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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B

Tuesday, 21 May 2024

Legislative Assembly

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ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B

The meeting commenced at 9.00 am.

Division 26: Western Australia Police Force — Services 1 to 3, Police —

Ms M.M. Quirk, Chair.

Mr P. Papalia, Minister for Police.

Mr C. Blanch, Commissioner of Police.

Ms K. Whiteley, Deputy Commissioner.

Mr A. Adams, Deputy Commissioner.

Mr F. Pasquale, Executive Director.

Mr V. Ianni, Director Finance and Business Services.

Mr P. Zappelli, Principal Policy Adviser.

Mr J. Gangell, Senior Policy Adviser.

[Witnesses introduced.]

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

A minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee. I will ask the minister to clearly indicate what information they agree to provide and will then allocate a reference number. Supplementary information should be provided to the principal clerk by noon on Friday, 31 May 2024. If a minister suggests that a matter be put on notice, members should use the online questions on notice system to submit their questions.

I give the call to the member for Vasse.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to the reference to family violence found under the first of the significant issues impacting the agency, “Demand for Police Services”, in budget paper No 2, volume 2 on page 406. In line with the notion that there is a higher demand for police services, especially in reference to family violence and sexual assault, how much funding is dedicated towards family and domestic violence training for police officers?

The CHAIR: That is one question. Let us proceed with that, minister.

Mr P. PAPALIA: It would be hard to isolate that element and the associated costs within the training at the academy, but I might ask the commissioner whether he can perhaps give some response.

Mr C. Blanch: I do not have a funding figure, but the Western Australia Police Force is responding to a significant demand in family and domestic violence. We receive approximately 100 000 call-outs to family and domestic violence a year. That converts to around 60 000 family and domestic violence offences. The training has increased not only at the recruitment level, but also across the entire agency. We are often asked about our investment in family and domestic violence response. It is a multi-tiered response. It is probably the largest component of the training for the recruits, but the retraining of our officers across the entire state is what we have been focused on. Although each officer who works on the front line is responsible for responding to and prosecuting perpetrators of domestic violence, we also have a centralised family and domestic violence team, our family and domestic violence response teams and our serious crime family and domestic violence teams working in the crime department. It is multi-layered and is probably our greatest response capability in the Western Australia Police Force.

Ms L. METTAM: I understand the funding for the training is captured within the budget. Do Western Australian police benefit from any free training for family and domestic violence that is not paid for, by any particular groups or agencies?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I am informed and I am pretty aware that police do all their own training, but in developing those training packages and their content, police seek advice from experts and various sources within the community. For instance, we have an Aboriginal advisory group that contributes and provides advice to police

about Aboriginal-related policing matters. There is a contribution from the culturally and linguistically diverse community leadership, and beyond that there is also specialist advice, but the police would seek that. They do not have anyone come in and do the training.

Ms L. METTAM: In a similar way, how much funding is dedicated towards sexual assault sensitivity training for police officers; and how many police officers have undertaken this training in the year to date?

The CHAIR: That is two questions, but I will let you get away with it this time.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I think it is the same answer with respect to isolating that individual component or element of training. It would be a difficult thing to do. It is not done as normal practice because all the training packages are funded collectively. Perhaps somebody could provide some further insight.

Mr C. Blanch: We do not have that.

Mr P. PAPALIA: We cannot give the Leader of the Liberal Party a monetary figure or isolate that part of the training.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to officer safety as referred to in paragraph 5 under “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency” on page 407, budget paper No 2, volume 2. How many police officers have been assaulted in 2023–24 to date?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I might get Deputy Commissioner Adams to respond to that.

Mr A. Adams: The data does not detail the specific individuals assaulted, but 1 344 assaults on police officers have occurred so far this financial year. Police officers can get assaulted multiple times in an incident, but, generally, it is largely one offence per individual over the broader dataset.

Ms L. METTAM: How does that compare with previous years?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Before I get the deputy commissioner to answer that, I will make an observation with respect to a charge of assault on a police officer. It covers a fairly broad spectrum in terms of the degree or nature of the assaults from things like spitting all the way up to serious assaults. That aside, the other thing to remember is that we now have the benefit of all our officers wearing body-worn cameras, which I suggest enables a better response to those sorts of assaults than has been possible in the past because it provides a degree of evidence. The likelihood of people being charged is higher now than it has been in the past. In our protected entertainment precincts, we have more police working during the times of the day and week when they may be more likely to encounter a situation in which they may be assaulted. For instance, in Northbridge, in the past we have seen a police officer respond to an incident report but get there after the incident is over. However, we now regularly see officers arriving at a scuffle, a fight or an assault whilst it is still underway, and they are more likely to get involved in that situation as a consequence. There is no doubt that there has been an increase in the number of assaults on police officers as a consequence of our faster response time, particularly in Northbridge and other PEPs. I will hand over to Deputy Commissioner Adams.

[9.10 am]

Mr A. Adams: As the minister said, we put in a lot of effort over the last three years around improving our responsiveness to calls for help from the community and have been very successful in that regard. Obviously, the quicker police officers get to those dynamic jobs, the more likely they are to get there at the time of the highest level of potential harm. We have seen the assault numbers increase around that response. But the way that I would put it is that it is the heroism of police—being there quickly, standing between the good guy and the bad guy and taking the brunt whilst they deal with the bad person. We have seen those numbers increase. Similarly, we have put a lot of effort into our entertainment precincts by increasing the number of police officers in those areas, which we know probably have higher levels of frequency of disorder, and the immediate manner in which the police in those areas respond to those incidents, again, increases the level of aggression towards them.

Ms L. METTAM: Can we have a breakdown of the data from previous years?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Yes. The Commissioner of Police provided me with something a little while ago, which is a breakdown over the last 18 years of assaults on police officers. Essentially, I can provide that to the member. It is a graph. Eighteen years ago, the number was higher. It is higher now than it was in recent years, and I think a fair amount of that can be attributed to the factors that Deputy Commissioner Adams referred to. I have the graph. It is not really supplementary information. May I provide it as additional information? It is this graph here, and I can give the member the data points of the peaks and troughs over the 18-year period if she would like it.

Ms L. METTAM: Okay.

The CHAIR: I think that probably needs to be provided by way of supplementary information.

Mr P. PAPALIA: By way of supplementary information, I will undertake to provide a graph of the Western Australian offence rate for assaults on police officers over the period from 2006 to 2023, which will give the member the data up until the latest complete year, with detailed data points of the graph.

[*Supplementary Information No B1.*]

Ms L. METTAM: Can I get the figures for 2021–22?

Mr P. PAPALIA: We will be able to get it for the member. I will hand over to the commissioner.

Mr C. Blanch: We provide the rate per capita of population. Given we have had such a significant increase in the WA population, we can provide the rates for each 100 000 measure of population. When there were only 20 people in WA, it would have been a very low number. Now there are nearly 2.9 million people, so the rate will give the member the best indication. I think that would help.

Mr P. PAPALIA: For what year, member?

Ms L. METTAM: For the year 2021–22.

Mr C. Blanch: We can give every year.

Mr P. PAPALIA: That graph will have every year that the member is talking about.

Ms L. METTAM: Can we have the figures for last year, 2022–23?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Again, I do not think the commissioner has that off the top of his head, but we will give the member that as part of that document.

Ms L. METTAM: Can I get a breakdown of these assaults, such as physical assaults, spitting et cetera? I appreciate the comment before that there is a broad range of severity of assaults.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Can I do that for just the recent years, rather than the whole 18-year period? Otherwise, it will take a long time.

Ms L. METTAM: Yes.

Mr P. PAPALIA: As part of the same document —

The CHAIR: That is B1.

Mr P. PAPALIA: — would the last three years be adequate?

Ms L. METTAM: Yes.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I will provide, specifically, the breakdown of the types of assaults. As an explanation, member, the commissioner has informed me that it is recorded only when there is use of force in assaulting police officers. Therefore, the data may not correlate with the number of assaults. The member may get a smaller number in the actual breakdown of the types of incidents because that is why that information is retained.

Ms L. METTAM: What services are provided for officer health and welfare?

The CHAIR: Is this in the context of officer safety or is it broader than that, member?

Ms L. METTAM: It is in the context of officer safety.

Mr P. PAPALIA: As an observation, the effort dedicated to the health, welfare and safety of our officers has massively increased in recent years, including the number of personnel who are assigned to that task. We have more than doubled the number of chaplains employed, including a couple of female chaplains now. There is a 24/7 chaplaincy response to traumatic incidents. The personnel allocated to the health, welfare and safety division has more than doubled in both uniformed officers and employed counsellors and psychologists. The peer-support program has been reinvigorated. It was withering a little on the vine about five years ago, but the number of participants has now more than doubled. They regularly have their training reinforced, have an annual training allocation and are recruiting additional peer-support program participants.

As the member will recall, we have included compensation for police now. Police compensation exists. It did not used to. That means that medically retired officers are now eligible for police compensation whilst retaining all their entitlements. This is something that they never had access to prior to that, and it was delivered at the end of 2021. I also make the observation that the leadership—both the previous and current commissioners—has made a concerted effort to tackle the stigma that used to be associated with talking about mental health and the consequences of exposure to trauma and to empower people to seek assistance. Apart from all the in-house services, there is a much-enhanced list of external authorised providers from whom officers can seek assistance without revealing to the police force the nature of their concern or illness. It is funded by police. All those services have been increased significantly. I might ask Deputy Commissioner Whitely to perhaps talk a little more about it.

[9.20 am]

Ms K. Whiteley: In relation to that last comment, the employee assistance program has been really successful. We have had a significant uptake of officers reaching out early when they needed some support.

In terms of our workforce, the health, safety and welfare of our officers is a primary focus. The number one thing is our people. Wherever we can, we are making sure that all the right information is getting out to all the officers on the ground. As the minister said, we have programs in place. The dedicated health and welfare division makes officers feel supported when they are home after being injured, when they come back to work or when they need

other support. The employee assistance program provides that support. Then, of course, we have seen officers attend critical incidents recently, so we immediately roll out our chaplaincy services. That also has an extended network across regional WA. That has been really successful. We are getting good feedback from the officers on the ground about that.

The peer support program has doubled. At present, work is continuing on that program to ensure that it continues to be out on the ground in the stations. The vocational rehab unit has been really successful in getting people back to work.

Of course, it is an ongoing effort. It is something that we are looking at on a daily basis—our retention task force, and ensuring that all those mechanisms are functioning and being delivered on the ground. It is quite an extensive program of work.

Ms L. METTAM: I have a further question.

The CHAIR: I just note that you have had 95 per cent of the questions. We almost might need to give one to a government member.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Chair, we are okay. Noting that there are a smaller number of opposition members —

The CHAIR: I am going to play it straight down the line. I think one question in 15 should go to the government if it feels inclined. If it does not feel inclined, that is fine.

Mr T.J. HEALY: We are happy to give it to the opposition.

The CHAIR: You may ask a further question, member. You are doing well, so keep it up.

Ms L. METTAM: How many officers are currently on extended medical leave?

Mr P. PAPALIA: We might have to get that answer to the member, if that is okay. I will undertake to provide that information. Is the member talking about officers who are on leave right now?

Ms L. METTAM: Yes, and the next part is: how many were medically discharged over the last 12 months?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I think we answered a similar question in the upper house, but we will get the answer to the member.

The CHAIR: Member, just repeat what you want because there are actually two elements there.

Ms L. METTAM: The question was in two parts: how many officers are currently on extended medical leave; and how many officers were medically discharged over the past 12 months?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I am absolutely certain I answered this last week in the upper house, but I will undertake to provide how many officers were on extended medical leave and how many officers were retired medically during the last calendar year.

[Supplementary Information No B2.]

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to paragraph 9 under “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency” on page 407 of budget paper No 2, volume 2. With regard to streamlining communications and response times to a call for help, what was the average response time for police 000 calls for the past 12 months?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I am advised that it is not an average response time. There is a grade of service. I can get Deputy Commissioner Adams to respond to that. That is the KPI that the police need to meet. I will let the deputy commissioner answer and if that is not adequate, the member can ask me something else.

Mr A. Adams: We keep figures for the average response time but it is not part of our regular information. Can I please ask what number we are looking at because I have a briefing note with the precise numbers.

Ms L. METTAM: It is paragraph 9 under “Technology and Facilities”, relating to streamlining communications.

Mr A. Adams: Is that page 404 ?

Ms L. METTAM: It is page 407.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Member, that note refers to the benefits that have accrued as a consequence of the establishment of the State Operations Command Centre and co-locating other agencies, which has resulted in a lot more collaboration, sharing of data and specialist advice to responders, not only benefiting policing generally, but also other agency responses.

With respect to the numbers that the member is asking about, while Deputy Commissioner Adams is seeking that information, I go back to the member’s question about medical retirement. The commissioner may be able to answer.

Mr C. Blanch: For priority 1 and 2 jobs, in response, within 12 minutes, our key performance indicator must meet 80 per cent. This year it is 86 per cent, so we are six per cent above our target. For priority 3 incidents, which we are required to respond to within 60 minutes, we also have an 80 per cent target, and we are at 84.7 per cent. We are nearly five per cent over, so our performance is better.

Ms L. METTAM: How does this compare with the response times for 2017–18?

Mr A. Adams: We would probably have to take that on notice. The five-year data generally is sitting in front of us. We have had 30 consecutive months of achieving greater service for priority 1s and 2s and 29 out of 30 for priority 3s. It is the longest stretch of continued achievement over the last five years. I would have to take it on notice to go back to 2016–17.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I think it would be better for the member if we provide that as supplementary information.

I will undertake to provide as supplementary information the key performance indicator achievements for the 2017–18 financial year.

[*Supplementary Information No B3.*]

Mr P. PAPALIA: I was going to respond by giving a bit of information now rather than waiting. We will give the specific numbers that the member asked for. Regarding medically retired personnel, as of 30 April this year, 71 members have medically retired from the WA police for work-related injuries since the commencement of the scheme. A further 60 members are at varying stages within the medical retirement process, with a further 25 members being referred to police separation transition for medical retirement.

In the year prior to establishing the scheme, we encouraged officers who might be eligible to access the scheme to delay their retirement process so they could become beneficiaries. There is a degree of catch-up related to the number of officers who are medically retiring. We have potentially captured a number of years before that. From memory, we originally anticipated around 20 a year. I think it was 22 last year. The numbers appear to reflect the predicted modelling of the likely number who retire annually.

[9.30 am]

The CHAIR: Technically speaking, we are on paragraph 9.

Ms L. METTAM: Yes. Is the minister able to provide a breakdown by priority category and by region of the average response times to 000 calls?

Mr P. PAPALIA: As an observation, the key performance indicators are for metro response. There is not one for regional. Does the member want average response times as a number for different districts?

Ms L. METTAM: Is there a breakdown for regional areas?

Mr P. PAPALIA: It is not what the Western Australia Police Force report on. It is not a measure of performance. Western Australia is one-third of the continent, and a lot of our regional districts are very large and sparsely populated. Responses in the regions can reflect that challenge. It is not an actual measure that, historically, is applied.

The CHAIR: It might be more appropriate to put that question on notice. The member already has the indication that it will not be easy for the WA police to distil that out of its current records, and, bearing in mind that these responses are required by 31 May, the member might want to put that on notice instead.

Ms L. METTAM: I appreciate that following the tragic death of Lynn Cannon there was a review into how 000 calls are responded to. Can the minister provide any update on that?

Mr C. Blanch: Lynn Cannon's death will be subject to a coronial inquest and a report for the coroner. We have done a significant amount of internal work looking at that specific situation in preparation for our response to the coroner.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I am on budget paper No 2, volume 2, page 408. There is a service summary at the bottom of that page and a list outlining the division of funding between metropolitan policing services, regional specialists and the Road Safety Commission. I think my question will be covered by the allocation in one of these. I am looking for information on the canine unit. I assume it comes under specialist policing services. What funding allocation is made to the canine unit in terms of FTE resources for dogs and their training?

Mr P. PAPALIA: My advisers will not be able to provide that right now. That is fine. We can get that information for the member. I will undertake to provide the member with the funding allocation for operations of the canine unit in its entirety including training.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Yes, please, including FTE for dogs and their training.

The CHAIR: Is that dogs or just persons?

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Both. I am assuming they are FTE!

[*Supplementary Information No B4.*]

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Further to that information on the canine unit, last year the Corruption and Crime Commission released a report into the deployment of police dogs. There was a recommendation, which the minister would be aware of, to develop and implement a WA Police canine unit policy, procedure and guidelines. From memory, I think there was an undertaking from WA police to have this completed by March this year. Could the minister advise whether this has been completed?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Yes, I can. I can confirm that it was. It was an interesting report; I disagreed with one element of the observations in it. With respect to the training procedures and practices, yes, that has been delivered.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Could the minister outline some of the changes? From my recollection, the report dealt with the over-representation of Aboriginal people in relation to the use and deployment of canines. Is there a reflection from the Western Australia Police Force or the minister on that matter?

Mr P. PAPALIA: The particular element of the report that I disagreed with was the suggestion, as a consequence of data around the number of encounters, that the dogs themselves were targeting Aboriginal people and that was somehow part of their training. I totally disagree with that. If that is the component of the report the member is referring to, I disagree with the suggestion that there is any racial element to the training or the practice of operations of the canine unit. Regarding training, it was more about the documentation of the training that had to be addressed, and that has been addressed. I will ask Deputy Commissioner Whiteley to respond specifically to the documentation because that was an element that was identified as an omission, or there was or a lack of detail, and that has been addressed.

Ms K. Whiteley: On the CCC finding, we have worked very closely with the CCC. We have actually had them attend out at Maylands and observe the changes in the training. There has been a lot of changes in deployment methods and the circumstances in which canines are actually released in terms of deployment. We track all of our deployments now. I can say dog bites in relation to our deployments have significantly reduced. We keep statistics on what the circumstances were and whether they met a certain threshold for the deployment of a canine. We are tracking that very closely. We are also working with the university to make sure that all our training application and the consequences of the deployments are fully considered. There is a fully reviewed training program in place. We are still working through some of the guidelines to make sure we are not missing any elements as we learn from the university's research. The team has certainly progressed that, and we have received positive feedback from the CCC.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I might get the commissioner to add a further response to that particular part of the question. Noting there was a change in practice with the canine units being located in the city and then deployed as required around the state, the objective, in part, was to ensure uniformity and consistency in training of both handlers and dogs.

Mr C. Blanch: We have had canines deployed throughout the state during our history, so there was an inconsistent training approach if those dogs were unable to come back for training at a certain period, albeit they were not very different. But with a centralised approach, a trainer who has come in, who in my view has been quite excellent, it is good to get the CCC in to have a look at how we are training dogs. Despite the Corruption and Crime Commission's report, we still deploy canines. Canines work one-up with their partner—the police officer. Most of the deployments occur in the middle of the night—for example, for burglaries. The determination of gender, race or anything else is not part of the deployment of a canine; it is about the threat and risk to the police officer and/or other people. Any suggestion that there was a racist approach to the deployment of the dogs is wrong, and we strongly disputed that. Our canines are deployed in appropriate circumstances to protect the officers and the community, and we will continue to do that when an officer makes that determination. I support them in that because canines are an extremely useful tool. They are very well trained and we are now able to recall the dogs even after a deployment before it may latch onto a person. That is something the training brought about as a result of a better training environment.

[9.40 am]

Ms M.J. DAVIES: On the advice provided that the minister was still working through the guidelines, when will those guidelines be completed? I understand that the CCC has undertaken to review them again at the end of this year.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I will ask Deputy Commissioner Whiteley to respond.

Ms K. Whiteley: The guidelines already exist and they are reviewed regularly. They are available as they currently stand, but they are under constant review to make sure that our deployment modelling is right.

Mr P. PAPALIA: With respect to the CCC requirement, as part of its report, that obligation was met. The documentation was provided.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Okay. I think I know the answer to this question. Those guidelines are obviously internal guidelines and policy. Are they not likely to be made available publicly?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Yes, they are. The member is correct.

Ms M. BEARD: I refer to regional and remote policing services on page 411 of budget paper No 2, volume 2. The number of FTEs is anticipated to increase from 2 240 to 2 407. How confident is the minister that that increase will occur?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I am very confident. My observation on personnel attraction, training and retention is that we undertook in 2020 to grow the police force by 15 per cent over four years. That was an ambitious target, but we were on track to deliver that. Prior to 2022, there were two years of recession. Coupled with the two years of COVID, essentially, over a four-year period there was a very low attrition rate. We have suffered a higher attrition rate post-COVID. We were on track to meet that target—in fact, we were ahead of it—but then we suffered a significant departure, I think, as a consequence of the accumulated number of people who had not departed at the normal rate prior to that. The attrition rate is across the police force. It is not specifically related to the regions. How many officers

go to the regions is a consequence of recruitment, training and retention. The attrition rate has now plateaued at a much lower level than the 2022 level, but it is higher than what was experienced prior to COVID. That may be the new normal.

I have asked the police to develop and provide a model that can more accurately predict our training and recruiting requirements, noting all the factors that they are able to predict like the current demographics, ageing out, the likely career path of different generations of people and our ability to attract people. More than 2 600 Western Australians have applied to join the police since the Let's Join Forces campaign commenced; more than 1 550 experienced overseas officers from the United Kingdom, Ireland and New Zealand have applied to join; and the Western Australia Police Force academy is training 1 000 recruits in a 12-month period, which is pretty much at capacity. Police will then be able to model that when we hit the additional growth target. We are growing the police force, despite some of the narrative around that. We will achieve the objective of getting to 950 above the attrition rate, but I cannot give the member an exact time because the work on the modelling is still being done.

In answer to hitting the extra FTE for the regions, I might hand over to Deputy Commissioner Adams. The Commissioner of Police dictates where police officers go and Deputy Commissioner Adams is the one who works the magic by putting them in different locations in different districts.

Mr A. Adams: So far, we have allocated 189 extra positions into regional WA as part of the 950 growth program and another 52 are to be allocated. There are some challenges around housing availability from a growth perspective in regional WA, but we have made some inroads on that by working with the Department of Communities recently, plus the districts have been doing a lot of hard work on the ground looking for housing opportunities. Operation Regional Shield funding has been extremely beneficial to regional WA over the last few years that it has been available, but this year we decided that although flying police officers in and out of regional WA for two-week periods is beneficial to the guys and girls who work in the districts, from a community policing perspective it is not the ideal model. I am not for one second saying that it has not been well received; it has been very well received. To try to attract police officers into some of those hard-to-fill locations such as Halls Creek, Laverton, Meekatharra and Newman, we have used some of the Operation Regional Shield money to significantly increase the attraction allowance for those locations. Back on 1 July 2023, we had 63 vacancies in those locations and today we have nine. The significantly increased attraction allowance using the Operation Regional Shield funding has enabled us to fill a significant proportion of the vacancies in those towns. They are not easy towns to attract people to, so the \$30 000 attraction allowance has worked very well and we are keen to pursue it.

Mr P. PAPALIA: As a further explanation, Deputy Commissioner Adams is talking about internal budgeting. Operation Regional Shield is an operation. It is not about specific numbers of police in any one location or another; it is about applying an effect. If police confront an acute crime issue in any of the regions, through the funding that is afforded them, they are able to respond with additional police officers or assets like analysts, aircraft, drone operators or anything of that nature. Deputy Commissioner Adams sits around trying to figure out how he will put police into different locations with the budget he has received for that financial year. We are still growing and have already funded the targeted 950 extra police above the attrition rate. If we are still growing those numbers but still have not met that number, the police can use that money in the financial year for other purposes. That is what he is talking about. I will get the commissioner to give more of an insight into Operation Regional Shield because it is an operation; it is not about staffing regional police stations.

[9.50 am]

Mr C. Blanch: There has been a 671 net increase of officers over the last five years. Regional WA has benefited from a lot of those officers living in regional WA. Operation Regional Shield gives us the flexibility to surge into those areas, particularly when we see high-harm juvenile offenders released from a period of custody into a town and we know that there may be increased crime. There is a surge capacity for funerals or other matters in any of the regional WA towns; we utilise Operation Regional Shield for surge capacity. That has worked extremely well and, as Deputy Commissioner Adams said, we find that the local police find a lot of respite in having Operation Regional Shield personnel come to their area. As the minister said, it is not just blue-shirt frontline police. We send specialist units. We might send the regional operations group. We might send drones. We have sent the helicopter to regional WA; it was most recently in Geraldton. We send our capabilities that we have here in Perth around the state because we police the state, not just Perth.

Ms M. BEARD: When Operation Regional Shield personnel are deployed, does it take police officers out of regional stations? Does that leave regional stations short?

Mr P. PAPALIA: The member needs to ask me.

Ms M. BEARD: Sorry. Does that take officers out of other regional locations, which then leaves them short, or is it a specialist unit that stays together all the time?

Mr P. PAPALIA: As the Commissioner of Police indicated, it sources personnel and capability from the metro area, but it might be from the regional operations group, from metropolitan police stations or from specialist units like the liquor enforcement unit. For instance, the member may have heard about the response to Kalgoorlie over

summer, where there was street-present antisocial behaviour. The response to that instance involved the regional operations group, liquor enforcement unit and the Aboriginal policing division as well as additional general duty police. Those three sources of personnel were not from the regions. It is not taking from one regional area to put to another. Again, I emphasise this. It is an operation that responds to an acute challenge. It may or may not involve additional police officers. It is not intended to be the means by which we staff regional policing. We are always going to staff regional police stations and districts. From memory, overall, there are more police in every regional district than there was seven years ago. Our intention, as the member heard from Deputy Commissioner Adams, is to grow that further. Operation Regional Shield is above that. For instance, in the Kimberley at the moment, there is a police district, an allocation of FTE within that district, and then Operation Regional Shield deployments are in addition to those people.

Ms M. BEARD: Can the minister give an indication of the number of times the Operation Regional Shield group has been deployed by location?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Again, it is not a group of people. It is not a unit. Operation Regional Shield is an operation funded to enable the commissioner to deploy whatever assets he requires at any time to any specific location in the regions. What is the member after? Is she after the number of operational deployments under Operation Regional Shield?

Ms M. BEARD: Yes. When we hear that Operation Regional Shield has been deployed to a location —

Mr P. PAPALIA: Operational Regional Shield is enacted in a district, and then police or resources and assets are deployed.

Ms M. BEARD: How many times and to what locations have they been deployed?

Mr P. PAPALIA: We would not have that information here. The member is talking about something that has been going for two years. I think the member will have to put that on notice as she is talking about a significant amount of work to identify the data she is talking about.

Ms M. BEARD: That is fine. Can the minister provide a breakdown of the authorised strength versus the current FTE by regional station? Should that be on notice?

The CHAIR: I think that is traditionally out of convention. That type of question is always out of order, for obvious reasons.

Ms M. BEARD: That is fine.

Mr P. PAPALIA: For operational purposes, police do not give you a subdistrict breakdown. You do not want to tell the bad guys how many cops there are in a particular town at any time. That is not me; that is normal practice. As I think I have done many times, I can provide the member with the district FTE.

Ms M. BEARD: This question is based around the previous question but may be a new question. My question is about Aboriginal liaison officers in each region and location. What is the number of positions vacant at the moment versus how many there should be?

Mr P. PAPALIA: To clarify, until recently, there were some legacy Aboriginal policing liaison officers out there, but not many, because that was a program from a long time ago. There were some officers employed under that scheme. But the member probably refers to the commissioner's more recent creation of the community liaison officer program. He can tell the member about who he has establishing and delivering that program.

Mr C. Blanch: The community liaison officer function of the Western Australia Police Force was traditionally managed in each station by the officer in charge. Depending on the OIC of the day, they may have different roles and differing functions. We wanted to grow that capability. We found that local employment, particularly of Indigenous people, in towns created a much better environment of connecting police with local communities. There were 11 community liaison officers in the most recent budget. We got funding for another 10. The Western Australia Police Force hired Mechelle Turvey as its community liaison officer coordinator. She centralises and coordinates that capability to deploy across the state. There will be 21 officers. We are in the process of recruiting 10 at the moment. Are there vacancies? Yes—the 10 we were allocated in the budget a couple of weeks ago. Of the original 11, there are no vacancies.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I will add to that. Mechelle is Cassius's mother. The member knows her history. She is a Western Australian of the Year. She is a very capable and powerful trainer. She does a lot of training with intakes at the Western Australia Police Academy as well. Having Mechelle deliver this element of the program is a new initiative. There are vacancies because we created an expanded number of funded positions and it is my ambition, subject to confirmation of success, that we look to grow it further in the future. It has already almost doubled the number of positions, and we will fill them. That is Mechelle's job.

Ms M. BEARD: I have one last question about workforce. With the shortages in the workforce, how does that equate to overtime per police officer? Are they doing a larger number of overtime hours?

The CHAIR: Is the member still on page 411, "Regional and Remote Policing Services"?

Ms M. BEARD: Yes.

Mr P. PAPALIA: We are not short of police officers. Understanding that our commitment in 2020 was to grow the police force, it has grown. In the last five years, it has grown by 671. There are 671 more police officers than there were when we started in 2017. The intent in accordance with that commitment was to grow the police force by 15 per cent, so we need to go even further. Therefore, in advance of recruiting, training and deploying people, we fund the police force for that number. There is an actual number and an authorised number. It is kind of confusing. If we look at the authorised number, it is bigger than the actual number. It does not mean that we are short; it means that we have an ambition to grow to that number.

[10.00 am]

Ms M. BEARD: Further question. Is there information on the average number of overtime hours that police officers are doing in the regions?

Mr P. PAPALIA: That is an on-notice one, I think. We can find it, but there is not a simple answer I can give you today.

Ms M. BEARD: Can you provide it by supplementary?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Not by supplementary. That is a big task. We are talking about a lot of work.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to recruiting, on page 407 of budget paper No 2, volume 2, under “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency”. How many prospective applicants have applied to become a police officer over the past 12 months?

The CHAIR: When you say “recruiting”, which paragraph number is that?

Ms L. METTAM: As I have said, “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency”, paragraph 6.

The CHAIR: Paragraph 6? You did not mention paragraph 6 before.

Mr P. PAPALIA: As I indicated earlier, my understanding is that since we started the Let’s Join Forces campaign, there have been more than 2 600 local applicants and more than 1 550 international applicants. As to how many actually applied in the last 12 months, I do not know; I might have to ask the member to put it on notice, to break it down. The other thing is that they only do in financial years, so it does not align with the calendar year.

Ms L. METTAM: Can that be provided by calendar year?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Well, yes, if I do it on notice, because we are talking about a bit of work. I am not sure what the member’s objective is. There is an extraordinary amount of interest in joining the Western Australia Police Force. I do not know for sure, but I would suggest that we have had far more success in attracting applicants than like jurisdictions on the east coast, noting that a lot of them are competing with each other. I think our police force enjoys an excellent reputation, which is part of what enables us to attract people so effectively, and that is not just in comparison with other police forces. I know the Australian Defence Force would envy the number of applicants we are managing to attract. Our challenge at the moment is not attracting people; it is getting them through the Western Australia Police Academy. There is no more capacity at the academy. We are training 1 000 a year, so short of building an entirely new facility and staffing it, we would not be able to train more people in 12 months than what we are doing at the moment. The pipeline of applicants is not the issue.

Ms L. METTAM: The purpose of the question is just to see how successful the recruitment program is. I am just seeking to find out, whether by supplementary information or otherwise, the number of police officer applicants over the financial year and how many of them were not successful.

The CHAIR: There are two questions there, member, and I think the minister has already indicated he would maybe prefer to take the questions on notice.

Mr P. PAPALIA: The observation I would make is that the campaign began in early 2021; that is when we launched the campaign, and it has attracted more than 2 600 locals and more than 1 550 internationals. By way of response to the member’s question around the success of the campaign, the predicted rate of recruitment is 786 FTE to commence in the current financial year. We are training 1 000 at the academy; they do not all pass through instantly. They have to undertake their training at different levels and there are different durations of training. The transitional officers from overseas take half as long. But collectively, we will be seeing 786 FTE graduate in this financial year, which is the highest number of any financial year since at least 2008–09. To train people at the academy, we have to recruit them. We are recruiting and training at the highest level since at least 2008–09. It is probably difficult to get comparative data prior to that time.

Ms L. METTAM: How many of those applicants were not successful?

Mr P. PAPALIA: The 786 that I referred to are successful, so how many of the 2 600 and the 1 550? I do not think we can really give the member that information, because a lot of them are still in the process. Some are not accepted on their first application but they remain in the pool. People go and train themselves to improve their performance in different elements of the recruitment criteria. We are also constantly attracting more people, so all I can say is that it has not been a challenge to attract people and it is obviously not a challenge to have quality people graduating. I invite the member to come along to a graduation and witness the quality of the people who are graduating. As

I said, in comparison with other jurisdictions and certainly in comparison with other like organisations, such as the ADF, we are doing exceptionally well at attracting quality recruits, and that is a good thing. I do not really think that questioning is a worthwhile thing to pursue. Not everyone succeeds, obviously. I am informed that the historical average success rate for the pool of applicants is one in five, but the pool that we have is constantly being added to. Some are moving out and others are joining.

Ms L. METTAM: How many officers have left or retired over the last 12 months? That is probably a financial year period.

The CHAIR: Strictly speaking, member, that is not covered by that paragraph, but the minister might give you some latitude.

Mr P. PAPALIA: What did the member want? Was it the last 12 months?

Ms L. METTAM: Yes.

Mr P. PAPALIA: The member wants to know how many had —

Ms L. METTAM: Have left or retired.

Mr P. PAPALIA: In 2023?

Ms L. METTAM: Yes.

[10.10 am]

Mr P. PAPALIA: The member asked about total separations. In 2023, there were 511. If the member is asking about the year to date, to 30 April, there were 164 total separations.

Ms L. METTAM: How does that number compare with the number of separations four and eight years ago?

The CHAIR: That is better put on notice. We are dealing with this year's budget and the out years, so it might be better put on notice, I think.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Yes; if the member puts the question on notice, I will provide the answer. As I observed earlier when I talked about the attraction, retention and attrition rates, we committed to grow the police force by 15 per cent and we will do that. It will not be within the timeframe we had hoped, because we were confronted with the extraordinary situation of two years of, essentially, very poor economic performance in Western Australia, which discouraged people from leaving, followed by an extraordinary event in the form of the pandemic, so very few people left a secure job in the public sector in that time. On completion of that period, we had an accrued or aggregated departure of people who might have been contemplating leaving earlier. But also, in my view—this is hard to quantify or specify—we have had a shift in demographics in the police force. I think it has been recognised in all sectors that we have new generations of people who do not expect the same career duration that their predecessors did as a matter of course, so that will have an impact. But, as I said, I have asked the police to compile a model, with the benefit of as much data or input as we are able to identify, to enable us to predict future demand and requirements for training and obviously recruitment, because we have to recruit people to train them. That work is being done. Undeniably, the younger people who are joining now have a different career duration expectation from that of the people who joined 20 years ago.

Ms L. METTAM: Is attrition currently positive or negative?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Is the member asking whether there are more people leaving than joining?

Ms L. METTAM: Yes.

Mr P. PAPALIA: No; there are more people joining than leaving, by a significant number. If we were trying to model and predict where we are going to be, there are 110 more officers now than there were in January, taking attrition into account, so we are growing. As I said, I have asked Mr Pasquale to prepare a model that will give us a longer view, obviously particularly for the commissioner and his team, but also so that government and the people who have to try to accommodate growth and delivery of service can determine how many officers we have to recruit and train, see what that represents into the future and be able to accommodate the likelihood of people having different career paths from those that people had in the past. That may be a new normal in terms of attrition, and it has plateaued; it is roughly around 28 a month, but I do not know for certain that that will be static. That may alter, but the model that I have asked to be compiled will address that as much as possible and predict what we need to do. We will grow. We are growing at the moment. As I indicated earlier, we already have 670 more officers than when we came to office, but we set ourselves the ambition of growing even further, so we have to achieve that.

Ms L. METTAM: Of those 511 separations, what is the average years of service?

Mr P. PAPALIA: That is the work I have asked to be done. We need to know the demographic of the current police force, who has departed and the tenure that they had—the duration of their career path—and if that is shifting, that should inform the model. We know the age of the people we have. Generally, we know the gender demographic, and that has an impact on career duration as well. A range of factors will contribute to the model. We will know more about what we anticipate will happen once that model has been developed. I have asked the police to work on that.

Ms L. METTAM: Just to confirm, is the minister unable to provide that information?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Which specific information is the member talking about?

Ms L. METTAM: The average years of service for those separations.

Mr P. PAPALIA: We can get that. We can probably get a breakdown of the different durations of service of different cohorts that have departed.

Ms L. METTAM: Can the minister provide that as supplementary information?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Yes. I think this may have already been done in answer to questions in the upper house, but I undertake to provide the member with a demographic breakdown of the officers who have retired and resigned in the last 12 months. Is that what the member wants?

Ms L. METTAM: Yes, including the number of years of service.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Yes, okay.

[Supplementary Information No B5.]

Ms M. BEARD: I refer again to page 411 of volume 2 of budget paper No 2 and the general heading “Regional and Remote Policing Services”. I want to ask about the traffic enforcement team across the regions. How often is the road traffic enforcement group deployed off the roads into other regional areas if there is an issue that needs attending to?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I will ask the commissioner to answer that.

Ms M. BEARD: Did the minister want me to clarify what I am asking?

Mr P. PAPALIA: No; it is all right.

Mr C. Blanch: We have three tiers of traffic officers. Obviously, we have traffic officers who perform duties in the metropolitan area. Some of those may be tasked to go to Operation Regional Shield, so I put that out there as well; sometimes, traffic officers will have a surge capacity through Regional Shield. As part of our road policing, we also have our highway patrol officers, who cover the highways up to 400 kilometres out of Perth’s metropolitan area, but each district also has a traffic unit that is dedicated to the regional WA district it is in.

Ms M. BEARD: How often are officers in the regional traffic groups within regions such as the Pilbara and the midwest taken out of those regions and used in other instances, such as being taken off road traffic duties to attend an issue in a town or somewhere else?

[10.20 am]

Mr P. PAPALIA: The regional traffic officers are also police officers, so the police respond to police tasks, but they are specialists in traffic enforcement. We do not have a dedicated highway patrol that does nothing else, other than the regional enforcement guys. The police in the districts are also regular police. I might get the commissioner to answer it.

Mr C. Blanch: The traffic officers in regional WA can be operationally deployed, subject to the demands and the resource requirements of the districts. If there is a major crash, if we want to run an operation or if we want to do additional breath testing in any of the towns in any of the districts, we will deploy those regional traffic officers anywhere within that district to support whatever the operational requirement is. They may assist with a special operation by doing roadblocks or vehicle control points. They are, I suppose, specialists in trafficking in the districts, but they can also respond to normal police tasks if there is a surge capacity requirement.

Ms M. BEARD: Are any statistics available on how often or how many times they are redeployed from traffic duties to normal policing?

Mr P. PAPALIA: The thing to remember is that other police officers do traffic as well. Not just those officers do breath tests or speed enforcement; other police officers do that. Both the dedicated personnel and the other personnel cross over on that activity. I do not think I will —

The CHAIR: Minister, Deputy Commissioner Adams looked as though he knew the answer to that question.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Maybe not because how often they are dedicated to other tasks, which I think the member is talking about, is really detailed information that I do not think is worth —

The CHAIR: The answer he indicated was no.

Ms M. BEARD: Okay. We have not got anything.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I think that trying to extract that information would be almost impossible but also not worth diverting effort from policing to do.

Ms M. BEARD: This is about the same regional and remote policing; I am staying on the traffic group. My question refers to page 534, which refers to the banned drinkers register.

The CHAIR: Sorry; are you making another reference?

Ms M. BEARD: I am referencing it to this. It is about regional and remote policing, but it is about road traffic, the areas of carriage limits and how often traffic enforcement in the regions has actually done carriage limit checks.

The CHAIR: Did you refer to page 534, member?

Ms M. BEARD: I am talking about the banned drinkers register. It is under the context of regional or remote policing.

The CHAIR: It might be in a different division. Yes; it is.

Ms M. BEARD: I am just making the comparison.

The CHAIR: It does not matter.

Ms M. BEARD: That is my question about regional policing: how many times would the road traffic people have done enforcement for inspecting cars for alcohol?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Is the member referring to the enforcement of carriage limits? That is not a responsibility solely of traffic police or police in dedicated traffic units or with that skill set. The enforcement of carriage limits is generally part of an operation that, based on intelligence, targets specific activity in a region where they are vulnerable to sly grogging. It is not really their role. They might be participants, but they are not dedicated people for effecting that outcome.

Ms M. BEARD: Can we get information on how many times they have done checks by region and what alcohol has been seized?

The CHAIR: Member, I think that is way too broad.

Ms M. BEARD: Sorry?

The CHAIR: It is very broad. I suspect that the minister will be able to say no. Minister, fire away.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I am with you on that, chair. I am not sure specifically what the member is after. I would not encourage police to reveal how frequently they are doing that anyway, for starters. Putting that aside, they might be able to do the confiscation of alcohol as part of the carriage limit enforcement, but I would think that the member would need to narrow it down to a specific region at a specific time so that we are not wasting their time trying to trawl through things.

Ms M. BEARD: That is what I was asking: can we get information by region as to how many of those checks have resulted in —

The CHAIR: That is not what you asked last time.

Ms M. BEARD: Sorry?

Mr P. PAPALIA: They could not provide how many checks, but if the member is talking about how many —

Ms M. BEARD: How many seizures have there been as a result of their checks?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I am informed that they seize alcohol not just from vehicles but also from individuals. I think that diverting effort and resources from policing to trying to find the data on that is not really justifiable.

Ms M. BEARD: Just to clarify, what I was actually asking is: how many vehicles have they stopped and searched for alcohol, and have people had alcohol confiscated and/or been charged?

The CHAIR: Is that universal or by region?

Ms M. BEARD: It is by region.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Is the member focused on a specific region? Is it her own in the midwest?

Ms M. BEARD: I am focused on my region but also other regions as well.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I am trying to narrow it down to accommodate the member's request in a reasonable way without diverting too many resources to the task. I will undertake to provide the number of charges for breach of carriage limit in the midwest over the last 12 months.

[*Supplementary Information No B6.*]

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I refer to page 408 of budget paper No 2, under the service summary of "Regional and Remote Policing Services". I assume that, from a regional perspective, customer service officers fall under that funding allocation. I am looking for some details on how many customer service officers are allocated in regional communities.

Mr P. PAPALIA: The member understands that they are not community liaison; she is talking about customer service officers. She knows who they are: the front desk guys.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: They are the front desk and administrative support.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Can I provide that for the member?

Ms M.J. DAVIES: That would be good as a supplementary.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Where is the member talking about?

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I am interested in regional Western Australia, but I am happy to do it in the wheatbelt district.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I undertake to provide the member with the number of CSOs in the wheatbelt district by station. [Supplementary Information No B7.]

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Can the minister provide some guidance on how CSOs are allocated to stations?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I might ask Deputy Commissioner Adams to give an answer as to how CSOs are allocated.

Mr A. Adams: Largely, it is based on demand. Obviously, there are a number of very small police stations in the wheatbelt where the demand probably does not support the provision of a full-time CSO, but they are very important in the Northam and Merredin locations. I think taking it on notice and getting the precise detail to the member will obviously help.

Mr P. PAPALIA: We have already undertaken to do that.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Following on from the advice that it is demand driven, I make the point to the minister that for a two-person station, having a CSO—if one is available, and I have a community where there is, but they are not actually being employed in that role—would support police officers to be out and on the beat. I understand that the superintendent and the commissioner’s preference is for police officers to be visible and out and not doing paperwork. Although I appreciate demand and resourcing, what if a warm body is available? I am trying to get an understanding of what demand level is needed to allocate a CSO.

[10.30 am]

Mr P. PAPALIA: Essentially, the deputy commissioner’s response in that respect is based on demand and requirement. The allocation of a community service officer is operationally driven and demand is based on the activity and extent of work at that particular location. Although it is a two-person police station and they would appreciate an extra CSO, the demand may not justify it. Is it a station that used to have one and now it does not?

Ms M.J. DAVIES: It has in the past.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Does the member know how long ago?

Ms M.J. DAVIES: No, I do not.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Under successive governments, some resources have been rationalised, as the member would know, and Northam is much bigger in terms of police district and policing numbers than it used to be. That is partly because police services were consolidated in that location, and similar things have been done in other locations. It may be that so many years ago, the ability to get around and support each other might not be as easy as it is now, and that may have been the result.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Just so I am clear, is it the demand in relation to the activity at the station that will drive the decision to allocate a CSO?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Yes.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Thank you.

The CHAIR: Minister, let me know when you need a comfort break.

Mr P. PAPALIA: It will not be too long, chair; I am getting old!

The CHAIR: Thank you, minister. Corrective Services is next, so maybe we can do it then.

Mr P. PAPALIA: It is up to opposition members how long they want to go on this division.

Ms M. BEARD: I refer to the line item “Government Regional Officer Housing” in the table under spending changes on page 406. The allocated amount goes from \$1.387 million to \$6.076 million and into the out years. Can the minister let me know what that is about? Is that for new housing? How does it translate to housing potentially across the regions?

Mr P. PAPALIA: As an observation, the state government has approved an additional \$26.779 million to support increase in demand for Government Regional Officers’ Housing and the annual updates for increases in rental rates. The figures in the table will accommodate the second part—the annual increase in rental rates.

Ms M. BEARD: I refer to the police and community youth centres’ safeSPACE program also found in the table on page 406. I see an allocation for 2023–24 and 2024–25. Are there plans to secure additional funding for other spaces beyond that?

Mr P. PAPALIA: That program was originally funded by the federal government and that funding ended. This is our allocation to ensure continued delivery. The Western Australia Police Force will be working on what happens next.

Ms M. BEARD: Is there a breakdown by location of what exists now?

Mr P. PAPALIA: We have allocated \$4.6 million to continue the delivery of the safeSPACE programs, of which \$3.87 million through the royalties for regions program will be provided for the safeSPACE program in Broome, Bunbury, Carnarvon and Geraldton; and \$0.73 million through an additional appropriation will be provided for the program in Gosnells.

Ms M. BEARD: I refer to the firearms reform budget on page 406 and the amount of \$745 000 for 2023–24 and subsequent allocations until 2026–27. Is that funding allocation for the digital firearms licensing registry?

Mr P. PAPALIA: The allocation of funding is not for what the member has called “digital licensing”, but actually an information technology upgrade for the entire administration of firearms licensing. A component of the funding will deliver the ability to have a digital licence, but it is mainly for our register and administrative process. It will enable a huge leap in capability in terms of being able to access and interrogate data and deliver a better policing response to anything to do with firearms. It will also enhance the licensing element and ensure that we are compliant with and able to meet our obligations to deliver information to the National Firearms Register. It is all those things; it is not just one element, but a complete system.

Ms M. BEARD: I refer to the third item of the asset investment program “Firearms Reform Program—Firearms Licensing and Registry System” on page 413. I understand that ammunition is not included in the legislation. Is there funding in the budget for more stringent requirements around ammunition or for more scrutiny around the sale of and possession around ammunition?

[10.40 am]

Mr P. PAPALIA: The funding is to build a new IT system that delivers on management, administration, enforcement and the capacity for police to interrogate data better. Part of that will be to enable real-time reporting of ammunition sales. The whole system will be upgraded. Currently, people who sell ammunition mostly record that data in a book or in their own digital format. But the IT system will enable that information to be easily submitted to the system and then become accessible for police to monitor.

Ms M. BEARD: Can I assume that this section in the budget will allow for more scrutiny on the sale of the actual ammunition?

Mr P. PAPALIA: What it will do is fund the build of a more modern licensing system to enable police to accrue and interrogate data, which we currently cannot achieve.

The appropriation was recommended.

Meeting suspended from 10.42 to 10.48 am

Division 27: Justice — Services 8 and 9, Corrective Services —

Ms M.M. Quirk, Chair.

Mr P. Papalia, Minister for Corrective Services.

Mr B. Royce, Commissioner of Corrective Services.

Ms C. Ginbey, Deputy Commissioner, Women and Young People.

Mr A. Beck, Deputy Commissioner, Offender Services.

Ms K. Maj, Acting Director General.

Mr T. Clark, Deputy Director General, Corporate Services.

Ms J. Kingston, Executive Director, Strategy and Engagement.

Mr R. Montilva, Acting Executive Director, Finance.

Mr R. Harte, Senior Policy Adviser.

Mr R. McFarlane, Senior Policy Adviser.

[Witnesses introduced.]

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

A minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee. I will ask the minister to clearly indicate what information they agree to provide and will then allocate a reference number. Supplementary information should be provided to the principal clerk by noon on Friday, 31 May 2024. If a minister suggests that a matter be put on notice, members should use the online questions on notice system to submit their questions.

The member for Vasse has the call.

[10.50 am]

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to paragraph 4 under the heading “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency” on page 422 of budget paper No 2, volume 2, and the development of a crisis care unit at Banksia Hill Detention Centre. When was the idea of a new crisis care unit first brought to the minister’s attention? Did this request come to the minister’s office or was it brought to his attention by the department?

Mr P. PAPALIA: The requirement for a new crisis care unit was identified prior to me assuming my role. I might ask Christine to answer, if she can.

Ms C. Ginbey: It was brought to the attention of the previous minister by the department. We have an intensive supervision unit at Banksia Hill. It looks after young people who have myriad different needs and risks. It is a place that helps people who have been involved in incidents within the department. There might have been a fight between some young people or a critical incident involving aggression between young people, and they are held there. If a young person who is going through withdrawals comes into the detention centre, they are also held in the intensive support unit, as well as young people who are at risk of self-harm or suicide. As members can imagine, having that mix of young people together in the one unit is not very therapeutic. We have been very fortunate that we have been able to do some interim work in that unit to support young people with a variety of needs and risks. Having a purpose-built crisis care unit is the most therapeutic environment in which we can hold young people who are at risk of self-harm or attempted suicide. It also allows us to staff it with professional staff who are particularly trained in that area. We look forward to having that on board.

Mr P. PAPALIA: The deputy commissioner recalls that it may have been brought to the former minister’s attention in late 2022.

Ms L. METTAM: When will the business case for this unit be completed?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I understand that the business case has already been completed. A total of \$20.7 million has been allocated for the construction of the crisis care unit, which will provide dedicated support to young people experiencing mental health crises. Tenders for construction of the CCU are currently being evaluated.

Ms L. METTAM: When will construction take place or when will the facility be operational?

The CHAIR: They are two separate questions.

Mr P. PAPALIA: The tenders are being evaluated. The normal process will play out. Once a successful tenderer is identified, we will be able to give the member those answers but I cannot answer those questions now.

Ms L. METTAM: Will more beds be available than are available in the current unit 18 complex?

Mr P. PAPALIA: This unit will not replace unit 18; it is not the alternative to unit 18. This facility will enhance and support services inside Banksia Hill for the cohort that is managed in that facility. The member may be conflating the tasks. There is another business case for a dedicated facility that will be a new youth detention facility in its entirety. That business case will focus on developing a facility to house the cohort that is currently housed in unit 18. It is a different facility altogether. That is the one to which we allocated \$1 million in the previous *Government mid-year financial projections statement*. That business case is underway.

Ms L. METTAM: What will be the capacity of this unit? How many beds will it contain?

Mr P. PAPALIA: All of that is part of the business case, which will determine the capacity and the nature of the facility. That work is being done. It is almost complete. It is underway.

Ms L. METTAM: Again, I refer to the third significant issue on page 422, which states —

The Department is continuing to progress a range of measures to enhance safety and wellbeing at Banksia Hill Detention Centre and Unit 18 ...

How many employees are earmarked, which is referred to in that paragraph, for Banksia Hill and unit 18?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Is the member referring to the increased staffing levels?

Ms L. METTAM: Yes.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I might ask the commissioner to respond.

Mr B. Royce: Banksia Hill is the actual centre and unit 18 has staff from that facility. We move staff to unit 18 as necessary. The actual staff contingent relates to Banksia Hill and unit 18 is run as a unit from that. If we put more young people in there, we lift the staffing. If we reduce the number of young people or change the wings they are in, we can reduce the staffing. Banksia Hill has the full contingent of staff and we move them to unit 18 as necessary.

Ms L. METTAM: It is my understanding that Banksia Hill has 254 positions for custodial staff. Are all those positions filled?

Mr B. Royce: No, they are not.

Ms L. METTAM: When does the minister expect those positions to be filled?

Mr B. Royce: We only have figures for the previous year. If we get all our academies through for youth custodial officers, we will get 144 staff. We have an attrition rate of around 2.5 to five a month, so it is a sliding scale, but I am hopeful that we will be as full as we can get with normal attrition by the end of the year.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to page 432 of budget paper No 2, volume 2, and the cost per day of keeping a young person in detention. The budgeted amount for 2023–24 was \$1 659, yet the estimated amount increased by 85 per cent to \$3 067 per day. What has led to that significant increase?

[11.00 am]

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

Mr P. PAPALIA: There are a couple of factors. There was an increase in the cost of service. Everybody experienced increases in service costs after the COVID period. Service costs are 44 per cent higher than budgeted. That is one component. The other element is a reduction in the number of young people in detention; therefore, the cost per individual has elevated. There was a reduction of 22 per cent in the daily average of young people managed in detention compared with the budgeted number of young people we began with. Fewer people and higher costs individually have resulted in an increase in cost per person.

Ms L. METTAM: As explained in note 3 for this item, which can be found at the top of page 433, this increase is due to an increase in the cost of managing young persons in detention.

Mr P. PAPALIA: There was also a reduction in the number of people in detention. Fewer people makes the cost per person go up, as does the cost of service delivery.

Ms L. METTAM: Has there been an increase in management associated with this as well or is it just an economies of scale issue?

Mr P. PAPALIA: With service delivery, there is an increase in the cost of individual services. That is something we are experiencing across all sectors. But a greater number of services are also being provided into Banksia Hill and unit 18, including some that we have employed. We have a new Aboriginal services unit. Other services are being delivered by not-for-profits, and we also have new programs, like the mentors or elders program. There are things of that nature that did not exist before. A significant number of additional services are being delivered and, obviously, they are part of the increase in costs. But individually, costs for services that were already engaged have increased. That is just a consequence of the cost escalation across all sectors. The other part is that we have fewer detainees than we have budgeted for, so the cost per individual has been elevated.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to the asset investment program on page 433 and the \$22.3 million being spent to provide a safe and secure environment at Banksia Hill and unit 18. What is currently unsafe at a Banksia Hill or unit 18 that requires an increase in services and support?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I do not think the member can make that observation from line 1.2. It reflects an additional allocation of funds to provide an enhanced and wider range of services and support in order to provide a safe and secure environment because the agency is tasked to provide a safe and secure environment. It is just delivering a greater allocation of funding to meet the agency's objective.

Ms L. METTAM: Can the minister outline what these services will include and how they will increase safety?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I gave an indication of a couple just before in terms of the Aboriginal services unit and the elders mentor scheme. I will hand over to the deputy commissioner, who might be able to run through them. There has been a really significant increase in support to Banksia Hill and unit 18, and the deputy commissioner is more familiar with that.

Ms C. Ginbey: Specifically, under the asset investment program, there are a number of works in progress. One of the issues that we are experiencing at Banksia Hill is that, because the infrastructure is aged and has certainly been well used over the years, young people were able to undertake a high degree of damage to sleeping quarters as well as being able to climb onto the roof or cowling, for example. Whenever this happened, it required staff to be diverted from the normal routine and running the normal program for the other young people who were not involved in the incident. Some of the work that is being done is to provide anti-climb fencing and anti-climb roof treatments on each of the buildings so that there will be less of those critical incidents that disrupt the normal routine.

There are a number of other works that are taking place. The crisis care unit is one that we have mentioned. We certainly have quite a difficult cohort there, so we are undertaking that roof and fence remediation and the work on the intensive support unit, which I have already explained. The intensive support unit was fairly bleak some time ago, and we have tried to make it a more therapeutic environment for young people who are spending time there by having additional exercise areas, colourful equipment, murals painted, noise-attenuating flooring treatments so that noise does not reverberate and observation cells to give staff a really good ability to observe the young people who might be at risk, and we have created a new staff area that enables staff to view CCTV camera footage within those cells more clearly. All of these have contributed to the safety of young people held in that area.

We have also put in some window protections. If young people in the units are lashing out, often the first thing that they do is to smash the windows, so we have put some treatments over those. We have put in some transportable dongas for those additional services that we are having come in so that they have somewhere to work from. We have also improved the education IT upgrade. A number of works are happening at Banksia Hill, all of which contribute to safety and security in that asset management area.

Ms L. METTAM: On matters of self-harm, is there anything specifically that is captured by that line item?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Just about everything the deputy commissioner referred to contributes to addressing that challenge because you can self-harm through climbing on a roof and potentially endanger yourself and suffer a consequence. All the measures around the intensive supervision unit are absolutely focused on making it a more accommodating environment and less harsh, and therefore will assist with a reduction in the likelihood of self-harm. That includes the observation cells and the provision of better facilities for staff to monitor people. Elements of this spend are associated with unit 18 as well, so I might ask the deputy commissioner to respond to the member and also reflect a little on that, because a lot of money has been spent on unit 18.

[11.10 am]

Ms C. Ginbey: Across both sites, there are additional psychology services. Youth justice psychological services has a team of clinical counselling and forensic psychologists who work across both sites, as well as in the community and the courts. A number of strategies have been put in place to increase its capacity and focus on offence-specific counselling, including recruitment and the use of community-based psychologists to commence counselling with young people while they are in custody. It also takes the through-care services out to the community. We have found that a number of our young people spend a number of short periods in custody and often the education, psychology and health services for them can be a bit stop-start. We are trying to provide better through care for them as much as possible.

We also have mental health services. The mental health, alcohol and other drugs nurses work with any young person when there are concerns that a young person might be showing signs of a major mental illness. They also work closely to support our custodial operations in managing any risk pertaining to that small cohort of individuals who have ongoing, chronic and acute behaviours and who are a high risk to themselves, often with attempted suicide or violent conduct. That can happen in the community as well as while they are in custody. Our custodial staff also work with those services and their queries about how to work with those young people.

We have daily at-risk assessment group meetings that are held to discuss young people who are at risk of self-harm. The attendees at those meetings include custodial staff, mental health services nurses, psychologists and Aboriginal youth support workers. Our Aboriginal mental health workers have commenced and have made a real difference. They attend both unit 18 and Banksia Hill Detention Centre. The Child and Adolescent Forensic Service—CAFS—has started. That is an in-reach service that includes neuropsychologists, psychiatrists, speech pathologists and paediatricians. The focus of that team is very much on developing the service model and addressing the operational challenges. Those clinicians are working to do psychological testing, as well as supporting referrals to the National Disability Insurance Scheme and providing assistance in developing behavioural management plans, when required.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I think the member's question was on the infrastructure investment to address self-harm in the facilities. Is that something she is specifically interested in, such as how much of the spend is allocated to that?

Ms L. METTAM: It was in relation to the line item around safety.

Mr P. PAPALIA: The member will see that the line item refers to Banksia Hill Detention Centre and unit 18. There has been a fair amount of spending on infrastructure enhancement at unit 18 as well as Banksia Hill. As I suggested with respect to the spend that the deputy commissioner initially referred to at Banksia Hill, there is an element of reduction in self-harm or mitigating that likelihood in just about everything when spending on infrastructure in the facilities. At unit 18, a lot of work has been done to change the structure to prevent access to roof spaces and climbing points where the detainees could hurt themselves or other people or do damage and then make the infrastructure more hazardous. A lot has been spent—we are talking about millions of dollars—over the term of unit 18 being employed as a juvenile detention facility. Even in the last financial year, that has been an ongoing process.

With respect to self-harm, despite the use of the terminology, ligature-free facilities do not really exist. It is impossible to prevent any cell or facility from having ligature points of some description, but every effort is made to reduce the opportunity to use points inside the accommodation as ligature points. There is an ongoing spend. When damage is done, because damage is regularly done by detainees, that is rectified and the detainees are moved to other cells where there is no damage.

Ms L. METTAM: Can I get some clarification? Are we dealing just with corrective services at the moment and then dealing with the Inspector of Custodial Services, or can we do them together?

Mr P. PAPALIA: The Inspector of Custodial Services is an independent commission. We will do that separately and the member can ask him questions then.

Ms L. METTAM: Okay. I will backtrack slightly to get some clarification. I refer to paragraph 3 under the heading “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency” on page 422, which I referred to before, about staffing at Banksia Hill and unit 18. Can I get some clarification on what the shortfall of those positions is at Banksia Hill and unit 18? I talked earlier about Banksia Hill having 254 positions for custodial staff and the shortfall. I would also like information on the shortfall for unit 18.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Here is the thing, member: it is similar to the police. We committed to increasing the resources and the number of staff and then we allocated those positions. We are building towards those positions. It does not mean that there is a shortfall. Compared with the past, the member will find that there are more staff. We have made a commitment to increase the number of staff. In 2023, 86 probation officers graduated from five training programs at the academy and a further six programs are scheduled to be run in 2024, with the potential, as the member heard from the commissioner, for 144 new recruits. Obviously, that is tempered by the attrition rate. From experience, the attrition rate of youth custodial officers is linked to the conditions and the environment. The more staff we get, the safer the environment is, the less trauma they are exposed to and the more likely they are to stay. That includes showing up to work, because that was a challenge that we confronted not long ago when there were significant levels of workers compensation leave and sick leave. That is less so now because more people are showing up to work. I think that is a reflection of the environment being perceived to be a better and safer working environment. That is true for Banksia Hill and unit 18. I will ask the commissioner to respond, although she may not be able to give the information right away. I think the information that the member is after is where we are at in either achieving or being short of our allocation of additional staff. Sorry, I will ask Mr Clark to answer that.

Mr T. Clark: As at 31 March 2023, we had 253 approved FTE and 230 FTE. As of 31 March 2024, we had 343 approved FTE. That is a significant increase. The number of approved and substantive FTE is 254. Our numbers have gone up over 2023 and 2024 and we are recruiting to fill the 88 required FTE.

Mr P. PAPALIA: The member would recall when the Premier and I took on the role and committed to responding to the challenges at Banksia Hill and unit 18 and said that one of the things we would do is increase the number of staff. That allocation has been done.

It is now a matter of growing numbers. Other services are being delivered that are external to the agency, and there are additional number in those services as well.

[11.20 am]

Ms L. METTAM: Can I clarify those numbers?

Mr P. PAPALIA: The member will have to go through me, but yes.

Ms L. METTAM: Minister, can I clarify that as of March, 253 was the allocation and there were 230 FTE; in 2024, it is 343 and we currently have 254? That is for Banksia Hill.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Mr Clark confirmed that, but as we indicated, we are running training. The capacity at the academy is very tight. The academy trains both prison officers and youth custodial officers and other staff like veteran support officers. There is significant demand. We have adequate courses programmed to add an additional 144 youth custodial officers.

Ms L. METTAM: Are we able to get similar figures for unit 18?

Mr P. PAPALIA: As the commissioner indicated, there is a global figure of youth custodial officers and they are allocated from Banksia Hill to unit 18. It is one pool of people. When the Premier and I made our commitment to take on the roles, at that time there was a significant impact on service delivery and issues like time out of cell and the like that could be attributed to shortages of personnel. The member would have repeatedly heard claims made about lack of personnel having an impact on conditions. That has improved significantly and that is in advance of getting additional numbers of the personnel they refer to. It has improved as a consequence of conditions improving and the management regime around the challenging and complex cohort who are housed in unit 18, meaning that Banksia Hill is a lot safer, as is unit 18. There is a new regime inside unit 18 that separates into three different cohorts. Those measures have resulted in a greater presence of staff than we have experienced. People are showing up to work; there is less sick leave and workers compensation than there was. There is less disruption of the greater population of detainees because there are fewer incidents of that very disruptive nature. That has all had a consequence. We are still going to grow more staff and we expect that means it will be even better, because we will have a bigger pool of people and enhanced delivery of service. It has already vastly improved from what it was when we took on the job—I have lost track; I think it was nine months ago.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to the service summary on page 424. The level of funding under the eighth service, “Adult Corrective Services”, falls from \$1.11 billion in 2023–24 to \$1.073 billion in 2025–26.

Mr P. PAPALIA: What is the member referring to?

Ms L. METTAM: It is under “Service Summary”.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Is it in the table? Is it the eighth point?

Ms L. METTAM: It is in the funding for corrective services. At a time that we see crime increasing, what is driving this reduction and have any services been cut?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I want to clarify: is the member talking about the budget year allocation column in the eighth point? Is she talking about the \$1.11301 billion as opposed to the estimated actual of \$1.113 billion the previous year and the budgeted amount of \$1.03 billion? That means an increase, not a decrease.

Ms L. METTAM: I am looking at —

Mr P. PAPALIA: Is the member looking at the subsequent years—the out years? Is that what she is talking about?

Ms L. METTAM: Yes. The out year 2025–26 is \$1.073 billion for adult corrective services.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I am informed that in any one year there might be funding that may not have been in the previous budget for a specific project or task. It would likely have occurred this year. In next year's anticipated budget, specific additional funding may not yet have been identified. It was elevated this year because an additional \$83 million was received for the prison service's evaluation reform project, which is not the only part of it; however, \$32 million of it was for that. The increase in services provided by the Western Australia Police Force was \$7 million. The reallocation of Western Australia Police Force costs from courts and tribunal services to adult corrective services was \$12 million. There are other elements to the budget that have not necessarily been identified at the time of the budget composition or compilation. That may happen again next year. There may be more allocated than what was budgeted.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to "Successful completion of community correction orders" on page 425. I note that in 2022–23, it was 69.2 per cent; we had a budgeted amount of 64 per cent and the actual was 66 per cent. Our next target is 64 per cent. Can the minister explain why there is a reduction in what he anticipates the successful completion rate will be? The figure seems very low; however, this is not my shadow portfolio. Can the minister explain the reduction in what is anticipated?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Is the member asking why the budget target is lower than the actual achieved outcome?

[11.30 am]

Ms L. METTAM: Yes.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I am informed that there have been incremental improvements in achievement, but it is not a significant change that would elicit a change in the budget target. That is arrived at through work with Treasury and the agency to set an objective. But there were improvements in the capability of staff in managing offenders in the community, and that resulted in incremental improvements since 2015–16. There were amendments to the adult community corrections handbook in May 2019 that impacted by placing an emphasis on motivation engagement with the offender to reduce noncompliance from occurring, in consideration of strategies to achieve the shared goal of compliance, but those improvements have been incremental. We do not necessarily have confidence that that will be a year-on-year improvement, once that incremental improvement has been made, that would justify setting a different target. It is work that is done with Treasury. If consistent improvement is achieved, we can expect that the target would then change and it would be budgeted for.

Ms L. METTAM: I have a new question. I refer to budget paper No 3, page 131, and the heading "New Young People Directorate".

Mr P. PAPALIA: Yes.

Ms L. METTAM: The reference reads —

A new dedicated Young People directorate will be established within Corrective Services portfolio to enhance the Department's focus on young people, at an additional cost of \$2.2 million over the forward estimates.

How many staff will there be in this directorate?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I might get the commissioner to answer, and then if I need to provide any further information, I can.

Mr B. Royce: The directorate is just a small portfolio office over the existing young people area. Of the "young people" part of the women's and young people's directorate that is coming out, it is only the very significant leadership part that is bringing in new positions. There will be a deputy commissioner, an assistant commissioner and a small staffing contingent to run the young people part separately.

Ms L. METTAM: Can you confirm how many FTE will be provided for this effort?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I am told it will be five additional personnel, noting that there is a women's and young people's directorate now. It is a separation of components into different areas of responsibility. There will also be the recruitment of a new deputy commissioner for young people.

Ms L. METTAM: How will the advice that body is to provide be any different from what is currently provided? Are there key performance indicators?

Mr P. PAPALIA: It is essentially just a recognition that we want to resource and staff the effort in juvenile detention to a greater degree. That means seeking out, recruiting and employing a dedicated deputy commissioner for the role and separating the two elements of the agency so that they are more focused on their specific fields. That will result in a more dedicated focus, and I have no doubt that ultimately, having dedicated, suitably qualified people for the two different roles of women and young people, will result in a greater focus on each of those tasks.

Ms L. METTAM: One final question before we go to the Inspector of Custodial Services. When will this be put in place?

Mr P. PAPALIA: With respect to what I was saying, that is not a criticism of the structure; we are throwing more resources and effort and support to the agency in each of those areas.

Ms L. METTAM: When will these five FTE be in place?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I think some already are. The new deputy commissioner process is not yet quite complete, but it is very close.

The appropriation was recommended.

Division 33: Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services —

Mr S.J. Price, Chair.

Mr P. Papalia, Minister for Corrective Services.

Mr E. Ryan, Inspector of Custodial Services.

Ms J. Higgins, Deputy Inspector of Custodial Services.

Ms K. MacGregor, Acting Manager, Corporate Governance.

Mr R. McFarlane, Principal Policy Adviser.

Mr R. Harte, Senior Policy Adviser.

[Witnesses introduced.]

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

A minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee. I will ask the minister to clearly indicate what information they agree to provide and will then allocate a reference number. Supplementary information should be provided to the principal clerk by noon on Friday, 31 May 2024. If a minister suggests that a matter be put on notice, members should use the online questions on notice system to submit their questions.

The Leader of the Liberal Party has the call.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to page 489 of budget paper No 2, volume 2, and the line item “Inspection and Review of Custodial Services” in the table headed “Service Summary”. I refer to the department’s continuing review of services at Banksia Hill and unit 18, as highlighted there. The minister recently provided an update, on 15 May, regarding part 2 of the 2023 inspection of Banksia Hill Detention Centre and unit 18. The minister noted that the most recent visits and data analyses showed some slippage in relation to staffing numbers and the return of services. Can the minister clarify what is meant by “slippage”? Is it to do with staffing numbers or the return of services?

[11.40 am]

Mr P. PAPALIA: I will ask the inspector to respond. I think that it was his report.

Mr E. Ryan: The media release the member is talking about is an announcement of a review we are commencing. It is the follow-up to the report *148: Inspection of Banksia Hill Detention Centre and unit 18 at Casuarina Prison (part one)*, which was tabled in June of last year. We flagged that we would go back and look at the services for detainees. The riot in May of that year delayed that. We have been monitoring the out-of-cell hours, staffing numbers and services being provided at both Banksia Hill Detention Centre and unit 18. We have certainly noticed that the out-of-cell hours, staffing attendance and activities that have been running are starting to improve; as a consequence, we think that now is a good time to go back and do the additional work that was flagged in the 148th report, and that is what we are talking about.

The reference to “slippage” in my announcement was that we saw quite positive out-of-cell hours in the earlier part of this year. It has come off a tad at the moment, and that is obviously attributable to a whole range of things. It is not a decline. There was an overall improvement, it has backed off a little bit, and it is continuing on that trajectory. That is the reference to recent slippage.

Ms L. METTAM: Is it a slippage or decline in service or numbers of staff?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Members should understand that the Inspector of Custodial Services is not there all the time. He is going to do another report, so he will go and do another assessment. I will let him answer that. Basically, he was making that observation based on out-of-cell hours, because we regularly report those to the inspector. He is going to go and look for himself, but I will let him answer.

Mr E. Ryan: It is not necessarily the services being delivered. It could be that the average out-of-cell hours might be five and a half hours, for example, and it might have come back to five hours or thereabouts. It is just a reference to that. It is not that services are being discontinued. Obviously, as in the previous division, if there is an incident and the centre has to go into lockdown for a particular reason, that affects the average out-of-cell hours.

Ms L. METTAM: Are services going backwards? Is that a better way of saying it?

Mr E. Ryan: That is the whole purpose of the review. As the minister mentioned, we are not out there all the time. We are out there fairly regularly and we keep a close monitoring of the available data we get through from our own sources and from the department, but the whole idea of the review is to actually go out, talk to the staff and service providers and have a look at the extent and frequency of, and access to, those services.

Mr P. PAPALIA: This review by the inspector of both Banksia Hill and unit 18 will give everybody an independent view of the situation. We cannot really give the member an answer on the current status in advance of doing that review, because the inspector is not there all the time. The review is a good thing; I welcome it, and it should be welcomed by everybody. The inspector is independent of government. He will tell us if he does not think it is good.

Ms L. METTAM: In this update, which really refers to the inspection and review of custodial services, there is a reference to “visits”, which could be interpreted as slippage occurring over multiple visits. How long has the department been witnessing this trend?

The CHAIR: Minister, the question relates to the statement, not to the budget.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I make that observation; the member should be asking about the budget. But with that aside, it is the inspector’s media release. As the member indicated earlier, the inspector was suggesting that there might have been a minor slippage in some out-of-cell hour averages. I can tell the member that I get the figures every week. For unit 18, it is monitored down to individuals; for Banksia Hill, it is monitored more broadly by different categories of detainees. The conditions in both Banksia Hill and unit 18 have vastly improved. At Banksia Hill, the weekly average is around eight and a half to 11 out-of-cell hours a day. As the inspector indicated, the average out-of-cell hours at unit 18 has been somewhere between five and five and a half hours a day, depending on individuals, because that place is separated into three cohorts. I would absolutely refute any suggestion that there is a slippage in service delivery; there has actually been a significant increase in service delivery to both sites and it continues to increase all the time.

As we indicated in the previous division when we talked about staffing numbers and the recruitment of additional officers, firstly the allocation of additional officers and then the recruitment to that target is underway. Officers are showing up and attending work at far higher numbers than at the time when there were concerns around that having an impact on conditions and service delivery. We have other initiatives like the Aboriginal services unit, which did not exist a year or eight months ago. Services like the Aboriginal elders mentoring program are constantly being delivered to both sites. There is now in-reach from the Mental Health Commission from specialist paediatric services. Additional services provided by not-for-profit organisations were provided before, but they are now able to be delivered more frequently because of the more stable conditions in the unit. All those things mean that service delivery is up, and we will keep working on improving and enhancing it. That observation by the inspector was about out-of-cell hours.

Ms L. METTAM: Can the minister provide some more information on this slippage or this trend backwards? We are referring to the inspection and review of custodial services.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Yes, the member is, but she is not talking about the budget.

Ms L. METTAM: That is in the budget. That is what we are budgeting.

Mr P. PAPALIA: No, it is not a line item in the budget. The media release referred to the future inspection by the inspector, which is not in the budget because it has not happened yet. But that aside, I refer to the average out-of-cell hours. I think, at the time of that media release, I can tell the member that for unit 18, since the start of the year, in January, the average out-of-cell hours was four hours and 22 minutes; in February, it was four hours and 27 minutes; and in March, it was four hours and 59 minutes, so if we are talking about unit 18, there is not a slippage of any description. There have been a few disruptions—not a large number—to out-of-cell hours on weekends in Banksia Hill, which would have impacted the average out-of-cell hour numbers. I think this is the slippage that the inspector referred to. The average out-of-cell hours for Banksia Hill in January was nine hours and 37 minutes; in February, it was 10 hours and 22 minutes; in March, it was nine hours and 23 minutes. All it takes is an individual to climb a roof and, for the safety of everybody involved, the response has to be a constraint on the movement of

everybody else, and that impacts on average out-of-cell hours. It depends on what time of the day it occurs. Obviously, it is not great, but it is better for average out-of-cell hours if the disruption happens later in the afternoon, closer to the evening, when the detainees would be going to bed anyway. It is not great if a disruption occurs in the morning and takes a few hours to resolve. It is not like Banksia Hill has gone back to three hours out of cell or anything like that. It has vastly improved on what it was when we took on this role.

[11.50 am]

Ms L. METTAM: The minister is talking about this slippage being related to extraordinary events such as when those in detention climbed on the roof. How many of those incidents over the last 12 months are we talking about?

Mr P. PAPALIA: In the absence of the Inspector of Custodial Services conducting the review that he has announced, he would be looking at and referring to out-of-cell hours, but he does not know the cause of it, other than from the observations we make. An asterisk might be under the report that he gets weekly, and a note says, “This may be due to a disruption from some detainees” but he does not have specifics. That is why he will do the review, and then he will be able to inquire into what is going on and what is happening.

Mr E. Ryan: I would not be able to add any additional detail to that. The reference to slippage is, as the minister said, that the average out-of-cell hours at Banksia Hill have dropped off a little bit. That is me being scrupulously honest in the announcement of the review to say that it was improving, but it has come off a tad in the week or so before we made the announcement.

Mr P. PAPALIA: In fairness, too, I know that the member is conflicted about when to ask the question. The member could have got the answer to these questions from the Department of Justice people if she had concerns about what drove this data at that time. The inspector has not yet gone in to inspect, so it is not really fair to ask him. We regularly reveal information of that type to the inspector and to the President of the Children’s Court so that they have visibility over the metrics that give them an indication, but they do not know what the cause is until they go in and have a look. The member is talking about one month, too.

Ms L. METTAM: It is a recent event.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Yes, but it is one month, and it is 20 minutes.

Ms L. METTAM: It is a recent event, and the minister has his staff here. I wonder what has contributed to this recent slippage. The minister must be aware.

Mr P. PAPALIA: The inspector cannot give the member that answer because he has not got access to what was driving it. With respect to my knowledge of it, it is minor. It is an indication of just how significant the improvement has been. The member is now fixated on a drop from 10 hours and 22 minutes out of cell in the daytime to nine hours and 23 minutes. I reckon that a few parents around the suburbs would be ecstatic if their kids got out of their bedrooms for nine hours and 23 minutes. That is not to say that it is acceptable to have any sort of backward movement in out-of-cell hours. Our ambition is to keep growing it, but there is only so far it can grow. They will be out of the cell for half the day, and for half the day they will be in it because it is bedtime. That is just a natural limit that will be confronted.

I will go back a little bit further at Banksia Hill, so the member gets an indication. There is no trend the wrong way. I have given the member three months. If I go back to October last year, the average out-of-cell hours at Banksia Hill was nine hours and 15 minutes. In November, it was nine hours and three minutes; in December, it was eight hours and 56 minutes; in January, it was nine hours and 37 minutes; in February, it was 10 hours and 22 minutes; and in March, it was nine hours and 23 minutes. The point is that we get occasional disruptions. I am not saying that this has occurred because we have had significant improvements in numbers with staff showing up to work and not being sick to the extent that they were, but if COVID went through, and it has done at different times, that could impact a shift of staff and have an impact. They are not dropping a significant amount. It has pretty successfully improved since we came to the role.

I do not know whether the member remembers, but I took over in October or June last year—June. In June 2023, the average out-of-cell hours was seven hours and 46 minutes, so there has been a significant improvement, and we will focus on it. The inspector can go there and check it out, and the member can ask all the questions about whether he is concerned about it not going the right way. I think it is going the right way, but if it is not, he can find out. His report will be published.

Ms L. METTAM: That is part of my further question. When will that report be published? Just to clarify, was the slippage the trigger for the report, or is it just what the inspector does anyway?

Mr E. Ryan: We anticipate that the report will be published before the end of the year. It is a snapshot review; it is not a full inspection. The timeline we set for the project is for November or thereabouts. The slippage I referred to in the release—which, it turns out, might be a slightly misleading turn of phrase—was not the catalyst for the report at all. We had seen improvement in our regular contact with both facilities. We had observed greater time out of cell in our data tracking. We were told by the staff on the ground, not just custodial staff but also general staff, that things were happening; education was happening, and we were seeing recreation happening.

Ms L. METTAM: Was this report not due last year or is it a different report?

Mr P. PAPALIA: This is an unscheduled one, actually.

Mr E. Ryan: Ordinarily in our inspections, we would look at services like education programs and recreation, but when we did the 148th report, *2023 inspection of Banksia Hill Detention Centre and unit 18 at Casuarina Prison (part one)*, which was the last published report on Banksia Hill, we decided to focus on three key areas in that report. We flagged that we would look at those other additional areas in part two. As I said in an earlier answer, a major disturbance in May resulted in infrastructure damage, and so a number of those things meant that those services were not happening. We have monitored the situation closely in the intervening period and noticed that those services are now recommencing, and out-of-cell hours are improving, so it is time to go back and, as the minister said, go into the detail and see how effectively and how often they are happening and the extent of it. Then, we will be able to report publicly on that.

Ms L. METTAM: The terms of reference for part two of the report include whether any deterioration in the progress been mitigated, to the best it can be, by appropriate departmental contingency planning. Considering the inspector has already stated that there is a reference to a slippage, which could be interpreted as extended periods of time, has any mitigation already been outlined? I know that the publication of the report is anticipated later this year.

Mr P. PAPALIA: This is so out of budget, it is extreme. That aside, the member keeps focusing on it. It is a media release by the inspector that referenced a slippage of one hour in average out-of-cell hours between February and March, noting that February had elevated out-of-cell hours. If we go back a couple of months prior to that, the average that the member is referring to as a slippage was nine hours and 23 minutes.

The inspector has more things to do than just deal with juveniles, because the adult estate is way bigger and he has a schedule of inspections. He has indicated that he will fit in this review, which is good. I welcome it. I would rather it happened next week and was over and done with and reported on by the middle of the year, but I do not think he is able to accommodate that target. We welcome the independent verification of just how much things have improved. I anticipate that that is what will happen. At the moment, the out-of-cell hours that I referred to are an indication of just how significant the improvement has been at both Banksia Hill Detention Centre and unit 18. Regular external oversight is provided by people like the inspector and his staff, but the President of the Children's Court has also made unscheduled independent visits to both sites. The response of those people has universally recognised that things are vastly improved from late last year.

[12 noon]

The CHAIR: Before the member asks her next question, you have really been given a lot of latitude to follow the statement questions. The minister and inspector have been very indulgent in their responses. You really need to get back to something that is relevant and in the budget.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to the 2023 inspection of Banksia Hill Detention Centre and unit 18 on page 489. This is a different line of questioning.

The CHAIR: Whereabouts on page 489 are we looking?

Ms L. METTAM: Under the service summary. I understand that part two of the review was meant to be released in the months following the release of part one of the review in May last year. The Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services publicly stated that part two could not be released during this period as the intended objective of the second part of the report could not be achieved with any services not consistently delivered. Which services are not being consistently delivered?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I have to address what the member is talking about here. The member needs to understand what the Inspector of Custodial Services is talking about in that report. His last review of Banksia Hill was in late 2022 to early 2023. In May 2023, there was a riot and 25 per cent of the buildings were burnt down, with \$40 million worth of damage—I lose track of how much. As a consequence of a great deal of disruption throughout the first half of last year, there was a significant reduction in out-of-cell hours. Subsequently, there has been a change in practice and management and an increase in staffing and service delivery. What we are dealing with now is not something that happened in 2022 or early 2023, but what has happened subsequently. I will go back to June last year. If the member wants to go beyond that, obviously the out-of-cell hours were lower. By the way, that is only one measure. A whole range of service delivery measures are also provided to the inspector, the President of the Children's Court and me. In May last year, the average out-of-cell hours was five hours and 24 minutes. Since June, it has not dropped below eight hours and 36 minutes; that is the lowest figure in a couple of months. Beyond that, it is all over nine hours.

Asking about something in the previous budget year is irrelevant for a number of reasons. First, it is not in the budget and members are not supposed to ask about it; and, second, everything was different to the extent that there was a massive disruption over an extended time, including probably the most serious riot experienced in juvenile detention in May last year. That has not happened since, and the out-of-cell hours are indicative of the impact of the measures employed.

Ms L. METTAM: By way of supplementary information, is the minister able to provide a breakdown of the out-of-cell hours?

Mr P. PAPALIA: No. I have read into *Hansard* the average out-of-cell hours at Banksia Hill since June last year.

Ms L. METTAM: Can we get a breakdown of the out-of-cell hours since 2021?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I might get the member to put that question on notice. There are two issues with that. Unit 18 started running in the middle of 2022, so we went from one facility to two, with different measures and impacts. If the member puts that question on notice, we can give her the average monthly of out-of-cell hours.

The appropriation was recommended.

Division 14: Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation — Services 1 to 3, Defence Industry, Veterans Issues —

Mr S.J. Price, Chair.

Mr P. Papalia, Minister for Defence Industry; Veterans Issues.

Ms R. Brown, Director General.

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

Ms P. Arbuckle, Executive Director, Defence West.

Mr R. Sansalone, Chief Executive Officer.

Mr P. Zappelli, Principal Policy Adviser.

Mr R. Harte, Senior Policy Adviser.

[Witnesses introduced.]

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

A minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee. I will ask the minister to clearly indicate what information they agree to provide and will then allocate a reference number. Supplementary information should be provided to the principal clerk by noon on Friday, 31 May 2024. If a minister suggests that a matter be put on notice, members should use the online questions on notice system to submit their questions.

I give the call to the member for North West Central.

[12.10 pm]

Ms M. BEARD: I refer to page 195 of the *Budget statements*, under defence industry and supporting veterans, and paragraphs 4.1 and 4.2. For key infrastructure and industry development initiatives, is Defence West working on infrastructure or industry development initiatives in addition to that identified in paragraph 4.1?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Paragraph 4.1 refers to infrastructure and industry development initiatives, including supporting the delivery of Australia's AUKUS nuclear-powered submarine pathway and driving the state's participation in it. It is a kind of catch-all. Essentially, a whole range of infrastructure and industry development is associated with those two primary tasks being referred to. AUKUS and the move to establish a sustainment and maintenance capability for nuclear submarines is one big task. Then we have a dedicated, collaborative effort with the federal government whereby the deputy director general to my left sits on a steering group with our Defence Advocate, Rear Admiral Philip Spedding, and the deputy chief of the Australian Submarine Agency, Rear Admiral Matthew Buckley. Defence West responds and provides support to that effort and brings in any other government agencies as necessary to achieve that objective. We also have a taskforce that is co-chaired by the director general of the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation and the deputy secretary of the Naval Shipbuilding and Sustainment Group, Jim McDowell. Again, that is a federal and state collaborative effort to deliver on all manner of infrastructure requirements to support defence activities, primarily at Henderson, but they can probably look elsewhere.

Those two specific bodies are focused on the sustainment of AUKUS, nuclear submarine, surface fleet and current submarine sustainment activities and other naval defence industry activities. Defence West works on engaging with the defence industry right across the full spectrum of defence activity to look for opportunities, assist in engaging with those opportunities and deliver to not just our Defence Force, but also those of our allies. It is always working across a range of areas, not just those two areas.

Ms M. BEARD: In relation to promoting the WA defence industry at major national or international trade expositions, what trade expos has Defence West attended to promote the WA defence industry over the last year?

Mr P. PAPALIA: It has participated in and supported Western Australian defence industry participants internationally at the Defence and Security Exhibition International, which is a really big defence-related expo in the United Kingdom; and the Sea–Air–Space Expo in Washington, DC, which again is another big defence-related expo. It participated in and supported the Land Forces International Land Defence Exposition in Australia, which is in the land domain and happens every two years; and the Indo Pacific International Maritime Exposition, which is in the maritime domain. The land forces expo was in Brisbane, and the Indo-Pacific expo was in Sydney. For the Australian-hosted expos—land forces and Indo-Pacific—Defence West purchased floor space and gave access to small to medium-sized enterprises to exhibit their wares and market themselves inside a Defence West stand so they did not have to buy floor space, which was really expensive. They marketed that and had Defence West branding. Defence West arranged access for key players such as defence primes, senior officers and ministers to meet with our SMEs. That was done at both the land forces and the Indo-Pacific expos. With the overseas expos, Defence West escorted and facilitated meetings with key players in the international space because our exhibits were part of the Austrade stands.

Ms M. BEARD: What criteria did Defence West use to measure the success of those expos? For example, was it the amount of overseas investment?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Defence West does a lot of work around screening participants so that the SMEs that participate in those expositions are the ones most likely to receive benefits. We do not want to encourage SMEs to overextend themselves in cost or time when attending an exhibition from which they may not get a return. We have contracts with defence, defence primes and jobs in Western Australia in this sector and seek returns in that regard. A lot of measures are more difficult to quantify out of these SMEs attending the shows. Sometimes they might establish a connection that might be only a lead and then in the future may result in a more tangible benefit.

I can give the member an example of some of our industry players that are now much more significantly engaged in the defence sector and are successfully delivering servicing capability to not just the Australian Defence Force, but also ADF partners. When we established Defence West, it was very early days and SMEs had a very small presence and were less connected to the international and Australian defence markets. Players such as Blacktree Technology, AVI Defence, InnoVero and Hofmann Engineering from the early stages of their engagement in this sector now have the benefit of much more awareness and presence in the defence space.

Ms M. BEARD: What was the total cost of those expos for the last financial year compared with that budgeted for the next financial year?

[12.20 pm]

Mr P. PAPALIA: The entire allocated budget for Defence West in 2023–24 was in the order of \$16.9 million, and costs associated with those shows are a component of that. They are not a very large component. Most of it would be personnel.

I am informed that an estimated \$1.5 million is dedicated to shows per annum. Having said that, we established our own version—it is not like a trade show—the Indian Ocean Defence and Security Conference, which we host. We bring international and interstate participants to the state and enable a platform for our local industry players. It is quite a significant event on the calendar every couple of years. Part of that \$1.5 million is also attributed to that conference. That conference is being held this year. By way of example, when we held the first conference in 2018, we had about 200 participants. We anticipate well in excess of 1 000 attendees for the conference being held in late July. All the primes will be participating. We will have the chiefs of Navy from every one of the AUKUS nations, so the Chief of Naval Operations from the US, the First Sea Lord from the Royal Navy and the Chief of Navy from Australia. They will be joined by the chief of the Navy from Japan and the Chief of the Naval Staff from India. Every time we hold this conference, it escalates in reach and recognition. For the first time this year, the same operators that run the east coast exhibitions—the big expos such as land forces, the Indo Pacific International Maritime Exposition and the Avalon air show—will be running ours. It is a significant increase in reach and return.

Ms M. BEARD: My next question is related to the last answer. On page 109 of budget paper No 3, there is a reference to an additional \$15.7 million to support the state’s defence industry and enable participation at trade shows.

Mr P. PAPALIA: JTSI is the agency and we have to try to identify the amount attributed to Defence West within the budget. I am informed that an element of the investment attraction fund, which is not just for defence but across industry, is part of that \$15.7 million, so \$12.5 million is investment attraction fund money. That is in addition to the normal budget. The remainder of the \$15.7 million is for trade shows. That is the sort of thing that I just talked about.

Ms M. BEARD: I refer to paragraph 5 on page 195 of budget paper No 2, which states —

Defence West also manages the Veterans Issues portfolio ...

What assistance is provided to ex-service personnel and organisations in relation to that?

Mr P. PAPALIA: The thing to remember about veterans issues is that, fundamentally, it is a federal government responsibility. The federal government sends people off to serve their nation. The federal Department of Veterans’

Affairs is responsible for their care on completion of that service. We primarily focus on the delivery of services to veterans and their families in our state and try to fill gaps that the service provision from federal agencies may potentially omit. At the last election, we increased the budget for veterans fourfold from \$300 000 a year to \$1.3 million. That money is administered through the Anzac Day Trust and the trustees take applications for grants. We guide it primarily to focus on service delivery, with an element of the funding to be used for commemorative purposes, but only significant nationally recognised commemorative events, not small grants to lots of small remembrance events, which is the sort of thing that the DVA does. We request that the vast majority of the funding be allocated to service delivery, that it tries to aggregate grants and has fewer of them and that they are larger and delivered over extended periods of time so they give certainty to the ex-service organisations that might be delivering a service. That has resulted in things like partnerships between bigger ex-service organisations that provide comfort around probity of money management and the administrative process and smaller operators that provide a specific innovative service of a higher standard but might need additional support around administration.

For instance, the RSL partnered with a charity called Working Spirit run by a woman named Karyn Hinder, who essentially began as a one-woman show. Now she has a couple of employees. She is delivering a veterans employment program, including a portal, which is essentially like SEEK for veterans. A concierge service places them with an employer who wants to employ a veteran and is very welcoming of that opportunity. The veteran is essentially matched with an employer. That service is now being provided to families of veterans. It placed more than 110 people last year, and it is growing. That is an indication of that partnership. The RSL is working in partnership with Working Spirit, so Karyn gets on with the job and a lot of the administrative stuff, and confirmation of probity around money is provided by the RSL.

Another example is Legacy, which provides a range of services for families, widows and widowers of veterans across the state. We fund them the administrative costs for the maintenance of their respite camp down in Busselton. We fund the Veterans' Transition Centre in the hills and support to provide programs. It partners with a range of organisations such as corrective services to deliver programs and services in their location. We have a partnership with RAAFA—the RAAF association partnered with the Andrew Russell Veteran Living program to deliver that service in the future. We provide funding to organisations in a sustainable way so they know in advance that they have support and they are able to build into the future with confidence that they will deliver services. There will be wraparound services for homeless veterans. I very much anticipate delivering services for veterans exiting the corrective services world as they come out of prison. That has been the experience in South Australia. In addition, the RSLWA has partnered with Kaizen K9 to deliver the psychiatric assistance dog program.

Our focus is a bit more niche and in between in delivering services that are a little more targeted than the Department of Veterans' Affairs is capable of doing or might focus on. We are also trying to make Western Australia the most attractive destination for veterans to retire to with their families and contribute to our state.

The appropriation was recommended.

Division 36: Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries — Services 5 and 6, Racing and Gaming —

[12.30 pm]

Mr S.J. Price, Chair.

Mr P. Papalia, Minister for Racing and Gaming.

Ms L. Chopping, Director General.

Ms E. Gauntlett, Deputy Director General.

Ms L. Kalasopatan, Executive Director, Finance.

Ms D. Kennedy, Senior Policy Adviser.

[Witnesses introduced.]

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

A minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee. I will ask the minister to clearly indicate what information they agree to provide and will then allocate a reference number. Supplementary information should be provided to the principal clerk by noon on Friday, 31 May 2024. If a minister suggests that a matter be put on notice, members should use the online questions on notice system to submit their questions.

The member for Roe has the call.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: My first question is about the regulation of gambling and liquor industries outlined on page 542 of budget paper No 2, volume 2. The table shows increases in costs of services, and changes under the minister's

“Explanation of Significant Movements”, notes 1 and 4, flow on to regulatory fees and the like. As far as impacting both the casino and racing industry, it was revealed last week in the committee hearing that the Gaming and Wagering Commission has increased regulatory fees in the order of \$1.3 million—more than a 300 per cent increase—to the WA racing industry. Can the minister outline how Racing and Wagering Western Australia has been swept up, it appears, amongst the increase in regulation from the Perth Casino Royal Commission and so forth?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Yes, the member is right. Which committee was that? Was it not an upper house committee?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: It was the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations hearing.

Mr P. PAPALIA: That is correct. Since I assumed this role, I have become aware of that change in the increased costs associated with governance. I have asked the director general to undertake a review of regulation and the fee. That process is underway at the moment. The member is right; it did increase as a consequence of the royal commission and subsequent determinations by the GWC.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Given that review, I feel that RWWA has, as I said, been swept up amongst this royal commission scenario of adding a massive increase in fees to the casino. I guess we will see what comes out of the review. Will the minister be leaning on Treasury and the Treasurer to bring that fee back to a more reasonable amount considering that nothing has really changed in the world of racing and RWWA, but they have been affected by this change?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I have a couple of points. It will not be the Treasurer; it is my portfolio. The agency’s cost recovery is always limited to 100 per cent anyway. That being noted, I have met with RWWA about this matter. A range of measures or regulation-related activities were undertaken prior to this time, and the cost was not attributed to RWWA. The agency undertook roles. Things like audits and inspections; investigations and prosecutions; legislative rule and direction amendments; submissions relating to new and existing agencies; one-off race day events; administration and maintenance of racing returns and databases; and the commission for investigating complaints about the WA TAB by WA consumers were all undertaken before, and they were not cost recovered. I have conceded that. I recognised that when I met with the RWWA board and other players who raised the matter. I have undertaken to assess this; I have asked the director general of the agency to review the real nature of that cost escalation and whether it is all justifiable and whether we might be able to refine it more. The member should understand that it was all post royal commission. A lot happened in a short period of time. There were recommendations from the royal commission, and the GWC responded. This was just a part of that process.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I look forward to the result of that review. I will stay in touch with the minister because it tends to flow on with a reduction, whether it be for thoroughbreds or harness or whatever in the regional areas, which is something that the minister and I do not want to happen. A fee like that is a massive increase.

[12.40 pm]

Mr P. PAPALIA: I think the impact is being felt industry wide; it is not isolated. Racing and Wagering Western Australia puts a lot of effort into supporting regional and country activities, but the cost is significant. We have recognised that and are looking into it.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Thank you, minister.

I refer to the line item “Gaming and Wagering Commission” on page 533. Obviously, we are seeing that scaled down from \$1.84 million to \$682 000. The Independent Monitor’s final report to government is expected in January 2025. If the Independent Monitor recommends additional actions by the Gaming and Wagering Commission, will the minister allocate more funding in the forward estimates? Can he foresee that happening?

Mr P. PAPALIA: We will consider whatever the Independent Monitor report recommends at the time. It is hard to anticipate. I get regular reports from the Independent Monitor and there will be more between now and then, but there has been significant progress in complying with the recommendations of the royal commission.

Ms M. BEARD: I have a question on liquor regulatory reform outlined on page 534. I am wondering whether there is a plan to amend legislation to allow police greater powers, or wider scope, to put people on the banned drinkers register. I understand that if the police go to a domestic violence situation, often they cannot put people on the register because it must go through the court, and that does not always happen.

Mr P. PAPALIA: That reform has been made and is in force now. My predecessor passed an amendment to the legislation that established a banned drinker order that enables police to respond to the situation the member is referring to, and they are doing it in significant numbers. The number of people on the banned drinkers register has grown quite considerably since the passage of that legislation and it became law. Police banned drinker orders did not exist previously, but they now do. The law came into effect in December 2023. Between the end of December and now, police have issued 240 banned drinker orders. That means 240 people have been put on the banned drinkers register, as directed by the police. In the Kimberley, it was 370; in the goldfields, it was 102; and in the member’s patch of Carnarvon and Gascoyne, it was 14. In total, there are 726 people on the register. That is only in that timeframe. Bear in mind that it changes because someone can come off the banned drinkers register. The register has been used significantly and effectively. Overall, in that timeframe, there has been a 370 per cent increase in the number of people on the banned drinkers register as a consequence of the banned drinker orders that police are employing.

Ms M. BEARD: When a large group is involved in a scuffle, I am led to believe that those people cannot automatically be put on the BDR on the spot. Is that correct?

Mr P. PAPALIA: The member is talking about an operational matter for police, but there is no limit to the number of people to whom police can issue a banned drinker order. Obviously, they have to meet the requirements of the law. Any concern around the inadequacy of the application of the law was addressed by that legislative change last year. The idea that not many people were put on the register and that it was constraining for police and the police would not use it because it was difficult is clearly not the case now. In my role as Minister for Police, I have not had any indication from police about any concerns with the law as yet. I have also been informed that if police charge someone with an alcohol-related offence, they can issue them with a banned drinker order.

Ms M. BEARD: Firstly, I want to understand—the minister can even provide the information later—how many people on the register seek medical attention. Secondly, how many get intervention from other wraparound services?

The CHAIR: Member, that is not really a budget-related question.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I would not have that information. That is a matter for the Minister for Health, so I would not be able to answer the member.

Ms M. BEARD: Was there going to be training for medical staff such as health practitioners?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Again, that is a question for Health. Putting that aside, obviously implementing the legislative change to the banned drinkers register initially, and now the amendment, has resulted in more people being placed on the banned drinkers register. The agency works with Health but it does not design the training or anything of that nature because that is special to Health.

Ms M. BEARD: Has the training been done for those people so that the doctors and health services can put people on the register?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Sorry; there is that element of it. Some individual health providers in particular have tried. The agency is working with Health to assist those providers in meeting the requirements of referral. Probably because it is new and they are not familiar with the justification requirements, some of the referrals within Health have not met the requirements for the agency to be able to put people on the banned drinkers register, but work is being done through Health to assist those people meet the referral requirements. It has happened. There is a bit of a problem that is probably more around a couple of individual doctors who, for whatever reason, have found it challenging to provide an adequate justification. We are intent on making that easier, and the director general is working with Health to enable that.

Ms M. BEARD: When is all that training expected to be rolled out?

Mr P. PAPALIA: The law allows it currently. What has happened is that some people have tried to refer people, but they have not been able to adequately meet the requirements of the referral process to enable the person to be put on the banned drinkers register. That is being resolved. It is more of a challenge around assisting the medical professionals to be able to provide the right type of information to meet the legal threshold for referral. It is a reasonable expectation that they should meet the legal threshold before they can put someone on the banned drinkers register or refer them to the register in the same way that the police have to meet the threshold. The police have a threshold to meet as well, but they have been more able to meet the threshold since the change to the law.

The appropriation was recommended.

Racing and Wagering Western Australia —

[12.50 pm]

Mr S.J. Price, Chair.

Mr P. Papalia, Minister for Racing and Gaming.

Mr I. Edwards, Chief Executive Officer.

Mr L. Crockett, Chief Financial Officer.

Mr D. Hunter, Chief Racing Officer.

Ms D. Kennedy, Senior Policy Adviser.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIR: We are dealing with Racing and Wagering Western Australia, which is an off-budget authority. The estimates committees will be reported by Hansard and the daily proof will be available online as soon as possible within two business days. Questions must relate to operations and budget of the off-budget authority. The chair will allow as many questions as possible. Questions and answers should be short and to the point.

The minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee. I will ask the minister to clearly indicate what information they agree to provide and will then allocate a reference number. Supplementary information should be provided to the principal clerk by noon on Friday, 31 May 2024. If a minister suggests that a matter be put on notice, members should use the online questions on notice system to submit their questions.

Do we have any questions? I give the call to the member for Roe.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Thank you, chair. I refer to paragraph 1.1 on page 299 and “Total Cost of Asset Investment Program” in the table below. The figure in the table is \$17.688 billion and the figure in paragraph 1.1 is \$6.6 million for building and improvements to the head office premises. I have heard that there are two buildings in Osborne Park. Can I have a summary of what the \$6.6 million for “building improvements to head office” is, and are there other activities in relation to another building down the road?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I will ask Mr Edwards to respond.

Mr I. Edwards: Thank you. We currently operate from the two buildings, which are side by side. One is owned and one is leased. The building that we lease has been sold by the owner to a third party. We need to consolidate the business into one building. The further challenge to that is that it is a building from the 1980s, so we are refitting it to accommodate double the number of people. We have encountered a number of issues that need to be worked through. It is a one-time project; it is the \$6.599 million plus the \$4.834 million in the current year—it is a combined amount of approximately \$11 million.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Has the building that RWWA currently occupies been sold?

Mr P. PAPALIA: The member will need to ask me.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Sorry, minister. Is RWWA outfitting the building next door to enable all staff to transfer across?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I will ask Mr Edwards to respond.

Mr I. Edwards: We occupy two buildings at the moment. We utilise both. We need to consolidate into one building. We will move the whole of RWWA into the building that we own. It needs to be fitted out to accommodate double the number of people it does currently.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: When everyone shifts across, what will be the total FTE in that building?

Mr I. Edwards: We have around 440 FTE in the business. About two-thirds of them work out of the head office premises. Others are at training and welfare facilities around the state. Effectively, there would be around 300 people in the office—not necessarily every day, but that would be their base.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Paragraph 1.3 on page 299 mentions —

\$24.6 million for the development of wagering systems and products ... The spend reflects both ongoing asset replacement and necessary innovation to remain relevant in a competitive market.

Obviously, it is about RWWA and the TAB remaining competitive, but is this about creating a system that is totally independent from Sportsbet, Entain and others, or will they be providing information into the systems as well?

Mr I. Edwards: That number largely reflects people’s efforts and they are teams of developers and engineers who work on improvements to the TABtouch app. It does not really interact with other corporate bookmakers. We have some operational interactions with Tabcorp—we pool and we run the tote through an arrangement we have with Tabcorp—but this is about delivering improvements to the TAB network and the TABtouch app, which effectively allows us to keep up with other bookmakers in the market.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I understand there has been a drop in revenue since COVID-19. Is there a percentage or figure available on that?

Mr I. Edwards: I caveat by saying that it is an estimate. Bookmakers do not tend to publish their turnover figures; however, our inference through the figures we see is that turnover nationally has probably dropped by around 20 per cent in the last 12 months. There were significant increases through the COVID period that sustained, and then cost-of-living pressures, interest rates and general economic factors have impacted that, as well as the impact of wagering regulation at the federal level. We estimate that the wagering market has contracted by up to 20 per cent in the last 12 months.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I refer to “Works In Progress” under “Asset Investment Program” on page 299. There is \$2.684 million dedicated to racing systems, infrastructure and minor capital and then \$4.316 million in the out years. Can the minister give me a breakdown of what will be provided and a breakdown of the metropolitan and regional categories?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I am informed that this is not for clubs; they are all assets that RWWA owns. It is all metro, but that is not because of a spend on a club in the city as opposed to the regions. They are not their assets; they are RWWA assets.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I refer to paragraph 1.2, which mentions —

\$8 million for racing infrastructure improvements at various State-owned thoroughbred, harness and greyhound sites ...

Where are the sites that the \$8 million will be spent on?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I am told that the bulk is the completion of the upgrades to the Mandurah greyhound track, which RWWA owns.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Is there timing and an amount on the Mandurah greyhound track or any detail on that?

Mr P. PAPALIA: It is complete, but it is acknowledgement that part of the spend was in 2023–24. It was over two financial years. It was \$4 million a year over two financial years.

The CHAIR: We are out of time. That completes the examination of the Racing and Wagering Western Australia authority.

Meeting suspended from 1.00 pm to 2.00 pm

Division 24: Education —

Mrs L.A. Munday, Chair.

Dr A.D. Buti, Minister for Education.

Ms L. Rodgers, Director General.

Mr J. Peckitt, Deputy Director General, Education Services.

Mr R. Thomson, Executive Director, Infrastructure.

Ms M. Sands, Deputy Director General, Schools.

Ms P. Beamish Burton, Executive Director, Finance and Commercial Services.

Ms R. Lee, Executive Director, Strategy and Policy.

Mr R. Miles, Director, Teacher Registration.

Mr S. Percival, Assistant Executive Director, Statewide Services.

Ms J. Healy, Executive Director, School Curriculum and Standards.

Ms M. Heberle, Acting Deputy Director General, Student Achievement.

Mr S. Ward, Chief of Staff, Minister for Education.

[Witnesses introduced.]

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

A minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee. I will ask the minister to clearly indicate what information they agree to provide and will then allocate a reference number. Supplementary information should be provided to the principal clerk by noon on Friday, 31 May 2024. If a minister suggests that a matter be put on notice, members should use the online questions on notice system to submit their questions.

Dr A.D. BUTI: If I could read out a statement. Quality early childhood education and care plays a critical role in supporting outcomes in early years development, school readiness and successes later in life. The first five years of a child's life set the foundation for their future life outcomes, including their learning, health and wellbeing. The creation of a dedicated early childhood education portfolio and its first-ever minister, Hon Sabine Winton, demonstrates the state Labor government's commitment to ensuring that all children in Western Australia, no matter their background, postcode or family circumstances, have the best possible start in life.

Early childhood education funding is accounted for within division 24, Department of Education. My office has had a discussion with the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and it has been agreed that I will answer all questions relating to education, including early childhood education, during the session. I thank the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for that. This is largely to ensure that any overlapping questions regarding the education portfolio can be answered and that the opposition will not miss an opportunity when the Minister for Early Childhood Education has her estimates session later in the week.

The Minister for International Education, who will be appearing this evening, will answer all questions relating to international education, which is accounted for under division 14, Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation, as well as division 24.

I hope that is as clear as mud! Thank you.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I refer to page 353 of budget paper No 2, volume 1, and the line item "Temporary Regional Incentives for Teachers 2024" under the heading "New Initiatives". There is an increase from \$3.8 million in 2023–24 to \$11.6 million in 2024–25. I am wondering why there are no further budget items for regional incentives for teachers in the out years.

Dr A.D. BUTI: As it states, \$15.5 million was allocated to the regional attraction and retention incentive package in 2024 to assist schools with staffing in regional and remote schools. That has been incredibly successful in attracting and retaining teachers. The number of schools increased from 48 last year to 66 this year. In respect of why it is not included in the out years, that is because it is part of the bargaining process. As the member knows, the executive of the State School Teachers' Union of WA has agreed in principle to the offer made by the government. That will now go to its members and be voted on. It was not possible to put that in the budget because we have to wait until that process is completed.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: How will it be handled then? Will be like a midyear review scenario once that is completed?

Dr A.D. BUTI: The union has indicated that it hopes to put the offer to a vote sooner rather than later, so without knowing exactly the process or when, I would imagine that we will know around August, if they agree to the offer that is put to them. That includes issues with regard to what the member is talking about.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: The minister said it has been incredibly successful. Can the minister give us some figures for the numbers that have been retained in both regional and remote schools due to the incentive program?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I cannot give the member the actual numbers, because there is always a combination of reasons why people are attracted to the regions and why they stay. When I speak to teachers in the regions, it is often put to me that it is an attraction for them to stay, but we have met our targets in respect of attraction and retention as a result of that package.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Is the minister comfortable that the requirements for full staffing of basically all the remote and regional schools are now in place? Would that be the minister's comment?

Dr A.D. BUTI: As the member knows, it is a constant challenge. I think it would be misleading for any Minister for Education in Western Australia to say that it is not always a challenge to staff all our schools. We have probably the largest geographical education jurisdiction in the world, and there are some incredibly remote communities. As the member knows, there are some remote schools in the electorate that he represents, but that is all relative in comparison with some even more remote areas, so it is difficult. It is always a challenge, but there is no doubt that the regional attraction and retention incentive, which has been geared particularly to the schools that have the most difficulty with attraction and retention, has been successful. But I would not lie to the member and say that it does not remain a constant challenge.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Is the scenario with staffing of remote schools related to attendance levels or is it, for argument's sake, calculated on the census in February or March?

[2.10 pm]

Dr A.D. BUTI: Funding is based on the census that is done, but I will allow the director general to maybe add to that.

Ms L. Rodgers: The number of FTEs required by a school is based on the census; however, fundamentally, the principal is at liberty to staff their school as they see fit. They have a one-line budget, and they use that budget to meet the needs of their school and their local context.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I asked a question about regional incentives. I am now referring to the item two lines above that, "Improving Access to Swimming and Water Safety Programs". Obviously, I am in agreeance with that; it is a good thing. Can the minister advise how this will assist regional students to access vacation swimming, given that there has been a reduction in the number of courses available across a number of locations over the past three years? Of course, the member for Central Wheatbelt and I have experienced that in several locations in our electorate.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I recognise the member's interest in this; we have had conversations about the member's area, and when I paid a visit to Hopetoun, that was definitely relayed to me. That was one of the incentives behind establishing the school of swimming and water safety, for which there is \$3.3 million over the forward estimates for three FTE. I want to correct a misapprehension that was communicated to me in Ravensthorpe. I think people are concerned that this is going to be a physical school and that we will centralise more courses in certain central areas. That is not the case. This is about treating very seriously the teaching of swimming and water safety by having a dedicated principal so that it becomes a school. It will not be a physical school with bricks and mortar; it will nonetheless be a school that will have a principal and a couple of other full-time staff members whose whole objective will be to ensure that we can coordinate swimming and water safety better into the health and fitness and physical education part of the curriculum. It will ensure that we have an employment of permanent staff particularly for vacation swimming, as the member mentioned. One of the issues for swimming teachers is that teaching swimming cannot really be a career. By setting up this school, we can have a permanent swimming teaching class. That will help to alleviate staffing concerns.

As the member knows, staffing is one issue. In some areas that the member and I have discussed, the other issues are remoteness and safety. We have worked with local government on those issues. We believe that this school of swimming and water safety will go towards alleviating some of the concerns that the member and others have expressed.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I thought that some slightly over-the-top scenarios were put in place for swimming classes last year, especially in some of the beach locations, that almost prevented those classes taking place. I give full credit to those communities, such as Starvation Bay, that worked pretty hard to try to maintain those classes. Does the minister foresee that all those beachside locations will continue to be used as part of this overall package?

Dr A.D. BUTI: As long as the conditions that were put in place as a result of reconsideration of those decisions are complied with. That is why it has been important to work with the local community and local government authorities. The member acknowledged the work done by local communities. I acknowledge the work done by the director general and the Department of Education to ensure that those locations remain open for vacation swimming.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Did the minister consult Royal Life Saving Western Australia to develop this initiative?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Very much so.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Why has the government opted to develop this in house instead of partnering with Royal Life Saving WA?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I think that we will always talk with and utilise the expertise of Royal Life Saving, but we consider this to be very serious. It will be a school of swimming and water safety. The Department of Education will be responsible for that school, as it is for any of its other schools. We do not partner or co-partner with a third operator for any of our other schools.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Is it optional for schools to participate in swimming lessons or do all schools have to participate in the swimming program?

Dr A.D. BUTI: There are two issues. The member is now referring to in-term swimming, not vacation swimming.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Yes.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I think that, in the end, schools have flexibility in determining whether they will engage in in-term swimming. It is strongly encouraged, though.

Dr D.J. HONEY: A view has been put to me that schools that choose not to participate are often in socio-economic areas with a large migrant population and many of the children's parents cannot swim; as a consequence, they are not confident to go to the beach, and the children do not learn to swim. Was there any thinking around encouraging high participation, particularly from students in areas where there is a large migrant population?

Dr A.D. BUTI: That is very important. That is a good question, member. Yes, and that is why we are establishing the school of swimming and water safety. We want to integrate swimming into the curriculum; it sits apart at the moment. We believe that if we better integrate swimming lessons into the curriculum, there is more chance that schools will take up the program.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I refer to the table at the bottom of page 353 headed "Spending Changes". That allocation drops off in the out years. Is that just a lack of budgeting or is that establishment costs that are required at the start and then drop away to a sustaining cost at the end? It is about halfway down the table, "Improving Access to Swimming and Water Safety Programs".

Dr A.D. BUTI: Initially, the government has committed \$3.6 million over two years to basically address existing costs and demand pressures. Obviously, we will look at it after that.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: With additional funding for in-term and vacation swimming, I presume that we will be supporting that across the board. Will that funding guarantee that every school will have two weeks of in-term swimming, particularly in regional locations?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Is that with regard to in-term swimming?

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Yes. For context, I have one school that has had its in-term swimming lessons cut back to one week for the last three years.

Dr A.D. BUTI: There is no guarantee. It is very complex, because we have to find a venue. Sometimes, aquatic centres are being renovated or closed down. That puts increasing demand on trying to find a venue. There have been issues with staffing; we think we are addressing that. There is no guarantee at the moment, but one of the goals of establishing a school of swimming and water safety is that the principal and full-time staff of that school will help with the timetabling of swimming lessons during terms. At the moment, the schools have to do it, and they have other demands on their time. The whole idea is that the school of swimming and water safety will help schools to timetable swimming. I cannot tell the member that I can guarantee that for every single school, but one would hope that with this school of swimming and water safety, there will be greater success in ensuring that there is coordination.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Will there be prioritisation for those harder-to-staff areas? If an area has fallen to having only one week of swimming lessons for the last three years, will there be prioritisation so that those areas can be considered a priority for this year? Otherwise, some cohorts will have had four years without appropriate access to swimming.

[2.20 pm]

Dr A.D. BUTI: They will be prioritised under the new school of swimming and water safety. Schools that have had troubles with having their full complement of in-term swimming will be prioritised.

Dr D.J. HONEY: On that same page, page 353, under “Spending Changes”, is the item “Higher Education Team for the University Sector Priorities and Reforms”. I think the minister knows that I am very, very keen to encourage him to have a focus on the tertiary sector. Although I know it does not fall directly under the purveyance of the state government, we have a responsibility there. Can the minister outline what is planned for that and his thoughts?

Dr A.D. BUTI: The member has a strong interest in this area. Obviously, with a PhD, he is going to, is he not! As he knows, we instigated a review of our higher education—our four public universities. At the same time, Minister Clare has engaged in his own inquiry at the federal level. The accord came out a few months ago, and certain funding measures were announced in the federal budget two weeks ago. The reason we set up this higher education team for university sector priorities is to look at how we, as a state government, can maybe become more involved in higher education and engage in strategic stakeholder engagement at the Western Australian level. We need to digest the accord a bit more and what the federal government is looking at regarding higher education, but the whole idea of this funding in the budget is to have the team set up in the Department of Education to look at strategy, policy and stakeholder engagement, help to improve the relationship and level of collaboration within and between sectors, promote a more cohesive and strategic approach across government, and increase collaboration across different levels of government and state universities.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Are the vice-chancellors actively cooperating with the minister on that program?

Dr A.D. BUTI: It is a work in progress. Look; they are all very keen. We have regular meetings to discuss issues of mutual interest and benefit for them and for the state. We have regular meetings under the Western Australian Higher Education Council at which we discuss those matters. I am going to the University of Western Australia tomorrow for a number of hours of discussion.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Is one of the matters being considered the potential to rationalise, perhaps, the number of universities in the state or is it too early for the minister to comment?

Dr A.D. BUTI: There are a lot of things that we are thinking and talking about. One of the things that the federal government announced, which I think is outstanding, is the payment of stipends for student teachers, nurses, social workers and early childhood educators; I think they were the four. We are keen to see how that will work and maybe how the state government can help coordinate placements of these students into the various practicums.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: In the table on page 354 under “Other” is a line item for RiskCover. It is the third item from the bottom of the table at the top of page 354. RiskCover fund insurance premiums are \$32.79 million, and then zero dollars are allocated in the out years. Can the minister explain that to me? Last year’s budget had a revision to RiskCover insurance premiums of \$7.86 million and then zero dollars in the out years. Could the minister outline to me how that plays out?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I will ask the director general to answer the member’s question.

Ms L. Rodgers: They are just allocated year by year.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Sorry?

Ms L. Rodgers: They allocate the funding year by year. It is not allocated ordinarily in the out years.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Okay. I notice on page 368 that paragraph 1.2 at the top of the page states —

increase in RiskCover Fund insurance premiums ...

As a further question, can the minister outline the percentage by which the RiskCover fund premiums have risen in the last financial year?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I might ask Mr Peckitt to answer this question.

Mr J. Peckitt: I do not have the percentage increase with me, but I can give a high-level overview of the amounts. Roughly, we pay \$104 million a year for RiskCover insurance premiums, and that will increase to \$128 million in the 2024–25 financial year. The \$104 million is the budget, increasing to \$128 million for the premium.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Can the minister supply the number of claims and the amount in this financial year compared with last year?

Dr A.D. BUTI: We can. I will ask the DG to do that.

Ms L. Rodgers: This year, we have had 1 124 claims lodged. In 2022–23, we had 2 113; in 2021–22, we had 1 831; and for 2020–21, we had 2 031 lodged.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Sorry; what was the figure for this year just gone?

Ms L. Rodgers: It was 1 124.

Dr A.D. BUTI: That is for 2023–24.

Ms L. Rodgers: That is 2023–24.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: What dollar figure do they represent?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I will ask the DG. We have the total fund premiums.

Ms L. Rodgers: In 2022–23, it was \$104 039 459. In 2023–24, it was \$109 653 100. In 2024–25, it is \$128 753 673.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I am on page 361 of budget paper No 2, volume 2. I do not have my *Budget statements* open, but there is a line under “Other Works in Progress”. I asked a question last year about the Western Australian College of Agriculture in Cunderdin, in particular about its student accommodation. My question is whether any of the funding referred to in paragraph 39 is for improvements to Cunderdin’s accommodation. I can see elsewhere in the budget that there is funding for Cunderdin agricultural college, I think, to do with its piggery. I wonder whether an allocation for upgrades to its accommodation is in the global amount for residential colleges.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Thanks, member. As I am sure the member will agree, Cunderdin agricultural college is an outstanding college that has achieved incredible results. It is also the college that Justin Longmuir from the Fremantle Dockers graduated from, so it has got to be good! For the money in the budget papers for Cunderdin, at paragraphs 40 and 41 on page 361, we have the money for the piggery. On the member’s specific thing about residential colleges, \$3.5 million is allocated globally for residential colleges. The department, in conjunction with the various residential colleges, will look at where that money could be allocated, but I recognise the needs of Cunderdin in that respect.

[2.30 pm]

Ms M.J. DAVIES: When will the global allocation of \$3.5 million be prioritised and determined?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I have been told that it is done on a yearly basis at the request of the colleges. It is an active consideration throughout the year.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: My understanding is that this request has been made previously. Do the colleges need to keep making that request that will get considered in a yearly context?

Dr A.D. BUTI: The Department of Education is incredibly aware of the requests and demands for residential upgrades at the Western Australian College of Agriculture at Cunderdin. I will ask Mr Thomson whether the college needs to put in a new request, but I think the department is well aware of its request.

Mr R. Thomson: That is a line item for maintenance. We have gathered all the building condition assessment information and we will work with those schools accordingly to prioritise that investment over the coming financial year.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I refer to Rockingham Senior High School and Safety Bay Senior High School on page 365 and the amounts of \$60 million and \$40 million respectively. As the minister knows, I am very pleased with the initial planning money for Esperance Senior High School, but there is obviously no funding in the forward estimates for those other schools. As the minister explained the other day, that definition is required for the forward estimates. Why is it, then, that in April 2023, Premier Mark McGowan announced in the Legislative Assembly the provision of \$100 million for Safety Bay and Rockingham Senior High Schools, yet there was no planning or definition money in last year’s 2023–24 budget?

Dr A.D. BUTI: It would be best for the member to ask that question of Mark McGowan because I do not know why he did it exactly that way. Rockingham Senior High School was opened in 1971; it is not a new school and not a lot of work has previously been done at that school. The announcement was made in last year’s budget and there is no doubt that it is work that is needed. The funding announcement was for not just Rockingham Senior High School, but also the Rockingham Senior High School Education Support Centre. I can arrange a visit for the member if he wants to go to Safety Bay Senior High School. I think he would be hard pressed to say that that school does not need the money.

Last week I was in Esperance and I had a tour of Esperance Senior High School. Through our discussions, I understood the need for a major renovation uplift at Esperance Senior High School and the Esperance Education Support Centre. The money that has been allocated in this budget is a very positive step. We do not do project definition plans without serious thought, and over \$600 000 has been allocated to that. That is a very positive step.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I agree that Safety Bay and Rockingham Senior High Schools are well and truly in need, as is Como Secondary College I gather. I guess the question really is whether that was a political comment or a political promise on the way out. For all these other schools, it is about the planning definition et cetera that takes place, whereas for those two schools, it was just announced and now they are adapting to the scenario, if you like. That would be the comment or the question.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Is that a question or a comment?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: That is a question.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Is it? I do not know that that is a question. I think it is a comment, so I will leave it at that.

Mr Y. MUBARAKAI: I refer to “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency” on pages 354 and 355 of budget paper No 2, volume 1. Paragraph 6.10 outlines that \$2.8 million has been allocated to progress the project definition plan for the inner-city primary school. Can the minister outline how he plans to address the enrolment issues and growth at Highgate Primary School and the current status of acquiring the inner-city site for the school?

Dr A.D. BUTI: In some ways, this answer is related to the question just asked by the member about Esperance and Rockingham Senior High Schools. We have over 830 schools in the public education system, so one is always trying to prioritise and see what is needed by those existing schools. We also have to look at where we need to build schools because of enrolment pressures and so forth. The member referred to page 355 of budget paper No 2 and the \$2.8 million that has been allocated to progress the project definition plan for the inner-city primary school. That school is needed to relieve the long-term pressure on Highgate Primary School, and we are also allocating suitable money for Highgate Primary School.

To give the member a bit of background, in May 2023 the state government announced that the Queens Gardens car park on Nelson Crescent in East Perth would be the preferred site for the new inner-city primary school. On behalf of the state and of the taxpayers of Western Australia, we made a very generous offer to the City of Perth to finally construct a new primary school—the largest ever investment in a primary school—and that the state would repeal the Chevron-Hilton Hotel Agreement Act 1960, which limits the land use of the Queens Gardens site to a car park. At the moment, it is legislated that that site can be used only as a car park. The city will benefit from being able to develop about one-third of the land, which is valued by the state at \$27.25 million, and, in return, the state has requested that the city provide the land for the primary school at no cost. Interestingly, this new primary school has been identified by the city over a number of years as a high priority. The city, in its recent announcements, has said that it wants to make inner-city Perth a liveable city and to increase population growth in the city. If it wants to do that, it needs to have the services available, and having a primary school is paramount to that.

The city has often stated to us that it wants to be in partnership with us. I keep asking the question: what is the city bringing to the partnership? We are, as a state, using taxpayers’ money to unlock the land there and provide one of the three lots back to the city, with a development potential worth \$27.25 million. We will build a state-of-the-art primary school, providing the largest investment in a primary school in Western Australia, which the community will also be able to use outside of school hours. We think that is a very generous offer, but the city continues to say that it wants additional money. I will say a couple of things about that. The city has set a precedent in providing land at no cost. It was prepared to do that at Elizabeth Quay. Why would it not do it for a primary school that is so important? If we were to pay over \$40 million or so to the city for those two pieces of land, that is \$40 million that I may not be able to use down the track on Esperance Senior High School, for instance. We keep asking the City of Perth to accept our very generous offer. I have to say, we have been in constant discussion at either my office or the Department of Education. I met with the Lord Mayor on 18 April 2023 to discuss the state’s intention to build a new primary school at Queens Gardens. I think the next day we had a press conference. The Lord Mayor was there, as was the Minister for Housing, who is the local member, and the Deputy Premier—but she was not the Deputy Premier then; she was the Minister for Planning at the time. She was also there. We have had constant meetings and correspondence since, and recently the department had further discussions, and I believe it is having a meeting shortly with the city. We remain committed to this. It is incredibly important for the future development of the City of Perth. We are not building a country club or a private residence; we are building a school for the benefit of the children and their families who will live in the City of Perth. We need to protect taxpayers’ money, and that is always a balancing act. The member for Roe rightly talked about other schools such as Esperance, Rockingham, Safety Bay and others. The member for Central Wheatbelt talked about Cunderdin. They all have meritorious claims, and if we were then to spend even more money in East Perth, there would be less money for other areas of the state. I think our offer is very generous, and we still hope that the city will come to the party.

[2.40 pm]

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Does the minister think that the City of Perth was clouded by his initial letter that offered the \$40-odd million? Does the minister think that is now in the background of the city’s thinking—that it cannot let it go?

Dr A.D. BUTI: No. I do not know whether we will get much benefit if we keep discussing this issue. No. The Lord Mayor rang me up straight after he received that letter to seek clarification.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: To accept it?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I provided clarification over the phone. We had a meeting in my office a couple of days later. It was made quite clear. He has even gone on radio and admitted that it was an error. Therefore, no; I do not think the city’s thinking has been clouded.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: This question is also in the context of Highgate. What does the minister project will happen if his negotiations stall for a certain length of time? Is he prepared to look at, say, a land swap or something, which I gather the mayor has been calling for, to help alleviate the Highgate situation sooner rather than later?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I have not heard the mayor mention anything about Highgate. Anyway, even if he has, we have funded \$12 million for an innovative modular solution to Highgate Primary School, plus other measures, such as the use of recreation facilities in an agreement with the local government authority. As a responsible government and a responsible Department of Education, we will consider what we need to do to ensure that every child in Western Australia who wants to go to a public school receives a quality education.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I note the figure in the budget for Highgate. Obviously, the student numbers are getting up around the 900 to 1 000 figure. If the numbers start going over that, despite the minister bringing in the demountable scenario, what other plans does the minister have for Highgate? What is the nearest other school or place that the minister can send the excess students to in the inner-city area?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I want to more fully explain what we are doing in Highgate at the moment. We have the \$12 million modular block. We also have the shared-use facility at Birdwood Square. We have also provided extra parking for staff. We have done turf, reticulation and bore replacement. We have refreshed two toilet blocks. Two transportable toilet blocks have been installed at the school for student use. A new solar system has been installed and is operational. We have also provided a grant for playground equipment. We are also looking at replacing low-end fencing with garrison-style fencing and appropriate height chain-link fencing along Bulwer Avenue and Bulwer Street. We are also doing other things in the immediate period.

With regard to the member's question, we will need to look at what we need to do. As I keep repeating, the government wants to create a world-class inner-city primary school. We are ready to go. We are providing a very generous offer to the city. The Lord Mayor stood with us and celebrated the announcement. He has constantly, in his own campaigning for Lord Mayor, mentioned that he was working in partnership with the government. I ask again: what is the City of Perth bringing to that partnership?

We are unlocking land to the tune of \$27.25 million, which the city can use. At the moment it cannot use it. We will be building a state-of-the-art primary school that can also be used by the community. I do not understand how anyone cannot see that that is a fair offer. At the same time, the state government must be responsible for taxpayers' money so that we can use it for other schools in the regions and the city.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I am following up on the asset investment program on page 359. In relation to asset investment, the minister would know that Shenton College now has over 3 000 kids in it. Bob Hawke College, as I understand it, is fully booked for students, even with the rebuild. City Beach Residential College campus is still in the government's hands. City Beach is obviously an option, but are there any other considerations for expanding an existing high school or building a new high school in the western suburbs? I might say, and this is my view, in that context it strikes me that once we have over 3 000 kids in a school, it is probably big enough from a practical point of view; therefore, is there a prospect of a new school in the western suburbs to cope with a continually growing student population?

Dr A.D. BUTI: It is interesting, is it not, member? When one makes decisions, one does not know of the unintended consequences. I am just thinking—the member is about my vintage, so he will remember—Scarborough closed, City Beach closed —

Dr D.J. HONEY: Swanbourne.

Dr A.D. BUTI: — and Swanbourne closed. There was one other, I think. Hollywood closed at the time because there were no population demographics to support it, and that seemed to be the appropriate decision, but now, of course, the strain is being put on Bob Hawke College and Shenton College. They are both outstanding schools. We have a \$15 million double-storey, modular building for 300 students ready to go at Shenton College, and we are at stage 2 of the Bob Hawke College build, which was opened in 2022–23 and cost \$53.9 million. There is also construction of a \$15 million teaching block at Mt Lawley for 500 students. However, yes, the member is right. We need to look at that. We have a strategy, and the department is looking at developing a business case to consider site options and the feasibility of a new secondary school in the inner city or western suburbs area.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I do not think it is surprising that my electorate has 16 schools but not one government senior high school. Does the minister have any thoughts on a timetable for that? I am not trying to tie the minister down to a date, but I am trying to get a sense of the timeline for that process.

Dr A.D. BUTI: No, I do not have a timeline for when we will be in a position to announce a preferred site, but I assure the member that the department is currently working on a strategy to look at preferred sites.

[2.50 pm]

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I refer to the delivery of services on page 353 of budget paper No 2 and the net amount appropriated to deliver services. WA public schools have been mandated to install at least one defibrillator by 30 June 2024 at a significant cost to their budgets. I am aware that this was a directive from the department, or the director general. I am also aware that both the member for Central Wheatbelt and I have been contacted by community groups such as Lions clubs or Rotary International clubs asking why the primary school in their towns have asked them to fund a defibrillator when the directive was made by the education department. If it is a directive of the education department, why does the Department of Education not pay for it?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I will answer that question and the director general may want to add to my answer. It was a directive because we considered it incredibly important that a school has a defibrillator. As the member knows, it was previously instigated by his government under Hon Peter Collier. It is funded under public schools in a one-line budget, within which a school has the capacity to fund a number of different things. In most cases, it will have the funds for a defibrillator. When the DG made that directive—she may want to clarify anything that I might say—it was made quite clear that if there were any financial hardship, the relevant school would be able to come back to the education department to seek assistance. The information I have is that the Department of Education received only one formal application for financial assistance, which has been supported by the school budget review committee. Only one school has contacted the education department. The director general made it quite clear that if schools were in financial hardship, they would be able to come to the department for assistance.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I find it ironic that school principals, or whoever, have gone out to the community and asked for help to fund a defibrillator. Was it made very clear to them that they could apply for that assistance, because it has happened in more than one community?

Dr A.D. BUTI: It was made very clear to them. It was on the department's internal website.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: With regard to this line of questioning, a defibrillator is not likely to be used on students at schools, so it is predominantly a staff welfare issue, which I would have thought is a department and government responsibility. I also put to the minister that not all defibrillators are made equal, and a range of defibrillators of different standards would have been installed. Whether they are being monitored or are useful is now a problem in ensuring that they do what they are designed to do. Would it not have been a better outcome to order en masse and make a bulk purchase, given the buying power of the state government, and distribute the defibrillators rather than leaving it to individual schools so that varying types of defibrillators are installed, potentially not being monitored and managed, and coming out of a single-line budget, which, as the minister knows, is already stretched for many schools?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I will make a couple of comments and then pass to the DG. Firstly, schools often complain that they do not have the ability to buy what they want and they have to go through various amounts of red tape. Secondly, although defibrillators are generally used on staff, I can assure the member that students may require a defibrillator at some stage. Thirdly—I am not commenting on any particular school, and schools in the regions may be different—many schools have considerable reserve funds in their bank accounts, some up to \$200 000 or \$300 000. I am not talking about any particular school but many schools —

Ms M.J. DAVIES: The minister can exclude schools in the Central Wheatbelt from that cohort.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I did not mention any particular schools, but many schools have considerable funds. With respect to the way it was done, I will hand over to the DG to explain further.

Ms L. Rodgers: We wanted to ensure that schools had access to defibs fast. We would expect that a defib would be in a school's standard first-aid kit. It was clear that not all schools had access to a defib. Moreover, they may have had access to a defib, but not everyone in the school knew where that defib was located. There were circumstances in which schools needed to use that piece of equipment and there was uncertainty about how to access it. The direction was given to ensure that schools could purchase one quickly without having to go through an extended process centrally. We also asked schools to put the defib in a particular place in their school. They are probably used more regularly than we would anticipate. We did say to schools that if there were any financial issues, they could come to the financial review committee and we would look at the cost of a defib.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Further to the member for Central Wheatbelt's question, was there a directive about what type of defibrillator they all needed—a similar variety or the same brand—for when there are maintenance issues down the track or whatever?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Public schools were not requested to purchase a particular type, but they had to ensure that it met Australian and New Zealand Standard AS/NZS 3200.2.4:2006 Medical electrical equipment—particular requirements for safety—Cardiac defibrillators. They had to meet a certain standard.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I refer to the line item “Camp Operations and Maintenance” under “Other School Facilities”, about 80 per cent of the way down page 365 of budget paper No 2. I notice that after 2025–26—it is scaling down from 2024–25—there does not appear to be any funding in the out years for camp operations and maintenance. Will school camps continue in their current form or has there been some sort of structural change or numbers of camps?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I can assure the member that school camps will remain. As the member knows, camp schools are located in Bridgetown, Broome, Dampier, Geraldton, Kalgoorlie, Pemberton and Point Peron. We are obviously looking at the arrangements that we have with Camp Fairbridge, which basically manages these camps with us. We intend to ensure that camps are available for students to attend because they have always been a very important part of Western Australian public education.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: The minister mentioned the administration arrangement, if you like, with Camp Fairbridge. I gather that it has not been that successful in certain places. Can the minister give an outline of ongoing contracts and how long that arrangement will be in place?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I can tell the member that although we are looking at that arrangement—I cannot go into the details at the moment—we have allocated \$5 million to upgrade those camp facilities because there was an issue with them being at a certain level. Those funds will be used to upgrade camp facilities, increase maintenance works and support operations to ensure that public school students can attend camps that are in the condition they should be. Regarding negotiations and legal arrangements with Fairbridge, we currently have a deed of variation with a new two-year option, and a partial surrender of lease has been signed with Fairbridge in relation to the Geraldton, Kalgoorlie and Pemberton camps.

[3.00 pm]

Dr D.J. HONEY: On page 354 of budget paper No 2, volume 1, paragraph 4 of the significant issues refers to “successful programs” such as the Kimberley schools project. Could the minister outline the details of that project and the success or otherwise of that program?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Is the member talking about the quality teaching strategy?

Dr D.J. HONEY: Yes.

Dr A.D. BUTI: As the member knows, the Kimberley region presents many challenges, and the education department has sought to respond to those challenges. The Kimberley schools project started as a \$25 million five-year royalties for regions regional reform fund investment. It has been extended for three years from 2023–24 with a further \$11.7 million in funding as part of our package for the Kimberley region. Through the project, we have sought to create an education system that will better cater for Aboriginal students in the Kimberley public and non-government school system. The projects are designed around the four key pillars of targeted teaching, early years learning and care, attendance and student–community engagement. The project uses skilled leaders, teachers and school support staff, including Aboriginal and Islander education officers and Aboriginal school-based attendance officers, to engage in evidence-based professional learning to build their knowledge of best practices. There has been a collaboration between the Department of Education, the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, Catholic Education WA and the Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia. It is a project that has been tailored specifically for the region, and it has been hugely successful. We have seen an increase in NAPLAN year 3 results. That is really promising.

Dr D.J. HONEY: The minister mentioned attendance at school in his response. It has been a little while since I have been to Halls Creek, Fitzroy Crossing and Kununurra, but when I was last there, school attendance was appalling, as was apparent during the school day. When I was last in Broome, fewer kids were out on the street during a school day than previously. Does the minister have any details on attendance at those schools? While the minister is at it, one of the confounding factors with attendance is that sometimes a child turns up at school on the first day, and, apparently, that is indicated as attendance at school, but then the kid just does not turn up for the rest of the time. Could the minister comment on attendance at those schools?

Dr A.D. BUTI: It sounds like the member is explaining one of my law classes at university in which everyone turned up for the first day and then the penultimate lecture before the exam!

School attendance is a challenge. It is a challenge not only in the Kimberley, but also in many areas of the state and around Australia. In respect of that challenge, the project supports a 0.4 FTE attendance coordinator based at East Kimberley College to follow up students living out of their community. I will not stand here and say that we have been able to ensure that every student who should be at school is at school, but it is an issue that we continue to try to address. With the Halls Creek District High School attendance strategy, many strategies are being put in place to try to ensure that students attend school, but it is not easy. As the former Minister for Education mentioned, schools are a reflection of their community. We need to address many issues outside school, as well to ensure that kids come to school and that we then engage them while they are at school. It remains a challenge, but through the Kimberley schools project and, in particular, strategies regarding attendance, I think we are on the right track.

Dr D.J. HONEY: If we focus on Halls Creek, as the minister may recall, there was a bit of controversy some time ago around a truancy officer—I guess that is the proper word—but I will not go down that path. More particularly, it came out that something like eight per cent of the kids were attending high school on a regular basis. What are those attendance levels now subject to those new programs?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I might be able to help the member there. Attendance at Halls Creek is not good, particularly in secondary school. It is below 50 per cent. That is not acceptable. We keep trying to see what we can do to improve that situation.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Taking into consideration the minister’s statement at the beginning of the session, the minister might tell me to go to another department, but I will try anyway. Page 357 of budget paper No 2, volume 1, has services and key efficiency indicators under the very broad heading of “Public Primary Education”. With reference to the state’s commitment to the Closing the Gap program, I note that 22 child and parent centres operate around the state. I presume that the funding comes from that global allocation within primary education. I cannot find it in the budget. Where does that child and parent funding come from? I have said where I think it might be, but I am looking for some detail on that so I can ask further questions.

Dr A.D. BUTI: It is not considered to be primary or secondary education. It is in the budget papers on page 358 under the heading “Regulation and Non-Government Sector Assistance”. It is not detailed. We do not have the funding specifically regarding child and parent centres, but that is where it would come out of.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: But that is where it would be funded from—okay.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Just wait a minute. I am seeking clarification. Yes. That is where it is in the budget papers.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Thank you. Could the minister advise how much funding is going towards the 22 child and parent centres?

Dr A.D. BUTI: In 2022–23, there were eight, which was under \$9 million. In budget year 2024–25, it was \$9 000 962. In the out years, it was \$10.3 million, and then it was just under \$10.7 million for 2026–27. The year 2027–28 is to be advised.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Sorry; what was that?

Dr A.D. BUTI: It is to be advised. The year 2026–27 is just under \$10.7 million and 2027–28 is to be advised.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Is there any view of government to expand funding to increase the number of those child and parent centres across the forward estimates?

[3.10 pm]

Dr A.D. BUTI: At the moment, we are dealing with what is in the budget. As the member knows, a report into child development services by a standing committee of the upper house made some comments on that. At the moment, we are dealing with what we have, and there is no announcement that I can make on the expansion of those centres.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Has the department done any work to look at reviewing the locations of the Child Development Service centres or creating some criteria for the expansion of that network? I am very supportive of them and think there is an opportunity alongside the Closing the Gap initiative and also an opportunity in our regional communities. I wonder whether we could be doing more to assist the communities to assist the government.

Dr A.D. BUTI: The department is doing an evaluation of those CPC programs at the moment.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: When will that evaluation be completed?

Dr A.D. BUTI: It will be completed around midyear.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I refer to the heading “Miscellaneous” and the line item “Compliance Programs—Asbestos Containing Materials Removal and/or Replacement” on page 366. It is about three-quarters of the way down the page. I do not see a figure for that in the out years after 2023–24 following the allocation of \$1 113 000. Does that mean there is no asbestos remaining in our public school system?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Was that a joke? This is a very serious matter. I will ask Mr Peckitt to answer.

Mr J. Peckitt: There is a separate allocation of money for asbestos, which is about \$3 million per annum. It is not in that specific line item, but it rolls up to our total budget. There is ongoing money throughout the out years for asbestos removal.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I recall asking some questions about a year or two ago about a K–12 school in Merredin and a primary school in East Fremantle. What is the breakdown of how many schools are left in the state under this program? Are they mainly in regional or metropolitan areas?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I am not sure whether we have that information.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Also, where is that line item?

Dr A.D. BUTI: It is not a separate line item and we do not have that information broken down into regions.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: We just had a reference to the funding. Whereabouts is that located in the budget?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I will ask Mr Peckitt to answer that.

Mr J. Peckitt: The capital projects are identified separately in the budget, but this item relates more to maintenance, so it rolls up to our total cost of services. That is not separately identified, but it would be a cost that rolls up to our total appropriation and total cost of services.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Why has that changed? Obviously, there was a line item specifically outlining the remediation works that were being done around asbestos. Why has a decision been made to roll that in so that we cannot see what is being spent?

Mr J. Peckitt: There are two separate programs. The department has an ongoing budget allocation as part of its maintenance and other funds for asbestos of \$3 million per annum. The other item in the budget papers was a distinct one-off allocation for asbestos removal. That is why it was deemed to be capital. Often this goes back to whether the item, from an accounting perspective, is deemed a capital or recurrent item. The amount I referred to of \$3 million is more of a recurrent item from an accounting perspective, so it is not listed separately in the capital investment program.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Is that \$3 million per annum in recurrent expenditure across the forward estimates?

Mr J. Peckitt: Yes.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Thank you.

Mr G. BAKER: I refer to the quality schools funding on page 373. How is this government ensuring that it is getting the best from the commonwealth for our public school students in Western Australia?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Thank you, member. As the member knows, at the very start of the school year, on 31 January, Jason Clare, the federal Minister for Education, came to Western Australia and we signed a statement of intent expressing our government's joint commitment to Western Australia's public school system being fully funded to 100 per cent of the schooling resource standard by the end of 2026. That standard is known as the Gonski index. That is basically what is considered to be the funding required to ensure that students are properly educated. We were the first jurisdiction to sign that statement of intent. We have now been joined by the Northern Territory. Basically, by signing that statement of intent, we were able to negotiate with the commonwealth to reach that full 100 per cent level sooner than initially intended.

Of the 100 per cent schooling resource standard per public student, the commonwealth government funds 20 per cent and the state has to fund the rest. For non-government students, the commonwealth government funds 80 per cent and the state 20 per cent. Every student in Australia, including Western Australia, who goes to a non-government school in Australia is funded to 100 per cent of the schooling resource standard. The issue, though, is that, apart from the ACT, nowhere in Australia are public school students funded to 100 per cent. To his credit, when Jason Clare became the minister, he said that has to change. Although there was an agreement at that stage that every state would be funded to the level of 75 per cent, it varied, and ours was a bit higher. He said he would increase the commonwealth funding by 2.5 per cent to go to 22.5 per cent and the states would have to increase theirs to 77.5 per cent. Both the state and the commonwealth would have to increase their funding by 2.5 per cent to hit the target of a five per cent increase. The commonwealth government was offering an increase of 0.5 per cent each year to 2029, so we would not have received full funding of our public educated students until 2029. However, because we have such a good financial situation due to the way we have managed the budget and finances over a number of years since coming to government in 2017, we were in a position to agree with Mr Clare that we were prepared to increase our contribution to 77.5 per cent over two years if the federal government was prepared to increase its funding over two years. Rather than having our public school students funded to 100 per cent of the index in 2029, all our students in the public education system will be fully funded according to the SRS by the end of 2026, which is absolutely fantastic. As a result, we ended up with a \$250 million bonus because we will get to the full funding by the end of 2026. In total, that means \$1.6 billion extra into our public education system. It is an outstanding achievement. We are negotiating with the federal government in our bilateral negotiations on what reforms will go with that funding.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I refer to the outcomes and key effectiveness indicators on page 356 of budget paper No 2. I am looking at the public school students achieving strong, or exceeding, proficiency levels in reading and numeracy through all the years. That figure is sitting somewhere around 60 to 70 per cent. Typically, it is in the low 60 per cent range. I would have thought that was a pretty disturbing outcome. I suspect this is not a new phenomenon, but it is disturbing that it would appear that one in three kids attending school, pretty well in all years from years 3 to 9, and, I would assume, around it, are not achieving above the proficiency level in reading. That indicates they are struggling. Could the minister comment on that and on what programs are in place to improve that performance?

[3.20 pm]

Dr A.D. BUTI: I will ask the director general to answer the member's question, but I will let the member know that we are under a new NAPLAN system.

Ms L. Rodgers: Thank you, minister; thank you, chair. There were new standards put in in regard to the NAPLAN scale. Ahead of those new standards being put in, Western Australia took the step to get ahead and brought in national proficiency measures. All other states previously reported on the national minimum standard. We put in place national proficiency measures and then ministers took the decision to essentially put in a new scale, which differentiated students' proficiency between developing, needs improvement, strong and exceeding. It is a new time series and this is the proportion of students who sit in the strong and exceeding category. It is the first year that we have had this data. However, if we look at results region by region—we previously spoke about the Kimberley schools project—we can see some of our most vulnerable students making incredible gains. In the midwest and the Kimberley, we are getting a five percentage point shift in reading and writing in some instances. We are scaling that up across Western Australia. Those are the percentages of students at the current proficiency levels, and we fully support harder standards to make sure that our students are equipped with the foundation skills that they need in order to succeed at school and in later life.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I refer to service 3, "Regulation and Non-Government Sector Assistance" in the "Service Summary" table on page 356. I want to ask about attendance rates and the recent *Four Corners* program in which it was reported that the attendance rate for students in years 1 to 10 dropped from 92 per cent to 88 per cent. In WA, we have seen a reasonable increase in homeschooling numbers, yet the associated FTE number does not

seem to have increased. Would the minister please give his comments, or the department's comments, on reconciling the number of increased enrolments in homeschooling with the lack of increase in FTE associated with it? I can give the minister numbers from 2023–24.

Dr A.D. BUTI: No; the member does not need to. What is the actual question?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: For argument's sake, in 2023, 5 825 students were homeschooled with an FTE of 41.26. In 2024, there are 6 215 students being homeschooled and the FTE has dropped to 40.43. There are 400 more students with one fewer FTE.

Dr A.D. BUTI: If the member wants to compare the home education moderator, in 2017 it was 19.31 FTE and in 2024 it was 34.40. That is a significant increase over that period of time.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: That is fine, but since COVID, we have seen a massive increase in the number of students being homeschooled; COVID no doubt caused the large increase that we mentioned. However, between 2023 and 2024, we have 400 more students being homeschooled, and we have one fewer FTE allocated to them.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I do not know where the member is looking. I see something different.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: They are the figures I got from answers to questions on notice.

Dr A.D. BUTI: We will have to seek clarification on that. The information I have before me shows there has been an increase in 2023–24. It was 33.58 in 2023, and it is 34.40 in 2024. That is what I have in front of me, but if the member holds on for a moment, I will seek some clarification.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I am happy if the minister wants to supply some supplementary information.

Dr A.D. BUTI: If the member wants to put the question on notice, I will provide it.

The CHAIR: The question will be on notice, member for Roe.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I have already asked the questions on notice and got those answers. I am now asking for supplementary information.

The CHAIR: Minister, are you willing to provide supplementary information?

Dr A.D. BUTI: As I said, I will provide it if the member wants to put it on notice.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I refer to “Retention in public schooling (proportion of Year 7 public school cohort studying in Year 12)” on page 356. It seems to have dropped. The 2023–24 budget figure was 81 per cent, and the estimated actual was 74.4 per cent. Is that caused by net interstate and overseas migration or are there other factors leading into those figures?

[3.30 pm]

Dr A.D. BUTI: Thank you, member. I am glad the member asked that question. I think it is a timely question. As the member knows, last week the government released the consultation draft of the post-secondary pathways. There were three main imperatives behind that review by an expert panel. One was the reduction in the participation rate of students doing ATAR. The second was whether our vocational education and training courses were properly aligning with or preparing our students for industry and workforce participation. The third was a drop-off in students from year 11 to year 12. There is an issue and that is why I instigated this review when I became Minister for Education. It was chaired by Emeritus Professor Bill Loudon. It was led by the Department of Education, along with Catholic Education Western Australia and the Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia. I gave the member a copy of the report last week.

The expert panel has six imperatives in mind. One is reframing the purposes of secondary education. As the member knows, our current system had its origins 20 or 30 years ago, maybe a bit more, when 35 per cent of students went to years 11 and 12. We now have roughly 87 per cent who go to year 11. We need to change the system. Other imperatives include looking at a system built from learning goals, more fully recognising student diversity and achievement, increasing student retention and engagement, recognising the value of all students and their achievements, and incorporating changing models of assessment. The panel came up with 35 recommendations. They are draft recommendations. They are not my recommendations; they are the recommendations of the expert panel and have been put out for consultation for three months. I invite members of Parliament and anyone to make a submission. While that has been going on, we have had the School Curriculum and Standards Authority undertaking a Western Australian Certificate of Education refreshment. Out of those 35 recommendations, some of the key recommendations include whether we could include VET subjects as part of the ATAR score.

I think it was reported in one media outlet that the panel was advocating for non-examinable subjects to be part of the Australian tertiary admission rank. I do not see that in the report; I do not know where that came from. If a vocational education and training course is going to be part of ATAR, it will be rigorously assessed. We are not flying solo on this; New South Wales has announced that it is going to have 12 VET courses as part of its ATAR score. To me, a VET course can be as rigorous as the normal, traditional ATAR units. I am really excited by the possibilities of that recommendation.

Another recommendation of the panel was to look at how we can create a system that caters for the diversity of our student population, whether they are of a multicultural background or students with special needs. There was a recommendation that the numeracy and literacy requirements that were established under the previous government should remain, but that we should look at increasing the way they can be assessed. I can remember sitting where the member is sitting now, when we were in opposition, quizzing the Minister for Education. A member on the opposition side, Nathan Morton, the former member for Forrestfield, had formerly been a school principal and he raised an issue that has always stuck with me. There were year 9 twins in his electorate who were highly intelligent but, because of certain perception difficulties they had, they could never pass the online literacy and numeracy assessment as it was then; they just could not pass it. It was a computerised system and at that stage there were very few exemptions allowed, so they were unable to gain a Western Australian Certificate of Education. That is something that we have to look at.

As part of the report, we are also looking at how regional students are affected. The School Curriculum and Standards Authority has come up with a number of suggestions that I am also excited about. One is to allow students with special needs to obtain a WACE. Many students with special needs can never obtain a WACE because they cannot pass the various requirements. SCSA is looking at the possibility of a WACE that will allow students with special needs to graduate. SCSA is also looking at one of the disincentives for many students choosing to undertake traditional ATAR subjects: they are concerned that they may not get C or above. They have to get 14 or more Cs out of 20 to graduate with a WACE. The easy option is to go for a less rigorous course, like a general course, rather than doing the harder traditional ATAR subjects. SCSA has suggested that maybe a D in a traditional ATAR subject is the equivalent of a C in a generalised course. I think that idea has a lot of merit.

We need to create a system for years 11 and 12 that incentivises and motivates all our students, whether they are at the top end of intellectual capacity, whether they have certain challenges, and regardless of whatever culturally diverse backgrounds they come from. We need a system that will motivate them to seek to achieve their maximum potential, and I think the current system has certain disincentives in place. Also, it is not a system that fully recognises the various interests and challenges that students in years 11 and 12 face. Yes, I want that figure to increase, and I think the review process that we have commenced and is now out for three months of consultation, plus the SCSA refreshment of WACE, will go some way towards achieving that.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Given that the minister has introduced the subject, I guess one of his platforms when he first became Minister for Education was the aspiration to increase the number of students who do ATAR which, as the minister knows, has dropped to somewhere between 30 and 32 per cent. Obviously, this is only an interim report, but does the minister think that it could potentially compromise that level to an even lower level? As I said, the minister's aspiration as the new Minister for Education was to get those ATAR levels back up. I am wondering how he feels about that side of it.

Dr A.D. BUTI: That is a good question, member; it is actually interesting. Obviously, the ATAR participation rate is too low, but in public schools it has actually increased slightly, whereas in non-government schools it has not. Public schools have actually shown an improvement in the numbers of students doing ATAR.

With regard to the member's question, no, I actually think it is the other way round. We are going to create a better suite of ATAR subjects. Whether we continue to call it "ATAR" is another issue. ATAR is just a ranking system that was set up to give universities a way to select students; that is all it is. We may actually change the name, and SCSA is looking at that. The crucial issue is that students do courses that fully challenge them and prepare them for what they want to do, whether it is tertiary education, vocational training or going into the employment workforce. In saying that we will look at VET subjects possibly becoming part of ATAR, if the subjects are rigorous enough, that would be a good thing, because students may do that. If a student is considering studying electrical engineering at university, why should they not go and do a VET course that has an electrical engineering component? I think this will actually increase their possibilities. Also, the SCSA suggestion of the ATAR D counting as a C would help that.

I will add that another report that came out after the post-secondary pathways consultation draft was released quoted—without actually identifying the individuals involved—some universities as having said that the report had possibly dumbed down our senior secondary education pathways. I mean, the hypocrisy and irony of that is unbelievable. It is the practices of the universities over a number of years that have led to some students not doing ATAR, because they have been able to get into university via many different ways, and sometimes those ways are justified.

During COVID universities were making unconditional offers—with some justification, because obviously students were staying home and there was the whole upheaval of COVID and so forth, although it has to be said that our students received a very good education during those years. But there was some justification for that. Universities tell us that there are no unconditional offers now, only conditional offers. That may be true, but I receive correspondence that shows that in the case of at least one university, the conditions it placed on entry did not incentivise students working to their maximum potential. So, if that report was true—that universities were saying that we were dumbing things down—that is far from the case. We are all—the Department of Education, the School Curriculum and Standards Authority, Catholic Education, the independent schools and me, as Minister for Education—trying

to look at how we can ensure that years 11 and 12 create an educational environment in which every student will want to maximise their full potential, and that includes ATAR participation. Having said that, ATAR in itself is not for everyone. I want to ensure that there is an alternative pathway that is rigorous and that will challenge the students who undertake it.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Before I ask my question, I will just say to the minister that that is a noble goal. When I was at my old school, Hampton Senior High School, there were probably about 30 kids doing higher maths, physics and chemistry. I am told that there is probably none doing that now. They are just as bright, but they have been discouraged in various ways from doing that, which is a tragedy for those kids.

My question is around school safety. For the record, I refer to page 353 of budget paper No 2, under the heading “Appropriations, Expenses and Cash Assets”. There has been a lot of publicity and concerns about school safety—children bringing weapons to schools and the like—and I am wondering whether there are any initiatives to look at the issues of school safety, given the heightened public concern about safety at schools? I could not see anything in the budget.

[3.40 pm]

Dr A.D. BUTI: I will answer the question, but does the member have a budget line?

Dr D.J. HONEY: I do. I am referring to the general appropriations, expenses and cash assets table and the total expenditure in there. Is any expenditure allocated to school safety?

Dr A.D. BUTI: That is very creative, but I will answer the question in any case. I think I mentioned not so long ago that schools are a reflection of their communities, but that does not mean that we as an education system do not need to look at the issue of violence. When she was the Minister for Education and Training, the previous minister announced a number of measures to tackle violence in schools. Last year, I enhanced that statement by producing the *Standing together against violence* plan and a number of other measures. One measure I announced was to unequivocally state to principals and staff that we have their backs if they need to take measures to exclude students. Obviously, to some extent we should not be celebrating that; we do not want students to be excluded, but, as we know, we live in a world where that may be possible. I announced 10 actions in that enhanced *Standing together against violence* document. It is a 10-point action plan that provides strong legislative and policy tools for principals to govern their schools in a way that seeks to reduce antisocial behaviour. Unfortunately, some of that antisocial behaviour comes from parents. That is totally unacceptable, as is violence from students. As I said, we have announced policy measures and there are legislative provisions now in place that allow for students to be excluded. Having said that, in trying to tackle this issue, more than 1 000 students in 2023 were provided with specialist programs in either alternative learning settings or other parts of our education system to combat aggressive behaviour. We have the policy and legislative framework to allow principals to do what they need to do, and we have provided alternative learning settings for students who engage in aggressive, violent behaviour. We have other specialist school programs, as well.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I have a couple of levels of concern. One is that we are getting a hint of copycat behaviour from the egregious behaviour that happens in the United States. Also, more generally, it seems that there is a proliferation of knives in the community. As the minister said, schools reflect communities. That is a concern. Is there any particular focus in that program on the prevention of weapons coming into schools?

Dr A.D. BUTI: If a student comes onto a site with a prohibited weapon, they will be suspended.

Ms M.J. HAMMAT: I refer to the total cost of services and total appropriations. I note that the total cost of services is \$6.8 billion in this budget. Congratulations—I think that is a significant demonstration of the government’s commitment to public education. Can the minister outline what if any additional funding has been allocated to students with complex needs, particularly students with autism, in that total budget allocation?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I thank the member. As the member knows, as she is also my parliamentary secretary, the issue of students with special needs is increasing in society and of course in our education system, and autism has been the predominant increasing diagnosis. I was gladdened when we were able to secure additional funding to the tune of \$224.3 million to be invested in individual disability allocation. Obviously, most of that will be going to students with autism because that is the fastest growing category of the disability categories that are funded under the individual disability allocation. We have also announced a review of the School Education Act to look at the barriers kids face when receiving support and access to quality education. We are looking at other measures we can put in place to assist students with disabilities. Under our student-centred funding model there are two ways that students can be funded. One is the disability allocation allowance for students who are diagnosed in one of eight categories, including autism. Payments of that allowance are made each year. That is where that \$224.3 million additional investment will be going. We then have education adjustment allocation funding for additional support for students who have been diagnosed with other challenges such as dyslexia or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. There is also interim funding available for students who are waiting to be diagnosed, because we know that sometimes there can be a waiting list. Last year, we allocated \$8.9 million for students with undiagnosed disability through the education adjustments. When schools receive their funding, that money is factored into kids who have extra needs.

To support schools and students with disabilities, we also have a School of Special Education Needs: Disability, which provides direct services to schools to meet the learning support needs of students with both diagnosed and imputed disabilities. We have a school psychology service, which offers a range of services in schools, including assessment and intervention planning for individual students, consultation for learning and behaviour support, early intervention and whole-school planning. We also have an autism specialist learning program, which provides specialist and intensive support for students who can access age-appropriate curriculum but are disengaged as a result of social, emotional and behavioural issues and challenges directly attributed to the impact of autism spectrum disorder. The number of programs is expanding from 16 in 2020 to 24 programs in 2025. This includes 12 primary schools and 12 secondary schools that link to provide a kindergarten to year 12 program. Approximately 350 students are currently enrolled in the SLP, and this number will grow as the new programs come on board and reach full capacity. Further—I have not finished here—late last year, I also announced a \$2.26 million trial for complex behaviour support coordinators to help school leaders address the needs of students with complex behaviours. I also add that one of the reforms that Hon Jason Clare is linking to the additional money under the National School Reform Agreement is small-group tutoring, so students who are having difficulties in class, particularly in numeracy and literacy, will have catch-up tutoring, being taken out of class to receive specialist tuition.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: This is probably on a similar theme, in some ways. I refer to page 354, significant issues impacting the agency, and paragraph 2 —

The Department recognises the importance of mental health and wellbeing as a precondition for learning.

How will the department ensure that staff receive the correct advice, support and resources to ensure that students have what they need in relation to their mental health? This paragraph refers to mental health and wellbeing as a pre-condition for learning. Is there any training for staff to make sure they are giving the right advice to those students in relation to their mental health?

[3.50 pm]

Dr A.D. BUTI: For a start, we have increased the number of school psychologists in school situations. I will give a bit of a run-down here.

As we know, mental health and wellbeing has become a great focus. That will also be part of the possible reforms; part of the increased money from the federal government will be used to look at the issue of student mental health and wellbeing. Ultimately, if we can create an environment at school that fully engages the students, that will help, but it will not always be the only thing.

If we look at wellbeing, all schools have access to the Department of Education's evidence-based programs and supports to promote positive mental health and wellbeing, including school psychologists, who obviously provide specialist mental health support. They also include consultation and preventive measures; school chaplains or student wellbeing officers, who support the social and emotional wellbeing of students; youth mental health first aid, which teaches school staff how to provide initial support to young persons who may be experiencing a mental health problem or crisis until professional help is received or the crisis is resolved; teen mental health first aid, which teaches students how to provide initial peer-to-peer support to a friend or classmate who may be experiencing a mental health problem or mental health crisis until professional help is received; gatekeeper suicide prevention training for professionals and paraprofessionals whose roles bring them into regular contact with people at risk of suicide; the Be You programs directory, which supports schools with choosing an evidence-based social and emotional learning program that best suits their school context; and the School of Special Educational Needs: Medical and Mental Health, which provides educational continuity for students whose medical or mental health prevents them from participating in enrolled school programs. In August 2022, the state government announced all public secondary school students—no; I will not need to worry about that, I think.

We have the greatest number ever working in the school psychology service system. The current workforce headcount is 631 in the Department of Education, which is phenomenal. It is an issue that is incredibly challenging. I mean, we have got to look at preventive measures to ensure that students' wellbeing is not affected. As the member knows, discussions are taking place now with our Premier. The issue about social media, students and so forth was reported in today's paper or maybe yesterday's paper. I am no psychologist, but there seems to be no doubt that social media has had some influence on the wellbeing of our students.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I would not disagree with that, minister. As the minister knows, I rate our education assistants very highly for their value to the system and especially for the role they play, especially with our special needs students. Flowing on from this, my understanding is that we have 60-odd education assistant positions vacant at the moment. How does the minister or the director general intend to ensure that schools that do not have sufficient resources or sufficient education assistants in place will cope?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I thank the member for the question. Of course, this question would not need to have been answered under the Liberal-National government because when it first came in, it substantially cut EAs. We made a commitment to increase EAs. Providing the number we need is a challenge in our economy, obviously, in most areas of our workforce, not just in education, but we have made a commitment. I just need to confer.

In 2019, mainstream education assistant numbers were 2 580. In 2022–23, there were 2 594 mainstream EAs. In 2022–23, there were 6 459 special needs EAs. In 2024–25, numbers have gone to 2 674 mainstream and 7 219 special needs EAs. When we have that number of positions available, there will always be some vacancies. The easiest way to not have vacancies is to not have the positions available. We are committed to EAs, unlike the previous government, which just slashed EAs. I have to say that it was done for ideological reasons because it associated EAs with a certain union that it did not like. As a result of that, it thought it could reduce union membership by slashing EAs. It was not the member, and it definitely was not his side of the coalition partnership. It was the blue side of the coalition partnership. He is not blue; no, he is green and yellow. Anyway, the point is that we have committed to it and, of course, now the challenge is to ensure that we fill them. Sorry, we are giving grants of \$5 000 for student teachers in their final years.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: On the same page, page 354, is paragraph 5 about the national workforce shortages and how the department initiated a range of strategies, including the international recruitment campaign. I know that the police minister went over there and sort of hung around Westminster and Downing Street and said, “Come and join the police force in Western Australia!” I am not sure whether the minister and the director general followed that same line or tack, but the question is: how many international teachers were recruited and at what cost?

Dr A.D. BUTI: It was a very, very successful campaign. I remember going early this year to welcome a number of teachers. I will give numbers. Since the program commenced, on day one of 2023, 117 international teachers have been appointed to 48 different public schools, and most of them, which I am sure the member is pleased with, are in the regions. We now have 139 international recruits who have gone to 58 different WA public schools. In the international teaching pool are 80 suitable teachers who will be considered for future appointments. An additional 86 teachers are currently being assessed and, if found suitable, will be considered for future appointments. Now, the member might want to put the question about cost on notice. I am not sure whether the member did economics at school, but I did, and my favourite area of economics was the economics of migration. Here we have overseas countries that paid for these teachers to become teachers, so we are actually getting these teachers at a cheap rate or amount of money because it would have cost a lot more if we had educated them. We do not have that cost. We could give the member the cost of the recruitment program. When they come here, they get paid normally. If the member puts that on notice, I will get it. Actually, he will find that if he looks at how much it costs to train a student to become a teacher, vis-a-vis recruiting internationally, there is a net benefit to the taxpayer of Australia and Western Australia.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: The minister spoke about 117 international teachers in 48 schools. Are all those who came across still in our school system? I am assuming they started in February.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I might ask the DG to answer this one. I can disclose right now that it costs about \$60 000 to \$80 000 to relocate them to their location and support the overseas teachers who come to Western Australia. I will ask the DG to answer the member’s specific question.

[4.00 pm]

Ms L. Rodgers: I have been advised, unless something has changed in the last couple of days, that we have lost one of those teachers.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Is there a contractual obligation that they must stay for two years or whatever it might be?

Dr A.D. BUTI: There is a contractual obligation. I will see whether I can find that, but I think it is four years. I think we are about to have a break, so we can check that during the break and then I can provide that information, but there is a contractual obligation. Sorry, it is four years for them to get permanent residency and they have to stay in the position that they are appointed to. They cannot go to a region for a term and then come back. The director general has just updated her advice to three teachers that she knows of who have been lost.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: What about housing for those teachers? Do they all receive Government Regional Officers’ Housing or is it a combination of accommodation et cetera?

Dr A.D. BUTI: They get GROH.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Did all 117 receive that?

Dr A.D. BUTI: They are entitled to GROH, but they may not be able to access GROH because of the demand placed on it. If they do not get GROH, they get rent assistance.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I guess we will go to the break, but the minister said that just about all those teachers went to the regions. If the minister has any figures to hand on whether the majority were provided with accommodation through that system, that would be appreciated.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I will see what I can do during the break.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: That is fine.

The CHAIR: The committee will now take a short break and recommence at 4.15 pm.

Meeting suspended from 4.02 to 4.15 pm

[Mrs M.R. Marshall took the chair.]

Dr A.D. BUTI: We will try to provide an answer to the question raised by the member for Roe, so I will pass that question to the director general.

Ms L. Rodgers: When the international teachers come over, if they are going to one of our regional areas where any other teacher would be entitled to Government Regional Officers' Housing, they are entitled to GROH. We are trying to get the numbers now of those international teachers who are at their schools but are in temporary accommodation. We will provide the number as soon as it comes through. If they are in temporary accommodation, we pay their rent.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I want to go to page 374 of the *Budget statements* and the minister's favourite subject—that is, the WA student assistance payment. Can the minister give us the current percentage of students or families who have taken up the payment? Does the minister have a breakdown of what has been taken up by the ServiceWA app versus using the more manual lines?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I would not say this is my favourite subject—all education is my favourite subject! In regard to the member's question, this information is correct as of yesterday, 20 May. Under the ServiceWA app, 145 556 primary school students and 110 074 secondary school students have been paid. Under the web format, 24 480 K–6 students and 15 672 secondary school students have been paid. Under paper form, 1 004 K–6 students and 1 020 secondary school students have been paid. Therefore, under the three forms, the total for K–6 is 171 040 payments and the total for years 7 to 12 is 126 766. The totality is 297 806. I do not have the percentage, though.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Does the minister not have the percentage of the total and what that represents?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I can give the member a rough estimation. It is roughly 60 per cent.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I noticed the other day that one or two schools' Facebook pages were advertising for people to visit their administration team and they would help them out. Did the minister plan for his administration and school leaders and the like to spend their time working to help people get their money? Does the minister think it would have been more appropriate for this money to have been paid direct to the school, as is done in the likes of Victoria, where it is paid to the school for each student and the money finds its way through in that format?

Dr A.D. BUTI: How much work for the school was involved in that situation?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Sorry?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Would that not have involved a lot of work for the school as well?

Ms M.J. DAVIES: No. It is a single allocation. Is it not?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Yes.

Dr A.D. BUTI: If the member wants to ask a question, ask a question.

This is the system that we have. It is roughly 60 per cent. I have not heard of anyone who has received a payment complaining. If the school wants to put something on its website, which I am sure does not take too long, to encourage people who have not applied to apply, that is great.

[4.20 pm]

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Is the minister comfortable that this is the most efficient way to do it when only 60 per cent of people have received the payment rather than allocating it to schools so that the money finds its way to every student?

Dr A.D. BUTI: It is finding its way to everyone who applies. There are still a number of weeks left before the end of term. Parents will receive the money and they will spend it according to their needs. It is a cost-of-living relief. People have not come to me complaining about receiving the payment.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Is there a cut-off point?

Dr A.D. BUTI: It is the end of term 2.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: What happens if someone misses the boat or they cannot work their way through the ServiceWA app or whatever? Is there some form they can fill out to apply for a special payment or for the payment that they are entitled to but they were running late?

Dr A.D. BUTI: They have the whole term to apply. To ensure that people do not miss out, some principals may spend two minutes putting something on Facebook to encourage people to apply. People cannot just apply through the ServiceWA app, though that is the quickest and most efficient way that people receive the money; there is a claim form on the web and people can apply on a paper form.

With regards to the member's question about the money going to schools, schools do not hold details of parents' bank accounts, so the parents would not have received the money. By using the system that we have, the money

goes straight into parents' pockets. Parents have been asking for cost-of-living measures to relieve cost-of-living pressures. The money goes into their bank account, which we think is the most appropriate way. Although the member said that only 60 per cent of people have received the money, that is still a lot of people—a lot of families.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I understand that there have been scenarios in which parents are separated, estranged or the like and it is basically a case of first in, best dressed. Has the minister had any issues or received any complaints about one parent being the first to grab the payment and the other one saying, "Hold on a minute, perhaps it should have gone to me instead"?

Dr A.D. BUTI: There is a dispute mechanism to solve any such issues.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Have there been any recorded cases of that happening?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I am sure there have been, but under any system, there probably would have been disputes between parents. I do not think it is a large number. I do not have the numbers. If the member wants to put it on notice, we may be able to provide the information. I do not know whether we can provide it but if we can, we will. Sixty per cent of families that are eligible have received cost-of-living pressure relief, which is very beneficial. I will not allow the member or anyone else to try to tarnish something that has been highly successful and well received.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Would the minister be able to provide that information as supplementary information?

Dr A.D. BUTI: No. I do not know whether we have it. As I said, if the member would like that, we will provide it if he puts it on notice.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Does the minister intend to look at rolling this out again in the first term of 2025 prior to the election?

Dr A.D. BUTI: That is a good try. This system was deemed necessary at this stage and that is what we have done.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I refer to service 4 relating to the support to the School Curriculum and Standards Authority. The table on page 358 of budget paper No 2, volume 1 shows the significant rise in the number of FTE. In 2022–23, the actual was 199 and the 2024–25 budget target is 235, which is an increase of 36 FTE in that area. Can the minister outline the requirement for such a significant increase—it is around 20 per cent—in staff?

Dr A.D. BUTI: SCSA does incredibly important work. That is related specifically to the adoption of the Australian Curriculum, number 9. I will pass on to Ms Healy, the Executive Director of SCSA, to elaborate.

Ms J. Healy: As the minister said, the School Curriculum and Standards Authority is responsible for adopting and adapting the Australian Curriculum. The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority recently reviewed the Australian Curriculum. Ministers signed off on it. We use that curriculum to adopt and adapt and customise it for our own students in our WA context. We have a longstanding history. We are probably the first jurisdiction to do that. We have adopted and adapted English, health and physical education. That work was completed last year and is up for familiarisation for our teachers this year to implement next year. This year we provide them with different forms of professional learning to assist them to familiarise themselves with new curriculum. Then we move through the other learning areas, so it is a phased approach, particularly to support our primary school teachers who have to deliver all eight of the learning areas. It gives them time to become familiar before they have to formally implement it in the classroom.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Would we expect that once that process is through and we have adjusted to that new curriculum, we will see those FTEs reduce?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I think that is a question that the executive director cannot really answer at this stage. Who is to know what other work SCSA may need to do. It is going through a refreshment process now. I can assure the member that the bodies in the SCSA building work very hard and I do not see any wastage. I am just being honest; I do not know what will happen in the future.

Before we move on to the next question, I want to provide some information to the member for Roe about GROH and the international unit. Out of those recruitments, 84 were eligible for GROH, 81 are in GROH, and three are in temporary accommodation. With regards to others, they were not eligible because they are in the city or they are not in a region where they are eligible.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I refer to the line item "Students at Risk" under "Expenses" on page 374 of budget paper No 2. I notice that the figure basically stays the same over the out years. Given the obvious sad and tragic incident involving the Rossmoyne student with extreme ideology, what is in place to counter future scenarios and what provision is made for deradicalisation programs in WA public schools?

Dr A.D. BUTI: That line item is not related to public schools; it is related to non-government schools.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Sorry, in government schools?

Dr A.D. BUTI: The line item that the member referred to does not relate to government schools. Which line item is the member referring to?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I am referring to students at risk under "Expenses".

[4.30 pm]

Dr A.D. BUTI: That is non-government schools. I will answer your general question because I like you. We need to be careful.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Obviously. I understand.

Dr A.D. BUTI: We also need to be careful with the language that we use. The whole issue of radicalisation can be quite emotive, and we need to be careful because there are often other issues involved.

We are always looking at what can be done. There is a working group that was established in 2022 that has representatives from specialist areas within the police, the State Security Investigation Group, the Fixated Threat Assessment Centre, the countering violent extremism unit, the Department of Education, Catholic Education WA, the Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia and the Departments of Communities and Health. The purpose of the group is to develop and formalise an agreed set of protocols to follow when managing threats on education sites, including students who exhibit risk factors relating to mass casualty threats and violent extremism. These protocols are currently in draft form and are being reviewed by the department's legal team.

The protocol outlines the responsibilities and expected response from schools, respective agencies and the police in responding to and supporting students who demonstrate engagement in violent extremism activities. The protocol has a cross-sectorial approach including non-government schools. The Department of Communities works closely with the specialist areas within WA Police to strengthen capabilities in preventing and responding to mass casualty incidents and violent extremism.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: How many WA schools have deradicalisation programs, or whatever you would like to call them, operating?

Dr A.D. BUTI: We can provide the number of students.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: That was my next question.

Dr A.D. BUTI: There are 23 public school students. There is actually one fewer now—for obvious reasons.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: There are 22 students. I have no further questions on that.

I would like to ask a question on works in progress on page 365. The funding for the universal access program ceases after 2024–25. The program is to provide structured, play-based early childhood education delivered in accordance with *The early years learning framework for Australia* and the National Quality Standard and delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher. If this program has been successful, why is it being defunded from 2024–25? Am I missing something?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I might ask Mr Peckitt to answer.

Mr J. Peckitt: That was a commonwealth-funded item through the previous universal access program agreement. The Department of Education has a separate budget item for early childhood education that provides between \$1.5 million and \$2 million a year for early childhood projects that may be required year on year for the types of issues. There is a funding line for that. This one was just a previously commonwealth-funded item, so it is no longer relevant.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Near the top of page 366, transportable classrooms are mentioned. I notice that the funding drops down fairly radically in the further out years. Given our student population seems to be increasing, we seem to need more classrooms and our State School Teachers' Union wants smaller class sizes, can the minister explain why the transportable classrooms allocation is dropping down?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Interestingly, transportables are actually of incredibly high quality. The issue is sometimes about space because they might take up green space. But to your question, this is actually an additional \$79.6 million over two years that we have provided for transport and accommodation. We made the judgement and commitment that for those transportable classrooms, we need to put that funding in over the next two years. We hope that we will deal with the enrolment issues that we may have. In addition, there are new schools being built, and there is also uplift in other schools. It is not our only measure to deal with enrolment pressure.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Just going back to students at risk in the line item on page 374. The minister has spoken about the *Let's Take A Stand Together* plan to tackle violence in schools and also the School of Alternative Learning Settings, which has 12 sites operating in WA. How many incidents of a violent nature were reported through the department's reporting process in the year 2022–23 and the year 2023–24 involving primary age students, secondary age students and also parents and carers?

Dr A.D. BUTI: The member is testing our friendship because that line item is non-government; it is not government. What year did the member ask for?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: The year 2022–23 and then 2023–24.

Dr A.D. BUTI: The total reported incidents of physical assault, threatening behaviour and contact in 2022 was 3 585. In 2023, it was 4 511 and to 15 March, the total is 791. The member is right to raise concerns about violence, but please be careful because this is complex. I will not go into it, but it is a complex issue. In some cases, it does not matter what we do, it will always remain an issue, and we are trying to address it.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I understand there are 12 School of Alternative Learning Settings sites spread around the place. Is there a set scenario for when a student goes to that particular alternative learning setting and are they are in there for a certain length of time, or are they returned depending on their behaviour? Could the minister explain how that works?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I will ask the director general to answer.

Ms L. Rodgers: There are sites where students can go if they are temporarily excluded or, indeed, permanently excluded, or if principals can identify students who might benefit from time in those alternative learning settings. Ordinarily, those students will be there for 10 weeks.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Does the minister see these alternative learning sites expanding or contracting, which would be a better scenario?

[4.40 pm]

Dr A.D. BUTI: I do not have a crystal ball, but it is always under review. They form part of our education ecosystem and we will wait and see whether they need to. We will just wait and see.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I refer to the works in progress on page 365. Under the heading “Other School Facilities” is the line item “Covered Assembly Areas”. Why is there no allocation in the years 2024 to 2027 and then a significant reallocation of \$2.063 million in 2027–28?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I will ask Mr Peckitt to answer that.

Mr J. Peckitt: In some years we need to reprioritise funding across various funding line items. In those middle years, in some cases we have reallocated the funding between other projects. As the member noted, that funding continues in that last out year, but in the middle years we have reallocated funding to basically deal with urgent priorities that we have identified in those years.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Just above that is the line item “Interim Schools”. That shows the same thing. The funding fades going into the out years. Can someone explain what interim schools are?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I will ask Mr Thomson to answer that.

Mr R. Thomson: Thank you, minister. It is an allocation to deal with urgent priorities and is an ongoing allocation. It is prioritised as we receive project requests from schools that are priorities for us to deliver. It enables us the agility to respond to emerging priorities.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Could it be called a sort of holding account to tackle urgent issues that crop up?

Mr R. Thomson: Correct.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Thank you. The minister spoke earlier about early childhood education and the Department of Communities. I am looking at budget paper No 2, volume 2—that is outside the minister’s responsibility.

I have a question on page 365 under the heading “Land Acquisition”, about one-third of the way down the page, and the line items “General” and “Land for Primary Schools”. Why is there no figure under the line item “General” from 2025–26? We discussed the inner-city Perth primary school. The estimated expenditure for land for primary schools drops quite dramatically from 2023–24. Can the minister explain that?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Mr Peckitt will answer.

Mr J. Peckitt: It is based on need. Each year we will obviously submit requests through the budget process for land that we need to purchase, and that is funded through that process. There is no amount in the out years because we need to identify exactly where we need the land and the time we need to acquire it. That is why the funding is there only for the next financial year.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Okay. Going back to the inner-city primary school, there were suggestions about potential land swaps et cetera. That would potentially come under that line item. Is there no contemplation of that at all by the department?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I do not think I need to say anything more on that, but I will reiterate to the member that the investment we are putting into the inner-city primary school is the greatest ever for any primary school. As the member knows from basic economics, there is one pie and the more you take from one part of the pie, the less there is available for other areas such as Esperance Senior High School.

The appropriation was recommended.

Division 3: Department of the Premier and Cabinet — Service 4, Aboriginal Affairs —

Mrs M.R. Marshall, Chair.

Dr A.D. Buti, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.

Ms E. Roper, Director General.

Ms F. Hunt, Deputy Director General, Aboriginal Engagement and Community Policy.

Mr A. Ripper, Executive Director, Native Title.

Ms T. Ninyette, Executive Director, Aboriginal Engagement.

Mr C. Patterson, Director, Corporate Services.

Ms M. Rudez, Assistant Director, Native Title.

Mr S. Ward, Chief of Staff, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.

Mr S. Hayden, Principal Policy Adviser.

[Witnesses introduced.]

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

A minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee. I will ask the minister to clearly indicate what information they agree to provide and will then allocate a reference number. Supplementary information should be provided to the principal clerk by no later than noon on Friday, 31 May 2024. If a minister suggests that a matter be put on notice, members should use the online questions on notice system to submit their questions.

I give the call to the member for Central Wheatbelt.

[4.50 pm]

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I refer to page 65 of budget paper 2, volume 1, and the general service area. It states —

The Department provides strategic policy advice and coordination to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs...

Could the minister provide advice on whether any policy or work has been done within this department, or by government, on a state redress compensation scheme for surviving members of the stolen generation?

Dr A.D. BUTI: This is an area we have received representation on. The member would know; she was at the screening of the documentary last week. In respect of that, there has been a number of papers written on communications we have received from various members of the stolen generation. We have looked at the issue from many angles; however, recently we had a stolen wages action settlement, which was the main focus for a considerable period of time. We reached a settlement on that, as the member will know, and an apology was made in Parliament. That is all I have to say about the stolen generation at this stage.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Can I confirm that there is no active work being done on policy development for the government as there has been in other states? As I understand it, only Western Australia and Queensland do not have redress schemes. I want to be very clear. Is there any work currently being done in terms of a redress scheme for the stolen generation?

Dr A.D. BUTI: The issue of stolen generation and redress schemes and reconciliation and reparations and so forth are constantly under review and examination by the Aboriginal engagement section of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. Do we have a definitive model? No.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Is there FTE allocated towards working on this policy? It is something that must turn the minds of the department and the minister must be asked regularly. I am trying to understand whether there is a specific allocation within the department that is dealing with this. How is it prioritised? From a stakeholder perspective, how are they engaged on this matter?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I have had a number of meetings with Jim Morrison and a number of other members of the stolen generation group. We have discussed various issues on redress and rehabilitation. At times the department has provided me with cross-jurisdictional analysis and other issues about redress.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Is the cross-jurisdictional analysis work being done by the department something that would be shared by government or published? Is there cost or liability that the state government might be open to if that was pursued?

Dr A.D. BUTI: It is not an issue about what we may be liable for; it is looking at what other states have done. Each state is different. When we consider this, we look at what other states have done.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I want to be absolutely clear, minister. Within this department, which is responsible for providing advice to the minister about Aboriginal affairs, is there dedicated FTE or resource for stolen generation policy development or response from the government?

Dr A.D. BUTI: No additional FTEs have been appointed to look purely at the stolen generation; however, the Aboriginal engagement team looks at this issue at various times. Sometimes more than one person will look at it.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Does the minister anticipate that this will be an area of priority going forward across these forward estimates?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I am not in a position to say that. I am the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs at the moment. What happens in 2025 and beyond is something that will have to be contemplated then. It is not in this budget and I am not going to commit to something when I may not be the minister. The government has to decide who the minister will be in 2025.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I refer to last year's referendum and the Voice to Parliament. I also refer to previous commentary from the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs that the state would be implementing its own legislative advisory committee—this was when Ben Wyatt was minister, at the beginning of the term. Following on from the referendum—I understand that conversation was usurped by the national conversation—we now have an outcome in which that was not delivered. Is this something that the state government is considering in terms of a state Voice to Parliament, akin to models that have been developed and introduced in other states?

Dr A.D. BUTI: A voice in the terms that the member has described is not being contemplated by this government; however, we do have under legislation the Aboriginal Advisory Council of Western Australia. It was established under the Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority Act 1972, and it currently advises the Western Australian government and me as a minister on matters affecting Aboriginal Western Australians. It has been very important in providing advice. Ministers across other portfolios also meet with the advisory council, which is a legislative advisory council.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Is that advisory council funded from this budget, through this line item?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Yes.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I have a further question to that. Does the advisory council only respond to issues that the minister or the government raise or is it a two-way conversation? Can it raise issues with the minister, and how is that information communicated?

Dr A.D. BUTI: It is a two-way scenario. The council raises issues that it thinks are important and I raise issues with the council. It is one of four statutory bodies that report to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs under the Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority Act and it provides feedback, advice and guidance to government on a range of policy matters relating to Aboriginal Western Australians. It is intended to support Aboriginal people and communities to be empowered to live good lives and choose their own futures from a secure foundation. I can assure the member that between us we have robust and frank discussions. We have made a commitment of \$400 000 over four years to help strengthen the council's strategic coordination and policy development. It is supported by a secretariat through the department's Aboriginal engagement directorate.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Is the \$400 000 across the forward estimates?

Dr A.D. BUTI: That is correct.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Is the advice provided to government published publicly? Are there communiqués made public for the community?

Dr A.D. BUTI: We do communiqués; yes. Obviously, we have discussions that are confidential, but we do produce communiqués.

[5.00 pm]

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Was the \$400 000 across the forward estimates, or per year?

Dr A.D. BUTI: The forward estimates.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Is that the total amount?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Yes.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Just one final question on that, just so I am clear. In the context of the referendum and the discussions we had as a nation around the Voice, is this the body that Western Australia has chosen to utilise as opposed to setting up a state Voice to Parliament? Has that been ruled out by this government?

Dr A.D. BUTI: It is not that it has been ruled out, because it has never been ruled in.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Sorry, say that again?

Dr A.D. BUTI: It has never been ruled out because it has never been ruled in. It has not been contemplated. This is the longstanding body that advises government. The people of Western Australia and Australia spoke last year. Although people might have wanted a different result, that is what was decided and there is no contemplation of a Voice as I sit here today.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Is there no work being done within the unit on a Voice from a state perspective?

Dr A.D. BUTI: No, but there is a review of the Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority Act taking place, which may result in some changes to the way the council works, but not with regard to the Voice, as such.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I refer to the table at the bottom of page 68 of budget paper No 2, volume 1, “Details of Controlled Grants and Subsidies” and the line item “Aboriginal Empowerment Unit Grants”. Could the minister —

Dr A.D. BUTI: It is “Engagement Unit”. Is that the one the member is looking at?

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Sorry, yes. Dyslexic! It is the “Aboriginal Engagement Unit Grants”. Could the minister provide an outline of what the grants are, who the intended recipients are and how they are being administered?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Okay; there are a number. There is the land and equity fund for the Indigenous land use agreement with the south west native title settlement; the Noongar land fund; the exploration incentive grants ILUA; the Plan for Our Parks; Yawuru strategic development; the Dampier Peninsula project; the Martuwarra Fitzroy River Council; Aboriginal community-controlled peak body; Reconciliation WA; and the Wellington Dam mural in Collie. These are not all mine—or are they? Yes, they are all mine. There is also the Kimberley youth and community justice response; the remote communities fund; the COVID-19 crisis relief fund; native title negotiations, litigation and implementation; the Collie art trail; the broader Bidadanga initial works ILUA; the Closing the Gap data project; the Mirning people part B area ILUA; unallocated grants and donations; and proposed budget adjustments for 2023–24. Then there are a couple of other projects—the inaugural Yajilarra dialogues, south west settlements and DPC special projects.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Are these grants that are issued in rounds or are they on application and how are they administered?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Some work on rounds or grants, like the Aboriginal community-controlled organisation strategies; some are just related to ILUAs or special projects and might be one-offs.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Is that a global amount?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Yes.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Is there anywhere we could find detail, apart from what the minister has just read, which did not denote the amounts? Is there anywhere we might find how that has been administered, how much has been issued and who it has gone to, publicly? Or could I have it via supplementary information?

Dr A.D. BUTI: The question is about the internal operating budget. The global amount is public, but not the internal breakdowns.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Is there no list of individual amounts that have been provided to the recipients? That seems odd, I think.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I cannot see any reason why we cannot provide that. Although I do not want to provide supplementary information, there is always an exception to the rule and we will provide that as supplementary information.

The CHAIR: Does the minister agree to provide supplementary information; and, if so, can he please state exactly what information will be provided?

Dr A.D. BUTI: It will be a breakdown of the Aboriginal Engagement Unit grants for 2024–25. I will just do it now. This is for the 2024–25 budget year. The land and equity fund ILUA, \$1.4 million; exploration incentive grants ILUA, \$250 000; Dampier Peninsula project, \$295 000; Aboriginal community-controlled peak body, \$1.525 million; Reconciliation WA funding, \$265 000; and native title negotiation, litigation and implementation, \$2.75 million.

That is it; that is all I have. We do not need to worry about supplementary information; I have just provided it.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I refer to page 72 of budget paper No 2, volume 1 and the special purpose account. Can the minister confirm that this is administered by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I will ask Ms Hunt to answer this question.

Ms F. Hunt: That is correct. The department administers the fund. It is held within a special purpose account, but to actually draw down from the fund, the department requires administrative invoices from other agencies—in this case, the Department of Energy, Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: What are the parameters for receiving grants? What are they actually waiving? When I read the description, they are prepared to endorse a government ILUA for the purpose of expediting procedures for the grant of exploration and prospecting licences, which I understand. What are the parameters for actually accessing it?

Dr A.D. BUTI: The account is provided to act as a financial incentive to native title holders who are prepared to endorse government ILUAs for the purpose of expediting procedures for the grant of exploration and

prospecting licences, and low-impact activities in areas where native title rights are recognised. The assessment will be made on whether the native title holders should be provided with this financial incentive for the purpose of expediting procedures.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Are there guidelines in terms of the disbursement of those funds that the department works with?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I will ask Ms Hunt to answer this.

Ms F. Hunt: We do not hold the underlying administration of the statistics for actually calculating payments; we are reliant on the Department of Energy, Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety to provide that information to us. We are essentially the administrators of the account. I am sure there are guidelines and parameters; they would sit with the department that provides us with the invoices and then the department expends —

[5.10 pm]

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Just for clarity, the Department of Energy, Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety is responsible for actually qualifying the native title party that signed off on an Indigenous land use agreement; this is just a transactional account, so there is no gatekeeping done by your department?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I will allow Ms Hunt to add. We provide the administration of the fund, but the actual determination is calculated annually by the Department of Energy, Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety. Ms Hunt might want to add to that.

Ms F. Hunt: That is correct. We administer the fund. We do not gatekeep the fund.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I refer to page 60 and significant issues impacting the agency, paragraph 1, “Aboriginal Affairs and Native Title Agreements”, which refers to resolving —

... matters by agreement wherever possible, which generates improved social and economic outcomes ...

I refer to the Djarindjin Aboriginal Corporation and its wish to transfer its houses from the Aboriginal Lands Trust to conditional freehold. I understand that the corporation has been in contact with the Leader of the Opposition, Shane Love, and through the member for Kimberley, because this is a Broome community. Is there any update about this particular corporation and its correspondence with the state government?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I think that the member may be referring to the Aboriginal Lands Trust state lands or properties, and that is administered through the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: That is not within this section?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Yes.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: That is fine.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I refer to page 71 of budget paper No 2, volume 1, and the expenses for the south west native title settlement and the Yamatji ILUA. Are there ongoing expenses associated with that settlement; and, if so, what is the extent of those commitments?

Dr A.D. BUTI: There are ongoing expenses. I will ask Ms Hunt if she can maybe provide further information.

Ms F. Hunt: The member asked about the south west settlement, so I will start with that one. In terms of committed expenses into the out years, the Noongar land fund specifically provides for \$46.8 million over 10 years. Obviously, there is a long-term commitment there to —

Dr D.J. HONEY: Sorry; how many dollars?

Ms F. Hunt: It is \$46.85 million over 10 years. We can see that reflected in the income and expenses side of the administered transactions. That is to support the Noongar regional corporations for joint land management and heritage projects. Obviously, within the settlement itself, there is an annualised payment over 12 years for the compensation agreement; some \$60 million or \$70 million will be paid over the next 10 years, so that is obviously money that has flowed through the accounts into the out years. Would the member like me to reference the Yamatji ILUA?

Dr D.J. HONEY: Yes, please.

Ms F. Hunt: The first payment under the Yamatji ILUA was made to the charitable trust in June 2021, and that is a 15-year agreement, so payments will flow through to the Yamatji Southern Regional Corporation over the next 15 years on an agreement schedule that is calculated and paid annually by the department for a range of objectives.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I will try this question; the minister might send me to division 43. In relation to the land transfer under the Noongar land estate and the delivery of the 320 000 hectares under the settlement, can the minister provide an update on how many hectares have been settled, or does that come under division 43?

Dr A.D. BUTI: If the member is talking about the specific land transfer, that is under the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: That is fine; I will go there.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I refer to page 60, under spending changes, about a quarter of the way up, the native title negotiation and implementation. There are some ongoing sums there. Obviously, the south west settlement has been resolved; as I understand it, the Yamatji midwest settlement has been resolved. Can the minister please tell me what those additional sums are for in relation to the native title negotiation and implementation?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I think that Western Australia has about 54 per cent of all the nation's native title determinations. That is what that figure involves. We are dealing with over 100 determinations. A lot of work has been put into that. That is what that budget figure relates to. If the member wants, we could go through the whole list, but we would be here until tomorrow. Actually, I do not have the whole list with me, anyway!

The Western Australian government owes as yet undetermined compensation liability to over 60 native title groups across the state, and the government has committed to resolve those claims by agreement; therefore, as part of that, there is recurrent appropriation of \$6.466 million over the forward estimates for eight FTE, including on-costs in the department's native title team, which will provide for an executive director, a dedicated policy unit, a dedicated engagement team, and redeploying of existing FTEs to native title negotiations to support the resolution of existing and anticipated claims; \$2.325 million in supplies to services funding to support ongoing responses to native title litigation; and \$5 million in funding over three years to be allocated to replenishing the department's land and equity fund, which is required for ongoing support and native title negotiations. Existing funding of \$0.75 million will be carried over and repurposed to fund native title negotiations. As I said, we want to reach agreement, because we do not want every single one to have to go through a court process.

The appropriation was recommended.

Division 43: Planning, Lands and Heritage — Service 4, Aboriginal Affairs —

Mrs L.A. Munday, Chair.

Dr A.D. Buti, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.

Mr A. Kannis, Director General.

Mr V. Davies, Assistant Director General, Heritage and Property Services.

Mr M. Darcey, Assistant Director General, Land Use Management.

Ms S. Cardenia, Assistant Director General, Business and Corporate Services.

Ms C. Hay, Chief Finance Officer.

Mr S. Hayden, Principal Policy Adviser.

[Witnesses introduced.]

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Are there any questions?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Before we start, I hope that we can have at least 15 minutes at the end for the multicultural part of the department—20 is even better. Also, member, I have just been informed by the director general, rightly so, that the south west land settlement and lands issues are dealt with by the Minister for Lands. It is not me who deals with that aspect.

[5.20 pm]

The CHAIR: Thank you. We are dealing with division 43, service 4. Are there any questions?

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I had a question, but I got called out for asking the minister wearing a different hat.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I might be able to help out a little bit, but do remember that it is another portfolio.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: It is on page 719, but it is under "Economic Diversification", so it is hard to understand where that fits. I am glad the minister has clarified that, and we will see whether we can ask the Minister for Lands. I am looking for an update in general about the land transfer because it is a big estate and, obviously, my electorate has a lot of local governments and we get asked those questions regularly across the Agricultural Region, in particular.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I think it would be better to ask the Minister for Lands.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: We should ask the Minister for Lands? Okay. Thank you, minister. I appreciate the clarification. Perhaps we will go to page 719, under “Protecting and Managing Aboriginal Heritage”, and paragraph 8, which is the implementation of an amended Aboriginal Heritage Act. I ask the minister whether there has been any review. In working through the implementation of the current legislation, has any work been done by the department to review the costs and impact?

[Interruption.]

Ms M.J. DAVIES: What is that noise?

Dr A.D. BUTI: It is a bell.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: It is not an alarm of any kind? No? Okay; we will keep going. We will leave when smoke is billowing from somewhere.

Given this is the responsible department for the rollout of that legislation, was there any review of the costings and the spend on the failed legislation, and were any learnings taken from that engagement process to make sure that we do not have a repeat now or in the future?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I am not sure how to answer that question. Anyway, the breakdown of the costs involved in the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2021 was a question on notice in the upper house.

[Interruption.]

Dr A.D. BUTI: What the hell is going on?

From 2017 to 2023, consultation costs were just under \$179 000 in 2017–18; in 2018–19, they were \$561 534; in 2019–20, they were \$246 877; in 2020–21, they were \$423 435; in 2021–22, they were \$495 874; and in 2022–23, they were \$890 920. Considerable consultation was done under the proposed 2021 act. The consultation process was used to frame the act but, obviously, as we know, the act was then repealed due to concerns. Have we learned? I think there has been general agreement about the amendments that were made to the 1972 act. The department constantly monitors the way the act is proceeding. I have not received any information that the act is not proceeding as it was intended, including from various stakeholders who wanted the proposed changes. I should also add that we have now instigated a capacity-building process for native title groups and also for the surveying process. I am not sure whether that answers the member’s question.

The CHAIR: Are there any further questions on that one?

Ms M.J. DAVIES: No. That is all right; I will come back.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Minister, this is further to the last question I asked before. On page 721, halfway down the page, we have the “Number of leases or divestments of Aboriginal Lands Trust estate land to direct Aboriginal control”. I understand that the Djarindjin Aboriginal Corporation has corresponded with the member for Kimberley and with Shane Love, Leader of the Opposition, wanting to have those lands and houses transferred into its name. Is there any progress update on that?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I will ask Mr Darcey to answer that.

Mr M. Darcey: We are aware that Djarindjin desires to get tenure for the houses in the community. The process is challenged by the need to get native title holder consent for that sort of transfer, and the team is working on that now.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: The team is working on a potential transfer to that group so that they will have direct control of the land and the houses there.

Mr M. Darcey: There is broad desire to divest the Aboriginal Lands Trust estate. If it suits the inhabitants, they can make the lease work, and we can get the prescribed body corporate across the line, then absolutely.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Can I just add to that? The government made the commitment back in 2017 and we still work towards that. Interestingly, though, earlier in the year when this was reported in a certain newspaper—it was not the member for Roe; I think it was a bipartisan approach—there seemed to suddenly be a sensational journalism response to that, which was very disappointing. I think we all agree that we can improve the economic outcomes for Aboriginal people if they have a greater say in owning their lands and being able to use that land for diversification and business opportunities.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: My understanding, minister, is that some of those houses are over 30 years old now and are in dire need of repair. Is that being treated as a matter of urgency as well?

Dr A.D. BUTI: In any discussion on whether land will be divested, all those things are very much considered.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Further to the advice we were just given, could I understand the relationship of that transfer? As I understand it, it is within the purveyance of the minister to do that transfer and native title negotiations. What is the involvement of native title negotiations in that process? Is that effectively a community engagement process or is it, in fact, a legal requirement that if the government is going to transfer land from Aboriginal Lands Trust land to freehold, it requires an Indigenous land use agreement, in effect, to do that?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I will ask Mr Darcey.

Mr M. Darcey: Under the legislation, the ALT or the trust is required to consult with all Aboriginal inhabitants, whether they are native title parties or people living in the community. Djarindjin is on four separate ALT reserves, and it is right adjacent to Lombadina, so there are lots of complications and lots of Aboriginal people from different areas. That is part of the process that the Aboriginal Lands Trust needs to go through.

[5.30 pm]

Dr D.J. HONEY: Just to clarify, I understood that it is consultation as opposed to some legal agreement as such.

Mr M. Darcey: That is correct. It is consultation, but it also relates to any risks on the land, such as contamination clean-ups, rubbish tips et cetera. My experience is that communities do not want to take land that is severely constrained, and that is part of the process that we work through.

Dr D.J. HONEY: That is very clear; thank you.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: On that point, I get regular correspondence in my office about the Northam reserve, and over the course of me being the local member, I have been consistently pushed on this matter between various government departments. I would really appreciate a briefing on the progress that has been made on the Northam reserve from the person who is in charge of leading those negotiations. I know that the Shire of Northam is engaged but frustrated, as are community members. As far as I can see, this is a health and safety issue for me at the moment rather than a development opportunity.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Would the member like to have a briefing?

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I would very much appreciate a briefing.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I can assure the member that we will do that very soon.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Thank you.

Mr Y. MUBARAKAI: I refer the minister to spending changes on page 178 of volume 2 of budget paper No 2.

The CHAIR: Sorry; which page number?

Mr Y. MUBARAKAI: Sorry; it is page 718. I, too, could be dyslexic. Can the minister provide some information about the capacity-building program and training that could be available for Aboriginal people? Does the current budget contain any allocations for this program and are any native title bodies interested in engaging in this program?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I thank the member for his question. Yes, we are engaged in and have allocated \$8 million annually for a native title party capacity-building program. It commenced in 2023–24 and will continue over the forward estimates to 30 June 2027. The capacity-building program will provide funding to up to 93 eligible native title parties, as defined in the amended Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972. It will build their capacity and increase their capability to engage with industry and government, consistent with consultation policy and the section 18 process, and it will work in conjunction with the government's heritage survey program to support the recording, protection and management of their cultural heritage and improve communications and relationships between native title parties and industry.

The funding program reflects the long-held views of Aboriginal organisations about the need for greater support, and it incorporates feedback from the Aboriginal heritage forum for native title parties held by the department in March this year. We have also invested in the development of a bespoke certificate III TAFE course for the on-country management of Aboriginal heritage. In the coming weeks, we will launch a pilot program partnering with South Regional TAFE to deliver a certificate III course to assist managers of country to meet their obligations under the 1972 act and improve the identification and management of Aboriginal cultural heritage across Western Australia.

Applications are now open from eligible native title parties for the capacity-building program. In the last few weeks, we have received six applications and we are assisting another eight that are currently in draft. The program incorporates a payment and reporting schedule. I can also confirm that the department has officers in the regions directly promoting, supporting and liaising with native title parties to support their applications. The department is also actively engaged with Central Desert Native Title Services, Native Title Services Goldfields and the Kimberley Land Council to support the distribution of funding to the native title parties for each of those prescribed bodies corporate. I encourage members opposite to encourage prescribed bodies corporate in their electorates or regions to apply for funding under this capacity-building program.

Mr Y. MUBARAKAI: Thank you.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I refer to the 10-year heritage survey program outlined in the sixth paragraph on page 719. I note that it commenced this year. Is the minister able to provide a list of the areas that will be prioritised for the forward estimates period? My understanding is that it is done only on an annual basis. Is there some guidance on where the priority areas will be and what will be done in the first, second, third and fourth years?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I do not think I have specific information about that at this stage. I think that the department is still discussing the priority areas with various stakeholders, Aboriginal groups, government and others, and it will make an assessment in line with those discussions. One thing I will say is that if a landowner does not consent to their land being surveyed under this program, it will not be surveyed. When section 18 consent has been granted, they might have to do a survey in any case.

In respect of prioritisation, we have made some general statements that we will be looking at areas that have not been surveyed that we think may be of major interest possibly for future development or even a current development, and those lands for which people have come to us seeking to have a survey done, but at this stage the department does not have prioritised areas noted down.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Was the last part of the minister's comments that the department will have that list?

Dr A.D. BUTI: No, sorry; it does not have that list. It is still being worked on. At the moment, if a party comes to us wanting to have its land surveyed, it will be strongly considered, but the prioritising of certain areas has not been worked out yet.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: This paragraph states that the program will commence in 2024.

Dr A.D. BUTI: It will commence, yes. If someone comes to us now and wants to have their land surveyed, it will be surveyed by the government. At the moment that is not the case, but under this program it will happen. We hope that in the coming months we will have prioritised the areas.

Mr G. BAKER: I am interested in the line item "Election Commitment—Divestment of the Aboriginal Lands Trust Estate" in the table of spending changes on page 718. Can the minister update the committee on the general progress of the Aboriginal Lands Trust divestment program to transfer the ALT estate into direct ownership of Aboriginal people as per the election commitment?

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Come on! We have had that conversation and we have already been told that we need to have advisers from the Office of Multicultural Interests in 15 minutes. We have just had a discussion about the divestment of the ALT estate.

The CHAIR: I will ask the minister to respond as quickly as he likes.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I will not take very long.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I will not take any criticism if we do not get to multicultural interests because the minister has members asking Dorothy Dixers.

The CHAIR: Thanks, minister.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I will take less than a minute if the member allows me to speak. It has been a very good estimates so far.

The divestment of the ALT estate is a commitment going back to 2017 and we approved \$10.3 million in funding from 2024–25 to 2027–28 to continue the program. That is progressing and we hope it will continue to progress. As I said, I was surprised by certain disquiet earlier in the year when it had basically been a bipartisan approach.

The appropriation was recommended.

Division 36: Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries — Service 2, Citizenship and Multicultural Interests —

Mrs M.R. Marshall, Chair.

Dr A.D. Buti, Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests.

Ms L. Chopping, Director General.

Ms E. Gauntlett, Deputy Director General.

Mr J. Jegasothy, Executive Director, Citizenship and Multicultural Services.

Ms L. Kalasopatan, Executive Director, Finance.

Mr S. Padshah, Principal Policy Adviser.

[Witnesses introduced.]

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

A minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee. I will ask the minister in that instance to clearly indicate what information they agree to provide and will then allocate a reference number. Supplementary information should be provided to the principal clerk by noon on Friday, 31 May 2024. If a minister suggests that a question be put on notice, members should use the online questions on notice system to submit those questions.

Are there any questions?

[5.40 pm]

Dr D.J. HONEY: At the outset, can I say what a pleasure it is to see the Office of Multicultural Interests here at estimates. We knew it would miss out if we did not ask questions. I will go straight to page 540 and the table at the top. I am looking at the increase in FTE. We have gone from 28 to 37, and 38 are planned. I see the explanation in note 2, but it is a bit vague in terms of where those functions are going to. The note refers to statutory requirements, enhanced governance, improved performance and increased service delivery capacity. In those categories, where are those numbers going, please?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I will ask the director general to answer this question.

Ms L. Chopping: Thanks, minister. Thanks, chair. Thanks, member. In terms of the direct FTE going into the Office of Multicultural Interests, we have a difference of six FTE. Those are the ones who are directly doing the work. That work predominantly relates to the work to facilitate the increase in the multicultural grants programs of which a number of new programs are announced in this budget. It will also go towards expanded communications support for multicultural interests, and then more generally across the organisation there will be some enhancements in governance, accountability, legal and audit requirements, compliance, human resources and finance.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I just want to be clear: is the majority—four or so—going towards grants and the rest is going to those other administrative aspects or something of that order?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Director general.

Ms L. Chopping: I am advised that three are direct and three are indirect. Therefore, three are going towards the grant program and administration directly within the Office of Multicultural Interests, and three are indirect and will be for the other services that I described.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I have another question—a new question. Sorry; I will get it right. By Thursday, I will be a dab hand at this, chair. Thank you very much.

In relation to the grants, it is obviously quite a significant amount of money.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Where are we looking?

Dr D.J. HONEY: I refer to budget paper No 2, page 540. If we look at the cost of service in the table at the top of the page, it is a significant amount. Can the minister describe the programs that are primarily being funded out of that fund for the next financial year? Sorry, minister. Just to be clear, in note 1 it says “the CaLD Community Capital Works Fund” for 2024. Perhaps we could look at this.

Dr A.D. BUTI: This has been an incredibly successful grant program. It is basically a commitment of our government to support and promote multiculturalism. It is important that multicultural groups have a facility to engage in their various activities and meetings. A long list of grants have been awarded in the city and the regions. If the member likes, rather than me reading them all out, which I am sure the member does not really want me to do, there are 35 grants totalling \$5.467 million in 2023–24 in the city and the regions. I am not sure what else I can say, but I can say that it has been very successful. If the member has a chance to go and view some of these clubs and what these grants will be utilised for, he will see they are very worthwhile. There are some in his electorate, too.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I am happy for the minister to provide me with the list.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Yes. I can provide the member with the list. It is already in *Hansard*, in answer to a parliamentary question. As it is in *Hansard*, I do not think I need to provide it as supplementary information, but I can always just provide it to the member later.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Thank you, minister. I am grateful for that.

In relation to that, firstly, how do organisations know to apply for those grants? Secondly, how are other recipients chosen? Thirdly, what process is used to select the recipients and obviously the quantum for those individual projects?

Dr A.D. BUTI: The grants have been advertised on the OMI website, various multicultural media outlets and the various other ways that communication happens in culturally and linguistically diverse communities. I think the member wanted to ask about the criteria. Is that correct?

Dr D.J. HONEY: Yes; and how are they selected?

Dr A.D. BUTI: To be an eligible applicant for one of these grants, one must demonstrate that one is a CALD community association or community service organisation specifically established to provide services or

advocacy for CALD communities; a not-for-profit organisation or community association incorporated under the Associations Incorporation Act 2015; and is based in WA. Applicants for the fund must demonstrate the project's purpose in the application through an outline of how the project will create opportunities for Western Australian business operators and the building and construction sector workforce; how it is clearly connected with the purpose of the venue; how it improves the facility building so it has the capacity and effectiveness to deliver community activities; and how it encourages increased use from patrons.

Applications must demonstrate that the organisation has the ability to complete the project, through evidence of adequate research and planning, having obtained, or be in the process of obtaining, appropriate planning approvals, sound project planning, risk management and realistic budgeting, and that all the works will be carried out by qualified and licensed professionals. Applications are also assessed against the extent to which they improve physical accessibility to the building and its amenities for people with disability; building safety and security; the ability of the facility building to be multipurpose; and how it incorporates sustainable initiatives, such as water and energy saving. Applications must demonstrate that the project has a suitable plan for the ongoing maintenance of the capital works. I think that probably covers it. I might ask the DG to add to that.

[5.50 pm]

Ms L. Chopping: The assessment is undertaken by an officer from the Office of Multicultural Interests who has experience with the multicultural community; and a representative from the department's infrastructure area, which works across a range of grant programs, including the community sporting and recreation facilities fund, so has the infrastructure nous to be able to assess business cases et cetera. The current round will have a representative from Lotterywest, which also deals with a lot of these types of applications, and a representative from the Department of Communities. They will assess grant applications in accordance with the criteria and then make recommendations up the line for funding.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Thank you for that explanation. I have a corollary question, if you like. What is the transparency of that process, in particular, if an organisation is unhappy with the outcome and it does not believe it has been assessed? I am not heading down the path of any particular organisation, but I have heard organisations say that they are disappointed they did not get a grant or the like. What is the transparency of that selection process in terms of why organisations did or did not get a grant and, more particularly, is there an opportunity for organisations to appeal a decision, particularly if it goes against them?

Dr A.D. BUTI: If an organisation is unhappy about being rejected, it can write to the minister. I would normally refer the matter to OMI and the department to examine the grievance. If I need further explanation or clarification on why it was rejected, that would be provided. The department and OMI would also offer feedback to the applicant about why the organisation was not successful and maybe point out how it was deficient in its application so if it applies another time, it may have a better chance.

Dr D.J. HONEY: In relation to that area, one of the things that I have had the pleasure to observe is the synergy between our local communities and engagement with other countries. India in particular stands out as an exemplar but I think it is also true across other communities. It is obviously good for the communities, but I think there is a benefit to the state overall. Is there any specific overseas outreach function within the department or is that simply a by-product of the work that the department does?

Dr A.D. BUTI: There is outreach and it is not only done by OMI and the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries, but the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation is also often involved. We also have the CALD global connections through the local events initiative, which is used to diversify and strengthen the WA economy by harnessing the capabilities and networks of WA CALD communities to deliver large-scale international focus on business and cultural festivals. Those festivals align with the state government's goal of providing genuine opportunities for WA CALD communities to contribute to the economic and cultural diversity of the state.

Dr D.J. HONEY: In relation to that, I note in the "Spending Changes" table a \$2.372 million increase in 2024–25. That is a pretty significant jump in funding. What is that funding for? It is on page 532 as a spending change.

Dr A.D. BUTI: It is a new enhanced version of our global connection, trying to support our CALD communities but in an economic way to have better diversification of economic opportunities and investment for Western Australia by using our CALD communities with their linkages to overseas countries. It will focus on festivals. Some examples of festivals that have been successful in the past include the 2019 Perth Chung Wah Cultural Festival, which was attended by 20 000 people, including 32 international sports industry delegates from numerous countries. The 2019 Africa Week event resulted in international delegates connecting with local businesses and electing to invest a minimum of \$3.7 million in real estate development and land acquisition. The annual Perth Diwali Mela festival organised by the Indian Society of Western Australia in collaboration with 110 Indian community associations and businesses engaged with popular Indian celebrities and performers. The Australian Arab Association Arab festival saw delegates from the United Arab Emirates explore potential investment in the camel meat processing industry of Western Australia. These are ways in which we can celebrate our CALD communities but with an economic benefit.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Obviously, that funding was allocated for 2024–25 but no additional funding has been allocated going forward. Is that simply because the projects are identified 12 months in advance or is there something special about 2024–25?

Dr A.D. BUTI: OMI and the department want to consider the efficacy of projects and how effective they are. I am sure they will come back to the minister and the government to look at further funding. I anticipate that it will be very successful.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I turn to the explanation of significant movements on page 540 of budget paper No 2. The third note states —

The reduction ... to the ...Estimated Actual is largely due to provision of Overseas Humanitarian Aid in Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Ukraine in 2022–23.

How does the office determine where it will make donations or where it will not make donations? Is that done as a direction of government? I am not averse to that; it is the government's role to direct things. Or does the department itself make an assessment to determine who should get a donation?

Dr A.D. BUTI: The department and the office will provide advice if requested, and the government will make a decision. With regards to those specific issues, I understand that it was the decision of the previous Premier.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Just to be clear, it was a ministerial direction. As I said, I am not averse to a ministerial direction; it is appropriate that ministers make directions from time to time.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I am not saying that it was a direction; it was a decision. We were not directing the department. The department provides advice. These are government decisions. It was not a direction made to a department.

Dr D.J. HONEY: It was not a written decision; it was a suggestion.

Dr A.D. BUTI: It was a decision. In the end, decisions on these sorts of matters are always made by government.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I turn to the service summary table on page 537 and the line item “Office of Multicultural Interests”. Going out in the forward estimates, we see that funding has increased quite significantly, up to almost \$19.8 million this year, but then we see a dramatic reduction in the out years. Can the minister explain why there is such a dramatic reduction for the department in the out years?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I will ask the director general to respond.

Ms L. Chopping: Given the time that is about to elapse, I will be brief. The department has undertaken a range of new initiatives over the last couple of years to improve its ability to be able to deliver capital programs, grant programs, policy work, across-government coordination of over 60 different projects and initiatives plus the compliance, human resources, Auditor General and remediation of things like the royal commission. As such, we have gone from having a salary underspend in 2020–21 when we were unable to attract sufficient staff to having a need for an uplift in terms of resources and FTE. An uplift has been given for this year and next year. During that time, a review will be undertaken with the Department of Treasury to determine what the resourcing should be going forward.

The appropriation was recommended.

Meeting suspended from 6.00 to 7.00 pm

Division 14: Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation — Services 1, International Education —

Ms M.M. Quirk, Chair.

Mr D.A. Templeman, Minister for International Education.

Ms R. Brown, Director General, Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation.

Ms S. Spencer, Deputy Director General.

Mr R. Sansalone, Chief Financial Officer.

Ms K. Kelleher, Acting Executive Director, Service Delivery.

Mr A. King, Executive Director, Strategic Policy.

Ms M. Shimmin, Program Director.

Ms L. Rodgers, Director General, Department of Education.

Ms P. Moss, Director, Department of Education.

Ms P. Beamish Burton, Executive Director, Finance and Commercial Services, Department of Education.

Ms J. Healy, Executive Director, School Curriculum and Standards Authority.

Ms K. Ho, Director General, Department of Training and Workforce Development.

Ms R. Trotter, Acting Chief Finance Officer, Department of Training and Workforce Development.

[Witnesses introduced.]

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

A minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee. I will ask the minister to clearly indicate what information they agree to provide and will then allocate a reference number. Supplementary information should be provided to the principal clerk by noon on Friday, 31 May 2024. If a minister suggests that a matter be put on notice, members should use the online questions on notice system to submit their questions.

I give the call to the member for Roe.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Welcome to our cast of thousands over there. Hopefully we will not hold you up for too long tonight. My first question on division 14 is on the line item “International Education” under the heading “Ongoing Initiatives” on page 194. Last year, the funding in this line item went from \$8.9 million in 2023–24 to \$3.4 million this financial year. This year’s budget shows an even more dramatic fall from \$1.85 million to \$100 000 in the following year. Can the minister explain the reduction in funding to nothing by 2026–27, given that the minister is such an advocate for international education?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I thank the member for the question. As the member would be well aware, post the 2021 election, the then Premier specifically sought to ensure that our focus would be on international education and increasing our student numbers from the pre-COVID level. That investment included some \$75 million across a range of initiatives that were focused on targeting markets and capturing a share of the international student market for Western Australia. The investment included money for marketing and incentives. Those incentives included student incentive bursaries through to other supports and measures for families, agents and others involved in the sector. We have been very successful. In fact, we have been outstandingly successful. The international student numbers for the sector have increased rapidly. We now have a 7.4 per cent share of the international student market in Western Australia. That is up from the pre-COVID levels of five per cent. That has secured nearly 60 000 enrolments as at February 2024. That investment that focused on lifting the numbers has succeeded, and the government and I are very proud of it.

Following the announcements in this budget and taking into account the circumstances that are evolving with regard to the federal government’s announcements on its migration policy and the potential impact that will have for international students more generally across the country, we will obviously advocate on behalf of Western Australia our continued desire to grow those numbers. However, we are aware of the announcement by the federal government in the budget it handed down last week and of the policy position of the federal opposition, which went further and effectively mentioned targeting international education more broadly. Therefore, we will now pause and closely monitor what impact those policy initiatives will have on the sector. I can assure the member that all the good work we have done still sets us up in a very strong position to maintain our numbers, but of course we do not control migration policy. That has been highlighted by the federal government and also commented upon by the federal opposition.

[7.10 pm]

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: The minister spoke about the federal government’s migration policy. That will no doubt affect future investment and numbers. Has the minister had much interaction with the vice-chancellors about how this will play out in the year ahead?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Yes; in fact, I met with the vice-chancellors this morning. I have a very strong relationship with the vice-chancellors. The policy direction that is coming from Canberra obviously has potential impacts across the sector, including for private providers, those in the vocational and TAFE sector and certainly for universities, and it is of concern. My focus will be on positioning Western Australia according to our strengths. We have developed some very strong relationships in the market. We have a very firm commitment to supporting our students who are here, and that is why some of the initiatives that we funded in the initial boost to international education were focused on student wellbeing and welfare. Of course, that is something we will need to be conscious of.

The \$1.95 million of support in this budget is for, as I said, targeted initiatives, and we will need to watch and monitor very closely the rollout of the federal government’s policy position. From my perspective, Western Australia has some unique circumstances that we will argue deserve consideration by the federal government. We believe that some of the pressures of international student numbers being referred to in other states do not necessarily apply to Western Australia. For example, accommodation is a big issue on the eastern seaboard, but a lot of work has gone into making sure that the students coming onshore have been safely accommodated and supported. We also believe very strongly that our market share is much smaller than that of the eastern seaboard, particularly New South Wales and Melbourne. We see that our market share has opportunities for continued growth that will not impact on some of those pressures being felt on the eastern seaboard.

The measures in this budget are very targeted. I mentioned the \$1.95 million. That is broken down to \$1.5 million to extend our partnership with the WA Technical Vocational Education Training consortium for another year, which is very important work; \$250 000 to attract teachers in areas of shortage; and \$200 000 over two years to grow student enrolments in our public schools. We will put our position very strongly to the federal government. My relationship with the sector is very strong. As I said, I met with the vice-chancellors and representatives from private providers this morning.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I have a further question.

The CHAIR: The minister's answer was very comprehensive, but I discern that we are trespassing into federal policy issues, so if you can just restrict it to what is currently in the budget.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: That is led by the minister!

If the minister is so strongly supportive, why has the amount in the out years for the 2025–26 budget dropped to \$100 000, and what will that \$100 000 pay for?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: To answer the first part of the member's question, I do not want to repeat what I have said, but we are in an interesting situation. We have invested very heavily and the results are outstanding. Student numbers in Western Australia are outstanding. Students have been accommodated in a sustainable way. I happen to believe very strongly that international students make a tremendous contribution to the Western Australian lifestyle, economy and way of life, and we should welcome and support them, as we are. However, through no control of ours, policy levers targeting international students and education have been moved by the federal government and are also mirrored by the federal opposition. The position of the federal opposition is now very clearly known. I need to use this time we have now to manage and articulate the Western Australian circumstances, which I believe have some unique aspects to them, and I will keep doing it. I will also ensure that we are agile and able to respond to the impacts of what we may see from those measures.

I might ask the director general to respond to the question about the specific \$100 000.

Ms R. Brown: The \$100 000 relates to the new initiatives. There is still ongoing funding in the department's budget for international education more generally across a range of areas, including staffing in the department, ongoing baseline funding for StudyPerth, funding of our overseas staff who work to develop the pipeline in our key markets and other programs and initiatives that have been in place and remain enduring.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I refer to paragraph 1.1 under "Diversifying the Western Australian Economy" under "Significant Impacts Impacting the Agency" on page 194 of the *Budget statements*. How is the department driving the development of WA industries when the funding for international education is virtually non-existent?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Of course, I dispute the premise of the member's question. This government has invested record amounts of money into international education. We have established a specific minister responsible, and the work of the first budget has been outstandingly successful because of the investment and the drive from government to continue the diversification of our economy and to recognise that international education plays an important role in that diversification. As an example, when we market the state internationally, international education is part of that suite of marketing elements. When we market the state of Western Australia, be it through the Tourism WA advertising, visitations, delegations or inbound familiarisation activities, that work includes international education because it is a key component of how we market the state. We are marketing the state of Western Australia to the international education sector and parents of young people in the market because we think WA is the best state to come to. We think WA is the safest place to come to study and a vibrant place in which to study and learn. We also believe that we have some outstanding institutions and training stakeholders that deliver high-quality education. We will keep doing that. The effort on behalf of international education is also integrated into our effort to sell the state to the world.

[7.20 pm]

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: The minister said that he had met some vice-chancellors this morning. Does the department and the minister work with them as a group to bring international students in or is it every man for himself when it comes to the universities competing with each other?

The CHAIR: With many of the vice-chancellors being women, of course.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Is it every man and woman for themselves?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I thank the member for the question. This is all about team WA. Although the campuses and their offerings have particular strengths and they understandably market to those strengths, all of them are on the same page with regard to the marketing of Western Australia. Curtin University knows that when it is marketing its suite of courses internationally or through its international campuses, it is all about Western Australia. It is all about enticing students to come here to study or to study through the university because of the quality of education that is provided, the expertise that is delivered and, indeed, the quality of the experience. The conversations are always very much about team WA. We are fortunate that we have a diversity of university offerings, but it is very much an all-in effort. That is the commitment by everybody.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: The minister is talking about team WA. I go back to the former Premier's decision to have a six-week extension of the COVID scenario.

The CHAIR: Are we still on page 194?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I am on page 194 about driving investment in Western Australia. Does the minister think that Western Australia and our universities have now recovered from the damage that former Premier McGowan did by extending that six-week COVID moratorium, which left students stranded overseas? There was a lot of collateral damage. What is the minister's perception?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Again, I do not support the member's reference to the former Premier doing damage. I remind the member that, during COVID, very important decisions were made by the government to protect Western Australians and people who were living and working in Western Australia. Those decisions were focused primarily on the health and wellbeing of our state's population and those who were living here at the time, and also on ensuring that our economy was robust so that people would be able to continue to be employed. What we saw was a remarkable outcome in terms of our economy. Reference is still made to Western Australia being one of the most robust and effective economies during the COVID period of any economy in the world. That was because of the commitment by the Premier and the government to delivering that to the people of Western Australia, and we continue to reap the benefits of that.

In terms of returning international students to pre-COVID numbers, that is one of the reasons we have invested a record amount of money—\$75 million—which is still being rolled out through ongoing programs, to ensure that this government's commitment to international education is not only embedded, but also enduring. My focus will be on making sure that no matter what might be thrown up by the federal parties, either in government or out of government, Western Australia's case and special circumstances will be well and truly articulated, and clearly articulated, and that WA does not become collateral damage because of some things that might relate more to the circumstances on the eastern seaboard.

Mrs L.M. O'MALLEY: I refer to Western Australia's share of international student enrolments under the outcomes and key effectiveness indicators on page 198 of budget paper No 2. How has the government's record investment of \$75 million over the past few years contributed to international student enrolment numbers?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I thank the member for the question. I have answered this question in part, but I want to give the example of the Asia-Pacific Association for International Education conference, which was held here recently. Through the department, we attracted that conference to Western Australia—I think it was the first time it had been held here and only the second or third time it had been held in Australia, from memory. It was very significant. That brought several hundred delegates to Western Australia from all around the world, including people from universities, agents, private providers and people involved in international education at the government level. It was the first time that many of those people had come to Perth, and one of the reasons they came was the interest this state has demonstrated in genuinely including international education as a key plank of our economy. We have had a couple of other important conferences of a similar nature. That highlights that whilst this is a very competitive sector—there is no doubt about that—we believe we have some specific assets or advantages that we are marketing. We are doing that through the Walking on a Dream campaign, the team WA approach to our trade missions et cetera. That has seen the numbers increase. Now, it is about supporting and continuing to support inbound students when they are onshore or those students who might be studying in some of our institutions on campuses in other parts of the world. We are ensuring that our story, our narrative, is strong and robust. We still have room in the market to increase our numbers. What I want to articulate to the federal sphere is that we have capacity.

We believe that Western Australia can be looked at through a different lens as it will not have the same impact on things here as the impacts in other parts of Australia. As the member would be well aware, also underpinning that is that many international students work part time in hospitality and tourism. Many who are studying aged care, for example, work in aged-care facilities, fulfilling important roles as they learn, train and study. That is, of course, a net benefit to Western Australia more broadly. We know that the tourism industry relies a lot on international students to assist in the delivery of tourism and hospitality services. I am very keen to make sure that our story is well heard and listened to while we wait to see what the federal policy levers deliver for us.

The appropriation was recommended.

Division 24: Education — International Education —

[7.30 pm]

Mr P. Lilburne, Chair.

Mr D.A. Templeman, Minister for International Education.

Ms L. Rodgers, Director General, Department of Education.

Ms J. Healy, Executive Director, School Curriculum and Standards Authority.

Ms P. Moss, Director.

Ms R. Trotter, Acting Chief Finance Officer.

Ms P. Beamish Burton, Executive Director, Finance.

Ms K. Kelleher, Acting Executive Director, Service Delivery.

Mr R. Sansalone, Chief Financial Officer.

Ms S. Spencer, Deputy Director General.

Mr A. King, Executive Director, Strategic Policy.

Ms M. Shimmin, Program Director.

Ms R. Brown, Director General, Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation.

Ms K. Ho, Director General, Department of Training and Workforce Development.

The CHAIR: Minister, is it the same advisers?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Yes, we have the same advisers; there is no change.

The CHAIR: All right. I have a statement to make.

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

A minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee. I will ask the minister to clearly indicate what information they agree to provide and will then allocate a reference number. Supplementary information should be provided to the principal clerk by noon on Friday, 31 May 2024. If a minister suggests that a matter be put on notice, members should use the online questions on notice system to submit their questions.

I give the call to the member for Roe.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I refer to page 359 of volume 1 of budget paper No 2 and support to the School Curriculum and Standards Authority. About halfway down the page, paragraph 2 states —

The higher levels of income in the 2023–24 Budget and 2024–25 Budget reflect the continued expansion of the International Education Program.

The income forecast has been revised down due to phased commencement in the number of overseas schools implementing the Western Australian curriculum. Could the minister explain that to me? That has obviously been revised down. How many students or schools have been revised downwards in relation to that?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I thank the member for the question. Obviously, the School Curriculum and Standards Authority has been in place for 37 years, as the member will probably be aware. As of 13 March 2024, 49 overseas schools were approved to implement WA curriculum programs. As of 8 March 2024, there were 1 919 student registrations in the authority's student information system from approved overseas schools under the IEP expansion. Obviously, that breakdown includes registrations in kindergarten to year 10 and years 11 and 12. As of 8 March, the authority was projecting a further 1 575 student registrations in 2023–24 before the end of June this year. There is corresponding information regarding fee collection.

I think the key point here is that this is a carefully phased program that ensures that capacity is delivered, or we are conscious of the capacity of implementation. I will ask Juanita whether she would like to make further comment on that question.

Ms J. Healy: As the minister explained, the School Curriculum and Standards Authority has offered licensing of the WA curriculum from kindergarten to year 12 since 37 years ago. Sunway College in Malaysia was our first school, and that school is still with us. We have had a phased expansion. At the moment, we have schools in about 15 countries, including Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Mauritius, Singapore, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Türkiye and Vietnam, as the minister shared before, with students from kindergarten to year 12. The students in senior secondary and years 11 and 12 undertake exactly the same courses as our students onshore here in WA. They sit the same ATAR course examinations with the same moderation processes. Our kindergarten to year 10 students also use the Western Australian curriculum. Our curriculum is highly valued offshore, and that has been recognised through receiving foreign equivalence in about five countries, including Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Türkiye, where they formally acknowledge the Western Australian curriculum, which obviously gives their students flexibility to come onshore here to our local universities, but the qualifications are also recognised by their local universities.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: The minister might be interested to know that when I went to China on a trip with former Speaker Peter Watson, we actually went to one of the schools that provides the WA curriculum. We got dragged up onto the stage to talk about all sorts of things! It was really interesting to me that the students at that school were actually studying the Western Australian ATAR courses.

My question is: how many staff or FTEs in SCSA or the department in general are involved in administering that program, and is there any way of identifying flow-on effects? Do those students usually eventually come to university in Western Australia? Are there any key performance indicators for that?

The CHAIR: Minister, there are three questions there, but I am sure you can handle it.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Yes. I will make some general comments, and then I might ask the relevant officer to give us some information on staffing numbers, or it might already be magically appearing before me.

There are 13 FTE in SCSA. We can mention the Western Australian Certificate of Education bursary. The most recent figures are that there were 36 applications. Obviously, there is a process that assesses the eligibility of applications. Of those 36 applications, seven were deemed eligible, three applicants received bursary funding and the remaining four applicants' payments are currently being paid as of this week.

To answer the question about the legacy of students studying the Western Australian curriculum and what that means for the potential pipeline of students coming to Australia and particularly to Western Australia, obviously, because it is a Western Australian-identified curriculum, those pathways or connections are very strong. I think that the member was almost asking whether we track numbers. I know that, as an example, the relationship with Sunway College in Malaysia goes back over 30 years. It is a fact that the Western Australian curriculum has been very prominently delivered there. We quite often see students from Malaysia, for example, ultimately seeking to further their studies in Western Australia. Of course, the power of the alumni is forever present and cannot be overestimated, whether they be people who have experienced or studied the Western Australian curriculum and/or ultimately ended up studying in Western Australia. They are the best sellers of the state and, indeed, an important connector for visitors to the state through friends and family. I can assure the member that the benefits are huge. The member has probably already noted the suite of countries that Juanita highlighted. They are strategic to the Western Australian market. A huge raft of them are our neighbours to the north and into the gulf, but we are experiencing interest from other entities, and those assessments are done by staff. We should be very proud of the School Curriculum and Standards Authority's reach and operation. As Juanita said, the Western Australian curriculum is very highly valued and respected.

[7.40 pm]

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Thank you, minister. Is there any tracing or tracking of those students?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I will get Juanita to respond.

Ms J. Healy: We have commenced. As the minister said, we have been working closely with team WA and with our universities, training colleagues and registered training providers to commence looking at the onshore conversion. We also have a range of SCSA associates who have been verified by the School Curriculum and Standards Authority board and with whom we work very closely. Part of their job in working with us and with interested schools to implement the curriculum is working towards the conversion of those students onshore into our universities. We have commenced the development of that. We have about seven active SCSA associates at the moment and that is also a key part of their role when interested schools approach them and then go through to our board to be endorsed.

The appropriation was recommended.

Division 25: Training and Workforce Development — International Education —

Ms M.M. Quirk, Chair.

Mr D.A. Templeman, Minister for International Education.

Ms K. Ho, Director General.

Ms K. Kelleher, Acting Executive Director, Service Delivery.

Ms R. Trotter, Acting Chief Finance Officer.

The CHAIR: I have just been told you will be spared from me reading the spiel because the same advisers are present. I give the call to the member for Roe.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I refer to item 6 on page 384. As outlined in the narration —

Recruitment and Management of International Students involves the marketing of Western Australian TAFE Colleges and public schools offshore and onshore, and managing admissions, compliance and the welfare of international students according to relevant legislation.

How many students does the allocated \$29 million account for in this financial year?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: The international student numbers have gone from 2 106 in 2022–23 to 2 470 in 2023–24 and 3 048 in 2024–25. Those numbers will rise in the out years.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: What strategies are in place for the recruitment and management of international students and how much of the budget is allocated to that?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: An important part of the work of the department is to continue to attract international students into the various courses at our TAFEs, colleges and schools. I have noted that certain course offerings, interestingly enough, see students coming from certain countries. For example, in more recent times in the vocational areas, the number of students from South America has grown. A number of those students come from Colombia, Brazil, Venezuela and Chile and they have been attracted to courses such as hospitality, cookery and aged care. The departmental staff regularly engage with and visit our international markets to create relationships to attract students, which has been very productive and effective. This is an important area for us because we know that some jobs in Australia are well supplemented by not only having international students train here, but also get work experience here.

For example, I have visited a number of TAFE colleges and met with international students who are studying and also working in the aged-care sector, therefore supporting the local economy. In fact, I think we would find in our aged-care sector in Western Australia, and probably other parts of the country, that a significant number of international students are, if you like, holding up those aged-care providers. This underpins why it is important to respect the value of having international students here to not only learn and train, but also support industries in which there is a staff shortage. I am particularly interested in the aged-care sector because, as we know, it has attracted a lot of attention in recent times both through Senate inquiries and the assessment of quality of care. International students get quality training here through our institutions in Western Australia while they study and learn. I shudder to think what would happen in the aged-care sector if we did not have that contribution.

Ms Ho may wish to add to that specifically about the marketing or outreach techniques to gain students. I will ask the director general to respond.

[7.50 pm]

Ms K. Ho: Thank you, minister, and thank you, chair. It is good to explain to members that the role of TAFE International Western Australia, which is a section of the Department of Training and Workforce Development, is to globally market international education and the opportunities that are available through our world-class TAFE colleges and government schools. It is a collaborative single-desk marketing approach, which means that we can work with the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation on its global marketing efforts and leverage off those campaigns about Western Australia being the place to live, work and study. We efficiently go out to the global market through marketing activities, some of which are offshore, such as going to student fairs and working with agents. Some of those are, as the minister said earlier, famils designed to bring education agents to look at our education and training offerings here in Western Australia. We work with education agents. Part of our work is making sure that they know what is being offered in Western Australia and the quality and standard of the available training. There was a specific question about what part of our budget might be devoted to marketing activities. It is in the vicinity of 10 per cent.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Of the 51 FTE employees, how many are solely responsible for the welfare of international students, and what does that involve?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I will ask the director general to respond.

Ms K. Ho: The 51 FTE are slightly more than the numbers at TAFE International WA because they reflect overheads in the department as well. Two or three FTE are solely responsible for the welfare of students. We have some particular responsibilities for school students who are under 18 years of age.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Does housing come into the welfare of students? How is the department managing the lack of affordable housing? Are any international students couch surfing or homeless?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Effectively, when students come onshore, the expectation and reality is that their accommodation needs have been provided. There are various avenues. Most students under the age of 18 have family networks within the metropolitan area or wherever they are living. A lot of those students live with family, as they should, because an adult must be responsible for them. Many students over the age of 18 stay with family. The diaspora plays an important role in accommodating many students. The use of family connections is important in that context. We supported a reinvigoration of the home-host program because it alleviated the need to compete in the rental market. A significant number of students are accommodated through the home-host program. Am I using the correct term?

Ms K. Ho: It is the Australian Homestay Network.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Yes. It is when people have one, two or more students living in their homes. There is a payment arrangement, which is scaled according to what is provided. If it is fully hosted, a certain amount is

paid to the home host, and it is scaled depending on what is offered or requested from students. Of course, many students stay in purpose-built accommodation. We are very keen to support increased purpose-built accommodation. With Edith Cowan University moving to the CBD, further student-specific accommodation is planned, some of which has commenced construction in and around the CBD. There have been conversions of old hotels or old stock into student accommodation; we encourage that. Of course, in the university context, there is student accommodation on university campuses. It is my understanding that few students have complained or reached out because they find themselves at risk of homelessness. I think it is because many of them secure accommodation before they arrive in WA by reaching out to the networks that are available, be they the diaspora or family and friends, to secure accommodation so that they are safe and well looked after.

One of the functions of StudyPerth is to continue to support students onshore. It has a variety of programs available to ensure that international students have an opportunity to experience Western Australian life and culture. I have been to a number of activities that StudyPerth has organised for international students. It is all about making sure that they feel welcomed, safe and encouraged to participate in the broad suite of Western Australian life.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I recall the homestay program. I remember the minister talking in Parliament about a regional program whereby students stay with families or whatever. Does the minister have any numbers on how that went and how many students were accommodated?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: The WA Regional TAFE International Student Bursary included a \$5 000 bursary, which is a very important part of the financial support for students who we are seeking to attract to study, live and work in regional areas. The program is currently in seven regional locations, being Broome, Geraldton, Northam, Kalgoorlie, Bunbury, Albany and my region, which is a very important region. I can give the member some figures. I will briefly go through some of the courses. As I was saying earlier, a number of the courses cover areas such as community services, early childhood education and care and a Diploma of Nursing, all of which are offered in Geraldton, for example. There is also information technology, aquaculture and commercial cookery. There is a range of others in the Broome and Albany courses. Did the member want some figures?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Yes, the figures in those regional locations.

[8.00 pm]

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: The numbers are small because we commenced this only recently, but it is showing some good growth. There are seven students in Broome, 17 students in Geraldton, five students in Kalgoorlie and 24 students in Bunbury. The program in Mandurah, which only started this semester, has four enrolments. We are looking to grow those numbers. I cannot think of a better place than a region in Western Australia for an international student to get a good, high-quality experience.

The students I met in Geraldton earlier this year are very heavily engaged in the local community. They are studying at TAFE. A young woman from Kalgoorlie whose name is Anelie, I think, is studying cert III in early childhood education and care but she works at the Goldfields Child Care Centre. Another student from the Philippines studies at the Central Regional TAFE Geraldton campus but works in the local learning centre in Wandina in Geraldton. There are a number of these students. I have met students who are working in hospitality and tourism, and students who are working in commercial cookery. I want to grow that. I am very keen to see TAFE continue to grow those numbers going forward.

In terms of accommodation, we know that it has always been challenging to get accommodation in Broome. After talking to students in Broome, I know that a number of them have had their accommodation provided by the employees.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Can the minister ask the director general to provide figures on how many students are attending public schools and how many are attending TAFEs in Western Australia?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I can give the member the figures for 2023–24. The college TAFE numbers are 2 050 and in our schools, it is 697, which is a total of 2 747. This budget projection, or current number—this will grow of course—is 2 260 students in TAFE colleges and 788 students in schools, for a total of 3 048 students.

Ms M. BEARD: The minister has been talking about TAFEs. Does he know how many international students based in the regions are using either the Geraldton Universities Centre courses or the Pilbara Universities Centre courses or are studying tertiary courses online?

The CHAIR: That is a bit of a triple whammy there, minister; you might want to split it.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Because they are university related, that does not relate to our state TAFEs and/or schools. That question is probably a more relevant question for another minister.

Ms M. BEARD: I can reframe it.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: The numbers could be found. Universities obviously have a number of campuses. The UWA has campuses in Albany and Curtin University has a campus in Kalgoorlie et cetera.

The CHAIR: Member, you indicated that you might be able to reframe the question.

Ms M. BEARD: Yes. I know that international students in my space up north are actually studying online and, as the minister said, integrating with the community and working as well. I was interested to know whether that is a line that international students are encouraged to take as opposed to basing themselves in Perth.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: That is actually a good question.

The CHAIR: As opposed to the others, minister!

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I will ask the director general to make a comment, particularly about the universities and the online issue, because the member would need to be aware of some specific information.

Ms K. Ho: The international students on student visas generally cannot do their whole course online. There may well be international visitors on some other type of visa arrangement if they are doing online study.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I thank all the advisers from the international education portfolio area.

The appropriation was recommended.

Division 36: Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries — Services 1, 4 and 7 to 17, Culture and the Arts; Sport and Recreation —

Ms M.M. Quirk, Chair.

Mr D.A. Templeman, Minister for Culture and the Arts; Sport and Recreation.

Ms L. Chopping, Director General.

Ms E. Gauntlett, Deputy Director General.

Ms J. McGrath, Deputy Director General.

Ms N. Miller, Executive Director, Culture and the Arts.

Ms A. Formentin, Executive Director, Infrastructure.

Ms L. Kalasopatan, Executive Director, Finance.

Ms M. Nicolaou, Executive Director, Sport and Recreation.

Mr K. Burton, Director, Programs.

Mr M. Fulton, Chief Executive Officer, Western Australian Institute of Sport.

Ms T. Widdicombe, Chief of Staff, Minister for Culture and the Arts.

[Witnesses introduced.]

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

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I give the call to the member for Roe.

[8.10 pm]

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I refer to page 531, “Item 83 Contribution to Community Sporting and Recreation Facilities Fund”. I note that in the 2024–25 budget year, CSRFF will go up to \$25.6 million, which is obviously very welcome. I notice the Premier’s annual press release of 15 March on this topic. Can the minister explain to me why this figure then halves to \$12 million in the three out years?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Yes, I can. The community sporting and recreation facilities fund appropriation was increased by \$7.5 million to \$19.5 million for 2023–24. An additional \$6.073 million was approved for projects in the 2024–25 forward planning round, and that is why both are reflected in the 2024–25 amount. I think, from memory, the member for Roe’s electorate was a generous beneficiary of a number of those additional projects that were approved. An additional \$6 million was approved in 2024–25 to fund the additional projects. There is also \$2.5 million a year for the Club Night Lights program. Although the forward estimates currently reflect a drop in funding from 2025–26, the total amount for allocation in future rounds can be considered as part of a future budget process. Effectively, we have increased the CSRFF, but for 2024–25 we funded some additional projects that we thought were very valid and important. A significant amount of funding from the 2023–24 round of approved projects went to a number of regional areas, including the member’s electorate for a number of projects there.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: As I pointed out previously, I look forward to seeing the minister do the first lap of the Dumbleyung swimming pool!

Is there any intention to boost the \$12 million in the three out years? I did not quite pick up why we will go from \$25.6 million back to \$12 million in the out years.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Again, the \$12 million to which the member refers is actually an increase. We in government have increased the CSRFF. Consideration of a future boost is subject to budgetary considerations. I was very pleased the Treasurer supported the boost that we gave in 2024–24 with an additional \$6 million for approved projects. As the member is well aware, demand is always there, and high-quality business cases or cases put for infrastructure will be assessed. Any additional boost like we saw in 2024–25 is a consideration for future budgets.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I note that in 1992, the allocation for the CSRFF was \$15 million. We are 32 years down the road and things are costing X amount more.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I also note funding for the CSRFF went down whilst the Nationals were in government, member. We boosted it. We have increased it. Do not forget, of course, a range of other programs have seen investment in infrastructure, including the legacy money that was applied as a commitment associated with Perth being one of the host cities for the FIFA Women's World Cup. Additional money was put towards National Women's Soccer League clubs to upgrade facilities. I understand that the legacy projects will continue to be rolled out over the coming six to 12 months.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I noticed that under Hon Terry Waldron there was a contribution from royalties for regions that basically doubled the CSRFF. Would there be any thought process in relation to that being applied to double this \$12 million figure? Does the minister think that could be a possibility or is it just a case of if there are good projects there, the minister will fly the flag to the Treasurer?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: The member needs to understand that although the CSRFF is a primary program for infrastructure provision, it is not the only one. A number of other infrastructure projects for sporting facilities are also funded through election commitments and Lotterywest. Other funding pools attract project support.

I will ask the director general to give a bit more of an explanation of the funding profile.

Ms L. Chopping: Although an amount for the CSRFF is announced each year, that amount is not expended in that year. It is profiled out over the stage of the construction of the grant program. The projection for expenditure in 2025–26 is \$18.209 million and then \$19 million in 2026–27 and \$19 million in 2027–28. That is because of the way we profile out grants. We approve the grants but, obviously, it takes time for them to reach the milestones to secure the payments. As we know, some CSRFF grants are delayed because local governments need to secure funds from elsewhere to supplement those grants in many cases. More than \$12 million will be spent each year even if there is not an uplift in further years down the track.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Another important consideration is that during the second half of last year, the profile of the CSRFF grant program was reviewed, specifically for contributions from local government, state government and the sporting club or the sporting entity. We wanted to streamline that, particularly for projects under \$500 000, from memory. There was an expectation on clubs to contribute to those sorts of projects, but many clubs have a limited capacity to contribute to big infrastructure projects. That streamlining has allowed the funding of a number of projects to be shared between the state government and local governments, and the contribution from the sporting clubs was either negligible or nil. Again, that was based upon the feedback we had from a lot of clubs saying that although the infrastructure upgrades are important, they do not have the capacity to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars to bear one-third of the cost.

[8.20 pm]

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Certainly, minister. A further comment, really, is that people in regional Western Australia understand the importance of the community sporting and recreation facilities fund grants. I suppose we could say that they provide a lifeline. Does the minister intend to maintain the current 50–50 split of regional and metropolitan projects? I know that it is not necessarily a policy, but it seems to work out that way.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Interestingly, in the 2023–24 period, the number of projects funded in regional areas was over and above the number of projects funded in the metropolitan area. The reality is that throughout the state in both the regional and metropolitan areas there are growth challenges, which has seen an uplift in the use of facilities and sites. Of course, I rely upon the independent assessment of projects. The independent panel makes the recommendations to me for each funding round and recommends those that are appropriate to support and fund.

As the member is well aware, because of the uplift in the number of people participating in junior sport, particularly girls' and women's sport, we have seen some pressure placed on some codes for the maintenance of the fields, for example, and also the need to provide appropriate gender facilities. Many of the facilities in the metropolitan area

and regional areas were built for men and boys only, particularly for the Australian Football League. We need a program to ensure that the corresponding uplift of female participation, which is welcomed and tremendous to see, also sees an uplift in the support for the number of programs and projects that enhance facilities for girls and young women.

It is important to note how good the regional network of departmental officers is in our major regional centres. I commend our regional managers and staff in our regional centres throughout the state because they are tremendous networkers. They are constantly consulting and liaising with all sorts of sporting codes in regional WA. That hard work, advocacy and support helps get more quality programs and projects submitted, be it through the CSRFF or other means. The member is aware that some of the regional programs are a suite of services that are supported by local regional officers. They include the regional athlete support program, the active regional communities grants program and the north west travel subsidy scheme. I do not know how many of those I sign off on. I quite enjoy seeing those come in because it is young people from our regions who are being supported to participate in state and national competitions. To me, that is a very important scheme. The country sport enrichment scheme aims to help emerging athletes in regional areas have access to expert support and coaching. We also have our regional servicing grants and regional strategic initiatives. I am very pleased with the strong network of regional support that we have.

I am also interested in the further development of our academies. I think some of our academies perform very well. They are an important pathway for those talented athletes in regional areas who show promise and need extra support on their trajectory to a more elite level of competition. Ultimately, we want to see those young ones going into Matthew's territory through the Western Australian Institute of Sport.

Mrs L.M. O'MALLEY: Also on the CSRFF, I refer specifically to the female change rooms fund on page 551. What projects have been funded using this allocation to increase participation in sport, particularly for girls and women?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I will not run through all of them, but it is important to get a flavour for the particular focus on change room facilities. We must never underestimate the importance of lighting and safety in our facilities either. The increased demand because of the participation means that the facilities are being used more at night for training and even games. Therefore, lighting becomes important. That is a safety factor for young people, be they men or young women, to safely get to their cars or to their parents who are picking them up. The member for Roe highlighted the success of the Shire of Dumbleyung, which has a newly reconstructed swimming pool at a cost of \$1.6 million. Bunbury Football Club received over \$200 000 for new women's and unisex change rooms and to upgrade the existing change rooms at the Bunbury footy club. Over half a million dollars was provided to the City of Bunbury for the reconfiguration of 14 netball courts, the removal of lighting towers and for the upgrading of new lighting towers at the Hay Park recreation ground. The City of Canning received a nearly \$2 million commitment for new club rooms in Ferndale Park Reserve, the City of Kalamunda received \$1.3 million for the construction of the Scott Reserve pavilion, the City of Rockingham received over \$1 million for new change rooms at Anniversary Park, and it goes on. This is an important investment.

The fact is that more young people are participating in sport, and more girls and women are participating in active sport. That is tremendous. That brings with it the need for continued investment in the facilities that they need to keep them participating. I will not say anything about the member's magnificent facility at East Fremantle Football Club. That is a tremendous project for the community. It will be exciting to open that in the coming months.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Now that the minister has brought up the East Fremantle Football Club redevelopment, I recall the member for Bicton standing up one day to give a grievance about the need for more money for East Fremantle and, funnily enough, the minister announced another \$5 million a few days later.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: She is very persuasive. Has the member ever been grieved to by the member for Bicton? She is remarkable.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Obviously, the East Fremantle Football Club project is a totally new concept. It will have no fencing and members of the public will be able to wander in during the football matches. Is the minister confident about the continuity for East Fremantle Football Club and that it will be able to extract enough income from the arrangements that will be in place? I do not fully know what they are. The minister might enlighten me on that.

[8.30 pm]

The CHAIR: I think that is going a bit beyond the pale, frankly.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I will tell members that it is a great opportunity for the club to grow and transform. It is certainly now up to the club to take the opportunity it has been given. There has been significant investment in the local community. There is a huge opportunity here to reinvigorate East Fremantle's football club and, indeed, its connection to community. The fact that the design of the facility has been very much focused on community engagement, participation and activation all goes well. We will watch that model very closely as it unfolds when the facility opens. The reality is that this is an opportunity for the West Australian Football League to look very closely at this. I am very excited about it. The reinvigoration of that club and its facility is very positive, and I look forward to the opening.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I go back to page 531 and the line item “Item 79 Net amount appropriated to deliver Services”. The estimated actual for 2023–24 is \$173 million, and then we move up to nearly \$300 million, at \$299.5 million. Can the minister enlighten me about the massive increase and what it will deliver—and then why it drops away again in the out years?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I will. The member is referring to page 531, and the 2023–24 actual versus the budget year shows a \$125 million increase. The increased value is due to the re-profiling of funding relating to projects such as the Canning Vale Regional Sports Complex, the Keenan Park Recreation and Sporting Precinct, the WACA ground redevelopment and the Alkimos aquatic recreation centre to align to revised project milestones. There are milestones to be achieved for a number of the projects I have mentioned, and this aligns those milestones with the funding required for their delivery. The director general will make an additional comment on that.

Ms L. Chopping: The projects we are referring to are not delivered by the department; they are projects delivered by other entities under funding agreements, and some of them are quite large financial commitments so that is why they make an impact on the figures going forward. Some of those projects have been delayed whilst the deliverer of the project secures funds from other sources, either other tiers of government or other sources for projects to be delivered. It is not within our power to control the profiling of those projects; they get moved forward in the budget papers.

Mr S.N. AUBREY: I refer to the line item “KidSport” on page 552 of budget paper No 2, which outlines sport and recreation funding. As WA communities experience greater cost-of-living pressures, can the minister please explain what actions are being undertaken by the government to minimise the impact of these pressures and support WA families with the cost of sport?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: There is no doubt that the KidSport program is highly successful, and it is very well targeted. However, over the intervening years, certainly while I have been Minister for Sport and Recreation, I have been very interested in the possibilities of the further reach of this program, given it focuses on supporting kids from families that would fit within a profile of having financial constraints. Given the current challenges with the cost of living more broadly, they are further enhanced. I was really proud that we doubled the financial support to eligible children. We also expanded capacity of what the voucher can be spent on. This is based upon good feedback from parents, communities, local governments and sporting clubs. The vouchers can now be used towards the costs of essential uniforms and equipment. We also wanted to look at cohorts that would fit the criteria of support that traditionally have not been targeted for it or had access to it through supporting agencies that might support some of these cohorts. For example, they might be asylum seeker refugee families, humanitarian entrants and, one of the ones I was particularly keen about, children in care. We all know that there are significant numbers of children in care in Western Australia and many of them may not be in the care of the CEO but parented by grandparents. I wanted to make sure that those kids were given every possibility to access this program. We have increased the criteria and doubled the amount. We are monitoring the take-up very closely because we want to see how this has gone. I would love to see a further expansion of the KidSport program, and I think if we target it well, we can get some tremendous outcomes and those who really need it will be able to access it.

A request from one of our local governments was to look at support for access to swimming pools, particularly during summer. We are piloting a program that allows around 300 kids in target regional areas to use KidSport to pay for their season pass or family season pass to get into their local pool. Again, we will monitor that. That program has been a pilot. Obviously, summer is coming to an end, if it ever comes to an end, and we will monitor and assess the effectiveness of that program. I think the number of 300 kids is great. We did not get the program out at the beginning of summer so we want to make sure the timing for the second round of this is in place for a full summer. We will monitor it carefully. I see it as a potential area of expansion. One of the shire presidents contacted me about the program and asked me to think about it. I thought it was a great idea, and I am pleased we delivered it. It might cost \$4 or \$5 for each kid, or whatever it is, for mums and dads who have four kids to get into the local pool, but if they can buy a season pass, they can go to the pool whenever they like during the summer, and I think that is great.

[8.40 pm]

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: The minister spoke about KidSport, which I obviously strongly agree with—another program brought in by “Tuck” Waldron back in the day. I refer to page 552 of budget paper No 2, as per the member for Scarborough’s question. The budgeted figure for 2024–25 is \$9.034 million. Why does it drop back to \$4.624 million in the three out years?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: First of all, in the 2020–21 financial year, a \$5 million injection from Lotterywest was aligned to the COVID response. Even though the KidSport program has been expanded, the uplift has not been fully expended. As the director general highlighted in answer to a previous question, this allows us to effectively spread the carryover into the out years. Ultimately, I want to spend it all. Ideally, I want to spend all the allocation each year. That has not happened in this case. One of the reasons we looked at expanding the criteria was that we wanted to see this money get into the hands of families who need it. Approximately \$3 million will be carried forward from 2023–24, resulting in a budget of just over \$9 million. Again, I have asked the department to explore models for expanding the KidSport program over the next financial year. We might consider increasing it again or we

might look at a further expansion of the criteria or a greater scope. For example, I really feel for grandparents who look after their grandkids. I know that the department is working with agencies like Wanslea, which has a grandcare program. We want to make sure that grandparents who are looking after grandkids are accessing KidSport to support the upbringing of their grandkids.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Thanks, minister. I have a new question.

The CHAIR: After that new question, we might have a five-minute comfort break. How are you going, minister?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I have filled my bottle. I am just joking; sorry! Maybe I should not have said that. It is getting late.

The CHAIR: Okay. Member for Roe.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Sorry; I withdraw that remark. It was outrageous of me.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I have lost concentration now.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: The minister is from Northam; he cannot help it!

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Sorry!

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I refer to the last line item on page 552 on the Western Australian Institute of Sport, for which the 2022–23 actual was \$3.56 million.

The CHAIR: Member, I think we might be dealing with that in division 37.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: No, that is a separate division from this.

The CHAIR: Yes. That is the Western Australian Institute of Sport, is it not?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: That is correct, but this is about the funding —

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I am happy to take the question.

The CHAIR: Okay. Thank you.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I am on page 552 and referring to the Western Australian Institute of Sport, for which the 2022–23 actual amount was \$3.56 million. We then seem to have a flatline of \$2.416 million each year. I also give my congratulations to the new CEO of the WA Institute of Sport—congratulations on your appointment, Matt. Given that we are heading into the Olympics et cetera, would the minister not have thought that an increase might perhaps be required? Of course, the 2032 Olympics will be held in Brisbane. The minister mentioned before the aspiration for our regional kids to go up to the WA Institute of Sport. Is there any explanation for this lack of increase in funding?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: The figures show the current allocations or the base funding. There are other sources, such as through the sports lotteries account. This is an important matter so I will frame it first by saying this: obviously, WAIS has been in a process of transition. A new board is in place with a very highly regarded membership. The governance issues have been addressed. Some matters of a residual or historic nature have been addressed. The department has been working closely with WAIS on the gymnast issue, which I am pleased to say is close to finalisation. Then there is the ultimate question: what should WAIS look like going forward as our peak high-performance training entity? What do we need to look at in terms of the ultimate funding profile for the entity going forward so that it is focused on delivering the outcomes that we expect of it, be that maintaining or hopefully growing the number of Western Australian athletes who are selected for the Olympic and/or Commonwealth Games, if we have the Commonwealth Games in the future; focusing on our strengths in terms of high-performance training and delivery; or connectivity to existing entities? For example, I have spoken to Matt a number of times since his appointment about the clearer pathway from the academy activity that takes place in regional Western Australia and what that means and what the interface needs to be with WAIS going forward. Fundamental to that is the funding profile that will achieve this. WAIS and the department are collaborating with Treasury at the moment on what that needs to look like in the out years. Of course, we needed to show the base funding for the agency in the forward estimates, which we have done. I am confident that we are having good conversations with Treasury about what is needed to fund that entity appropriately to deliver the outcomes that we expect, need and want from it.

In the interim, as the member may be aware, in preparation for the Paris Olympics in July we announced over \$1 million all up to support our Western Australian athletes through a \$5 000 grant per athlete to assist with their personal costs of being an Olympian or Paralympian. This was in addition to the \$333 000 that the state provided to WAIS directly to assist in the qualification support and performance optimisation initiatives leading into Paris—that is, the things WAIS needs to do to support the athletes to get them to both selection and competition level. Then, of course, the state government further committed \$375 000 to the Australian Olympic Committee and the Paralympic team appeal. That investment, combined, was \$750 000. Those contributions also have been made in preparation. At a federal level, state and territory ministers continue to talk with the federal minister about the green and gold pathway. Of course, that is the aspiration towards 2032 and ultimately beyond and the alignment with a national sporting strategy. We continue to have discussions around the national sport strategy; I think that is the title.

I want to position the Western Australian Institute of Sport. The bones are brilliant in WAIS; there is no doubt about that. WAIS has been very successful. We had a few issues that we have now dealt with, and I am confident that WAIS is on a very firm marking. There are ongoing considerations with Treasury for future budgets and the optimum amount that is needed to ensure that WAIS flourishes and delivers what it needs to deliver for Western Australian athletes, no matter where in WA they are from.

[8.50 pm]

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I have just one further question before we have a break. The minister mentioned the redress situation. At page 139 of budget paper No 3 we see that the government has approved \$6.1 million over 2023–24 to 2027–28. How is that going? Obviously, it is very traumatic for the gymnasts and everyone involved. In relation to the redress scheme, how is the program going? How is the improvement in governance that the department has foreseen all playing out?

The CHAIR: There are about six questions there, member!

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: That is all right.

The CHAIR: Good.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: It is an important issue, and obviously I have taken a particular interest in ensuring that we resolve the matters and issues that came to light through a formal inquiry and recommendations, as well as ensuring department oversight of that program.

There are a couple of key things. I refer to the oversight. In order to ensure that WAIS complies with the implementation of the Sport Integrity Australia review recommendations, the department continues to meet regularly with WAIS to discuss those recommendations and most recently received a progress report or update in January this year. That is ongoing. We expect that that will be finalised and completed by the third quarter of this year. That is very well on track to be delivered. These are actions on the gymnast program that I asked the agency and WAIS to respond to. Obviously, we made the apology—goodness me, I think it was two years ago, from memory—in the Parliament, which I think was an important acknowledgement. That was in June 2022. Another action was to facilitate the restorative and reconciliation process. Those sessions have commenced. I think it is important to note that the former gymnasts are engaged in this process. I pay tribute to the gymnasts. There is a core of probably four or five gymnasts who are, I suppose, representative of the broader cohort, and they continue to engage with the department and WAIS to facilitate the restorative and reconciliation process. Again, that is expected to be completed by this year.

The third request was to undertake a comprehensive governance and cultural review. KPMG was engaged in the second half of last year to conduct that review, and we expect that that will be concluded and a final report released to me mid this year. That is expected imminently in the next couple of months. The request to establish a specialist child safeguarding unit to investigate other regulatory measures to work towards child safeguarding has been completed. That is very important; I am pleased about that. The finalisation of the redress is imminent.

Ms M. BEARD: I have a further question on the institute that follows on from the member for Roe's question on the line item on page 552 of budget paper No 2. As an inaugural member of WAIS, I am very supportive of WAIS, but I am also supportive of regional athletes. There is a line item above WAIS, "Regional Athlete Support Program". Do athletes who are supported by that regional program feed into the WAIS program?

The CHAIR: We were actually looking at page 139 of budget paper No 3, so in fact it is a new question. We will have a break until nine o'clock. Thank you.

Meeting suspended from 8.55 to 9.00 pm

The CHAIR: The member for North West Central has another question on this division. We might then get an indication from the opposition, given we have an hour left and a number of divisions, how you want to allocate your time. Member for North West Central.

Ms M. BEARD: My question is on page 537 of budget paper No 3, in relation to museums.

The CHAIR: Excellent.

Ms M. BEARD: I refer to the line item "Museum Services to the Regions". Can the minister explain what museum services have been delivered to the regions for the \$8.5 million? I note that there is a reduction of \$1 million since the last budget.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: The member would be aware that the Western Australian Museum is responsible for a number of regional museums in Albany, Geraldton and the goldfields, as well as the Western Australian Maritime Museum. It also has oversight of "Goondawarudu Mia", which is in Carnarvon.

Ms M. BEARD: It is Gwoonwardu Mia.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I need to learn how to say that. We are pleased to see an increase in visitation at that centre from 2021–22. I will find out whether we have the funding allocation or the appropriation to support the

delivery of services at that heritage and cultural centre. I note some ongoing programming collaboration with local and visiting Aboriginal artists and musicians. For example, a 12-day celebration was held around the time of the solar eclipse. A new touchscreen has been installed in the permanent exhibition; the yarnning circle received some funding support from Tourism Western Australia to connect with local Aboriginal people to become guest speakers; and in partnership with Real Futures, the training cafe at this facility launched in October 2023. My understanding is that the funding for that centre is ongoing. The agreement has just been finalised for another two years and that allocation, from memory, is from royalties for regions. The key thing for the member is that the funding agreement has been finalised for the next two years. To be totally honest with the member, a lot of opportunity can be delivered through that cultural centre. It is still a work in progress. More consultation and discussion is needed around what can be delivered through that centre. It should be a place that is very active and engaging and able to entice more visitation than it currently does. I know that the director of the WA Museum is closely monitoring the operation of that centre now that there is certainty for another two years of funding. I would expect that closer consideration of that program will be really important. It should be the number one place to go to for any visitor to Carnarvon, apart from the magnificent Carnarvon Space and Technology Museum where the satellite dishes are.

Ms M. BEARD: Are there other museums throughout the regions that offer a similar experience to Gwoonwardu Mia?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: It operates under a longstanding arrangement. The WA Museum is the entity that oversees a number of museums in the state, including the flagship museum Boola Bardip, and the WA Maritime and WA Shipwrecks Museums in Fremantle. Then we have regional museums that are operated by the Western Australian Museum and include the Museum of the Great Southern in Albany, the Museum of Geraldton on the Batavia Coast and the Museum of the Goldfields. A number of other museums located in rural and regional centres are basically operated by a mix of local government support and/or volunteers or both. They are not funded by the WA Museum because to fund all of them, both small and large, would be quite a significant commitment.

In the first term of the McGowan government, the WA Museum supported a program that assisted collecting entities like local, regional or town museums to commit to a digital record of their artefacts and collection. Not last year, but I think the year before, we also launched WAnderland, which is a portal that assists in cataloguing and ensures that people have access to points of interest. People might know that a family member, for example, may have had a connection to Menzies. They can then use the WAnderland portal to access any information that relates to Menzies, including the digitalised collections of collecting entities. As we move towards acknowledgement of the 200-year colonial presence in Albany in 2026 and acknowledgement of the 200-year colonial presence of the Swan River settlement in Perth in 2029, it will be important to have ongoing protection and a growing record of what is out there in a lot of our museums. The member would know. I have been to the Norseman Historic Museum; it has collected some remarkable stuff. Wagin Historical Village has a magnificent museum precinct and a great collection. We rely very much on volunteers, as all members would be aware, to maintain, curate and share the stories that are attached to those magnificent places.

[9.10 pm]

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I refer to the second last line on page 552. The Western Australian Football Commission seems to have received a general increase of between \$300 000 and \$400 000 a year. Can the minister outline how that figure is calculated each year and why there has been an increase?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I will get more detail to that but, broadly, the funding arrangements for the Western Australian Football Commission include the commitments made prior to the commencement of the construction and operation of Perth Stadium, or Optus Stadium as it is currently called. I understand that it will be a number of years before those arrangements will be fulfilled. From memory, I think it is a 10-year commitment. The football funding agreement, which was signed by the previous Barnett government, provides payments over 10 years from 2018 to 2028. The next Minister for Sport and Recreation—it might be me, you never know—in the next government will have to consider this item after 2025. The annual payment is based on the value of revenues generated at Subiaco Oval. The initial base value of \$10.297 million was based on calculations relating to Subiaco Oval revenues. The agreement requires the payment to be escalated annually based on CPI growth. I understand that the figures reflected in the forward estimates relate to indexation.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I refer to the ongoing initiatives on page 532, and the club night-lights program, which has obviously been well received. The amount of \$659 000 appears in the 2024–25 budget year but it then seems to disappear. Can the minister explain the logic or thinking behind that?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: We provide \$2.5 million per annum through the club night-lights program. It runs in conjunction with the funding rounds for the community sporting and recreation facilities fund. From memory, the club night-lights program was established by Minister Murray; I must arrange for a bust of Minister Murray! The amount of \$11.6 million has been allocated to 103 projects. Recently, an additional \$659 000, which is shown in this budget, was approved for projects in the 2024–25 forward planning round, but that does not mean that the night-lights program disappears, because it is part of the CSRFF total allocation.

The appropriation was recommended.

Division 37: Western Australian Sports Centre Trust — VenuesWest —

Ms M.M. Quirk, Chair.

Mr D.A. Templeman, Minister for Sport and Recreation.

Mr D. Etherton, Chief Executive Officer.

Mr N. Lucas, Chief Finance Officer.

Ms T. Widdicombe, Chief of Staff, Minister for Sport and Recreation.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIR: I give the call to the member for Roe.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I refer to page 558, budget paper No 2, “Spending Changes” and the item “National Rugby League Home and Away Perth Series”. When will taxpayers find out how much this proposal will cost?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: As the member would be aware, various negotiations take place between the government and entities that are of a commercial-in-confidence nature, and this is one of those. That is not just a practice of the current government; the exact same practice was used by the former Liberal–National government. It protects the interests of both the state and entities subject to negotiations.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: In light of that, the Premier has come out strongly about wanting a Perth team in the National Rugby League. According to Peter V’landys, chairman of the Australian Rugby League Commission, the Premier has been substantially annoying.

The CHAIR: Stick to the line item, member.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: In light of the Perth home-and-away series to which I alluded, is there something in the forward estimates or in the thinking of the minister and his department about the potential of a Perth team and the expense that might accrue from that?

[9.20 pm]

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: As the member would be well aware—history shows this in other codes—it is important that Western Australia is part of the conversations around national sporting programs and organisations. We will always be interested in promoting the opportunities that Perth offers should a licence be granted in the AFL or other codes, including rugby league. There have been conversations around the machinations of how the NRL operates. It is a highly commercial entity. Its reach is growing but it is not a national competition at the moment because it does not include the biggest state in the country, Western Australia. We will continue to have discussions with Mr V’landys and others involved in the NRL and put the case that Perth should be considered for a team in the future. When those discussions reach a certain point, requests of government for financial and infrastructure commitments will be part of any conversation.

Ultimately, part of the promotion of Perth is to seek to host games. We have had some very successful rounds in Perth; in fact, our crowd numbers exceed a number of the crowds that participate in the home-and-away games on the eastern seaboard. For example, I have been to what is called the Magic Round in Brisbane. There may also be opportunities for Perth to be included in something of that nature in the future. They are subject to negotiation, consideration and conversation.

Would I like to see an NRL team in Perth? Yes, I think that would be desirable. It would be a great addition to the National Rugby League competition. As former Minister Tinley reminds me constantly, it would put the “N” in the NRL. It would be a truly national competition if a Perth-based team was part of the NRL. Mr V’landys, the chairman of the NRL, has made it very clear that it is on an expansion timetable. Where a Perth-based team fits in with those aspirations is probably the discussion point. We believe that we should be seriously considered. There are currently 17 teams, with a twentieth team to come. We think we should be in the mix but we want to go in with a very clear understanding of what that might mean in terms of cost to the state. Obviously, it is a licence issue, so there would be an owner. We would not be the owner but we would be open to negotiation on how we could facilitate a team being considered for Perth. These sorts of events would be commercial-in-confidence because those matters are confidential.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I again refer to page 558, and the line item “Sam Kerr Football Centre—Opening and Ongoing Operation”. The estimated actual in 2023–24 was \$4.065 million and now the ongoing operation seems to be around \$2.8 million. Can the minister explain the difference in those figures? What does the amount relating to the ongoing operation actually pay for?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Obviously, costs were associated with the preparation and ultimately the opening of the centre, which was a community opening. The Matildas were present. Sam Kerr was present. She was honoured at the official launch of the centre by it being named in her honour. The initial cost is the reason for that figure in the early part of the table. The ongoing net operational costs amount to approximately \$2.8 million each year. It is

important to note that \$1.15 million of that amount is appropriated to depreciation. The net figure for the operation is obviously arrived at through the assessment of what it costs to operate such a state-of-the-art facility and accommodate the presence of Football West. The ongoing programming and activities based at that centre continue to be part of the ongoing management and negotiations with VenuesWest as the managing entity and Football West as the primary tenant. I am confident that for the first time we have a centre for football, and the game will more broadly continue to grow in participation and popularity.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: On the next page, page 559, are seven paragraphs relating to significant issues impacting the agency. As the minister knows, the Western Australian Sports Centre Trust Bill 2024 was introduced into the wrong house after the Standing Committee on Legislation looked at it. Nonetheless, I assume that it will find its way through the system. Paragraph 7 states —

The Bill will clearly articulate the management of a portfolio of venues and precincts and support long-term sustainability and growth for the organisation. It will also address specific measures to enhance public safety.

Can the minister or the CEO enlighten me on the specific measures that will enhance public safety? I assume that we are talking about Perth Stadium.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: The first part of the question is about the progression of the bill. I am very hopeful that we will pass the bill in our house during the June sittings. That is my intention. I look forward to the member's support so that we can swiftly pass it and send it to the other place. I expect that we will have that in place and ready for the second half of the year. The legislation will also see a reconstitution of the membership of the board. It will reduce it to seven members down from nine. It also articulates a range of additional responsibilities and/or mechanisms to allow it to operate. It is also fit for purpose, modernised legislation that will allow an important entity like the trust to operate in modern times.

I will not go into specific measures individually because, quite frankly, I will not let anyone put the public at risk by giving details of exactly what they might mean. Security measures include measures that are up to date and based upon the latest intelligence from experts in public safety, so it might include the addition of bollards, CCTV and technology that identifies people who may not be at a game for the purposes of enjoyment. We want to make sure that our venues are benchmarked to the safest in the world. One of the main objectives and charges of VenuesWest is to make sure that all patrons and staff engaged in any of our venues are looked after and are safe.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I refer to the line item “Perth Glory and Western Force” under the new initiatives listed near the bottom of page 558. I noticed the amounts over the four years. Page 141 of budget paper No 3 states —

The Government has approved \$2.1 million in financial assistance measures over 2023–24 to 2027–28 to support the continued operation of the Perth Glory Football Club and the Western Force.

Could the minister enlighten us as to what those amounts will cover for those two clubs?

[9.30 pm]

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I will. I will ask the CEO to give a bit more detail, but, more broadly, obviously we want to see Perth Glory and Western Force succeed. We want them to grow their membership. Part of that effectively relates to, and relies on, their performance on the field so it is important for those franchises to be cognisant of that.

Perth Glory and Western Force are provided access to high-quality facilities. Mainly due to investment by the government through the FIFA Women's World Cup, a number of elements of the stadium in East Perth saw a major upgrade.

The appropriations across the forward estimates reflect the consideration of cost points that both Glory and Force experience and where the Western Australian Sports Centre Trust can assist and work with those two entities to play on the field in the most cost-effective way for them—bearing in mind, of course, that there are costs that need to be acknowledged by VenuesWest.

There has been a lot of negotiation between the government and Perth Glory and Western Force. We want them to succeed, and we have been cognisant of the need to look at ways of supporting them into the future so that they can grow their membership and grow the number of members and/or supporters who go to the grounds for games. I remember the heyday of Glory. For example, we would go down to the stadium and there would be up to 10 000 supporters attending. We want to get back to that. The costs that are required from those entities will be ongoing points of discussion. I want to highlight that VenuesWest has done a lot to work with both Western Force and Glory to reach agreements that deliver their aspirations.

I will ask the director general to make further comments on some of the ways that might have occurred.

Mr D. Etherton: We have licence agreements with both Western Force and Perth Glory for use of the facility on match day and on the Captain's Run day. In essence, three specifics are funded out of that spending. There is a short-term licence fee reduction. That number decreases a little over time. It starts a little higher in the first two years and reduces. There is a desire to have both men's and women's games occurring back-to-back at the venue

and so there is a contribution to make that happen. Then we have a program called the revenue initiative fund. We partner with the two clubs to help them promote their game to get more attendees at the venue, which they benefit from and we benefit from. We have increased the revenue initiative fund as part of that funding to try to drive them. I remember the heydays when there were 20 000 people there, minister, and we had 56 000 people for a grand final at Optus Stadium, so there are obviously a lot of fans for Glory and Force out there and we want to make sure they come back.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: On page 141 of budget paper No 3, under “Asset Maintenance Fund—Venue Maintenance”, it states —

Additional expenditure of \$10.9 million over 2024–25 to 2027–28 has been approved to enable VenuesWest to address critical infrastructure issues and increase maintenance efforts across its asset portfolio. This includes structural roof repairs at HBF Stadium, Bendat Basketball Centre and HBF Arena, and the replacement of ageing fire systems at HBF Stadium and HBF Arena.

All three stadiums or arenas require structural roof repairs; is that correct? Secondly, I know basketball is looking for more courts; are there any comments the minister might make on that?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I am happy for the CEO to answer.

Mr D. Etherton: I do not have budget paper No 3 in front of me but in budget paper No 2 the asset investment program shows a substantial increase in the moneys being appropriated to VenuesWest. That is detailed on page 558. The fourth-bottom line details \$2.6 million a year in increased ongoing maintenance and the projects that the member was talking about are the sorts of projects that we would fund from that. That is a totally new allocation to us to deal with the ageing portfolio of venues at VenuesWest. It is really welcome new funding to support fixing things such as roofs that are 30 years old in the case of a couple of the ones the member mentioned, and making sure they stand the test of time.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: This will probably be my last question on this division.

The CHAIR: It is all right. Take your time. We are all philistines; we do not want to hear about arts or heritage! Thank you, member.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Minister, in relation to the Optus Stadium loan, I noticed —

The CHAIR: Is that budget paper No 3?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I refer to page 558 of budget paper No 2, the third line item from the bottom. We have an increase, obviously, for this budget year. I note that back on page 141 of budget paper No 3, it states —

Following an update to interest rate projections, additional expenditure of \$20.9 million has been approved over 2023–24 to 2027–28 ...

Can the minister enlighten me as to how long the loan is going on for and is there a point at which it has been repaid or how does that sit?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I am pleased to report that we have paid over \$100 million off the initial debt of \$422 million. That debt has been paid off. The loan ultimately is subject to a time period of 25 years. The loan arrangement is subject to fluctuations in the interest rate. It is apparent in previous budgets and even in the projected forward estimates that that will go up and down depending on the nature of interest rate settings. That fluctuation is expected to continue. It is a 25-year loan arrangement, and it is pleasing that now \$100 million of that \$422 million has been paid off.

[9.40 pm]

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I notice that the minister is calling it the Optus Stadium loan through to 2027–28. Can the minister enlighten me on when the agreement wraps up for the naming of the stadium and whether the government is looking to rename it or continue with the current name?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I am advised that we believe 2027 was the negotiated completion date for that sponsorship arrangement. I predicate that by saying there may have been a clause or some consideration given during COVID. I am happy to supply that as supplementary information. I have been very generous. I am happy to supply as supplementary information to the member for Roe the details of the Optus Stadium naming rights contract, including when that contract reaches its conclusion.

[*Supplementary Information No B8.*]

The appropriation was recommended.

Western Australian Institute of Sport —

The CHAIR: For the minutes, I note that the Western Australian Institute of Sport was not examined.

Division 43: Planning, Lands and Heritage — Service 3, Heritage —

Ms M.M. Quirk, Chair.

Mr D.A. Templeman, Minister for Heritage.

Mr A. Kannis, Director General.

Mr V. Davies, Assistant Director General.

Ms S. Cardenia, Assistant Director General.

Ms C. Hay, Chief Financial Officer.

Ms T. Widdicombe, Chief of Staff, Minister for Heritage.

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

A minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee. I will ask the minister to clearly indicate what information they agree to provide and will then allocate a reference number. Supplementary information should be provided to the principal clerk by noon on Friday, 31 May 2024. If a minister suggests that a matter be put on notice, members should use the online questions on notice system to submit their questions.

Are there any questions?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Madam Speaker, for the record —

The CHAIR: Madam Chair.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Sorry; Madam Chair. We did not examine the Western Australian Institute of Sport. You made that comment a moment ago for the record for *Hansard*. We had an agreement with the minister that we would merge WAIS in amongst division 36.

The CHAIR: That is fine. Technically, it is not a budget item, so I had to say that.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I just wanted to clarify that.

The CHAIR: All right. Let us move on. Do we have a question? The member for North West Central.

Ms M. BEARD: I refer to line item 3 “Historical Heritage Services” on page 720. Funding for historical heritage services falls from \$16.9 million in 2022–23 to \$14.3 million in 2024–25. What is driving the decrease?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Did the member say “historical heritage services”?

Ms M. BEARD: Yes.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: That is item 3 under “Service Summary”. The decrease is mainly due to a decrease in expenditure for the Fremantle Prison conservation activation, which was \$800 000. A program of continued works has been completed at Fremantle Prison. That figure relates to the conservation and activation work.

Ms M. BEARD: I refer to the table in the middle of page 724. There is a reduction in FTE from 79 to 63 from 2022–23 to 2024–25. Can the minister detail the roles that were lost?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: The 63 FTE is the baseline. In 2022–23, the additional FTEs were temporary positions that were created to focus on priority areas. They included the Fremantle Prison projects that were part of the Fremantle Prison’s strategic plan, including the conservation works. That work was finite in nature. Also, temporary positions were focused on assessment and registration work.

Ms M. BEARD: Is it fair to assume that the jobs that decreased were contracts? Were they contracted to a project and were not FTEs?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: They were finite contracts for specific project work.

Ms M. BEARD: Also on page 724, can the minister explain why it seems that the net cost of service is falling?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: This relates to the total cost of service and it shows a decrease from just over \$16 million to just over \$15 million. The indicator measures the average cost per service for historical heritage services and includes costs related to the activity that supports the service, including heritage management and advice, development, project delivery and the administration of the Heritage Council of Western Australia. The indicator is calculated by dividing the total cost to deliver the services, less the grants, by the total number of services delivered for the historical heritage management. I will ask the director general to tell me what that means.

[9.50 pm]

Mr A. Kannis: If I break that down into the various years historically, the total cost of service, which is the top line, falls from \$16.966 million to \$16.141 million. Is that the correct line the member is referring to?

Ms M. BEARD: Yes.

Mr A. Kannis: The reduction from 2022–23 to 2023–24 is due to the decrease in the expenditure for the Fremantle Prison conservation and activation project. From the 2023–24 budget figure to the 2023–24 estimated actual there has been no material movement.

From 2023–24 to 2024–25, the decrease of \$1.4 million is mainly due the one-off expenditure that was related to cyclone Seroja. There was money in previous years for cyclone Seroja and that has dropped off so it has now got to its normal baseline, which is the answer to that question.

Ms M. BEARD: So there are not fewer services being provided?

Mr A. Kannis: No.

Ms M. BEARD: What does that relate to for Seroja?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: There is a line item for Seroja.

Mr A. Kannis: There is in another part of the budget papers.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I am just clarifying what the member would like to ask about the line item.

Ms M. BEARD: I was wondering what the amount was and what it was for.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: It is \$1.6 million. As the member would be aware, a lot of ultimate payment of repairs and/or rectification of heritage works were paid out through the insurance process, so for a number of identified heritage work needs, the ultimate payout would be via insurance arrangements with an insurer.

Ms M. BEARD: Can I just clarify that this was for the shortfall that proponents could not claim from their insurance?

Mr A. Kannis: The principle was that for those who were not insured, an allocation was made. Based on the applications made, it appears that many were insured, so a provision was made in this budget that will be reconciled. In this current financial year—I am talking about 2023–24—there will be a reconciliation and that money is still available in the budget, but it will only be based on what requests we get from applicants.

Ms M. BEARD: When does the request period close? Do they have time?

Mr A. Kannis: Applications close in December 2024.

Ms M. BEARD: I refer to the explanation of significant movements on page 724. The first note states —

The average cost of historical heritage services has decreased from the 2023–24 Budget to the 2023–24 Estimated Actual as a result of an increased number of historical heritage services provided.

Can the minister detail the new heritage services that have been provided that have reduced the average cost? I think the minister has answered that previously.

The CHAIR: Yes, he has.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I am advised by the director general that it specifically relates to the demand for services not the amount or type of services provided.

Ms M. BEARD: Does that reflect a decrease in visitation?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: No. Note 2 relates to Fremantle Prison visitation.

Ms M. BEARD: I refer to Fremantle Prison restoration on page 726. Can the minister indicate what the original budget was for the restoration and whether there have been any material differences?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I will stand corrected, but there has been an allocation of \$8.9 million for the period 2022–23 to 2025–26. Those works relate to a couple of key things. One was to address some immediate conservation needs of the structure. The building was completed in 1860, I think. If the member knows the prison well, she will know that as she enters through the main gates and into the inner gate, there is the forecourt, or the parade ground. A lot of work needed to be done on drainage, which, of course, decreases the impact of water egress on the limestone wall structure of the prison and also allows and enhances opportunities to use that space for activation. In the future, we will see more concerts and activation of that nature in those areas at Fremantle Prison.

That allocation was given unashamedly. This is the only built World Heritage site in the state. It is very significant. It is a top tourism winner, and a multi-award winner. In my conversations with the federal minister, we will continue to seek matching funds for further works to ensure we protect that asset.

The appropriation was recommended.

Division 46: Heritage Council of Western Australia —

Ms M. Quirk, Chair.

Mr D.A. Templeman, Minister for Heritage.

Mr A. Kannis, Director General.

Mr V. Davies, Assistant Director General.

Ms S. Cardenia, Assistant Director General.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIR: Are there any questions?

Ms M. BEARD: I refer to paragraph 1 of the significant issues impacting the agency on page 763 of the *Budget statements*, which mentions the grants program for conservation and interpretation projects. How much is the Heritage Council grants program each year?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: It is \$1.2 million.

Ms M. BEARD: How many grants were provided this year? Can the minister provide a list of recipients?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: We had a total of 28 projects and they varied from regional areas to important sites on Wadjemup, for example.

Ms M. BEARD: I refer to the percentage of additional private investment generated from grant-assisted conservation projects towards the end of page 764. The figure falls from 260 per cent to 225 per cent. Can the minister explain the changes to those ratios?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I will ask the director general, bearing in mind we also have to pass the National Trust.

Mr A. Kannis: The actual for 2022–23 was 219 per cent and the budget for 2023–24 was 250 per cent. We are aiming to achieve an estimated actual of 260 per cent this year. The baseline is around 225 per cent, so it is an increase from the current actual. We have been aspirational in our target.

The appropriation was recommended.

[10.00 pm]

Division 47: National Trust of Australia (WA) —

Ms M.M. Quirk, Chair.

Mr D.A. Templeman, Minister for Heritage.

Mr E. Sirna, Acting Chief Executive Officer.

Mr M. D'Souza, Chief Financial Officer.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIR: The final division is division 47 on the National Trust. Are there any questions? You have 30 seconds.

Ms M. BEARD: I refer to the second significant issue impacting the agency on page 768 of budget paper No 2. What is involved in the increased focus on community engagement delivered through formal and non-formal schools and public education, and how much funding is the trust allocating each year for this purpose?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: The trust has comprehensive engagement with schools, particularly through the various heritage sites that it operates and oversees. There are a number of them. In terms of expenditure, I will ask the acting chief executive officer to make a brief comment.

Mr E. Sirna: The expenditure is primarily with reference to the salaries for four of our staff members who conduct these programs that are aligned to the curriculum. We do get part cost to assist with materials programs from the actual student fees paid to come and do them. I do not have the exact amount with me, but I can certainly supply that.

The CHAIR: Member, you can put that on notice.

The appropriation was recommended.

Committee adjourned at 10.01 pm

