was under —

Mr M. McGOWAN: I do not think there is any rule that says you cannot call Lotterywest. Whether or not it wants to converse with you is another matter!

The CHAIR: Member, if you have a question —

Dr A.D. BUTI: What line item is that?

The CHAIR: If the member would like to ask the Premier a question, we will do our best to facilitate that within the boundaries of this chamber.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I am not banning Lotterywest from speaking to the member. I think members often advocate on behalf of certain projects or whatever. That is not unusual.

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: Yes. I was not out to champion it or anything. I was trying to possibly get a second side of the story. Thank you.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: On the same page, 581, I note there is a \$300 000 allocation towards the property program for Lotterywest. I am keen to understand what that is.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will get Mr Hubble to comment on that.

Mr J.S. Hubble: There are actually two elements for the property program. One element is an expenditure and one is a revenue. The expenditure of \$300 000 is for the development of an additional product for Lotterywest called a game service fast ticket, so it is not property in the physical sense of property. On the revenue side, we have an intended sale of property for \$1.3 million.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Out of curiosity, as part of this, how much money does Lotterywest provide to responsible gambling services and the like or to gambling support services or gambling counselling support services?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will hand that to Mr Hubble to answer that question. I assume the member is referring to some line item.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I am sure I am.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Yes. Mr Hubble.

Mr J.S. Hubble: I would not be able to give the member a hard figure today. We contribute to responsible gambling in two ways. We make a contribution to a state facility, as do other gambling agencies. I recall that our contribution to that is quite substantial, in terms of between \$100 000 and \$200 000 per annum. We also run our own responsible gambling practice. We have recently received the highest level of accreditation for responsible gambling, so we wish to maintain that.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Thank you.

The CHAIR: That completes the examination of the Lotteries Commission's authority. I will now vacate the chair until 7.00 pm.

Meeting suspended from 6.00 to 7.00 pm

Division 28: Western Australia Police Force, \$1 544 335 000 —

Ms M.M. Quirk, Chair.

Mrs M.H. Roberts, Minister for Police.

Mr C. Dawson, Commissioner of Police.

Mr G. Dreibergs, Deputy Commissioner of Police.

Mr C. Blanch, Deputy Commissioner of Police.

Mr P. Steel, Assistant Commissioner, Operation Tide.

Ms K. Whiteley, Assistant Commissioner, Operations Support.

Ms S. Cardenia, Director, Finance and Business Services.

Mr F. Pasquale, Executive Director.

Mr A. Warner, Commissioner, Road Safety Commission.

Mr I. Cameron, Chairman, Road Safety Council.

Mr K. Law, Assistant Director, Finance and Business Services, Road Safety Commission.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIR: Some might say it is the usual suspects! This estimates committee will be reported by Hansard. The daily proof *Hansard* will be available the following day. I will ensure that as many questions as possible are asked and answered and that both questions and answers are short and to the point. The estimates committee's consideration of the estimates will be restricted to discussion of those items for which a vote of money is proposed in the consolidated account. Questions must be clearly related to a page number, item, program or amount in the current division. Members should give these details in preface to their question. If a division or service is the responsibility of more than one minister, a minister shall be examined only in relation to their portfolio responsibilities.

The minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee rather than asking that the question be put on notice for the next sitting week. I ask the minister to clearly indicate what supplementary information she agrees to provide and I will then allocate a reference number. If supplementary information is to be provided, I seek the minister's cooperation in ensuring that it is delivered 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 Hillarys.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: Through you, minister, my first set of questions refers to page 418 of budget paper No 2. Under new initiatives and the line item for "Other COVID-19—Operating Costs" a series of figures is outlined. Obviously, it is something that was not foreseen in the previous budget. Around \$24 million is allocated for the 2019–20 actual; \$10 million is allocated in 2020–21; and diminishing amounts are allocated in the out years. There is a 43 per cent reduction in the operating costs for COVID-19-related operations between the 2019–20 financial year

and the financial year we have just entered. What is the explanation for that significant reduction in operating costs? Is it going to be sufficient, given that we are almost halfway through this financial year and we are still in elevated COVID times regarding Operation Tide and every other operation that Western Australia police are undertaking?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: As the member would be aware, the COVID-19 state of emergency in Western Australia was first declared on 15 March this year. The Commissioner of Police is the State Emergency Coordinator. Because of the pandemic, significant changes have been made to what police need to do and that has incurred additional costs. Those additional costs include things like compliance and assurance operations; the enforcement of land borders and regional checkpoints; and air and sea port checks, including assistance right across Western Australia. Of course, the police are also involved in the G2G travel application process, and some further indirect costs have also been incurred. The police force was provided with a total of \$45.495 million across the forward estimates period for those operating costs, including additional expenditure of \$24.473 million in 2019–20 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A breakdown of the \$24.473 million is as follows: \$12 million for employee expenses; the investment in personal protective equipment; \$5.5 million for enhanced cleaning contracts; and \$4.5 million for equipment purchases to fit out frontline offices. Over the forward estimates period for unavoidable costs related to COVID-19, additional funding of \$21 million is provided for 2020–21. That includes \$3.6 million for accommodation and communications, given the ongoing requirement for the state pandemic coordination centre and incident management team operations. It also includes additional money for cleaning and hygiene, which has been costed at \$2.315 million. Additional funding of \$2.3 million is allocated for enhanced protective equipment and consumables for that period. There is additional expenditure for technology. These costs are unavoidable for us. There are also associated salary expenses. I am not sure whether the commissioner wants to add anything further.

Mr C. Dawson: No.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: I have a further question. I understand that breakdown and I appreciate it. Obviously, the expenditure for 2019–20 commenced in March, so let us be generous and call it four months of expenditure. That included \$12 million in employee expenses, \$5.5 million for cleaning and everything that the minister outlined. That was for a concentrated four-month period. We are now four months into this financial year. If in the current financial year we had expenditure similar to that which we had at the end of the last financial year, would the minister not expect that our expenditure on COVID-related operating costs would at least be commensurate with what we had last year, if not higher, rather than there being a reduction in expenditure? The minister outlined that \$21 million is allocated over the forward estimates and she is right, but that equates to only \$10.5 million in the current financial year. I seek some assurance that funding is available to continue Operation Tide and all the other operations, given that if they cost \$24 million in three and a half months, why, over the next 12 months, were they allocated only \$10.5 million?

[7.10 pm]

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The fact of the matter is that when we last held budget estimates, there was no money in the budget for COVID at all. That money was found because it was needed. Some of those costs that are referred to there are initial set-up costs. Some of the things that we had to do in the first instance include putting in place all those intrastate borders and intrastate checkpoints and so forth. They were a lot more intensive. As the member will also be aware, we have not had any community spread of COVID-19 in our state for over six months. Like the member, I do not have a crystal ball; I am not sure exactly what the future holds. Whatever costs the police need to meet in that process, they will be met. The allocation by government is based on what the police have requested. I understand that the commissioner is prepared to add a bit more clarity for the member, but some of those costs are very much initial set-up costs. They were required when we were doing more intensive operations. We all hope that in the future, there will be less to do, not more, but of course that cannot be guaranteed. That is why we need to be prepared. That is why we have allocated significant extra resources to the Western Australia Police Force, including the initial 150 officers we announced in April and the first 200 of the additional 800 officers we committed to in this budget process, which will be delivered in 2020–21.

Mr C. Dawson: In addition to the comments raised by the minister, the set-up costs were for, by way of example, the rollout of additional OneForce Locate mobile technology with the smart devices, which we accelerated forward to assist us. In relation to an example that the minister just mentioned, with our intrastate border directions, we stopped some 850 000 vehicles over that four-month period. With that, we implemented a G2G PASS system with QR codes. That required us to accelerate forward some of the technological spend in the last four months of the last financial year. In the current budget year, of course some \$73 million has been allocated for additional police officer recruitment and some \$17.8 million for some additional tracking and tracing. The expenditure differential, which I think is the heart of the member's question, was really particularised in bringing forward some early spend. We certainly got the budget we sought in the current financial year with the additional FTEs and some additional technical operating costs.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: Again on the COVID-19 operating costs, the minister mentioned the need to ramp up, and Operation Tide. Could we get from the minister an update on the current allocation of FTEs to Operation Tide and the anticipated allocation over the foreseeable period—let us say between now and Christmas, unless the minister has some other period that she thinks is worthwhile expanding on?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: As the member for Hillarys may be aware, I recently answered a question about this. I think the figure that was given was about 380, but I will ask the commissioner to provide whatever up-to-date information he can.

Mr C. Dawson: The number stated by the minister is accurate—in the order of 380 to 400. It is a little flexible, but I have established a dedicated portfolio dealing with the police response to COVID-19. That is headed up through Deputy Commissioner Gary Dreibergs, and Assistant Commissioner Paul Steel is the titular head of that new portfolio, which has just under 400 FTEs dedicated to it. I would add that in the surge capability, that reflects only the FTEs we have allocated within the Perth metropolitan area. Although some of those officers are at times dispatched to regional Western Australia, in the recent week, for instance, we have had the iron ore carriers come into the Pilbara, and we dedicate regional Western Australia staff who are already positioned there, so the number is, by its very nature, fluid. Although we have 400 purposely dedicated full time to this, we co-opt officers from a whole range of disciplines, particularly in regional Western Australia. If there is an issue in Wyndham, we will obviously utilise Wyndham, Kununurra and Kimberley police and we will supplement them when we need to. For instance, at the roadblocks at Kununurra and Eucla, we supplement the existing local police.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: We recognise that. Thank you for the answer. I think that is well recognised and the police need that capacity. The public and the opposition support the police in that. In relation to performing the duties that Operation Tide officers perform, when there is a need to do the regular check on people who are self-isolating, is that performed by Operation Tide officers or by the officers at the police station in the local police district, and does it differ between metropolitan Perth and regional WA?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I will pass that on to the commissioner.

Mr C. Dawson: Thank you, Chair, and, with your consent, Mr Dreibergs could add to what I may miss. In the metropolitan area, it is done predominantly by the Operation Tide officers who are dedicated to that. We have a dedicated compliance checking team. We ordinarily target a person who is self-isolating with in the order of three checks over their 14-day period, but we may increase that depending on our intelligence and assessment of the individuals. What has made a massive difference has been the introduction of the G2G Now app, which was WA-led with a small Western Australian company, through which we do virtual checking. I can get the exact number for the member, but about 4 500 people are in self-isolation as of today. Just under 2 000 people are using the G2G Now app. That means that we can virtually check without the necessity for officers physically going there, although we will continue to do that, to be blunt, to keep people on their toes and make sure that the integrity of the quarantine is right. In terms of regional Western Australia, I know the answer, but I know that Mr Dreibergs and Mr Steel do this on a daily basis.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I will ask Mr Dreibergs to contribute. Ahead of doing that, I think I have already put on record my thanks to Mr Dreibergs for his work on developing this app. It is really a first in Australia and it is a great initiative by the Western Australia Police Force. I think it makes sense and it will be very useful into the future.

Mr G. Dreibergs: I can add that in regional WA, the checks are done by regional WA officers, but most of the pre-process is coordinated in Perth by the Operation Tide team. They do the data entry into our computer-aided dispatch system so that officers in regional WA know where they have to visit. They also deploy advice to the regional WA locations to undertake those checks. Again, the G2G Now app operates in regional areas, as well as in the metropolitan area, so it has the capacity to work throughout the entire state. We also supplement our officers in the metropolitan area when we can with additional FTEs from the police academy if necessary if we get a real surge in requirement. That is done because we have officers who are doing driving training, and that gives them an additional opportunity to do some quarantine checks as part of that training. We are utilising our resources to the maximum, but they are always managed and led by senior supervisors when they perform that function. In regional WA, predominantly the checks on quarantine are conducted by regional WA officers and coordinated in Perth by Operation Tide.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: I have a further question.

The CHAIR: The tide is going out, but you can have one further question at this stage.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: On the G2G PASS that is funded through this initiative, it is well-established that if someone comes in through the land border or the airports, they require a G2G PASS of one form or another. Is it the same for people who arrive by sea? Do they need to get a G2G PASS in order to leave the port that they arrive at or is that handled in a different manner?

[7.20 pm]

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: One of the difficulties that we have had in any jurisdiction, whether people are leaving by boat or by plane, is imposing a requirement for travellers to have a G2G PASS. If we had our way, we would like authorities in the eastern states and other countries to check whether people have a G2G PASS. The airlines could do it. We could get assistance from the Australian Federal Police or Australian Border Force. It would not really matter who did it. That would make sense because we continue to end up with the problem, whether it is by air, sea or land, of people who attempt to enter the state without a G2G PASS. There is a requirement for people to fill in that paperwork if they want to come to Western Australia. When I say “paperwork”, I am using that word a bit metaphorically. People have to apply online. Perhaps Mr Dreibergs could comment further.

Mr G. Dreibergs: All persons entering Western Australia are expected to complete a G2G PASS application. If they do not complete an electronic version of the G2G PASS application, they can download and complete a hard copy or email version from the WA government website. Once they have completed the application, they have to wait to become an approved traveller. As the minister pointed out, people can elect to do the wrong thing and travel to Western Australia without an approved G2G PASS or an approved email application, but if they arrive at our airports or roadblocks, they will be checked. People arriving who are not approved travellers can also be checked at our ports. If they are not approved travellers, we have the ability to direct them to return to where they came from. The process is supported by the G2G PASS system because when people arrive at any location, the officers have a system called mothership. They have wireless laptops. They go through the entire process of checking an individual's situation when they arrive. They look at their application, all the evidence of the details that they have provided, and make sure that they are approved travellers. They can eject them at the airport. On occasions people have said that they put in four or five applications. Interestingly, we generally find that those people change their story from the first application to the fifth application. They are regularly the people who are rejected when they enter the state because their story does not add up from the start to the finish. The benefit for Western Australia is that we have a full history of every single person who arrives with a G2G PASS when they come here.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: I understand that in relation to airports and the land borders of both Kununurra and Eucla, the police are checking people. Are police officers ordinarily stationed at our ports to monitor the compliance with the G2G system? Do they have a 24/7 presence? What sort of police presence do we have at our ports, be it Fremantle, Geraldton or any of our many ports in this state?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The Commissioner of Police will clarify that for the member.

Mr C. Dawson: The Australian Border Force and the Department of Home Affairs have primary responsibility for border control. If a vessel arrives from international waters, it is primarily met by the Australian Border Force. There are Australian quarantine systems in place, and the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, which is a commonwealth agency, has biosecurity risks, for instance. We work in tandem with commonwealth agencies. We will not necessarily have Western Australian police at every single port but we do liaise and get advice. By way of example, last weekend—it is well-known publicly—a livestock carrier entered Western Australian waters at Fremantle and an iron ore carrier came into Geraldton. We physically met both those vessels with the Department of Health, which is the main hazard management agency for Western Australia. The police support that department. We physically meet any persons who are disembarking from those vessels. As the State Emergency Coordinator, I am required to make an assessment. Over the last weekend, I signed 39 specific directions requiring crew who had either been in close contact with or who were direct positive to COVID-19 to be swabbed. I gave directions to my officers who then physically escorted those people from the vessels, either to a hospital or primarily to what is known as centre quarantine, which is a hotel contracted by the Department of Health.

The police are closely involved in the escort arrangements and then the compliance checking. It is initially done through the commonwealth, supplemented by police and other state assets, which includes the Department of Primary Industry and Regional Development, which does some of the animal husbandry, if it is that sort of vessel, or another state agency if the vessel is associated with the resource sector and carrying LNG et cetera. It is a busy part of our area. My long answer to the member is that through that structure of the commonwealth, the state and other state agencies, principally through public health officials, we meet any vessel that we consider suspect. Most of the crew from many of the vessels never disembark, but, when they do, either for health reasons or for a crew change, police certainly become involved quite heavily.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Under Operation Tide, the minister said that just under 400 police officers are dedicated to dealing with the COVID-19 G2G PASS. Does that limit the number of people who can come into Western Australia if they have a G2G PASS? With some of the anecdotal evidence that we have heard of people being rejected three, four, five or six times, is the cap on the number of people entering Western Australia tied to the number who are in Operation Tide to be able to cope with the influx of people coming from the east coast, from the ports or wherever into Western Australia? Is there a cap based on the numbers in that operation?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I think the simple answer is no. Clearly, as has been widely publicised, there is an international cap. That has effectively been set by the commonwealth. Until recently in Western Australia, our component of that international cap was 1 025 people a week. That number increased by 140 this week, so we are up to 1 165, which I think is in place for the next four weeks at this stage. We are a little at the behest of the commonwealth with respect to those international caps. We are not assessing people on the basis that we have a cap. We are assessing people on the criteria that are listed in that G2G PASS application form. The commissioner can provide further information or delegate it to one of the other officers if he wants.

Mr C. Dawson: Assistant Commissioner Paul Steel is the operational head. He will be able to answer questions related to land borders and other travellers who arrive. By volume, they primarily enter the state by air but we also have land borders in maritime.

Mr P. Steel: Since 5 April, when the “Quarantine (Closing the Border) Directions” came into effect, 16 678 international travellers have arrived in accordance with the caps that have been set, and 69 696 domestic travellers. Travellers into

Western Australia can enter the state under the “Quarantine (Closing the Border) Directions” only if they meet one of the exemption criteria. The number of people who can get in is based not on the resourcing for Operation Tide, but rather on those who qualify for an exemption to enter Western Australia. A total of 237 people have been refused entry at the airport. They have actually arrived and been turned around because they have not had appropriate authorisation or they do not meet the criteria under section 27 of the closing the border directions. About 660 land border travellers likewise have been refused entry and been turned around because they have not met those criteria.

[7.30 pm]

Mr V.A. CATANIA: When did the G2G PASS come in. Was it in April?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: March.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: March?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: No, March was when we put the direction in place.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Is the minister able to provide the number of people a month who have been approved through the G2G PASS from the commencement of the pass until today, through a supplementary, unless the commissioner has that detail?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I suspect we have some information that we can give the member tonight, if anyone is putting their hand up? No; they are drawing a blank. I will pass over to the commissioner.

Mr C. Dawson: The number of G2G applications that we have on hand and are processing at the moment is 3 296. That is of last evening. We are still assessing some 2 965. That is only a current point in time snapshot. The member’s question about how many we have had on the G2G itself, we will have to get as supplementary information, unless one of my colleagues has found it in the meantime. We obviously do keep statistics, it is a digital system, but we would have to —

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: One of the difficulties with getting information is that people make multiple applications. The number of applications and the number of people are two different figures.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: They should be two different figures that the government should be able to apply, because it is digital; therefore, I would have thought it would be quite easy.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: That is right. I will ask Deputy Commissioner Dreiberger whether he can provide any further clarity on that.

Mr G. Dreiberger: The clarity I can provide for the member is relative to the G2G PASS system. The G2G PASS system was established as a process that in the first instance was to allow truck drivers to travel within Western Australia when we had the intrastate borders. It was designed purely to allow fast movement between those intrastate borders. It was being developed over time and refined more and more over time. At no point was it designed as a data collection tool. It was never established to collect data. Additional to that, it is extremely difficult for the system to identify all the categories of people who may or may not be exempt, because those directions have been changing significantly over the period of COVID. We have different arrangements all the time, and different directions come out relative to persons travelling and permitted to travel to Western Australia. That includes all persons exempt. The issue is that the system has not collected data. It is not verified data. Therefore, unlike our crime statistics, whereby we keep the verified data within our system and we provide that accurately, we cannot provide the member with accurate data from day one of how the G2G PASS has operated, because the system was never established to collect data in the very first instance. When the system was created, the intention was to allow Western Australians to move safely, freely and as quickly as possible throughout the state. It then moved to a system to allow people from outside Western Australia to move quickly and efficiently into the state. That was the intention of the system. Unfortunately, it does not have the level of data that the member would expect it to have. Certainly, we have been working on that to get the systems to start collating data, but I could not stand here, hand on heart, and say that I will be able to give the member accurate data about the number of people who applied to enter Western Australia in April.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Surely the minister would be able to provide data for the last three months of the G2G PASS and the different sets of circumstances through which people applied for it, whether through work or hardship. Surely the minister would have some of that information from over the last three months, given there has been three months to improve the systems and collate the information. Surely the government should be basing the need and the resources to put into it on the number of people who are applying or coming through.

The CHAIR: Member, could you just maybe state more succinctly what you are after and the minister can indicate whether —

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Not since its inception, but for the last three months, how many people have entered Western Australia through that G2G PASS?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: That is something that the member can put in a question on notice, and we will endeavour to give him what information we can. I think what Deputy Commissioner Dreiberger has attempted to make very clear is that we have a system in place here that is the best in Australia. No-one was expecting this pandemic; no-one

was expecting to set up a process for the hard borders. I can tell the member that, as Mr Dreiberger said, we set it up for those intrastate borders, so that truck drivers would not have to get stuck in a queue for hours on end, or anyone else for that matter who wanted to come through. The member will have seen on television news people queuing up to go from New South Wales into Queensland. We know that people are processed through our airport much more quickly than they are in Victoria, thanks to the G2G PASS. We know that because we set up this kind of application and pass as an online system so that for any one individual, we can see a whole history. That has been integral to our system; that has been hugely valuable.

What Mr Dreiberger attempted to explain is that we have not set it up as a kind of data collection system in which we have annotated how many people applied, and who got a pass for what reason and so on and so forth. It has been an evolving thing. The reason that being able to get a pass has changed over time is that the directions have changed for whom we have allowed in. To give the member another example, when Victoria suddenly had that outbreak, people who had pass applications and approvals in the system were automatically denied, because suddenly the directions changed. The rules effectively changed and people who previously would have got a pass or had even got a pass were then denied because of the outbreak that occurred in Victoria. It has very much been a movable feast. It is not easy to give the member the information that he wants. I am not going to ask senior police and others to turn their attention to try to go through the system to collate new information in the format that the member requires, but if he puts a question on notice, and within the time frame that is provided for a supplementary answer to estimates, we will endeavour to give the member what information we have in the system.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I am asking for the number of people who have been accepted. Forget about the criteria, whether it is hardship, work or for whatever other reason they have been able to come through. The minister cannot tell me how many people have been agreed through the G2G PASS to enter into Western Australia over the last three months. She cannot provide just the basic number, month by month, for the last three months.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: We can provide that. Put the question on notice and it will be provided.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I would have thought that that information is critical in being able to know how many police officers are dedicated to —

The CHAIR: That is a separate question.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The member has had the response that if he puts the question on notice, we will provide him the information that we can.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: This is estimates. This is being able to actually —

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The member is not actually asking about the budget as such. The member is asking about a program. We have been very generous in answering details about COVID and the program.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: That is to do with the budget.

The CHAIR: Ten questions have been asked on this matter, member. You have already had your go at this, member.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: All I want to clarify is that the commissioner, in one of his answers to the member for North West Central —

The CHAIR: All right, ask the question quickly.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: — indicated he was prepared to provide some supplementary information.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The member well knows that I am the one who says whether we provide supplementary information or not.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: I understand that, but I would like to request from the minister that that offer from the commissioner to provide supplementary information be accepted and it be given a number so that we can obtain that information.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: As the member would be aware, there is a time frame involved. The obligation falls upon me to provide supplementary information to Parliament in a tight time frame ahead of our consideration of the budget.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: The commissioner indicated he was prepared to provide it.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The member has had the answer.

The CHAIR: Member, we are not here to debate. There have been 10 questions answered.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Put the question on notice and I will attempt to answer it promptly.

Mr V.A. Catania interjected.

The CHAIR: Members!

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: How hard is it to say how many people got the G2G PASS?

The CHAIR: I will call you to order, member for Hillarys.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: What about being open and transparent? How many people got the G2G PASS in the last three months?

[7.40 pm]

The CHAIR: The member for North West Central indicated that he had a question on another issue.

Mr S.A. MILLMAN: I have a further question on Operation Tide.

The CHAIR: The member for Mount Lawley.

Mr S.A. MILLMAN: A rising tide lifts all boats. This is a virulent and highly contagious virus and our police officers are putting themselves in harm's way to keep our community safe. I know the minister is concerned about keeping our police officers safe. What measures have been put in place to protect police officers and provide for their occupational health and safety in the face of COVID-19?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: As the member for Mount Lawley is clearly aware, I have a huge commitment to keep our police officers safe. People in here will be aware that we have put in place some additional legislative measures to do with penalties for people who threaten that they have COVID and then spit at or assault a police officer, and for those who may actually have COVID. In addition, we have fast-tracked a range of things that will protect our police officers. For example, we have fast-tracked the rollout of body-worn cameras. That is a \$24.6 million program. Generally, the community responds well to knowing that the cameras are there. They protect police officers. Ultimately, more and more people in the community will become aware that their behaviour will be recorded because the police have cameras on them. Therefore, if they assault or threaten a police officer or do something else, the whole incident will be recorded. We went through years of not having that independent recording and people would sometimes take an excerpt from a mobile phone to a television station or wherever and say, "Look what this police officer did." They showed none of the lead-up, none of the provocation and none of the offensive things that the individual said or did, so that is important.

Another measure that we have put in place is the scheme for the vests. That is a \$19.2 million program to provide personal-issue body armour. The number of officers is also important so that there are sufficient officers on the frontline to deal with COVID and other associated issues. That is why we utilised for a time fast-tracking officers from the academy. We made that commitment back in April, immediately in addition to the 150 additional officers, so that we could provide support. We have also funded 200 electronic monitoring devices—effectively, ankle bracelets—so that we can protect police officers. We have put in place 100 automatic number plate recognition devices. Members might ask what that has to do with protecting police officers and the community from COVID. One of the things that can be done with that equipment, for example, is that if a person is required to quarantine, police will take note of the vehicle the person usually drives, and the registration plate can be uploaded into our ANPR system. Therefore, if that number plate is seen out and about, it is immediately drawn to the police's attention. That is about keeping the community safe.

Getting to the member's point about the safety of officers, I think it is important for officers to have the best information available to them about the health of the person driving the vehicle. For example, if that person was supposed to be quarantining because there is a belief they might have COVID, when pulling that vehicle over, the police officer needs to know that the driver of the vehicle should be in quarantine and therefore might have COVID and that he or she needs to take the appropriate protective measures.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: Can I ask a further question on that?

The CHAIR: It is a further question on a matter that the opposition has already asked eight questions on.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: I could ask a new question, then.

The CHAIR: Yes, and the member can get in line. The member for North West Central is the next in line.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I refer to the tracking and tracing capabilities under the heading "COVID-19 WA Recovery Plan" on page 417 of budget paper No 2. I notice that in this year's budget and in the forward estimates quite a bit of money is dedicated to tracking and tracing. Is that solely to do with ankle bracelets for COVID-19 and for what the minister just said regarding preparing for COVID-19 to be around for quite a while? Is the government therefore allocating the funds needed to be able to track and trace and put ankle bracelets on as many people as the government sees fit?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The tracking and tracing capacity is very useful for COVID-19 and it was purchased for that. However, most of the devices and things that we have purchased have many other policing applications. I might get the commissioner or one of the other officers to explain that further. For example, yes, we purchased extra automatic number plate recognition technology devices for COVID-19, but it is very useful in many other applications. We have fitted out 85 police vehicles and 15 specialised trailers with that technology. Similarly, there is a range of other applications for electronic monitoring tracking devices. It is a little about futureproofing. We are not using all those tracking devices at this time, but we need to know that we have the capacity. I will get the commissioner to add something.

Mr C. Dawson: In the period we sought budget approvals to procure the 200 tracking devices, for instance, which are identical to the electronic monitoring bracelets used by the Department of Justice —

Mr V.A. CATANIA: How much are the 200 devices worth?

Mr C. Dawson: Deputy Commissioner Blanch, who is overseeing that program, could add to that.

In April, when we were facing community transmission infections, everything was looking gloomier than it is looking now in October. Having said that, we had to prepare for a widespread community outbreak. They were the facts. The member might recall the vessels *Artania* and the *Vasco da Gama*. We had thousands of people arriving. In the case of the German cruise liner, large numbers of people were infected, some of whom, sadly, passed away. That is the context of the moment in time that we procured the 200 electronic bracelets. I have issued orders for four people who were in quarantine but, due to their behaviour and risk profile, I was satisfied that they required, in addition to quarantine, to be fitted with an electronic monitoring bracelet, which geolocates them within metres. That is a system that we use in our State Operations Command Centre and it also has broader applications, which, with the consent of the minister, Deputy Commissioner Blanch could expand on.

My closing remark is that I credit the Western Australian community for supporting what Health and Police are doing. I call it policing by consent. We have issued upwards of only around 300 infringements for people in this state who have breached since the emergency was declared. That is a very sharp differential between us and another Australian jurisdiction that has seen over 30 000 people breach. It is probably no surprise which jurisdiction that it is. It has been a very different environment. We procured the electronic bracelets in anticipation of what might be a widespread COVID-19 outbreak or widespread breaching, but they have a very valuable application. With the minister's consent, Mr Blanch could expand on what other applications it has and the price per unit.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The budgeted amount for the GPS tracking devices is \$3 million in total. I ask Mr Blanch to add further comments.

Mr C. Blanch: The electronic monitoring bracelets are around \$6 000 apiece, and there are 200 of them. Doing the maths, that does not equal \$3 million. Prior to COVID-19 coming to Western Australia, we did not have the capacity to monitor electronic monitoring bracelets within the State Operations Command Centre. We also built a back end that enabled our data to come together—not only the electronic monitoring data, but also all the other data that police collect. The tracking and tracing capability, including the automatic numberplate recognition and the electronic monitoring, is a very powerful tool. Western Australia police take the privacy of Western Australians very seriously. We put an ethical use of technology framework around the use of these technologies. Section 70A of the Emergency Management Act, which was included as part of the act when COVID started, allowed the use of electronic monitors. We had to rapidly put together a capability to do that and to put those on people, which we have done four times, as the commissioner said.

As to the ANPR network, as I think everyone appreciates, for a state of our size, it does not matter how many police we have; it is very difficult to keep track of people who might be escaping authority. We use that very judiciously around identifying people when they are breaching quarantine. As the minister said, we have an alert system that pings if someone has breached quarantine. Under new amendments to the Bail Act, we are running a pilot with Mandurah Magistrates Court around recidivist offenders. We can also use the ANPR to find people at risk—so, people who have threatened suicide, people who have gone missing, and people who have committed offences that involve a penalty of three years' imprisonment or more. It is a very, very successful tool for police and it keeps the community safe.

[7.50 pm]

Dr A.D. BUTI: I refer the minister to the line item “Body Armour” on page 418 under “Spending Changes”. I ask for an update on the rollout of body armour and how it is being used to protect police officers.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Read the ministerial statement!

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I am glad the member for North West Central was listening. I thank the member for Armadale for that question. The body armour project has been very close to my heart. It is something that has needed to be put in place for some time. We used to have the old ballistic vests; they were heavy, they were not personal issue and they were not useful for current purposes in which police officers face the threat of knives, syringes and other sharp implements. The other factor was that we clearly needed to have vests that were as lightweight as possible whilst providing the protection to withstand a bullet. I actually saw a demonstration of the vest. These are state-of-the-art vests; they are the best in the world. They are personally fitted. As the member for North West Central alluded to, I made a statement recently that I got to meet Mrs Ethne Moller, who is actually from Victoria, who had been right around the state. She and her husband shared the driving as they towed their caravan out to regional areas. She flew to a few locations in the police plane, but she largely travelled the length and breadth of our state towing a caravan. It was a \$19 million commitment. They are personal issue. Thinking about the COVID-19 pandemic, I am really pleased that police got individual personal-issue vests. An officer does not want to be popping on a vest that has someone else's sweat and everything else in it! As Mrs Moller pointed out to me, after a while the vests mould to the body. It is a bit like a pair of shoes that have been worn for a while; the vest moulds to the body. It makes for a much higher level of comfort.

The member for Armadale requested an update. As at the end of September, 6 203 officers had been measured and 3 611 have had their kits delivered. The remaining vests will be supplied in early 2021. I am told that storage for

those vests has been installed at 98 sites so far. By sites, we generally mean police stations or units. It is very important that police have a proper, what I will call, airing cupboard. It is not quite an airing cupboard, but these vests do need to be stored appropriately.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: On that same item, in an earlier response to the member for Mount Lawley, the minister indicated that the cost of that program was about \$19.2 million. In last year's budget and in her ministerial statement in, I think, April 2019, the cost was indicated to be \$15.4 million for 6 200 vests—three more than had been measured up, so around about the same. What explains the 25 per cent increase in the cost of the rollout of the body armour from last year's budget and the minister's press release of 13 April and now?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Quite obviously, since last year's budget we have been through that selection process and let the contract. Inspector Brett Baddock headed up that process for us. Effectively, we have spared no expense. We have bought the best possible vests for our officers. As I said, they are state of the art. They are exceptional in terms of the calibre of bullets and the proximity from which someone can fire one of those bullets at the vest and for it not to impact on an officer. We have the very best, and that is what the total cost has come in at.

Mr K.M. O'DONNELL: On behalf of most Western Australians, I wish to thank all police officers for their commitment and dedication to keeping us safe during these times.

I refer to the fourth paragraph on page 419 of budget paper No 2. The heading at the top of the page is "Keeping Communities Safer Together". There will be 800 additional police officers, which is a very good thing. It also says that there will be an additional 150 officers in the next four years as part of the recovery plan, which will take the number to just under 1 000. Besides those additional police officers, how many will go through over the forward estimates—this year and the next three years—to take it well over 1 000?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I will get one of the advisers, maybe the commissioner, to give the member some further detail about the numbers we will need to cover for attrition. All of the officers we have committed to are over and above attrition. The member will be aware that we have already delivered about 150 officers within the last three years. A hundred were for the meth border force, 25 were for the regional enforcement unit on regional roads, a number were for the 24-hour and extended-hours police stations, and some others were allocated to domestic violence matters and other tasks, taking the total number to about 150. The 150 we committed to in April are already training and, in committing to a further 800, that will take our total to 1 100. Committing to that 800—that is 200 per year—it is starting this year. I did hear someone suggest that they were being back-ended. I understand that is a technique that some governments have deployed at various times. It is not something that we are doing. The 150, plus the initial 200, are in the 2019–20 budget, they are in this budget and they are underway. In addition, there is the 200 in each of those three out years, taking the total to 950, or an overall total of 1 100 provided by the McGowan government. In addition to that—the member is quite right—we will need to cover for attrition. I will just pass over to the commissioner to talk about those kinds of numbers because we are planning for that at the academy. We really are ramping up the number of recruit schools through the academy.

Mr C. Dawson: In regard to the totality of the additional police officers, the number of 950 means that in the first financial year a total of 350 additional will be recruited, and thereafter 200 per year for the following three financial years to make a total of 950 FTE. We have already recruited the first 150 police officers that were announced by the government in April this year; therefore, while they are appropriated in this current financial year, we will have completed that recruitment and graduating process in April of next year. The first 150 will have completed their full 27–28 weeks training. Taking into account the matter of attrition, we are planning for an average of 330 full-time equivalents per annum, which takes into account the additional officers plus the natural attrition that will occur with people resigning and/or passing away. With that, that is the estimate that will be required per annum. Obviously, a big recruiting campaign is underway. Mr Dreiberger may have further details should the member wish for any further information.

[8.00 pm]

Mr G. Dreiberger: I have nothing further to add.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: It is fantastic that the budget provides for so many extra police officers. With these new police officers in the budget, is there a policy in the police force that there has to be a minimum of three police officers at a police station?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The smaller stations have two. There are no single-officer stations. There were single-officer stations during the Court government but we got rid of them when the Gallop government was elected in 2001. The member's father actually campaigned on that issue from opposition.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: It is good that we share the same vigour to try to get more police officers. Are there any single-manned police stations at the moment, particularly in regional WA?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: There is single officer staffing rather than manning at a station. I understand that the member is aware of one such station.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Yes.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I think Mr Dreiberger might have some information on that because in his role as deputy commissioner, he has responsibility for regional Western Australia.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: They are all good police officers, by the way, who do a fantastic job.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: They do.

Mr G. Dreiberger: If the member is referring to Pannawonica and Paraburdoo Police Stations, they have recently been assisting in the Exmouth police district to cover the Coral Bay issue with extra persons there on school holidays and over this period of time with lots of people travelling up north. We have had officers from two locations working in Coral Bay. We always deploy our resources in the best possible way that we can to meet the greatest needs at any point in time. In those two locations, yes, we have had officers away working in Coral Bay.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: That is interesting, because I thought that maybe police officers might be on leave and therefore the stations cannot have anyone come in and that is why they have only one police officer. The minister might want to check that out. I am glad that Mr Dreiberger mentioned Coral Bay and Exmouth—this is a further question about police resources—especially at the moment, with the influx of tourists. I think there was an influx of 20 000 people in Exmouth and 6 000 in Coral Bay, with no extra police officers resourced to Exmouth, which covers Coral Bay. Exmouth has four police officers, and no police in attendance, with 6 000 people down the road at Coral Bay. Exmouth's four police officers would normally cover the 2 500 who live and reside in Exmouth.

The CHAIR: Is there a question at the end of this?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: With an influx of 20 000 people in Exmouth plus 6 000 down the road, will there be any extra police resources in not only Exmouth, where they are desperately needed, but also resources, police officers, in Coral Bay?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Of course, the Commissioner of Police allocates police officers to where they are needed and if he thinks police officers are desperately needed somewhere, he sends them there. He obviously gets advice about regional WA from Deputy Commissioner Dreiberger and Assistant Commissioner Jo McCabe, both of whom the member would be familiar with and would see regularly in his electorate. I understand that there have been significantly greater numbers of people visiting Coral Bay. It is anticipated that the kind of season of tourists and people enjoying Coral Bay will probably be much longer. We are expecting that to be extended. As the member is well aware, Coral Bay is a beautiful place for families and individuals to go on holiday to fish, swim, camp, whatever. One of the factors that the police take into account is crime in an area; that is, how many call-outs there have been and the purpose of those call-outs. As the member is well aware, in season a roster of police goes from Exmouth to Coral Bay. Officers are from time to time deployed from Carnarvon to Coral Bay, which is a much further distance to travel. I understand that Kim Massam, the superintendent for the region, met with the development commission and perhaps the shire to talk about the additional resources that are needed right across a range of government agencies. The police are very happy to participate in those talks. I think that on occasions—Mr Dreiberger or the commissioner can clarify this—and during key times, police officers will use hotel or private accommodation in Coral Bay if they need to stay there —

Mr V.A. CATANIA: If they can get it.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: If they can get it, yes. They have arrangements in place. I understand why the member is asking the question. It is not just a population base that determines police numbers; it is also the level of crime that comes with it, and I suspect that there is not a lot of crime necessarily in Coral Bay. I will ask the commissioner to talk.

Mr C. Dawson: In regard to the resource allocation, I reserve the right to deploy officers where they can be best utilised to protect the community throughout the state. We obviously take note of not only population density, but also the number of liquor outlets, the road traffic and safety issues associated with people travelling up and down particularly regional highways, and myriad other datasets. Obviously, in regard to the specific locality of Coral Bay, Superintendent Massam was scheduled to meet with the Coral Bay Progress Association only yesterday but, unfortunately, it was cancelled, not by the police, and has to be rescheduled. It is ongoing dialogue with the local progress association and the local community. We are heading into a warm weekend this weekend. As we do in the metropolitan area, we will put additional resources at Scarborough Beach, for instance, and we do that equally in regional areas when there are not only events but extra holidaymakers. I do not say that just because the member is sitting here; it is a fact. On average, the Coral Bay area has about 20 incident reports a year. By rate of offending, it is not the busiest locality but that does not mean that we ignore it. We routinely place officers there during peak season, as I am sure the member would be aware as a local member. One of the things that I am aware of is that the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a large influx of intrastate tourism. I have had to travel around a bit myself and I have seen the very vibrant movement of people. With the additional 150 officers, I have met with my senior executive team and we anticipate to put an additional 100 sworn officers throughout regional Western Australia, which will include the districts that cover this area. I will not necessarily particularise Coral Bay because we do not have police infrastructure there, but those are the sorts of discussions that we are having with the local community. Obviously, we will brief the minister accordingly should there be a resource requirement that says that is deserving of a permanent position. We will deploy as evenly as we can, depending on the demand and requirements.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: In terms of police resourcing, the commissioner mentioned Carnarvon and the influx of tourists. Mt Augustus is a classic example with three deaths in one week, which required a huge amount of resource from Carnarvon and Burringurrah and leaves those communities quite open. With the pressure that JobSeeker puts on a community like Carnarvon in terms of alcohol and drugs, police in Carnarvon are under immense pressure, as the commissioner would know, with not only the local population but also the influx of tourists, such as those who visit Mt Augustus.

Will any more resources be deployed to Carnarvon, because that is becoming a major issue?

[8.10 pm]

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I commend the member for North West Central for taking the opportunity to raise the need for additional resources for his electorate in the presence of the commissioner, the two deputy commissioners and other senior police personnel. I think they have got the message loud and clear; he has made the case. The commissioner will consider that along with all the other requests that he gets.

Mr S.A. MILLMAN: My question also concerns the 800 additional FTEs. As the minister knows, community safety is a very important issue in my community of Mt Lawley. We have a couple of a very active Facebook pages and the newly established Mt Lawley Neighbourhood Watch. How will the additional 800 police officers provide additional community safety, both in my community of Mt Lawley, working in concert with the Neighbourhood Watch, and across Western Australia generally?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I thank the member for Mount Lawley for the question. As I have already highlighted, the commissioner will prioritise officers on a needs basis, but there are some clear areas of priority. There has not been much negative comment. Most people in the community have really welcomed the additional 950 police officers that the McGowan government has now committed to and they can see the benefits of that. I see that a very small minority of people think that will mean we will get a police state and just lock up more people in jail. That is certainly not the intent. The police do a lot of proactive work in the community. Those communities that are lucky enough to have a police and community youth centre in their area know that the work that police do with youth in those centres is sensational and deters people from getting involved in crime. Even where there are no PCYCs in regional communities and other places, there are Blue Light discos and police get involved in football and basketball matches. They do a lot of really proactive things.

We have found that the mental health co-response teams have been an incredibly effective way of dealing with people. We do not want people to continually give rise to police call-outs. The mental health co-response teams can link people with the mental health assistance they need by getting them in front of their practitioner or getting them some appropriate support. That avoids them getting in trouble with the law and future police call-outs.

There are currently a lot of demands on our police officers. Mental health and drug issues are at the forefront, as is domestic violence. The number of domestic assaults is on the up right around Australia. Some of that is potentially attributable to the impacts of COVID. I am sure that people around the world are analysing that. When we put a priority on educating the community that an assault in the home is not a private thing but is an assault and a crime that needs to be reported to police and that the perpetrators need to be dealt with, we encourage more people to come forward and report it. We have provided those support networks.

I am very excited about the additional number of police officers. I know that the commissioner is looking forward to sending some more officers out to regional Western Australia. Again, I commend the member for drawing attention to Mt Lawley and all the suburbs that make up the beautiful electorate that he represents, as I would only have expected him to.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: I refer to the fourteenth dot point on page 420 under the heading “Keeping Communities Safer Together”, which starts on page 419 and continues to page 420, which is about workforce safety, health and welfare. I think we are all supportive of a very positive and safe workforce environment for our police officers, who do such a great job. Can the minister provide an update to the house on any progress that has been made around police compensation, which has been promised by both sides of politics for a long time; and whether it is anticipated that the legislation that is required to give effect to that compensation piece will be introduced into this place during this term?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Yes. I anticipate giving an update on that in the course of the next month or so.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: Does that mean that legislation will be introduced or not?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The member will be aware that we made some commitments about police-specific compensation at the last election. We have already moved on some elements of that; for example, we have put in place the \$16 million redress scheme. That is a first in Australia. Nowhere else has any government in Australia moved to try to provide some recognition of wrongs that were done in the past. The member also knows that police officers used to be dismissed under section 8, which is the same section of the Police Act used to dismiss those who had brought themselves into disrepute some way or another. That was a pretty undignified way of leaving. We have had a planned process for this. We have amended the Police Act so that officers who need to retire because they

are medically unfit are no longer sent out through section 8, which is the same section under which those officers who might be deemed to be corrupt are dismissed. We have moved, with the support of the Medically Retired West Australian Police Officers Association, to implement the redress scheme, which, I think, concluded in May of this year.

Although people say that police do not have any workers' compensation, that is not a true statement overall. Many elements of the treatment of injured and sick police officers are superior to those that other workers get, and rightfully so. Police officers run towards danger and put themselves on the front line, so they need to have that support. Our police officers can have up to 168 days of sick leave, for example, and all their medical expenses are covered. People in other workplaces, such as nurses, teachers, bus drivers or whatever do not get those kinds of leave entitlements or that automatic payment of their medical bills and support. If, for one reason or another, 168 days of sick leave in a year is not enough to recover, they can apply to have that extended. Over the years, there have been a large number of examples of that being extended. There are people who have had a year or more worth of sick leave on full pay with their medical bills paid. Some years ago, we also moved to ensure that medical expenses could be paid post-retirement and we put a process in place for that. That was something that I initiated and was carried on by John Kobelke. I think the legislation was finally brought into the Parliament by Christian Porter. I thank him for the recognition he gave me for instigating that scheme when he introduced that legislation. The gap is complicated because it is not just about standard workers' compensation. If police wanted standard workers' compensation like every other government worker, they could have had it 20 or 30 years ago. Police officers do not want to give up their existing entitlements to 168 days of sick leave a year, with the right of extension; the right to have all their medical expenses paid whilst they are on the job; and for those ongoing medical expenses to be paid post-retirement. We will not take any of that away from them. The gap is a termination payment for those who need to be terminated, and we are nearing a stage where I will be able to make an offer to the WA Police Union and put something forward, and I look forward to doing that.

[8.20 pm]

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I refer to page 418 of budget paper No 2, volume 2, and the line items "Operation Heat Shield" and "Other COVID-19—Operating Costs".

The CHAIR: What number sorry, member?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: It is under "New Initiatives" in the table on page 418. Is the minister able to detail how many people in hotel quarantine have had their fees waived under the hardship program? Does that come under "Operation Heat Shield" or "Other COVID-19—Operating Costs"?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: No. Operation Heat Shield was \$5 million that we allocated for the period from last November to April, mainly for overtime, so that we could deploy officers over the summer period. It is a worldwide phenomenon that crime increases over summer. In summer periods, people are outdoors, socialising and enjoying themselves or whatever, so we tend to see more assaults and more crime, and, also, kids are on school holidays and we see more shoplifting and other events like that. Therefore, that was really a crime reduction strategy to have a visible police presence in key areas, whether it was the city, Northbridge, Joondalup or Armadale, or country centres. A proportion of that money was spent in regional Western Australia, but most of it was spent in metropolitan Western Australia, but it is nothing to do with COVID.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: As I said, does hotel quarantine come under "Other COVID-19—Operating Costs" in terms of any fees that have been waived due to hardship? Do people who have had their fees for hotel quarantine waived because of hardship come under the police budget at all?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The costs of hotel quarantine and any waivers associated with that do not come under Police; I understand it comes under the Department of Health. The Commissioner of Police has just prompted me that it also comes under the Department of Communities. Health has a major role; the Department of Communities looks at the hardship cases.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: Just a further question on Operation Heat Shield. The minister explained the purposes of Operation Heat Shield, and \$5 million was allocated in the budget for it. I have asked a question on notice about this. I note that the largest portion of overtime costs allocated to Operation Heat Shield was in May this year, when more than \$1 million was allocated. It is interesting that a large part of Operation Heat Shield was for the city and Northbridge, but nightclubs were not allowed to be open in April and May. Therefore, why was almost 40 per cent—such a disproportionate amount—of all the funds expended on overtime through Operation Heat Shield between December and June expended in April and May, when Northbridge was at its quietest?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: There were some quiet periods in Northbridge in terms of dealing with night-time activities. Pubs and clubs were largely closed. There were plenty of photos on social media and elsewhere of James Street with no-one standing in it. I understand that \$1.3 million of that \$5 million funding was allocated to regional Western Australia, so it is not fair to categorise it as a Northbridge and city program. There was \$1.3 million for the regions and \$3.7 million for the metropolitan area.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Does it include Mandurah?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Mandurah is regional, yes.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: What about outside —

The CHAIR: Member, you are not asking the question at the moment.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The member will have to ask the member for Mandurah about that; he will probably sing the answer for him!

Operation Heat Shield was a very successful program. In the metropolitan area, there were some 4 822 charges; 1 982 arrests; 1 228 summonses; 48 juvenile justice team referrals; 346 Criminal Code infringement notices; 6 281 retailer engagements, for which we got very positive feedback; 263 move-on notices issued; 1 643 homeless welfare checks; and 607 other referrals.

In regional Western Australia—pointing out that it is not just a Northbridge or city thing—there were 1 060 charges; 518 arrests; 197 summonses; 25 juvenile justice team referrals; 37 Criminal Code infringement notices; 1 607 retailer engagements; 51 move-on notices issued; and 1 038 licensed premise patrols. I understand that over that time crime was well below the five-year average. In respect of month-to-month expenditure, it was clearly allocated on a needs basis. Perhaps Deputy Commissioner Dreibergs might have some more detail on that.

Mr G. Dreibergs: Police expenditure of Operation Heat Shield money was spent evenly over a period of time. I am not sure what the accounting was in terms of the last expenditure in May, but I can tell the member that it was not just about focusing on events or Northbridge. It was very heavily focused on regional WA and metropolitan districts as well. It was focused on volume crime offending, so really targeting those who were involved in burglary, motor vehicle theft, assaults and robberies. We increased our sanction rate significantly. If we are talking about Perth in the month of May, we were quite effective in having a very high sanction rate for robberies, which meant that a lot of the money was spent on overtime towards officers doing investigations relating to offences that occurred during the period of Operation Heat Shield. Effectively, the way that Heat Shield operated was that there was a very high visible presence in the Perth CBD, supported heavily by an investigative approach in terms of targeting repeat, recidivist offenders in the CBD and outwards into all the districts as well.

It also targeted high-harm areas in regional WA. Meekatharra, Geraldton and other areas were targeted for high-harm around alcohol abuse in hotels, bottle shops and other places that were of high risk of causing harm to the community at that point in time. It was effectively used across the entire period; it was not just for Perth in the summer. It was very well planned over that period, right through to May. In an operational police context, we had monthly reporting from the districts. Each individual police district reported to us on every single operation they were conducting to target volume crime and to provide highly visible policing at that time.

Ms E. HAMILTON: I refer to page 419, under “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency”, particularly with regard to the Aboriginal cadet program. As the member for Joondalup, I am quite fortunate to have the Western Australia Police Academy in my electorate. The minister and I have both attended quite a number of events; in fact, back in 2018 I attended the Aboriginal cadet program graduation, which was great. I would like details on the numbers from 2017–18 and the current numbers, and the plans for 2020–21.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I thank the member for Joondalup for her excellent question and for her support of the police. I am very pleased that she was able to attend our recent police Remembrance Day ceremony at the Joondalup academy. The member’s presence there was certainly appreciated. The member has asked about the cadet program. It has been in place for a while. Our commissioner has identified our police force as not having sufficient numbers of Aboriginal people. That is no more obvious than when people go somewhere like the Pilbara or the Kimberley. A high percentage of Indigenous people live in the general population, yet those who police it do not reflect that diversity. We are really keen to have a more diverse police force that reflects the general community. We want to see more Aboriginal people in the roles of police officers or auxiliary officers. That is why the Commissioner of Police signalled that we would limit the intake of Aboriginal people into our cadet program in some years, now that it has been diversified to include Aboriginal people and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Regarding the program numbers that the member asked me about, I understand that in the cadet program in 2017, there were 10 Aboriginal people; in 2018, it was increased to 33 Aboriginal people; in 2019, there were 15 Aboriginal people and 10 people from CALD backgrounds; and in 2020, there were 13 Aboriginal people and 15 people from CALD backgrounds. As of 1 October 2020, 58 are cadets in training. Our next program will commence in January 2021.

Meeting suspended from 8.30 to 8.40 pm

The CHAIR: We are dealing with division 28 and we now have a quorum. The member for Scarborough has the call.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I refer to the “WA Recovery Plan and COVID-19 Pandemic Response” on page 418. Regarding border security arrangements, can the minister advise whether the police officers who are currently working at the airport have their own facilities, including a crib room and a dedicated washroom, or do they need to share those facilities with the passengers at the terminal?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I will ask Assistant Commissioner Paul Steel to respond to that.

Mr P. Steel: Yes, I can advise that, as we work our way through those locations—bear in mind there are multiple airports—we have arranged, through Health, to take over one of the private lounges that is not currently being used. Police officers are able to use that space. Police officers will move from terminal to terminal, so there may be occasions when they are not able to access private facilities, but they are available. We have made a significant investment in the spaces where officers process passengers. If members have been at the airport recently, as opposed to in the early days when trestle tables were set up, they will see we have invested quite heavily in booths designed by the health department with perspex to protect officers from interacting with people who might be COVID-positive. As much as we can, we have tried to make sure that those officers are catered for with their personal protective equipment, in comfort and via rostering to ensure they are not disadvantaged by working away from a police location.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Can the minister advise when the arrangements were made for the lounges? On what date were the lounges made available to police officers?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I will refer that question to AC Steel.

Mr P. Steel: That process happened more recently when we moved to a single terminal. We negotiated with the airlines to come in at a single location. In the early days, that was not the case. Officers were using facilities within the airport or with the assistance of the areas used by the Australian Federal Police. It has been only in the past months that we have been able to utilise the lounges at those locations. As I said, it will not always be the case depending on which terminal police officers are at, but when we have been able to coordinate lounges, it has been the case.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Is any cost being borne by WA Police for the use of those facilities?

Mr P. Steel: At this stage, WA Police is not funding the lounge. It is being supported through Health. However, on an ongoing basis, as the Health footprint is not as prevalent at the airport, that arrangement may change. The costs relating to the additional equipment, the personal protective equipment and the desks et cetera, have been borne by WA Police.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Further to the cost of the PPE and equivalent, what PPE are the officers provided with and how many changes are they permitted per shift?

Mr P. Steel: The use of PPE has changed as the pandemic has progressed. In the early days, the advice from Health in terms of what PPE was required, how long it could be used for and what stocks of PPE were available, varied quite rapidly. Compared with some other policing jurisdictions, we were one of the only policing jurisdictions that put in place a very early process to monitor and ensure that our police officers have sufficient personal protective equipment. One of those purchases was re-usable masks. They do not look particularly pretty. They are black, they look quite confronting and, frankly, they are difficult to speak through. We had a health assessment done because the safety of our officers during airport processing is paramount. One of the pieces of advice that Health came back to us with was that using those re-usable masks, although they were personal issue and we were trying to do the right thing, increased the risk to officers because they had to talk louder. It meant that the masks would move and they had to continually move the masks around their face. Every time they moved the mask around their face without changing gloves, washing their hands and those sorts of things, the risk of transmission increased. Health very kindly provided us with some guidelines on what masks were appropriate for that activity. That led to the creation of the desks with the barriers and the frequency at which those masks needed to be changed per shift. Officers are provided ample PPE to change gloves, glasses and masks with proper set donning and doffing procedures as often is required during a shift. That will vary from person to person. Although we can say that a disposable face mask may last a person one to two hours, if that mask becomes wet because of the amount of time someone is speaking or expiring, it needs to be replaced earlier. It may be that some officers are required to change their mask on a regular basis. A supervisor monitors the donning and doffing procedures at all times to make sure that when officers are putting on and taking off their personal protective equipment, they are doing it in a manner that minimises the risk of any infection. These are all lessons that we learnt and things that we did not think we would need to know seven months ago.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I refer the minister to page 418 of budget paper No 2 and the third dot point under “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency”. My question relates to the COVID-19 WA recovery plan. What are the capital works priorities as part of the \$23.8 million allocated for the refurbishment of police stations?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: It is great to get a question from the member for Armadale about a police station other than Armadale Police Station that he campaigned on for quite a few years.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Do not worry; I have a question coming.

[8.50 pm]

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Yes, I think something may be coming.

Excellent progress has been made in Armadale, and it will be a fantastic police and justice complex.

The line item the member referred to relates to the \$23.8 million that is part of our COVID-19 WA recovery plan. That is about doing small works at police stations, long overdue maintenance works and improvements at a range of police stations. The Western Australia Police Force basically highlighted its main priorities.

Those selected include, in the metropolitan area, Belmont Police Station, \$1.5 million; Kwinana Police Station, \$2 million; Mandurah Police Station, \$2 million; Palmyra Police Station, \$2 million; and Rockingham Police Station, \$1.5 million. Regional areas got the bulk of the money, I think, with Laverton Police Station getting \$1.5 million. In the great southern, they are Katanning Police Station, \$1.5 million; Narrogin Police Station, \$2 million; Wagin Police Station, \$1 million; and Williams Police Station, \$1 million. In the Kimberley, they are Derby Police Station, \$1.5 million, and Kununurra Police Station, \$0.5 million. In the south west, they are Collie Police Station, \$1.5 million, and Donnybrook Police Station, \$1 million; and in the wheatbelt, it is Merredin Police Station, \$1.5 million. Some planning and administration fees are associated with that, which I understand total \$1.8 million. That gives that total of \$23.8 million. These works are obviously fantastic for those local police stations. I have been out to a number of them and the officers are pretty excited to see those works happening at long last. This will make a real difference to the working environment of many police officers in both metro and country areas, but it also means that given that they are in the scheme of building small projects, a lot of local builders and tradies will get that work, making those improvements in the local community. Hopefully it will help create a steady stream of work in this post-COVID environment.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I am sure police officers in those areas that have some capital works are very excited. The north west has police stations in Exmouth, Cue, Onslow and Paraburdoo. Onslow Police Station, which is basically a donga on stilts, was built in 1968 or 1969; I cannot remember. Paraburdoo Police Station is very much the same. They are well and truly past their use-by dates. When will the capital works program hit the north west, given the fact that the engine room of our economy is coming from those places that I just mentioned?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I was relatively recently at Carnarvon Police Station, which is one of the best police stations in regional Western Australia, rivalled only by the courthouse next door, which is even flasher.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: We were very happy to get the money for that one.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Again, the member has made a case for some police stations. Unfortunately, we inherited a very long list of dilapidated police stations; very little had been done in maintenance of police stations for quite some years when we came to government. Getting this money through the COVID process has really been a boost to WA Police Force. I hear what the member has said about Onslow and other places and will take that into account when the commissioner next looks at his priority list.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: I refer to page 432. Under the heading “Details of Administered Transactions”, there is a point about fines that have been derived from firearms licensing infringements. The budgeted amount was \$100 000 for the previous financial year, and the actual recoup was \$169 000. Is there an explanation about why we have had this increase in firearms licensing infringements? Is it because of poor compliance, is it because the police have had the opportunity to focus on compliance activities, or is some other factor driving them?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The Firearms Act 1973 and the Firearms Regulations 1974 enable WA Police Force to issue an infringement as an alternative option to deal with firearms offences. These relate mostly to not renewing a firearms licence within three months of the due date. These infringements are issued by WA Police Force and have been for many years under the provisions of the act. There are also the Criminal Code Amendment (Infringement Notices) Act 2011 and the Criminal Code (Infringement Notices) Regulations 2015, which enable the Western Australia Police Force to issue an infringement as an alternative option to deal with criminal conduct for nominated minor criminal offences by issuing notices rather than going through the court system. I will ask the commissioner to comment further.

Mr C. Dawson: In regard to the firearm regulatory system, the member might note in the budget paper he referred to a greater amount in 2018–19. As a consequence of the number of firearm thefts, particularly from regional Western Australia—but not totally that, also metro—we put in a concerted campaign and did a number of operations to overtly inspect the security cabinets and security of firearms, which resulted in a higher number of infringements being issued. As a consequence of doing those audits, many of them of course without notice, we were satisfied that that really hardened the environment so that, in both regional and metro areas, owners and licensees were required to maintain the regulatory framework for securing firearms in a locked secure manner, as is required. We did infringe excessive numbers in that particular operation, and then we audited them further. That reflects an operational proactive matter.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: The Law Reform Commission review was finally completed in 2016 and I know that the minister asked the commissioner quite some time ago about an update into the reforms that New South Wales had done. Has there been any further progress with the review of our firearms legislation; and, if so, when can we anticipate either public consultation on that sort of review, or even legislation?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I will get someone else to talk to that in a moment, but from a government perspective, I am a little disappointed that we have not been able to progress some of those reforms a little more quickly. I originally asked for some things that I thought were relatively simple and would have broad agreement, and perhaps we could act on those first. I suggested that rather than bog it down and have it too complex, I thought we could expedite matters and have a couple of tranches of firearms reform. We could put on the table those things that are

simple and agreed broadly, and do those in the first tranche. We set up a firearms working group, which I will get someone to talk about in a tick, but with that firearms working group we have now got to a broad agreement about what should be in that first tranche. We are nearing a stage at which, hopefully, we will have a bill that will be able to be presented. If the bill is not able to be presented before Parliament rises this year, I would expect to give an update to the house about progress and on which elements are being progressed. There is quite strong involvement from the industry and interested parties on that firearms working group and I understand that they are all conversant with what is being proposed in that first tranche.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: Final further question —

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Sorry, I was going to get Deputy Commissioner Blanch to add some more. I am sure the member would want to hear from him; I think he might be his constituent.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: Not quite. My borders have not been sent that far north yet! Maybe at the next election along.

Mr C. Blanch: Obviously, nationally, it is difficult to get agreement across the states and territories with how we categorise firearms. I will say that as a result of the first tranche work we did in building the licensing and firearms system to bring it into line with the national system—the Australian Firearms Information Network, which is managed by the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission—we have been a leader in police force jurisdictions to be able to access the right categories and details of firearms, but we are not licensing them out, to the point when other jurisdictions have come to us now, asking us to utilise the software that we have put in place. The firearms working group is working together to try to bring everyone into alignment. The movement of firearms and/or parts across the country poses significant challenges, particularly when they are categorised differently. We are seeking to have that alignment meet the requirements of the WA community and also making sure that all the states and territories are in strong alignment. Given that we are leading that work with the connectivity with the commonwealth system, I think we are in a good position to influence the other states and territories.

[9.00 pm]

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: The minister mentioned some of the relatively easier things to do. Permitting airsoft guns, with appropriate regulation, seems to be a no-brainer. Where have we got to with that? Have we progressed any further? It seems that it could be done by regulation, but, if it cannot, there appears to be pretty strong bipartisan support for it, so why can we not get it done?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I am not sure whether we can describe the issue of airsoft guns as being a no-brainer, as such. I amended the Firearms Act some years ago to allow for paintball guns. We put in place a regime around that because my view was that it was being played broadly unregulated. All types of people were playing it, including lawyers, accountants, corporate groups, young people and older people. It was being played without regulation and it was felt that we could put in place an effective regime. I understand that effective regimes for paintball have been put in place in most places in Australia. However, there are some key differences between paintball and airsoft, and there are some greater hazards associated with airsoft. As I understand it, airsoft is not permitted in any Australian state, and it would also require the involvement of the commonwealth. Again, I might be wrong about what the impediment is, but I think that importing airsoft guns into Australia presents a problem. There are also some problems associated with the National Firearms Agreement. I expect that Mr Blanch or someone else might be more familiar with the issues that WA police has with it. We attempted to work with Hon Aaron Stonehouse to see whether we could come up with a regime for airsoft, but the bill that he put forward certainly had quite a number of issues for police. The projectiles that are fired from an airsoft gun are very different from the paintball projectiles, for example. I understand there is a whole raft of issues with it, including being able to import the gun and the impediments to the National Firearms Agreement and so forth. That is why no state in Australia has introduced it. The member said that it is a no-brainer. Apparently, based on the advice of police, it is not as harmless as many people portray it to be and there are significant issues with it. I think the commissioner will add more to that.

Mr C. Dawson: The advice I have given the minister is confirmed in the sense that, presently, airsoft guns are a prohibited import, so it would require the commonwealth to change its position on it. The difference between what are known as paintball guns and airsoft guns is that paintball guns do not look like a conventional firearm. As the member may be aware, they have a large plastic bucket, basically, that sits on top of a pipe. They cannot easily be confused with a conventional looking weapon. The real risk that I see from a public safety perspective is that the airsoft weaponry looks in every respect like a military assault weapon. Most of them are designed to look like an AK-47 cum AR-15 Ruger mini. Those sorts of weapons are very often mistaken by the community and certainly by police officers. No-one would want a police officer to have to resort to a use-of-force application when someone was waving or carrying one of those around and potentially be involved in a lethal situation because they could not determine in a high-risk situation whether it was a replica airsoft gun or a real weapon. I have significant public safety concerns about airsoft guns that I have expressed to the minister. We have, in fact, had several offences whereby they have been found in Western Australia, and that, I think, requires some very careful advice to government about the policy position. Certainly from my position on public safety, I maintain those concerns.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I am glad that the minister brought up paintball guns, because I wrote to the minister several months ago and asked a question about them in this house. I raised this very issue several years ago in this house in regard to using a paintball gun for cattle marking. Several pastoralists out there have had their application rejected to use a paintball gun to mark their calves. I want to know what the situation is concerning using what the paintball gun was developed for and was intended to be used for, which is cattle marking. Is that illegal and why are pastoralists being prevented from being able to use a tool of their trade?

The CHAIR: I think that is contrary to standing orders in that it is asking for a legal opinion, but the minister can work around it if she wants to.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I am happy to work around it. The member for North West Central has raised this issue with me a number of times. I think that he has raised a sensible point, and I, in turn, have raised that with the police. Maybe the commissioner can provide the member with a response.

Mr C. Dawson: I am familiar with the matter, having been briefed on it. A number of pastoralists and people involved in the livestock trade are, in fact, licensed. I think that some of our people in the Department of Agriculture and Food are also exempt and able to use such weapons. I would invite any applicant who has had an application refused to further submit and/or correspond with me about that. It does not mean that I will automatically ask one of my delegates to approve it, but it is an option that is available under the Firearms Act.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I have written to the Minister for Police and the response was that the minister was awaiting further advice. I have done that through the appropriate channels.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The member has not given me the names of specific people.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I think I have, but I will give them to the minister tomorrow if I have not. It would be nice to get a resolution to this.

Indulge me, minister. I am not sure whether it is under this section, but I refer to licensing and infringements. The minister may be aware of the case of a station owner who has a range and is going through the process of getting licensing approvals. Does Western Australia Police Force have a budget for going to court and pleading its case, knowing that the police may have deeper pockets than the person who is challenging or trying to get a licence? Is a budget in place for the police firearms licensing department to go to court to prevent a range, for example, from operating in Carnarvon?

The CHAIR: That sounds like shooting blanks to me!

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I would imagine that the firearms division and the police's legal unit work to a budget. I invite the commissioner to provide further clarity for the member.

Mr C. Dawson: The firearms branch is called our Licensing Enforcement Division. Obviously, it has a budget. There is not a particularised line in the budget for that that I am familiar with. In fact, I doubt its budget is particularised to the State Administrative Tribunal appeal process. The division appears regularly in the tribunal because, as the member is aware, that is the appropriate administrative tribunal that deals with appeals generally. We obviously prosecute through the criminal courts as well, but in terms of the appeal mechanism, that is a cost that we apportion to our legal area as well. We generally have the State Solicitor or one of our internal counsel assist, so it is basically in a funded type of process. I certainly do not put any corporate limitation on it by saying, "You can only process X number of appeals" or "I want you to limit what it is." At law, I am required to ensure that the licensing arrangements comply with the Firearms Act and the regulations. It is really predicated on the genuine need and the genuine reason why an applicant can, firstly, make an application, and secondly, my delegates assess whether the application has merit. If there is a contest about that, generally it goes through an appeal at the State Administrative Tribunal. There is certainly no allocated budget that I have mandated, and nor would I, to say, "You can only do a certain number per year." It really is on a supply-and-demand basis.

[9.10 pm]

The CHAIR: I am mindful of the time. Although it is the same division, we have people from the Road Safety Commission. Members might want to consider that.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I refer to paragraph 6 under "Keeping Communities Safer Together" on page 419 in volume 2 of budget paper No 2. It is about illicit drugs. Can the minister provide an estimate of the drop in the amount of meth coming into Western Australia given the fact we have a hard border? Has there been a drop and can the minister quantify that drop in the amount of methamphetamine hitting our streets?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: With the hard border, there has been a drop in the amount of methamphetamine and other drugs coming into the community. That has been one of the bonuses. Police have learnt a lot during this period. As the member would be aware, cracking down on people who perpetrate the misery of methamphetamine in the community is a key priority for our government. That is why we committed an additional 100 officers specifically to what we termed the meth border force and the 20 other support officers. The commissioner has dedicated many more officers than that from a range of divisions to tackle the scourge of meth. He and the two deputy commissioners,

and the whole force, are determined to reduce the amount of meth circulating in our community. We know that it is a driver of crime. Not like other drugs, which meant people did burglaries and theft and whatever, meth use drives violent behaviour and assaults. That is why it is important that we get on top of it. The commissioner will no doubt talk about the specifics of the impact of the hard border and what that has meant. There has been a large number of significant busts in recent times. We also know from wastewater results that the amount of meth being consumed in the community is well down.

Mr C. Dawson: My response to the question is that over the last several years, Western Australian police have been able to seize in excess of 2.3 tonnes of methamphetamine, mainly in the crystallised form. That is the illicit drug of most harm to Australians, particularly in Western Australia. One of the serendipitous ways, to a degree, of disrupting the meth supply has accompanied the border controls that I signed on 5 April, but it is not solely that. We have had a longstanding commitment through what the minister has already mentioned, the meth border force appropriation that was provided to us, not only with additional police but also with additional analytics. We have been very busy in building our intelligence and analytical capability. That is complemented through our numberplate recognition, our capacity to utilise more CCTV, through human source and through, to be blunt, basic detective and high-end tactical disruption of particularly the drug traffickers.

In my time as commissioner, and before that, we have never attempted to try to target drug users. We charge them because we find them in possession of it, but we focus our priority squarely at the drug trafficking top end of town. That is now being realised through very large seizures. Members would be aware that we recently seized nearly \$4 million cash out of one syndicate. There was also 14.8 kilograms of meth connected with that particular transaction. That is before the courts, but that is just a snapshot of the top end of town that we are targeting. We are also proceeding to seize a lot of assets. Why are we doing that? The direct correlation between particularly methamphetamine and substance abuse and crime is very heavily related. We know that through the drug use monitoring that we have done through the East Perth watch house, and now the Perth watch house, over 20 years. From the detainees who voluntarily submitted urinalysis, the meth detected in their system rose from in the order of about 20 per cent of detainees to upwards of nearly 75 per cent. That directly tells us not only the number of detainees but also the type of offences.

In this quarter, we have had a downturn of 32 per cent in all categories of crime. That was a global figure. In relation to burglaries, our most recent stats—these are now quite consistent over this recent period—have decreased by 58.3 per cent. That is 4 718 fewer burglaries in the past quarter. That was the average over the past five years. Equally, the offence of the theft of a motor vehicle has nearly halved—there were 45.6 per cent fewer offences. Stealing itself, over the five-year average, has now decreased in the last quarter to 47.8 per cent. We know that it is having a big impact. Yes, part of it is to do with the closing of the borders, but there has also been a downturn in air traffic, road traffic and maritime traffic. That does not mean we are letting off. In fact, Mr Blanch, amongst others, is leading a very concerted effort into the drug-trafficking syndicates and we are going way beyond Western Australia; we are going to the offshore high-end targeted syndicates that are sitting outside of our jurisdiction but which import drugs into Western Australia. We are not really getting much in the way of local manufacturing. It is an imported problem. We are also exporting our efforts.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: The commissioner mentioned the September quarter. Can the commissioner clarify what that means?

Mr C. Dawson: In the last three months, the number of burglaries, for instance, has decreased by 4 047 fewer than in the previous quarter. Over a five-year average, that equates to 4 718 fewer burglaries occurring in that three-month period. As a snapshot, we are seeing a real downturn in that. The only crime type that has gone up has been assaults. We are putting some strategies in, particularly for family violence assaults. They were not quite as easy to attribute straight. Part of the directions I signed earlier for the COVID-19 pandemic required people to stay at home. That meant some homes were less safe than others; having people domiciled as opposed to on the street. We saw less offending in certain licensed premises because they were not open, but there was a corresponding increase in some assault categories at home.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Has the commissioner found that there has been a spike in the number of drug labs in Western Australian houses or premises because the hard borders have prevented it from coming in?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: It was certainly a concern for police given the advice was that most, if not all, methamphetamine comes into WA via import. It is no secret that most of it originates from China. People look for alternatives if they cannot get hold of methamphetamine, which we know they cannot. We know that the June quarter 2020 wastewater result is the lowest it has been in five years or whatever. We know the amount of methamphetamine being consumed in the community is right down. People are looking for something. I think some people are turning to alcohol and abusing it to a greater extent. The further fear is that people will go back to the bad old days of the drug labs that the member is alluding to and home-based manufacturing and manufacturing in cars, caravans or wherever. There was a period of time a few years ago when there would be a drug lab explosion just about every week. We are not back at that. I understand—I will get the commissioner to refer to it—that there have been some cases of people trying to manufacture their own drugs but it is not across the board.

[9.20 pm]

Mr C. Dawson: With consent, Mr Blanch might add to what I say. Between February and September of this year, we attended a total of 38 clandestine drugs laboratories. That is almost double—in fact, just over double—the number in the same period in 2019 when we had 17. We are seeing what I might call a concerning increase even though the numbers are nowhere near what they were several years ago. When I was in charge of the Australian Crime Commission, nationally more than 700 labs were detected with Western Australia having several hundred per annum. This is well down, but we have noted that increase in the last few months and, as the minister outlined, that has pretty well halved in terms of the amount of meth that we believe is being consumed for a range of reasons. We want to maximise our efforts to maintain that downward pressure. Mr Blanch, with the minister's consent, can add to that.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I ask Deputy Commissioner Blanch to add to that.

Mr C. Blanch: Whilst it says it has gone from 17 to 38 this year, I put clandestine laboratories in two basic categories; the first is super labs where the equipment is quite sophisticated and generally needs to be imported or brought into WA. We have not seen any super labs here this year but we have seen what I would call the vegemite jar version of labs, which is usually downloaded off the internet with people trying their best due to the shortage of methamphetamine. I also attribute that increase to the drugs and firearms squad, which has been operating for 12 months. It has executed in excess of 500 search warrants. It is an intelligence-led squad that operates in both metro and regional WA. It was funded by the government in its methamphetamine funding. It spends all day every day executing search warrants and looking for methamphetamine in the community so a significantly higher amount of drugs is being seized and clandestine smaller labs are being found.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I refer to page 418 and the WA recovery plan and COVID-19 pandemic response. Can the minister advise how many categories of people are allowed to enter Western Australia on a the G2G passes and what those categories are?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I regard that as a policy question, not a budget question.

Ms E. HAMILTON: I refer the minister to pages 417 and 418 and the COVID-19 recovery plan. How is the Western Australia Police Force contributing to the state recovery plan?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: As I outlined to the member for Mount Lawley, part of the recovery plan is the \$23 million that is being spent on repairs and maintenance at a large of number of police stations. As part of that, we have put a range of other measures in place with other works that are occurring. For example, the Fremantle police complex is a significant investment of more than \$50 million. It has needed to be done since 2013 when the dilapidated station in Henderson Street was necessarily closed and relocated in temporary and very inadequate accommodation. As part of the recovery plan, I would certainly include the recruitment of 150 police officers to strengthen the front line and the \$14.5 million that I alluded to earlier to enhance the tracking and tracing capabilities that the member for North West Central asked about for multifunction police stations, which I had not referred to. Their air conditioning, heating and ventilation certainly needs replacing and that is a \$14.2 million much-needed commitment.

There is also, as I partly alluded to earlier, the \$45.5 million that covers the additional operating costs that are directly attributed to the police force's involvement with the COVID-19 pandemic, with all that additional expenditure going towards things such as accommodation, communication, the enhanced cleaning costs that I itemised before, our border control efforts as well as the impact of contract and the commitment to technology, licences and hardware. All that work is being done by the police right throughout the 2.5 million square kilometres that is Western Australia, but also at the high tech end and all that DC Dreibergs and others have been involved in developing—not just the G2G app in the first place so that we have that application-based process which, I understand, Tasmania has taken up and Queensland is looking it as an option.

In addition, we have the very innovative G2G Now app that enables facial recognition and has a GPS coordinator. A person agrees to download the app on their phone and rather than having to use police officer resources call in to see them now and again to check that they are quarantining, we know that their phone is there all the time. We can call vastly more frequently than can a police officer call in to their home and they can be phoned several times a day. Effectively, it is a bit like the iPhone facial recognition. People have to hold their live face, not a photo or a reverse photo of it, up to the screen and it has to be shown that they are at the location they say that are at. I think that app will be taken up by other jurisdictions very usefully because it is one way of ensuring that people quarantine at home. It is better for the police because it is less time consuming, less resource intensive and it is vastly better for individuals because most people do not want to quarantine in a hotel and would much rather quarantine in their own home, an Airbnb or some other accommodation. There is a big difference between being able to locate in a free-standing house or a unit and a hotel room and, of course, it gets away from the expense of hotel accommodation, which, I understand can be claustrophobic and it is also not great for the elderly or for those who are quarantining in a hotel room with kids. It is really innovative and I could not be more pleased with the way that WA Police have been really proactive and shown real leadership in coming up with these kinds of applications that are world leading.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: I refer to page 426 of budget paper No 2, volume 2, and the line item “Breath and Drug Bus Replacement”. We know that drug bus 2, as it was called, was replaced earlier this year with two smaller nimbler and modern buses. The previous bus had been in service since 2002. When are the other large breath and drug buses due for replacement, and has any allocation been made within the forward estimates for those replacements; and, if so, will they be replaced by large buses or the newer, smaller type of buses?

[9.30 pm]

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Yes, it was innovative to get the two smaller buses. I understand that they are described as Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 516 vans. I have been to have a look at them and check them out; they are really good. In fact, they come fully kitted-out with all the equipment that people might imagine, plus more. For example, they have the national automated fingerprint identification system. In the van there is a little chair for people to sit in for a breath or a drug test. Should they test positive and further proceedings have to occur, they can put their hands on top of a small plate that looks like photocopier glass. Their fingerprints will be taken and uploaded so police can take that information and potentially identify them. The cost of the two smaller buses is significantly lower than the cost of the one big bus. It is my understanding that they are working really well. I think they are largely funded through the road trauma trust account. They are obviously much more mobile, and one bus can be deployed much more readily to country areas. I understand that we will look at getting two more of the smaller buses that have proven to be really effective. If the member wants more information about that, I am quite happy to ask Mr Warner, Mr Cameron or, indeed, one of the police officers to talk to the usefulness of the smaller buses. I think people have been very happy with them.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: That was not my question. My question was: when are the other big buses scheduled to be replaced?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: At this time, there is no schedule. Funding would need to be approved. I expect that police would seek funds through the road trauma trust account, so it would need to go to the Road Safety Council.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: I have a further question on the tests that are conducted on those buses. During the COVID period, some of that activity was, obviously, curtailed. That is understandable and no-one is criticising that. What ongoing changes to either the methodology of testing or the protection of officers conducting the testing have been put into place to deal with COVID-19 still being an issue in the community? Even though there is no community spread, it is still an issue.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: People will be aware that we ceased the bus operations for a period. They are not currently ceased; they were recommenced quite some time ago. That was in line with what occurred in other jurisdictions right around Australia at the peak of concerns. When the *Ruby Princess* and those other problematic issues were happening, that was deemed to be the appropriate thing to do, and we had to very quickly deploy police officers to do other options at that time, such as our intrastate borders. In any event, I do not think we would have wanted our officers to be breath-testing people using the methodology that we use for breath testing in this state. We have put additional precautions in place. Deputy Commissioner Blanch can give the member some further detail on that.

Mr C. Blanch: As the minister said, we ceased, through a national agreement, law enforcement breath and drug operations. When we restarted that, we engaged closely with the Department of Health on the appropriate personal protective equipment requirements. They were initially quite significant, which slowed down operations, but we were still able to do them. Over time, we have engaged with the Department of Health to make sure that we always have the right level of PPE for our officers, whether that is extra gloves or masks or things like that. That is continuing to this date. We are always making sure that we keep our officers safe.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: I know that there is a longstanding annual target of 1.8 million tests per annum. Due to the ceasing, did the Western Australia Police Force manage to reach that target in the last financial year; does it anticipate that it will meet or exceed the target this financial year; or is the need for police to be engaged in the COVID response slowing down the rate of testing?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: It has slowed down our rate of testing. From a road safety point of view, our aim is one test a year for each licensed driver. I have got a nod from the Road Safety Commission people. That is a target and best practice in Australia, so that is what we aim to do. I think we fell short of that in the last financial year thanks to COVID. We will endeavour to get as close to that as we can in this financial year.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: I am not knocking the fact that we did not get there. I am just trying to get a picture of where we are and the general impact that COVID is having.

The Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I will ask Deputy Commissioner Blanch to give the member some more accurate figures on that, but we fell short.

Mr C. Blanch: We were short during this COVID year. I do not have the figures in front of me, but I have been advised by the traffic commander that we are on track for the next financial year for 1.9 million breath tests and around 40 000 drug tests.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I refer to page 430. Under “Current Liabilities”, employee provisions have increased by 20 per cent from the budgeted figure of \$174 million to \$210 million. Under “Non-current Liabilities”, they have increased by 22 per cent. Is that a reflection of unused long service and annual leave?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I understand that under the financial position for current liabilities, there is an increase of \$28.3 million for borrowings and leasings due to the inclusion of lease liabilities for the first time as the result of the introduction of a new leasing standard in 2019–20. Is that what the member is referring to?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: No. I was referring to the allocation for employee provisions—the current liabilities and non-current liabilities.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Is the member talking about the increase of \$31.3 million?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Yes.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: That is \$26.4 million for the increase in actual leave liability hours to 319 392 since June 2019, which resulted from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic; the decrease in interest rates by 0.66 per cent since June 2019; and the annual provision of \$4.2 million for the twenty-seventh pay. There is an extra fortnight in that year. It was a leap year. My birthday—29 February—apparently caused it.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I refer to page 426 of volume 2 of budget paper No 2 and the line item “Optus Stadium Deployment Centre”. It caught my eye that there is nothing in the forward estimates in 2022–23 and 2023–24. Why is that the case?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I am not sure whether the member is aware, but we utilised Optus Stadium when we had all the intrastate roadblocks in place and so forth. We are not currently using Optus Stadium in that way. I will ask the commissioner to explain further.

Mr C. Dawson: In respect of Optus Stadium, it was an innovative option exercised under Deputy Commissioner Dreibergs, Assistant Commissioner Steel and others. As the member may be aware, we have a police operation centre and police assistance centre in Midland which does all our computer-aided despatching and 000 call-taking. We have established the state operations command centre out at Maylands, which really is what I might describe as a nerve centre. It also has major incident breakout rooms, and that is regularly utilised in actions, such as when the Greenough Regional Prison escape occurred. At that time I attended out there and observed them standing up for a real incident happening in real time. Obviously, we do it with major events such as City of Perth Skyworks, and in response to hazards such as cyclones and bushfires, so there is surge capacity there. When the global pandemic hit us, we obviously needed hundreds of officers to stand up readily and be accommodated with all the telephony, radio infrastructure and intelligence systems, so I had to sign some directions to stop football being played at Optus Stadium. Again, it was an unintended outcome, but —

[9.40 pm]

Dr A.D. BUTI: So long as it was the Eagles!

Mr C. Dawson: I would like to comment, but I will not!

The opportunity for us to negotiate with the venue operators was, firstly, sensible, and, secondly, a good approximate distance to police headquarters and our major infrastructure. We were able to secure that under some emergency management directions through which I have the power to basically second and sequester all sorts of infrastructure. I will take this opportunity to commend the VenuesLive and VenuesWest operators, who worked very closely with police. They did not charge us for any lease costs. We had to spend some money, predominantly on cleaning, obviously for COVID, some security costs and some meal provision, but it was basically not at cost to the taxpayer in terms of leasing the venue. We were there for about three and a half months.

We have since moved our entire COVID-19 response into government-owned premises at 99 Plain Street, which is the former Department of Housing and Department of Communities building. We were able to secure our executive directorate and our assets area at a very modest transitional cost. We now have about 400 officers accommodated there. We have also been able to expand for our research capacity. We have extensive planning should there be an outbreak, whether that be in a remote community or a metropolitan community. We have the capacity to bring in our public health emergency operations centre and any other government departments that assist us. As part of our response, we have, for instance, seconded 30 Department of Transport call takers, who operate a call centre for us. These new premises mean that we will not have to take up Optus Stadium any further. It has now been addressed in the long term by the premises we have secured at 99 Plain Street.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: I thank the commissioner and the head of the Road Safety Council for waiting so patiently. I refer to page 420, paragraph 16, under “Road Safety”. Paragraph 16 refers to the fact that we need a new road safety strategy, given that Towards Zero, the road safety strategy for WA 2008–2020, is coming to an end. Given that the year is coming to an end, when can we anticipate the strategy to be released? Have there been any delays caused by COVID or any other reasons in putting together and releasing this strategy?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I thank the member for Hillarys for that question. As Madam Chair (Ms M.M. Quirk) will be aware, the new road safety strategy is something that we have consulted on pretty widely. We had a forum in her electorate, as we did in many other parts of our state. In those workshops and forums, which were run by the Road Safety Commission, we sought feedback from the community. The strategy is nearing completion, so I do not think I am giving too much away to say that Road Safety Week is coming up and I hope to launch that strategy during Road Safety Week.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: Has there been any allocation of additional funds that may or may not be required under this new strategy; and, if so, where is it in the budget? Is it in one of those ubiquitous “government projects not yet announced” or whatever? Is that funding included in that?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The strategy itself is a framework; it is not a funding document.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: So in the strategy there will not be any additional new commitments that require funding?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The member will have to wait and see!

Mr S.A. MILLMAN: My question relates to the “Spending Changes” table on page 417, and specifically to the “Run-off Road Crashes Program” line item. Under the COVID-19 WA recovery plan, how will that funding benefit road safety in WA?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The run-off road crashes program is a program that is very dear to my heart and dear to the heart of the Road Safety Council chair and everyone at the Road Safety Commission. We know that run-off road crashes in country areas account for a lot of crashes. I understand that in 2019, for example, of the 163 people who died on our roads, 63 were from regional run-off road crashes. We can see why this is a program that is very dear to our hearts. Together with what we know about having a safe systems approach to road safety, the run-off road crashes program can make a huge difference. There is research to show that investing in that program can make a huge difference in reducing fatalities and serious injuries on our roads. That is why it is a priority.

We offered to commit \$20 million and asked the commonwealth government to chip in \$80 million for that regional road safety program, to install road safety treatments that prevent run-off road crashes. We also asked for further money to accelerate the rollout of that program, because clearly if we bring those treatments forward, the benefits will start much sooner. The treatments are generally things like shoulder widening, sealing and installation of audible edge lining and audible lines in the middle of roads. The program has been going for some time, but we realised that if we could get a lot more money into the program, we could achieve the benefits much sooner.

The program originally commenced back in 2012 and it has provided road safety treatments on a priority basis. Since then, some 1 400 kilometres of road have been treated. We have lobbied the federal government from both a transport and road safety point of view. We thought that this would be an opportune time to get it, because these are not huge road-building projects that costs tens or hundreds of millions of dollars and involve big contractors; they are regional, so they provide work in regional areas and are generally lower-cost projects that can be done by local contractors. It makes sense on so many fronts in respect of providing jobs, assisting the economy and providing a dividend. When I talk about a safe systems approach to road safety, I really mean that we have championed issues such as drink driving, speeding and seat belts for a long time and we have had a big impact in those areas. People now regard it to be morally abhorrent to drink and drive, for example.

[9.50 pm]

We know that people still make mistakes. They still drive tired or can get distracted by something and they have a moment’s inattention. The safe systems approach is one in which people are given a little bit of latitude and we acknowledge that people, from time to time, are going to do something wrong, be it driving tired or drifting off a little. We want those people to have the opportunity to correct that behaviour before they end up in a serious crash or as a fatality. In the federal government’s recent budget, \$1.1 billion for Western Australia was allocated over three years to go towards shovel-ready projects for transport infrastructure. That included \$80 million for 2020–21, which we will match with \$20 million out of the road trauma trust account, making it \$100 million. On top of that, the commonwealth has now offered more money towards the program, so all up, about \$350 million will be expended within the next year or so. The commonwealth has put some pretty tight time frames on the expenditure of that money. From meeting with our Road Safety Commission people and talking to our Road Safety Council chair, Iain Cameron, who also has a role at the Department of Transport in his real, day job, I understand that Main Roads is very confident we will be able to meet the commonwealth’s expectations. If other states do not do the works within the prescribed time frames, I understand that additional money might be available, which we would also be keen to spend. Between Minister Saffioti’s Main Roads people and our Road Safety Commission people and police, we are chafing at the bit to get ahead with this program because we know the benefits that it will realise. I am told that we are in a better position than that of most of the other states to be able to roll out this work because we have been planning it for years.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I refer to page 418 and the spending changes for the infringement management reform program. Could the minister please explain the components of that program and how it will benefit the effectiveness and efficiency of people in the Western Australian community?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: I thank the member for Armadale for that question. The infringement management reform program is another really important initiative. As people here all know, speed and red-light cameras play a vital role in changing driver behaviours and reducing the number of people who are killed or seriously injured on our roads. We have allocated \$13.74 million from the road trauma trust account for the infringement management reform program. These reforms will be of big benefit to community members, particularly those on lower or fixed incomes. They will hopefully be able to pay their infringements without incurring additional costs. The member will be aware that unpaid infringements are referred to the Fines Enforcement Registry, which incurs additional enforcement fees. I understand that the fees are in the order of \$110. The total amount that is collected by the registry is some \$19.7 million. It makes it much more challenging for people on low and fixed incomes to pay their fines. We estimate that about 20 per cent of infringements are not paid before they are referred to the Fines Enforcement Registry. We can assume only that most of those people are having some difficulty paying, so copping the extra cost on top of the fine would not help. Difficulties with payment is consistently cited as the top reason for recipients not finalising a matter and not contacting the police.

We will replace the existing, inefficient infringement processing system. That system has been in place since 2003 and it is reaching its end of life. We are going to complement that with some legislative changes that will allow for electronic infringements; the provision of digital services, including online nominations for a responsible driver; and part payments of infringements, which I have been championing for years. The government has not been able to do it because the system could not cope with part payments, so people have ended up on the Fines Enforcement Registry. We want people to be able to pay and make part payments. I doubt that there is a member of Parliament who has not had someone in their electorate office to complain about that, or complain about the fact that once the fine is one day late, it cannot be paid other than via the whole costing rigmarole with the Fines Enforcement Registry. This is a really important project in which I am very pleased to see the Road Safety Commission playing an important role.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: I refer to page 428 and the road trauma trust account revenue. The actual amount for 2019–20 came in at about \$4 million less than the figure that was budgeted. This is the money we get from speed cameras and fine enforcement generally. It is projected in the current year that the revenue will fall further, by more than \$3.5 million. What is the explanation for that? Is it because people are complying better with speed limits, not running red lights and the like? Is it because there has been an equipment failure? What is the explanation for this seemingly continual decline in the number of fines that are issued and collected?

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: There is a range of explanations. The first question the member put to me was whether people are being more compliant. The simple answer is yes, particularly in keeping to the speed limit. The former Minister for Police in the Barnett government cancelled the program in which speed monitoring technology was put in place on roads in all speed zones. It was a small program that cost about \$100 000 a year. No-one is fined; they are the black strips members can see lying across the road from time to time. They are put out in speed zones of 40, 50 and 100 kilometres an hour. They monitor the speed that people are going so we can see how compliant people are with the speed limit. We have now had that information for at least 20 years in Perth, with a gap of a couple of years towards the end of the Barnett government. We have those figures and we know that people are much more compliant in sticking to the speed limit. I think that is a part of it.

One other explanation is that whenever people are concerned about their income in times of economic uncertainty, they behave more cautiously. There is evidence in lots of jurisdictions that when people are uncertain about their incomes and there are tough economic times, they are more cautious because they are more worried about getting a speeding fine. There are those changes in behaviour. Of course, we also had a period when a lot of people were off the roads. When the intrastate borders were closed, there were fewer people on the road. Anecdotally, I heard from police that the people who were on the roads in country areas were more likely to be speeding. There were quite a number of isolated examples of people going at really high speeds. However, the overall volumes of people on country roads for that period of a couple of months was incredibly low. There is lots of evidence that shows economic circumstances and people's job security are two of the many factors that feed into driver behaviour. The trend of sticking to the speed limit is probably also because of the deployment of cameras and enforcement as well as the road safety message. We know that there is a trend towards compliance. Does anyone from the Road Safety Commission want to add anything?

Mr A. Warner: The only other element is that we are closely monitoring the revenue trends and will be providing advice. Any adjustments we make based on our analysis of those trends will factor into the advice in the next budget process.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: I refer to outcomes and key effectiveness indicators on page 422. The last indicator is for "Effectiveness of road safety awareness campaigns". The budgeted figure is 70 per cent and the actual figure is 82 per cent. How does the department arrive at these figures? How is the effectiveness of road safety campaigns measured?

The CHAIR: I think the answer is 42, minister!

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: I think it is the point to my question, too!

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Yes, the answer might be provided by one of our Road Safety Commission representatives. I think I have asked that question myself when I was sitting there.

Mr A. Warner: There is a bit of science involved. It is marketing best practice that any campaign or social marketing has some research evaluation to measure a number of things, including the awareness and comprehension of the campaign and, importantly, the impact on the intentions of the people who receive that campaign—in our case, the drivers of vehicles.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Warner. That was a great, succinct answer. The question is that the appropriation be recommended.

The appropriation was recommended.

Committee adjourned at 10.00 pm
