

Division 10: Registrar, Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission, \$13 067 000 —

Ms M.M. Quirk, Chair.

Dr A.D. Buti, Minister for Finance representing the Minister for Industrial Relations.

Ms S. Bastian, Chief Executive Officer.

Mr M. Hadfield, Executive Director, Finance Data and Technology.

Mr J. Welch, Principal Policy Adviser.

Ms R. Marton, Senior Policy Adviser.

[Witnesses introduced.]

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

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

The member for North West Central.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I refer the minister to spending changes on page 118. Under new initiative, it shows the appointment of an additional commissioner. What is the genesis of this initiative to have an additional commissioner?

Dr A.D. BUTI: It was an election commitment to fund for an additional commissioner to be appointed to the Industrial Relations Commission; that was the commitment made.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Is this due to the current case load of the department or the registrar, and how does the case load compare with previous years?

Dr A.D. BUTI: The view is that the changes that have resulted from the new work health and safety legislation and the changes that will come with the new industrial relations legislation will result in an increased workload at the commission.

[10.30 am]

Mr V.A. CATANIA: What was the average length of cases in 2020–21 compared with what is projected in the forward estimates?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I do not think those figures are kept.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I wonder whether the statistics are collected. I refer to page 119 in volume 1 of budget paper No 2.

The CHAIR: If the member is on another page, that is a different question.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Only insofar as it refers to a metric on the timeliness of the service provided by the department.

The CHAIR: Which is different from talking about the appointment of a new commissioner. That is fine; ask the question. It is a new question, that is all.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Thank you very much. How is that metric achieved, minister?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Where is it on the page?

Dr D.J. HONEY: At the bottom of page 219, under "Outcomes and Key Effectiveness Indicators", is the timeliness of cases.

The CHAIR: Right at the bottom of the page, minister.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Yes, I have it. An annual customer survey is completed for the year. Based on that, it works out a key effectiveness indicator.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Are there any other metrics in terms of efficiency of the service provider? It seems unusual that that is the only KPI that seems to be provided. There is another KPI, "Accuracy and relevance of information",

but I am not sure how that is arrived at, unless that is based on a survey. Are there any other metrics in terms of efficiency of use of resources within the department?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I am not sure whether the member is able to come up with a suggestion. Each case that comes before the commission is different. It is hard to provide an index that will provide some measure of conformity across the various cases—they are all very different. Some cases may be completed in a day; some may take many more days. There is conciliation et cetera. I think it is quite appropriate to base it on a customer survey.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I appreciate that there will be some differences, but I anticipate that there would be a reasonable average across the year for the completed workload. I would have thought it possible to have metrics, even in terms of timeliness of response back to complainants and the like, but also to work out averages across the year.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I also wonder whether the member is in the wrong division. We are dealing with the Registrar of the Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission. This is not the actual commission making decisions on a case. Maybe that question relates to another division.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Sure. It is still a response, but in any case.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Correct me if I am on the wrong track here, minister: has the registrar had to deal with any industrial relations matters related to COVID-19?

The CHAIR: That sounds like a new question, too.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I will defer to the CEO.

Ms S. Bastian: Excuse me behind my mask, minister and chair. In effect, any matter that is filed with the department of the registrar, we are the repository in the interface for the commission. Our role is really one whereby we collate the information, take the applications and then it is referred to the tribunal for determination. The registrar's role is not to deal with any formal matter, unless it is directed back to the registrar for action by reference from the commission.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Have any matters come back to the registrar in regards to COVID-19; and, if yes, how many?

Ms S. Bastian: No, they have not.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I refer to “Support to the Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission and Industrial Magistrates Court” under the service summary on page 119 in volume 1 of budget paper No 2. Has the registrar been consulted on the proposed regulations to the Work Health and Safety Act 2020?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Again, this would not be the division; it is not the registrar who would be consulted on this.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Under the service summary, it has “Support to the Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission and Industrial Magistrates Court”. I wondered whether that would also include support related to the Work Health and Safety Act 2020. I think the minister is saying that it is not.

Dr A.D. BUTI: The member referred to “Support to the Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission and Industrial Magistrates Court”. The actual costs are lower due to some positions remaining vacant. It is referring to how many FTEs are at this level. It is not related to any legislation. That is dealt with in another division; not with the registrar.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I refer to the total appropriations on page 118. There is a significant increase of a little more than \$1 million above the appropriation in 2019–20. I appreciate there was some increase due to COVID and we are getting an additional registrar, but what is the additional expenditure for?

Dr A.D. BUTI: The increase of \$350 000 is for the annual indexation of accommodation expenses; variance of \$318 000 in employee benefit expenses because some positions remained vacant in 2019–20. The positions were filled in 2020–21; therefore, the budget forecast for 2020–21 includes full FTE levels. A decrease of \$634 000 in supplying services is mainly due to the end of the external contract for the ICT project for the commission's website and the registry portal into 2019–20. This project was brought in-house in 2020–21. The increase between the total cost of services in the 2020–21 estimated actual and the 2020–21 budget estimate is mainly due to the employee benefit expense for an additional commissioner and administrative support for the chambers, and an interim commissioner.

Dr D.J. HONEY: When the minister said “employee benefits”, has there been a change in the employee benefits or is it simply that there is now a full complement of employees and these are the benefits that go with that?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Full complement.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Referring to the accommodation cost, is that a permanent increase in the accommodation cost and not a temporary increase?

Dr A.D. BUTI: It is not temporary; it is permanent.

Extract from *Hansard*

[ASSEMBLY ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B — Thursday, 23 September 2021]

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Mr Vincent Catania; Dr Tony Buti; Dr David Honey

The appropriation was recommended.

Meeting suspended from 10.38 to 10.46 am