

Division 5: Governor's Establishment —

Mrs M.R. Marshall, Chair.

Mr R.H. Cook, Premier.

Mr H. Gretton, Official Secretary.

Ms A. O'Sullivan, Program and Communications Manager.

Mrs N. Parker, Senior Financial Accountant.

[Witnesses introduced.]

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

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

I give the call to the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr R.S. LOVE: I refer to page 82 and the spending changes and the security investment of roughly half a million dollars that has been made for Government House for each of the next three years. What will that money provide and why is the investment for three years and not ongoing?

Mr R.H. COOK: This reflects continued funding over the next three years to maintain the current level of security at Government House to ensure the appropriate level of protection for the occupants and visitors, as well as the heritage-listed assets under the care of the Governor's establishment. I will ask the secretary to provide a brief description of how those things work.

Mr H. Gretton: We have our own security staff at Government House. We also employ additional contracted security. Back in former Governor Beazley's time, there was a break-in at Government House, which changed the security profile. There was only one security guard at the Governor's establishment. A change was made to bring in a security contractor. That funding will continue to provide that extra security person so that we will have two people 24 hours a day.

Mr R.S. LOVE: I refer to page 82 and staffing for the Governor's program. The significant issues discussion refers to a program that the Governor undertakes supporting the wellbeing of Aboriginal people, strengthening institutional trust, development of young leaders, children's progress and volunteering. The \$125 000 for this year is new money; there was no money in the previous year. Will that be a full-time equivalent position? What is the profile?

Mr R.H. COOK: Chair, I will ask Mr Gretton to answer that question.

Mr H. Gretton: That is ongoing salary for the funding of one FTE in a key strategic area within the Governor's establishment, which is the events and engagement area.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I refer to page 83 of budget paper No 2 and the significant issues. The third paragraph states —
The Establishment will continue its commitment to the preservation, presentation and community use of Government House ...

If we look at the spending table for the asset investment program on page 84, we see a fair winding down of investment in Government House. I know that a significant amount of preservation work has been undertaken. Is there any significant outstanding preservation activity required for Government House or has the substantive work been done to, if you like, ensure the physical security of Government House and we are now in a period of routine annual maintenance?

Mr R.H. COOK: It is an old building. I have been through a few rounds of the Expenditure Review Committee in relation to Government House because something always needs doing. It is a bit of a money pit as far as that is concerned. I will ask Mr Gretton to provide the details.

Mr H. Gretton: We have been allocated \$500 000 under the asset maintenance fund for the next three years, which is money for us to allocate appropriately to maintain the heritage-listed building, the ballroom and surrounds. Constant work is required within, being the building that it is. The appropriate use of that money will be allocated accordingly.

[12.20 pm]

Dr D.J. HONEY: Are there any sorts of major unresolved structural issues with the building or have the major structural issues been resolved? I know work was being done on stabilising the walls and the like. I appreciate it is significant work, but have the major structural issues been resolved?

Mr H. Gretton: We constantly find structural issues; for instance, one in the roofing area is being investigated at the moment. Even the wall on St Georges Terrace is heritage listed. There is an internal convict wall within the property that is heritage listed. To the member's point, there is not a specific maintenance issue currently, but this amount is to allow us to keep on top of them because they do come up.

Mr R.S. LOVE: On page 85, the amount for "Sale of goods and services" under "Income" way out in 2027–28 is \$127 000. I am wondering what is planned for that particular year that will see a little bit of money coming in?

Mr R.H. COOK: Since December 2019, the Governor's establishment has stopped cost recovering from charitable and community organisations for the use of Government House facilities such as the ballroom. The forgone cost-recovery revenue to 2026–27 has been supported and supplemented by service appropriation. As the last year of the current forward estimates is outside the Governor's term of appointment, any future cost-recovery arrangements for the 2027–28 budget process will be a matter for consideration and discussion at that time.

Dr D.J. HONEY: On page 83, item 4 under "Significant Issues Impacting the Agency" is —

Planning and preparation is underway for a possible Royal Tour in late 2024.

I wondered whether the Premier could offer any insight into the likelihood of that and what that would involve in a broad sense?

Mr R.H. COOK: I have reported that I have written to the King seeking to have Western Australia on his itinerary when he tours, I think in the back end of 2024. That would not only be a huge opportunity to continue to showcase WA to the world, but also allow the people of Western Australia to celebrate the visit by the King, which would be his first visit in his current role. As I remember when the Queen came a little while back, we had a big garden party at Government House; I must say, member for Cannington, I was expecting tea and cucumber sandwiches, but I was delighted to see gin and tonics and things of that nature as well. That was a good afternoon.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: We took our two girls, because we both got invited, and we met Jerry Hall, so even better.

Mr R.H. COOK: There we go; Jerry Hall is not whom we would expect to meet at a Queen's garden party, but I will invite Mr Gretton to make further comment on what the Governor might have in mind.

Mr H. Gretton: We are very excited about a prospect of a royal tour. We do not have any details on that at the present time, but in terms of preparation, we are doing work along the lines of maintenance and other issues around the house to make sure that we are properly prepared for the possibility.

Ms L. METTAM: When does the Premier anticipate having confirmation that the tour is happening?

Mr H. Gretton: We are totally at the mercy and the courtesy of the palace as far as that is concerned. We do not have details at the moment. We would hope to be told within the next few months, but we do not know.

Ms L. METTAM: Is the invitation for the end of this year or is it just an open invitation?

Mr R.H. COOK: No; we were encouraged by the commonwealth government to anticipate a potential tour in late 2024. That was the focus of my letter to His Majesty, and we are continuing to plan around that. But, of course, that was before the King had his current health issues, so, ultimately, we are in his team's hands and, of course, we stand ready to respond.

Ms L. METTAM: I imagine it takes some significant months of planning for such a tour, so how long would that be? Are we now starting to think that the tour is not really going to happen?

Mr R.H. COOK: When we invited the King, we suggested a range of activities that his team could consider if he was so good as to come to Western Australia. We have an idea about the sorts of activities that we should be ready to make happen in the event that we are given the go-ahead. Ultimately, though, we just have to be ready to move, because, as Mr Gretton said, it is essentially up to his team in terms of the itinerary and the timing and how much notice we get.

Mr R.S. LOVE: If we do not get an answer back from the King, would the Premier consider inviting Prince Harry to come over on an alternative tour, as he did in Nigeria recently?

Mr R.H. COOK: Controversial as always, Leader of the Opposition. I think I would be delighted if Prince Harry came to Western Australia. I notice that he is more of a polarising character as far as Royal Family members go. I often have this discussion at home. I am a bit of a Harry fan, so I would be very happy if he could come over. It

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Chair; Mr Shane Love; Mr Roger Cook; Dr David Honey; Mr Bill Johnston; Ms Libby Mettam

would be a great opportunity for him to engage with some of the veterans who live in Western Australia, and we all note the great work he has done in that space.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Would the expectation be that Prince Harry stays at Government House or would he have to go to a hotel?

Mr R.H. COOK: I have no idea. Chair, that sounds like a very dangerous question, so I am going to exercise my great courage and flick it immediately to Mr Gretton to handle.

Mr H. Gretton: Protocol prohibits me from going into the particular details of where anyone would stay. It would depend on the circumstances that prevailed at the time.

Mr R.H. COOK: Beautifully said.

The appropriation was recommended.