

Extract from *Hansard*

[ASSEMBLY ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A — Tuesday, 21 September 2021]

p63b-87a

Chair; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Vincent Catania; Ms Libby Mettam; Dr David Honey; Ms Meredith Hammat; Ms Hannah Beazley; Ms Divina D'Anna

Division 27: Western Australia Police Force, \$1 547 412 000 —

Mrs L.A. Munday, Chair.

Mr P. Papalia, Minister for Police.

Mr C. Dawson, Commissioner of Police.

Mr C. Blanch, Deputy Commissioner.

Mr G. Dreibergs, Deputy Commissioner.

Mr P. Steel, Assistant Commissioner, Operation Tide.

Ms S. Cardenia, Chief Finance Officer.

Mr F. Pasquale, Executive Director.

Mr A.J. Warner, Road Safety Commissioner, Road Safety Commission.

Mr I.F. Cameron, Chairman, Road Safety Council.

Mrs R. Sackville-Minchin, Chief of Staff, Minister for Police.

[Witnesses introduced.]

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

The minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee, rather than asking that the question be put on notice for the next sitting week. I ask the minister to clearly indicate what supplementary information he agrees to provide and I will then allocate a reference number. If supplementary information is to be provided, I seek the minister's cooperation in ensuring that it is delivered to the principal clerk by close of business Friday, 1 October 2021. I caution members that if a minister asks that a matter be put on notice, it is up to the member to lodge the question on notice through the online questions system.

Mr P. PAPALIA: If possible, can we do the questions related to the Road Safety Commission early and then the two people who are here from the Road Safety Commission can depart. Are members okay with that? I do not know how many questions members have. They are all part of one division. It is just practical.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: We will do them first.

The CHAIR: I give the call to the member for Vasse.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to page 270 of budget paper No 3. Can the minister please provide a breakdown of the \$118 million in expenditure from the road trauma trust account in 2020–21?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I do not have that reference page, but that aside does the member want the breakdown of where the road trauma trust account money has been allocated in 2021–22?

Ms L. METTAM: In 2020–21.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Is the member talking about the last budget?

Ms L. METTAM: Yes.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I only have a breakdown for the current budget. I might ask the member whether she can take the answer as supplementary information. I could tell her the breakdown for the current budget we are discussing, but I will have to answer the member's question as supplementary information, if that is okay.

Ms L. METTAM: I will take it as supplementary information.

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

Mr P. PAPALIA: Yes, I agree to provide a list by line item of allocations from the road trauma trust account for the 2020–21 budget.

The CHAIR: Is that right, member for Vasse?

Ms L. METTAM: Yes.

[Supplementary Information No A6.]

Ms L. METTAM: Also, could we have a breakdown of the expected \$99 million in expenditure from the RTTA in 2021–22?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I have that for us. The approved budget for this year has: increased breath and drug testing, \$5.95 million; expansion of drug testing capabilities, \$1.394 million; roadside alcohol and drug testing election commitment, \$1.013 million; crash blood testing, \$912 000; electronic school zone signs, \$2 million; RoadWise program, \$1.832 million; School Drug Education and Road Aware program, \$1.671 million; alcohol interlock assessment and treatment services, \$1.531 million; replacement of mobile breath and drug testing bus, \$600 000; Prevent Alcohol and Risk-related Trauma in Youth program, \$485 000; automatic number plate recognition technology, \$180 000; Safer Roads, category, regional road safety improvements, \$20 million; metropolitan intersections low-cost treatments, \$5 million; metropolitan intersections, \$1 million; rural intersection advance warning signs, \$60 000; speed enforcement camera operations and infringements, \$17.359 million; speed enforcement administration, \$4.881 million; regional road enforcement increased police deployment, \$1.5 million; speed monitoring, \$100 000; south west emergency rescue helicopter, 4.65 million; road trauma support service, \$904 000; data linkage, \$148 000; state trauma registry, \$373 000; policy research and governance, \$9.011 million; community education and engagement, \$8.871 million; infringement management reform program, \$6.938 million; and regional road enforcement mobile camera trial, \$1.5 million. The total is \$99.872 million.

[7.10 pm]

Ms L. METTAM: What impact has COVID-19 had on the revenue flow to the road trauma trust account?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I do not believe it has had an impact, but I might hand over to the Road Safety Commissioner, Mr Warner, to answer that.

Mr A.J. Warner: The simple answer is not as much as we initially anticipated. We anticipated a \$5 million reduction in the early stages of the COVID response in terms of revenue because of what we anticipated to be lower traffic volumes on the roads because of lockdowns and the like. That did not eventuate, because we stayed out of lockdown essentially for most of the year. The revenue came back to what we would normally expect.

Ms L. METTAM: What is the infringement management reform program, at a cost of \$6.9 million?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I will pass over to the Road Safety Commissioner again.

Mr A.J. Warner: This is a major reform program for the government. It is aimed at a couple of things, but primarily it is about fixing up the technology in the back-end processing system for infringements. The current system is old and out of licence, so a lot of extra support needs to go into it. We are in the process of looking at tenders now. We have gone out to a formal public tender for new technology solutions. That is under evaluation now. Those responses and the evaluation will form a submission to the government in due course about the implementation of whatever solution we do get.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I refer to page 411 and under “Road Safety”, paragraph 12 states —

The Road Safety Commission (the Commission) is leading the implementation, across Government and within the community, of the Driving Change—Road Safety Strategy for Western Australia 2020–2030 which aims to reduce the numbers of people killed or severely or seriously injured by 50–70% by 2030.

Could the minister give an update about whether those targets are being met? Was there a reduction of those who were killed or seriously injured in this financial year just gone? What is the projection in the coming financial year? Will the police force meet those targets or are they someway off?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I might hand over to the Road Safety Commissioner and, if necessary, the chair of the Road Safety Council, too, because this is a longer term objective with regard to reducing the numbers.

Mr A.J. Warner: The minister is right; it is early days in terms of counting the numbers. There is usually a lag between each calendar year and when the crash statistics are published. We know that COVID had an impact on 2020’s, pleasingly, lower road trauma and we will have to wait until the end of this calendar year to get a sense of a trend. It looks like it is coming back to what we would normally expect as the previous trend, but it is still a downward trend.

Dr D.J. HONEY: In relation to the significant issues impacting the agency, were traffic police taken off the roads to deal with the COVID issues?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Who, sorry?

Dr D.J. HONEY: Traffic police, as in, the police normally patrolling the roads. Was there a reduction in police patrolling the roads to put resources into the COVID response?

Mr P. PAPALIA: At what time?

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Dr D.J. HONEY: Over the past 12 months.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Obviously, during some parts of that time there was very little traffic. When we shut borders and imposed multiple internal borders on the state, the flow of traffic was massively diminished. There was really very little concern around policing traffic other than the roadblocks that we had enforced. With regard to outside those times, I can ask the Commissioner of Police to respond to that.

Mr C. Dawson: With respect to police officers deployed on duties during certain periods of border control, we had the business of dealing with arrivals by road during the year at the South Australian border at Eucla, with just under 100 000 arrivals over that full year. That obviously required stopping individual vehicles and persons to be spoken to. There were 51 023 arrivals at the Northern Territory border at Kununurra on Victoria Highway. Just over 150 000 vehicles were stopped. That was just at the border control, but the member may recall that we had three periods of border control lockdowns: between 1 and 14 February 2021, in which we stopped 232 077 vehicles; between 24 and 27 April, some 39 305 vehicles were stopped; and between 29 June and 3 July, just over the financial year, with 63 704 vehicles stopped. They contained 455 000 people as a sum total just during those three operations.

In regard to breath and drug testing, for a very short time we suspended the use of breath and drug testing by way of what is commonly known as booze buses. That was for only several weeks during quite a heightened risk of outbreak and infection control. We had public health advice about that. There was a heightened state of public health concerns about asking people to blow into an apparatus and in a randomised way. It did not prevent police from still apprehending people and charging people for drink or drug-impaired driving. But for a short time we did lower the incidence, and that was based on public health advice. Also, we had some challenges, obviously, with police wearing personal protective equipment during that time. That has all been fully accommodated and addressed, but it had a marginal impact on the enforcement role for police.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to page 410 of budget paper No 2, volume 2, under “Spending Changes” and the line item “RTTA—Mobile Camera Trial—Metropolitan and Regional”. What is the total funding allocated to this trial?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I think I already read it out as \$1.5 million. It was in that list when the member asked about the road trauma trust account allocations. It was one of those line items.

Ms L. METTAM: I can see the \$1.5 million in the 2021–22 budget. I interpreted that as the project had increased in cost by \$1.5 million. Can the minister clarify? Is the whole cost of the program \$1.5 million?

Mr P. PAPALIA: That is a new trial and it is a funding allocation for a trial of a mobile point-to-point camera system, which is a new thing for Western Australia. It is pretty new to the country. I think one other jurisdiction might have trialled or implemented it. It will be similar to the point-to-point speed cameras that the member will have on the way to Vasse, her electorate, along the Forrest Highway. These are mobile, though, so we could have a couple of trailers with the same capability but they provide enhanced capabilities. The idea is that we will get cameras that record not only speed, but also have the capacity to identify whether people are wearing seatbelts or using mobile phones. I also hope we will have automatic numberplate recognition, and, with any luck, the idea would be that we link that piece of equipment to our State Operations Command Centre to provide extra intelligence. That is what I hope we will achieve. It is a trial at the outset. In the event that it works and is successful, we will look towards another budget and potentially roll it out more widely.

[7.20 pm]

Ms L. METTAM: By definition, it is not at a fixed location; it is mobile in terms of movement and not just picking up mobiles!

Mr P. PAPALIA: No, it is not picking up mobiles. It is literally something that is mobile and can be placed in different locations around the state. Parts of the state that at the moment do not get much in terms of that type of coverage would be captured.

Ms L. METTAM: I am not sure whether the minister can answer this, but what is the current technology in relation to mobile phone use while driving? I appreciate that it is an ongoing concern. A pilot program is being invested in at the moment. Do the current cameras also enforce —

Mr P. PAPALIA: No; they are just purely for speed. A camera system is being trialled on the Mitchell Freeway, but that is not being done by the police or the Road Safety Commission; that is being done by Main Roads Western Australia.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Is that the one that looks like something from *Dr Who*?

Mr P. PAPALIA: No, not that one. I think the member is talking about speed cameras. Main Roads is trialling one on the Mitchell Freeway that also has the capacity to detect mobile use and the wearing of seatbelts. It is that sort of technology, but it is a fixed camera. We are looking at mobile cameras, so that will enable us to move them around.

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People will not necessarily know where they will be, and we can put them on roads that in the past would not have had coverage.

Ms M.J. HAMMAT: My question relates to page 412 and the fifteenth point under “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency”. Can the minister outline the new funding from the state and federal governments for the regional road safety program and how this will improve road safety in regional WA?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Essentially, as a consequence of a partnership with the federal government, the program is part of the single biggest investment in regional road safety in this state’s history. It looks at things like a wider bitumen seal to road shoulders and the installation of audible edging and centrelines in a lot of the major arterials roads in regions that have been identified, mainly by Main Roads, as needing necessary and likely improvements that could be achieved through this investment. I am hopeful that it will result in a significant reduction in some of our single car run-offs, because they seem to be terribly prevalent. People are driving themselves off the road often because of fatigue or inattention and having serious crashes. These changes have been proven to work, and there has been something like a 50 per cent reduction in serious and fatal crashes on Indian Ocean Drive since those types of works were rolled out. The hope is that we achieve that sort of reduction elsewhere where we are doing it.

It will be very interesting to watch the program’s impact, because serious regional crashes involving injury, serious injury or fatalities disproportionately contribute to our road toll. The regions used to comprise something like 60 per cent of fatalities on roads and now it is more like 70 per cent, so anything that will reduce that outcome will get an enhanced return in the reduction of the overall road toll.

Ms L. METTAM: On page 410 under spending changes is the regional road enforcement unit.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Volume 2, page 410, and the line item “Regional Road Enforcement—Increased Police Deployment”?

Ms L. METTAM: Yes. The increased police deployment is reflected as only \$1.5 million for 2021–22. How many FTEs will that provide for that year, and how will they be funded going forward?

Mr P. PAPALIA: This is from the road trauma trust account, and that is just one source of funding for that activity to enhance our regional roads enforcement. I might hand over to the Commissioner of Police about where they specifically are. I have been down to Capel where one of the regional road enforcement units is located. An enhanced presence on regional roads is partly a consequence of this funding. I might hand over to the commissioner, for enlightenment.

Mr C. Dawson: Thank you. The regional road enforcement is designed primarily based on the road safety statistics about persons who are killed or seriously injured. Ordinarily, they are measured in the major arterial roads to and from the Perth metropolitan area, in a radius of about 400 kilometres of the major arterial roads. Speed still remains a significant factor on those arterial roads. On average, over the past five years, in 53 deaths a year, which is about 32 per cent of the deaths, speed has been a significant factor. The extent of the situation in regional WA is further emphasised in that south west corner, which the member is obviously well aware of as it is in her electorate, which comprises some 24 per cent of the state population. Approximately 70 per cent of deaths on WA roads have occurred on roads in regional WA compared with a five-year average of about 60 per cent.

The deployment of regional road enforcement will complement that supplied by the district police. By way of example, the police at Bunbury and Busselton will still deploy and enforce, but, as the minister has already outlined, at Capel, a component of the deployment of officers are dedicated to regional road enforcement. The concept is based on statistics and harm, and optimises the deployment to get maximum use of police visibility on the roads, which obviously complements other road enforcement measures such as cameras. The concept has been in operation, in my estimation, on regional road enforcement for about 10 years, and it has proven to be quite successful.

Ms L. METTAM: How many FTEs make up the funding allocation?

[7.30 pm]

Mr P. PAPALIA: I might get Deputy Commissioner Blanch to answer that one.

Mr C. Blanch: Thank you. The \$1.5 million increase —

Mr P. PAPALIA: Sorry; instead of Deputy Commissioner Blanch, Mr Pasquale seems to be the one who might have the correct answer.

Mr F. Pasquale: The additional investment is not for new police officers. It is basically supplementing the existing capacity with extra funding to be able to do blitz-type operations. It provides for overtime and any consumable costs.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Does the member know there is a unit based at Capel?

Ms L. METTAM: Yes.

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Mr P. PAPALIA: The member has probably visited it. It is dedicated to that task.

Ms L. METTAM: To clarify, why is this funding allocated for just one year? What will happen in the forward estimates, beyond 2022?

Mr P. PAPALIA: The road trauma trust account is allocated on the recommendation of the Road Safety Council to the Road Safety Commission. The recommendations that it made were 100 per cent complied with. That determination is made by the Road Safety Council and then complied with by the Road Safety Commission in this case.

Are we all good on road safety?

Ms L. METTAM: We are good.

Mr P. PAPALIA: If members do not mind, we will excuse Iain and Adrian. They can go home. Thank you very much for accommodating that; we will let them go home and enjoy the evening.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I refer to paragraph 6 on page 411. I quote —

The Western Australia Police Force continues to build positive relationships with young people in the community. This work includes contributing to better outcomes for youth and the community by leveraging opportunities with partner agencies, including the Police and Community Youth Centres, to provide early intervention, diversion and prevention strategies for at-risk young people.

I have asked this question in Parliament before. I refer to anywhere in regional Western Australia in places like Carnarvon, Meekatharra or Broome. It is not that I am against the strategy, but it needs to be fully funded and provided with support programs for youth crime. I want to know whether the minister or his predecessor has issued a directive to the Commissioner of Police, or whether the Commissioner of Police has issued a directive to police officers around regional Western Australia, not to charge youth under the age of 15 years, or charge youth up to a certain point when they get out of control. Like I said, in places like Carnarvon, people need respite from the youth crime that is going on. The police officers also need a break as well as the youth who are continually breaking and entering, and causing damage. They need a break from society for their own selves. Is it true that there is a directive by the commissioner issued to police officers not to charge youth under the age of 15 years?

Mr P. PAPALIA: No.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Is there no directive to charge or, let me put the question a little bit differently —

Mr P. PAPALIA: You made a speech, member. If you have a question, ask the question. Do not precede it with a massive speech that is intended to be divisive and encourage concern in the community over, I do not know, Facebook posts or whatever it is the member is sourcing his material from.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: There is concern in the community; that is the problem.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Just ask a question with a line item from the budget.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: It is paragraph 6 on page 411. I want to know whether it is true that the commissioner has directed officers to try to avoid charging youth under the age of 15 years by going into juvenile justice strategies, to other families or next of kin before youth are being charged through the court system. I want to know whether there is any foot on the hose for charging youth under the age of 15. We do have a crime problem and we do have a youth problem. The evidence I have heard from police officers around this state is that they have a directive not to charge youth under the age of 15 years.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I already answered the member's question.

The CHAIR: Let us move on with a new question. I give the call to the member for Cottesloe.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I refer to page 409 in budget paper No 2, volume 2. Note (a) under the table refers to the redress scheme for the police. In the past 12 months, how many applications have there been and how many applications have been accepted under that scheme?

Mr P. PAPALIA: No, member; that scheme has closed.

Dr D.J. HONEY: The scheme has been completed.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Yes, it has been completed. Essentially, some 70 per cent of applications were found to be eligible. There were 366 applicants. They were assessed by an independent assessment panel. The member would recall former Commissioner O'Callaghan was chair of it and there was representation from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. In total, 265 applicants were assessed as eligible. As part of the process, a review was undertaken into an applicant's cadet service history, which resulted in a further eight eligible applicants receiving supplementary payments of around \$123 000. The redress scheme concluded on 31 July last year.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I understand that it has become a normal workers' compensation claim. How many claims have there been for workers' compensation for the police?

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Mr P. PAPALIA: No, member. Historically, police have what is considered to be more generous medical benefits than that of other public servants. This government, for the first time in history, undertook a range of initiatives to address caring for medically retired police officers in a more comprehensive manner. The first thing we did was remove them from being dealt with under a section 8 notice, which is the same process by which people are dealt with if they had a loss of confidence by the commissioner. We then initiated the redress scheme, which I just referred to. That was the first time it had been provided.

Last December, before the election, the Premier and the then Minister for Police gave a commitment at the WA Police Union AGM that the government would introduce a police compensation scheme. It would preserve all their current entitlements. Every state government prior to this time in history has indicated that, were police to be given a form of compensation, they would have to relinquish part of their entitlements as quid pro quo. The Premier gave an assurance that that would not be the case. It is quite a comprehensive and pretty significant change. At the moment, we are working on the legislation to enable the establishment of a police compensation scheme. We are still working on that. I hope to conclude that work in the near term and introduce it to Parliament. I look forward to everyone supporting it.

[7.40 pm]

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to page 126 of budget paper No 3. Under the heading “COVID-19 Emergency Management”, it states —

The Western Australia Police Force spent \$34.3 million in 2020–21 on operational costs to support the State’s emergency response to the COVID-19 ...

The additional operating costs relate to processing international and interstate travellers, the G2G Pass application ...

And other pandemic-related costs. Since Victoria moved to high risk, how many G2G PASS applications have been received from people in Victoria and how many were approved?

Mr P. PAPALIA: The member needs to refer to a budget line item and a matter addressed in the budget. The member is asking about something that was not part of the crafting of the budget. It needs to be about what has been allocated is for the budget in this financial year or in this budget round. The member is asking about something that is operationally related to a period that was probably post the compiling of this budget. It is probably more appropriate for the member to put a question of that nature on notice to me as the minister, as this relates to current operations, not the budget.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Could she do it by way of supplementary information?

Mr P. PAPALIA: No.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Why not?

Mr P. PAPALIA: It is because I asked for it to be put on notice. Did the member not hear the instructions at the start of the hearing?

The CHAIR: The minister can choose not answer and he can choose for it to be put on notice.

Mr P. PAPALIA: That is appropriate because it is not really a budget matter.

The CHAIR: Would you like it on notice, member for Vasse?

Mr P. PAPALIA: She has to put it on notice in her own time.

Ms L. METTAM: I have to put it on notice.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I refer to page 410, significant issues impacting the agency and the COVID-19 response. The first paragraph states —

... the Western Australia Police Force is performing duties associated with border security, quarantine arrangements, track and trace services and compliance measures.

How many individuals in Western Australia have been fined for breaching COVID directions? What is the total value of fines issued up to when the budget was finalised?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I am informed that the total, probably at the last time it was compiled, was 766 infringements. I cannot tell the member the overall quantum of fines.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Do they vary?

Mr P. PAPALIA: There are different penalties. Again, that is a question I suggest the member put on notice.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Any chance of getting it as supplementary information?

Mr P. PAPALIA: No.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: How many businesses have been fined for breaching COVID directions? What is the total value of those fines?

Mr P. PAPALIA: We do not have to hand the breakdown the member has requested. If the member puts the question on notice, I will get an answer to him.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Can I ask for it as supplementary information?

Mr P. PAPALIA: No.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: How many cautions or warnings have been issued to individuals or businesses for breaching COVID-19 directions?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I am not sure that that is a category. There are cautions. There have been 42 cautions, including 10 juvenile cautions.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: It is a big problem that people are very complacent, particularly in regional Western Australia, about checking in and businesses do not direct their customers to check-in. How many individuals and businesses have been penalised for failing to use the SafeWA check-in system?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I think that is kind of what the member asked before about how many businesses have been penalised for not complying. The member will have to put the question on notice.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Any chance, yet again, of getting it as supplementary information?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I am reluctant to take supplementary questions for this sort of statistical data because it takes up police time, and right now they are pretty busy. They are focused on defending the state against one of the greatest threats we have encountered since the Second World War. I do not want to divert police from the priority of that task to something that can be done a little slower in accordance with the obligations around putting questions on notice. The questions are not extraordinarily related to the budget. Members can ask me those sorts of questions any time and I will provide them with an answer in accordance with the standing orders on questions on notice.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Minister, I beg to differ. This is what Parliament and the budget process is about. We live in a democratic system in which it is our job, on behalf of Western Australians and taxpayers, to question ministers and any department. It is our duty as members of Parliament to ask those questions. This is not about whether it takes up one's time; this is about being open and transparent. The minister's government was elected on rolled-gold transparency in 2017, but there has been anything but rolled-gold transparency and openness from this government.

Mr P. PAPALIA: It is about the prioritisation of effort.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Accountability is not a government priority.

Mr P. PAPALIA: The priority for the state, the government and the vast majority of Western Australians right now is keeping the state safe in the midst of a global pandemic. I am pretty comfortable about asking the member to put the question on notice. He will still get an answer; it is just that it will be in accordance with the standing orders.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: It is never accountable. Is making sure the government is operating in the correct manner not being safe?

The CHAIR: Minister, would you like to move on? Next question, please.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I refer to page 409 of budget paper No 2, volume 2. I note that the net appropriation to deliver services has a very marginal increase from the 2020–21 estimated actual to the 2020–21 budget estimate and then relatively moderate increases going forward. The government has committed to 950 extra policemen. How will those additional police officers be accommodated inside that relatively marginal increase in the budget line item?

Mr P. PAPALIA: The commitment to what is essentially 950 additional officers above attrition over four years began in the previous budget period. In fact, in the last financial year 350 officers above attrition were recruited. For the next three years, there will be 200 additional officers above attrition each year, and the budget accommodates those numbers.

Dr D.J. HONEY: What is the average cost, approximately, of an additional police person, plus likely support resources?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I might throw to Mr Pasquale for that one.

[7.50 pm]

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Mr F. Pasquale: I do not have the exact cost to hand, but I can probably qualify the first question. All the salaries and directly related costs of employment under the program for the additional 950 police officers are incorporated right across the forward estimates. That includes funding for uniforms, the recruitment processes, and equipment and vehicles. I refer the member to page 410 where he will see a reference to infrastructure planning under the line item “New Initiatives”, which is about halfway down the page. That refers to the provision from the government to fund the police to plan for our capital accommodation requirements and to also supplement the employment of the additional officers under the 950 program. Other costs will come on board to accommodate the future placement of the 950 program.

Mr P. PAPALIA: The costs beyond wages and personnel are also accommodated in other parts of the budget through infrastructure programs for some of the buildings that will be built to accommodate the future growth as a consequence of the 950 program.

Dr D.J. HONEY: My assumptions for the personnel costs—the minister would have this in his budget—is that it would probably cost about \$150 000 on average per new police officer if that includes on-costs plus equipment costs and the like. I am trying to get a sense of whether other money had to be found inside the budget or whether the budget has been increased adequately to cover that. The minister must have an average cost that he uses when he brings on a new police officer.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I think Mr Pasquale answered the member’s question when he said that the cost of the growth is accommodated for in the budget.

Dr D.J. HONEY: With all due respect, minister, that does not tell me the estimated cost per person.

Mr P. PAPALIA: The member can put that on notice, if he wants to.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I would not have thought that was a hard question, but I will not hold the minister to it.

Mr P. PAPALIA: The person responsible just told the member that he could not give the answer right now and he also said that the full cost is accommodated for in the budget.

Dr D.J. HONEY: He did not say that he could not give me the answer.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: How many of the 950 police officers, by FTE, will be deployed over 2020–21 —

Mr P. PAPALIA: Which line is the member referring to?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I am referring to the 950 police officers.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Which line is it?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I refer to the second significant issue impacting the agency on page 410 under the heading “Safe, Strong and Fair Communities”. It is down the bottom of the page and states —

To meet the Government’s commitment of an additional 950 police officers ...

How many of the 950 police officers, by FTE, will be deployed over 2021–22 and the forward estimates? How many of those, by FTE, will be located in the regions? What allocation has been made to Government Regional Officers’ Housing to accommodate those officers?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I will not respond to the third question because this is the wrong portfolio. That relates to the Minister for Housing, and the member can ask that of him. I can ask the commissioner to respond to the number of police officers and where they might go.

Mr C. Dawson: Of the additional officers, we have already decided to allocate a number to regional WA. The member would be aware that we have promised that additional officers will go to the electorate of Carnarvon as part of the initial allocation.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I have heard that it will be nine, five and three.

Mr C. Dawson: My colleague might have the number —

Mr P. PAPALIA: Hang on a minute. The member has to ask the question through me. What did the member ask?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I asked whether it will be nine, five or three.

Mr P. PAPALIA: In relation to what?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: In relation to what the commissioner was saying about the number of police officers going to Carnarvon.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Was it about the number of additional officers in Carnarvon specifically?

Chair; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Vincent Catania; Ms Libby Mettam; Dr David Honey; Ms Meredith Hammat; Ms Hannah Beazley; Ms Divina D'Anna

Mr V.A. CATANIA: The commissioner mentioned Carnarvon and I asked how many additional police officers there will be. I have heard that there will be nine, five and three. I asked him whether he could put a figure on it.

Mr P. PAPALIA: That is getting a bit in the weeds for the commissioner to be responding to.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I will let the commissioner continue and I will ask a follow-up question.

Mr C. Dawson: We have made a decision on the allocation. With some specificity, my recollection is that five FTE have been allocated to Carnarvon itself. We have done that based on a supply-and-demand match. Some FTE has been appropriated specifically to assist the court security and custodial services contract. My recollection is that after some extensive negotiation with the Department of Justice, 67 FTE were specifically allocated to places that have a District Court and also for the transfer of prisoners. Again using Carnarvon as an example, as the member is aware, that applies to the transfer points for the movement of incarcerated and/or remand prisoners, and includes Kununurra, Broome, Karratha, Carnarvon and Busselton. There may be one other location that I have missed; I am doing this from memory.

Further to that, we have also extended specialist support by way of additional detectives and general duties officers throughout regional WA. We have withheld making a decision over the last two years of the forward estimates because we primarily need to support the COVID-19 response through Operation Tide. As at the end of September 2021, 300 recruits of the additional 950 additional officers had graduated, and by April 2022, a further 230 recruits will graduate. They will then be able to be supplemented beyond the COVID response. Ideally, they will be able to be further distributed throughout the metropolitan area and regional Western Australia. We have not come to a definitive landing on that yet because we are still in a state of emergency. As I said in one of my earlier responses, we have had to issue, and as the State Emergency Coordinator I have signed, over 700 individual Emergency Management Act directions. Depending on whether there has been an infection—the member would be aware that we had two truck drivers who recently travelled to Western Australia across three jurisdictions—we have to put additional measures in place. We supplement officers in the country in places such as Eucla and Kununurra and, at times, we have also had infected crew members coming to Western Australia who have had to be brought ashore to places such as Geraldton and Port Hedland. In those instances, we surge the number of police to support the local police. We have kept it intentionally dynamic and agile so that we do not denude the local policing effort. Deputy Commissioner Dreibergs and Assistant Commissioner Steel are doing that on a day-to-day basis and ensuring that the local communities do not suffer a loss of the policing effort, because we have in excess of 500 officers that we have dedicated to the COVID-19 response. Although we use local police if necessary, we are always supplementing them by flying officers back and forth from the Kimberley out to Eucla et cetera, and we will supplement them again, depending on the particular criticality.

In summing up, there are further additional officers who can be permanently deployed, and have been already. They have already arrived at places like Busselton, Derby, Kununurra and Broome. As we emerge out of the state of emergency, I expect that we will be in a better position to make those longer term decisions.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Essentially, that reflects what I have already said about the prioritisation. The operational demand is met as required. The priority of the policing effort goes towards the greatest risk. Right now we are in the middle of a pandemic, which represents a pretty serious risk to the state. Obviously, that gets priority with respect to personnel deployment, but there is flexibility in the system to meet the ongoing policing challenges as well.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: The commissioner mentioned the 67 police officers in regional WA such as in Carnarvon, Kununurra and Broome where the court systems are, and he mentioned that additional police are taking over the roles that would normally be done by —

Mr P. PAPALIA: There has been a deployment of police officers to fill the vacuum that existed during the entire time of the previous government's tenure. The member for Vasse would know that for a long time the police officers in Busselton have been requesting additional officers to meet the requirements around court security. That is similarly the case in a number of regional areas. As a consequence of this growth in recruiting and additional police officer numbers and prioritisation by the commissioner, it is now being done by police officers.

[8.00 pm]

Mr V.A. CATANIA: It is now being done by police officers, so they are not additional police who are on the beat, working the beat and assisting?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Essentially, if they are there and they were not there before, who does the member think was doing the work before when they were required to assist with court security?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I am assuming that the company has a contract; I am not too sure.

Mr P. PAPALIA: No, no, no. For eight and a half years in government, the previous government failed to respond to this task.

Chair; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Vincent Catania; Ms Libby Mettam; Dr David Honey; Ms Meredith Hammat; Ms Hannah Beazley; Ms Divina D'Anna

Mr V.A. CATANIA: The minister is saying that in regional WA, in places where there is a court like Carnarvon, Kununurra and so forth, the additional police officers are there to provide security at the courthouse itself, not to actually walk the beat?

Mr P. PAPALIA: That is partly so. They support the security requirements and there is flexibility around the use of the police officers, but they are additional officers who were not there when the member was in government.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I refer to page 412 of budget paper No 2, volume 2, relationship to government goals, and the government goal “Safe, Strong and Fair Communities”. Police response times in the Perth district and Northbridge have increased from 2.9 minutes in 2016–17 to 13.6 minutes in 2020–21. Does the minister believe that that is an adequate response time for the Perth region, and what has caused that significant increase in response times?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Which line is the member referring to?

Dr D.J. HONEY: I am referring to the government goal of “Safe, Strong and Fair Communities” on page 412 of budget paper No 2, volume 2.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Where is response times there?

Dr D.J. HONEY: The government goal —

Mr P. PAPALIA: Where is response times there?

Dr D.J. HONEY: Response time is part of safe, strong and fair communities.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Where is response times there?

Dr D.J. HONEY: Also as a key effectiveness indicator. It is not in there, minister, but it is part of being a safe and strong community.

Mr P. PAPALIA: No, it is not. The member is not referring to a line in the budget.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Therefore, the minister does not need to respond to it. That is very poor.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I refer to page 420 of budget paper No 2, volume 2, details of controlled grants and subsidies. I point out the “Police and Community Youth Centres (PCYC) Carnarvon and Kununurra”. I want to put on record: thank you for the invite to the opening! It was very disappointing that I never got one. Unfortunately, this is where the politics play out, but as the local member, it was disappointing that I did not get an invite. I want to put that on record.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Thank you, member. I will pass on to the PCYC that hosted that event and was responsible for the invitations that you are disappointed with it. I will let Geoff Stooke know that you are disappointed in his performance.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Unfortunately, during the election campaign, the manager of the PCYC was promoting the Labor Party candidate. I just want to put that out there. My question is: can the minister confirm that as an election commitment in 2017, \$3 million was allocated to the PCYC in Carnarvon?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Member, what I can confirm is that your front knows no bounce. You are a pretty appalling political animal when it comes to your reference to volunteers at the PCYC.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I just want to know. Was it \$3 million, minister?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Is the member saying that the volunteer at the PCYC is not doing a good job?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I did not say that at all. I want to know —

Mr P. PAPALIA: The member’s reference earlier on was pretty embarrassing.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I am asking the minister a question. Was it the government’s election commitment of \$3 million to build a PCYC? When I look at the budget, under \$1 million has been spent, so what happened to the over \$2 million for PCYC? It has left community groups now without a home.

Mr P. PAPALIA: What I can confirm is that over the eight and a half years of the Liberal–National government —

Mr V.A. CATANIA: You have been in government now for five years.

The CHAIR: Member for North West Central, let the minister answer.

Mr P. PAPALIA: — led by Colin Barnett, in which members of the Nationals WA were key ministers, the PCYC was bled dry.

Mr V.A. CATANIA interjected.

The CHAIR: Member for North West Central, please let the minister answer.

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A — Tuesday, 21 September 2021]

p63b-87a

Chair; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Vincent Catania; Ms Libby Mettam; Dr David Honey; Ms Meredith Hammat; Ms Hannah Beazley; Ms Divina D'Anna

Mr P. PAPALIA: It was left in an almost bankrupt situation. Police were removed from support of the organisation. There was no funding given for sustaining its operations and it was at the point of insolvency in accordance with the observation that has been made by the PCYC itself. It is thankful that we took office. I think in the order of \$19 million or \$20 million in capital works was delivered in conjunction with the federal government, I must add, to upgrading and restoring a number of the buildings around the state. The one in Carnarvon is a magnificent building now that has been fully restored by a local operator.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Northern Aspect Construction, a very good builder.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Similarly, the one in Broome is magnificent. The one in Bunbury is extraordinary. There is one in Collie. I have not been to all of them; I am getting around to them. The PCYC is a wonderful institution and the McGowan government has backed it from the word go. As I said, I think in the order of \$19 million or \$20 million in capital works has been committed to PCYC buildings, and some of it is still being delivered. The PCYCs in Midland and Rockingham are being restored as we speak. There was \$19 million in recurrent funding given to PCYC in the first term of the McGowan government.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: What about the Carnarvon PCYC? How much was that?

Mr P. PAPALIA: There was \$19 million to enable delivery —

Mr V.A. CATANIA: How much was the PCYC in Carnarvon? That is my question, minister.

The CHAIR: Member for North West Central!

Mr P. PAPALIA: There was \$19 million to enable delivery of programs across the state, and in this term of government, we have committed \$18 million of further funding to sustain operations of the PCYC.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Point of order, Madam Chair. This is not the question I asked. I asked specifically about the Carnarvon PCYC and why it has been short-changed by over \$2 million.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Eddie was not upset; as the shire president, he was pretty happy with the PCYC when I was up there. I did not meet one person in Carnarvon who was unhappy about the investment in the PCYC in Carnarvon or the delivery of the service. I am quite struck by the member's lack of connection to the town if he feels that people are aggrieved over what has been done at the PCYC. It is an extraordinary improvement. The gym there started off with about 75 members. The last I heard, I think well over 200 local people have joined up to the gym there, providing a revenue stream for the PCYC and also a great facility for the town. Its basketball court is probably the best one in town. The mechanical and automotive training facility there is extraordinary. One of the oldest school buildings has been fully restored to enable classrooms for arts and other community activities, and it has greened an outside area to enable the kids to get involved in different sports. The whole place is just remarkable. I am pretty worried that the member would seek to come into this place and try to criticise what has been done and undermine the PCYC and its commitment to the town of Carnarvon and the service that it is delivering. It is wonderful that it is back. It was almost gone under the previous government, operating out of a tin shed, with no funding and no support to the structure or the organisation across the state. That is a good news story for the McGowan government. I would be staying away from it if I were the member.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I have a further question, Madam Chair.

The CHAIR: I think the minister has answered the question.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: No; I have a further question. The PCYC in Carnarvon has been short-changed by \$2 million by this government. That means that the old PCYC building is now going to be sold, although taxpayers' and ratepayers' money have gone into that facility, because of the short-changing of \$2 million for the PCYC in Carnarvon. That means that about a dozen community groups that would utilise a facility like the PCYC, gymnastics being one, are now left without a home. My point is that by not spending \$3 million in making it a fantastic PCYC that can cater for all community groups, it has now left a lot of community groups without a home. That is the point I was trying to make. The minister can dress it up and put lipstick on it, but it still does not cater for the needs of Carnarvon. That is what the minister missed out on.

[8.10 pm]

Mr P. PAPALIA: The member is probably the only member of Parliament in the state, and certainly the only person in Carnarvon, who would be complaining about the quality of the service that is being delivered by the PCYC and the enhancement of the facilities that was delivered.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I am not complaining about the quality at all, minister. I am complaining that it is not big enough.

The CHAIR: Member for North West Central, let the minister answer.

Chair; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Vincent Catania; Ms Libby Mettam; Dr David Honey; Ms Meredith Hammat; Ms Hannah Beazley; Ms Divina D'Anna

Mr P. PAPALIA: It is just extraordinary that the member would think that the best thing for him to do as a local member in a town like Carnarvon —

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Keep talking, because everyone is watching this.

The CHAIR: Member for North West Central!

Mr P. PAPALIA: If they are watching, mate, they would be embarrassed by you.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: They are embarrassed by you.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I refer to page 413 of volume 2 of budget paper No 2 and the line item under “Outcomes and Key Effectiveness Indicators” for the rate of offences against the person, excluding family violence–related offences, per 100 000 people. Can the minister confirm that the level of violent crime is the highest in the state’s history?

Mr P. PAPALIA: That is not what the line refers to, member. The line refers to the rate of offences against the person, excluding family violence–related offences, per 100 000 people. Is that the one the member is talking about?

Dr D.J. HONEY: I am, and part of that is violent crime against the person.

Mr P. PAPALIA: No, it is not.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Part of that statistic is —

Mr P. PAPALIA: No, it is not.

Dr D.J. HONEY: — violent crime.

Mr P. PAPALIA: That is not the line.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Then where does the violent crime statistic appear in the metrics?

Mr P. PAPALIA: The member asks this question in Parliament quite regularly.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Once.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I have answered it several times during question time. The rate of crimes per 100 000 people that the member is referring to that are listed here, excluding family violence–related offences, are inclusive of a range of crimes, many of which are not predictable or the type that can be anticipated. For instance, I think murder falls under that category. I am not sure what it is the member is trying to get at. If he is saying that women who suffer sexual assault should not report it to the police, and that he views it as not a good thing if they feel more comfortable about reporting those types of crimes because they understand that the police will view them as a more serious crime than they might have done in the past, and that they will be dealt with in a very sympathetic and responsive fashion, then that is a pretty poor suggestion on his behalf.

Dr D.J. HONEY: That is an offensive assertion on the minister’s part. He knows that is not the question I am asking.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I do not know what the member is asking.

Dr D.J. HONEY: The minister has previously tried to obfuscate in an answer to this question by saying that it is due to family and domestic violence–related offences, but the only point I make in relation to his offensive comment to me is that if those other statistics are excluded, the rate of violent crime against the person is, in fact, the highest in the state’s history. The only reason for saying that those statistics are excluded is to highlight the problem that we have a linear and increasing level of violent crime against the person. It is my grave concern that whatever is being done in relation to this is ineffective.

Mr P. PAPALIA: The member can criticise the police all he wants, but I will defend their performance.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I am criticising the minister.

Mr P. PAPALIA: The peak of the rate of crimes against the person came under the member’s government in 2015–16 and that has not changed. That peak was the highest point.

Dr D.J. HONEY: For violent crime against the person? That is just untrue.

Mr P. PAPALIA: There was a decline in crimes of this nature under our government in the couple of years prior to the pandemic.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I do not know why the minister keeps hiding that inside the total crime numbers. It is violent crime against the person that is increasing in a linear fashion under his government.

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

Chair; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Vincent Catania; Ms Libby Mettam; Dr David Honey; Ms Meredith Hammat; Ms Hannah Beazley; Ms Divina D'Anna

Dr D.J. HONEY: I am referring to the crimes that are reported in the police annual report. If we go through those statistics and look at the record of violent crime against the person, we see that there is a linear increase. If we strip out those factors that the minister has tried to say is the reason for it, it is at a record level.

Mr P. PAPALIA: No, it is not. There has been an increase in the population over the time frame to which the member refers of about 100 000 people, which has resulted in a linear increase in the raw number of incidents of offences in alignment with—in fact, it is a little bit lower than—the population increase. Beyond that, the member's effort in trying to, at a stretch, append some sort of responsibility for increases in crime to the government is a bit crazy.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: But when it goes the other way, the minister likes to take the credit.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I do not take the credit for anything.

Dr D.J. HONEY: My concern is whether the police are being given adequate support to deal with that.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Okay. Since the Liberal–National government lost office, the budget for police has increased over the five years or so of budgets by more than \$1 billion. Resourcing of police to fund the biggest increase in police numbers in the history of the state has been given in accordance with the contribution from Mr Pasquale earlier on. In the last term of office, we provided police with body-worn cameras, body armour and digital technology that enables every police officer to be connected to databases like never before. We included in the last budget resourcing for a new helicopter, and in the current budget there is resourcing for another one. There are improvements in capabilities as a consequence of resourcing like never before in the state, yet we are in the middle of a pandemic and there has been an increase in population since crime peaked under the Liberal–National government in 2016. If the member wants to look at the rest of the statistics, he will find that overall crime statistics have diminished since the peak.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Response times have quadrupled.

Mr P. PAPALIA: We are in the middle of a pandemic, member for Cottesloe.

Dr D.J. HONEY: So what?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Would you expect there to be no impact on any policing activity?

Dr D.J. HONEY: I would not expect a quadrupling in time because we do not have COVID in Western Australia.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Hang on a minute; what is this quadrupling in time that you are referring to?

The CHAIR: Will you go through the chair, please.

Dr D.J. HONEY: It is in response times, which you refused to answer earlier.

The CHAIR: Will you address the chair, please.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Which line of the budget are you referring to?

Dr D.J. HONEY: You refused to answer before.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I know you have not done this many times; you are pretty new to Parliament, but you must refer to a line item in the budget if you want an answer to a question.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Your metrics are terrible and you are not answering the question.

Mr P. PAPALIA: It is probably a longer speech than your inaugural. If you want to ask a question, choose a line in the budget and refer to it.

The CHAIR: New question, member for North West Central.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I refer to the extra 950 police officers —

Mr P. PAPALIA: Which page?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: It is page 410 and the second issue, “Safe, Strong and Fair Communities”. I refer to the additional 950 police officers and note that communities such as Exmouth and Coral Bay have a population of 2 500, but on some days there can be 20 000 people in Coral Bay, which has no police officers whatsoever. It is very difficult for the four police officers in Exmouth to patrol down to Coral Bay as well, which on any given day could have 5 000, 6 000 or 7 000 people. Given the number of tourists who are travelling on the roads, particularly in that region, it puts pressure on a lot of the volunteers, including ambulance volunteers, and also obviously police resources. Is there any scope within the 950 additional police officers to base them in places like Exmouth or Coral Bay, at least during peak periods, for the safety of not only the locals, but also the visitors who are travelling around that region?

[8.20 pm]

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A — Tuesday, 21 September 2021]

p63b-87a

Chair; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Vincent Catania; Ms Libby Mettam; Dr David Honey; Ms Meredith Hammat; Ms Hannah Beazley; Ms Divina D'Anna

Mr P. PAPALIA: The government funds and resources police and operational matters. The disposition or deployment of the resources controlled by police are the responsibility of the Commissioner of Police, and I have great faith that he will respond and deploy his resources as necessary.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Could the minister ask the commissioner why additional resources have not been put into a place like Exmouth? It has a population generally of 2 500 people, swelling up to 20 000, which is putting pressure on his police officers, who also have to look after Coral Bay, which can have another 5 000 or 6 000-plus people? Businesses in Coral Bay have had to use cable ties on an offender after an incident has occurred and have had to wait two and a half hours before a police officer could take the offender away. That is what is happening in Coral Bay.

Mr P. PAPALIA: If the member for North West Central wants to seek advice about a specific incident, I advise him to source the incident report number from the people who have talked to him about the incident and contact my office. I will ask the Commissioner of Police to provide me with a response appropriately.

Ms H.M. BEAZLEY: I refer to page 410, “Spending Changes”, specifically the line item “Proceeds of Crime”. What results have been achieved with the proceeds of crime funding to date?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I might provide the opportunity for Deputy Commissioner Blanch to respond to that question.

Mr C. Blanch: The proceeds of crime investment within Western Australia Police has enabled us to significantly enhance our border operations. During the COVID pandemic, we have been able to access and learn about sequences of data for organised crime and the way they operate in WA and how they work through the pandemic to get methamphetamine and other drugs into Western Australia. We enhanced our border investigation team, our target development team and our organised crime team, the gang response squad. We also set up a squad called drugs and firearms. That has led to a significant achievement with seizures in the order of \$80-odd million in assets and more than 300 kilograms of drugs and arrests in the order of 200-odd people, the most recent being the arrests of 13 people and the seizure of \$7 million and between 15 and 30 kilograms of drugs just last week. These results are unprecedented across Australia. In fact, the cash seizures by Western Australia Police in the last financial year accounted for approximately 80 per cent of the nation’s cash seizures. That is not to say that all the cash for organised crime is in Western Australia; rather, it reflects the strategies that have been applied against organised crime—not only Western Australian criminals, but certainly those criminals who live on the east coast of Australia or who live offshore but still target Western Australia in organised crime. The money in the proceeds of crime fund has been used to target those criminal groups offshore and work with partner agencies, including the Drug Enforcement Administration. We have invested a significant amount to hire a crime strategist from the Drug Enforcement Administration to come here and train our officers in new techniques. The culmination of all that has led to, in recent times, the greatest increase in organised crime disruption in Western Australia.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to page 414, “Explanation of Significant Movements”, specifically the sixth note, which states —

The decrease in the 2020–21 Estimated Actual compared with the 2020–21 Budget and the 2019–20 Actual can be attributed to a 10.9% increase in family violence–related offences against the person compared with 2019–20.

This increase has placed additional demands on available resources to process offenders within seven days. I refer to the 10.9 per cent increase in family violence–related offences. What is the total number of family violence–related offences?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Is the member talking about from 2019–20 to 2020–21?

Ms L. METTAM: Yes.

Mr P. PAPALIA: The total number for assault—family was 21 429 in 2019–20 and 23 792 in 2020–21. There is also threatening behaviour—family, which is related but is another category. The total number was 3 113 in 2019–20 and 3 501 in 2020–21.

Ms L. METTAM: The increase in family and domestic violence–related offences is also having an impact on resourcing demands for processing offenders. What measures have been put in place to address the additional pressures on WA police?

Mr P. PAPALIA: We have increased the budget and the recruiting of police officers, both of which have been increased to the largest extent in the history of the state. With respect to our family violence response, there has been the implementation of family and domestic response teams across all police districts. This incorporates partnerships with Communities, with Communities personnel co-located with police in most of the districts to enhance the response to family and domestic violence incidents. We are looking at operational improvements all the time to enhance and improve the response.

Ms L. METTAM: Given this level of investment, why is the budget target 75 per cent? It seems like it is —

Mr P. PAPALIA: Where is the member referring to now?

Chair; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Vincent Catania; Ms Libby Mettam; Dr David Honey; Ms Meredith Hammat; Ms Hannah Beazley; Ms Divina D'Anna

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to page 413, which relates to that dot point.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Which dot point is that?

Ms L. METTAM: It is the sixth line item under “Outcomes and Key Effectiveness Indicators” on page 413. It refers to the percentage of family and domestic violence–related incidents in which an offender was processed for an offence against the person within seven days. I would have thought that there would have been more confidence and that that percentage would be greater than 75 per cent given the investment that the minister talked about in the area of family and domestic violence and policing. Another way of putting it is: why is the government not expecting or anticipating any significant increases or improvements in the percentage of offenders being processed for an offence within seven days?

[8.30 pm]

Mr P. PAPALIA: On the face of it, I would say it is because the number of incidents is not anticipated to increase. That obviously happened during that reporting period, with, as indicated, a 10.9 per cent increase that resulted in an increased time for response beyond the target. That is not an indicator of any diminishing effort. If that target is hit with a high number of incidents, it will require increased efficiency and performance. It is not a diminution of the importance attached to the task.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to paragraph 4 on page 411 of budget paper No 2, under the heading “Safe, Strong and Fair Communities”, which states —

Increased reporting of family violence and the need to provide victims with continued support and to keep perpetrators accountable ...

Can the minister explain the technological improvements being looked at to improve reporting in this area?

Mr C. Blanch: The technological advances include working with the Department of Communities on a risk assessment tool for initial attendance by police. That risk assessment tool is nationally recognised to ensure that there is a consistent response statewide when we attend a family and domestic violence situation. When the risk assessment is completed, it is made available immediately to not only the police at the State Operations Command Centre, but also the Department of Communities. We are working closely with it on that at the moment. The department has a system called a triage bot that makes sure that it takes the highest priority cases and provides immediate victim support and care. Obviously, the police take the role of perpetrator accountability. The primary objective of the technological advances is to have a consistent statewide approach to all family and domestic violence victims to ensure that victim care is delivered immediately and to hold perpetrators accountable. One of the reasons for the longer response times for family and domestic violence incidents more recently has been that we are dealing with victims who were initially reluctant to come forward. Because of that triage time and the care then applied, some very good work is done with victims to get them to come forward over time. Sometimes that can make it a longer investigation, but a more fruitful one, to make the perpetrators accountable.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to this reporting tool and the improvements that the deputy commissioner was talking about. How long have these things been in place for? Is it a new approach or is it something that has been built on over the last few years?

Mr C. Blanch: This is a new tool. The OneForce platform, which is the mobile phone for police officers, is working in conjunction with the Department of Communities to provide that information immediately. That is a new tool. Previously, it was done through a manual process of reporting, firstly, into the police system. It was triaged by police and then it went to the Department of Communities and was triaged by the Department of Communities. This is the current system. This is about expediting that entire reporting system and making the consistent datasets available to all immediately.

Meeting suspended from 8.35 to 8.44 pm

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

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I refer to page 410, significant issues impacting the agency. Under the heading “Safe Strong and Fair Communities”, paragraph 2 is about an additional 950 police officers. I refer to police Commissioner Chris Dawson’s commentary regarding the review of standards of briefs provided to prosecutors and also comments made by Ms Forrester, the Director of Public Prosecutions, who also took a swipe at police. She said —

... there was a significant decline in the overall standard of briefs provided to the ODPP by the WA Police Force.

She added that ODPP staff were going to considerable additional effort to help investigators do their job, which detracted from them performing their own roles. What review is underway by the WA Police Force to support the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions?

Mr P. PAPALIA: As much as it is all very interesting to refer to media reports or something that happened outside this place and outside the budget, it has nothing to do with the budget line that the member referred to.

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Mr V.A. CATANIA: I am referring to the 950 additional police officers.

Mr P. PAPALIA: What is it the member wants to know about the 950 police officers?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Are those 950 police officers part of the review to increase the number of prosecutors who are able to do their work, given they are clearly under a lot of pressure?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Where in this budget paper in my responsibilities is there anything about the DPP's resources, capabilities or reviews for that matter?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I am talking about the police who, obviously —

Mr P. PAPALIA: I think the member might want to reflect on what he is able to ask questions about in this division. This division is not DPP.

The CHAIR: Member, if you can identify a particular line item on a page —

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Thank you. On page 410, under safe strong and fair communities, paragraph 2 states —

To meet the Government's commitment of an additional 950 police officers over a four year period ...

I am referring to the 950 police officers, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and the review that is being undertaken by the police commissioner, Chris Dawson.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Is there one word about a review in this paragraph?

The CHAIR: Minister, please wait until the member has finished his question.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: These are the comments made by the Director of Public Prosecutions about the standard of briefs provided to the Director of Public Prosecutions by the WA Police Force. I assume that the WA Police Force comes under the Minister for Police. She was clearly saying that the effort of her staff and the work undertaken is covering for the lack of police in that area. Can the minister confirm that the 950 police officers are going to be part of the review to provide more resources to the police in order to go to court?

The CHAIR: Minister, the question does not actually —

Mr P. PAPALIA: It does not comply with standing orders, member, and I am not going to answer it.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to page 410. Under spending changes, the line item "National Anti-gangs Squad" has \$91 000 allocated to it. Why is this program no longer being funded going forward?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I might get Deputy Commissioner Blanch to answer that one.

Mr C. Blanch: The National Anti-Gangs Squad is a commonwealth initiative that is funded over a period of between two and four years at any one time. It has been rolled over by the commonwealth at various intervals. We expect it will continue to be rolled over by the commonwealth, but that is our engagement as part of the national anti-gang work. We still have a gang crime squad that is fully funded by the state and providing full pressure on the bikie squads. This is just about the connectivity into the commonwealth environment and the National Anti-Gangs Squad.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Also, that \$91 000 to which the member referred is in the previous estimated actual. It is an underspend from the year before.

[8.50 pm]

Ms L. METTAM: These are funds that the state contributes to the national program. Can I get an understanding to clarify that point? What does the National Anti-Gangs Squad achieve and how does it fit in with what police do at a state level? My understanding from that clarification is that state funding is provided to the national program.

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

Mr C. Dawson: The National Anti-Gangs Squad continues to detect and disrupt activities of outlaw motorcycle gangs. We know from long history, from our intelligence, and from the conviction and charging of numerous outlaw motorcycle gangs that they are an organised crime entity. There are a number of them in Western Australia. Although the various operations of the National Anti-Gangs Squad are in part funded by the commonwealth, they are part and parcel of the state crime portfolio and we regularly work closely with our organised crime division and our dedicated gang crime squad. By way of example, during the recent Operation Ravello, the National Anti-Gangs Squad supplemented the other gang crime officers as well. We charged over 250 bikies and seized in excess of 90 firearms. During Operation Ravello, we also arrested a person who is now before the court charged with the murder of the former president of the Rebels outlaw motorcycle gang. I cannot comment too much further because the matter is before the court, but it has been a successful operation and is enduring. We continue to utilise the National Anti-Gangs Squad as a supplement to our existing efforts.

Ms L. METTAM: In relation to the issue of gang crimes, and further to this, where are we as a state going? Is the amount of gang-related crime and violence a growing concern in this state? What is the trend?

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Mr P. PAPALIA: No. But in response to the member's question about outlaw motorcycle gangs, as was made clear by the commissioner during the lockdown in the caretaker period, it became evident that there had been a significant disruption of the supply of methamphetamine, in particular, and other illicit drugs to Western Australia as a consequence of the reduction in traffic across the borders and our enhanced ability to identify and isolate the individuals and the means by which they were introducing drugs into the state. Therefore, there was a significant downturn, and it was confirmed by a number of markers. Sewage testing indicated that methamphetamine use had collapsed. Presentations to hospitals related to meth use dropped significantly, and the price on the street elevated. Those three markers, amongst others, indicated that we had had a significant disruption of the supply. That, coupled with intelligence and some of the outcomes of operations conducted, showed that outlaw motorcycle gangs were directly linked to that activity. Therefore, it is a priority for the state and the police. I could hand over to the commissioner if there is something specific that the member wants to know.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Is the crime that has occurred, or the gangs, if you like —

Mr P. PAPALIA: All that collapsed, too. The crime linked to feeding a meth habit across the state collapsed.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: But has the violence of crime escalated in terms of weapons being used? We hear and see a lot on TV about bikies using weapons. Has the severity of these incidents increased?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I might let the commissioner make a response on that in a minute, but I will say that the opportunity of being able to refine our knowledge of the techniques and methodology that individuals and outlaw motorcycle gangs, in particular, were employing has provided us with a pathway towards continued success in interrupting that supply. I will let the commissioner respond.

Mr C. Dawson: In addition to what Deputy Commissioner Blanch answered in the previous question, some 390 kilograms of methylamphetamine was seized in the past year. To illustrate the effectiveness of the strategy of following the money, in the financial year 2016–17, the amount of cash frozen was \$7 million. In the past year, it was \$58 million. As Deputy Commissioner Blanch outlined earlier, this not only was a significant increase at a state level, but also outnumbered, proportionally, the number of national seizures.

There is no doubt that outlaw motorcycle gangs are a key offending group within the procurement, distribution and criminal activities associated with drug distribution and supply. That is demonstrated through the large numbers of offenders who are patched members or associates of outlaw motorcycle gangs. When we do these operations, there are generally three common denominators—drugs, firearms and cash.

In respect of the offending that the member asked about and what type of offences, we know through analysis of wastewater testing and the drug-use monitoring of detainees at the police watch house that there has been a massive reduction in available drugs, which are, as the minister mentioned, those markers. That has also translated to a 40 per cent reduction in burglary offences and theft. This has been the most significant reduction in the 40 years that I have been in policing, and I have never seen anything like it. It is largely attributed to people who steal or commit burglaries to fund their addiction. In real terms, that means that over the past five years we were getting on average about 30 000 home burglaries a year, and that has reduced to about 12 000. It is a most important improvement.

We are not necessarily seeing a direct correlation with violence, but it would be fair to say, and I might just close on an observation as opposed to strict finite statistics, that when the shortage of drugs occurs, we see violent offending against other drug offenders, because there is a shortage of drugs. The drugs have been successfully stopped at the borders and then drug offenders steal from each other because they are short of drugs themselves. Therefore, the crimes of violence that have been seen over the past year have not necessarily been against members of the community; they have been criminals on criminals.

[9.00 pm]

Mr P. PAPALIA: In respect of the member's question, generally, through this unique set of circumstances, whereby the volume of traffic has reduced and techniques and capabilities have been successfully applied to the task, it has refined the visibility of opportunities. I do not want to identify anything in advance of police being ready to make public their intentions beyond what the commissioner already did when he said we had identified, as a consequence of this window, potential pathways for really making a long-term impact on supply, which is linked to the outlaw motorcycle gangs. There is an opportunity now that did not exist before. It will not be long before we can be very clear about where we are going with that.

Ms L. METTAM: That is a significant reduction; I thought the commissioner said from 30 000 to 12 000 home burglaries.

Mr C. Dawson: I may have got that wrong. It may have been 22 000 to 12 000, but it was about 40 per cent.

Mr P. PAPALIA: There were massive reductions in a lot of categories. We could see it was directly linked to the drop in supply and subsequent drop in use. All the other markers indicated that it was a successful interruption of

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supply; it was not that we were finding bigger proportions of an even bigger amount coming across. It actually impacted supply significantly. That had a direct impact on harm.

Ms L. METTAM: I asked about the visibility —

Mr P. PAPALIA: Of gangs?

Ms L. METTAM: Yes, of gang members. I appreciate that the activity has died down as a result of the border restrictions. Does the minister have any visibility of how many gang members there are in Western Australia and perhaps where that is trending?

The CHAIR: The minister can consider how he wants to respond to that. It is not a direct question related to the budget, so it is up to you.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I might ask Deputy Commissioner Blanch to respond. In advance of that, I will reiterate that a number of initiatives are being worked on at the moment in this matter. We will make it very clear where we are going very soon.

Mr C. Blanch: The number of outlaw motorcycle gang members in Western Australia has remained relatively static in the last couple of years. The biggest change in membership is the members going into and coming out of custody. Given the significant pressure and suppression that we have put on outlaw motorcycle gangs, at one time all the members of one particular club were in custody. That really made a huge difference to their behaviour in the community because they were not in the community. Each time they come back, obviously we undertake those suppression activities again. The biggest swell and reduction is because gang members are in or out of custody.

Ms D.G. D'ANNA: I refer to paragraph 5 under significant issues on page 411. I ask for an update on the implementation of the Kalgoorlie CCTV commitment and other initiatives around CCTV.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I might ask Deputy Commissioner Blanch to answer.

Mr C. Blanch: The WA police have worked very closely with the City of Kalgoorlie–Boulder to support the procurement and installation of CCTV. We are hoping to meet that commitment this financial year. This major upgrade will significantly bolster the CCTV capability of Kalgoorlie and Boulder. I would say more important is the connectivity of the CCTV and the associated automated numberplate recognition system back to the State Operations Command Centre. Some of the cities across the state that have been early adopters of using CCTV and ANPR technology have been able to directly connect to the State Operations Command Centre so we can see when, for example, stolen cars or wanted people enter into cities. That can send an automatic alert directly to the State Operations Command Centre that enables an immediate response from police. It has been very successful in the cities that have adopted it. We are working very closely with the city to implement it across Kalgoorlie–Boulder.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I refer to election commitments under new works on page 417 and I also refer to the police station upgrade program on page 418. Onslow Police Station is one of the oldest police stations around the state. I think it may have been built in the 1960s, if my memory serves me correctly. It is a donga. When is it due for an upgrade or a brand new police station, given that it is a donga that I think was put there in the late 1960s?

Mr P. PAPALIA: To which line is the member referring?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I refer to new works and the police station upgrade program, which has an estimated cost of \$9 million or \$3.96 million over the forward estimates. I wonder whether Onslow Police Station is one of those, given that I think it is the oldest police station in the state.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Onslow is one of many police stations across the state that is ageing and ultimately in need of upgrades. I am informed that there is a dedicated police station upgrade program in the order of \$4.4 million a year across the forward estimates. Specifically, I do not have the detail on where it is going. It will be something that is done in a prioritised order of need, which is determined by police not by me. Specific builds were committed to during the election. Those election commitments are clear. Other ones are currently underway that were commenced in the previous term of government, like in Dunsborough, Bridgetown and Collie. I did a tour of the south west and half the police stations down there had been refurbished. Around the state, various sites are being done. It is an ongoing process. There are hundreds of police stations across the state. As the planning enables it and the funding is allocated, they will be refurbished. There are some specific responses in the near term for most police stations to enable them to accommodate things like the new body armour. If there are more than just a couple of police officers, a lot of the buildings are not designed for that equipment. As I travel around, I regularly see small spends on refurbishments to enable the accommodation of that equipment, including things like body-worn cameras and the like.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I would imagine that Onslow does not have any of that capability, given it is a donga.

Mr P. PAPALIA: It has body armour and body-worn cameras; everyone has that.

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A — Tuesday, 21 September 2021]

p63b-87a

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Mr V.A. CATANIA: There are very expensive assets in Onslow through Wheatstone, BHP Macedon and so forth. Despite the investment that has occurred and the amount of assets and wealth that are generated in Onslow, it still has a donga that was put there in the 1960s. Where it is on the priority list? Is it number 1 or number 2? Does the minister have a list or can one be provided through a supplementary question?

Mr P. PAPALIA: If the member wants to put that on notice, I am sure we will get something back to him.

[9.10 pm]

Dr D.J. HONEY: I refer to page 410 and spending changes. The line item “COVID-19 Emergency Management” drops from an estimated actual of \$36 million for 2020–21 to \$16 million in 2021–22 and then drops to about \$2.4 million. The Premier indicated earlier today that he thought it would be a significant time before we return to normal and that we can expect rolling shutdowns and the like will be required into the future. I am concerned that that budget cut is precipitous, and I am interested to know what that forecast cut is based on. What assumptions are behind that? What does the ongoing allocation of roughly \$2.4 million per annum account for?

Mr P. PAPALIA: With respect to the member’s last question, the \$2.4 million per annum across the forward estimates is principally for the ongoing expenses related to 99 Plain Street, where Operation Tide operates from. This line item is not the sole government response to the COVID pandemic and it is not the sole budget response to COVID. The member indicated that he was listening to the Premier earlier today on other portfolios in which there is significant spend and there are allocations in this budget for contingency around COVID. Most of the \$10.6 million the member is referring to in this line item is for recruiting an additional 150 police officers to strengthen the front line and provide capacity for the Western Australia Police Force to assist with the initial pandemic response. In 2020–21, \$36.4 million was dedicated to operational costs to support the state’s emergency response to COVID-19. That was in addition to the funding for police specifically for the response. The \$15.9 million in the 2021–22 budget that the member referred to reflects known additional unavoidable costs, including accommodation upgrade costs for 99 Plain Street, in East Perth; additional software licences; and communication costs projected for the year.

As we have discussed a number of times this evening, there is another spend on growth in overall police numbers, many of whom will go towards responding to the pandemic or assisting police in other operations whilst many hundreds are dedicated to the pandemic response. That is not in this line item, but it is accommodated in the budget.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to page 410, spending changes and the school drug education and road aware program.

Mr P. PAPALIA: We told those guys to go away, but go on.

Ms L. METTAM: Tell us more.

Mr P. PAPALIA: The Road Safety Commission advisers have gone. I will have a go at answering the member’s question; what is it?

Ms L. METTAM: There appears to be a disruption in funding. The program is funded in only 2023–24 and 2024–25. There is no funding for this year and next year and there is \$76 000 in 2023–24. What is happening in the meantime? What is the government doing in the meantime?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I am not sure. Is the member referring to the projection for the 2023–24 budget of \$76 000 and then \$114 000 for the subsequent year?

Ms L. METTAM: Yes.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I expect that that program is being pitched to the Road Safety Council as something that might be funded by the road trauma trust account, and it will be delivered at that time. It has been pointed out to me, sorry, that there is an allocation of \$1.671 million from the road trauma trust account. It was amongst the figures I read out earlier. That is what the program is currently getting. I am informed that that will be the case this year and there appear to be increases by those amounts in the out years. It is \$1.671 million that is allocated at the moment. It is a Department of Education program. The department will go to the Road Safety Commission and ask for funding for the program. The council will make the case to the Road Safety Commission and then the funding will be allocated if it is deemed worthwhile.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I refer to page 409, “Appropriations, Expenses and Cash Assets” and the Salaries and Allowances Act 1975. In relation to the 950 police officers the government hopes to attract and train to boost police numbers, is the Western Australia Police Force finding it very difficult to attract and retain police officers while police have a pay freeze? I think it is a fair question.

Mr P. PAPALIA: The first observation is that there is no pay freeze. The member would be aware of that and it is very mischievous of him to suggest that there is a pay freeze. There was a \$1 000 flat increase across the board.

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Mr V.A. CATANIA: Sorry; it was a \$1 000 cap.

Mr P. PAPALIA: It was more than consumer price index for those on lower income levels. It was not a terrible outcome at that time, particularly in the first couple of years of our government when we were trying to repair the damage inflicted by the former government. As announced by the Premier recently, in advance of the budget, we are developing a new wages policy. That is underway right now. That aside, I am aware that we have been very successful in attracting new recruits. In the last financial year, we hit the target of 350 additional recruits. That is 350 recruits above attrition. I thought attrition was around 50 to 70—something like that—annually depending on the rate, but we got that plus the additional 350 officers last year. We now have to hit the target of 200 additional officers every year for the next three years. It is a big task, but it is an attractive career path. We are out there promoting it for all we are worth, and some fantastic work has been done by Deputy Commissioner Dreiberger at every opportunity on what a good job police are doing, including at some of the big events we have around the traps. I might hand over to Deputy Commissioner Dreiberger.

Mr G. Dreiberger: I can advise that our attrition rate for police officers still remains very low. At any time, we can lose anywhere between seven and 12 officers per month. The good thing is that while we are in a recruiting campaign, we do not have to meet high attrition rates, which is significantly beneficial. As the minister said, we have met the additional 300 recruits on top of attrition already for the period we have been recruiting additional numbers, with 200 to be recruited next financial year. For the period April to July last year, we had 853 applications for the Western Australia Police Force on the back of a marketing campaign. The “Let’s Join Forces” marketing campaign was run between December and February, and again in more recent weeks. Every time we run that campaign, we see a significant number of additional resources. A number of additional applications came out of the police careers expo. We continue to recruit heavily and advertise through the mainstream media. We will have a recruitment stand on the day at the upcoming grand final at Optus Stadium, which hopefully will provide us with even greater capacity to attract recruits. Our Aboriginal cadets will be working at that recruitment stand on that day.

We think that we are doing very well. To date, we already have enough recruits in our pool to meet our recruiting targets to put recruits into our academy as far forward as January 2022. We already have the numbers on the books to get us to January 2022. All the work that we are doing now will ensure that we continue to have the numbers on the books and the necessary pools to go forward with the recruiting process. We have also added quite a few innovative things to the recruitment process to enable people who want to apply to go through the system more quickly, including by outsourcing physical assessments to people in the community who can provide us with a written endorsement that the recruits have passed particular elements of the physical testing requirements. People need to continually undertake that testing during the lead-up to going into the academy. That has assisted us to get more people through the process more quickly.

[9.20 pm]

Mr P. PAPALIA: It is going well. It is a challenging time for anyone recruiting personnel in any sector.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Going back to 2007–08, the pressures were competing with higher paying jobs in the Pilbara or wherever.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I think that serving as a police officer provides a significant reward, such as having a diverse career and the opportunities it affords people who join. I think the recruitment process has been assisted by people knowing that they are making a significant contribution to the state, particularly at this time. That awareness of what police are doing has probably been elevated beyond any other time in our history. It is right up there with the wars, when police were doing things under great duress. There are good people out there who want to serve and assist their community, and they are volunteering. It is great to see.

Ms M.J. HAMMAT: I refer to the third item on page 415, “Specialist Policing Services”, which includes the canine division. It is clear that police dogs are a huge asset on the front line and that they always star in the media. There was a story recently about the police dog handlers and the police dogs graduating and being deployed. My question is: how do the police deploy this capability to get the best return for the state?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I absolutely agree with the member. The canine unit is an incredible asset. The dogs and their handlers make a wonderful contribution. I think I might have met “Gunner”—kept at a safe distance—on his graduation. Gunner recently apprehended someone at Dog Swamp, which was apt. I will ask Deputy Commissioner Dreiberger to give the member some insight into how the canines are deployed and how the asset is used.

Mr G. Dreiberger: As the minister pointed out, our canine division is a critical specialist resource for our agency. We deploy them in a way that provides for both a proactive and a reactive approach, which is focused on increasing community safety. Our dogs are deployed seven days a week and undergo constant training and supervision. They are not only deployed on a daily basis throughout the week, but also trained on a weekly basis, because they undergo quite complex training. They are deployed as dual-purpose dogs and as narcotic dogs. They work very closely with our districts in our specialist squads and are deployed across the state to support drug investigations in particular

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and also other crime-related operations. Predominantly, the work they do in the regions is drug investigative work. The narcotic dogs provide us with a special investigative capability to search and locate, and they are particularly good at locating methylamphetamine. We deploy them based on our intelligence holdings. We deploy them when we have targeted patrols, when an area that we have been focusing on has experienced a high crime trend, for particular targets whom we are trying to focus on, and in other areas that we want them to patrol in. They are often linked with high-visibility patrols, with our air wing overhead. That is why quite often people see elements of our air wing combined with the canines. A lot of the footage that is shown on television of people being apprehended with the assistance of canines is caught by the air wing when they are chasing offenders. The canines are very effective in that model. As members can imagine, we do not have a dog for each district every day, so they are deployed based on intelligence when we think there is a high likelihood that we will need them immediately.

As I said, the metropolitan dogs undertake their structured training on a weekly basis. That is because the WA Police Force has a legislative requirement under section 17 of the Criminal Investigation Act to ensure that every animal is being trained for the purpose for which it is used. The deployment of a dog with inadequate training skills is a breach of the legislation. That is why our training has to be of the highest standard. To accommodate that, we recently we had specialist contractors assist us with the selection and breeding of dogs. They also gave us advice on the best breeders and assisted us with the training models. We have converted those particular contracted specialists to full-time employment working with the agency, so that rather than us relying on a contractor who may leave at any time or whose contract needs to be renewed, we now have one of the best canine trainers in Australia working specifically in our canine section.

As members can understand, our police dogs are taught to bite in only very controlled circumstances. Their skills are perishable and they require constant reinforcement through training, deployment and correction through oversight. It was not long ago that we had a Corruption and Crime Commission review to make sure that our dogs were being deployed appropriately and were not biting, because there was a concern that they had been biting when they should not have been. That was a significant issue and so we had to make sure that we were meeting our obligations under the legislation. We do not want our dogs to bite the trainers, officers or members of the public, most importantly, so we undertook a review.

It is of note that we have had 74 requests for the deployment of police dogs in regional WA locations. Ninety-seven per cent of those deployments have been for the purpose of narcotic jobs. We deploy them for a very specialised reason. They are very rarely deployed in regional areas for search activities or for the apprehension of offenders; they predominantly do drug work. When we did the capability review to make sure that our dogs met their obligations and could be trained to a suitable level, we identified that keeping dogs permanently in regional WA was a very high risk to the agency. The reason for that is that the dogs cannot continue to be trained on a weekly basis. In fact, we had dogs in regional WA that were not being trained for up to eight or 12 weeks. If the dogs are not trained for up to eight or 12 weeks, there is a high risk of them biting someone and not operating in the way that they should during drug searches. Also, the more they work in hot areas—particularly in the Kimberley and the Pilbara—the more they lose their skills very quickly and require more ongoing training. If we have to continually bring those dogs back every eight weeks to redo a course and then send them back out, it makes the training conditions difficult.

We identified that the best model for deployment for us is for all the dogs to be deployed centrally from Perth. The four dogs that we currently have in regional WA will be reallocated or redeployed back to Perth. The police officers and the dogs will come back, but the positions will be replaced by officers who do not handle dogs and who are going there for normal general duties police work, so the community will not lose an FTE, so to speak. Those dogs will be able to be deployed anywhere around the state at any point in time. That is a significant change to our business in the context that we may move a dog out of a regional location. We understand that people will miss the dogs because people form an emotional bond with the dogs. I think that they like the dogs more than the police officers, probably! People will miss them a lot when they leave, but, as I said, we have had 74 requests for the deployment of police dogs in regional WA, which is more than one a week. We undertake, and will continue to undertake, those deployments to regional WA. We can use our air wing and, ultimately, our new helicopters in the future.

[9.30 pm]

Dr D.J. HONEY: In relation to the dogs, I was struggling to remember the name of the dog in Broome that was taken away and then put back.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Woof.

Dr D.J. HONEY: No. But one of the points made in that local community was that although the dogs are obviously important for their police work, the police officers said that they break down the barriers in interacting with members of the community and, in fact, are a substantial aid to a more meaningful or successful interaction between

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the police and the community. I wonder whether there is a function for dogs? I am talking about dogs staying in the community for a long time, not just being there for a short period.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I will say something and then give Gary another go. The dogs to which the member is referring are dual purpose. They have two tasks: one is the detection of illicit drugs; the other, as the member heard, is apprehending people. They are not really dogs that you want to go and pat; that could be quite negative for relationships with the community! I will hand over to Deputy Commissioner Dreiberger for a further response.

Mr G. Dreiberger: Thank you. There is a significant shortage of suitable dogs throughout Australia, and the training program for a dog is significant. It is an 18-week course just to get the dog upskilled in the first instance. There is no doubt that communities love their dogs when they are there. Basically, we would not invest in a significant asset like that for the purpose that was described by the member, with respect. Maybe in the future a retired dog in town with someone may be okay, but for that purpose, they are a very expensive asset, they are very hard to obtain and they lose their skills very quickly. The Kimberley dog was losing its skills very quickly, for instance.

Mr P. PAPALIA: People like them, but not as a pet or something that is nice and friendly; it is something that they view as being an additional asset for police. But, as the member heard, for the dog and the handler, this skill set erodes quite rapidly. The training regime that the deputy commissioner referred to is very high-level and intense, and it can be dangerous in the event that that skill set erodes and the dog's response to commands diminishes. That can be very bad and even a threat to the handler. My understanding is that dogs only retain that level of capability for a maximum of about five or six years. At the end of their career, the dogs have to be retrained to be able to be retired to ensure that they are safe for reintroduction into the community. They live with their handler 24/7 during that course and subsequently, and in normal practice, they would retire with that handler, but they have to be prepared for that to happen.

Dr D.J. HONEY: They have to be acclimatised, yes. I turn to pages 414 and 415 and the tables in parts 1, 2 and 3. If we look at the totals of the "Employees (Full-Time Equivalents)", from the 2020–21 budget to the 2020–21 estimated actual, there was actually a reduction of 25 officers in that total. The budget indicates that there is going to be an increase of 324 through to 2021–22. I am just trying to get a handle on those totals. What is the baseline year for the 950 officers? The minister said that there was going to be an increase of 950 officers. What is the baseline of that, and what is that baseline against in terms of those totals?

Mr P. PAPALIA: The first 150 officers were a direct response to the requirement to meet demand at the outset of the COVID pandemic. Subsequent to that, the commitment for 200 a year thereafter for four years was made, but that first 150 was in the same financial year as the first 200. In the last financial year, which ended in July, 350 were delivered above attrition; subsequently, it is 200 a year above attrition.

Dr D.J. HONEY: If I look at the 2020–21 estimated actual and the 2020–21 budget and total those numbers, I get 9 122 as the budget and 9 097 as the actual, so there was in fact a decrease in police numbers. That is for these totals; I do not know whether there are numbers other than this. There was not a net increase. I see that there is a budgeted increase of 324 on those totals against the 2020–21 budget, which would seem to fall shy of that target.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Member, look, I am willing to trust the integrity of the process and Mr Pasquale's contribution to the state in budgeting and accounting for the increase and all the funding thereof, but I will pass to him for an explanation as to what the tables demonstrate.

Mr F. Pasquale: In relation to the services that the member is referring to, for that part of the *Budget statements*, the member is correct that in those numbers, the total number is in the order of 9 000. It is important to understand that FTE is measured in terms of effort, so it is the total number of operational hours represented in FTE terms. It is not just for police officers; it is for total FTE across the whole of WA police, so it includes our public servants. To answer the member's question about the baseline, I guess I am saying that there are many factors that will have positives and minuses on the movements between those years. In terms of authorised strength or baseline strength for police officers from the ranks of recruit to commander, within that 9 000 or so FTE that we are talking about, I am happy to give the member the numbers of the authorised strength moving across the estimates years, going back to 2019–20, and these are baseline authorised strength as at 30 June each year. For 2019–20, it is 6 423; for 2020–21, it is 6 741; for 2021–22, it is 6 940; for 2022–23, it is 7 140; for 2023–24, it is 7 330; and for 2024–25, it is 7 330. Those numbers are showing increases, which are net increases as a result of the new additional programs.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Within those numbers, in relation to the 2020–21 estimated actual number of police officers, how many police officers did we have as an estimated actual in 2020–21 versus the budget?

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

Mr F. Pasquale: In terms of the estimated actual for the service, for police officers alone, for 2020–21, it was 6 624.

Dr D.J. HONEY: It was 6 624.

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Mr P. PAPALIA: Does the member think that we are going to try to rip him off? Slide one past him?

Dr D.J. HONEY: No, I did not think that, minister. I trust the minister's integrity absolutely. I am just trying to get a handle on the total number of increases, and Mr Pasquale has explained that to me, so I have something to track. Thank you.

[9.40 pm]

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to page 411 and paragraph 6, which states —

The Western Australia Police Force continues to build positive relationships with young people in the community.

This is a bit of a local question. I know that the term has changed, but I am referring to youth crime prevention officers.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Youth policing officers or YPOs.

Ms L. METTAM: I stand corrected. We certainly welcome the additional police officers in Busselton, although I understand there was a challenge with some Government Regional Officers' Housing. Could I get some clarification on those additional officers for the Busselton Police Station and also on whether there is any dedicated YPOs for Busselton?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I might get the actual numbers. I should remember but I cannot specifically, but we can provide that as supplementary information. The number of additional police officers is in the public domain. This is the number specifically for Busselton. The member for North West Central already got his answer for Carnarvon.

The CHAIR: The minister is obviously agreeing to provide supplementary information. Can he please state the supplementary information exactly?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I undertake to provide for the member the increase in police FTEs for the Busselton Police Station.

[*Supplementary Information No A7.*]

Mr P. PAPALIA: I think we put out a media release about it. I do not have it on me, but it is in the public domain.

Ms L. METTAM: I know.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I am very proud of it.

Ms L. METTAM: Further to that, what is the status of the YPOs for Busselton? The concern was that the YPOs for Bunbury were being stretched across the region.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Although the status of YPOs might be a little bit in the weeds for a specific response right now, I can ask the Commissioner of Police to talk about youth policing officers and the effort to deploy them in greater numbers. I think that is something he can talk about.

Mr C. Dawson: Obviously, as the member will be aware, the south west is a high-volume attraction area for people other than the normal residents. For instance, we obviously have a big plan underway for school leavers, as we do every year. On the specificity of the duties of the additional officers, some we dedicate to youth policing itself and do not get drawn into the normal tasking elements, but that does not mean that they do not exercise at times the powers of a constable to charge. What we are also overtly doing is directing them to assist in activities such as ranger programs and school and police and community youth centre efforts. A lot of not-for-profit organisations that are providing youth leadership are aligned to streaming at-risk youth—those who perhaps are being cautioned or who have for the first time been involved in the criminal justice system—towards programs that divert them away from those bad pathways. That is not meant to take away from the roles that are supportive of the Department of Communities, the Department of Justice and, obviously, the schools themselves. I have overtly directed all district superintendents to actively encourage police to attend at such youth centres, specifically PCYCs, because we do not want them to become just a sport and recreation-type of activity whereby we do after-school care. Local governments and other providers do that. These are specifically targeted to those at-risk youth.

We did change the name, as was indicated earlier. When officers attend at a home and the young person we might be going there for is not a criminal, and we introduce ourselves as youth crime officers, obviously that is sometimes the wrong label to attach to a child who has gone a little astray or is at large and actually needs just a bit of correction. We are very keen to ensure that the relationship does not poison the relationship with police but in fact is positive. I know that I and every other police officer who has done it get a lot of job satisfaction in seeing some youth divert away from making bad decisions. It is right across every police district now. We are seeing very good success with that and we have a dedicated youth division that supplements the work of other government and non-government agencies.

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Ms L. METTAM: The experience locally in Busselton has certainly been very positive. There was a great presence of YPOs when the youth centre first opened. It is my understanding that YPOs are based in Bunbury but are stretched across the region, so there is a lot of local interest in seeing two of them dedicated to Busselton given the increased demand. I would ask by way of supplementary information to be provided with an update on whether there has been any change there.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Is that on whether there are YPOs in Busselton as part of the increase?

Ms L. METTAM: Yes.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I am sure we can check that. The observation I make is that despite the specific designation that the commissioner has referred to, all police undertake that sort of role. It is not isolated to YPOs to engage with young people and endeavour to build relationships and provide a degree of mentoring in the community. That is done by all police. It is not specifically those individual police who can do it.

I put in a plug for the member's officer in charge down there, Manus Walsh, who is a bit of a legend. He is very capable and quite young compared with me. I am sure he is out there leading his team in engaging with local young people, and doing that universally. It would not just be the YPOs who are responsible for that task.

Ms L. METTAM: We still want more!

The CHAIR: Minister, there was a request for some supplementary information.

Mr P. PAPALIA: We will not change the supplementary information; I will just ensure that it identifies whether there are YPOs associated with that FTE increase.

Ms L. METTAM: But will it include a reference to the YPOs?

Mr P. PAPALIA: It will include whether there is a YPO element to that FTE increase.

The CHAIR: Because we previously allocated a number to specific information —

Mr P. PAPALIA: I am just undertaking personally to the member that I will make sure that that is incorporated in that. I do not think we need to change it.

The CHAIR: Is everyone happy? Very good.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I do not know whether I am right here, but page 410 refers to the COVID-19 response and the commissioner's new role in ensuring —

Mr P. PAPALIA: Which role—Vaccine Commander?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: On the vaccination rate.

Mr P. PAPALIA: If the member wants to ask a question about that, the commissioner will be responding in his role as COVID-19 Vaccine Commander on Thursday as part of the health division. He will be advising the Minister for Health at that time.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I will have to wait until then.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Yes, but the commissioner's role is different.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: It is just about being able to increase the vaccination rate in regional WA.

Mr P. PAPALIA: It is on Thursday morning with the health minister.

[9.50 pm]

Dr D.J. HONEY: I refer to page 415, "Regional and Remote Policing Services". Between 2020–21 and 2021–22, there is a 6.5 per cent increase in staffing but the cost of service flatlines. Does that mean that other services will be cut to accommodate those additional officers? How will the costs of additional FTEs be accommodated? There is a one per cent cost increase for the total cost of service, but a 6.5 per cent increase in staff.

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

Mr F. Pasquale: What the member said is correct, but what he cannot see in terms of the financials are the movements against the financials. I can talk the member through some of the adjustments on the financial side. The movement from the 2020–21 estimated actual to the 2021–22 budget is about a \$3.4 million increase. Because this is a portion of the business and the costings are based on a costing methodology, the gross costs that contribute to these movements is just under \$40 million to support the new additional 950 program, which included \$37.6 million for the additional police officers, so the portion of those additional police officers that belongs to regional and remote policing services is attributed to that \$3.4 million. In addition, \$1 million was for ChemCentre and PathWest, which were flow-on costs associated with the additional program and, again, the portion of that \$1 million has been attributed to the

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\$3.4 million. Finally, there is \$1 million for the infrastructure planning, so the proportion of that \$1 million goes to that \$3.4 million. What has been offset, though, for one-off type costs is the \$900 000 for one-off expenditure for cyclone Seroja, which occurred in the previous year. There is the portion of the \$12.9 million that was attributed to the body armour project in 2021 and that is, obviously, complete, so that portion of cost will not flow on. Similarly, there was the portion of \$5 million for Operation Heat Shield, which occurred in 2020–21. There are those one-off costs that occurred previously that are not occurring in the out years, hence why the member is not seeing an adjustment in the costs. But the budget is reflective of the additional police officer program.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Is it correct that the wages for the 950 police officers was an additional \$36 million? In relation to the answer that was just given, were the increased wages costs \$36 million for the 950 officers?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Mr Pasquale.

Mr F. Pasquale: That is the proportion of the 950 —

Dr D.J. HONEY: Is it the proportion of the 950 allocated to regional and remote WA?

Mr F. Pasquale: That is correct.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I thought the government was paying them very little!

Mr P. PAPALIA: The member is on the case to make sure they get their money.

Ms H.M. BEAZLEY: I refer to the fourth paragraph on page 416 and the corresponding line item on page 417, “Helicopter Replacement”. Can the minister provide an update on the delivery of the two new helicopters?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I would love to wax lyrical about the two new helicopters because I am very excited about that commitment, but I might hand over to Deputy Commissioner Dreiberger to make a more informed contribution.

Mr G. Dreiberger: Currently, our helicopter fleet consists of a 1990-built Kawasaki BK 117 and a 2011-built Dauphin. We are investing \$54 million in the replacement of those helicopters with the same type of helicopter fleet. Effectively, we will have two of the same helicopters, the new Airbus H145 helicopter, the first of which will be delivered to the Western Australia Police Force in December 2022. The second one will arrive in September 2023. The first of the new helicopters will be fully operational by April 2023 and the second will be fully operational by October 2023. As the member would be aware, our state, being the single largest policing jurisdiction in the world, requires significant air support, and this will further increase the size of the Western Australian Police Air Wing. WA police helicopters are used for highly specialised missions and they have mission role equipment to accommodate that. They are rapidly deployed and non-impaired by traffic congestion. They can provide real-time eyes on intelligence to officers and decision-making on the ground, so the capability with which they will be provided will provide us a live feed to officers on the ground either at the State Operations Command Centre or back at police air wing. They are used in police pursuit management, as the member would be aware, and provide significant safety for the community because they allow our officers to turn off their lights, slow down and stay back from a pursuit while the helicopter sits above using mission role equipment, including a forward-looking infrared camera and night-vision goggles to observe an incident at night-time, hence making it much safer without police officers having to continue to pursue on the road. Quite often, they can continue to follow the vehicle and offenders when they leave the vehicle. They are also used as a hazard management tool during large land and marine search rescues and they assist the state search and rescue advisory group in the deployment of resources as required. They can be used to winch survivors from water and land rescues and they can obviously be deployed to lengthy distances from the Perth metropolitan area.

The benefit of going to a standardised fleet is that there will be reduced inventory on tools and reduced pilot, engineer and tactical flight officer training requirements. As the member would be aware, we have two totally separate helicopters right now, which require two totally different systems of engineering, tools and training. Our helicopter pilots have to train in two different types of choppers and our tactical deployment teams also have to train to deploy in two different systems, so they will have to be trained to deploy in only one system. The police force has been looking forward to having two of the same helicopter for many, many years. There will be significantly reduced downtime for the helicopters and there will be the interchangeability of parts between aircraft, enhanced fault finding and improved operational availability. Also, we will have a single suite of pilot, tactical flight officer and engineering procedures, which require Civil Aviation Safety Authority scrutiny and approvals. All the procedures and processes that we undertake at the Western Australian Police Air Wing have to be approved and signed off by CASA. Having two choppers of the same type will require only one set of safe systems to be signed off, which is significant.

The H145 helicopters are capable of being deployed to Geraldton, Kalgoorlie and Albany and into greater regions of WA, depending on fuel stops. Clearly, going from one location to another takes time, but with the appropriate ability to stop and fuel, they will be fine. Basically, there is a refund in terms of a trade-in. The current helicopter will be provided with a trade-in value for the Dauphin. We are taking advantage of that and that is why it is being brought forward. I do not have the exact cost, but the minister may be able to provide that when I finish. Actually, it

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looks like it is \$4.4 million. Effectively, our engineers and pilots will travel to Germany to train during the acquisition process. The pilots and engineers will go overseas in the middle of next year to begin training. The H145 helicopter is the first of its type in Australia. We are very, very happy to have the new helicopters arriving, as I said, on the dates I provided.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to page 440 and the election commitment of a methamphetamine action plan.

The CHAIR: Sorry, member; if you are on page 440, you are into justice.

Mr P. PAPALIA: That is not in our part of the budget.

Ms L. METTAM: Oh dear! It was such a good question.

I refer to page 420 and the CCTV program. Are any of those commitments for CCTVs in Dunsborough or Busselton? I thought that the Labor Party made a commitment for those during the election.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Off the top of my head, I cannot say. All our election commitments have been compiled and are tracked, and I can guarantee the member that they will all be delivered. Off the top of my head, I do not know whether they will be placed in those two locations. It is just like the magnificent upgrade to the PCYC in Carnarvon!

The appropriation was recommended.

Committee adjourned at 10.00 pm
