

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