

Division 7: Salaries and Allowances Tribunal, \$1 037 000 —

Ms A.E. Kent, Chair.

Mr M. McGowan, Minister for Public Sector Management.

Mr L. Cullen, Acting Executive Officer.

[Witness introduced.]

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

A minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee. I will ask the minister to clearly indicate what information they agree to provide and will then allocate a reference number. Supplementary information should be provided to the principal clerk by close of business Friday, 3 June 2022. If a minister suggests that a matter should be put on notice, members should use the online questions on notice system.

I give the call to the Leader of the Opposition.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I refer to budget paper No 2, volume 1, page 103. Under the table “Outcomes and Key Effectiveness Indicators” there is a note that sets out the anticipated determinations and reports prescribed in this line item, including restructures within the tribunal’s jurisdiction. Can the Premier explain what those restructures are?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. The number of determinations, which I think is what the member is referring to, may vary due to the number of appointments, machinery-of-government changes or positions included in the tribunal’s jurisdiction, and variations required to the main determination in relation to minor amendments related to changes to allowances or the rate of reimbursement. That is based upon agencies changing the mix of people who are subject to Salaries and Allowances Tribunal determinations.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I refer to page 105 of budget paper No 2, volume 1, and the subheading “Expenses” under “Cost of Services”. There seems to be a jump in expenses from 2020–21 to 2021–22. Can the Premier provide an explanation for that?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I think that was last year’s budget. In the first year that the member mentioned, the wage freeze for the senior levels of the public sector meant that the work of the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal was significantly reduced. Obviously, that is now changing because the four-year wage freeze has ended.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I refer also to the item “Other expenses”. Can the Premier provide detail on what these expenses are?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I think that might be for incidentals. That is \$9 000, is it not?

Ms M.J. DAVIES: It is not much—not big bucks!

Mr M. McGOWAN: I think that might be for things like paper and photocopy ink—incidental-type stuff. That would be my assessment.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Is it just for office administration?

Mr M. McGOWAN: It is for paper, pens, photocopying—all that stuff.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Big stuff! Thank you.

I refer again to budget paper No 2, volume 1, page 102, and the item “Net amount appropriated to deliver services”. That amount is fairly static across the forward estimates. The Premier just said that there is likely to be an increase in the work that will be done by the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal. How does the Premier reconcile that? Will the same number of people be doing more?

Mr M. McGOWAN: If the member looks at the earlier budgets, she will see that there was a total appropriation, but some of that went into what is called cash assets, which is the line at the bottom of that table. That is money that was not spent because the tribunal did not have to do the analysis of work value and so forth. I suspect that the figure for cash assets is relatively high for an agency like this. The total appropriation remains static, but cash assets have grown over time, and that money is available if there is an increase in work.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I might need a bit of clarity on that, because the amount for cash assets across the forward estimates is static as well.

Mr M. McGOWAN: It would have been lower before 2020–21.

Extract from *Hansard*

[ASSEMBLY ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A — Tuesday, 24 May 2022]

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Chair; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Mark McGowan

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Is the Premier saying it is comparative with the previous budget?

Mr M. McGOWAN: Yes, with earlier budgets. Obviously, there was a four-year period when there was limited work to be done because we had legislated to put in place a pay freeze in order to set the right example for the rest of the public sector, which worked spectacularly well. Prior to that, additional money had gone into cash assets. Now that we are out of the pay freeze, that money is available to do whatever work needs to be done. The money in that bottom line, cash assets, is available, in addition to the normal budget of the agency, to do whatever work needs to be done.

The appropriation was recommended.

[3.10 pm]