

Chairman; Mr Troy Buswell; Mr Alan Carpenter; Dr Kim Hames; Mr Max Trenorden; Mr Peter Watson; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Ben Wyatt; Ms Dianne Guise; Mrs Judy Hughes

Division 3: Premier and Cabinet — Service 1, Support for the Premier as Head of Government, \$12 234 000; Service 2, Management of Matters of State, \$80 844 000; Service 3, Management of Policy, \$10 976 000; Service 4, Support for the Premier as Minister for Public Sector Management, \$11 270 000; Service 5, Parliamentary, Statutory and Legislative Publishing Service, \$165 000; Service 6, Management of the Constitutional Centre Programs, \$1 039 000; and Service 8, E-government Policy and Coordination, \$4 733 000 —

Mrs D.J. Guise, Chairman.

Mr A.J. Carpenter, Premier.

Mr M.C. Wauchope, Director General.

Ms A.L. Nolan, Deputy Director General.

Ms M.J. Reynolds, Assistant Director General, Public Sector Management.

Mr G.J. Moore, Assistant Director General, State Administration and Corporate Support.

Mr K.A. Jones, Principal Project Officer, Corporate Support.

Mr G.A. Hay, Assistant Director General, Office of State Security and Emergency Coordination.

Ms V.J. Bryson, Executive Director, Office of e-Government.

The CHAIRMAN: This estimates committee will be reported by Hansard staff. The daily proof *Hansard* will be published at 9.00 am tomorrow.

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. This is the prime focus of the committee. While there is scope for members to examine many matters, questions need to be clearly related to a page number, item, program, or amount within the volumes. For example, members are free to pursue performance indicators that are included in the budget statements while there remains a clear link between the questions and the estimates. It is the intention of the Chairman 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 Premier may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee, rather than asking that the question be put on notice for the next sitting week. For the purpose of following up the provision of this information, I ask the Premier to clearly indicate to the committee which supplementary information he agrees to provide and I will then allocate a reference number. If supplementary information is to be provided, I seek the Premier's cooperation in ensuring that it is delivered to the committee clerk by 6 June 2008, so that members may read it before the report and third reading stages. If the supplementary information cannot be provided within that time, written advice is required of the day by which the information will be made available. Details in relation to supplementary information have been provided to both members and advisers and accordingly I ask the Premier to cooperate with those requirements.

I caution members that if the Premier asks that a matter be put on notice, it is up to the member to lodge the question on notice with the Clerk's office. Only supplementary information that the minister agrees to provide will be sought by 6 June 2008. I also advise members that if they wish to pursue a certain line of questioning, I will allow it within reason. If members ask for a further question, they may well be granted one!

Mr T. BUSWELL: My first question relates to service 4, "Support for the Premier as Minister for Public Sector Management", on page 96. I refer to the third dash point, which reads —

whole-of-government reporting on public sector workforce demographics, trends and management issues; . . .

Historically, the government has produced, every quarter, a summary, by agency, of full-time equivalent employment levels. That is published on the Department of the Premier and Cabinet website. The last one to appear on the website was for the June quarter of 2007. Why is this information appearing in a less timely manner than has historically been the case? What is the figure for total FTE employment in the Western Australian public service?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I was catching up to the page; I want to make sure that I have the correct reference point.

Mr T. BUSWELL: Service 4, page 96, the fourth dash point under the first paragraph, which reads —

whole-of-government reporting on public sector workforce demographics, trends and management issues; . . .

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Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I will ask the director general to respond.

Mr M.C. Wauchope: I ask the Leader of the Opposition to look at the first dot point under “Major Achievements For 2007-08” on page 97. It indicates that we have —

Developed and implemented a revised human resource data collection system utilising the Workforce Analysis and Comparison Application software.

We have basically gone into a new, enhanced series, which will enable us to drill down into further detail both regionally and in terms of occupational status. As a consequence of that, we are not reporting the minimum obligatory information requirements data at the same level of detail, but we have the same total numbers coming out. The total during 2007 was about 105 544 FTEs.

Mr T. BUSWELL: When was that?

Mr M.C. Wauchope: June 2007.

Mr T. BUSWELL: I know that; I have the information here. I want to know how the public can now find out from the department’s website the number of FTEs in the public sector.

Ms M.J. Reynolds: The shift to the new workforce analysis and comparison application system has required a significant effort on the part of agencies and the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. We ceased reporting the quarterly data during the transition period, which commenced in July 2007. We have reported the 2007 total FTE count and that information has appeared on our website. The figure is 105 544. We intend to publish the 2007 profile. That will take place within the next two to three weeks. The same occurred last year when we published the 2006 profile some 12 months after the data had been collected. We have, over the past 12 months, ceased reporting quarterly data, but the profile will still be available within the next few weeks. Information to that effect about the transition details has also been posted on the website.

Mr T. BUSWELL: Just to confirm: you are referring to the profile of the Western Australian state government workforce?

Ms M.J. Reynolds: Yes.

Mr T. BUSWELL: That information is produced some 11 or 12 months after the event. In other words, the earliest I can accurately find out how many full-time equivalents are employed in all different government agencies is almost 12 months after the end of the previous financial year—is that right, Premier?

Mr M.C. Wauchope: As I indicated previously, there is a crossover of data collection. There have been delays in collecting the data, but we will have an enhanced data set as a consequence. All data will subsequently be reported, but in better detail.

Mr T. BUSWELL: When will that be?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: The Leader of the Opposition is asking how easy it will be to effectively access that information once the new system is embedded.

Mr M.C. Wauchope: The information, as I understand it, will be on our website. We are still in the preparatory stage of getting the data together.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: The Leader of the Opposition said that there had formerly been an update every three months, and wants to know what will happen from now on.

Mr T. BUSWELL: As I understand it, we will now get that information once a year, a year after the end of the previous financial year.

Ms M.J. Reynolds: No, after July 2008 we will continue quarterly reporting. It has only been in the past 12 months that we have had to cease that arrangement while resources were directed to ensuring a smooth transition to the new system.

[9.10 am]

Mr T. BUSWELL: What is the latest measure of the size of full-time equivalent employment in Western Australian state government bodies? Has the government had an update since June last year?

Mr M.C. Wauchope: The figure I have is from June 2007, and that was 105 544.

Mr T. BUSWELL: I have that figure. Is there no other figure?

Ms M.J. Reynolds: During the transition we have been collecting some data; however, agencies have had to make some significant adjustments to what is reported. In addition to that, we have been increasing what we require by way of information, so it would be fair to suggest that some agencies are working through getting all

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of the information we require. We expect that by 30 June this year all that information will be available and that the agencies will be ready for regular reporting from that point.

Mr T. BUSWELL: Just so I know, does the Minister for Public Sector Management not know the size of the FTE in the Western Australian public sector other than the information that was provided in June last year?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I have only the information from June last year, but —

Mr T. BUSWELL: Is that a concern for the minister?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Yes; that is why we are changing the system. My recollection is that the motivation for this change was that there was a degree of doubt about the accuracy of the figures historically anyway. If I asked a particular department how many people it had and what they were all doing, it could not tell me. I found that most disturbing. I want to know who is doing what.

Mr T. BUSWELL: The minister wants to sit on this side and try to get that information!

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I have sat on that side.

Obviously, from a ministerial position as well, on a day-to-day basis I want to be able to hit a button and know how many people are working in a department and what they are doing. That was the motivation for putting in place a different system; the numbers were always very rubbery. The numbers were never contemporary; they were always historical figures. That was not good enough, hence the change.

Mr B.S. WYATT: I refer to the first dot point under “Significant Issues and Trends” on page 83 of the *Budget Statements*, which deals with the federalism reform that is underway. My question is two-pronged. Firstly, in respect of cooperation being the cornerstone of reform, can the Minister for Public Sector Management indicate what preparation and engagements are required for the new relationship in this new era of the Council of Australian Governments? Secondly, how can members of Parliament ensure through that process that Western Australia will get its fair share of resources in the carve-up?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I will do my best to answer that question and then I will ask Ms Nolan to supplement the information I provide.

Obviously, big changes are happening to the Council of Australian Governments. The new commonwealth government is establishing—to use its terminology—a new federal architecture for funding operations. State relationships are changing and a significant number of new bodies are being established. The travel and time requirements to service those new bodies put a fair bit of pressure on our public service. I think this applies more to Western Australia than the other states because we must travel a long way to attend functions and meetings and so on. However, it is a unique opportunity and we want to ensure that we get the best out of it. Therefore, additional resources are required to support Western Australia’s approach to COAG. We think this presents a great opportunity if we can seize it. Funding of \$300 000 in 2007-08 and \$600 000 a year over the next four years in the forward estimates has been provided to enhance COAG coordination. The very appointment of Ms Nolan to the position of Deputy Director General of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet was in part driven by a desire to ensure that we are locked into the changes that are happening federally. The provision of that additional money has enabled the appointment of extra staff, including a principal policy officer who has responsibility for providing strategic advice.

My experience with Council of Australian Governments’ meetings and ministerial council meetings were very frustrating from a Western Australian perspective. I think it is a frustration that has often been shared by other ministers historically. I think other states, particularly New South Wales and Victoria, expend a lot more resources, energy and people than Western Australia in their federal-state relationship profiling, if that is a term I may use. That, coupled with our geographic separation, is a significant disadvantage to Western Australia. A lot of the political and business leaders up and down the east coast meet regularly, even if it is only in airport lounges on a Friday afternoon, and discuss matters of state in a way that is denied us because of our geographic separation. Therefore, I was keen to ensure that we provided sufficient resources and funding to put in place the people and the policies needed to deal with these changes at the federal level. A deputy director general, Ms Nolan, has been appointed, with the prime role of facilitating cross-government coordination and communication on COAG issues. I do not know how many COAG meetings Ms Nolan and I have attended so far—I think it has been three since the change of federal government.

Obviously, funding has been required to enable officers to travel. This is an issue for Western Australia and I have raised it with the federal government. The number of meetings, the COAG working groups and the frequency of these occasions require some of our scarce senior people to spend two or three days on the eastern seaboard and, therefore, they are unavailable to pursue other work for our state. In 2008-09 it is anticipated a further three staff members will be employed to beef up the strategic project management and relationship building capacity of the intergovernmental relations area. Additional funding will enable further training and

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development. I do not know whether members recall Professor Greg Craven's commentary about Western Australia's inability to maximise opportunities in the federal-state relationship sphere. Professor Craven pointed to Victoria and I think he described it as "an army of lawyers and senior bureaucrats" who are engaged full time in the federal-state relationship policy area to ensure that Victoria does not miss out on any opportunities that arise. Therefore, I think it is no coincidence that Victoria was the state that led the development of the COAG national reform agenda that was put in place last year, initially under the Howard government, and then followed through by the Rudd government. Therefore, this is a big area for us. The signs are good so far that the new federal government is more receptive to Western Australia's position. We are lucky that we have more senior ministers from Western Australia at a federal level than we had. We had a couple, but I think we now have more ministers with more clout under the new federal regime, and I hope that will play to our advantage. As I said, we appointed a new deputy director general to a position that had been vacant for some time. One of the prime objectives of that appointment was to address this area of COAG relationship. Ms Nolan is that person; therefore, I ask Ms Nolan to provide further detail from her window on the world.

[9.20 am]

Ms A.L. Nolan: As the minister has mentioned, the ambitious Council of Australian Governments' agenda provides enormous opportunities for Western Australia, and it is up to us to ensure that we harness those opportunities. Seven working groups have been established under the COAG auspices and we have had two COAG meetings; a third meeting will be held on 3 July. Groups are focusing on health and ageing, productivity, climate change and water, infrastructure, business regulation and competition, housing and Indigenous reform. One of my roles has been to ensure that we provide good input to those working groups so that we can have a truly national perspective on the reform agenda and that we are able to capture a whole-of-Western-Australian-government perspective. As a consequence, we are ensuring that at most working groups we have at least one line agency involved in the process as well as a central government agency, being either the Department of the Premier and Cabinet or the Department of Treasury and Finance, depending on the nature of the reform agenda.

We have also developed some very good cross-government relationships within the WA public sector to ensure that we do have a whole-of-government perspective on many of these important policy issues; the prime mechanism being meetings of directors general on a regular basis to focus on the Council of Australian Governments' reforms and then ongoing core group meetings to focus on the day-to-day activities. The workload has been amazing; we have had 20 working group meetings and 60 subgroup meetings so far. That has certainly focused our minds in recent times.

As the Premier has mentioned, to date we have been fairly successful. The forthcoming COAG meeting on 3 July will focus on the new specific purpose payment arrangements that will come into play through the COAG process. That will see the establishment of four or five key specific purpose payments that will fund things like health, education, disability services and housing. The prime focus of the COAG meeting in July will be a statement of shared outcomes and outputs.

Dr K.D. HAMES: I refer to the second last dot point on page 93 of the *Budget Statements* —

The Special Advisor on Indigenous Affairs assisted in planning and follow-up of the Premier's Indigenous Jobs Forum.

My question specifically relates to the Special Advisor on Indigenous Affairs. I note some comments that the Premier made following the special adviser's recommendation for a regional Indigenous advisory body. It appears that the Premier rejected that quite strongly at the time. Since then, the Special Advisor on Indigenous Affairs has made some comments at a local government conference, saying —

I have been accused by those who don't have the imagination to see a better way of doing things of proposing a new and additional level of bureaucracy.

"This is nonsense. . . .

The Premier would not have had time to respond yet, but last week the Education and Health Committee recommended that we support a regional body; and the committee is obviously a bipartisan committee. In looking specifically at the Premier's comments, it was felt that he had been referring to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission model. We all agree the ATSIC model is not appropriate. Can the Premier clarify his view on those recommendations for a regional Indigenous body as recommended by Lieutenant General John Sanderson?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I appreciate that the member for Dawesville has a genuine interest in this matter, as do I, but anybody who has served as a Minister for Indigenous Affairs understands how difficult it is to move forward in some of these areas.

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What I specifically wanted from the appointment of the special adviser was for us to break the mould of continuous bureaucratic reorganisation and, instead, actually do things that might make a difference, such as going to local communities to find out what does and does not work there; what specific arrangements are in place or on foot in different communities; whether we can enhance them; whether we can replicate them in other communities. In other words, local solutions to local problems or issues, specifically engaging the non-government sector, because if government effort had been able to resolve many of the issues or even ameliorate many of the issues on foot in Aboriginal communities, it would have happened by now. It is not through want of trying, and I am sure the member for Dawesville would agree with that. We do try and we do get some progress.

My view is that the underlying dynamic that we have to address in a meaningful way is economics. I am not a dry economist, but I have come to that view after years of observing effort. I had this view when I was the Minister for Indigenous Affairs. We have to address the social issues as well, but in many ways they stem from economic issues and failed government policy.

I was hoping that the Special Adviser on Indigenous Affairs would be able to identify economic opportunities in Aboriginal communities in Western Australia, such as those that were identified clearly by Argyle Diamonds and were utilised to the benefit of Argyle Diamonds and the Aboriginal communities who now service Argyle Diamonds' labour requirements. It was a very good fit—there are some problems associated with it obviously. What I did not want was a recommendation for the creation of a new bureaucracy. That was why I made the comments that I made at the time. I was very disappointed to be basically presented with recommendations about how we should, on a wholesale scale, reorganise bureaucracy and create in effect what I viewed as a new bureaucracy. I said so publicly and I said so privately. Until we engage Indigenous people in the real economy, we will be beset by social issues; that is the truth.

I offended people in the private sector by telling them that they were not doing enough. I made comments such as, "Don't come whingeing to government about social issues involving Aboriginal communities in communities where you are operating but not employing one Aboriginal person. Do your bit, because the government and governments have been doing what they can and could." That was my motivation.

I believe that there are economic opportunities that have not been tapped into sufficiently. I believe there are educational policy settings that we can put in place—and we have tried them. We put in place a lot of Aboriginal-oriented initiatives in education and in sport and recreation when I was Minister for Indigenous Affairs—I cite the Clontarf model. For those it has engaged, it has had a profoundly beneficial impact. The objective at the end of that is to provide participants with opportunities in the real economy, because if they do not have those opportunities, then, no matter what we do, they will sink back into dysfunction on many occasions. That is what I wanted and that is what I still want from that advisory role. I have not got it yet.

We need to get out there and find ways of engaging Aboriginal people in the business domain. That is being pursued now, because I have more or less forced some companies to go down this pathway by challenging them. We also need better coordination at government level; I know that. We were not getting much. We had a difference of view from the later period of the Howard government. I thought Philip Ruddock and I had a pretty good understanding of where we were going, and in fact the federal government at the time adopted the models developed by the Department of Indigenous Affairs in Western Australia. It may have been started under the member for Dawesville's auspices, I do not know, but it certainly happened under mine. It was about closing the gap, about how we move people from squalor and disadvantage closer to the acceptable norm. That model was accepted under Philip Ruddock as the federal approach to some of these issues, and we were starting to work quite cooperatively. I think that broke down in the later period of the Howard government. The federal government, probably for understandable and contestable reasons, did something dramatic in the Northern Territory. However, we are now working with the new Rudd government and the new minister to try to make sure that the Council of Australian Governments process produces a better coordinated, better mutually understood approach from the federal and state governments' Indigenous affairs departments. That is good and must happen, but it will not work if the private sector is not engaged.

[9.30 am]

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: The government must engage Aboriginal hearts and minds as well.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Yes, but there has to be something to offer. The welfare model that has been pursued for so very long is driven by great intent. I have worked with people in government, as has the member for Avon. There could not be more motivated people, but they cannot effect the change they want because at the end of their effort there is nothing in the real economy for people to engage in. We must therefore do these things. That is what I wanted from this role. I was disappointed that I did not get it, and I made that disappointment known.

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Dr K.D. HAMES: I have a further question. The minister addressed the issue of promoting employment by having a jobs forum. During my time as minister I did the same thing but privately. At every meeting I had with the private sector, including with companies such as Rio Tinto and Hamersley Iron, I promoted employment, as did government departments. A committee reported on the low level of Indigenous employment in government departments, and it is still very low in government. Even the Premier's department, the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, has a level of about one per cent Indigenous employees. The Chairman is nodding. There is very low employment of Indigenous people in the Premier's own department. It is fine to have employment, but people must be employment-ready. They must have education and decent living conditions, and they have to get up in the morning in an environment in which their family is happy to support them going to work and in which they are not all drunk and lying in a Fitzroy Crossing gutter. All those things must be in place first. I tried, and the Premier tried, to do that. When we look back, are Aboriginal people better off today than they were after this government's seven years or after the previous coalition government's eight years? I do not think they are. In some small areas they are. Rio Tinto has between 40 and 50 per cent Indigenous employment at the Argyle mine. However, overall, Indigenous people are probably worse off. We have to accept that and ask ourselves what we can do that is different. The opposition has put forward a proposal to put senior people on an implementation committee. John Sanderson would be the head of the committee, because we have enormous respect for his abilities. Fiona Stanley would be on it. I know that the Premier feels the same way about her as we do. There would be a senior Indigenous representative, such as Ernie Bridge, who has been a minister. The Premier does not like that one.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: No.

Dr K.D. HAMES: I am sorry, I thought the Premier was reacting to that.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I like Ernie. I have a lot of respect for him.

Dr K.D. HAMES: Ernie Bridge is another option as a member of that committee. The proposal is that the implementation committee implements John Sanderson's recommendations. We do need Indigenous input. The committee recommends a regional body to examine the coordination of state and federal government services to improve the living conditions in Indigenous communities.

The CHAIRMAN: I am sure I feel a question coming on sometime soon.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Do I agree?

Dr K.D. HAMES: My question is: does the Premier support such a model that would result in that implementation committee sitting at the head of the Department of Indigenous Affairs, with DIA as the administrative arm to implement the recommendations of the Hope report, the Sanderson report, the Gordon inquiry and all those sorts of reports, and to make sure that they are properly managed and coordinated with state and federal government money?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: My response is along these lines: I respect the motivation that underlies the policy idea; however, I fear it would fail hopelessly. My experience as Minister for Indigenous Affairs and now as Premier in this area tells me that. That is why I believe we have to get down into the communities and deal with the people who live there. I am not talking about people who fly in, make some observation about how life could be so much better "if only", then fly out, present a five-page document to government and leave. We need to know what the dynamics are that are operating on the ground and what opportunities there are there. The member for Dawesville mentioned a regional body—singular. We cannot have a regional body.

Dr K.D. HAMES: I am sorry, I did not mean a regional body. This proposal just started in the Kimberley.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: The motivation came out of an examination of events that were occurring in the Kimberley. Even a regional body in the Kimberley would be hopeless; it is too big an area. The Kimberley is massive.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: The Premier is right: it must be done on a community basis, including for Northam.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: It would have to be localised. We are not talking about regional bodies; we are talking about local engagement. Why was the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission deemed to have failed? ATSIC was a regional body that people were elected to. In Western Australia it did a reasonable job. It was patchy but it was not beset by the same scandals that ultimately cruelled it nationally. However, it was beset by fairly deep and broad dissent about whether certain people were representative and why they were engaging in particular activities.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: Nepotism in the wheatbelt was amazing.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Yes. I do not subscribe to the view—I may have done once—that there is now a select group of people who somehow have the answers to these questions and who can provide broadbrush and very

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generalised statements that I could write before lunchtime any day of the week. Any day of the week I could write those sorts of reports, and I know what they would produce if they headed off in that direction. What we need is hard graft; on-the-ground work with people who have the ability to provide opportunities and to seize them when they are provided. Our role is to make sure that we take measures, such as reduce the impact of alcohol and domestic violence and so on. The Fitzroy model is an example of how that can work.

Having said that, I will say this: two years ago the Aboriginal community in Fitzroy Crossing was holding the community up as the model community for other people around the state to emulate. It fell apart badly when a lot of these issues suddenly erupted—or emerged as, obviously, they had been there for some time. Pulling back the alcohol has obviously had a very beneficial impact and we must examine the possibility of implementing that approach more broadly. The member for Dawesville mentioned that the Argyle mine has between 40 per cent and 50 per cent Indigenous employment; that is excellent. BHP Billiton has also dramatically stepped up its engagement of Indigenous people. I do not believe that the answer is taking on people necessarily in government; it is part of the answer. There is a vast number of Aboriginal people who do not want to work for the government but want to work elsewhere. They should be given economic opportunities.

Dr K.D. HAMES: There are plenty who do and they are not given the opportunity.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: The member for Victoria Park has examined the lack of a driver's licence, for example, as an impediment to employment in the private sector. We are moving in a direction to try to resolve that. The member for Dawesville cannot tell me that with the current economic boom in Western Australia, big, medium and small companies cannot find creative ways of engaging Aboriginal people. He cannot tell me that those companies must point to government or that government must point to itself and say that only government can do it. It is nonsense. Look at the billions of dollars of wealth that have been drawn out of the goldfields for 115 years and then look at the position of Aboriginal people in the goldfields. They should be participants in the private economy of the goldfields, and in a way they have been excluded from that. Until companies accept that, we will have a major issue. These companies should not come to government complaining about the impact of social dysfunction in Aboriginal communities on their ability to operate. They should do something about it themselves. They should employ some people. They should give young kids a chance. The Department of Education and Training struggles with all sorts of initiatives, some of which are brilliant. However, if nothing is offered to kids when they leave school, what is the motivation for locking in these best-intended policy agendas? I have visited numerous communities. The teachers there are brilliant. They have all sorts of strategies to engage kids. We have given remote communities the most sophisticated teaching tools in the world, such as information technology and broadband. Nobody else in the world has anything like the education tools that we offer in these remote communities. However, at the end of the day kids figure out well before finishing school that no-one wants them. If there is complete social dysfunction in their community because none of their older family members has a job opportunity, that has an impact on them. My response to this general debate is that I do not need to employ people to write me generalised documents about bureaucracy; I know it all, as far as that goes. What I do not know, because I do not have the expertise, is how to get down in business and in private economy and find ways of engaging Aboriginal people so that they can change their lives. That is why I try to get people to do it for me.

[9.40 am]

The CHAIRMAN: That was a long question followed by a long answer. Let us not have those again. Member for Dawesville, you may ask one quick question. To be fair to the others, we need to move on.

Dr K.D. HAMES: What makes the Premier believe that his one-year experience as Indigenous affairs minister gives him a better understanding of what is needed in Indigenous communities than John Sanderson, me, who was minister for four years, and the member for Central Kimberley-Pilbara? They support the proposal.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Far be it for me to say that I have a better understanding of Indigenous issues than anybody, but I have a view. I have lived in Western Australia all my life. It is not as though I have come from another planet. For one reason or another, I have been observing and been close to these issues all my life, including my private life when I was younger, my professional life as a journalist and now my professional life as a member of Parliament. Did any of those people that the member mentioned, including him, stand up and say, "Robert Bropho is an evil person who has to go"?

The CHAIRMAN: Members, I think we have strayed far enough from estimates. I will move this along.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I can talk about Indigenous affairs for a month.

Dr K.D. HAMES: That is a very arrogant attitude.

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Mr A.J. CARPENTER: No, it is not arrogant. I am not saying that the member for Dawesville is arrogant either. He has a view and I have a very strong view.

Mr P.B. WATSON: I refer the Premier to “Significant Issues and Trends” on page 83. I have a short question about the tight labour market. What initiatives has the government undertaken to retain and recruit employees to the public sector under this tight labour economy?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I can go on about this as well. I will let the director general start and if anything needs to be added, I will do my best to add in the humblest possible way.

Mr M.C. Wauchop: The public sector is impacted by changes in the demographics as much as any part of the community. We are facing the consequences of the economic boom, an ageing population and an ageing public sector workforce. In a sense we have to plan for now and into the future how we replace ourselves and have the skills that we need. There is a labour shortage in Western Australia as a consequence of the boom. The department has initiated a number of strategies, including the following. The workforce planning project will examine the workforce needs into the future and then identify initiatives agencies can use to deal with their various workforce needs. The initiatives will include use of graduate programs in areas in which there are projected skills shortages, streamlining recruitment processes and active promotion of government employment at universities, technical and further education colleges and other supply sources.

We are looking at professional development of the public sector workforce. That includes retaining the workforce in its current element, which is keen to offer services within a tight labour market. Developing and growing expertise from within the public sector is considered to be important to ensure that we have the necessary knowledge and transfer of skills into the future. As a consequence, we are offering a number of programs based on leadership, management and skills development. An important initiative was signing up to join the Australia and New Zealand School of Government in late 2006. This is an association of governments and universities providing postgraduate education and professional development for public sector leaders. The ANZSOG and executive fellows program offer the opportunity to study and learn alongside colleagues from other public sector jurisdictions across Australia and New Zealand. It gives us access to people to whom we would not have had access otherwise in terms of their academic background and skills.

We have also implemented the women in leadership strategy. This strategy aims to break down the barriers to women attaining senior public sector positions. The department is working with other key agencies in increasing flexible work arrangements, professional development and networking opportunities for women within the sector. We are looking at improvements in recruitment practices. One of the issues that the public sector suffers from is the way we go about recruiting people. We are looking to streamline that. We have done some work with public sector agencies and we have had discussions with the Public Sector Standards Commission about how that might be streamlined. We are examining flexible work practices. How government delivers services is another important element, and how we serve the needs of the community. Our researchers confirm that flexible work practices can often assist in attracting and retaining employees. We are working on researching enabling factors and barriers affecting implementation of flexible work practices. When completed, the department will develop tools and resources for agencies to use to assist them in implementing different approaches to work practices. That is basically a summary of what we are doing in addressing the labour shortages facing the public sector.

Mr P.B. WATSON: What percentage are you short in the public sector workforce through not being able to attract people?

Mr T. BUSWELL: They do not know how many they have got.

Mr P.B. WATSON: I was not addressing the question to the Leader of the Opposition; I was addressing it to the Premier—something he will never be.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: It is unfortunate that we get stupid assertions. If I had asked any Premier any day of the week exactly how many people are in the public sector, at no time in the state’s history would he have been able to give me a specific answer. We had a model that used to provide us with quarterly figures—105 504. I believed that that model was insufficiently inaccurate and unresponsive, so we have put in place a method that will give us a more accurate figure. That does not mean, as has been asserted, that we have no idea how many people work in the public service. Only a fool would assert that. Let us get that clear for a start. We are short across the public service. The criticism that is made of us, though, is that we employ too many people. The Leader of the Opposition is nodding his head.

Mr T. BUSWELL: It is not just me who has that criticism.

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Mr A.J. CARPENTER: We get that criticism from people who say in the next breath, “You haven’t got enough teachers, you haven’t got enough policemen, you haven’t got enough doctors in public hospitals, you haven’t got enough nurses, you haven’t got enough community workers in Indigenous communities, you haven’t got enough people assisting young mothers, and you haven’t got enough people doing this, that and the other.” We say that we are doing our best to try to recruit them. Five minutes later they say that we have too many people in the public service. To all those who say that we have too many people in the public service, I ask how many are too many? We have an economy that is growing at astronomical rates of six or seven per cent. There is a demand on the public sector. We probably had something similar to it in the 1960s. Anybody who stands on the front steps of Parliament House of Western Australia and tells the Western Australian public that we should have fewer people delivering services will get a hostile reception. Ordinary people have more sense than that. The big, small and medium-sized companies that complain about the time it takes for their applications of one sort or another to be processed know that we need more people doing that work. They also know that we are recruiting them.

Mr T. BUSWELL: They also know you could do it more efficiently.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: They know that we are doing it much more efficiently than it has ever been done before. For example, I think we are still searching for people in the education system. I do not know how many teachers we are short, but we have around 1 300 more teachers in our classrooms and smaller classes than we had when we came to government. We have 2 000 additional education support workers in our system than we had when we came to government but there is a demand for more. We have 1 500 or 2 000 additional nurses in our public hospitals than we had when we came to government. We have 1 000 more doctors in our public hospitals than we had when we came to government, but we need more. Mr Wauchope may be able to provide the member with a better estimate of how many more we need, but that is about the best I can do at the moment.

Mr M.C. Wauchope: I do not have any particular figures on hand.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: We have quite a lot of unfilled vacancies in the public sector. Everybody who is walking around without blinkers on knows why.

[9.50 am]

Mr T. BUSWELL: I might just keep talking about employment in the public sector for a little while. I want to ask a couple of things. First of all, does the Premier have an aggregate growth guideline for what is expected or planned for full-time equivalent employment growth in the public sector? Between June 2006 and June 2007 the public sector grew at a rate of 14 full-time equivalents per working day. I wonder whether the Premier has an aggregate figure.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Where did the Leader of the Opposition get that figure from?

Mr T. BUSWELL: I got it from the government’s reports.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Will the member refer to the page?

Mr T. BUSWELL: I was following up on what I was talking about before. I refer the Premier to service 3, on page 84 of the *Budget Statements*, “Management of Policy”. I was merely making a point. The Premier will see that there has been quite a significant increase, from \$9.3 million per annum to \$12.6 million per annum, in the cost of the service. How many policy advisers are employed in that section of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, and how many new advisers have been employed in the past 12 months?

Mr M.C. Wauchope: Page 95 of the *Budget Statements* shows a target for the number of full-time equivalents for the policy division in 2008-09 at 73. The estimated actual for 2007-08 is 68. The difference between the two numbers, as I understand it, is taking up an existing entitlement. It is expanding to the approved level.

Mr T. BUSWELL: Related to that, how many individuals work in the Government Media Office within the department, and what is the estimated budget of the GMO?

Mr M.C. Wauchope: The Government Media Office is not paid out of that particular item.

Mr T. BUSWELL: Then let us refer back to services 1 and 4 on page 83. Service 1 is “Support for the Premier as Head of Government”, and service 4 is “Support for the Premier as Minister for Public Sector Management”.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: The note I have indicates that the Government Media Office actual for the total cost of service for 2007-08 is \$3 296 925. The total number of staff for 2007-08 was 41.4 full-time equivalents, which includes ministerial media advisers. This number is projected to remain unchanged in 2008-09. As at February 2001, the Court government had an allocation of 41 staff. The number for staff directly situated within the GMO was 23.4 full-time equivalents in 2007-08. This number will remain unchanged in 2009-10, and it compares with the Court government figure of 23 at the time that government went out of office. It has been pretty static. I think the present government has two fewer ministers than the previous government—they had 17, we have 15. The GMO cash budget for 2008-09 is \$2.518 million, and the total cost of the service is \$3 667 700. That includes

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corporate service and executive support costs. That can be compared with the budget in the final year of the previous coalition government of \$3.35 million. We are a long way down the track since then, by the way. In real terms, after factoring in annual consumer price index increases each financial year since 2000, the coalition's 2000-01 spend equates to \$4.177 million—in other words, there has been a real reduction—which is 24.7 per cent, or \$827 811, more than this government's proposed total cost of service budget for 2008-09. The total number of full-time equivalents is 41.4, of whom 23 are physically located in the Government Media Office.

Mr T. BUSWELL: I return to my original question. Does the government have an aggregate, across-government target for workforce growth?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: There is none that I am aware of. I will ask Ms Reynolds to respond.

Ms M.J. Reynolds: We have Australian Bureau of Statistics figures indicating that the population will increase by 240 000. Over the two financial years 2005-06 and 2006-07 there was an increase of roughly three per cent in the public sector. We do not have any future predictions at this time.

Mr T. BUSWELL: Is there an expectation that the rate of growth in public sector employment will track the rate of growth in the population? The government must have a guide for long-term planning.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: My rough guide is that we will employ as many people as we need to do the job properly. I think at the moment we are understaffed in some areas, and that is creating issues that everyone knows about. However, I would not expect that the rate of growth in public sector employment would outstrip the population growth. In fact, I think the trend has been that the growth rate has been lower than the population growth. It must be remembered that the government is conscious of the budget, as is the opposition. We do not want to spend money on employing people we do not need. The last thing we want to do is to spend money in areas in which we do not need to spend it when there are areas in which we do need to spend money and have not been able to spend enough. We must maximise our efficiencies out of the available budget. We are constantly scanning the landscape to look at the ways we can, if not save, at least redirect public sector spending to get better value for it. The process goes on under all governments, and it will continue under the present one. I do not envisage wholesale reductions in the number of people employed in the public sector, as economically rational as that may seem. It is just not possible in the growth period that the state is going through. The pressures on the state to provide services are enormous, as the Leader of the Opposition would find if he had the experience.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I refer the Premier to page 89 of the *Budget Statements*. Service 1 is "Support for the Premier as Head of Government". The first dot point under "Major Achievements For 2007-08" refers to the European office. In the light of the challenges posed by the current economy, can the Premier enlighten us on the contribution to the promotion of skilled and business migration that European office has made, as outlined in the third paragraph of that dot point?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I was quite disappointed with the direction that the debate took nationally about the value of state government trade offices in the wake of the modest amount of controversy attaching itself to the appointment of Peter Beattie as Queensland's trade officer in North America. I am sure that he is ideally qualified for that role. It was very unfortunate that one of the former heads, or senior officials, from Austrade said that, in his view, the state trade offices were a waste of time and money. I do not find many people who share that view.

[10.00 am]

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: I do not.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: The member knows they are absolutely vital. Western Australian trade officers around the world—I think we have got 15 of them now—have and do provide magnificent service and value for money for the Western Australian community, irrespective of which party is in government. We took a slightly different view to the appointment of some of them; we have not appointed former politicians to the European office, for example, which has often been the trend. I do not say that there is anything necessarily wrong with that, but we have not done that and I do not intend to. We get very good trade benefit from that office, and I have some information specifically on the promotion of skilled and business migration which reads: the European office, in conjunction with the State Migration Centre, attended several migration expos during 2007-08, including—I do not know if this is a comprehensive list—one in York—that is, York, England—called "Emigrate York" —

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: It is a shame that it was not York, Northam.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: — "Emigrate Coventry", the "Down Under Expo" in Dublin, "Opportunities Australia", London, in November 2007 and April 2008, "Opportunities Australia", Manchester, "Opportunities Australia", Leeds, "Emigrate Edinburgh", "Emigrate Sandown"—which is near London—"Emigrate Belfast",

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the “Emigration Fair” in the Netherlands, and the Department of Immigration and Citizenship’s—DIAC—“Australia Needs Skills Expo”. The European office also attended the migration information days and seminar held by migration agents in Europe. Presentations were provided to potential skilled and business migrants in London, Edinburgh, the Netherlands, Belfast and Italy. Migration presentations for potential skilled and business migrants were also held in the WA Business Centre. In October 2007 additional resources were provided by the State Migration Centre, and a full-time staff member was allocated responsibility for skilled and business migration. With the assistance of the State Migration Centre, the European office doubled its resources applied to skilled and business migration during the year. In March 2008, the European office provided assistance, including office staff and facilities to the Department of Health’s recruitment drives in Edinburgh, Belfast and London. As a result, 120 interviews were conducted, with 90 offers of employment being made.

In March 2008, the office facilitated the Department of Education and Training’s recruitment drives in London, Belfast and Glasgow. During that recruitment drive 70 interviews were conducted; 52 jobs offered, and a further 132 expressions of interest were received for additional recruitment. In March 2008, the Department of Corrective Services participated in a migration expo in Belfast, and the “Australia Needs Skills Expo” in London. During the Belfast expo, 38 expressions of interest were taken from various potential applicants, including prison officers.

The member can see from that information that the European office and Mr Noel Ashcroft, who has been heading that office for some time—he is coming to the end of his tenure now—have been working hard, in cooperation with federal agencies and state agencies, to try to address the skills shortage issue in Western Australia. Harking back to that previous question about the level of employment in the public sector, we are looking at trying to recruit into the public sector from those European centres, as well as the private sector, obviously.

As to value for money, the European office is head and shoulders above comparable offices from other states. I anticipate that it will continue to play a vital role. It facilitated the recent trip to France and Russia, and there was a lot of very positive engagement with Russian economy and business, and science institutions, across a whole range of spheres. We are very lucky that we have such good people in our trade offices; some members of Parliament will have come across them and been assisted by them and made a judgement on their capacity. I think if the work of trade officers were graphed, it would peak at the awarding of an Order of Australia for the officer in Shanghai, B.J. Zhuang, for the role he played in securing the liquefied natural gas trade deal for Western Australia and the Western Australian government. He is recognised all around China—and in Australia—as tantamount to genius in putting together deals. Interestingly enough, another former Western Australian-based person was also granted, I think, an Order of Australia recently; he is now working privately in Moscow. I had the opportunity to talk to him whilst I was there, and he said that he could not write on a piece of paper—so many would be the zeros—the price that B.J. Zhuang could ask for his expertise in the private sector.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Premier, a large component of the list of locations of expos referred to that trade officers attended were in the United Kingdom, and I understand they have branched out into other expos in Europe. I also understand that Germany has—unusually round the world—potentially a large number of engineers who face unemployment in their country. Does the Premier know whether WA is trying to get into the German skills market as far as accessing skilled migration?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: To be honest, as I sit here, I cannot say yes to that, but I would be surprised if the answer is no. That opportunity was pointed to regarding other—Germany aside—former Eastern Bloc countries, whose education systems have been traditionally very strong in the sciences, engineering, chemistry, geology and so on. A lot of opportunities exist for potential recruitment in places like Poland, the Ukraine, Russia and the former Soviet states —

Mr P. PAPALIA: They are all going to the UK.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Not all of them. In Tomsk, for example, which is a university city servicing the resource industry of Siberia, a Scottish university from Edinburgh has an English-delivered postgraduate engineering school, from which the major oil companies of the world—as well as the Russian interests—recruit from. When we were there, I spoke to a very large group of young graduate engineers, all of whom, subsequent to our discussion, wanted to know where they could get the migration papers to come to Australia.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: Considering the performance so far this morning, I ask this question with some trepidation, but I will go for it. On page 83 of the *Budget Statements*, starting under the second dot point, and going over to the second dot point on page 84, and again on page 103, there is considerable mention of efficiency, effectiveness and accountability in government. I want to attempt to solicit the Premier’s support for my view that these documents—although they are sensational in their quality and are of a professional

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standard—do not meet the requirement that the budget papers refer to. These documents need to be produced at this standard for the professional standing of Treasury, which is the best in Australia clearly, but there is a lack of capacity for parliamentarians and people outside Parliament, like local government, industry and others, to generally follow the programs and the outcome of the programs. Premier, I think it is well overdue that that should happen. The Premier could facilitate that whilst he is in office. It would not be a significant change, but it could make a difference to the understanding of quite a few of those line items mentioned in the documents.

[10.10 am]

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I thank the member for the suggestion, and I will do my best to respond in a general sense. I do not doubt that there are some capacity issues among members of Parliament in being able to follow the budget papers, but I would suggest that that is not the fault of the budget papers. In fact, as I understand, the Western Australian budget presentation is nationally lauded as the best by those who make these sort of judgements—and I do not think that is us. Having worked on the other side of the equation, trying to pursue issues in government budget papers, I was forever frustrated by what appeared to me to be years of continual change in the way the budget papers were presented. For quite a long period in the 1990s, it seemed to me that the budget papers were very hard to compare from one year to another because the mode of preparation and presentation seemed to change a lot. In that regard, we have steadied the ship and the budget presentation has been consistent in style, format and mode for several years. The member for Avon will know that I am not an expert on these matters; however the Deputy Director General, Anne Nolan, to whom I referred before, is a former senior Treasury official and she may or may not have a bit more information on the way the Western Australian budget paper presentation is viewed outside government.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: Premier, I can save us some time. Without question, these are the best-prepared budget papers in Australia.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I agree with the member—apparently!

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: The preparation is not the issue. The issue is that we have gone from cash accounting to accrual accounting and from Australian standards to international standards, and that is why the budget papers have changed. In preparation terms, these are magnificent budget papers, and they serve that purpose beautifully. However, I am trying gently to say that there is a second purpose for budget papers. For academics and senior people following these budget papers, they are first class; I am not arguing about that. I am arguing that a range of other people, including members of Parliament, also like to be able to follow program and budget performances. It would not be difficult, particularly in light of what it states on page 103 about e-government programs. The day will come—I am not saying it will be next year—when budget papers will be electronically presented to opposition and government members, and, particularly to the Premier on a monthly basis. Those days are coming. For the sake of all Western Australians I am simply suggesting that there could be an opportunity for a quick look at what could be done, not to these budget papers, but to a supplementary process, probably electronic, to help people follow the progress of budget programs.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I appreciate the member for Avon's suggestion for the budget papers. I know this is somewhat tangential to his suggestion, but the budget papers are presented electronically now. Summations of the content are presented. Ministers, as the responsible authority over the different departments, present accounts in shorthand form—the *Reader's Digest* version—of what is happening in their portfolios, only to be attacked for being political! There are always ways to improve people's capacity to follow and understand programs and budget presentations. I take the member's suggestion on board. However, I think that if members were to sit and do the work honestly—I am not suggesting that the member for Avon does not—then the budget papers and their presentation are both chock full of information and relatively easy to follow.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: Premier, I was a big fan of the previous Auditor General, Des Pearson. He was an outstanding servant of Western Australia and I have no doubt that he is doing a very good job in Victoria. Mr Pearson used to say that there was about a 10 per cent efficiency gain available to the state if better and more easily understandable information was available outside these formal budget papers. There is an opportunity, not only for the Parliament to get financial gain from a better understanding, but also for public servants and a range of other people to be able to follow the process a bit better, therefore making these efficiency gains possible.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I understand the member for Avon's well-intentioned suggestion and I undertake to discuss his suggestion with the Treasurer and the Under Treasurer. If there are ways to provide better, more complete and more comprehensible data, information and presentations we will pursue them. I thank the member.

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Dr K.D. HAMES: I refer the Premier to the first point about average operating costs per ministerial office under “Key Efficiency Indicators” on page 92 of the *Budget Statements*. I note that the 2006-07 figure was \$1.6 million —

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I am sorry. I am on page 92. Will the member for Dawesville direct me so that I can drag my finger to the line in question?

Dr K.D. HAMES: Average operating costs per ministerial office; the first point under “Key Efficiency Indicators”.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Yes, I see.

Dr K.D. HAMES: The 2006-07 actual figure was roughly \$1.6 million with a 10 per cent budgeted increase, thus bringing the figure to \$1.8 million. The actual increase was 12.3 per cent to roughly \$1.85 million. The target for this year is a further 0.8 per cent increase to just under \$2 million. I note point (b), which states that the increased rent for Dumas House accounts for a portion of that increase. I would like to know how much of that component will change due to the changing numbers of staff in ministerial offices and by how much staff numbers have increased since 2006, and, perhaps, since 2001.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: If I can, I will ask Mr Wauchope to respond. I think that I have a note on this matter—somewhere.

Mr M.C. Wauchope: The member for Dawesville is correct. Rent is the significant movement in that component, but it is rent for not only Dumas House, but also Governor Stirling Tower. Those significant increases are reflected in our 2008-09 target and will also be reflected in the department’s costs across the board. The rent hike has been significant and will show up in those various components. In terms of the staff numbers, I will take that question on notice. I was not quite sure what period the member was interested in looking at.

Dr K.D. HAMES: Given that we are seeking supplementary information, I will clarify my request. When I was the Minister for Housing, Water and Indigenous Affairs, I had eight or perhaps nine ministerial staff. I understand from a conversation I had last year with the then Minister for Housing and Works and Indigenous Affairs, Hon Michelle Roberts, that she had a significantly higher number of staff. I would like to know how many staff members are employed in each ministerial office now compared with the number of staff employed in the same capacity at the time of the 2006-07 budget, and further comparing those numbers to the figures at the end of the Liberal term of government in 2001. Is the Premier happy to provide that information on notice?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Is the member asking the question on notice or is he seeking it as supplementary information?

Dr K.D. HAMES: Mr Wauchope offered to provide the information as supplementary.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I thought that I had the information here and I am trying to find it now.

The CHAIRMAN: That being the case, the supplementary information number will be A18.

[*Supplementary Information No A18.*]

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: The level of staffing in individual offices does vary a bit. I think we started in office with an average of 10 staff per office; that is, from the front desk down to the minister. For some ministers that was enough staff; it depended on the workload. For others it was, obviously, not enough.

Dr K.D. HAMES: Amongst Liberal ministers there were big differences in the number of staff members.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Yes. When the member for Cottesloe was a minister he had 18 staff because of his many and diverse portfolios. At one stage I had a number of staff because I was responsible for education, Indigenous affairs, and sport and recreation.

Dr K.D. HAMES: Sure; I understand that. However, I had a reasonably clear comparison between the member for Midland and myself, with similar portfolios, yet she had nearly double the number of staff—I think. I will wait to see the answer to confirm that thought.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: We will get the information.

Mr B.S. WYATT: Following on from the question asked by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, and maybe this is a question of curiosity, I ask about a point on the same page. Page 92 of the *Budget Statements* contains the Leader of the Opposition’s budget for average operating costs. Can the Premier outline those costs and what they entail?

[10.20 am]

Mr T. BUSWELL: Has the member seen the film *Flatline*?

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Mr B.S. WYATT: That is my suspicion; I just want to know whether it is actually true.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: The Leader of the Opposition cannot have it both ways; he cannot argue that there are too many people employed in the public sector and that it costs too much, and then ask for more people to receive better pay.

Mr T. BUSWELL: I did not ask for more people to receive better pay; I said I appreciated the fact that the director general sought to adjust the salaries of some of my more substantive staff. That is all; I appreciate that.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Did the Leader of the Opposition say that publicly?

Mr T. BUSWELL: If I am asked, I will.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Is the Leader of the Opposition now saying publicly that he encourages higher salaries?

Mr T. BUSWELL: Why would I be asked that publicly? I am telling the Premier now. I still understand why the aggregate global budget is flat, so we have to squeeze savings from somewhere else, but the opposition is happy to lead the way.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I made the point previously about the number of staff across government. The pressure is on everybody. Last year the issue was that there had been an extra allocation of staff, but the then Leader of the Opposition could not fill the vacancies. I think that was the case. As the Leader of the Opposition knows, it is very hard to get people of the sort one wants with the skills set that one would like, when they are able to earn sometimes two or three times the amount for the same skills set in the private sector. It affects my office; I have lost two people from my office to Perth Airport.

Mr P.B. WATSON: It has not improved the parking there!

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: They were probably sparked into action and are taking a bit of notice of what the government is saying! The job opportunities were there.

The member's question is not really related —

Dr K.D. HAMES: The Leader of the Opposition wants to know how much our office is getting.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I do not know why we keep making a comparison with 2000-01, but the cash budget then for both opposition parties was \$934 620; in 2007-08 it is \$1 423 000. Applying the Treasury deflator, the 2000-01 cash budget would be adjusted to \$988 095, and the 2007-08 cash budget to \$1.2 million, an increase in adjusted terms of \$229 000. I do not think that is unreasonable, actually. In fact, I remember that when we went from opposition to government, Geoff Gallop made the point that the opposition's office was not adequately resourced. He sought to do something about it.

Mr T. BUSWELL: Yes, he gave 40 per cent of it to the National Party.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: The opposition has that issue, but the Leader of the Opposition can see the point: there are two parties in opposition.

Dr K.D. HAMES: We get 60 per cent of the ministerial figure. As the government increases the ministerial figure, so ours goes up.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: There has been a 23 per cent increase in total funding for both opposition parties. It should be noted that there was an estimated overspend by the office under Hon Paul Omodei of \$187 000 for reimbursement of the Forest Products Commission for Mr John Kime's salary; on-costs of \$83 000; \$93 000 for end-of-contract payments to five staff; and \$11 000 for last year's Liberal Party policy launch at the Raffles Hotel in December. This included payment for event management and sound and audio. That was \$11 000.

Mr T. BUSWELL: It does not happen anymore.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I am not surprised. Did the member for Victoria Park get that? I said \$11 000.

Mr B.S. WYATT: Yes; quite a party.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: The Liberal Party's policy launch at the Raffles Hotel in December cost \$11 000; this included payment for event management, sound and audio. It might be argued that it was not a Liberal Party policy launch, but it might be argued that it was. Is the Leader of the Opposition nodding in agreement?

Mr T. BUSWELL: I am just moving my head; I am moving my head in every direction it can move.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I take it from the Leader of the Opposition's head movements that he disapproves of the \$11 000 expenditure.

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Mr T. BUSWELL: I was not involved in the decision, so I do not —

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I know; he did not even turn up.

Mr T. BUSWELL: No.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: No; I remember. One has to be careful when one starts making jibes about this, because I do not know what happened when we were in opposition.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: They are busy officers, though, Premier.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I know. Was it a policy launch? The \$11 000 was for leadership profiling. I do not recall—Mr Wauchope might be able to embarrass me—anything similar happening under Geoff Gallop while in opposition. If Mr Wauchope knows anything to the contrary, I ask him to let me know about it privately later! I am sure the community would be outraged if it knew about that.

Mr T. BUSWELL: I think we could find a fair bit across the government's spending about which the public would be equally, if not more, outraged.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I doubt it.

Mr T. BUSWELL: I have a question, but before I ask it, I advise the Premier that I have done a quick series of calculations on population growth versus public sector employment growth. The Premier said that they were widely divergent, with population growth going one way and public sector —

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: No. Did I use the words “widely divergent”?

Mr T. BUSWELL: The Premier said that they were different; he said that one was going one way and the other was going the other way.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Yes, but did I use the words —

Mr T. BUSWELL: Okay, divergent. Let the record show I delete the word “widely”.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: As I recall, the point I was making was that growth in public sector employment, to my understanding, trends somewhat below population growth. I did not have any specific data to back that up.

Mr T. BUSWELL: I just thought I would let the Premier know that over the past three years, according to the information I have, the average annual increase in public sector FTEs is 4.1 per cent and the population has grown at around 2.5 per cent.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Where did the Leader of the Opposition get that information from?

Mr T. BUSWELL: From the government's reports, which I dutifully keep every quarter, except that the government no longer produces them every quarter, so I cannot read my report.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Which report?

Mr T. BUSWELL: This is not my question, by the way, Mr Chairman.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: As a percentage of the total labour force for the past 20 years, state government employment has dropped from 20.8 per cent to 15 per cent.

Mr T. BUSWELL: I am not talking about the past—how many years?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: No, we are responding to trends at the moment.

Mr T. BUSWELL: I am telling the Premier that over the past three years the rate of population growth has been lower than the rate of average annual growth in public sector FTEs.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: That shows what an efficient government we are.

Mr T. BUSWELL: The government is employing people at a higher rate than the rate at which the population is growing.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I know what the Leader of the Opposition is saying, and we are not. He is talking about percentage growth, not real numbers.

Mr T. BUSWELL: I refer to the table on page 108 and the “Accommodation” line item under “Cashflows from Operating Activities”.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I am sorry; I was distracted by the Leader of the Opposition shaking his head. What page is he on?

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Mr T. BUSWELL: Page 108. Of course the total growth of the public sector will be less than the total growth of the population.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Then the Leader of the Opposition should not assert otherwise.

Mr T. BUSWELL: I did not; I said that the rate of growth of the public sector is higher than the rate of growth of the population.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: That is correct.

Mr T. BUSWELL: That is not what the Premier said.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: That is what the Leader of the Opposition said, but it is not all that he said.

Mr T. BUSWELL: It is not what the Premier said earlier when he waved his hands about to create the impression that there could have been divergence between the two. I know the Premier does not know how many people are employed in the public sector and I do not expect him to, but I expect him to have an idea about where it is heading.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: If one takes long-term trends, that long-term trend is obvious, is it not?

Mr T. BUSWELL: How far back does the Premier want to go?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I said 1988. Let us dwell upon it; while the Leader of the Opposition is here, let us hear his assessment about where radical surgery could be undertaken on the public sector.

Mr T. BUSWELL: I have stood many times in this place and criticised the Premier for not conducting enough reviews of the efficiency of government and ways in which to improve the processes and focus of government services. I know the Premier was not here to listen to my address-in-reply speech to the budget, but I spoke at some length —

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Nor were any Liberal Party members. At least I was listening in my office.

[10.30 am]

Mr T. BUSWELL: — about efficiency of service delivery rather than this focus on inputs.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I agree with that entirely; of course I do. Nobody in their right mind would disagree with that. However, I remind the member that in our first term in government, we received constant criticism that all we were doing were reviews of the public service. The criticism was that we were doing more reviews of the public service and reorganising the public service more than had ever been undertaken. Now the opposition says that we should do more reviews!

Mr T. BUSWELL: I was not here for Labor's first term in government.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: We have taken a breather.

Mr T. BUSWELL: However, I will tell the Premier something interesting: in the government's first term —

Ms D.J. GUISE: Can we have some questions rather than a discussion? I would actually like to ask some questions.

Mr T. BUSWELL: On that guidance from above, accommodation has gone up from —

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I know; I am not trying to be distracting, but the member had better remind me where we are at again.

Dr K.D. HAMES: We are looking at page 108 of the *Budget Statements*.

Mr T. BUSWELL: We are looking at the cash flow statement on page 108 and, in particular, the accommodation line item. This picks up on a point that the Director General of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet raised earlier. A very significant increase in accommodation charges has been estimated for this department in this financial year and over the out years. I understand that the department will relocate in due course to the Bishops See development on St Georges Terrace. Some time ago, I think in 2004, the director general received a report that recommended the government consolidate some of its leasing footprints and go to the market and negotiate substantive long-term leases. At that time, the government, for a range of reasons that I would like to have articulated, chose to stick with its existing model, which is basically a series of smaller footprint shorter-term leases that are rolled over. Has the government done any work on what that would now cost, given that the property market in the ensuing years has become somewhat superheated?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I ask Mr Wauchope to respond to that question.

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Mr M.C. Wauchope: I understand the matter is being handled by the Department of Housing and Works, which has offered different options over the past few years. I would need to go back to that department to get the information the member seeks. It is not a matter that has come across my desk in that sense.

Mr T. BUSWELL: In that case, will the Department of the Premier and Cabinet's office be relocated in the next couple of years?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I think we are reaching the point at which the building we are occupying will be knocked down, so we had better move. The member mentioned Bishops See as a replacement building.

Mr T. BUSWELL: I do not know whether it will be the replacement—I am asking that.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: The member mentioned that and I asked the director general whether that is where we will go. I know that it is one of the options being discussed and looked at, but I do not think it has yet reached any sense of finalisation. Mr Wauchope might be able to provide us with a time line. My general recollection of the question that the member asked—I was not the Premier at the time; I was in cabinet—is that it was driven by a desire to avoid additional costs. In 2004 we always tried to get the cheapest deal. The property market, as the member says, has moved on quite quickly. The Department of the Premier and Cabinet now occupies Governor Stirling Tower, which the owners have earmarked for demolition within five years. This will become an issue because, on superficial analysis, the accommodation cost for us will be significantly greater, but we do not have much choice other than to stay and have the building knocked down around our ears. I know the public does not have a lot of sympathy for that; some people would quite happily see us on the lawn outside, but it would probably not lead to much in the way of efficiency. Therefore, we are stuck and we must find an alternative location. I am not exactly certain of the time lines; Mr Wauchope might have a better idea.

Mr M.C. Wauchope: Basically, we must be out of Governor Stirling Tower by late 2012. As the minister indicated, the site that the Department of the Premier and Cabinet currently occupies will be redeveloped. If it was an option for us to stay, we would basically be in a construction site for an extended period. Whatever decision has been made is obviously for the long term. The department has been in that building for 24 years; therefore, we are looking at 20 to 30-year-type decisions, and as a consequence of that we need to move in 2012. Obviously, we are investigating a couple of options for a long-term solution for the management of the executive government, effectively, including departments.

Mr T. BUSWELL: What is the Department of the Premier and Cabinet's current lease footprint in square metres? What does the department anticipate securing as part of this new long-term arrangement?

Mr M.C. Wauchope: I do not have those figures at my fingertips. However, we occupy a number of sites at the moment. We have accommodation in Governor Stirling Tower, Dumas House—the building over the road —

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: No, the Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

Mr M.C. Wauchope: Sorry, I am talking about the Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

Mr T. BUSWELL: Yes; that is right.

Mr M.C. Wauchope: At London House we have two ministerial offices —

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I see what Mr Wauchope means—all ministerial offices.

Mr M.C. Wauchope: We have accommodation in William Street—namely, for the State Law Publisher—and the Office of Road Safety is in the old Dwyer Durack building in Barrack Street. Currently, we are spread across a number of sites, which is not conducive to efficiencies, and the need to move gives us an opportunity to consolidate and have a purpose-built arrangement to address those functions.

Mr T. BUSWELL: Will a number of ministerial offices go into that building?

Mr M.C. Wauchope: Our intention is to consolidate where we can, but I do not think all ministerial offices would be in the new building. I think we would still have a footprint in Dumas House.

Mr T. BUSWELL: In relation to the accommodation aspect of this year's budget—this is really a capital item but it relates to the cash flow statement—how much money is being spent in the current financial year, how much was spent in the previous financial year, and how much is expected to be spent on office fit-outs and upgrades within the existing footprint of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, particularly Governor Stirling Tower?

Mr M.C. Wauchope: The answer is not a lot. Quite frankly, we have been conscious of the fact that we will move within four or five years. We had to do some work to accommodate new functions and to refurbish offices so that they provide adequate working arrangements, but I do not have the detailed cost in front of me. I can provide that if necessary.

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Mr P.B. WATSON: I refer to the first dot point at the top of page 96 of the *Budget Statements*, which comes under the heading “Major Achievements For 2007-08”. This dot point indicates that Western Australia is one of only two contenders for the Square Kilometre Array project, which is known as the SKA project. I ask this question on behalf of the member for Geraldton, who has had a fair bit to do with this project and has put a lot of work into it. Can the Premier indicate where Western Australia is at in this bidding process?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: The Chairman will be interested in the answer to this question as well.

The CHAIRMAN: I am.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: There is growing public awareness of this project, particularly in the Murchison and Geraldton.

Mr T. BUSWELL: Everybody is interested.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: There is also growing awareness about the Square Kilometre Array project statewide, especially in the scientific community, in which there is salivation at the prospect of Western Australia ultimately being the host for the bulk of the project. Western Australia’s bid for the project has been in development for quite some time. Western Australia is one of the two remaining potential ultimate sites, along with southern Africa, but principally South Africa. However, the member for Geraldton probably knows more than most of us about this project. I think southern Africa includes South Africa and about half a dozen other southern African nations. The Square Kilometre Array project is so vast that the radio telescope dishes would need to spread into half a dozen southern African nations. We could basically accommodate the project in Western Australia; the bulk of it would be in the Geraldton hinterland area but radio dishes would be spread across Australia and into New Zealand because the catchment would be so big. The Square Kilometre Array nomenclature, as I understand, comes from the area that the aggregate of radio dishes would take up.

Western Australia co-hosted the International Square Kilometre Array Forum in Perth on 9 April. State funding of approximately \$40 000, through the Department of Industry and Resources, contributed to the cost of the forum. The state government continues to support the bid through funding of the Premier’s fellowships in radioastronomy—\$1 million over four years—and the chair of radioastronomy at Curtin University of Technology, Professor Steven Tingay, through a grant of \$500 000. This matter will come up again later in the industry and resources session of the estimates committees and the member might want to ask the question again then, when I will have far more expertise and information available to me. As Minister for Science and also, obviously, as Premier, I will continue to push, on behalf of Western Australia, for the Geraldton region of Western Australia to be the main host for the project.

The Acting Deputy Director General of the Department of Industry and Resources is in the public gallery and is beaming at the recollection of this: we were recently in Russia with the state’s senior scientist, Professor Lyn Beazley, and spoke to numerous Russian scientists who also are excited about this project. We sought, and I think have gained, their support for the project to be located in Western Australia—the member for Geraldton will be pleased about that. As I am informed, this is the biggest science project on the face of the globe and is likely to be the biggest for many decades.

[10.40 am]

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: It is also a very significant advantage for education in Western Australia.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: It is not like lotto, where, at the end, there is either a prize or nothing. As the member for Avon would know, the infrastructure is being developed now, the expertise is being developed now, we are aggregating in Perth radio scientists of international expertise from all over the world and there is already a huge benefit that is starting to accrue to us educationally and in other ways. The year 2012 is the ultimate decision point, but by that time a vast amount of infrastructure, including optic fibre and whatever else, will be in place in Western Australia. The pursuit of this now, in tandem with much stronger support than we had previously—although there was good support from the federal government—is delivering us benefits in the state of Western Australia. It is a very exciting project.

As it was described to me by one of the Premier’s fellows with international expertise in radioastronomy, the leap in capacity, going from the existing radioastronomy capacity to what will be on offer when this project is in place, is the equivalent to the leap in capacity that Galileo delivered to humankind when he opened the world’s eyes, through the telescope, to the solar system; so vast is the increase in capacity. The amount of data that the Square Kilometre Array project will be able to accumulate in one day will be superior to the total amount of data that science, in the history of human observation of the universe, has been able to gather hitherto. It is amazing. In a single day, the information we will be able to capture from space will be greater than the entire information we have captured from space in our history. It is a good project.

Chairman; Mr Troy Buswell; Mr Alan Carpenter; Dr Kim Hames; Mr Max Trenorden; Mr Peter Watson; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Ben Wyatt; Ms Dianne Guise; Mrs Judy Hughes

Ms D.J. GUISE: My question to the Premier relates to service 8, which appears on page 105 of the *Budget Statements*. I refer to past expenditure on computer hardware and software, as well as the item under “New Works” for computer hardware and software for 2008-09. My first question relates to the estimated cost and budget. Can the Premier advise what portion of that amount actually refers to members’ laptops?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I will do my best to try to find out who would have that information. I am advised the answer is none. I ask Mr Moore to respond directly.

Mr G.J. Moore: The \$300 000 referred to on page 105 is the department’s IT refreshment program; it is an annual expenditure. Members’ laptops are provided through Parliament House and this is where the department works with Parliament House. They are laptops supplied by Parliament House and supported and serviced by Department of the Premier and Cabinet IT.

Ms D.J. GUISE: The \$300 000 estimated expenditure is indeed for the refreshment program that is wholly and solely related to the software that is on the members’ laptops—is that correct?

Mr G.J. Moore: It relates to computer equipment replacement, not so much the software within those laptops.

Ms D.J. GUISE: On page 83, under the heading “Delivery Of Services”, is an “Item 5” entry. Could the Premier indicate the cost of supplying software to members directly?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Sorry. Could the member repeat the question?

Ms D.J. GUISE: What does it cost the Department of the Premier and Cabinet to supply IT software and support to members of Parliament; and how much is going to be spent in 2008-09, given the problems that we are currently experiencing?

Mr G.J. Moore: The software is put on by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet but unfortunately I do not have with me the split between the dollars.

Ms D.J. GUISE: I request that information as supplementary information.

[*Supplementary Information No A19.*]

Ms D.J. GUISE: I would also like to be provided with supplementary information of the cost breakdowns for 2007-08 and 2008-09.

[*Supplementary Information No A20.*]

Ms D.J. GUISE: Can the Premier advise by what date the Department of the Premier and Cabinet will be able to advise parliamentary IT of the compatibility of the software that it has placed on our laptops with the proposed new laptops that are meant to be rolled out to us in due course?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Mr Wauchope is indicating that he might be able to respond to that.

Mr M.C. Wauchope: I understand there have been some problems with the laptops of some members of Parliament. That has been due in part to the upgrade in software and the lack of memory capacity of the existing laptops that have been issued by Parliament to members of Parliament. Originally, Parliament was due to replace those computers in August this year. I understand that, due to the problems that members have had, it has brought that program forward to June. We would expect that all laptops would be replaced in that time frame. I also understand that a memory upgrade was offered to members of Parliament to assist in the bridge between now and the replacement of the computers. I understand that about 37 members have taken up that offer. I think June will be the date for the replacement of the computers as opposed to the original August.

Mrs J. HUGHES: My question relates to the same topic. When members are actually in Parliament, we can be here for sometimes 12 or 15 hours in a day, and most often our computers are the only link, apart from the telephone, to our electorate offices and to our communities. When we are unable to access the services that are required for us to at least get on to the internet, it makes it very difficult for members of Parliament to execute their jobs effectively. Is there any move by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and the Parliament to put the service into one pair of hands so that members know where to go for repairs? At the moment members have to go between the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and the Parliament and it is a very ineffective method. Is there any move for the Department of the Premier and Cabinet to take it under one heading?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Not that I am aware of, but if there is, the director general might be able to illuminate it for us.

Mr M.C. Wauchope: No. That has been considered from time to time over a number of years, but the answer is no, not at this time.

Ms D.J. GUISE: I have a further question.

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The CHAIRMAN: I will take the further question from the member for Wanneroo, but I have been approached by several members wanting a break for a cup of tea or for other purposes. I will therefore take the further question first from the member for Wanneroo.

Ms D.J. GUISE: The question is along the lines of IT again and is in relation to the support that members are given. In the Department of the Premier and Cabinet a decision was made to change members' email addresses without any consultation. That does not seem to me to be best practice. I wonder whether this practice will continue. Also, having made the decision, was any consideration given to the cost to members for replacement of stationery; and, if it was not, why not?

Dr K.D. HAMES: Good question!

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Mr Wauchope.

Mr M.C. Wauchope: I would have to talk to my IT people to get an answer from them.

Ms D.J. GUISE: Could that answer be provided to me as supplementary information, Mr Chair?

[Supplementary Information No A21.]

The CHAIRMAN: As I said, we will take a five-minute break for a cup of tea or coffee, or whatever might be needed, and I ask members to be back at five minutes to 11.00 am.

Meeting suspended from 10.52 to 11.05 am

Mr B.S. WYATT: I refer to the second last dot point on page 93 that states —

The Special Advisor on Indigenous Affairs assisted in planning and follow-up of the Premier's Indigenous Jobs Forum.

I have a question—I could have asked it by way of interjection when it came up previously—about the outcome of that follow-up. Could the Premier provide me with some details of the follow-up?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: As I recall, I was unable to attend the jobs forum because it coincided with the funeral of Matt Price and I could not go. The member for Victoria Park went, and I understand it was generally seen as a good event. How many people were at the jobs forum?

Mr B.S. WYATT: Two hundred.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I asked Lieutenant General Sanderson, in his special adviser capacity, to follow up with non-government employers—I discussed this earlier; I will not go over old ground—and facilitate an increase in the number of Indigenous people employed by those organisations. We have done that individually out of our office, and the member for Victoria Park has been doing some of it. In March I received a report from Lieutenant General Sanderson that recommended a more systemic approach to Indigenous employment between the state and commonwealth government. The state government, through the Council of Australian Governments, is working with the commonwealth government on increasing Indigenous employment and economic participation. COAG has asked the Indigenous reform working group to bring forward sustainable reform proposals no later than the COAG meeting in October 2008. The government is still considering Lieutenant General Sanderson's report. I was not aware that a freedom of information application had been made—I may have been—to access the report. Quite frankly, I do not have any issue with its release. It did not quite address the area that I was anticipating it would address, which was non-government employment and how to follow up the jobs forum, which was all about engaging non-government employers. Having brought them together and having those employers show their willingness to be part of this policy drive, how could we practically pursue opportunities in the private employment arena?

I recall that the report was very much focused on intergovernmental issues. I have a copy of it here. I was a little frustrated by the fact that the FOI application and the decision not to release the report became the subject of a story rather than the subject of the report itself. The last thing that I want to do is create a mystery where none exists. I would like to provide that report so it is available for people to peruse themselves. I will make the report available. I do not see any reason that it should not be released. Documents are sometimes prepared for government for internal gestation and then taken to cabinet for decision making. All governments go through this tension between the desire of the media, on behalf of the general public, wanting to access information and the government wanting to use that information to develop policy or decisions before the information is publicly disseminated. There is a natural tension in trying to be open and accountable and develop good policy before we take a policy out publicly. I will table the report at the end of these proceedings. I consider it to be entirely non-contentious. It did not address the issues that I wanted it to address.

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The CHAIRMAN: Premier, you will not be able to table it as part of these proceedings but it can be tabled when Parliament is sitting.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: We are still working with the special adviser to work again with these non-government employers and determine what follow-up there has been, what outcome there has been or can be and what role we can play in assisting those outcomes.

Dr K.D. HAMES: It seems to me that the Premier rejected two of the reports.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I am not rejecting this one.

Dr K.D. HAMES: Okay, the Premier was frustrated by what was put forward to him in two reports from John Sanderson. Is the Premier questioning whether John Sanderson is doing the overall job the Premier would like him to be doing?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I have had several discussions with John Sanderson about the approach I am trying to adopt and the approach that his reports recommend. Those discussions are ongoing. I am not rejecting his report at all. If members have a look at it, they will see that a lot of it —

Dr K.D. HAMES: We would like to have had a look at it, but we were rejected. I am pleased that the Premier is now making the report available.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: The recommendations amount to improving the cooperation between federal and state governments. A lot of what is happening at the Council of Australian Governments working group is all about that. It is not a matter of rejecting; it is a matter of wanting additional focus.

The CHAIRMAN: The Leader of the Opposition is back. Does he wish to ask another question? Whoever has that mobile phone can remove it from the chamber.

Mr T. BUSWELL: It might be my phone; I might have left it up there.

The CHAIRMAN: Then you will be going out as well, with your phone.

Mr T. BUSWELL: I have done that before. I want to return to the subject of office accommodation, and the move of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, the Department of Treasury and Finance and possibly some ministerial offices to a consolidated site by 2012. I refer to the line item on page 108 in the “Payments” section under “Accommodation”. This move is taking place and the director general has indicated that the Premier is aware that his office must move but does not want his office being knocked down around him, and all those sorts of things, which I think is very wise. The opposition keeps a list of consultancies that are engaged by the government, because it does not have any confidence in the quarterly report on consultancies, which reports only a fraction of what actually takes place. I refer to a couple of consultancies that have been engaged recently. On 31 January of this year, a tender, or some such thing, was awarded to Code Commercial Interiors for \$590 000 for the Governor Stirling Tower office refit. Another \$511 000 contract was awarded on 22 February for the Department of the Premier and Cabinet West Perth office fit-out. A number of those consultancies are listed. I have not had a chance to add them all up, but there are a significant number. In other words, a quick glance indicates that at least \$1 million worth of works are contained in those two contracts—\$590 000 for the Governor Stirling Tower office refit and \$511 000 for the DPC West Perth office fit-out. Is that in line with the advice the director general provided earlier? Is the director general aware of this contract, and are there any others?

Mr M.C. Wauchope: As I indicated before, we are trying to do the minimum amount of work on Governor Stirling Tower to get over the next four years. I am not sure which tender relates to that \$590 000. The contract for DPC West Perth could be Dumas House. We have done some work on the 11th floor of Dumas House to refurbish the office that was previously occupied by Minister Marlborough. That has been revamped and enlarged so that it can be set up as a new ministerial office. I cannot confirm that, but that is likely to be the case. I would have to answer the question about the \$590 000 contract by way of supplementary information.

Mr T. BUSWELL: I want to get a feel for how much money is being spent. When I dig through this list, how many more will I find? What would I be looking at? Did the government pay millions this year and last year on Governor Stirling Tower? I understand the need to have decent office accommodation; I am not arguing about that. I am only looking at the Premier by way of courtesy; I do not expect him to answer. The director general will have the information.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I do not have the detail. Before I hand over to the director general, it is worth making the point, which I think the Leader of the Opposition acknowledges, that in the interim of four or five years the Premier—whoever that may be—will need adequate accommodation. People will need to be properly accommodated while new accommodation is being constructed. It is a bit like the transference of medical

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services from Royal Perth Hospital. That hospital must be kept operating at an adequate level while that transfer takes place. The criticism that is usually levelled at me internally is that I am miserly.

Mr T. BUSWELL: I have heard a few others.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Yes, but one of the criticisms is that I am miserly, and I do not necessarily share the view about the need to have new furnishings and so on. I am quite happy with what we have, but I appreciate that people want to present a good image to visiting dignitaries. When people visit the office, we do not want to be sitting on fruit cases. As for the general figure, I am not sure, but the director general might have more.

Mr M.C. Wauchop: As a general comment, I restate my original position; that is, we do not intend to spend large sums of money on the Governor Stirling Tower, but from time to time fit-outs will be required to accommodate new functions or to obtain better alignment of functions. Like everyone else, we are subject to the state of the building industry at the moment—up until now, it has been fairly heated, particularly trying to get accommodation fit-outs done. What might cost \$95 000 now might have been quite a lot cheaper several years ago. The figures look significant perhaps by comparison, but in reality it is probably fairly minor work aggregated in one job.

[11.20 am]

Mr T. BUSWELL: Is it possible to be provided with that information by way of supplementary information? The only reason I ask is that the Premier might be interested to know—and I know he is miserly. I have just quickly read it going back to December of last year, and there have been \$16.5 million worth of contracts advertised specifically for office fit-outs. I do not know whether that fits within the Premier's premise of miserly; I am not asking specifically because the allocation is specific to the Premier's department, but quite a bit of money has been spent on upgrading offices at the moment across government.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: My response is that we will provide as much information as we can get together. I think this is a legitimate inquiry, but I do not know how long that will take or how easily aggregated it will be, but we will provide it.

The CHAIRMAN: What is it exactly that the member is asking for—so that we know for the record?

Mr T. BUSWELL: I am asking how much has been spent by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, either on advertising for contracts or contracts that have been awarded; that is, either concluded, advertised or awarded contracts by DPC across all footprints.

The CHAIRMAN: Is the Premier happy to provide that information as requested?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I am. I have scant information actually at the moment.

[*Supplementary Information No A22.*]

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I ask Mr Wauchop: what is the scope that we are looking at for these offices? I have information that tells me a little bit about the ministerial offices themselves, which is a very small amount of money.

Mr M.C. Wauchop: I think the accommodation footprint would include, for example, electorate offices, so again —

Mr T. BUSWELL: On the balance of probabilities, the DPC will be planning out what will be consolidated into the new footprint, as we discussed previously.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: My notes read: the following figures indicate costs associated with capital works including costs of refurbishments of ministerial offices as at 8 May 2008. The figure is \$41 121. In the 2008-09 budget, it is \$300 000, and the 2007-08 budget was \$705 000. Expenditure as at 9 May was \$41 000, and for 2008-09, the figure is \$300 000. These costs were expended on the offices of Minister Logan, \$7 000; Minister McHale, \$300; Minister Ravlich, \$300; Minister Ford, \$600; Minister McGowan, \$24 000; Minister Quirk, \$600; Minister Roberts, \$487, as well as other previous ministers; D'Orazio and Minister McRae, \$6 400. Those were the amounts expended out of the allocation of \$705 000 for the 2007-08 budget—that is ministerial offices, as opposed to all these other offices.

Mr T. BUSWELL: I understand that.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I told the member I was miserly.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: I refer the Premier to page 105 of the *Budget Statements*. I will talk to a range of issues related to electorate offices. The first and key issue is under the heading of "New Works" and found at the bottom of that section—"Computer Hardware and Software—2008-09 Program". Premier, I am aware that most

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members of Parliament are a bit agitated about their electorate offices and the equipment in use in them. A magnificent effort was made a few years ago to get things up to a workable level, but I perceive there has been some stagnation since. The information I have gleaned from walking around the corridors of Parliament House is that there is some anger across political parties about some of the process of equipment provision. Recently, my office in Northam was fitted out; it is magnificent and it is a beautifully fitted-out office. The reality is—I will adopt a one vote, one value quote—that I suspect the workload of all members' offices will go up significantly. I have a few issues, if Madam Chair would allow me a little licence to ramble a bit.

The CHAIRMAN: The member might test me.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: I think I am one of the few members using the electoral management system. I insisted to my staff that we use EMS because I wanted the outcome of the electoral management system. When I last asked members, five or four of us are using that system. I think the whole of the Australian Labor Party uses a different system; I do not know what the Liberal Party uses —

Dr K.D. HAMES: I use the same as the member, but I am one of the few, I think.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: It is important to have a software program that I can use in my office that is apolitical, as is all the equipment in my office. I have one very new staff member who is a very competent person, but I am trying to teach her this process, and the information technology support provided to Northam, only 100 kilometres out of Perth, is not that flash. All my IT service comes from Perth, even though capable people are in the town of Northam. I cannot complain about the passion of the people who provide that service, but sometimes my systems are out for days. I am also not allowed to have things like a photocopier linked to the computers to make it easier for my staff; that is not available. Premier, my question is about the money in the budget for computer software and hardware. An election is coming up, and the DPC could, every now and again, look at what is in electorate offices. I do not want to say that I am being treated differently from metropolitan members, but sometimes my staff tell me I am. I am concerned about the two full-time equivalents in my office who have a fair slice of most working days interrupted by irritating processes. I repeat that I have a beautiful office—I cannot argue about that—in a great location; it must have cost a fortune. However, the functional part of —

Mr T. BUSWELL: They rent them; they do not buy them.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: The fit-out of my office is excellent, I will not say that it is not, but some of those functional issues have not been reviewed for some time, and I think most members would agree that it is time for that to happen.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Is it not? Is that the question?

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: Yes.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: It is a bad question.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: The budget has funding of \$614 000.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: Only half —

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I understand the point made and the question tagged to it. Is there any assistance that we can provide by way of response? If so, perhaps Mr Wauchope should answer.

Mr M.C. Wauchope: I understand what the member is saying. The offices have been standardised in their equipment and fit-out as much as they can be. Technology moves on and there are increasing expectations on what members and people in the community can do. I am happy to look into it, and obviously anything that we look at changing will have a funding implication. I am happy to make arrangements to talk to the member—and any other member—to ascertain what their requirements are and report back to the Premier.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: I appreciate the offer. To facilitate that happening, perhaps the best thing to do is just call a meeting at Parliament House and see who turns up. I think there will be quite an interested audience. I will ask the Premier a question about the EMS, because I have a concern that it is not getting the attention that it needs as only a handful of members are using it, including me and the member for Dawesville. I know that its maintenance is contracted out to Consultech, or a company like that. I am not complaining about its service; I am just concerned about the quality of that software program and the money that is going into updating that program, and the ability of my staff to use it.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Mr Wauchope.

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Mr M.C. Wauchope: The issue of electorate management software has a fairly long history. EMS was the only provider for many years, and during the Court government's time there was an increasing view from both sides of politics that it was necessary to access different software that would be more conducive to their requirements.

[11.30 am]

Some work was done and, ultimately, on the advice of the State Supply Commission, we went out to tender. That left us with the current provider situation. EMS was owned by Consultech Engineering Services at the time, but changed ownership during the course of the tender process. As a consequence there were fewer members, less support and possibly less development; I do not know. However, it is an issue that has emerged over the past few years, and it perhaps needs to be reconsidered. That is the history of why we are where we are at today.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: I am happy to switch to another program if advice is given to me about what is available. I only know EMS.

Mr M.C. Wauchope: That is right. There is a limitation in that certain suppliers will provide only certain members with access to the software. There is a broader issue of accessibility.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: This is not specifically related, but I go back to the question about accommodation and the relocation out of Governor Stirling Tower. We may have inadvertently provided slightly misleading information when asked about Bishops See. According to my note we have gone beyond the information provided, and perhaps I should put on the record the information that we have. I apologise for not knowing that I had this information before. An expression of interest process was undertaken following a cabinet decision in April 2006. The expression of interest process resulted in 15 responses, of which three were short-listed and invited to submit a request for proposal. Those three were, first, Colonial First State for the redevelopment of the 1-5 Mill Street site—that is the current site—and the site at 197 St Georges Terrace, with a tower to be located at 1 Mill Street; second, the Hawaiian Multiplex partnership for Bishops See North Tower, Mount Street; and, third, Babcock and Brown's Capital Square project at Spring Street. All the plans included consolidation of the ministerial offices currently located at Allendale Square and London House at the time of the department's move. Ministers would then be at one of two sites: Dumas House or with the departments in new accommodation. The three proponents were asked to submit detailed proposals to address two mandatory requirements, these being 10-year and 15-year lease terms. Comprehensive assessment of the two compliant proposals was conducted. The results of the assessment by the consultants have been reviewed and supported by a project control group with representatives from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, the Department of Treasury and Finance and the Department of Housing and Works. On 11 April 2008 the Hawaiian Multiplex joint venture was notified that it was the preferred proponent. The awarding of preferred proponent status will allow DHW to commence negotiations—it is being run by DHW effectively—with Hawaiian Multiplex to detail specific requirements for both DPC and DTF. I remind members that that is for the Bishops See tower in Mount Street; at one point I think I said that there were several preferred proponents. There is no rental impact on the recurrent budget estimate or forward estimates because the new lease is expected to start beyond the forward estimates period on 1 July 2012. The internal office fit-out will commence in 2010-11 and the budget for this has been included in the Department of Housing and Works' capital works budget.

The CHAIRMAN: I intend to return to the member for Avon's question after members have finished this line of questioning.

Mr T. BUSWELL: I thank the Premier for providing the information. I take it that the new consolidated rental situation applies from 2012.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Yes.

Mr T. BUSWELL: Assuming that the Department of the Premier and Cabinet is by and large on the same type of lease, this year its accommodation costs will jump from a budget figure of \$11.4 million to an actual estimate of \$14 million to next year's budget estimate of \$18 million.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: That is about a 25 per cent increase.

Mr T. BUSWELL: In the same offices. What sort of lease is the Department of the Premier and Cabinet on—a put the rent up every week type of lease?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: No.

Mr T. BUSWELL: The Premier must understand what I mean. Has the lease conked out and is the department trying to make up the space? It does not make sense to me given that the department has known for some time that it will have to move. The point was made earlier that the department did not want to spend money on office fit-outs because of that. I am intrigued as to why, on what I am assuming is the same footprint, the rental will go up from \$11 million to \$18 million in a one-year period.

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Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I refer to Mr Wauchope.

Mr M.C. Wauchope: The rental arrangements were negotiated by the Department of Housing and Works taking into account the market arrangements at the time, the expectations and the fact that we were likely to move. We have had some significant increases in our rental requirements as a consequence of reviews that have been done under those arrangements. I would have to get further details from the Department of Housing and Works, but they are very significant rental reviews.

Mr T. BUSWELL: Is it an annual market-based rental review?

Mr M.C. Wauchope: I do not have that information.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I do not know. Will the member for Vasse sit in on the housing and works estimates process? Has that been held yet?

Mr T. BUSWELL: Has the Premier ever sat in on housing and works? This is bad enough!

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: No.

Mr T. BUSWELL: I understand, and I will try to find out. However, the Premier can see my interest in the area.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Yes; it is a big increase.

Mr T. BUSWELL: Generally the lease would run for a certain period and there may be a market review every couple or three years and then CPI might apply. However, it seems to me to be an extraordinary increase that is well above that which a market review would be expected to generate.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: To ensure that we do not provide anything other than sufficient information, it might be better to pursue that line of questioning through the housing and works estimates process.

The CHAIRMAN: I now bring us back to the member for Avon's question. Taking some liberties from the chair, I refer the Premier to the line items on computer hardware and software and electorate offices on page 105 of the *Budget Statements*. Premier, I do not think we were given a sufficient answer before. The member for Avon and I have spoken about the computer hardware and software expenditure. Since we have ascertained that the budget item is not about members' laptops, can we now have an explanation for this line? Given that there will be additional members in this house next year, why is the estimated total cost \$614 000 yet the estimated expenditure for 2008-09 only \$300 000? I note that a fit-out to accommodate the additional members is costed at \$550 000. Will the Premier explain?

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: Yes, for that amount one could easily have 20 new offices.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I should hope not. I remember that I did not have an office for six weeks or more, nor did I have a laptop. I do not think I was any less efficient. If the member for Avon will wait, we will see if we can provide an answer.

Mr M.C. Wauchope: To be honest, I am not sure that I follow the question.

The CHAIRMAN: The question is: exactly what will the budgeted \$300 000 under that heading be used for; and, why is there disparity between the estimated cost and the amount budgeted?

Mr M.C. Wauchope: The difference between the two figures is that the \$614 000 is the total cost of the program, \$300 000 of which it is estimated will be spent in 2008-09. The \$300 000 is the allocation for the department's ongoing computing equipment replacement program. We have an orderly program of computer replacement over a two to three year-period; we simply do that as a matter of routine and we fund it as part of capital works on an ongoing basis.

The CHAIRMAN: Approximately how many computers are we talking about?

Mr M.C. Wauchope: I would need to take that as supplementary information because I do not know the answer.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: Premier, a brand-new computer has just been installed in my office. I was one of the first members to receive a new computer, which I was pleased to know—perhaps because it is A for Avon! However, for whatever reason, a new computer was recently installed. Nevertheless, it is a bit strange that we are provided with this excellent equipment that cannot be utilised for current standards such as printing to photocopiers and other such things that are generally done in the modern office environment.

[11.40 am]

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I ask the director general whether he has any response.

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Mr M.C. Wauchope: As I said before, we are happy to look at members' requirements, but I stress what I stressed earlier: it will have a funding implication that will need to be addressed one way or another. However, we are happy to look at what members seek to do.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: Members would be appreciative if we could have that discussion. In common with Mr Wauchope, I have grey hair and have been around for a while, so I can recall these things having been discussed from time to time in the past. Every now and then we should have a discussion about what is appropriate and then leave it for a while.

The CHAIRMAN: As part of supplementary information, can the Premier provide me with a breakdown of the expenditure of \$300 000 and the number of computers?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Yes.

[*Supplementary Information No A23.*]

Mr P. PAPALIA: I refer to service 2, "Management of Matters of State", and the fifth dot point under "Major Achievements For 2007-08" on page 93 of the *Budget Statements*. It regards planning undertaken for an upcoming counter-terrorism exercise in October. I wonder whether the Premier can provide us with an insight into what that exercise will incorporate.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I appreciate the member's interest, given his previous professional experience. I think we can all rest assured that we are in safe hands should anything happen in Parliament. I hope he gets his priorities right!

Mr T. BUSWELL: He will rescue his own faction!

Mr P. PAPALIA: I do not have one!

Mr T. BUSWELL: A lot of Labor Party members do not have factions anymore.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: That is something that should probably be celebrated rather than denigrated.

Mr Hay's official position is Assistant Director General, Office of State Security and Emergency Coordination. He may be able to provide a thorough response to that question.

Mr G.A. Hay: The exercise is called Mercury 08. It is an exercise that is organised and run by the National Counter-Terrorism Committee. Every three or four years, each state or territory gets the opportunity to conduct a major exercise. This year the exercises will occur in Western Australia and Queensland. The exercise in Western Australia will take place in October in the Pilbara region, around Karratha and Dampier. It will involve a wide range of state and commonwealth agencies, including Western Australia Police, the Fire and Emergency Services Authority, the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and Horizon Power. Also included will be Woodside Energy Ltd, Rio Tinto Ltd and the Shire of Roebourne. It is expected to involve hundreds of people across the country. We will be testing the full range of response and consequence management capabilities over a period of approximately four days.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I note that it is a national exercise, so it will escalate to the tactical assault group being dedicated to an assault. Will there be an opportunity prior to the exercise for the TAG to enact its own tactical phase so that it can get the full value of the exercise, rather than going straight to the Australian Defence Force?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I ask Mr Hay to respond.

Mr G.A. Hay: Without wishing to divulge too much about the scenario, I think I can safely say that it will not be the traditional TAG response kind of exercise. It will be very much focused on Western Australian government capability, and Western Australia Police in particular.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Is it intended that the exercise incorporate ministerial decision making, so that we actually exercise our ministers' ability in making judgements? I know that participants get real value from interacting with real political players as opposed to people standing in their stead.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Before I refer the question to Mr Hay, we have done some exercises like that in the past with the previous Prime Minister, which were enjoyable and quite enlightening, with the Prime Minister at the controls!

Mr T. BUSWELL: He was ready for action!

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: He was! I think we distinguished ourselves—or performed adequately, anyway! I ask Mr Hay to provide a response to the question.

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Mr G.A. Hay: The expectation is certainly that the Premier and the Minister for Police and Emergency Services will participate. We would expect the Premier to be involved in a teleconference with the Prime Minister and other Premiers and Chief Ministers as part of the exercise. Indeed, we will conduct discussion exercises in the months before the exercise involving ministers and others to refresh and prepare them before their participation.

Mr A.J. SIMPSON: I refer to service 8, “E-government Policy and Coordination”, and the table of key efficiency indicators on page 103. The figure provided for actual full-time equivalents for 2006-07 is 29. I refer to question on notice 3028 of 13 March. The Premier stated that there were 25.05 permanent FTEs in the Office of e-Government. The table on page 103 puts the number at 29. Why is there a difference?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: The Office of e-Government?

Mr A.J. SIMPSON: Yes.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: In response to the member’s question on notice I responded that there were 25 FTEs?

Mr A.J. SIMPSON: Correct.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: The number of full-time equivalents in this table is 29, so there is a discrepancy of four. What is the cause of the discrepancy?

Mr A.J. SIMPSON: Yes.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Perhaps I can ask Mr Wauchope to answer the question.

Mr M.C. Wauchope: The difference is entirely due to corporate services support. When the budget papers are put together, we reallocate the central corporate services support across all the services, and that would be the allocation to e-government.

Dr K.D. HAMES: I refer to the same dot point raised by the member for Peel about the counter-terrorism activity. I refer particularly to the potential role of Royal Perth Hospital in a terrorist event. I was recently in New York and spoke to the staff at New York Presbyterian Hospital about the role it played in two major events in that city—the Twin Towers event and, some years later, the total blackout of the city during which large numbers of people walked to the hospital. Similarly, in London, very important and key roles are played by central city hospitals. Has the Premier received any reports highlighting the critical need for a central city hospital during terrorism events?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Not that I am aware of, but I suspect Mr Hay might be in a better position to answer the question more comprehensively. I would assume that in the strategic planning for terrorist events the availability or accessibility of such facilities is pivotal.

Dr K.D. HAMES: My understanding is that Royal Perth Hospital, because of its easy access by road, rail and air, plays a key role. I want to know if that is the case for current planning, and how the Premier thinks such planning would be affected by the closure of Royal Perth Hospital.

[11.50 am]

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I ask Mr Hay to respond to the first part of the question. I do not know whether he is in a position to speculate upon the second part of the question.

Mr G.A. Hay: I have had discussions with the Department of Health about the impact the closure of Royal Perth Hospital will have on its management of a surge in the number of patients.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: May I interrupt? We are using very loose terminology. As we know, despite the closure there will still be a medical facility, no matter what the configuration is, whether it is our configuration or an alternative one. The capacity for treatment will not disappear from the landscape; therefore, it is not, in fact, a closure.

Dr K.D. HAMES: Sure; it is the closure of a tertiary hospital.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Yes.

Dr K.D. HAMES: Under one of the proposals it would simply become a glorified general practice clinic. That is one of the options put by the Minister for Health. He did not say “glorified” but he said “a GP clinic”.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I have never heard a proponent of the change describe the alternative as a glorified GP clinic. Anyway, I think we are drifting off into another debate.

The CHAIRMAN: Yes; I think we might be.

Chairman; Mr Troy Buswell; Mr Alan Carpenter; Dr Kim Hames; Mr Max Trenorden; Mr Peter Watson; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Ben Wyatt; Ms Dianne Guise; Mrs Judy Hughes

Mr G.A. Hay: I simply make the point that the Department of Health holds regular exercises of a surge in patient numbers as part of emergency training. I know the department involves the full range of hospital beds across the entire metropolitan area as part of that surge planning. It was probably remiss of me not to mention the Department of Health before in relation to the planned Mercury 08 exercise in the Pilbara later this year. The Department of Health will indeed be a major participant in that exercise.

Dr K.D. HAMES: In performing that exercise—I am not sure whether that will be a city exercise—will the Premier pay attention to the role that Royal Perth Hospital plays so that he can form in his own mind a view about whether that should remain a tertiary hospital? The question really requires a “yes” or “no” answer.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I will obviously pay attention to all the different factors and dynamics as best I can. I am also interested in where I would be treated if I were among the civilian maimed.

Dr K.D. HAMES: Good.

The CHAIRMAN: The member for Peel may ask a quick further question on this subject before the last question for this division is asked by the member for Vasse.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I must comment on that line of questioning. I have seen similar comments in the paper. A consideration is that when we centralise our assets, that represents a distinct vulnerability. I ask that if the Premier assesses anything regarding the medical facilities in the course of the Mercury 08 exercise, he also take that vulnerability into account. That factor would obviously need to be considered. If we spread our capability, we will have a redundancy that is an asset.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Yes, good point.

The CHAIRMAN: We are on to the last question for this division—let us roll!

Mr T. BUSWELL: My question relates to service 4, “Support for the Premier as Minister for Public Sector Management”, on page 96 of the *Budget Statements*. There is a reference to best practice in human resource management. I looked at the Department of the Premier and Cabinet website, as I often do when I am waiting for the quarterly employment figures to pop up. I will not do that anymore because I know —

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: It is only a matter of weeks.

Mr T. BUSWELL: — it is a long time coming. However, one thing I read with interest was a document entitled “Meeting the Challenge: Attracting and Keeping Public Sector Employees”, which is a very good document. The document has a section on the state government’s mature age employment strategy. I wonder whether the Minister for Public Sector Management could explain why he thinks it is so important to keep mature age people in the workforce. Are they kept in the workforce because of the value they add—or is it the case that when people reach a certain age, they are turfed out so that a younger person can come in? I am interested to understand what the government view is on that matter.

Dr K.D. HAMES: Particularly in relation to the member for Yokine.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I certainly think it is of value to maintain people in the workforce, particularly in the circumstances we are in. We are losing people from the public sector who often have years of corporate knowledge, if I may put it that way, which is irreplaceable, certainly in the short term. Over recent years all ministers, including me, with their different portfolios have been in the unfortunate position of watching years of expertise walk out the door and not being able to replace it. The ideal would be to have a great mixture of the most senior people, with all their knowledge and abilities and, if I might say so, worldly wisdom, mentoring younger people who are coming into the system out of our universities and working their way up through different roles in the public sector. To develop our leaders of the future we need to maintain a core group of people who are capable of preparing and developing young people for that role. Another of my portfolio areas—the Department of Industry and Resources—has lost Jim Limerick who, I think, is 55 years old. Effectively, the department has also lost Noel Ashcroft and Peter Murphy—a range of people—who are the corporate knowledge holders of that part of government. That is a huge and significant loss to us. Therefore, we want to do the best we can to retain those people for as long as we can. However, we must confront the reality that great opportunities are being offered outside of government to people who have their body of knowledge and level of experience and expertise. Sometimes it is impossible for us to match those very, very exciting opportunities. However, in relation to the general thrust of the move inside government, I ask Michelle Reynolds to further illuminate us on the thinking at the top of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, which straddles all government, about how we can go about this process more effectively.

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Ms M.J. Reynolds: The member is correct in suggesting that we have an ageing workforce in the public sector. Our figures indicate that more than half our workforce is over 45 years old. Therefore, we have taken some fairly aggressive action to look at what we can do to maintain those people in the workforce. As the precursor to the “Meeting the Challenge: Attracting and Keeping Public Sector Employees” publication the member found online, we conducted the 2006 Retirement Intentions Survey.

Mr T. BUSWELL: That survey is still on the Department of the Premier and Cabinet website.

Ms M.J. Reynolds: Yes; it is very useful. Obviously, that survey asks only about people’s intentions. We find that when the day for retirement comes, some people are ready to launch into retirement while many more people look to stay. We have been fairly active in dealing with this issue and we are about to launch an interim program across the public sector that agencies can use. In the chief executive officer performance agreements for this year, the Premier asked agencies to look very actively at their workforce planning—it is an across-the-sector measure. In addition to that, we are working on the exit surveys, which ask people why they are leaving. Obviously, retirement can be one reason, but attraction to the private sector is another. Therefore, we are really actively looking at providing the public sector with a series of tools that will assist it. Obviously, the workforce data and the planning that goes around what the public sector’s future workforce needs are will also be captured in that.

Mr T. BUSWELL: Thank you very much; that is very good.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I seek the Chairman’s advice and guidance on whether the Department of the Premier and Cabinet budget hearing is an appropriate time to mention that I want to inform the Chinese consulate this afternoon that on behalf of the people of Western Australia we will offer \$1 million of assistance for the earthquake recovery action in China. The money will come out of this budget and be topped up if necessary.

The CHAIRMAN: Yes.

[12 noon]

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Quite frankly, I think it is the least we can do, given what the Chinese economy and the Chinese people have done to benefit Western Australia through their partnership with us. I do not think we would have anybody who would object to our allocation. I am going to the Chinese consulate this afternoon, first of all, to sign the condolence book —

Dr K.D. HAMES: The book is actually here.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I have been invited to go to the Chinese consulate. I want to inform the consulate that we had this discussion in Parliament today and there is bipartisan support for a \$1 million allocation. It may end up being in kind, but it will be whatever it is that they think would be the best avenue; as we did with Burma through the Australian Red Cross. Given that we are talking about the budget here, this is the appropriate time to raise it, to make sure we are all on the same page

The CHAIRMAN: It appears to have the genuine support of the Parliament.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: It is an inappropriate time, but agreed to!

The appropriation was recommended.