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Wednesday, 25 May 2022

Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, 25 May 2022

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B

The meeting commenced at 9.02 am.

Division 24: Education, \$5 379 782 000 —

Mr D.A.E. Scaife, Chair.

Mr T.J. Healy, Parliamentary Secretary representing the Minister for Education and Training.

Ms L. Rodgers, Director General.

Mr J. Peckitt, Deputy Director General, Education Business Services.

Mr R. Thomson, Executive Director, Infrastructure.

Ms M. Sands, Deputy Director General, Schools.

Mr M. Clery, Executive Director, Statewide Services.

Ms R. Lee, Executive Director, Strategy and Policy.

Mr R. Miles, Director, Teacher Registration.

Mr C. Ward, Executive Director, Professional Standards and Conduct.

Mr J. Bell, Deputy Director General, Student Achievement.

Ms R. Bope, Director, Public School Accountability.

Mr A. Blagaich, Executive Director, School Curriculum and Standards Authority.

The CHAIR: I thank the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Community Services for stepping into the role.

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

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

Ms J.J. SHAW: I will hand over to the parliamentary secretary for education to do the introductions.

The CHAIR: All right, the parliamentary secretary for education.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIR: The member for North West Central.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I have a point of order. Perhaps you can guide me, chair. We have now lost 10 minutes. The parliamentary secretary gets paid a considerable amount of money to turn up to these estimates hearings. We have a shorter time now—by 10 minutes. Can we extend the time? It is pretty much unacceptable that the opposition has only a small window to scrutinise the government. The parliamentary secretary has a team —

Mr T.J. HEALY: My apologies. I am ready to start when the member is.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: — of advisers here that is larger than the number of opposition members in the chamber. Can we find the 10 minutes that we have lost? What we will find is that the parliamentary secretary will tell us to put the questions that we ask on notice rather than give us the answers. It is just outrageous and unacceptable at this time. The arrogance shown by the parliamentary secretary and this government is limiting the opposition's time to question and hold the government to account on behalf of Western Australian taxpayers to ensure that our education system is adequate and strong. We have now lost 10 minutes of our time to question the parliamentary secretary.

[9.10 am]

Mr T.J. HEALY: Chair, we are ready when you are.

The CHAIR: Thank you, member for North West Central. Even though that is not a point of order, I have let you make your point. Yes, it is my expectation as chair that all members of the committee and ministers and parliamentary secretaries be here on time for sessions. To answer your question, though, no, it is not possible, because the timetable is determined in advance by the house, and it is not possible for the committee to overrule the decision of the house when it comes to the timetable. Members, we are dealing with division 24.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I hope the parliamentary secretary answers the questions, then.

The CHAIR: Are there any questions?

Mr T.J. HEALY: If the member asks the questions, I am happy to.

The CHAIR: Are there any questions, not commentary? The member for Roe.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I would also like to echo the disappointment of the member for North West Central. I assume that that will rule out any Dorothy Dixers from the government to maximise our time.

The CHAIR: We are wasting time at this very moment. Member for Roe, you know my view, as chair, of Dorothy Dixers in estimates, so you should be in safe hands.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I refer to page 365 of budget paper No 2, volume 1. The seventh paragraph at the top of the page, under “Staffing and Schools”, states that attracting teachers with the right skills to the right areas at the right time remains a priority and that the department has implemented a lot of strategies to support and recruit particular staff. In last year’s budget, there was an \$11 million increase for school psychologists. Currently, there are 10 positions vacant for school psychologists, apart from pool appointments. What strategies has the department implemented to attract school psychologists and the like?

Mr T.J. HEALY: In terms of paragraph 7, I am happy to discuss our attraction of staff, but I think the member’s question about psychologists would apply to a different line item. I will clarify again. The member asked a question about supporting and recruiting skills to the right area. I have some notes here, so, for the sake of it, I will give it to the member, because I apologise for being late. I can confirm that attracting teachers and all staff with the right skills to the right areas at the right time is certainly a priority. I think the member has said in his speeches that despite the pressures last year, we did quite successfully at the start of this year. That is certainly commendable of the team here with me and all the staff and principals across all our schools. Regarding the query about school psychologists, as at 28 April 2022, an average of 402.6 school psychologist FTEs were employed across the public school system, an increase from 376.7 in 2021. The department is continuing to work in partnership with local universities on graduate supply in the context of the government’s election commitment. As the member will be aware, our election commitment was quite broad last year, and it is being implemented quite well. There is an increase in demand for psychologists.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: In relation to the school psychologists, as I said, currently there are 10 positions vacant, apart from pool appointments. Does the parliamentary secretary feel that these will be filled any time soon or is there a projection of when they will be completely filled?

Mr T.J. HEALY: Can the member repeat that question? Is he saying that we do not have enough psychologists?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: At the moment, there are 10 positions vacant. Is there a projection of when they will be filled?

Mr T.J. HEALY: Thank you for the question. We are on track to fill them.

Ms L. METTAM: How many positions need to be filled?

Mr T.J. HEALY: In the question from the member for Roe, he said that there were 10 positions vacant.

Ms L. METTAM: Yes.

Mr T.J. HEALY: Does the member have a further question to that part?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: No; we want you to answer it. Do not come in here late and start playing games. Answer the question!

Mr T.J. HEALY: Thank you, member for North West Central. Additional FTEs will be added in additional years. I can confirm that there will be an additional 42 FTEs in 2022, rising to 100 FTEs by 2025. There will be vacancies when those are filled, and the department has employed 72 new school psychologists to date, with 30 in country regions.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Given recent attacks such as that at Gilmore College, does the parliamentary secretary see that there is a shortage of psychologists and the support that is required for students in those high-risk environments?

Mr T.J. HEALY: I think the member is referring to another section in his question. Health and wellbeing is a priority and that is why we committed to school psychologists in the first place.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: On the back of the concern for students and teachers, last week Carnarvon Community College was placed in lockdown after a primary-age schoolgirl climbed up on the roof armed with a sharp kitchen utensil

and had to be coaxed down by police. What does the parliamentary secretary say about the escalating instances that are occurring right throughout our schools in which an increasing number of students are armed and are putting teachers and other students in danger? What is the department doing to assist those students with their mental wellbeing and also to attract and retain teachers when there are record amounts of payouts to teachers because their mental wellbeing is being affected by the environment they are in?

Mr T.J. HEALY: When the member asks, “What do we say about violence in schools?”, I am sure he will commend Minister Ellery and the director general for having a very firm line. I am sure he has seen the “Let’s Take a Stand Together” plan about violence in schools. There is a very united position across schools, implemented by the director general and the minister, that we say no to violence in schools. We have a very impressive line, and it is backed up with support. We say no to violence in schools.

I will further add to what the member said by saying that the principal at that school acted very, very swiftly in that scenario. A number of opportunities and options are provided. There are now clearer directions about consequences when there are incidents in schools and about the violence in schools policy. There is also the alternative learning settings and other opportunities and options for young people. We commend all teachers. There was a reference to Gilmore College and other unique circumstances in schools. We have a strong position that is supported by schools and the department.

[9.20 am]

Mr V.A. CATANIA: It is all very well having a paper and singing *Kumbaya, my Lord*, but the reality is something different. The reality is that violence in schools is increasing. The member for Roe has raised an instance. I have raised an instance. If we talk to teachers around the state, we find that violence is increasing, and that is backed up by the record amount of payouts that the Department of Education has made to teachers. The government can have every line in the sand, but we are finding that violence in schools is increasing, which is affecting the ability to retain students in schools because families want to take those students out.

The CHAIR: I will just take a point of order from the member for Bicton.

Mrs L.M. O’MALLEY: I am just curious about which line item this refers to? I am just drawing the member’s attention to the fact that in estimates, it is a page and a line item.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I can give the member a line item if she wants.

Mrs L.M. O’MALLEY: Not a speech.

The CHAIR: Thank you. There is no point of order, member for Bicton. But it would help if the member for North West Central could direct us to a line item.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I am continuing with a further question.

The CHAIR: I accept that there is going to be a relevant one, but if you could preface your questions with that, that will assist the proceedings.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: No; I have not finished yet. It is important. You have said that there is a line in the sand and there is a paper —

Mr T.J. HEALY: Can you ask your question?

The CHAIR: Just take a breather, both of you. The member for North West Central has the call. Parliamentary secretary, I will let him finish the question and then you will have an opportunity to respond. The member for North West Central.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Thank you, chair. The rhetoric that is coming out of the parliamentary secretary’s mouth and from the Minister for Education is clearly not keeping pace with reality. The reality is that crime is escalating, we are losing teachers and record payments are being made due to the way the education system is being run. Surely it is cause for alarm when a primary school-age student climbs onto a roof with a sharp implement and that shuts down a school. I would like to know how many instances of violence have occurred in places like Carnarvon Community College and other schools around Western Australia, because the evidence seems to be in complete contradiction to the line in the sand and the piece of paper that the government has while it sings *Kumbaya*. Actions speak louder than words.

Mr T.J. HEALY: Thank you very much, chair, too. Like I said, I am happy to answer that question. After this point, the member for North West Central will have to look up a line item. Every parent rightly expects that when their child is at school, they will be safe and nurtured and supported to learn. Similarly, staff should also feel safe in their workplace. Again, I have mentioned the 10-point action plan that we have to address violence in public schools. The “Let’s Take a Stand Together” plan is very much supported by the community, schools and teachers. We are implementing a whole-school approach to create a school environment in which students are actively engaged in the curriculum, feel cared for by staff and develop a sense of belonging to the school. There is further access. They are providing classroom management strategies and there is the WA positive behaviour support programs

and de-escalation strategies. There is access to resources and supports to assist staff to make necessary teaching and learning adjustments to ensure that students can access the curriculum. They are implementing evidence-based social and emotional learning programs. I can confirm that in 2021, 6 397 staff undertook classroom management strategies. I did my teaching prac at Gilmore College when it was Kwinana Senior High School, and classroom management strategies was one of the greatest things I found to deal with that, and I can certainly commend them. Also in 2021, more than 3 700 department staff, including 672 graduate teachers, completed training in de-escalation and positive handling, and, when necessary, training was rescheduled in 2021 due to COVID-19 restrictions. I will finish on this: the department suspends and excludes students to set a standard, draw a line, break a cycle, maintain good order, provide the opportunity for reflection, modify behaviour, and plan a supportive and restorative approach.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I have a further question.

The CHAIR: The member for Roe.

Mr T.J. HEALY: The member began by not really looking at a line item.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Thank you, chair.

The CHAIR: Just a second, parliamentary secretary. I give people the call. I am chairing. I have given the call to the member for Roe, not to you. If, when you are responding to the question, you want to raise whether or not it is relevant to the line argument, you can do that, but do not interrupt a question. The member for Roe.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Thank you, chair. This is a more specific question, parliamentary secretary. In the instance of the Gilmore College attack last week—I commend the actions of that teacher; I thought it was well handled—can the parliamentary secretary explain to me what support has been given to the teacher and students who were in the class, and also what actions happened with the particular student who launched the attack?

The CHAIR: Before the parliamentary secretary answers that, I did say before that it would be helpful to give a line item for these questions. I have allowed it to go on for a bit.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I started at page 365 and paragraph 7, or, if you are not happy with that, I can go back to page 364 and the fourth paragraph, which refers to a supportive schooling environment and strengthening the delivery of support services.

The CHAIR: It is fairly tenuous, member for Roe, but I will allow the question on this occasion.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Thank you, chair.

Mr T.J. HEALY: I am not going to mention the diagnosis of the student or the circumstances to the people in this chamber. The director general has indicated that she is happy to make a briefing available to the member to talk about the unique circumstances of that particular student. In terms of the question about the support for staff, there are additional psychologists and support team support, because it was a very confronting incident, and support has been offered to all the students and staff involved. I am not going to go into the details of the student. That can be made available to the member in a private briefing.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: The other part of that question was about the other students in the classroom. Are they being supported on an ongoing basis by the school psychologist? Is that how that works? What is happening for the other students who witnessed that particular incident?

Mr T.J. HEALY: Thanks, chair. I can confirm that students are offered and can access support.

Ms L. METTAM: My question relates to the same line item on page 365, “Staffing and Schools”.

Mr T.J. HEALY: I think we are on page 365 and paragraph 7.

Ms L. METTAM: Yes. Can the parliamentary secretary provide an indication of how many FTE teachers have undertaken stress leave over the past two years? Is that information available?

Mr T.J. HEALY: The question was about how many staff have accessed —

Ms L. METTAM: Stress leave over the past two years, appreciating the obvious value of retaining teachers.

Mr T.J. HEALY: Member, that is not available in the sense that it is not attached to this line item in the budget papers about attracting teachers with the right skills. A number of staff have gone through some amazing things with COVID. In answer to the member’s question, there have been a number of different challenges, but that is not available under this line item.

Ms L. METTAM: I have a further question.

The CHAIR: I want to be clear. I described the member for Roe’s linking of these questions to this part of the budget papers as being tenuous. I will let it go on, but I do not want it to go on much longer. The member for Vasse.

Ms L. METTAM: Thank you. Is the parliamentary secretary able to provide this information as supplementary information?

[9.30 am]

Mr T.J. HEALY: The member is asking about teachers who go on stress leave. A variety of different leave is available for staff. There is personal leave, sick leave and other options. They are not categorised in the same way. The information is not available according to stress leave.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to page 377 and the income statement under “Financial Statements”. Paragraph 1.4 under “Expenses” notes the increases to depreciation and leave liability. With the leave liability, what are we seeing in relation to stress leave? If the parliamentary secretary is unable to provide it now, I hope that it can be provided by way of supplementary information.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Given the fact that we have lost 10 minutes!

The CHAIR: Can I just clarify? Parliamentary secretary, I think you made a statement before that stress leave as a category was not available. Is that the answer to the question? I am just trying to work out whether there is a further question. I will let the parliamentary secretary answer.

MR T.J. HEALY: Certainly. I can give information about paragraph 1.4 on page 377 in terms of the leave liability, which I will have in just a moment. Paragraph 1.4 on page 377 refers to increases to depreciation and leave liability. I can confirm that on 16 February 2022, the Expenditure Review Committee approved new leave liability caps that will apply as at 30 June 2023 to allow agencies to focus on service delivery during the pandemic and to reflect lower levels of leave taking. The department has significantly reduced its accrued leave liability with long service leave and annual leave liability falling from \$263 million in 2014 to \$131 million in 2019. Strong efforts have been made by the department to manage the increase of liabilities. We are encouraging staff to clear their overdue balances. As the member can imagine, over the last two years, not all the staff wanted to take long service leave during term to go overseas because of COVID scenarios, but regular auditing informs communication to staff with overdue balances. The final part I have here is that the department’s leave liability cap will increase to just under \$1 145.8 million as at 30 June 2023 from the current limit of \$785.2 million.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Coming back to Gilmore College, which was the origin of the question, have any of the teachers or staff at Gilmore College taken stress leave due to that incident; and, if so, how many?

The CHAIR: I am ruling the question out of order. I have made my position clear about relevance and the link to the items in the budget, and I am not satisfied that that question is relevant to an item in the budget. The member for North West Central.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I refer to the table of ongoing initiatives on page 364 and “Revision to RiskCover Insurance”. I see that for this financial year, the budget shows costs of \$13.372 million.

MR T.J. HEALY: Are you looking at the bottom of the graph?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Yes, where it says, “RiskCover Insurance”—and in 2024–25 out year, there is a 54 per cent blowout to \$29.578 million. Can the parliamentary secretary explain what this change in the line item means?

MR T.J. HEALY: The department has increased its RiskCover insurance budget by \$74 million over the period from 2022–23 to 2025–26 to reflect increased workers’ compensation renewal contribution and prior period adjustments due to higher trends of severe claims over the last five years; increased hospital costs by more than the consumer price index; and an increased property contribution due to an increase in declared property values.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Can the parliamentary secretary tell me how many claims are with RiskCover at the moment and which workers are putting in these compensation claims?

MR T.J. HEALY: The number of claims lodged in the current financial year to 31 March 2022 was 1 341. This is lower than in the same time period in the previous two years, with 1 357 in 2022 and 1 453 in 2021. The Insurance Commission of Western Australia has projected claim numbers to further increase to 2 100 in 2022–23.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Based on that information, the parliamentary secretary is saying that there has been a decrease from the last two years, when there has been limited classroom activity due to COVID. That could be a reason why the department is predicting an increase—because schools are back operating. That may be the reason, but I want to know how many of these claims are for principals, how many are for teachers and how many are for education assistants.

[9.40 am]

Mr T.J. HEALY: First of all, we did not blanket close schools. A couple of schools closed based on health advice. There was a school near Fremantle, of course.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: There was limited classroom activity.

Mr T.J. HEALY: I think the member said that there are fewer workers’ compensation cases because there are fewer children in schools. There are fewer children in schools because of COVID and the pandemic.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Can the parliamentary secretary please answer the question? How many of those claims are for principals? How many of those claims are for teachers? How many of those claims are for education assistants? Could he provide a breakdown of the number that he has just quoted? Also, there is a projection of a 54 per cent increase,

so what he said earlier in one of his answers about dealing with antisocial behaviour is clearly not the case, because the department is projecting more issues and more teachers, principals and education assistants applying for RiskCover. The document that he quoted is clearly not working. Anyway, if he could provide that breakdown, that would be great.

Mr T.J. HEALY: I can confirm that we are happy to provide by supplementary information the breakdown of RiskCover statistics for principals, teachers and education assistants. Were those the three categories the member mentioned?

The CHAIR: For what time period?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Over the last two years.

Mr T.J. HEALY: Yes. Chair, I can confirm that we will provide supplementary information on the number of applications for RiskCover for principals, education assistants and teaching staff for the last two financial years.

[Supplementary Information No B8.]

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Can the parliamentary secretary please provide the projected data for the 2024–25 year, which shows a 54 per cent increase? Clearly, there is data on the number of principals, teachers and education assistants who are going to apply for RiskCover. Can he provide an estimation of those who are going to apply for RiskCover in the 2024–25 year?

Mr T.J. HEALY: I would struggle to provide the member with data for something that has not occurred yet.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: So how did the department come up with a 54 per cent increase to \$29.578 million? Surely it has some figures or modelling that it has done to come up with that figure.

Mr T.J. HEALY: Yes, there are a number of factors in RiskCover’s model, but it does not have individual cases because they have not occurred yet. There are a number of models.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Is this increase of 54 per cent in RiskCover insurance to do with stress-related claims or claims of a bullying nature?

Mr T.J. HEALY: The member’s question was about whether RiskCover applications are due to bullying.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Let me ask a couple of questions here. The first question is —

Mr T.J. HEALY: Just ask one and we will get to the next one.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Is the estimated increase in RiskCover insurance over the next four years mainly due to stress-related issues and matters of a bullying nature? Can the parliamentary secretary provide a breakdown of whether it is stress-related or of a bullying nature or whether it is to do with incidents such as those that the member for Roe has spoken about and that I have spoken about in Carnarvon recently, in which students took sharp implements to school and caused massive destruction to classrooms? Can he provide a breakdown of why education department employees are accessing RiskCover insurance?

Mr T.J. HEALY: I can confirm that increased workers’ compensation renewal contribution and prior period adjustments are due to higher trends of severe claims over the last five years and increased hospital costs by more than the CPI.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Can the parliamentary secretary please provide that data for the last five years to show the increase in RiskCover claims and the amounts that have been accessed for the issues that he has just raised?

Mr T.J. HEALY: I can confirm that we can give data on the number of claims.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Can the parliamentary secretary elaborate on the claims that he raised before in response to my question about stress-related and bullying claims and other incidents? Can he provide a full list of why education staff have accessed RiskCover insurance?

Mr T.J. HEALY: I can confirm that we can give data.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Over the last five years.

Mr T.J. HEALY: I can confirm that we can give data on the number of claims. That can be done as a question on notice or by way of supplementary information.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Supplementary, thank you.

Mr T.J. HEALY: No worries. Did the member ask for the last five years?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Yes.

The CHAIR: I am going to need some clarification around the supplementary information. Is it the data from the last five years on the number of claims made?

Mr T.J. HEALY: It is the number of claims made to RiskCover.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: And the types of claims to RiskCover.

Mr T.J. HEALY: I do not believe we can give the type of claims, but I can confirm we can do the number of claims.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Surely the department has the types of claims, whether it be stress leave or incidents of being bullied or attacked. Surely the department has that information, because it is pretty critical information. Given the fact that there is a report on how to combat this antisocial behaviour, surely it is to do with the facts or the people accessing RiskCover.

Mr T.J. HEALY: We will add “if possible”.

The CHAIR: So “if possible”?

Mr T.J. HEALY: We will add “if possible” in there. If the department provide it, it will. But I can confirm that we can provide supplementary information that covers the last five years on the data of number of claims to RiskCover and, if possible, the type of claims.

[Supplementary Information No B9.]

Mr V.A. CATANIA: As a former teacher, I would imagine the parliamentary secretary would take a very keen interest in what happens in education. Is the parliamentary secretary concerned about these RiskCover insurance claims and their escalation by 54 per cent due to the factors that we have just spoken about? Is the parliamentary secretary concerned that education staff are now being targeted by this antisocial behaviour? It is a worrying trend. Is the parliamentary secretary concerned about it?

Mr T.J. HEALY: I was concerned when I was a teacher under the member’s government. I am not concerned now under this government.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: The parliamentary secretary was concerned under the previous government. That was eight years ago.

Mr T.J. HEALY: It was five years ago.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Over the last five years, the parliamentary secretary has seen an increase in RiskCover claims, which is projected to increase by 54 per cent, but he is not concerned as a former teacher, as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education and Training and as a member of Parliament. Is the parliamentary secretary is not concerned by that?

Mr T.J. HEALY: The Department of Education and schools are working to support all students and staff far better than they were when I was a teacher. We have a fantastic minister in Minister Ellery, and perhaps a dodgy parliamentary secretary now in me, but we have a government that has actually responded to the stressors. I have worked in some tough schools, and there are far better supports now. I can tell the member from talking to teachers—I am sure the member has spoken to people in the community as well—that the minister’s strong action plan, which was implemented across schools by the department, has been very well received. We drew a line in the sand that was not there when I was a teacher.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I have a further question.

Mr T.J. HEALY: But again —

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Further question —

Mr T.J. HEALY: Hang on. I have not finished.

But, again, there is always more to be done. Schools reflect communities. I know that as a former teacher. The work that schools do is important. There is always more work to be done, and we are doing it.

[9.50 am]

The CHAIR: Member for North West Central.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: The parliamentary secretary is happy that his response to this escalating antisocial behaviour problem in schools is to increase RiskCover insurances by 54 per cent. That is the response. Is the parliamentary secretary happy with that response as a way of combating the issues, because he says he has no concerns? I would say that is pretty career limiting as a parliament secretary, and I do not think he will probably see a ministerial gig into the future, but that is enough for my questioning.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I have a further question.

The CHAIR: Further question. Member for Roe, is this a new question or a further question?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: It is a further question on that.

I am concerned with the parliamentary secretary saying that he is more comfortable under this current government. This government was elected in 2017 when the number of attacks on principals, deputies and staff was 2 000, and now it is 2 577 in 2021. The number of weapons brought to school was 600 when this government was elected and now we are up to over 1 000 incidents of weapons being brought to school in 2021. That statement concerns

me. In relation to this RiskCover insurance increase, the parliamentary secretary spoke about the CPI. Can the parliamentary secretary explain why the insurance has gone from \$13.8 million in the 2023–24 out year up to \$29.5 million in the 2024–25 out year, and then back down to \$17 million in the 2025–26 out year?

Mr T.J. HEALY: I am happy to confirm a couple of things, but, again, we are diverging very much from the line item. In answer to the member's question, I can confirm that the line item itself shows a movement from the previous budget. The increase in workers' compensation is not 54 per cent; it is approximately 12 per cent from 2022–23 to 2025–26. But, again, going on the line item, I am happy to answer those queries as best as I can.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I was asking: why is it going up to \$29 million in the 2024–25 out year and then back down to \$17 million in the 2025–26 out year?

Mr T.J. HEALY: I can confirm that in each year there are different fluctuations and adjustments, such as in 2024–25.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: In the parliamentary secretary's answer before, he alluded to hospital costs as part of the costs for those workers' compensation claims. Can the parliamentary secretary give us a breakdown of what those hospital costs are or —

Mr T.J. HEALY: Well—sorry; finish your question.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: What are those costs for these different categories—principals, teachers, education assistants?

Mr T.J. HEALY: No, chair. That is a RiskCover matter. We will not have access to that information.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: My understanding was that was part of the parliamentary secretary's answer before and that was part of the reasoning for the increases.

Mr T.J. HEALY: The detail that the member is after? No. Chair, I am happy to confirm that what we are discussing is the hospital costs and CPI that is part of that. We will not have access to that information for the member. We can put the question on notice for the member if he seeks that, but I am not sure the department will have access to that information.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Can it not be provided as supplementary information?

Mr T.J. HEALY: No. I am happy to put it as a question on notice, but I am just foreshadowing that I am not sure the department will be able to provide that information.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Minister—sorry; parliamentary secretary, because you will not be a minister.

I refer to paragraph 4 on page 364 of budget paper No 2. The department is strengthening the delivery of its student support services through the investment in additional resources and staff training. The parliamentary secretary touched before on dealing with antisocial behaviour. The parliamentary secretary waved a document. Can the parliamentary secretary provide the number of students suspended across the education system? What support is given to those students who are suspended so that they can, I suppose, be educated on how to behave at school? Are there any support services? I will give the parliamentary secretary an example. In Carnarvon, for example, generally we deal with kids who do not behave appropriately at school by suspending them. The suspended kids then go out and roam the streets and cause other problems in the community. What programs have been put in place to work with the students and the parents to ensure that the children behave in an appropriate way at school? Can the parliamentary secretary provide a list of the number of suspensions that have occurred, perhaps, over the last five years?

Mr T.J. HEALY: I am very, very happy to, chair. In 2017, the number of students suspended was 14 075. In 2018, it was 14 243; in 2019, 16 149; in 2020, 15 943; and in 2021, it was 18 068. I will also confirm and have recorded in *Hansard* that the percentage of total enrolled students suspended was 4.5 per cent in 2017, 4.5 per cent in 2018, five per cent in 2019, 4.9 per cent in 2020 and 5.5 per cent in 2021.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: There has been a steady increase of the number of students suspended. Is the parliamentary secretary able to provide a breakdown between regional Western Australian schools and metropolitan schools for suspensions over the same period?

[10.00 am]

Mr T.J. HEALY: Are there any particular regions, or is the member happy for me to read them all?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Let us go with the Gascoyne.

Mr T.J. HEALY: I will start with the member's region.

The number of students suspended in the midwest was 2 319 in 2019, 2 116 in 2020 and 2 187 in 2021. The number of students suspended in the south west was 3 976 in 2019, 3 581 in 2020 and 3 876 in 2021. The number of students suspended in the Kimberley region was 1 901 in 2019, 1 484 in 2020 and 1 889 in 2021. The number of students suspended in the goldfields was 1 703 in 2019, 1 787 in 2020 and 1 963 in 2021. The number of students suspended in the Pilbara was 1 800 in 2019, 1 504 in 2020 and 2 078 in 2021. Finally, leaving the metropolitan area out of this unless the member would like those figures also, the number of students suspended in the wheatbelt region was 2 159 in 2019, 1 807 in 2020 and 2 212 in 2021. If *Hansard* does not record that very well, I am happy to put the question on notice. It is certainly available.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Thank you for that, parliamentary secretary. In reference to the support services for students in paragraph 4 on page 364, can the parliamentary secretary provide a breakdown of school attendance over the last five years and a breakdown between regions? When I say regions, I mean schools within the regions, because we hear a lot about midwest–Gascoyne, but Geraldton is in that area and overshadows a lot of the stats in Carnarvon, Wiluna, Meekatharra or Mt Magnet. Can the parliamentary secretary provide the details of school attendance for each school in Western Australia over the last five years? I would be happy to take that as supplementary information.

The CHAIR: Parliamentary secretary.

Mr T.J. HEALY: Thank you very much, chair. I am happy to confirm that. Rather than just reading out all of this, because I want the opposition to get in as many questions as it can, I am happy to provide it as supplementary information. But in 2021 in the midwest, attendance was broadly at 87.7 per cent; 56.4 per cent in the remote community schools; 77.5 per cent in the district high school K–12 schools; 79.4 per cent at secondary schools; and 83.6 per cent at ed support schools and centres. There is a lot of data here, but I am happy to provide that as supplementary information to save some time.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I appreciate that, parliamentary secretary.

Mr T.J. HEALY: Not to save the member some time, but to get him some more questions.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Let me make it quite clear that it is not just the regions, because the figures for the regions are skewed. The figures for Geraldton go in with the midwest. What I want is a breakdown of the school attendance rates for every school in Western Australia.

Mr T.J. HEALY: Okay. What I am happy to do, because I have a document here —

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I am happy to take it as supplementary information.

Mr T.J. HEALY: I am happy to provide as supplementary information the regional attendance figures for 2019 to 2021 for each of those regions. The document is here and I can make it available to the member very soon, but the member will have to put the question on notice in regard to which particular schools.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I have a further question.

The CHAIR: The parliamentary secretary is offering to provide the attendance rates by region for 2019 to 2021.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Why would we not go back to 2017?

The CHAIR: Sorry, I am not inviting questions. Is that the supplementary information that you want?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: No, the supplementary information that I have requested is the attendance rate for each school in Western Australia.

The CHAIR: That is not what is on offer at the moment, member for North West Central. I am not going to put it down as supplementary information unless that is something that you want to receive. You can pursue other bits of supplementary information, but that is what the parliamentary secretary is offering at the moment.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: You just asked me what I wanted. I am just telling the parliamentary secretary what I wanted.

Mr T.J. HEALY: Yes, I know. I heard it the first time. I am happy to provide the regional attendance figures for each of those areas for the regions. In terms of schools, I am not going to agree to that, but the member can put that as a question on notice in regard to the schools that he is interested in. There are 800-plus schools in the state. The member can provide a list of schools that he is interested in as a question on notice, but I will provide, and I confirm, chair, as supplementary information the 2019 to 2021 attendance.

The CHAIR: The attendance rates by region.

Mr T.J. HEALY: I will further add that Schools Online provides the attendance figures publicly. The member can google each of the schools on the department's Schools Online website and get all that information, but he can also put it as a question on notice.

The CHAIR: So, parliamentary secretary, are we providing attendance rates broken down by region for the 2019 to 2021 school years?

Mr T.J. HEALY: Correct.

[*Supplementary Information No B10.*]

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Just on that, how many of those suspensions evolve into exclusions? Does the parliamentary secretary have a breakdown of exclusions?

Mr T.J. HEALY: Can the member repeat the question? Is he are asking about suspension and exclusion data?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I asked how many of those suspensions evolved into exclusions or, as a separate scenario, whether the parliamentary secretary is able to provide a breakdown, as he did on suspensions, on the number of exclusions for each area.

Mr T.J. HEALY: A suspension does not necessarily automatically mean a student is going to be excluded. In each of these cases there is a human and those things are not always necessarily connected, so we cannot really provide that.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I understand that it does not always roll into an exclusion.

Mr T.J. HEALY: I think the member is asking how many people are suspended and how many people are excluded. I am happy to put that as a question on notice. Actually, sorry, I can give the member the number of students excluded. Is the chair happy for me to divert the question on the connection that the member is talking about?

The CHAIR: Yes.

Mr T.J. HEALY: I can confirm that eight students were excluded in 2016, eight in 2017, 24 in 2018, 65 in 2019, 72 in 2020 and 76 in 2021.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I appreciate that, parliamentary secretary. When those students are excluded, does that end the involvement of the Department of Education, or is there any follow-up from there?

[10.10 am]

Mr T.J. HEALY: To answer the member's question: does it end when a student is excluded? No. Each student is case managed. There are a number of options that are available. Each student is supported back into some sort of mainstream learning. There is a variety of settings. As the member knows, we expanded the ALS settings. There are a number of different options based on their community and each individual person.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I have a further question.

The CHAIR: The member for North West Central.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Is the parliamentary secretary able to provide a breakdown of those suspensions for repeat offenders—those who consistently get suspended? It would be interesting to see a breakdown of the programs and assistance for those who get suspended, because if there are serial students who get suspended, clearly that is not working.

The CHAIR: Can I confirm for my own benefit, member for North West Central, that we are on paragraph 4 of page 364?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Yes, it is paragraph 4.

Mr T.J. HEALY: I do not like the term “repeat offenders”. Each student is a human. But, no, we cannot provide the data for that. What I can confirm is that a relatively small group of students with four or more suspensions—that is 3 049 students, representing 16.9 per cent of students suspended—contributed almost half, 47.9 per cent, of all suspensions in 2021.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Was that 49 per cent of suspensions are for repeat offenders?

Mr T.J. HEALY: I will repeat that again. A relatively small group of students with four or more suspensions is 3 049 students, representing 16.9 per cent of students suspended. They contributed almost half, 47.9 per cent, of all suspensions in 2021.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Did the parliamentary secretary say that the programs that the department has or does not have are working to stop those repeat offenders from being suspended from school? Clearly, with those statistics, whatever the department is doing is not working.

Mr T.J. HEALY: In answer to the member's question, we have a number of great programs and a number of great staff whom are all working very, very well and will continue to work and engage with communities. I can confirm, which is probably the member's next question, that in 2021, a total of 97 students engaged with the ALS program across four existing sites, and 32 students are continuing support in 2022. Of the 65 students that did transition, 47 students transitioned into a mainstream school, and of these, 31 returned to their enrolled school, 16 enrolled in a new school, and seven students transitioned into an alternative education setting such as TAFE. So the right fit was found for those students.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: How much money is spent on these thousands of kids who have been suspended? Does the parliamentary secretary have a figure of what is spent on rehabilitation? How much money is spent on these repeat offenders that the parliamentary secretary says make up 49 per cent of all suspensions? Does the parliamentary secretary have a figure for the amount the Department of Education spends on those who are suspended and on those who are repeat offenders?

Mr T.J. HEALY: We take all students in Western Australia. Every student is entitled to an education. I think a different approach that certainly shows high numbers is that we encourage staff to report incidents and to actively suspend and exclude when it is appropriate. We cannot break down the funding that is there. We provide a very wholesome package of goods and services for all the students, but we will work with all students, member.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: The parliamentary secretary talked about all the wonderful programs that are in place. Can the parliamentary secretary provide what specific programs are in place for those students who are suspended?

Furthermore, can the parliamentary secretary provide a breakdown of those repeat offenders and the programs that those repeat offenders are in? Can the parliamentary secretary provide that cost? Are there counsellors and are they involved with those students who are suspended? Are counsellors involved with the students who are repeat offenders who are suspended? The department would obviously have a breakdown of those who use which program and how much those programs cost.

Mr T.J. HEALY: We cannot give the member a breakdown of the programs. Each school has a one-line budget that it manages itself. That involves student services teams, and schools often run a student wellbeing team that has a combination of programs when students return from suspension that involve year coordinators and school chaplains, the number of which we have increased, and school psychologists, the number of which we have also increased. There is a number of different staff within those models. There is not a breakdown available, but there are very comprehensive packages available. Each school will manage as best it can, and we have given schools the resources to do that.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: The government has increased those resources because of the increase in suspensions from and antisocial behaviour in schools. But anyway, do the schools or the education department have KPIs for the suspension of repeat offenders? What are the schools' KPIs? Is it to lower suspensions, is it to reduce the number of students who get suspended consistently—twice or three times? Are there any KPIs?

Mr T.J. HEALY: The KPIs that the member is after are in the budget papers, and I will leave it to him to find them. But I can confirm that we do have KPIs for those factors, and we also have very good KPIs for literacy and numeracy attainment and other things. But the member will not find them under this line item.

[10.20 am]

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Are there any external providers that assist with those students who are suspended in the programs that the parliamentary secretary talked about, and what is the cost of those external providers?

Mr T.J. HEALY: There are a number of different external providers that will provide support such as chaplains or youth carers. The Clontarf Foundation and Shooting Stars Foundation are examples. But schools can really determine their own. There are a number of non-government organisations and local councils. Every school has the choice to manage their own, but there are a number.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Surely there is an education budget. Obviously, the parliamentary secretary should know how many external providers there are. What internal providers are available through the education department? Clearly, the parliamentary secretary should know what the breakdown is for regional education and metropolitan education. What resources are put into regional education and what are the resources put into the metropolitan area through external programs?

Mr T.J. HEALY: The member should put the question on notice if he would like to know the further details per school, but every single school in every single region determines its own external provider. I am very happy to read out to the member a number of service providers and programs that are available.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Can the parliamentary secretary provide it as supplementary information to save time, given the fact that he was 10 minutes late?

Mr T.J. HEALY: There are: Aurora Education Foundation, which runs the high school program and the outreach program; Glass Jar Australia; Developing Your Spark; Shooting Stars; Seven Sisters; the Koya Aboriginal Corporation's Moorditj Koorlong program and the Kaat, Koort and Horizons program; the Balancing Program; the Kaat, Koort and Horizons thriving program; the peer ambassador youth development program; SHINE Inspire Achieve Belong; the Stars Foundation; and the Stephen Michael Foundation. Service delivery costings for programs on the panel arrangement are determined by the individual service providers.

I can confirm two more things for the member: in 2020–21 to 2024–25, the state government has committed \$19.75 million specifically to support schools to purchase an engagement program for Aboriginal girls and young women. Just as an example, a school that I was at engaged a careers program named Beacon. There are a lot of programs. The director general does not send a direction saying, "All 860-plus schools should do this." The schools work out within their own one-line budget how they wish to allocate funding. But I think the member can put the question on notice and we can potentially provide some further information. Each school and each region is very different, but the programs that I have read out are an answer to the member's question.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Can the parliamentary secretary provide a breakdown between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students out of the thousands of students who either have been suspended or are suspended?

Mr T.J. HEALY: The member is going to have to find a more specific line item. But at this stage, no.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: It is paragraph 4 on page 364, which we have been dealing with. The parliamentary secretary has given me the figures for suspensions throughout Western Australia. Can he provide a figure for the number of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students have been or are suspended?

Mr T.J. HEALY: Okay.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I am happy to take it as a supplementary.

Mr T.J. HEALY: Member, we are drawing away from a specific line item, but I do have the information here for him, which I will read out. In terms of students suspended who have Aboriginal status from 2019 to 2021, in 2019, that number was 4 157; in 2020, it was 3 866 students; and in 2021, it was 4 414 students.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: On that same line item, I would like to recognise the good work that our principals, deputies and staff do. As part of the supportive environment that is provided, can the parliamentary secretary enlighten me about what the department is doing to support our principals, deputies and staff in light of the figures that were released recently and how the number of attacks have gone from 2 000 in 2017 up to 2 577 in 2021?

Mr T.J. HEALY: I have already mentioned a couple of programs. I can go into further detail on the classroom management and behaviour management strategies. To give the member some further and new information, there are a range of supports available for principals, deputies and staff. I will begin with the Djiral-ak djinda bidi aspirant Aboriginal leaders program. That identifies action plans and leadership. In 2022, the first principal cohort of the Culturally Responsive School Leadership program will be implemented for 20 school principals. As of earlier this year, 443 principals had expressed an interest to engage with a collegiate principal. The collegiate principal program is a fantastic way to support principals from their colleagues. Since 10 February 2021, there have been 239 from regional locations and 204 from metro schools. The Leadership Institute's professional learning programs ensure that principal wellbeing is a focus within existing and new programs. I can confirm for the member that 168 aspirant principals have completed the aspirant principal preparation program. From February 2020 until May 2022, 173 newly appointed principals have completed the newly appointed principal induction, and between 2019 and 2022, 170 newly appointed principals have completed the launch program. Further, there are also online wellbeing webinars through the Leadership Institute. Collegiate principals are trained in psychological first aid to better support their principal group. There is the Thrive at Work Masterclass trial with ed support network and principal wellbeing checks, which is very, very important. There is also further engagement in the work health and safety advisory committee to appoint a new work health and safety framework.

[10.30 am]

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I think we will tidy this up. I understand those leadership programs and collegiate principal programs. What I am getting to is when there has been an attack in a classroom or on a staff member or deputy or the like. Is there a program to deal with that or is it just treated on an individual basis with support from the department? How does the department deal with a teacher like the one at Gilmore College, for argument's sake, last week? What happens with that teacher? How does the Department of Education support them? Are there programs for them or is each one treated on an individual basis?

MR T.J. HEALY: Is the member's question in addition to the programs that I just mentioned?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Sorry?

MR T.J. HEALY: In addition to the programs that we have mentioned, does the member want to know what supports are available for staff?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I am really talking about the teachers across the state. If there is an attack in a primary school or a senior high school, what support is given to that individual teacher?

MR T.J. HEALY: Aside from just repeating the things that I have already mentioned, every scenario—we will use Gilmore College as an example—is unique and has different circumstances. They are all managed on a case-by-case basis, depending on that staff member's needs. It is very difficult for us to predict from this chamber what that staff member is going to be facing. But I can confirm that the staff member—it is not just one staff member; a number of staff are affected by what happens within a school—has been provided support by the school and the principal. The DG has confirmed with me she has also been in contact personally with the principal to ensure that everyone there gets the support that they need.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Okay, I think we will move on to a new question, thanks.

If we can, we will just move on to page 363. I notice that there is no budget for 2022–23 and onwards for the schools ventilation strategy under “COVID-19 Response”. Can the parliamentary secretary enlighten me why? I have heard the minister and so forth talking about continuing the ventilation program within our schools. Where is the funding for the continued ventilation program, or does COVID stop at 30 June?

MR T.J. HEALY: The ventilation strategy has been implemented. We have further flexibility to respond. The pandemic is not over, but that ventilation strategy has been implemented. That is why the costs the member is talking about do not appear, but we have the flexibility to respond, just like we did previously. We have a very, very well trained and organised department that responded very rapidly.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Can the parliamentary secretary confirm that every piece of ventilation equipment and the like has now been placed in all our schools, even right out through our remote communities and the like?

MR T.J. HEALY: Member, I can confirm that there is a ventilation strategy that is in place for every school.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I know the parliamentary secretary is confirming that strategy, but have all those ventilation units been delivered to all those schools right throughout Western Australia, especially in the outer regional schools of Western Australia?

MR T.J. HEALY: Member, I can confirm that each school has the equipment and the system in place for its school and its need for its season. When this was put in place, obviously it was summer. We are now going into winter. Every school and every region is very, very different. I will confirm that we purchased a number of purifiers and a number of pieces of equipment. They were provided to the schools when each school did its assessment. Each school had its own unique assessment for each classroom. That relied on looking at and assessing the natural ventilation, mechanical ventilation and air purification. We have the capacity to relocate. Every region is very different. What is summer in one school is a very, very different winter in another school. We have the ability to adjust based on those needs, but each school has what it needs available to it for its own ventilation strategy.

Ms L. METTAM: Can the parliamentary secretary confirm that every public school has an air purifier for every classroom, and did they have an air purifier for every classroom at the beginning of term 1?

MR T.J. HEALY: To assist the member, we purchased a number of air purifiers, but each school and each principal have worked out their own needs for their school and their classrooms. The natural ventilation is the first assessment. Natural ventilation is achieved through fresh air and maximising that fresh air in a room. That is not always available in a regional school in the middle of summer. There is also mechanical ventilation that uses evaporative coolers, air conditioners, fans and other things to adequately ventilate rooms. The schools that do not have those options available as per their individual ventilation strategy have been provided with the purifiers. Every classroom has been assessed and provided with what they needed.

Ms L. METTAM: Can the parliamentary secretary provide us with a breakdown of the schools that have not been provided with air purifiers as part of the so-called ventilation strategy?

MR T.J. HEALY: I can confirm that we surveyed each classroom and each mechanical device, and on the basis of the health advice that was determined by the CHO, we determined the needs for each classroom's air circulation.

[10.40 am]

Ms L. METTAM: How was this assessment undertaken? The parliamentary secretary referred to the Chief Health Officer. Were the principals tasked with making an assessment themselves? I note that the parliamentary secretary stated that having fans in classrooms or having a classroom in a regional location may suffice. Can the parliamentary secretary give me a clearer indication of how it was assessed whether there was a need for a carbon dioxide monitor, ventilation or an air purifier for these classrooms?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: It was just a window in regional WA.

Ms L. METTAM: Yes; just a door open.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Yes; the fan on.

Mr T.J. HEALY: I can confirm that the strategy was based on current national and international guidelines and endorsed by the WA Chief Health Officer. To inform the strategy, the department implemented a comprehensive assessment program of windows and mechanical ventilation systems in public educational facilities across the state. Schools were issued with guidance on ventilation protocols from term 1, 2022, and the assessments also informed decisions about whether air purifiers fitted with HEPA filters—high-efficiency particulate absorbing filters—were required to be provided to specific learning areas where adequate ventilation was not able to be supplied by natural or mechanical means. I am sure the member has seen the poster about the ventilation strategy. Very good information was provided to schools, students, families and educators.

Ms L. METTAM: Was it up to principals to make their own assessment against the international guidelines—those posters—for the determination of whether a HEPA filter was required in each individual classroom? How was it determined?

Mr T.J. HEALY: I can confirm that the Chief Health Officer gave advice about the assessments and that contractors did the assessments.

Ms L. METTAM: Were contractors employed to do the assessments for each classroom across the state? What qualifications did these contractors have to enable them to make that determination?

Mr T.J. HEALY: I can confirm that window assessments were conducted by one stream of contractors and mechanical assessments by another, in line with the natural ventilation and mechanical ventilation strategies.

Ms L. METTAM: Are we able to get by way of supplementary information the classrooms or the schools that have the HEPA filters?

Mr T.J. HEALY: I can confirm that the department purchased approximately 12 000 of these devices. They have been deployed out to schools. If the member would like a list of schools, by region or by school, she can ask a question on notice and we can provide that.

Ms L. METTAM: Can the parliamentary secretary provide that by way of supplementary information? For the purposes of transparency, we would also like to see the reports that were undertaken of each of these schools. I am sure parents would be very interested to know the status of their school and why their school may not have been successful in receiving these air purifiers or HEPA filters for their classrooms.

Mr T.J. HEALY: So that the member does not ask three more questions on this, I am happy to provide information on the regional locations to which the ventilators, filters or machines have gone.

Ms L. METTAM: Okay.

Mr T.J. HEALY: I might have to clarify. Is the member happy with a list of regions or does she want me to provide a list of schools? We will provide a list of schools. I am sure that will detail the regions as well. I am happy to provide by supplementary information the list of schools that received the filters.

The CHAIR: In regional areas or across the whole state?

Ms L. METTAM: Across the state.

Mr T.J. HEALY: Are there any particular regions?

Ms L. METTAM: No, across the state.

Mr T.J. HEALY: Happy to provide that.

The CHAIR: The parliamentary secretary is going to provide a list of schools across the state that have received HEPA filters.

[Supplementary Information No B11.]

Ms L. METTAM: Is the parliamentary secretary able to confirm whether there are HEPA filters at “Silver City”?

The CHAIR: I think one of the issues that you might have with this question, member for Vasse, is that the line item you are referring to is the schools ventilation strategy. Is that right?

Ms L. METTAM: Yes.

The CHAIR: I am not satisfied that the question is relevant to that line item.

Ms L. METTAM: Okay.

The CHAIR: Any further questions?

Ms L. METTAM: Well, I was just wondering whether the Department of Education was —

The CHAIR: I have ruled it out of order on the basis that it is not relevant to the schools ventilation strategy.

Ms L. METTAM: Okay. I have a further question.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Has the Minister for Education and Training’s office been done?

The CHAIR: Member for North West Central, I am not inviting interjections from you. I know you think you are the smartest of the three on that side, but the member for Vasse has got the questions at the moment. The member for Vasse has the call.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Just between you and me!

The CHAIR: No, I call you to order.

Mr T.J. HEALY: The member for Roe is pretty smart.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: You cannot attack me and then call me to order.

The CHAIR: I call you to order for that, member for North West Central. You are just interrupting your own member who is asking questions. The member for Vasse has the call.

Mr T.J. HEALY: And just for the record, chair, I do find all three of them very smart.

The CHAIR: No, I am not asking for interjections from you.

Mr T.J. HEALY: I tried.

Ms L. METTAM: I am interested in how it was determined that HEPA filters were selected, in terms of the product itself. What is the make and model of these HEPA filters? I am sure that is publicly available. What evidence is there that these HEPA filters have been effective, or is there any evidence that they have been effective as part of the ventilation strategy rollout? Is the fact that there is no further funding an indication that this program has been unsuccessful?

[10.50 am]

Mr T.J. HEALY: I can confirm that the brand was Samsung. A market scan was completed and an assessment made of a number of factors. For the member’s information, they included ease of use in a school setting and capability to deliver.

Ms L. METTAM: Which schools received HEPA filters that are currently gathering dust—that are not being commissioned? We have heard reports that some schools received HEPA filters but have not used them. Is the parliamentary secretary aware of this; and, if so, which schools, and to what extent has this been an issue?

Mr T.J. HEALY: I can confirm that we purchased a number of devices. They were given to the schools that required them as part of their strategy. Do we have some additional stock? To respond to that, I am going to pass to the deputy director general in a second because he has some really good extra information to provide the member. They will be going to the right schools. We are also doing an assessment now, I understand, but the deputy DG will probably expand further on that. What we applied as part of our strategy in summer is very, very different from what we will provide in winter. Regional schools and metro schools have very different needs, as does each region, in summer and winter. I will pass to the deputy DG, Mr Peckitt.

Mr J. Peckitt: A number of allocations of air purifiers have been made to schools. There was an initial allocation in term 1 for the ventilation strategy based on summer conditions at the time. Since then, we have allocated additional air purifiers. We have recently done a contingency allocation. They are basically there for schools to use when they need them. It is possible that some of those are not being used at this point because they might be used for a particular event, such as an exam or something else that might occur at the school. At the moment, we are allocating those for winter conditions. Schools may not need them until the weather cools and then they will put them in place. That is the likely reason that they are not all necessarily being used right at this moment.

Ms L. METTAM: I understand some issues have been raised about the quality of the purifiers or the HEPA filters that were purchased. How will we know that our students have benefited from this taxpayer-funded investment in schools? I also understand that other schools may have missed out. What assessment has been undertaken to illustrate the efficacy of this ventilation program, which has now ceased?

Mr T.J. HEALY: There were a couple of things there. How do we work out the quality of these items? Some people talk about the quality of the members of Parliament in this chamber, too; that is always tricky. We have a very well-planned ventilation strategy for schools that assesses a number of factors. We are also not relying on one single thing. I will pass to the director general in a moment to further expand on that, but our COVID-19 pandemic response is not just about ventilators in schools. There are a number of well-planned and well-organised initiatives, such as the vaccination of staff and mask wearing—a number of things. I will let the director general expand further on those points.

Ms L. Rodgers: I think it is best to see it in its totality. Throughout the whole COVID pandemic, we have worked really closely with the Chief Health Officer, and the Chief Health Officer obviously has been working with his colleagues in the AHPPC. Throughout the last two years, we have always taken the Chief Health Officer's advice. In regard to keeping our schools safe, there has been a range of measures that we have put in place to make sure that we have been able to maintain the continuity of teaching and learning, and keep our schools open. Some of the things that have been put in place have been, obviously, mask wearing—we have seen that at some point—the vaccination strategy, and there has been enhanced cleaning in schools since very early on. Of course, one of the other recommendations that the Chief Health Officer made was around ventilation. There was no one component of this strategy that stood on its own. The most important thing for us in regard to ventilation is just that. It is not about whether they are opening the door or whether they have an evaporative cooler or a fan—the key aspect is to keep air circulated. We needed to assess every single classroom—to look at each classroom and say, “How best can we get the optimum conditions to ensure that air is circulated through these classrooms?” Along with additional cleaning, along with the vaccination strategy, along with a whole range of other measures, we have made sure that classrooms have airflow. It is really hard to be able to understand the efficacy of one particular part of that strategy. Over the last two years, we have been able to keep schools open and we have been able to keep kids learning. We have done a number of things and we will continue to take the advice of the Chief Health Officer as and when he provides that advice.

Mr T.J. HEALY: I would like to add that a key part of that was our border arrangements. That was a key part of how things were managed. Obviously, that involved going against the advice of the Liberal Party and the advice of the patron saint of the Liberal Party, Clive Palmer, on the border arrangements.

Ms L. METTAM: What a ridiculous comment.

The CHAIR: The member for Vasse.

Ms L. METTAM: I note that the ventilation strategy is not being funded further while the communications strategy for COVID continues. How do we know the HEPA filters are working? Do they meet international standards? Why were they selected above UV filters, for example?

Mr T.J. HEALY: Just to partly repeat, we have delivered on our strategy. It has been implemented. But with the funding changes in the budget papers, we can pivot as required. As we have said, the department is doing a winter assessment now of schools. I am aware that those on the other side do not always appreciate the different regions within Western Australia and the different needs of those regions, but each area is very, very different and they will have an effective strategy. We plan to meet that. We have the ability to pivot to it. A key thing is that we will

follow the expert advice of the Chief Health Officer. I know that is something that has not been supported by the other side before, but if the Chief Health Officer gives us further advice in that area, we will follow it. I mean, the pandemic is not over. We still have a number of cases. A number of schools are still dealing with this. It is far from over, but we have the ability and the flexibility, and a great team of people, to implement the strategy.

Ms L. METTAM: The parliamentary secretary did not answer the question. I am simply asking how the HEPA filters were selected. Do they meet an international standard? Do we know they are effective? Why were they selected above what is used in other schools overseas, such as UV filters?

[11.00 am]

[Ms A.E. Kent took the chair.]

Mr T.J. HEALY: To repeat, an assessment was made following a market scan. They were selected on their capability to deliver and ease of use in school settings.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I move to the line above on page 363, “Schools Administrative Support”. This is in relation to COVID. Can the parliamentary secretary define what that is and how it has progressed over the COVID period?

Mr T.J. HEALY: Small to medium-sized Western Australian schools have been provided with additional funding to support the administrative requirements associated with managing active COVID-19 cases in their schools, including the requirement to manage their own contact tracing. As at 23 March 2022, a total of \$3.025 million had been allocated to public schools. Funding of just under \$1.28 million has been provided to non-government schools through grant agreements with the Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia and Catholic Education Western Australia.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I want to ask about staff, so I can do it either on this line or when we move to FTE.

Mr T.J. HEALY: Let us move there.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: How are we progressing in relation to relief staff given the recent uptick, I guess, in COVID cases? What are the shortfalls in the system? Do we have schools that are short of teaching staff at the moment?

Mr T.J. HEALY: We acknowledge that there is pressure in schools. It has not been an easy time for the last two years, but schools have stepped up—parents, schools, educators, students, everything. I think even the member has acknowledged in his speeches the fact that Western Australia has had more face-to-face teaching than anywhere else in Australia or the world as a result of the incredible job of the government in working in partnership with the community and schools. But this term, like last term, there is definitely pressure in schools in terms of relief. Staff and family members—close contacts or those who have COVID—are isolating, as they have been directed to, and that is resulting in staff numbers being down, so we acknowledge there is staffing pressure in schools. We use relief pools, principally. If schools can no longer go through their relief pools, they can opt to reach out to the department and we can deploy available staff from the department who are trained teachers.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: How many staff are out of the system at the moment on different types of leave waiting for the working mandate to cease?

Mr T.J. HEALY: I think the member has two questions. We can provide the number of staff deployed centrally from the department who have gone out to schools. I think the member was also asking another question about the number of staff who do not meet the vaccine requirements and who are currently not in schools. Does the member want to ask the question about deployment of staff again in a second, and I can confirm those staff who did not comply or meet the requirements of the vaccination plan?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Yes.

Mr T.J. HEALY: The Department of Education has more than 50 000 staff. Fewer than one per cent of staff did not initially comply with the mandatory COVID-19 vaccination policy.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I understand from recent reports that there are 13 staff who are not vaccinated but who are in the system because, apparently, they have had COVID. Why were they allowed back into the system?

Mr T.J. HEALY: I can confirm that 13 staff are in the category that the member alluded to, without saying the correct term. As the member knows, the majority of Western Australians got vaccinated. The one per cent of staff, or less than one per cent of staff, I have already mentioned, did not start teaching at the start of the year because they did not meet the vaccination requirements. There are currently 13 staff who, as a result of declaring that they have had COVID, are currently back working. But when that period ends, if they continue to not meet the vaccination requirements, they will revert to their status.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Has there been any backlash from other staff within the system over those 13 who have been allowed back in without having been vaccinated?

Mr T.J. HEALY: No.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I refer to page 364 and the line item “National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) Online”. It is in the table.

Mr T.J. HEALY: About three-quarters of the way down?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Yes, three-quarters down. There have been recent reports that there has been a delay to NAPLAN testing and that it has been stretched out over a longer period due to COVID arrangements or COVID numbers. Can the parliamentary secretary confirm that?

[11.10 am]

Mr T.J. HEALY: I can confirm that we extended that NAPLAN period by a week.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: How many of the NAPLAN tests were done online? Is there a breakdown? Were any done in the home environment, and what is the breakdown for that?

Mr T.J. HEALY: I was about to say that I do not think we are going to have this data because it was only last week, but we have an amazing team and director general in the Department of Education. I can confirm that 88.7 per cent of NAPLAN online testing has been completed, and we expect the rest of the testing to be done by the end of the period.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Is the department concerned about the integrity of the results due to the delays et cetera?

Mr T.J. HEALY: No.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Given the nature of online activity, not only for NAPLAN but also online learning, we have heard of Australian school students being at risk of unprecedented tracking and surveillance from various remote learning corporations. Has the education department taken any steps to minimise the potential tracking and surveillance of our children?

Mr T.J. HEALY: In a NAPLAN context?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: In a NAPLAN context or an online learning context. As the parliamentary secretary knows, online learning is potentially increasing in these times.

Mr T.J. HEALY: In the context of the nation and the world, Western Australia did not move as online as the rest of the world because we did not have the lockdown days and a lot of learning remained at school. However, on the point I think the member is making, the Department of Education has established a centrally managed site and security model encompassing security, risk management and governance processes in both operational and strategic contexts to cover schools, central services and regional offices. There are multiple layers of security technologies to address known security threat factors, and external security operation centres monitor, alert and help defend against such threats. Cybersecurity issues are aptly reported via a well-defined series of processes that include notifying appropriate senior staff, and threat metrics and activity reports from the security operation centre are provided monthly with live data available via a portal. I can confirm that a cybersecurity manager role was created, advertised and filled in 2021 to ensure a dedicated resource for leading and enhancing the department's cybersecurity posture.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Is the parliamentary secretary comfortable that the integrity of our children's private information is intact, given the cybersecurity program at the Department of Education?

Mr T.J. HEALY: I think we are responding appropriately. This is an area that is changing very, very rapidly, and we are responding appropriately. That is the key thing. That will evolve based on different scenarios and threats, apps, and things like that. I can confirm that each school has a firewall in place and each app that is used is assessed for privacy and security. Each app that is available or recommended by a school is assessed. The department also continues to work very closely with the eSafety Commissioner.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Does the education department use, for instance, the Adobe Connect app for videoconferencing and screen sharing, which would have access to students' cameras and microphones and also allow it to collect phone numbers?

Mr T.J. HEALY: The member will have to put the specific question about Adobe Connect and others on notice so that the department can provide the information that it can. In further answer to the member's question, we heavily promote cyber-safety education to young people, educators and families. That is an ongoing conversation, as I have already. But in proper answer to the member's question, the department principally uses Teams and Webex; that is the real answer to the question. That is the primary one that we would use, which has, as the member knows, better levels of security.

The CHAIR: Member for Roe and parliamentary secretary, do you want to just break for five minutes or are you happy to continue?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I am happy to continue because we started 10 minutes late, so we have lost 10 minutes of our time.

Mr T.J. HEALY: I am fine.

The CHAIR: Okay.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Thank you. On page 376, the bottom item is "Asbestos Containing Materials Removal and/or Replacement". There is an allocation of \$1.73 million for one year only. Does this mean all asbestos has been removed from the public school system, because there does not seem to be anything further in the out years?

Mr T.J. HEALY: I can confirm that the use of asbestos in building materials was phased out in the late 1980s, but it is likely that it continued to be used until stocks were exhausted in the early 1990s. Of the estimated 600 public schools built before 1993, infrastructure at these sites may include asbestos-containing materials. All public schools have a site-specific asbestos-containing materials register, which I know the member is aware of because we have spoken about it in the chamber. That is an integral part of the Department of Education's asbestos management plan. I can confirm that in 2020–21, the asbestos-containing-material removal program focused on removing ACM sunroofs and, where possible, removing and replacing service pits, fire doors, soffit linings, and external eaves. Metal strip ceilings were replaced in three schools and contaminated roof spaces at a variety of schools. The ACM removal program for 2020–21 has been completed and the program for 2021–22 is in progress.

[11.20 am]

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: How many metropolitan schools are currently on the asbestos register?

Mr T.J. HEALY: I will just clarify: how many schools are currently on the register?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Yes. How many schools are on the register, as a combination of metro and regional?

Mr T.J. HEALY: I am very sure this was a question on notice from the opposition, from memory, but I will give details of the central school register that is available. Is the member looking for an update? Am I wrong or has the member asked questions on this before?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Yes. I am asking how many schools are on the register?

Mr T.J. HEALY: In further answer to the question, 600 public schools are currently on the register as having had asbestos at some point.

Mr T.J. HEALY: To further assist, I am pretty sure that the member asked a question on notice on this in the past. We could possibly update the answer to that if he wants to resend it. From memory, I recall seeing a question on notice on that. If I am wrong, I apologise.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Yes. I have a further question. Where is the risk register kept for each individual school? Is there a register kept at the school?

Mr T.J. HEALY: First of all, it is a central school register, and it is kept at the school. But I can also add that online asbestos awareness training is now mandatory for all school principals, deputy principals, managers of corporate services, head cleaners, senior gardeners, and gardeners who work alone. The department continues to monitor the mandatory ACM training compliance and has developed an automated process requiring school principals and site managers to confirm every semester that they are meeting the key requirements of the asbestos management plan.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Each school keeps a register at the school, which is updated after various works are completed. Is that the scenario?

Mr T.J. HEALY: Yes; I can confirm that it is updated as required.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: At each school? Yes.

Mr T.J. HEALY: Actually, I might add further to that. ACM registers are updated through formal audits that occur at intervals as recommended by an independent assessor, but not exceeding three years, and on an as-required basis to reflect details of any significant ACM removal.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Can the parliamentary secretary confirm that East Fremantle Primary School is one of the schools that is on the central asbestos register?

Mr T.J. HEALY: I can confirm that.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I have been alerted to concerns raised by parents about irregularities with the risk register and the amount of friable asbestos on the site. Does the parliamentary secretary have any comments on the risk register at East Fremantle Primary School?

Mr T.J. HEALY: I am happy to confirm that a WorkSafe inspector from the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety undertook a site visit of the school in January 2022 and confirmed that all the works were being undertaken in accordance with the regulatory requirements. In March this year, the member for Roe requested a copy of the asbestos reports and registers held by the department for that school, which were provided to him. Is that correct?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: That is correct.

Mr T.J. HEALY: My understanding is that East Fremantle Primary School has followed the requirements within the department's asbestos management plan on consultation and communication with the school community each time asbestos works have occurred.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Was unsealed friable asbestos dust and debris disclosed to the school insurer?

Mr T.J. HEALY: I cannot confirm what was disclosed to RiskCover.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: As I said, I have had parental concerns raised with me about contamination at the school and also about the risk ratings with the risk matrix of the asbestos register. Would the department be comfortable if an independent assessment were undertaken of the situation at East Fremantle Primary School?

Mr T.J. HEALY: I can confirm that WorkSafe, this year, has inspected the site. It is separate. It is independent from the department.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: At this stage I will leave it at that, but I want to express concerns with some of the inconsistencies, I would say, in relation to the risk register, the asbestos register, the risk matrix, and concerns also in relation to communication to some of the parents in the school community. This was also pointed out as a school of concern by the education minister in 2015 when she was the opposition education spokesperson. I will leave it at that for the moment, thank you.

The CHAIR: Are there any further questions to this division?

[11.30 am]

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: My next question is in relation to page 374, and Hedland Senior High School, which is about 90 per cent of the way down. Can the parliamentary secretary update me on how renovations have been going at the Hedland Senior High School? They have been dragging on for several years now.

Mr T.J. HEALY: I thank the member very much for the question. The member is correct that through the very, very hard work of the local member, the state government has allocated \$15 million to upgrade Hedland Senior High School. In May 2021, Pindan Contracting went into administration and all work ceased at the school. Following the collapse of Pindan Contracting, the budget increased from \$15 million to \$18.5 million in the 2021–22 budget process to fund the completion of the works. The process of ADCO Constructions taking over the work from Pindan took more time than originally anticipated due to additional works being required, and the state via the Department of Finance and ADCO subsequently reached agreement on a revised completion date. We are aiming for late October 2022, which is on schedule at this time, noting that there are obviously supply chain delays and we are still in the middle of the pandemic.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Thank you. I will leave it at that, other than to say that a lot of the wealth of the nation comes from that area and we look forward to that school being completed sooner than later.

Mr T.J. HEALY: Hear, hear, huzza.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Just going to page 379, and the details of controlled grants and subsidies, I refer to the line item “National School Chaplaincy Program”, which ceases to be funded as of next year. In last year’s budget papers, the program was funded with an increase over the forward estimates. Why has this program ceased, even though in the narrative below the table, the commonwealth has committed to the funding over the forward estimates but the state allocation has not been determined?

Mr T.J. HEALY: I can confirm that the current national school chaplaincy program project agreement received commonwealth funding for public and non-government schools and for administrative costs to operate the school chaplaincy program. The commonwealth government has committed to the continuation of funding until 2025–26; however, the state allocation has not yet been determined. As I am sure the member is aware, we expect the commonwealth government to be of great assistance in that area, given that there was quite a large change on the weekend—I am not sure if you heard about it!

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I did.

Mr T.J. HEALY: But there will be a change in federal government, and I think we will definitely see very strong support for Western Australia continuing.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Is the parliamentary secretary confident that the state government will commit to this program in conjunction with the commonwealth, even though it has not really been outlined in the forward estimates?

Mr T.J. HEALY: The line that the member is talking about is the federal side. The state government’s commitment to school chaplaincy is very clear, as presented in the budget papers and at the state election. We expect the federal government to continue with its role in chaplaincy, yes. It is a great program.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I understand that.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I refer to page 378 of budget paper No 2, volume 1, and the income statement and income from government, “Royalties for Regions Fund”. I assume the funding for the Department of Education is coming from royalties for regions as outlined in budget paper No 3 under the line item “Put Education Assistants Back in the Classroom”. I assume that is an election commitment?

Mr T.J. HEALY: Yes, I can confirm that was from 2017.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: In the income statement on page 378, the royalties for regions fund is \$9.1 million across the forward estimates

Mr T.J. HEALY: Yes, I have got that. So, the regional community services fund?

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Yes, that is right. I am assuming that the funding that is allocated there is from royalties for regions and is identified in the budget under “Put Education Assistants Back in the Classroom. That is where the RFR component appears. I can point to budget paper No 3.

Mr T.J. HEALY: Yes, that is correct.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: So, it is \$9.1 million across the forward estimates for putting education assistants back in the classroom. Can I confirm that that is not the total amount for that program, just the regional component?

Mr T.J. HEALY: Yes, that is correct.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Could the parliamentary secretary tell me the cost of the entire program?

Mr T.J. HEALY: In 2020–21, the total cost will be \$19.56 million.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Is that the same across the forward estimates?

Mr T.J. HEALY: Roughly, yes.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Thank you. I have a new question on the same thing—royalties for regions expenditure in budget paper No 3, which I assume is reflected through this regional community services fund line item in budget paper 2, volume 1, on page 378. I refer to budget paper No 3 and the allocation for the Western Australian College of Agriculture in the Kimberley. What role has the department had in developing that? There is literally \$1 million allocated in this year’s financial year. What is the role of the department in terms of that \$1 million?

Mr T.J. HEALY: I acknowledge the very hard work of the member for Kimberley, of course. In answer to the member’s question, this proposal is to explore the feasibility, through a business case, of establishing a Western Australian College of Agriculture in the Kimberley to ensure that students in the region, particularly Aboriginal students, have the same opportunities to engage in agricultural education as other students in the metropolitan area and other regional locations.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: It is for the preparation of a business case, is it, member?

Mr T.J. HEALY: That is correct.

[11.40 am]

Ms M.J. DAVIES: When does the parliamentary secretary expect that business case will be completed?

Mr T.J. HEALY: Member, we expect that to be completed in the next financial year.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: The Kimberley is a big place. The member for Kimberley is here. Is there an indication of where that might be located? Has any work been done in terms of where the department would like to see this college located? I would be very supportive of it; there is no criticism. I think it is a wonderful idea to expand our agricultural college network, which is one of the best in the nation.

Mr T.J. HEALY: Royalties for regions is a very important program. For many years, as the member probably knows, business cases were not developed and a lot of assessments were made as to needs and requirements. That is what the business case is going to assess. In terms of location, we will do the work first to work out that evidence-based location. It is different from past practices for royalties for regions.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I am not accepting your partisan comments on something that you were not around to assess.

Mr T.J. HEALY: Apologies if I made it partisan.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I am interested in finding out where we can expect to see the agricultural college go. The Kimberley is a big place. Are we talking about Kununurra? Are we talking about Broome? Is it likely to be a multi-campus arrangement? How is the department going to go about that consultation process?

Mr T.J. HEALY: As I stated before, it is too soon to say, and we will be developing a business case, in the next financial year we expect, to assess the best locations.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Okay.

Mr T.J. HEALY: I am happy to hear the member’s thoughts, but we will also rely on the evidence in the business case.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I refer to the top of page 373, and “Transportable classrooms.” How many transportable classrooms will \$20 million buy?

The CHAIR: While you are preparing that, parliamentary secretary, I am mindful of the time and we have two other divisions.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: This will be my last question.

Mr T.J. HEALY: For the expediency of time, there will be 86.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Where will they be housed and stored?

Mr T.J. HEALY: Member, the cost for this will be for constructing. They will need to be constructed first before they are stored somewhere, and they will be deployed to the areas of need.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Has the parliamentary secretary got any indication of what parts of the state they will be sent to?

Mr T.J. HEALY: Generally, they will be going to high-growth areas.

The CHAIR: Any further questions for this division? No? Okay.

The appropriation was recommended.

Division 25: Training and Workforce Development, \$524 036 000 —

Ms R.S. Stephens, Chair.

Mr T.J. Healy, Parliamentary Secretary representing the Minister for Education and Training.

Ms K. Ho, Director General.

Ms G. Husk, Acting Executive Director, Service Delivery.

Ms J. Wallace, Executive Director, Policy, Planning and Innovation.

Mr G. Thompson, Executive Director, Corporate.

Ms R. Trotter, Acting Chief Finance Officer.

Mr R. Brown, Executive Director, Service Resource Management.

[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 these details. Some divisions are the responsibility of more than one minister. Ministers shall only be examined in relation to their portfolio responsibilities. A minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee. I will ask the minister to clearly indicate what information they agree to provide and will then allocate a reference number. Supplementary information shall be provided to the principal clerk by close of business Friday, 3 June 2022. If a minister suggests that a matter be put on notice, members should use the online questions on notice system.

Member for Roe, do you have a question?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Thank you, chair. My first question relates to page 385, paragraph 4 under “Labour Market Conditions.” The WA skills summit highlighted the need for greater opportunity for underutilised segments of the labour force. What were the direct outcomes of the skills summit held on 30 July last year?

Mr T.J. HEALY: A number of outcomes have come through and for the expedience of time, I will just list the names. There has been a JobSeeker program for ex-offenders to gain employment; a targeted advertising campaign to bring people to Western Australia; a program for Aboriginal youth to overcome barriers to employment; caring for country pilot programs; job-ready programs; and drivers’ licence programs. There have been a number of things. The Kings Park skills summit was supplemented by 10 regional skills summits, so it was not just city based. It identified a number of very good ideas and concepts, and a number of them have been made available. I will probably be happy to provide some further information but I am conscious of the time. If you would like further supplementary information I am happy to provide.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: How many skilled migrants have entered WA in 2022?

The CHAIR: Can I just clarify, member for Roe? Did you want to supplementary information on that or do you want to put it on notice?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I am happy to receive supplementary information, yes.

Mr T.J. HEALY: I will provide supplementary information but I will answer the question. I am happy to provide the programs that have been announced since the skills summit. Was that the question?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: How many skilled migrants have entered WA?

Mr T.J. HEALY: No; supplementary information related to the skills summit. The member will have to refer to a line item for his question on how many skilled migrants have entered the state.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: In 2022, yes.

The CHAIR: Excuse me, parliamentary secretary. I need to clarify this for Hansard.

[*Supplementary Information No B12.*]

The CHAIR: Continue on that next question, member for Roe.

[11.50 am]

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Has the department forecast which industries will have the greatest skills shortages in 2022–23? In which particular industries and areas has it forecast shortages?

Mr T.J. HEALY: The member will have to refer to a budget line item for that.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I am looking under “Labour Market Conditions”.

Mr T.J. HEALY: So the question is: which areas does the government identify as having the greatest need?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: That is correct. Which particular areas have been identified as having the major skills shortages?

Mr T.J. HEALY: For the expedience of time, I will pass to the director general, but this is not the right location for the question.

Ms K. Ho: Thank you for the question. The department has a range of strategies that it uses to understand the skills needs of the state, and it includes collecting a lot of labour market data, surveying industry and then testing the results of the surveys and the labour market research with industry through the industry training councils that are funded by the department to provide advice. Through that process, a state priority occupation list is developed annually, which is the basis on which the skills needs are determined for purchasing training delivery, as well as skilled migration policy settings in the state-nominated migration program. Most people will understand there are skill shortages in the state in a whole range of industries, occupations and regions. It is fairly widespread, from aged care, disability, community services and the construction industry. Really, we are seeing shortages over a wide range. Our tight labour market conditions are caused by the strong economy and a couple of years of closed borders. It is not confined to Western Australia. There is a national picture of skill shortages.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I think we all know that aged care and child care are probably two of those major areas. What has been identified as a method of addressing them in the short and immediate term?

Mr T.J. HEALY: The state government has worked very closely with industry to develop a number of workforce strategies. Firstly, I will address the aged-care component of the member’s question and look across the metropolitan area and regional communities. Even before the McGowan government started managing the pandemic very well—it continues to manage the pandemic very well—the economy continued to grow.

A range of training and workforce strategies have been put in place, including a number of courses. There are 25 courses targeting jobs in the care sector. Of course, this was also found at the skills summits in those regional communities. The courses are targeting the aged-care and disability sectors in the Lower Fees, Local Skills initiative to provide accessible and low-fee training, low-fee existing worker traineeships in aged and disability care, and fee-free training in the direct care skill set course to attract new workers to the sector. I can tell the member that more than 900 students have enrolled in that free skill set course, and 11 other fee-free skill set courses to provide skills for jobs in aged care. Again, I think post the federal election on the weekend, at which aged care was an issue, we are going to see a lot more support, and continuing support, from the federal government for that.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: On page 385, under “Labour Market Conditions”, there is an item about the state-nominated migration program target. It is under the same section and is further to the discussion about how the department will prioritise to alleviate these skill shortages. Does the department make recommendations to cabinet or to government in relation to which of those employment areas should be on the state-nominated migration program; and, if so, has it nominated any that have been rejected by government?

Mr T.J. HEALY: I can confirm the department does make recommendations to government, but discussions of cabinet are protected by cabinet-in-confidence.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: So the recommendations of the analysis that the department has just explained around where the shortages are, and the need, are put forward for consideration by government and cabinet ultimately decides which of those areas are allowed in terms of changes to the state-nominated migration program. Have I got that right?

Mr T.J. HEALY: I would say that that is overall correct, but the member should remember that the Department of Training and Workforce Development does an incredible job in communicating, but also, like the skills summit as an example, ministers work very closely with industry and with the industry training councils. A number of conversations occur across all our regions in all our industries providing that feedback. That is in addition to all our government departments, which provide that feedback as well. A number of conversations are led, greatly by the Department of Training and Workforce Development, but not in its own silo.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: But, ultimately, is it government that makes the decision around who or what area is on the state-nominated migration program?

Mr T.J. HEALY: Yes. The Western Australian government is its own thing.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: That is right, and a whole list of those areas were cut from the state-nominated migration program when the Labor came to government in 2017. There was a whole list of employment areas that were taken off the list.

Mr T.J. HEALY: I can confirm that we made election promises in 2017 about what would go onto that list in conversation with the federal government. As the member knows, a lot things evolved—market changes and economic changes—and we evolved with them to meet the needs of the community.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: The government has put them all back on again, has it not?

Mr T.J. HEALY: If the member would like to ask questions about which are on there, I am happy to provide an answer.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: No. I can find that list myself, so it is fine.

Mr T.J. HEALY: It is there. The member can Google it and it is there.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Correct.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I have a new question.

The CHAIR: You will have to be very quick, Member for Roe, given the time.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I wanted to ask about the budget allocation for the mature and ex-offender JobSeeker program.

The CHAIR: Actually, I have been advised that we have run out of time, so are you able to put that question on notice?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: No worries.

The appropriation was recommended.

Building and Construction Industry Training Board —

The CHAIR: For the minutes, I note that the Building and Construction Industry Training Board was not examined. It is an off-budget authority, so it has no appropriation figure. I will now vacate the chair until 1.00 pm.

Meeting suspended from 12.00 to 1.00 pm

Division 35: Communities — Services 1 to 6, Child Protection; Women’s Interests; Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence; Community Services, \$1 072 681 000 —

Ms A.E. Kent, Chair.

Mr P. Papalia, Minister for Police representing the Minister for Child Protection; Women’s Interests; Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence; Community Services.

Mr M. Rowe, Director General.

Mr D. Stewart, Deputy Director General.

Ms R. Green, Deputy Director General, Community Services.

Ms L. Kalasopatan, Assistant Director General, Management Accounting.

Ms C. Irwin, Assistant Director General, Strategy and Partnerships.

Mr M. Crevola, Chief Financial Officer.

Mr G. Mace, Executive Director, Service Delivery.

Mr P. Payne, Executive Director, Regulation and Quality.

Mr M. Richardson, Director, Management Accounting and Financial Analysis.

Mr M. Burgess, Director, Strategic Policy.

[Witnesses introduced.]

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

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

I give the call to the Leader of the Opposition.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I refer to page 520 of budget paper No 2, volume 2. Under “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency” is “COVID-19 and Emergency Welfare Services”. Paragraph 2.1 is about the commercial accommodation purchased throughout the state. Can the minister give us an understanding of how this was undertaken? Is it permanent accommodation or was it hotel rooms? If permanent accommodation was purchased, what happens as we move through to the next stage of COVID?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Because it is the COVID response, it is hotel accommodation, and it is flexed up and down as necessary to meet demand.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Was all the \$11.3 million for accommodation used to purchase hotel rooms?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Yes, it was used to purchase hotel accommodation and fixed assets for the purposes of accommodating individuals. It was predominantly hotels.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Was \$11.3 million spent or is that how much was allocated?

Mr P. PAPALIA: No, that is how much was allocated. The budget allocation was \$11.29 million. It is estimated at the moment that in the order of \$7.4 million has been expended, with expenditure forecast by the end of the financial year to total about \$8.1 million.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: If it is not fully expended, will that just be absorbed back into the department's budget or does the minister anticipate that the government will require ongoing emergency funding?

Mr P. PAPALIA: That decision has not yet been made.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I refer to "Child Protection and Earlier Intervention Services" on page 521 of budget paper No 2. I could probably choose any number but I will refer to paragraph 3.2, which states, in part —

A review of the effectiveness of the Department's Earlier Intervention and Family Support Strategy, comprising the Aboriginal In-home Support Service (AISS) and the Intensive Family Support Service (IFSS), during 2021 found that referrals for keeping children safe at home resulted in 94% of children for AISS and 86% for IFSS not being in care 12 months later.

Can the minister explain where these programs are located in WA and how many full-time equivalent employees are attached to these programs?

Mr P. PAPALIA: The Aboriginal In-home Support Service evaluation report completed by Social Ventures Australia has been endorsed by the Department of Communities and is published on Communities' internal and external websites. The report's findings indicate positive impacts on the community and successful relationships between the community sector and government due to the AISS being place based and trauma informed. The partnership between the current service provider, Wungening Aboriginal Corporation, and Communities is a fundamental and necessary way of working with Aboriginal families. Some positive outcomes were seen from the consortium model, including access to strong local connections and highly integrated and streamlined service delivery. Families reported Wungening helped them feel empowered. The AISS impact evaluation was finalised and approved on 30 April last year.

The implementation plan was developed in partnership with Wungening and endorsed on 22 September last year. Expansion of earlier intervention and family support services into select regional sites has been funded, with Halls Creek and south west trials being initiated in the 2022–23 financial year and further development of other selected sites commencing in the 2023–24 financial year. On 5 January 2022, the AISS expanded to the Peel region, which provided service support to a further 18 families. In total, the AISS can work with up to 192 families in the metro area. The member has already read out that 94 per cent of children referred to the AISS to keep children safely at home remained at home with their parents after 12 months.

The AISS is metro and the IFSS is the regional provider. The way it works is that the consortium outsources to local service providers. They are mostly Aboriginal corporations, so they are not actually in-house FTE; they are outsourced to others. The admin costs are absorbed by the providers, so there are no extra additional FTEs as a consequence of the program. Inside government, it is the delivery of service getting grants.

[1.10 pm]

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Can the minister supply the funding that goes to these external organisations that, for example, look after the intensive family support services? I think it is important to know what agencies get that funding, who are these agencies, what are the KPIs of these agencies and what towns do they operate in? It is very critical. I am glad that the minister is here because he is the police minister. The police are often at the pointy end of not having the resources in child protection or working with families in regional communities. This is a good way of finding out exactly what programs are out there, what intensive family support services are available, who is doing what and how much is being spent on it. That is very critical when it comes to the level of crime that has been plaguing regional WA.

The CHAIR: Member for North West Central, can you keep your questions to the point, please? What is your question?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Yes, what is the question?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Can the minister supply the names of these external organisations that look after, for example, intensive family support services for the Department of Communities, and where are they based?

Mr P. PAPALIA: The member made a speech about service delivery. As I read to the member, Social Ventures Australia did an evaluation report on the Aboriginal in-home support service and determined that it was very successful. As a consequence, the programs have been expanded. Clearly, there is a partnership with Wungening, and then it seeks other providers of service, who are largely Aboriginal. It has resulted in successful outcomes.

In terms of giving the member the detail and getting breakdowns of what services other providers are providing under the grant system to the prime service delivery, I will ask the member to put that on notice, the reason being, this agency is doing incredibly important work. It is confronting an exceptional challenge that is not just associated with the difficult field of supporting children in care and trying to keep them out of care and keep them in safe environments in their family homes, but it is also doing that in an environment that is impacted by COVID. Significant numbers of staff in the agency are affected by COVID and they require furlough. Therefore, I do not want to direct them away from the priority that should be those children in care and those children at risk. The member can put that question on notice, and then the agency will provide that answer because I do not have it here. A supplementary question would require very immediate action and divert the agency from its priority tasks. For it to be placed on notice is reasonable.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: No-one is doubting the work that the department does; it is one of the hardest departments in government dealing with some of the tragic issues that unfortunately have to be dealt with in our society. No-one is disputing that. But I am disputing a lack of funding that is contributing to the inability of the Department of Communities to actually perform its duties. That is why we need that scrutiny to occur —

The CHAIR: Member for North West Central, I am moving on. Member for Vasse, you had a question.

Ms L. METTAM: Yes. I refer to the spending changes on page 520 of budget paper No 2, volume 2. About halfway down the page, under “Ongoing Initiatives”, is the line item “Strengthening Child Protection Services and Aboriginal Outcomes”. How does the Department of Communities’ budget, which is responsible for both child protection and housing, ensure that children taken into care placements are housed appropriately?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I am representing the Minister for Child Protection and the division that she is responsible for. Housing comes under a different minister and has a different focus. The member has combined a couple. I am trying to get in my head what she is getting at. I can answer with regards to child protection.

The CHAIR: I think we need to put that on notice.

Ms L. METTAM: I can rephrase it. How does the Department of Child Protection ensure that state wards—children who are being overseen and supported by the state—are in appropriate housing?

Mr P. PAPALIA: As part of the 2022–23 budget, the government will provide additional funding to boost investment in the state’s child protection system and, at the same time, improve outcomes for Aboriginal children and their families. The government has committed a further \$16.9 million across the budget and forward estimates to further boost earlier intervention family support through a phased expansion: firstly, to bolster urgent additional placements and enhance this current system; and, secondly, to expand two further regional sites based on priority; along with \$6.7 million to support urgent additional places and enhance current services; \$9 million to expand services to two priority sites; \$900 000 for a chief practitioner for child protection to not only lead the specialist child protection unit, but to also oversee a range of child protection reforms across communities; and \$400 000 to fund the Aboriginal cultural capability and reform program.

Ms L. METTAM: Does the minister acknowledge the revelations of the Moorditj Koort—and excuse my pronunciation—Aboriginal Corporation in the inquiry before the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations that —

Mr P. PAPALIA: What line of the budget is the member referring to?

The CHAIR: Yes, what line, sorry?

Ms L. METTAM: It relates to this issue.

Mr P. PAPALIA: What expenditure in the budget is the member referring to?

Ms L. METTAM: It is the expenditure related to “Child Protection Services and Aboriginal Outcomes” and the document by this Aboriginal corporation which raises concerns that the Department of Child Protection is placing state wards with families they know are homeless. What is the minister’s response to that very concerning submission?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I really do not think this is appropriate for the estimates. If the member wants to raise a specific question of the minister with respect to that report, she should do that in Parliament during the normal course of question time, which is an appropriate location. If the member wants to reflect on the budget and the matters I just referred to—she asked me what was being done in relation to that line item, and I indicated what was being done—that is fine. I ask the member to note, of course, that I am also just representing the minister. I would not want to reflect on a view of the minister, and I do not think it is appropriate in estimates anyway.

[1.20 pm]

Ms L. METTAM: The minister is not the responsible minister but he has many advisers here. Given there is a line item for strengthening child protection services and Aboriginal outcomes, what is the government doing to ensure that the Department of Communities does not continue to place state wards with families it knows are homeless, as put forward by the Moorditj Koort Aboriginal Corporation?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I already responded to the question with respect to the line item she referred to—what the government was doing to strengthen child protection services and Aboriginal outcomes. If she wants me to read it again, I can, but I have given her a response. The specific question she is asking relates to a document. I have not seen it, which is not surprising as it is not my portfolio. I suggest that the member raises it with the minister in question time during the next sitting, which is not far away, and I am sure that she will provide her with a response.

Ms L. METTAM: Is the minister aware that the Department of Communities is directing state wards to live with family members who are homeless?

The CHAIR: Member, you have to relate the question to the budget papers. It is about consolidated funds, so I remind you to focus on that.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I am not going to respond. It is an inappropriate question. It is focused entirely on trying to achieve some sort of political outcome with a statement with respect to some report I know nothing about. The question should be posed to the Minister for Communities; Child Protection. She can pose it to the minister in question time in normal Parliament, as is the appropriate approach. Doing this here is just pointless, it is inappropriate and it is not related.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: That is the whole point of today.

Mr P. PAPALIA: No, it is not.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: It is.

Ms L. METTAM: It is actually.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I am not even going to bother —

Mr V.A. CATANIA: That is the problem with having you in this chair.

The CHAIR: Can we just move on and have the next question, please?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Yes. Ask something about the budget.

The CHAIR: I give the call to the Leader of the Opposition.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I refer to page 519 of budget paper No 2, volume 2, and the total appropriation for the department of \$2 billion. Can the minister advise how much of that is appropriated to support the work of the portfolio of women's interests within the department?

Mr P. PAPALIA: The total appropriation?

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Within that total appropriation, what FTE allocation and funding allocation is there towards supporting the women's interests portfolio?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I am informed that it is in the order of \$5 million. My advisers do not have the precise amount.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Minister, is that \$5 million to support the work of the women's interests portfolio?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Yes.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: How many FTE are allocated within the department?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Dedicated to?

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Dedicated to managing the women's interests policy. I have a question about *Stronger together: WA's plan for gender equality* as well.

Mr P. PAPALIA: There are five dedicated within the policy division and there are others who work as necessary on managing grants and the like.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Has that changed over the last five years?

Mr P. PAPALIA: From what? It has got bigger, but I do not know what it was before. It has increased.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Can the minister ask?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I did. A few years ago, it was two and now it is five.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I thank the minister. I am assuming that within that general appropriation—I cannot see it in the budget; I am happy to be pointed to where it appears—the main policy framework for women's interests is the stronger together plan for gender equality. Can the minister point me to where in the budget I will see funding applied to achieve the outcomes or the recommendations and policy work that is contained within that document?

Mr P. PAPALIA: The point to bear in mind is that "stronger together" is an across-government plan, so every agency contributes and delivers on the objectives of the plan. If the member is talking about Communities, it is the first item, "Community Services", in the service summary on page 526.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Is that just under "Community Services"?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Within my portfolios, I pursue the objectives of that plan, as does every other minister, so it is not like it is one allocation of funding.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I understand.

Mr P. PAPALIA: The policy demands that every minister and every portfolio pursue the objectives. Every agency would be expending some degree of resources or funding to deliver on the outcomes.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to page 532 of budget paper No 2, volume 2. I see that the department is spending \$500 million on the provision of safe and stable care arrangements for young people in the care of the CEO. Of that amount, how many staff are employed and what amount is spent on ensuring that children are placed in appropriate settings and not with families or carers of those who are homeless?

Mr P. PAPALIA: The agency is focused on the provision of safe and stable care arrangements, so it does not knowingly put anybody in a risky environment, including one in which accommodation may not be available. Obviously, it does not do that.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: How many children are taken away from carers and placed in alternative care? Are there any instances of children who have been removed from care and placed in another person's care being abused in any way or has any abuse been reported as a result of the department's move from one carer to another? Does that make sense?

[1.30 pm]

The CHAIR: Member, can you direct me to the line item?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I am asking a further question off that asked by the member for Vasse—for example, foster carers.

Mr P. PAPALIA: With respect to placement, the agency acts in its best endeavours to find a safe place for a child.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I understand that.

Mr P. PAPALIA: That is the primary objective. In the event that it becomes evident that that placement has not had a good outcome, the department will seek to find somewhere else but it obviously does not look to place children in a non-safe environment.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I totally understand that.

Mr P. PAPALIA: With respect to how often replacements occur, I might ask the member to put that on notice if he wants a specific number in the last 12 months or something like that. Again, my motivation is not to deflect this agency from doing its important work, particularly in the next week.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I will rephrase the question. With any placements, moving from one carer to another, whether it be to a foster carer or to another carer, have there been any instances of a child being removed because that child may have indicated that they were hit by a spoon and removed from that family to a point where that child has been moved to another family or person and been abused? Are there any instances of the department moving children from one family to another who have been abused in some way? Do not worry about the stats; I just want to know if that is the case.

Mr P. PAPALIA: It is a complex environment, and challenging with respect to when relationships break down or why placements do not work and need to be changed. There are often multiple reasons they might change. A duty of care unit within the agency is responsible for investigating any claims of the nature that the member has suggested, regardless of whether it is before or after a placement or a replacement or however we term it—a movement of a child from one carer to another. The advisers I have with me are unaware of the scenario that the member posed occurring.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: From one carer to another, have there been any instances of violence towards a child in care, being moved from one carer to another? Is the department aware of that occurring or aware of any abuse at all?

Mr P. PAPALIA: There are 5 133 children in care. They do move. There is a lot of complexity around the reason for placements breaking down. I am not aware of any. If the member is talking about a specific instance, we might be able to confirm whether that has happened. At the moment, I am advised that people are not aware of those particular instances. We would have to investigate. It is one of those questions to which I would ask the member to put on notice and define it, so ask, "In the last 12 months, did this scenario occur?" If the member puts it on notice, the minister can ask the agency to investigate but it is not a question that I can answer right now and I do not want to ask my advisers to take it as a supplementary.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to the explanation of significant movements on page 532 of budget paper No 2, underneath "Explanation of Significant Movements". I refer to item 6, "Care Arrangements and Support Services for Children in the CEO's Care", paragraph (d) under the table and note 3 under "Explanation of Significant Movements". Why have the budgeted days of secure care arrangements been projected to reduce, given that the accompanying note 3 references a growing number of young people with increasingly complex needs? Why is the government budgeting to secure fewer people in secure care when it also predicts that more young people will have increasingly complex needs? How does that add up?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I think note 3 that the member asked about in relation to the secure care arrangement may conflate a couple of things. All the kids are complex—increasingly, they are more complex—but the secure care arrangements are applied to a very specific cohort. They are the really challenging and difficult cases—those who end up in the Kath French Secure Care Centre, which is for a range of really challenging behaviours; they are not in someone’s foster care home. It is not a large number of children. I think note 3 refers to everybody. All the children are increasingly complex. We would assume and hope that the number of children who are subject to the secure care arrangement will not grow and it will diminish.

Ms L. METTAM: Would the minister not also hope that the number of children with increasingly complex needs reduces as well?

[1.40 pm]

Mr P. PAPALIA: I do not get the member’s question.

Ms L. METTAM: I will put it another way. Why does the minister think that the number of —

Mr P. PAPALIA: There are two different things. The member is conflating a couple of types of child, which is what I was suggesting but I may not have made it entirely clear. Note 3 refers to exceptionally complex children or complex cases. Secure care is a different type of service, and that is what I was trying to convey. That is for the really challenging cases—the small cohort of children who have to go into that other centre.

Ms L. METTAM: I will separate the two items and just ask what consideration or modelling is going into the assumption that we will see a reduction in the number of secure care arrangements? Why do you think that will —

Mr P. PAPALIA: Sorry, member, I was just getting a bit of a briefing. Could the member ask that question again?

Ms L. METTAM: Yes. Minister, I am just asking, and separately: why is the department or the minister anticipating that we will see this reduction in the number of days of secure care arrangements going forward?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Secure care as opposed to exceptional? Thanks, member. I am advised that that secure care complex, the Kath French Secure Care Centre, was undergoing renovation and enhancement. As a consequence of that work, it has greater capacity for lower costs, so we will be able to accommodate more children for a smaller amount of money.

Ms L. METTAM: To get some clarification: what will be the trend of people or individuals going forward? The minister is talking about the cost of delivering this service. It is obviously going to be reduced, but what is the trend in terms of the number of individuals we anticipate will require secure care arrangements, and what are the numbers behind those budget figures?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I do not know about projections forward, but it has the capacity to accommodate more than it did in the past for the same, or lower, outlay. That aside, there has been a reduction, so we can, look backwards and see what has happened in recent times. There was a 3.9 per cent reduction in the total number of children in care overall from 30 June last year until 30 April this year, and that is as a consequence of a lot of different efforts across a whole range of classifications of children; it is not just the secure care. We hope that that trend can be continued. That is overall numbers, but for secure care, it might just be a reflection. If the overall number of children that are getting to the point of requiring care is on a downward trend, that might be reflected in the others. I do not think we are able to tell the member whether there is a trend in secure care demand. It is a very small number, so a couple at any one time.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I thank the minister. I refer to page 519 and the line heading, “Amount Authorised by Other Statutes—Salaries and Allowances Act 1975”. I refer to the first page of division 35, “Communities”, and the line on page 519, “Amount Authorised by Other Statutes—Salaries and Allowances Act 1975”. Under that is the line, “Total appropriations provided to deliver services”. Will the minister provide to me the staffing levels—that is, the FTEs—for Geraldton, Carnarvon and Meekatharra, and also the Kimberley region, being Kununurra, Fitzroy Crossing, Halls Creek, Derby, and Broome? I refer to the staffing levels at the child protection.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Does the member not care about Wyndham? Yes. I will see. Bidyadanga?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Well, they would travel from Broome, I would imagine.

Mr P. PAPALIA: There is actually someone from the Department of Communities in Bidyadanga. I have met her.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: While the minister is doing that, if they are full-time FTEs for those towns, what is earmarked for them and what is actually there?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Sorry?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: How many FTEs have been assigned to those towns and how many are actually there, working in town?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Yes. The member is adding a whole lot of questions to the question, which is okay. I think it might be an on-notice question to get all the details for him. That is reasonable. I do not want to commit them to doing it inside. Does the member want all those other aspects?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I want to know how many staff are actually—

Mr P. PAPALIA: That is, the FTE. That was the member's first question.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Yes.

Mr P. PAPALIA: What else did the member want?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Are those positions filled?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Are they filled? Okay.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Does the minister not have that? That is unbelievable. The minister seriously does not have a breakdown of his own FTEs?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Can the member stop talking for a minute?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: It is a simple thing.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Okay. Chair, I am happy to take as a supplementary—

The CHAIR: Could you state exactly what you are going to offer as supplementary?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Yes. I knew you would say that. The FTE from the Department of Communities in the towns of Carnarvon, Geraldton, Meekatharra, Kununurra, Halls Creek, Derby, Fitzroy Crossing, Broome and Wyndham. No, that is Kununurra.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: And, say, Newman. I do not know if it is Karratha or —

Mr P. PAPALIA: The member is adding to it now? Why not? Which ones, Newman?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Karratha and Port Hedland.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Karratha and —

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Port Hedland and Newman.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Port Hedland and South Hedland, or either one?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: It will be under one.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Okay.

[*Supplementary Information No B13.*]

[1.50 pm]

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to page 520, the heading “Ongoing Initiatives”, and the line, “Child Protection—Delivery of Services”. There seems to be a significant variation between each year in terms of the funding allocation, including \$32 million in the out years of 2025–26, and \$5.7 million for 2022–23. Can The minister provide some explanation about that and why there is so much variation in those figures?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I will try to get this right, but it is because of the cost and demand model that has been implemented the increase in costs as a result of shifting to the cost and demand model. The change in the use of the model is felt in 2025–26. It is like an accounting practise that has resulted in the change, or the modelling has resulted in the change. I will read it out, because I will probably mess it up. The increase in the cost and demand model in 2025–26 is mostly due to 2025–26 being the near out year. As the new out year has not previously factored in any previous projections on either cost growth or demand growth forecast in 2025–26, the out years in the spending changes from 2021–22 to 2024–25 show an adjustment from what was previously approved in prior budget processes, while 2025–26 shows the full population on the prior year's base, plus adjustments to that forecast. Got that?

Ms L. METTAM: What does that actually mean?

Mr P. PAPALIA: It is a different model and then it comes into effect, essentially, by that year.

Ms L. METTAM: Is this part of the machinery-of-government changes?

Mr P. PAPALIA: No, it has nothing to do with that. It has been in effect since 2008–09.

Ms L. METTAM: Is the funding that is set aside in 2025–26 as an out year there because the government anticipates spending that on delivery of child protection services?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Member, it is not a conspiracy. There is nothing sneaky or anything like that. It is the last 2021–22 budget process. It is the projections from the cost and demand model. The cost and demand model expires in 2024–25, and they have applied the model again with all these other drivers like the consumer price index, population growth, and the demand growth of the number of children in care. None of those things were accommodated in the last model for 2025–26, and now they suddenly come on at 2025–26. The out year projections may not be realised. They are recalculated and reprojected each year and it may change. It will definitely change before then, but it is more like a budget modelling process, not a reflection of the number of kids, necessarily.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I refer again to page 519 and “Total Appropriations”, where there is a \$2 billion actual.

Mr P. PAPALIA: It is more than that. It is bigger than the police budget.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: With regard to the defamation settlement between the Minister for Community Services and Dr Tracy Westerman—the \$13 000 settlement by taxpayers—has it come out of that budget, the total appropriations of the Department of Communities?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I have no idea and I do not think that is an appropriate line to reflect that question.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: It is a total budget. Has it come out of the budget of the Department of Communities, yes or no?

Mr P. PAPALIA: At a guess I would say things of that nature are not accommodated in this agency’s budget. They would be some sort of whole-of-government type activity under maybe the Department of the Premier and Cabinet or the Department of Justice.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: It is fair question to ask if it has come out of the budget, that is all. I just wanted to see if it had come out of the Department of Communities.

Mr P. PAPALIA: That would not normally be the practice, and in my experience that would not be where the funding is drawn from.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: What support did the Department of Communities give to the defamation case against the Minister for Community Services? Were there any expenses associated with staff or resources?

Mr P. PAPALIA: As I said, the Department of Communities is the agency. This is the budget for the Department of Communities. The member is talking about something that is completely outside the realms of this particular division.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: There is a cost involved with the Department of Communities, whether the director general or anyone else provided assistance in the defamation case against the Minister for Community Services.

Mr P. PAPALIA: This strikes me as being one of those questions that would far more appropriately be put in the chamber during question time, and the member gets an opportunity to do so all the time during question time. He does not ask many questions about this particular portfolio, but he could put that question next time we sit. It is not about Department of Communities agency activity in respect of the budget.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I am asking a budget question. Has the Department of Communities used any of its budget—

Mr P. PAPALIA: The member is struggling to make an association.

[2.00 pm]

The CHAIR: Member for North West Central, I think the minister has answered. Let us move on.

Mr P. PAPALIA: That is right. It is not in this budget. If the member wants to ask that question, should ask it in Parliament, as he gets an opportunity to do every time we sit.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I refer to page 531 of budget paper No 2, volume 2, under the heading, “Preventing and Responding to Family and Domestic Violence”. Is there an allocation in the total cost of service to support women or family members who may have needed to call an ambulance as a result of domestic violence and who are then left with that debt? That is one of the issues that has been raised by the sector and by individuals.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Essentially, the answer is yes. There are a number of services funded by the agency, like refuges, but also emergency relief-type services that have flexible budgets that enable them to cover the cost of ambulances in the event that someone is compelled to use an ambulance and then receives a bill.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I assume that is on an ad hoc basis.

Mr P. PAPALIA: It is a very flexible, accommodating budget process, so the services that deliver relief to people who are victims of FDV are very flexible. The government agencies that they will encounter in seeking assistance are the ones that will be able to cover the cost.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Is it possible to provide me with information or detail on how many times the department has done that, and what has been allocated within the budget for that? What is the process that they have to go through?

Mr P. PAPALIA: It would actually be imposing an impost on not just the agency but also the service providers to deliver some sort of account of how frequently that has occurred. They currently are funded to do emergency relief; different agencies provide that. Refuges provide that service. They are not rigidly constrained in how they use those funds, so they are able to fund this. Is the member worried about how many people are receiving a bill?

Ms M.J. DAVIES: It is absolutely an issue. I can provide some context, given that the minister is not the relevant minister. There have been concerns raised by community groups. In fact, one of the groups that the minister referred to in the south west has an entire FTE dedicated to following up bad debts from women who have been forced to call an ambulance and have then been left with a bill. Instead of being able to provide proactive financial counselling and support, they have actually got someone working full-time on trying to recover debts. St John

Ambulance, I know, has been raising with the government for some time being able to write off debts that they hold within their organisation because it is not in their best interest to be calling women who have had to call for an ambulance in a period of great distress. Some individuals—there has been a number of them in the media—whom one would regard as survivors have said that they have simply stopped calling the ambulance until they have escaped domestic violence and moved themselves into a safer situation, because when they have had to do it multiple times, they know they cannot afford it. It is a real issue. Instead of the ad hoc nature that seems to exist in this space, it seems to me that there is a policy gap that needs funding within that service to ensure that people are aware that if they call an ambulance in a situation like that, they are not going to be left with a bill.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I am informed that the minister's response to that proposition is that it is part of a broader discussion around ambulance services and health challenges—because it is part of health, in a lot of ways—and how they might be addressed. I make the observation that despite the scenarios the member has postulated, the agencies that provide services to the, mostly, women who are in these situations, fleeing domestic violence and compelled to call for an ambulance, the people that then provide them with further support, regardless of whether they are going to get a bill in the mail, are the relief services, and they have funding. They have flexibility of funding to deliver those services. It is not like an ad hoc thing; it is a natural practice and a natural expectation of those agencies, as indicated by the department, because there is flexibility around their funding to enable them. With regard to the particular organisation the member referred to that has dedicated an FTE, is it actually addressing the bill on behalf of the victim of FDV, or what is it doing?

Ms M.J. DAVIES: That is my understanding; it tries to get the debt forgiven, or it tries to follow up post the event.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Is it a service delivery agency?

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Yes, it is. Sorry, I do not have the name at my fingertips; I had it last week in Parliament. It is one of the women's refuge and domestic violence services providers in the south west. I will find the name for the minister if I can get some time while somebody else asks a question.

Mr P. PAPALIA: That might be worth the member pursuing. If she has a specific question, I am sure she can put it to the minister with regard to that particular organisation.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I did try that last week.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I am sure the answer is on its way, then.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I was not filled with great confidence, minister.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I cannot give the member an answer right now.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I understand.

Mr P. PAPALIA: There is a degree of flexibility in the funding for agencies that provide emergency relief and that would normally, I expect, be the way people can avoid having to pay. They also get support in other ways. If it is a refuge or another emergency relief organisation, they will provide more than just dealing with an ambulance bill. They will be doing a lot more, I would hope, and that is kind of appropriate.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: It is the South West Women's Refuge, and the CEO is on record in the paper down there and in discussions with our office. The point of asking the question is it is clearly a policy area, and this is the department that deals at the coalface with individuals who are impacted by family and domestic violence. I would expect to see this as a priority for the department, so that if women find themselves in these situations, it is just one less thing they have to worry about. Nobody should get an ambulance bill that they have to follow up on when they find themselves in these circumstances, regardless of whether there is flexible funding within service providers. I just think it should be something that is resolved from a whole-of-government perspective, and I would that thought that this was the department to take the lead on making sure that happens.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Maybe, or it might be the Department of Health.

[2.10 pm]

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to page 531 and the heading, "Preventing and Responding to Family and Domestic Violence" under "Explanation of Significant Movements". I refer to footnote (a), which gives the number of cases. acknowledge that the minister and the department is anticipating a reduction in the number of cases in the coming year, and I would like an explanation of how that is calculated, appreciating that for 2021–22, the budgeted number of cases was 15 590 but the actual was 17 788. The level of demand was well and truly exceeded in the 2021–22 budget. Given what we are hearing across the board, how can the minister and the department actually expect or anticipate that the level of demand to go down, given that demand was well and truly exceeded last time? That is the demand for 2022–23, with a budget target of 17 750.

Mr P. PAPALIA: It is not significantly lower, member. That aside, so the —

Ms L. METTAM: I did not say it was significantly lower.

Mr P. PAPALIA: No.

Ms L. METTAM: I said that there was a significant increase.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Yes. Well, that was all over the world.

Ms L. METTAM: The actual is a lot more than what was budgeted.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Yes. During COVID, the number of family and domestic violence cases increased all over the world.

Ms L. METTAM: Yes, but COVID started in 2020 in WA.

Mr P. PAPALIA: That happened everywhere in the world; it is not something that happened only in Western Australia. It may diminish, but I do not think the number is significant in the budget. Regardless of that, the services will be funded. I am informed that there may have been a minor decrease due to the fact that one of the things we did in COVID recovery was increase funding for financial counselling to assist people, which may have averted some of the damaging environments that resulted in further FDV.

Ms L. METTAM: I appreciate that and I appreciate the challenges through the pandemic, but we are seeing demand continue.

Mr P. PAPALIA: The pandemic has not finished.

Ms L. METTAM: There is the additional challenge of a lack of housing, which plays into these issues. The real challenges of homelessness and lack of housing are resulting in women feeling that they have no options, or fewer options, as a result of very difficult circumstances. We are also hearing refugees talking about the fact that they have never been so under pressure. One south west refuge talked about having had to turn away 300 families over the last 12 months. What modelling is being undertaken to suggest that there will be a slight decline, given that we have seen such demands, despite WA reportedly being past our COVID peak? What makes the department think that our numbers will now plateau, given the other challenges of housing, and a sector that is continually being asked to do more with less?

Mr P. PAPALIA: No-one is being asked to do more with less. That is just a silly statement. There is more funding for this activity, for these services, than there ever has been in the history of the state.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Why does everything keep on going up, then?

Mr P. PAPALIA: The only jurisdiction that reduced its support was the previous federal government; it just lost office. Those sorts of statements are not based on fact and are pretty unhelpful. There was a peak in FDV as a result of COVID, but there was also an escalation in FDV witnesses. It is difficult to determine the drivers and isolate them, one from the other, and suggest that it might be housing pressures, COVID-related stress or whatever the other primary drivers might be. It is a bit difficult to isolate and refine and attribute growth or otherwise to any one particular driver.

Family and domestic violence is a priority of the McGowan government, and we have done more in creating a portfolio and focusing a lot of effort on it across all agencies. I can tell the member that, from a policing perspective, the culture with respect to FDV and the collaborative organisation response from police is light-years ahead of what it was when we took office; the focus has been unparalleled, certainly in the history of this state. The challenge of FDV is something that is replicated in every jurisdiction in this country, and everyone is suffering from housing shortages and rental unavailability and increasing costs in housing. That is something that every jurisdiction is confronting.

In response to the challenge, the state government has committed to establishing a two-year rapid rehousing pilot. This is specifically in response to the critical shortage of available and affordable rental properties, noting, of course, that Western Australia—Perth, in particular—is probably the most affordable capital city in the country. That aside, it is difficult for people. The pilot will assist eligible women, with or without children, to source and secure a tenancy in the private rental market so they can leave refuges and begin to rebuild their lives. We are extending the Safer Pathways program, which was established specifically to help Department of Communities clients sustain tenancies in situations in which family and domestic violence is or may be a primary cause of tenancy issues. That program helps women who are in public housing or waiting for a public housing allocation. We have also expanded the Safe at Home program, which provides intensive care, management, and outreach services; funding for home security upgrades; and victim and perpetrator intervention, so that wherever possible, women and children can remain safely in their own homes.

As I indicated earlier, safe housing is one of the responses that is required to address family and domestic violence. There are a lot of different drivers of that wicked problem. I have a list of things that were committed to in February 2021 as part of a \$60 million package of election commitments that is being delivered to tackle family and domestic violence. As this current financial year plays out, there has been an expansion of Safe at Home; rapid rehousing pilots; counselling programs for young people; training for first responders; expansion of Safer Pathways programs; development of a primary prevention framework; subsidised dental treatment; driving lessons for women who are exiting refuges; expansion of the Respectful Relations program in schools and sports clubs; and expansion of Pets in Crisis and KidsBark programs. Two additional one-stop hubs have been funded, and they are trying a Caring Dads program in the Peel region. We are also doing more reform measures. We are committed to law reform in this field of endeavour.

We just passed through the upper house amending legislation to the Firearms Act, an element of which is the creation of firearm prohibition orders, which can be focused on people who are FDV perpetrators. There is a whole range of law reform in this field that is being pursued by the government. We would like to be able to say that it all will result in a reduction in FDV and fewer incidents of that nature, but it is just a huge challenge, and it requires ongoing significant effort. I do not think one can question this minister, this agency or this government with respect to its efforts against FDV, having elevated it to a priority. We continue to focus on everything we can possibly do to try and reduce the incidents of FDV.

[2.20 pm]

Ms L. METTAM: I have a further question on this section of the budget—I have raised this with the minister before—about the funding cuts dedicated to the cost of service. I note, and it is acknowledged, that it is mainly a result of the cessation of commonwealth funding for time-limited initiatives. The funding going forward for 2022–23 is \$73.6 million, which is less than the actual funding dedicated in the previous financial year in terms of the cost of service.

Mr P. PAPALIA: What is the question?

Ms L. METTAM: The question is: how will the government be able to address this shortfall, given that demand is anticipated to be about the same, given that although there has been the cessation of commonwealth funding time and initiatives, and given we are seeing refugees like the one in the south west turn away 300 families over a 12-month period? Why is the government unable to ensure that the funding at least is at the same level?

Mr P. PAPALIA: The member has asked, and received an answer to, this question a number of times in Parliament. There are movements as a consequence of commonwealth-funded programs for FDV responses ending. That is just something that happens when the federal government funds its own programs for a short period of time, unlike the state government. When a grant ends, the federal government's funding for that activity ends. It is not state government budgeting that has resulted in the reduction in that line item.

Ms L. METTAM: Was the commonwealth funding that ceased related to COVID? My understanding is that it was just a two-year funding commitment.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Yes. One could ask why the federal government only funded it for a limited number of years? It chose to do that. It did it under the guise of a social recovery plan. I think it was under COVID-related funding, which ended. What I have just said with regard to COVID funding may not be correct but, effectively, it chose to fund it only for that period of time. When it ends, it is like our budget. If we do not budget something in the subsequent year, then that funding ends, but the state government funding has not been reduced. The federal government funding has ended because it was a time-limited, or time-specific, program, and it chose to do it for that length of time and it ended.

Ms L. METTAM: But it does represent a reduction in funds dedicated to that area.

Mr P. PAPALIA: By the federal government, yes. I agree with the member that the Morrison government failed pretty dismally in this regard and chose to only fund those programs that it felt were necessary. It perhaps should have funded them for longer.

Ms L. METTAM: My understanding is that it was COVID-related funding. Given the challenges that we are seeing and the demand, the question is: what will the McGowan government do to ensure that we see at least the same level of funding, given that demand is at least at the same level as last year and is, in fact, growing with so many refugees and other agencies or support services saying that they are doing more with less?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Funding from the McGowan government for family and domestic violence services has been extended for five years in terms of agreements or contracts. That is good practice and has resulted in certainty of funding and service delivery. That is what the state government has done. The Morrison government did not do that and that is why its funding ended. It only gave funding for a finite period of time, which was pretty short. It clearly did not give it much of a priority. I cannot apologise for the Morrison government. We are the state government and the practice of giving five-year contracts is really good one. The longer we can engage agencies and give certainty around their staffing and planning, the better. I just reiterate that our state government provided an additional \$63.9 million over the forward estimates to support the community sector as part of the 2022–23 budget process. We have provided \$10.3 million for homelessness over two years and \$18 million for family and domestic violence to facilitate five-year contract extensions. That is a really serious commitment to ensure that those service providers have certainty, and maybe it is a good model for federal governments to adopt.

Ms L. METTAM: In acknowledging the five-year contracts for refugees and other services, I understand that a number of those contracts were recently renewed. The sector is concerned that in some instances, the level of funding dedicated to those five-year contracts has not changed since 2014 and that the funding dedicated does not acknowledge increased utility costs or increased demand. This has led to a situation in which refugees have had to effectively cut services because they cannot keep operating at that same level. Why was increased demand not built into those renewed contracts?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Which refuges have cut services?

Ms L. METTAM: South West Refuge is one example.

Mr P. PAPALIA: What service?

Ms L. METTAM: It has had to turn away two to three hundred families as a result of operating on the same contract or at the same funding level that it has had for some time. We also heard from the Centre for Women's Safety and Wellbeing that has raised real concerns. The Western Australian Council of Social Service made a statement about the budget and raised concerns about refuges having to operate with less as a result of these contracts not having the increased demand worked into them.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Is the member suggesting that there is a greater demand than that which can be met with their budget?

Ms L. METTAM: Yes, as a result of demand they have had to cut services. They have not been able to operate the full suite of services because they can only deal with the basics.

[2.30 pm]

Mr P. PAPALIA: I am informed that the five-year contracts have been signed and extended as a way of giving certainty to those service providers. The agencies are currently engaged in a financial modelling process to determine whether baseline funding is adequate. During that process, those concerns about whether funding has kept pace with costs will be potentially addressed. I am informed that some of the agreements are more contemporary than others and have probably accommodated any elevation in costs. The other agreements may be addressed as part of that process. Undeniably, the sector has responded pretty favourably through voting with its feet with 135 of the 137 services signing up to that agreement.

Ms L. METTAM: The minister said that 135 of the 137 services have signed up to the agreement. What choice did they have? These services are desperate. I appreciate that some contracts are only a few years old and others are significantly older than that. Some contracts have been operating under the same level of funding for the last 10 years. What option did they have but to sign these contracts? When will we see an uplift in the funding?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Our government has implemented an enhanced or improved indexation formula and the five-year component of the agreement gives far greater certainty and support than has ever been offered. The current process of financial modelling will look to address any inadequacies. Other than the speech, it is an interesting observation to note that five of the last 10 years, during which the funding did not change, was under the member's government. I will just reflect on the fact that more than ever before, this government has placed a greater priority on and given greater funding or resourcing to elevating and addressing the challenge of FDV. It is an ongoing process that involves a lot of effort by a lot of other agencies that are not specifically labelled "FDV response" in the Department of Communities. They will all potentially contribute to a reduction in FDV and better outcomes.

My agency has put in a significant effort—far in excess of what was happening when we took office—that focuses on the delivery of better FDV intervention and response from just that one agency. I am sure it is true in other ones where it is a cross-government effort driven by the philosophy that we stated when we took office—that this would be a priority. We see it as one of the biggest challenges that government confronts.

Ms L. METTAM: Can I get an indication of when we are likely to see these services get that uplift, which I understand is to be part of the reform process? I heard that it might be as soon as next year. Can the minister provide some clarification on that?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Yes. The financial modelling process is underway, then that will inform the normal government process for budgeting. I cannot give the member a specific time frame.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I have a different question. I refer to page 149 in budget paper No 3 and "Investment in Child Protection Services". Is the minister able to advise where across the state those additional child protection workers will be allocated and what work is being done to recruit into those positions?

Mr P. PAPALIA: At the moment they are in the process of recruiting to the target indicated on that page and they are also working to determine where they will go. It will be dependent upon me and upon vacancies, but they have not resolved specifically where they will go yet.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Some areas must have greater need than others because a number has been reached. Those additional 36 have been funded across the budget. Can the minister provide any indication on where in the state is the greatest area of need?

Mr P. PAPALIA: We could predict that many will go regional because that is where some of the greatest need is for additional child protection workers. I think that since July 2020, there has been—the director general is getting the number—in excess of 100 additional workers. That is in advance of these workers or these additional numbers. Since July 2020, more than 116 full-time caseworker positions have been created, and since 30 June 2017, the child protection caseworker FTE has been increased by 31 per cent, which equates to 218.6 FTE. That is all in advance of these—okay, the 36 are in the top 116, sorry. I have not got an answer on where those workers will specifically go, but it will obviously be driven by need and vacancy. They will go where the need is most acute.

[2.40 pm]

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Just to clarify that, is the \$36 million part of the funding that has already been announced or is it new money?

Mr P. PAPALIA: It is new money. The paragraph under “Investment in Child Protection Services” states that “This Budget invests an additional \$114 million” and then the \$36.7 million is part of that overall increase.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Yes. I understand that, but I am trying to understand where these 36 additional workers will go. How far along are we in terms of recruitment?

Mr P. PAPALIA: They are actively recruiting. Every effort is being made to attract and enable greater numbers to be recruited into the task, but they have to select the right people as well. I cannot tell the member the number.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Have any been recruited, minister?

Mr P. PAPALIA: As part of not this number, but of the effort prior to this time for this significant growth in numbers of FTE that are funded, there was a statewide recruitment campaign in June 2021 to address vacancies. Ongoing recruiting campaigns have focused on child protection and senior child protection workers. Last year’s initial campaign resulted in 227 applications with 179 applicants interviewed and 104 individuals deemed successful. Those applicants were advised of the outcome from late September last year.

A further child protection worker pool that focused on the recruitment of university graduates has just been completed. Communities incorporated assessment centres to build a degree of flexibility in the process and to allow graduates to demonstrate skills to the panel rather than provide examples of demonstrated experience against the essential criteria. The process of recruiting university graduates using the new model has yielded 237 applicants and 136 interviews with 90 applicants found to be suitable. This is additional to the 104 from the other process.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: The figure of 90 is a lot more than 36. I do not understand.

Mr P. PAPALIA: This is from last year. The 36 is an additional target now —

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Okay; this is not the current figure.

Mr P. PAPALIA: — because we are going to have to recruit to the funding. They are going to be confronted with the same challenge that everyone in the country has with respect to skilled workers. It is good that they are trying different models of potentially accessing demographics within our own population that we might not have encountered or attracted in the past. That is a good thing. But as with so many other fields of endeavour, this one would benefit from perhaps some additional effort by federal government to assist and attract skilled workers via some the things that have been thrown around in terms of incentives that are not within our capacity to offer. We cannot offer people a rapid passage to citizenship and all that sort of thing. We are doing everything we can to attract people to the state and from within the state, including those graduating from the education system, and into this field because it is really important.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: The minister has indicated that a decision has not been made about where these child protection workers will be deployed. Is there a shortage in my electorate of the wheatbelt? Is it likely that additional child protection workers will be allocated to the wheatbelt?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I am informed that in the wheatbelt in its entirety there are six FTE vacancies.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to page 527 and the outcomes and key effectiveness indicators. Underneath “Outcome: Families and individuals experience FDV, homelessness or other crises are assisted to build their capabilities and be safe” there are three line items, but I refer to “Percentage of homelessness clients with some or goals achieved at the completion —

Mr P. PAPALIA: That one is not ours. That comes under the Minister for Housing. The other two underneath it are ours.

Ms L. METTAM: Does the percentage of clients who received an earlier intervention come under the minister’s portfolio?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Yes.

Ms L. METTAM: What I am really after is a breakdown of the number of women and families seeking refuge at the state refuges over the last 12 months, or in the last financial year. What will the anticipated numbers be going forward? If the minister provides a breakdown of refuges, that would be valuable as well.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Can the member repeat the question again with regard to what she is actually after, please?

Ms L. METTAM: Yes. I am after an indication of the number of women and families or individuals accessing refuges across the state in response to family and domestic violence.

Mr P. PAPALIA: The total number of people who sought refuge in refuges over the last 12 months.

Ms L. METTAM: Yes, over the last 12 months, and what the predicted number may be going forward. I also asked for a breakdown of refuges.

[2.50 pm]

Mr P. PAPALIA: The refuge one might be hard, but I ask that the member put that question on notice—I do not want them spending time in the next week trying to get that. With the total number of FDV clients, this is who was assessed and received a response as a result of an FDV incident. The estimated actual number of FDV clients in 2021–22 is 13 396. We are still currently within that budget. The estimated actual is what was budgeted for. In the previous year, the actual number in 2020–21 was 13 586. That was the total number as opposed to those who did not require an FDV-related response within 12 months, which is the number in this table.

Ms L. METTAM: Just to clarify, are these individuals who are staying at refuges? Is this for refuge stays, not support?

Mr P. PAPALIA: No. I will see if we can get a definition of what that is. That table does not relate purely to refuges. It is the number of people who sought any service with respect to FDV.

Ms L. METTAM: I have one further question.

The CHAIR: Can I offer a 10-minute recess and we will return at 3.00 pm, unless you want to finish you point.

Ms L. METTAM: No, I will go back to it if that is okay.

Meeting suspended from 2.52 to 3.00 pm

The CHAIR: We are ready to go. Thank you, member for Vasse.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to that line item that relates to families and individuals experiencing family and domestic violence. Can we get, by way of supplementary information, an indication of the number of individuals seeking refuge at the refuges across the state over the last three years? I am also hoping for an indication on what the average length of stay was.

Mr P. PAPALIA: That information about refuges that the member is after is not readily available. The agency does not run refuges, so the member is talking about a great deal of effort to seek out from those refuge operators and other service providers, I imagine, information that they may have to hand. In which case, that will take time. As I indicated earlier, I am loath to divert the agency in the near-term from its priority and very important task. I would ask that the member put the question on notice rather than have us provide it as supplementary information. Supplementary information has a very short time frame. As an explanation for anyone who might be listening—it is unlikely, but, yes, possible—or reading this at a later time, supplementary questions have a very short time frame. I think that I have offered a couple of supplementaries—certainly I did yesterday. But with this sort of task, it is more appropriate that the question be put on notice, please.

Ms L. METTAM: I have a question that may relate to this line item. I can look for it but I know that minister referred to it earlier. Can the minister tell us about the rapid rehousing project trial that is being undertaken and where will that be rolled out? I have heard some feedback regarding the rapid rehousing project in Bunbury. If the minister can provide some clarification on how that is progressing as well, that would be of great value.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I think that I might have already referred to this.

Ms L. METTAM: Yes, the minister touched on it.

Mr P. PAPALIA: In the government's *Path to safety: Western Australia's strategy to reduce family and domestic violence 2020–2030* we acknowledge the important role of housing and homelessness services in response to family and domestic violence. We have committed to establishing a two-year rapid rehousing pilot in response to critical shortages of available and affordable rental properties. That pilot will assist eligible women, with or without children, to source and secure a tenancy in the private rental market so that they can leave refuges and begin to rebuild their lives. I am just trying to see if I can get the member a little bit more information. I assume that the member wants to know where and how. The rapid rehousing pilot has two elements to it: one is focused on Aboriginal women and the other one is the rest of the population. A trial is about to go out to tender shortly and it will focus on delivering for 40 women across both cohorts—so 20 each across metro; this is for a pilot.

Ms L. METTAM: How does the program work? I heard some feedback that the trialling in Bunbury has been challenged by lack of housing stock. Can the minister give me some feedback on that and whether that is the case?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Yes. That is a different program, member. The one that the member referred to in Bunbury is not this. That is under the Minister for Housing. It has a homelessness focus and potentially a different cohort. This is the FDV-focused program that will establish a response to women, with or without children, who are having trouble securing tenancy to help them get out of refuges. The one in Bunbury, as I understand it, is under a different department and it focuses on a different cohort. I assume that it is for people who are rough sleepers—anyway, that is not this program. This is a new pilot with a new focus.

Ms L. METTAM: It begins this year and it runs for the next two years and is just —

Mr P. PAPALIA: The earlier tender advice is on Tenders WA. The program will be commissioned by the end of the year. It is a two-year pilot so I assume that it takes two years, but, yes, it will start by the end of the year.

Ms L. METTAM: I have another question. I refer to page 519, spending changes and the “Enhanced FDV Response Team”. It makes a reference to a centralised hub. Where will the centralised hub be based and how many FTE will make up the enhanced response team?

[3.10 pm]

Mr P. PAPALIA: Where the central control and support team might be located—we were actually talking about this earlier today—has not yet been resolved. From my portfolio perspective, I would be encouraging the agency to consider co-locating it with the State Operations Command Centre, or some version of that sort of an arrangement. The Western Australia Police Force has a State Operation Command Centre that has a 24/7 direct link to all the police districts. Increasingly, as we invest really heavily and move rapidly towards integrating technology with policing, it will result in things such as the provision of real-time intelligence to people on the ground, including teams that might be co-located with police such as a commission or a community staff member, or when encountering a situation that might involve a Communities response. As the first responder, we are increasingly able to provide them with direct communications, direct access to a database and intelligence support from specialists. In the event that these guys are stood up as a central authority or source of advice and assistance, it might be really helpful if they can communicate everywhere—and we are talking about everywhere. There are pilot trials running at the moment with satellite comms on police vehicles in the remote areas so that people are given, as close as possible, the same sort of support as they would get in the metro.

The location has not yet been decided, but I will encourage them to do that. It may not work or it may not be appropriate, but whatever it determined, the concept is pretty much the same sort of thing that we have in police operations in that some expertise is provided as often as it can be done in the hours that it can be done, but from a central location that gives everybody the support rather than expecting a specialist to arrive at every specific incident. Our FDV co-response teams cannot be everywhere. The policing model is to build a pool of people who are given additional training and capacity who then operate with the specialists from Communities and other agencies.

If this is the model in which the resource is centralised and greater support is provided everywhere, that is a change to the operating model to try and get greater and more effective coverage. The numbers to achieve that are funded. Where they will be located has not yet been determined. The number of additional FTEs are five from Communities and two from Justice. The police are doing it using its current resources. The historical model for the FDV response team was a Communities person with a couple of police officers driving around their vehicle. Increasingly in each district we have doubled the funding in police, but instead of getting twice as many police on that team, they will get a larger pool of police in each district so that they can rotate through or take the skillset that they have acquired during that training to their normal general duties response and provide greater support to an FDV response.

Ms L. METTAM: Thank you, minister, for that response. Would forensic services be included as part of the centralised hub? I imagine that it would be if it were co-located where the minister suggested.

Mr P. PAPALIA: You mean police forensics?

Ms L. METTAM: Sorry, just forensic services. In terms of the principle of having a one-stop hub, are any considerations made in that regard?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I think we might be mixing a couple of things up. The FDV response model is in every police district. Communities people are generally co-located with police and they are not normally primary responders. They do not get to every priority callout, but they are effectively an additional specialty with special knowledge. They do not respond to every single FDV callout because that is far in excess of the numbers that they could respond to, but there is a specialist Communities person in each of the districts. We are doubling the funding this year and that will increase the numbers, but the model that police use to provide operational support is changing—that does not really matter.

The member was talking about a hub that is like a one-stop place for victims of family and domestic violence. That is a pilot and that has a physical location. I think there is one in Midland at the moment. In February 2021, the government committed to an additional \$60 million as part of our response. That included \$17.8 million for two new one-stop family and domestic violence hubs and in Armadale and the Kimberley, and that builds on the other ones in Mirrabooka and Kalgoorlie, which were launched in 2020. They have been successful so we are replicating that response, but that is a different thing. It is a one-stop hub where someone from an FDV situation can seek assistance and then be potentially referred to all those other supports and assistance that can be provided. But the additional team that we are talking about in that central location yet to be determined is more like an operational response when an urgent matter is brought to the attention of police, and the FDV response goes to that site. They can seek advice and support from this central team, and we do not yet know where that will be, but I would encourage them to put it in the SOCC.

There are two different things. There are the hubs, which I would imagine are where FDV victims would seek assistance. They are a shopfront with a soft entry designed to be less intimidating and able to be accessed by people without some of the hurdles that they might have to overcome in other, more formal settings. They can then be directed or assisted with a range of other agencies or supports. The central team is more for the operational response.

We have an operational response out there, often co-located with police, in all the police districts. When there is a callout or an overnight report of an FDV-related incident, these guys will prioritise it, go there, intervene and provide support to people in the home or the community. It is like a central team with additional skills and knowledge to advise people on the ground.

[3.20 pm]

Ms L. METTAM: Thank you. I have a new question. I refer to page 146 of budget paper No 3, “Major spending changes since the 2021–22 mid-year review”. Underneath “Other Spending” is “Investment in Child Protection Services”. I note the provision of \$800 000 to appoint a chief practitioner for child protection within the department. What is the breakdown of the \$800 000 and how many FTE does it support?

Mr P. PAPALIA: That is the salary for four years for a specified calling level 7 position, and apparently it was advertised recently.

Ms L. METTAM: Can I confirm that the \$800 000 is only the salary for four years? What will be the length of the contract for the practitioner; will it be a four-year contract as well?

Mr P. PAPALIA: No, it is a five-year contract but the budget estimates go for four years.

Ms L. METTAM: What is the purpose of this appointment? What will be the role of this additional person within the department for child protection?

Mr P. PAPALIA: That person will be the most senior child protection practitioner. They will lead research and reform in the field of child protection and provide guidance with respect to child protection matters.

Ms L. METTAM: Will they be undertaking the role like a director general or how would their role be different?

Mr P. PAPALIA: The member is talking about a child protection specialist who can provide guidance in their field of endeavour—a specialist field of child protection. A director general is an agency head and may or may not have specialist knowledge in that particular field; they seek advice from specialists. This is one of the people who they would be seeking advice from particularly with respect to child protection.

Ms L. METTAM: I note that the minister stated that the position is being advertised at the moment. I would like an understanding of what the selection process will be and when we are likely to see an appointment made?

Mr P. PAPALIA: It will comply with the standard practice of the public sector. The position will be advertised. I imagine the department will receive applications. There will be a selection panel that will review the applications. It will probably shortlist those it will interview. It will then interview them and determine who it recommends for the role.

Ms L. METTAM: How was the decision made, or why was it determined, that the department requires such a role, such an investment in an individual—\$800 000 over four years? What was missing?

Mr P. PAPALIA: The Department of Child Protection wants specialist knowledge in the field of child protection, and I think any effort that we can make to enhance our capacity and our knowledge in that field is commendable. I am informed that there are similar positions in other jurisdictions, but it goes without saying that it would be a good thing to get someone who is a recognised professional or a specialist in that field.

Ms L. METTAM: What will be the reporting obligations of this individual? Will they be required to report to the director general?

Mr P. PAPALIA: It is not like a statutory body or anything; this person will be just part of the agency. They will report and operate within the normal practice of public sector operations. They will have an immediate superior and then they will report to the director general. He or she could seek their advice if it is appropriate in the same way they would with any other person of that level with specific specialist knowledge. It is not like a commissioner or anything in terms of being an independent body or anything of that nature.

Ms L. METTAM: Will this individual have specific staff dedicated to support their role?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Within the agency there are a number of senior social work positions around the state. There is a child death review team and a small number of staff in a policy team. These staff are already within the agency and so they would support this person with the conduct of their role.

[3.30 pm]

Ms L. METTAM: To confirm, this individual will be utilising existing staff within the agency?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Yes.

Ms L. METTAM: Where will they be based? Will this individual be based at the department of child protection?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Yes. They will be based in the Fremantle office, but they will travel extensively right around the state.

Ms L. METTAM: Touching on something I asked about before, how did this decision come about? Was there a specific recommendation for such a role made in a report or has the agency looked at what has worked in other states? Is there something that suggests the reasoning or rationale behind the investment in this specific role?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I am told it was recommended in the Iain Rennie review in 2019. As I said earlier, other jurisdictions have similar positions and it looks like it might be becoming best practice to have a position of that nature.

Ms L. METTAM: What is the skill set that the department is looking for for this unique role?

Mr P. PAPALIA: It is specified calling so applicants have to have social work or psychology experience, and it has to be extensive experience to meet the demands of the job description. It is a national search.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: The minister said that they will be based in Fremantle but will travel the state. I understand from an earlier answer that the \$800 000 is the salary component for the position. Will there be an additional budget to allow them to conduct their work, and will that be a specific line item in the budget?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Any costs for travel will just be absorbed by the normal budget.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: So the activities of the commissioner will be taken within the current budget; there will not be an additional —

Mr P. PAPALIA: It is not a commissioner.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Sorry; practitioner.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Practitioner, yes.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: The activities of the individual will be funded from within the current budget; there will not be additional funding on top of the salary?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Yes.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to page 519, the delivery of services in the area of women's interests and item 73.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Is it page 519?

Ms L. METTAM: It is page 519. That is the appropriations page.

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

Ms L. METTAM: It is the line item "Item 73 Net amount appropriated to deliver services". How much of the \$2.08 billion in the Department of Communities' budget will be appropriated for the work of Women's Interests?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I think that question has been asked. We undertook to provide it to the opposition.

Ms L. METTAM: Sorry; I must have been out of the chamber.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I asked for the question to be put on notice because it was kind of tricky.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I refer to page 523 of budget paper 2, volume 2. Sorry; I think I have the wrong reference in my chart. While I am trying to figure that out, I will ask a different question. I have the wrong number. I have a question. I just have the wrong number next to the question I want to ask.

The CHAIR: Throw the question out there and let us see if they know the answer!

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I am sure that the member for Mirrabooka has a question.

The CHAIR: Member for Mirrabooka, go ahead.

Ms M.J. HAMMAT: Minister, I refer to the significant issues impacting the agency listed at page 521 of budget paper No 2, volume 2, with reference to paragraph 3 under child protection and earlier intervention services. Can the minister outline to the committee what this government's record investment into our child protection system will mean for services and frontline operations?

Mr P. PAPALIA: We know that children in care are some of the most vulnerable in society and many experience physical and mental health issues, increased contact with justice system and poorer employment outcomes. The government is committed to getting better outcomes for vulnerable children and families in WA, and this budget is about safe children, safe families and safe communities. That is why we are investing over \$114 million to keep children safe as part of the 2022–23 budget. We are delivering the most comprehensive package on child protection the state has seen, and this investment shows that we are serious about keeping children safe and families together. Through the investment, we will spend \$19.3 million to deliver dozens more child protection workers to the front line to help keep vulnerable children safe. This investment will help address case load pressures in the districts by increasing the number of staff in frontline child protection roles.

Removing children is always a last resort and that is why we are investing \$23.9 million in early intervention initiatives so that children can remain safely at home with their families and thrive. The extra funding means we will reach more children and families and meet increased demand in Midland and Armadale. We are also trialling the program in Halls Creek and the south west. We know community safety is an issue in some parts of our state and it is a priority of this government to ensure that our communities are vibrant and safe places for everyone, and that is why we are spending \$11.1 million to expand our highly successful Target 120 program to nine more locations

around the state, steering at risk youth away from the criminal justice system. Target 120 has already seen encouraging results, showing participants contact with police has been reduced by 50 per cent. This funding will expand the program to Broome, Halls Creek, Fitzroy Crossing, Derby, Karratha, Newman, Carnarvon, Mandurah, and Ellenbrook.

Our investment in this budget highlights our ongoing commitment to the child protection system. Through our record investment in early intervention, we are keeping more families together. The rate of children coming into care has dropped for the first time in a quarter of a century. This is the largest reduction in children in care for the last two decades, and that is why in this budget we are investing so heavily in early intervention. It keeps families together and children safely at home. Significantly, the number of Aboriginal children in care has fallen for the first time in a quarter of a century. It is quite extraordinary. To support that, we have increased the number of child protection caseworkers by 31 per cent since 2017, as of the end of March. We are also focused on significant law reform across a range of portfolios to assist and enhance efforts in child safety.

[3.40 pm]

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to page 522, budget paper 2, volume 2 and paragraph 6 on the Target 120 program. At how many locations is this program currently being delivered and can the minister provide a list of those locations and advise which organisations are operating at each site?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Target 120 is currently delivered at 12 metropolitan and regional sites. They are Armadale, Broome, Bunbury, Mirrabooka, Kununurra, Midland, Geraldton, Kalgoorlie, Rockingham, Port Hedland, Albany and Northam. Target 120 has formal grant agreements with the following service providers: Kinship Connections in the metropolitan sites; Breakaway Aboriginal Corporation in Bunbury; Whitelion Youth Agency in Mirrabooka; Ebenezer Aboriginal Corporation in Mirrabooka; MG Corporation, the Miriuwung Gajerrong people, in Kununurra; Ngala Community Services in Geraldton; Midwest Employment and Economic Development Aboriginal Corporation in Geraldton; Gorenang Moortabiin Aboriginal Engagement and Community Development in Albany—sorry if I got that wrong—and the Julyardi Aboriginal Corporation in Port Hedland.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Did the minister mention Northam was one of those sites?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Yes, Northam is one of the sites. There are some locations where it is not external; it is coordinated. Target 120 involves the delivery of wraparound services to the family home of juveniles who are at risk or actually on the pathway to being more than that. In Northam, it is being delivered by an agency person.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Is that a new allocation? Is that a new site?

Mr P. PAPALIA: It was established last year so it is relatively new, but it is going pretty well. They are saying 67 per cent of Northam clients have not reoffended since joining. I do not know what the numbers are—the numbers are pretty small, but it is early days.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Would minister like to share that number?

Mr P. PAPALIA: It is three individuals but 11 family members. It is not just the child who gets the support or the intervention; it is the home environment. Sometimes when staff deliver Target 120 to one household, they might get a number of siblings. In this case, it is early days; they only just set it up last year.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I said earlier the overall results from Target 120, and some of them have been going for years.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: It is a great program.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Yes. It is difficult but I am optimistic that the greater rollout of that program will have a significant impact, particularly up in some of the areas that we were worried about—the Kimberley and the Pilbara.

Ms L. METTAM: Does the department record information such as the average length of time that participants are involved in this program? Is that information available? Further to that, if it is available, can we get a breakdown of that time for each of the locations?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I think that question should be put on notice. It is a good question to ask. We should be interrogating the outcomes, but I do not think it is something the advisers will have easy access to. Also, we have a number of programs that have been established and running for years and then we have other ones that have just been initiated, so it might take some effort to compile a report that will be useful. I think that would be a question to put on notice, please.

Ms L. METTAM: With respect to the program's expansion in the Kimberley and the Pilbara that was recently announced, are those programs currently operational or when does the minister anticipate —

Mr P. PAPALIA: It is just Kununurra. In Kununurra, MG started a year ago or maybe a bit longer. It was two years ago. That was the first one in the Kimberley. MG Corporation has been delivering it in Kununurra since 2019 February. That was initially community led and now it is being delivered by the Aboriginal community-controlled organisation. Lawford Benning and Jeremy, I think it is, are delivering the service now. They currently have currently 11 active clients, with 41 family members involved. The member can talk to them; they will tell her they are pretty enthusiastic about it. I think that is probably one of the sites that gave confidence to the agency that in the regions it could look

towards ACCOs to deliver this service in partnership. The agency is about to go out for an expressions of interest for service providers across those other towns that we referred to. We are empowering a local community to deliver things that it believes in and feels will make a difference. There is a whole lot of reasons for doing the program but, primarily, it is because it has been demonstrated to work in the metro area. That is not a bad reason to try it out. Kununurra now has had pretty good results. In Kununurra, they have 57 per cent of participants who have not reoffended since they started the program. It is a relatively small number in terms of the overall number of kids, but these are generally the ones who we can get the greatest return on if we can get a good outcome.

Ms L. METTAM: I am on page 539 of budget paper 2, volume 2, and refer to the “Details of Controlled Grants and Subsidies” table and the line item “Wooroloo Fire Recovery” under the heading “Community Services”. I note that there is no ongoing funding in this budget year. Could the minister perhaps outline how the agency made the decision to extract itself from a community that has experienced such a significant event, because I know community members in that area are still facing challenges? Can the minister just explain perhaps what that funding has been used to deliver?

[3.50 pm]

Mr P. PAPALIA: To allay the member’s concerns, that line refers to the specific grants that I think were from the federal agency—that is, the federal disaster response distribution of funds. That funding ends because the grants have a finite time. That is not the end of support to people, however. In this budget, there is \$5.4 million for the continuation of community and welfare outreach programs. That will not be specifically for Wooroloo, but for other emergency or disaster-type relief activity. There are funds available and the bushfire recovery centre at Gidgegannup is there to support people as a point of contact.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: On that same topic, I am just following up on something the minister said. So there is \$5.2 million somewhere in the budget for community outreach for communities that have been impacted by natural disasters. How much of that has been delivered to the Wooroloo community? How does that get dispersed?

Mr P. PAPALIA: The immediate response was specific to Wooroloo and there was a dedicated budget. Both state and federal funds were expended in support of people in the immediate aftermath and subsequent rebuild. This is just as an allocation to emergency welfare response across the state. I do not think there is a dedicated element of it for Wooroloo. There is a budget available. Is there some specific —

Ms M.J. DAVIES: No, no. The minister mentioned there was \$5 million. Is that a bucket of money allocated just in advance of and knowing that there might be an emergency in the next four years or is it money allocated to support communities that have been impacted?

Mr P. PAPALIA: No. I think this is just an ongoing allocation. In the event of an emergency of that scale, we would allocate far in excess of that amount of money.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I would have thought so, yes.

Mr P. PAPALIA: As the member has witnessed, in the event that one of those incidents occurs, it is a specific response that has to be addressed. I am informed that since 15 March 2020, the department has responded to more than 37 other emergency events. That includes not only Wooroloo, but also Seroja. We have seen a lot of other bushfires and floods, and supported the people who have been impacted by those unforeseen events. This is a budget allocation for that relief, but in the event of something more significant occurring, obviously the government will respond.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I have one further question. On the same page 539, just a bit further down, under election commitments, is the line item “Access to Regional Childcare.” This a significant issue in regional communities. Can minister explain to me what that allocation is for?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I actually got a brief on this this morning, but I am getting old. The commitment is to invest \$4.8 million over the out years into improving access to childcare in the regions to ensure that early childhood education care is sustainable, accessible and affordable. The funding will be used to address issues such as access to suitable facilities, attracting and retaining suitably qualified staff, and addressing issues such as population and workforce fluctuations. Funding for grants was approved until the 2025–26 financial year as part of last year’s budget. The funds consist of \$1 million capped grant funding, \$250 000 per annum to local governments in regional areas to fund retention and attraction packages for childcare workers, and \$4.03 million capped grant funding to identify key regions and assist in the establishment of sustainable models of regional childcare. Each council will apply to the grant scheme independently with their proposal for measures that will address the attraction and retention of staff and the provision of childcare. I think it is primarily for the attraction and retention of staff.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Is that royalties for regions funding?

Mr P. PAPALIA: No.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: No?

Mr P. PAPALIA: No.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Where has it come from, because it is under controlled grants and subsidies table?

Mr P. PAPALIA: It is just an appropriation, so it is consolidated.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: It is consolidated. Thank you.

Mr P. PAPALIA: We have to pass this division. I want to get the money.

The appropriation was recommended.

Meeting suspended from 3.58 pm to 4.30 pm

Division 3: Premier and Cabinet — Service 4, Aboriginal Affairs, \$20 877 000 —

Ms M.M. Quirk, Chair.

Dr A.D. Buti, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.

Ms E. Roper, Director General.

Ms F. Hunt, Deputy Director General, Aboriginal Engagement and Community Policy.

Ms T. Ninnette, Acting Director, Aboriginal Engagement.

Ms S. Meaghan, Acting Special Adviser, Native Title, Aboriginal Engagement.

Ms E. Fells, Acting Executive Director, State Services.

Mr A. Brender-A-Brandis, Chief Financial Officer.

Ms L. Chighine, Senior Policy Adviser.

[Witnesses introduced.]

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

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

I give the call to the member for North West Central.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Thank you, chair. I refer to page 68 and service 4, “Government Policy Management—Aboriginal Affairs”.

The CHAIR: So, that is the fourth dot point, member?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: It is the fourth dot point, yes.

Can the minister explain the reduction in cost of service from the budget to the actual figure? The 2021–22 budget figure is \$36.405 million and the 2021–22 estimated actual is \$22.583 million.

Dr A.D. BUTI: The decrease of \$13.8 million is mainly due to a reduction in expenditure carryover for various Aboriginal engagement projects including native title projects, the south west native title settlement, the Yamatji Nation Indigenous land use agreement implementation cost, the south west native title settlement implementation cost, the Aboriginal cultural centre planning project, and the Tjiwarl native title compensation claim and delays in the ongoing negotiations. They are the main matters.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: New question.

The CHAIR: Yes, you are the only one putting your hand up.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I refer to page 69 and explanation of significant movements. Paragraph 1 states —

The decrease in Total Cost of Service from the 2021–22 Budget to the 2022–23 Budget ... mainly relates to the cessation of funding with respect to short-term and discrete Aboriginal Engagement projects and grants.

The CHAIR: It is at the top of the page, minister.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Can the minister perhaps provide information on what these projects are in relation to and a list of the projects and the grants?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I think, member, the projects that I went through in my previous answer are basically the projects.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Are you able to provide the grants to those projects?

Dr A.D. BUTI: The amounts?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: The amounts of the grants, yes.

Dr A.D. BUTI: The amounts, yes. Basically, it is \$13.8 million in total. The native title projects are \$2.4 million. The south west native title settlement is \$1.6 million. The Yamatji Nation ILUA implementation cost is \$0.8 million. The south west native title settlement implementation costs are \$0.8 million. The Aboriginal cultural sector planning project is \$3.6 million. The Tjiwarl native title compensation claim is \$1 million. The royalties for regions carryover to 2022–23, which I mentioned previously, is \$1.6 million and there are Closing the Gap initiatives of \$1.3 million.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Thank you, minister. I refer to page —

The CHAIR: Is this is a different one on a different matter, member?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: This is a different question for which I am going to a different book. I refer to page 168 of budget paper No 3 and the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2021.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Okay, that is probably best left to the next section, if you do not mind, when we will have the Department of Planning, Land and Heritage.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Got you—okay.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to page 68 under the service “Government Policy Management—Aboriginal Affairs”. Can the minister explain why there has been such a reduction in the cost of service from the budget to the actual figure?

Dr A.D. BUTI: That is the same question.

Ms L. METTAM: Is it the same?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Yes.

Ms L. METTAM: Sorry.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I am more than happy for members to come to an end with their questions. They do not have to pad it out.

The CHAIR: We might move on to the next one.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Yes, that is where the questions are at.

The appropriation was recommended.

Division 43: Planning, Lands and Heritage — Service 4, Aboriginal Affairs, \$15 797 000 —

Ms M.M. Quirk, Chair.

Dr A.D. Buti, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.

Mr A. Kannis, Director General.

Mr V. Davies, Assistant Director General, Heritage and Property.

Mr D. Corr, Executive Director, Land Use Management.

Mr M. Darcey, Assistant Director General, Land Use Management.

Mr B. Harvey, Executive Director, Heritage Services.

Mr S. McLeod, Chief Finance Officer.

Mr S. Hayden, Senior Policy Adviser.

[Witnesses introduced.]

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

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

Member for North West Central.

[4.40 pm]

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Thank you, chair. I will get back to that question on budget paper 3, page 168. It is on “Other Spending” under Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2021, where it says —

To support the implementation of the *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2021*, additional expenditure of \$12.4 million over 2022–23 and 2023–24 has been allocated to undertake an extensive stakeholder engagement and co-design process to develop subsidiary legislation, establish the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Council, progress compliance activities and develop procedures to enable an efficient transition to the new legislative regime.

Can the minister please outline the specific breakdown of this \$12.4 million?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I will make some introductory comments. As the member would know, the process has commenced for the co-design of the regulations. It is a three-phase consultation process and it will take a year to complete. There will then be an education program on that. As a result of the co-design of regulations, the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Council and the LACHS—the local Aboriginal cultural heritage services—will need to be established. The budget allocation of the specific ones is really a work in progress. At the moment, the focus is on the co-design of the workshops, which are quite extensive throughout this state. That is where the focus is now, plus the drawing up and drafting of documents to be considered at those workshops. I do not think we have a breakdown because it is an ongoing process.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Is the co-design process on track for all three phases now that phase 1 has been completed?

Dr A.D. BUTI: It has indeed. There is a strict timetable that has been adhered to. The department is working very diligently on that. Yes, it is on track to finish in the prescribed time.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: How many submissions have been made to date and what is the breakdown of those submissions from the public workshops versus online submissions?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I think I have some information on the participants who have been to the various workshops. The closing date for the written submissions is 27 May, which is Friday. This Friday is the close of written submissions so we will not have the figures on the written submissions. On the workshops, the member can either have me read out who was at all the workshops, which would give him a breather, or, if he wants to ask me a question on notice, I will be able to provide that. First, shall I tell the member where the workshops have been?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Yes. I think it is important to get it on record, rather than put it on notice.

Dr A.D. BUTI: The workshops were in: Albany on 26 April; Armadale on 5 May; Broome on 28 April; Bunbury on 4 May; Carnarvon on 5 May; Esperance on 28 April; Geraldton on 13 May; Kalgoorlie on 2 and 3 May; Karratha on 3 May; Kununurra on 26 April; Perth CBD on 29 April and Perth CBD again on 10 and 11 of May. I am not sure that we have a total number of participants in the workshops, but would the member like me to read out the Carnarvon one, seeing as it might be of particular interest to him?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Why not, while you are there?

Dr A.D. BUTI: It was the Aboriginal Legal Service, Bidjemia, the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, Department of Water and Environmental Regulation, Gascoyne Catchments Group, Goldfields–Esperance Development Commission, Mia Mia Station, Ngala, Real Futures, Rangelands, the Shire of Carnarvon, the Shire of Upper Gascoyne, WA police and community youth centre and Yinggarda Aboriginal Corporation.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: On the \$12.4 million, how much is being spent on administration of the consultation and the co-design process?

Dr A.D. BUTI: There have been approximately 300 participants in the workshops, just to let the member know. Sorry, what was the question?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: How much of the \$12.4 million has gone into administration to carry out the co-design process?

Dr A.D. BUTI: We do not have a breakdown of that at this stage.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Out of that \$12.4 million, is there going to be any finance towards upskilling traditional owners?

Dr A.D. BUTI: There is a \$10 million commitment —

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Yes, I know, but will any of that \$12.4 million go towards any assistance for traditional owners in the process of consultation?

Dr A.D. BUTI: The \$12.4 million is separate from the \$10 million.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I understand that, yes.

Dr A.D. BUTI: The \$10 million is for capability but the \$12.4 million has been allocated to allow the workshops and the co-design process to take place. It is being used to put on the workshops, to allow the traditional owners to be there and so forth.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Is it a twelve-month process to spend this \$12.4 million?

Dr A.D. BUTI: No. The \$12.4 million might involve more than twelve months. The idea is that, under the current schedule, the regulations will be concluded by the end of February next year. Then there will be an education program for the rest of the financial year to educate people on that. That might include part of the \$12.4 million.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: When does the minister aim to have the new legislation working by?

Dr A.D. BUTI: It is 1 July 2023.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: The minister expects the co-design process to be completed. What needs to be brought back to Parliament, if anything?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Nothing. The regulations are obviously an Executive Council situation. The member would well know, as he participated in the debate last year and forensically prosecuted the case, the act was passed last year. This is about the co-design of the regulations, so the act would become fully operational. There will be certain parts that will become operational before that but, for all intents and purposes, the new Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2021 becomes operational on 1 July 2023.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I refer to page 729, under division 43, Planning, Lands and Heritage. Under “New Initiatives” and “Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2021”, \$1.479 million is allocated in 2021–22. Then this financial year, \$6.436 million is allocated in 2022–23. In the out year, 2023–24, \$6 million is allocated. Can the minister explain what that amount is for?

Dr A.D. BUTI: To implement the new act, there are two main components. As I have mentioned, one is the stakeholder engagement and co-design process developing the supporting documents. Secondly, it is progressing the operation activities and procedural matters by the department to enable the efficient transition to the new regime. The initial funding provides the necessary resourcing to administer the bill and includes the provisions for the new Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Council, establishing the regional presence, expanded grants and repatriation programs, in addition to expanding staff complement. There is also the necessity to collect data to assist in the development of a transparent, robust and equitable cost-recovery model.

[4.50 pm]

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Is this not a part of the \$10 million?

Dr A.D. BUTI: No. The \$10 million that was committed is for increasing the capability of the prescribed body corporates and the LACHS as well. In many respects, they will be the same thing. Sorry; it is for the LACHS, not the prescribed body corporates but, in many cases, the LACHS will be the prescribed body corporates.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: In terms of being able to find the —

Dr A.D. BUTI: Let me just be clear. The \$10 million is to provide training and capability for those LACHS so they can be involved in the new regime. The \$12.4 million is for the process of co-design, implementation of the new act and the staffing and so forth.

The CHAIR: Please feel free, everyone else, to pipe up if you would like to. New question, member for North West Central.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: On page 730 under, significant issues impacting the agency and “New Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Legislation” I might refer to that \$10 million. It reads, “. . .to oversee a co-design process and to develop the key documents,” which I would imagine is part of that \$10 million. No, but roughly the \$10 million? I could not find it in the actual budget. I know it is a key commitment, but is it not in the budget process so far; would that be correct, minister?

Dr A.D. BUTI: It is Treasury administered, not within this department’s budget bottom line.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: It is Treasury administered. In dealing with LACHS, traditional owners, organisations and prescribed body corporates, the \$10 million the minister has mentioned to help develop key documents and upskill —

Dr A.D. BUTI: No. The \$10 million, which is administered through Treasury, is for the capability building of the LACHS. The documents and the organisation of the workshops for the co-design of regulations, that is the \$12.4 million. The \$10 million does not include the drafting of the documents. The \$10 million is purely for the capability building of the LACHS.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Is that not under the minister’s portfolio?

Dr A.D. BUTI: No.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: And it is not in the budget papers for —

Dr A.D. BUTI: No. At the moment, that \$10 million is being administered by the Department of Treasury.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Okay. I will work out another tack to try to talk about that \$10 million, unless the minister wants to talk about it now?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I will just make a couple of comments because it is not part of the budget bottom line in this division. It is a commitment we made for capability building of the LACHS, which in some cases are, as I said, part of the prescribed body corporates. That is all I really need to say.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: On the co-design process and the public meetings that have been held across Western Australia, has there been concern that \$10 million is not enough to be able to facilitate the prescribed body corporates or Aboriginal organisations that do not have a prescribed body corporate or are an entity to be able to actually negotiate or deal with pastoralists or other communities?

Dr A.D. BUTI: In other words, the member is asking whether the \$10 million is enough—right?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Yes. Has it been brought up with the minister during the co-design process?

Dr A.D. BUTI: No. The co-design process overall has been a very useful process. A range of views have been expressed on issues going forward about capability building. I, as the minister in this area, am always looking at what can be done. We are also developing a cost-recovery model going forward, which will provide a revenue source for the LACHS.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Minister, going back to the reference group that has been mentioned in the new Aboriginal cultural heritage legislation, who is part of that reference group?

Dr A.D. BUTI: There are four members including two traditional owners. Mr Kannis is representing the government or the department, and there is a member from industry, which is Bronwyn Bell from the Chamber of Minerals and Energy. The two traditional owners are Merle Carter and Lindsay Dean.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: How were they picked to go on the reference group?

Dr A.D. BUTI: The member of the department is, obviously, a straightforward one. Regarding Bronwyn Bell, after much discussion, it was thought that someone from one of the peak mining resource bodies should be representing industry. Regarding the two traditional owners, the Aboriginal co-owners were picked through government boards. Both Lindsay Dean and Merle Carter are on government boards.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: What are the backgrounds of the two Aboriginal people in the reference group? Are they from the south west? Is one from the north?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Merle Carter is from Kununurra and Lindsay is from Albany but has linkages to the Kimberley region.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Who does this reference group report to directly?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Well, it is not really a reference group reporting, as such. It is a reference group that is providing overall guidance to the workshops. It will provide input to the department through these workshops and after, and obviously advise the minister. If I want to have a conversation with it, I will.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Did this reference group go to cabinet?

Dr A.D. BUTI: No, it did not go to cabinet.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Was it recommended to the minister, as the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, that these people should be on the reference group?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Yes.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Was it recommended by his director general?

Dr A.D. BUTI: It was recommended by a number of different people. In regards to the Aboriginal representatives, an expression of interest was put out.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: How often does this reference group meet?

Dr A.D. BUTI: There is at least one, usually two of them, at each of the workshops. The reference group itself meets once a month.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Further question; sorry, chair.

The CHAIR: Yes, assuming that, thank you.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Are they paid to be on the reference group?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Yes, they are paid sitting fees.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: How much are the sitting fees?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Mr Harvey.

Mr B. Harvey: Thank you, minister. The representative of industry, from CME, is not paid. The two Aboriginal representatives are paid and they are paid the same meeting allowances they get for sitting on meetings of the Aboriginal Cultural Material Committee, given both members come from that committee.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: On the reference group and under the significant issues impacting the agency, what outcomes is the department expecting out of the reference group?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Well, I do not know. That is an interesting question. It is not an outcome of the reference group. It is to manage the process of the co-design of the regulations, which is a 12-month process. They are managing and providing advice if need be. The outcome is the outcome from the workshop, not the outcome from the reference group.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Once the reference group reports back about the co-design process or the consultation, will the minister have the final say on that co-design process and the way it looks?

[5.00 pm]

Dr A.D. BUTI: I suppose the question is more about the outcome of the regulations. The co-design process is there to draft and settle on regulations which, in the end, have to be approved by government. Then they go through the normal regulatory process of being signed off by the Governor. Under the act, as I am sure the member well remembers, there is an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Council, which is the main body that will be determining issues of cultural heritage.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Can the minister explain the process? Once the co-design process and consultation is completed, then I imagine there will be a draft of regulations that are presented. Will those go out again for further consultation or does the minister or cabinet make that decision?

Dr A.D. BUTI: No. Part of the co-design process is for the drafting of documents and the regulations. Obviously, government will make the final decision. The regulations that are going to be drafted will come out of the co-design process. The Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Council will conduct the final phase of consultation on the draft regulations.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Going back to the consultation process that has taken place around the state, has there been an explanation of the act in its obligations for say, a pastoralist wanting to clear land or repair fencing?

Dr A.D. BUTI: If the member recalls, the act has three tiers of activity category—tiers 1, 2 and 3. What the activity is classified as determines what process has to take place to obtain approvals for that activity. Part of the co-design process is to determine what activity fits which tier. To dig a hole somewhere—is that a tier 1, tier 2 or tier 3? What tier is putting in a fence? That is all part of the co-design process. Pastoralists have already been through some workshops, I believe. That is part of it. That is why these workshops, which are part of the co-design process, are so important. They will come up with the final categories for the various tiers of activity.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: For tier 1, tier 2 and tier 3, fines are attached to each tier and also jail time, I think, is attached to one of the tiers for an individual. Is that being explained through the co-design process and consultation to pastoralists and others to be able to identify whether digging a hole is a tier 1 or bulldozing a rocky outcrop is a tier 3 activity? Has that been explained to the minister's knowledge?

Dr A.D. BUTI: As the member would recall from last year's estimates, I provided him with extensive consultation lists of everyone who had been consulted on the contents of what was then the bill. People were made aware of the contents of the bill, so I do not think it can be argued that the government did not provide sufficient avenues for people to become educated on the contents of the bill. That was done last year. The bill has now passed; it is now an act. This co-design process is for the regulations. We are not now going back and recycling all the things that were said during the consultation over the bill. That is done now. Now what we are doing is fleshing out the actual regulations.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I understand that, minister. I just want to ask whether it has it been made clear to those who attended the consultation process of the co-design of the fines in the act—obligations for an individual or a company for that matter? Has that been highlighted when they are going through that process of populating what a tier 1, a tier 2 or a tier 3 looks like? Has that been highlighted, because it is pretty important and significant given the potential fines, the amounts and potential jail time?

Dr A.D. BUTI: The co-design process has talked about the possible penalties, but the co-design process will determine what activities will fit into the various tiers and then what possible fine will come about as a result of them. The actual penalties have been outlined in the consultation of the bill. Also, in the co-design process, there is communication on the penalty regime.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Further question.

The CHAIR: Further question and then we probably need to move on to another area, member, after this one.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Yes, okay; thanks, chair. Going back to the reference group. It is made up of the director general, someone from the resource sector, being the CME, and two Aboriginal participants. Why is someone from the agriculture sector not in the reference group, given it is a large landholding area—whether it be the Western Australian Farmers Federation, Pastoralists and Graziers Association or the Southern Rangelands?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I can assure the member that the Pastoralists and Graziers Association and other rural groups have had and will have sufficient capability to participate in the co-design process. The reference group is just managing the process. The reference group is not deciding the content of the regulations.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Further question. I understand that, minister, but if there is a cross-section of the resource sector, being the Chamber of Minerals and Energy, on the reference group, the visual aspect of that reference group is that you are covering the resource sector, which plays a major role in this. We have seen Juukan Gorge and why

the resource sector is extremely important in participating in this, as well as, obviously, traditional owners and Aboriginal people. I would have thought that, given that large landholdings in Western Australia are pastoralists and farmers, at least a representative from both areas could have been on the reference committee. That they are the ones who—I am not going to say this right, but—need to understand that the process, because, at the end of the day, as I said, the fines are quite high for an individual as well as jail for an individual. For a resource company or a company, it is a fine, not jail. The farmers and individuals have got the greatest risk with not understanding the process hence why I think it is important to be able to have those two bodies—large landholders—on the reference committee. Is it too late to change it, minister?

[5.10 pm]

Dr A.D. BUTI: I do not see any need to change it. The industry representative is representing industry, not representing just the resource industry. My understanding is that all sections of various industries are happy with the current arrangements. The Pastoralists and Graziers Association and other rural based federations are happy with the process and they have been given sufficient avenues to present their point of view and to participate in the co-design process. As I say, the reference group is there to manage the process, not to design the regulations. It was always a balancing act between how many are on the reference group and ensuring that it is an efficient way of facilitating the process. It would make it too large a reference group. Traditional owners or Aboriginal groups could quite easily also argue there should be Aboriginal representatives from all the different regions of Western Australia. Or other industries could argue they should be on it. Various government departments could argue they should have a representative, rather than just the director general of this department. We wanted to limit the membership to make sure it was focused and facilitated the process. The agricultural industry and the pastoralist industries have been involved and invited to the workshops and invited to make submissions, and there will be an extensive education program.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Further question, chair.

The CHAIR: I really think you have flogged a dead horse well and truly by now, member.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I just had —

The CHAIR: I think we can move on.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Just one more, one more.

The CHAIR: One more. We said that four questions ago. One more.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: That is what my kids say to me all the time, “One more”. Has the minister met with any of the agricultural groups himself about the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage bill directly and the co-design process, whether it be someone from the pastoralists or Farmers Federation?

Dr A.D. BUTI: To launch the co-design process, I had a meeting down at the convention centre, which was streamed online and there were people in the room that day. I may be wrong, but I think Doug Hall from the Pastoralists and Graziers Association was there and there were others online. I have been to other workshops in person in Kalgoorlie and Armadale. Actually, in Armadale, there was a representative from the fruit and vegetable association. So there you go! You have got your tomatoes and your beans and peas.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Just a further question.

The CHAIR: No. No.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: This is actually quite important.

The CHAIR: I am sorry. I am sorry. You have had 17 further questions on this, so let us just go on. I think the minister has said all he can usefully say on the matter. New question, member for Vasse.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to page 730. I note the fifth item under “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency” is the Aboriginal Lands Trust divestment. It refers to the proposal to introduce some legislative amendments to support the continued transfer of Aboriginal lands. I first ask: what is the trigger for these legislative amendments, and how will they support the worthy goal of increased economic opportunities?

Dr A.D. BUTI: A 2017 election commitment by the Labor Party was to divest Aboriginal Lands Trust estates to Aboriginal ownership. A consultation process is taking place as we speak. It is moving around the state. Tomorrow there is a workshop on the Aboriginal Lands Trust divestment process. Workshops will take place throughout the state, and a number have already have taken place. The idea is that by divesting these lands back into Aboriginal ownership, it will allow Aboriginal people to use that land as collateral and a way to obtain investments and financial assistance from financial institutions. As the member would know, the history behind the Aboriginal Lands Trust was based more on a paternalistic approach, and I think this is a challenge. It is quite complex and we have to bring the various Aboriginal groups along with us on this because it is a bit of an unknown journey for many of them.

Ms L. METTAM: I appreciate that it will be challenging, but certainly something good to achieve. Does the minister have a list of the groups that have been involved or will be involved in the consultation process regarding this proposed legislation?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I am not sure there is a list here, but I can let the member know that there have been workshops in Albany and Kununurra; tomorrow there will be one in Carnarvon; and there was to be one in Warburton next week, but that has been deferred.

Ms L. METTAM: Will there be any in the south west?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I do not have that list; sorry. I can ask Mr Corr to answer that question.

Mr D. Corr: To date, we have held consultations in Albany, all through the Pilbara and all through the East and West Kimberley, and various groups have been turning up. We have also done numerous consultations in Perth with registered native title body corporates and other interested stakeholders. I do not have the list of precisely who was there, but we do have that.

Ms L. METTAM: When is the minister anticipating to introduce the legislation to Parliament? I imagine there is quite a process to go through, but can the minister indicate what the process will be from here? Is this more about communicating with the groups about what is being proposed?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Yes. At the moment, the consultation process is taking place. I do not have a set date for the introduction of the necessary amendments to Parliament.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Is there a register of the lands that the minister is talking about? Is there a map or a list? Is there an estimated cost associated with the land?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I think the question the member has asked is: where are the estates and how much of the state is in Aboriginal Lands Trust estates?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Yes, that is it. Is there a register?

Dr A.D. BUTI: It comprises 301 properties and approximately 8.7 per cent of the state, or 22 million hectares, which comprises 243 Crown reserves, 47 provisional tenure freehold properties, six general purpose leases and five pastoral leases. There are 143 permanent Aboriginal settlements of communities on ALT estates, with approximately 12 000 residents. In 2019–20, the department received a budget of \$5.841 million to 2024–25 to facilitate the divestment of 33 priority ALT properties.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Some of the ALT properties have housing on them. Bindi Bindi in Onslow may be one that is on ALT land. I think that is one example. Will negotiations be for not only the land, but also the infrastructure that is on the land?

Dr A.D. BUTI: No. The aim is to divest the estates, the land. Part of the consultation process is to determine, if that divestment takes place, what assistance or what needs to be done from the state's point of view.

[5.20 pm]

Mr V.A. CATANIA: If there is housing on ALT land, the department of housing will provide assistance from the federal government to do up the houses, for example.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Did the member say the federal government? We hope the new federal government will, but the previous federal government ran away from them.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I do not disagree with the minister. In years gone by, the federal government provided assistance. I look forward to the minister's advocacy in trying to get that back.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Very much so.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Minister, in handing the land back to traditional owners or Aboriginal corporations, if they request some financial support to maintain housing, roads, lighting, you name it, will that also be part of the negotiations? It is important that we know as well.

Dr A.D. BUTI: As I read out to the member previously, the department has already expended moneys to facilitate a divestment of 33 priority ALT estates. These will be ongoing negotiations and one would expect that this will be part of the discussion. As part of the divestment, there is also the issue of what sort of land tenure will happen.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: That is my next question.

Dr A.D. BUTI: That is under discussion, and it will depend on different areas and different concerns.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I am pretty sure Bindi Bindi at Onslow is one. It is prime real estate on the coast of Onslow. The organisation could negotiate to take back the land and the housing, and say it will go to a developer and sell the land because it is worth \$20 million to 30 million and it will develop housing somewhere else for those people. Is that the type of thinking or will that be allowed under the amendments to the act?

Dr A.D. BUTI: It will all depend on the outcome of the various discussions with different groups. We are not prohibiting that possibility, but it will just depend.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: No, it is important.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Part of the idea here is to allow Aboriginal people to have a greater determination in their economic future.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Exactly right, and I think that to provide the ability for them to determine whether they sell land and to invest that somewhere else is a good step in the right direction.

The CHAIR: All right, with that editorial comment, are there other questions?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I refer to “New Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Legislation” on page 730. Chair, if you will indulge me.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Chair, just before he asks the question, I think the member is so interested in heritage because he is concerned about the heritage of the Liberal Party of Western Australia.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I was once concerned about the Labor Party.

Dr A.D. BUTI: You do not need to worry about the Labor Party, mate.

The CHAIR: I do not know whether we would have you back, member, but what is the question?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I asked a question about meetings. Has the minister been approached by various agricultural industry bodies? Has the Pastoralists and Graziers Association, the Southern Rangelands Pastoral Alliance, the Kimberley Pilbara Cattlemen’s Association or the farmers’ federation approached the minister to meet and discuss the proposed Aboriginal cultural heritage bill?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I would have to check my diary. From my recollection, I do not believe I have received a request from any of the pastoralist or farming groups, but I have had meetings previously; certainly mining or resource companies have approached me in a general manner. I hope I am not getting confused here because I was the former Minister for Lands and when I was the minister, I had discussions on various lands issues, so this may have come up in that portfolio. As the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, to the best of recollection, I do not believe I have received any invitations to a meeting from pastoralist groups. I may have, but I do not recall.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Has the minister heard from the Property Council of Australia, WA division, or any land developers about this bill?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Does the member want to put that question on notice, because I do not want to give him incorrect information? I do not believe so, but if the member wants to put it on notice, I can provide him with a more thorough answer.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Going back to the Aboriginal Lands Trust divestment, I did not quite catch when the minister is looking at introducing the amendments.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Just before I answer that, the department has met with the Pastoralists and Graziers Association and so forth, but to my understanding, they are very happy with the process. That is the reason I have not met them. We have the act; the act has gone now.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: But the minister has not met with them personally?

Dr A.D. BUTI: In regard to the co-design process, no. In regard to your question that was asked, I think, by the member for Vasse, that has not been determined yet. At the moment we are in the consultation phase.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: But in this term of government?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Well, let us do the consultation process first.

The appropriation was recommended.

Division 13: Finance, \$616 288 000 —

Ms M.M. Quirk, Chair.

Dr A.D. Buti, Minister for Finance.

Ms J. Cant, Director General.

Mr G. Gilbert, Deputy Director General, Service and Investment.

Ms K. Ingham, Deputy Director General, Advisory Services.

Mr S. Whitmarsh, Deputy Director General, Buildings and Contracts.

Mr D. Geraghty, Chief Finance Officer.

Mr C. McMahon, Commissioner of State Revenue.

Ms H. Farrell, Chief Customer Officer.

Ms A. Kidson, Senior Policy Adviser.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIR: The estimates committees will be reported by Hansard. The daily proof *Hansard* will be available online as soon as possible within two business days. The chair will allow as many questions as possible. Questions and answers should be short and to the point. Consideration is restricted to items for which a vote of money is

proposed in the consolidated account. Questions must relate to a page number, item or amount related to the current division, and members should preface their questions with these details. Some divisions are the responsibility of more than one minister. Ministers shall only be examined in relation to their portfolio responsibilities.

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

I give the call to the member for Vasse.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to page 165. The fourth paragraph under “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency” refers to the major projects directorate. There are a few projects listed there. How many major projects are currently being considered by the major projects directorate at the moment?

[5.30 pm]

Dr A.D. BUTI: I will hand over, but let me just say a few things first. The major projects directorate has been established in the department to deliver several major projects on behalf of the government, and many of those projects are listed at paragraph 4. But in regard to further elaboration on the member’s question, Shaun Whitmarsh will answer that.

Mr S. Whitmarsh: Thank you. There are a number of different projects at different stages: the women’s and newborns’ hospital is listed in the papers, along with the Peel Health Campus redevelopment, the Bunbury hospital redevelopment, the inpatient surge facility, and the new metropolitan facility for the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development laboratories—bit of a mouthful, that one—and the Casuarina Prison redevelopment. Projects are also underway through public–private partnerships for some schools as well. I think there is one school left to deliver.

Ms L. METTAM: How does the infrastructure delivery unit interact with this unit? There is a reference there in the paragraph, but how does that unit interact with major projects?

Dr A.D. BUTI: It is part of the major projects directorate.

Ms L. METTAM: Is it a unit within the directorate?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Yes.

Ms L. METTAM: What information does that provide?

Dr A.D. BUTI: They communicate with each other on the projects and the infrastructure that is being built.

Ms L. METTAM: Now that the market-led proposals unit is being moved from Finance to Lands, have any staff changed departments as part of that?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Yes.

Ms L. METTAM: How many staff?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Ms Cant can answer that.

Ms J. Cant: Yes. I think it was four who have been transferred across with that change.

Ms L. METTAM: Does Finance have any oversight over the market-led proposals now following that shift?

Dr A.D. BUTI: No. Now it is in a different department. The department is on the steering committee that makes the proposals.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I refer to page 165, “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency”. The second paragraph states —

The Department is supporting the response to the COVID-19 pandemic by procuring and distributing all personal protective equipment and Rapid Antigen Tests ...

Have all 15 government-supplied free RATs per household been distributed?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Okay. I could make a joke about rats, but I will not!

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I know. As soon as I said it, I thought, “I’m bugged”!

Dr A.D. BUTI: As the member knows, Australia Post has been involved with distribution, and I think something like three per cent, or maybe less, of people have not received their RATs. To answer the member’s question, through that process, not everyone has received them, but hopefully they will. There have been other avenues. People could have gone to collect them. The member for North West Central as a member of Parliament would have received RATs as well, as we all have.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Is the department also responsible for the school rollout of RATs to students?

Dr A.D. BUTI: No. We assisted, but that is done through the Department of Education.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: What cost was associated with giving 15 rapid antigen tests to each household?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Does the member mean the cost of the postage?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I mean the cost of postage and the actual tests.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I will ask Ms Ingham to answer that.

Ms K. Ingham: On average we are paying about \$7.73 for RATs to be delivered to households, for the whole program. That includes the cost of the RATs. That is the cost, a handling cost and postage cost.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Given that COVID will potentially continue for a while, will the government consider providing further free rapid antigen tests to households? Has that been factored into any financial situation?

Dr A.D. BUTI: The government is continuing to monitor the issue, and we will see what the situation is as we go forward. The government has been very successful in aiding to purchase a considerable number of RATs.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Is that why they are free?

Dr A.D. BUTI: One of the member's colleagues was complaining, which I found very unusual, about how many RATs we were obtaining and distributing. In response to the question, it will be monitored as we go forward. We will see what needs to be done. We are the only state, in my understanding, that has provided free statewide access to RATs.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Is the minister suggesting there is an oversupply of rapid antigen tests, hence the government is prepared to give taxpayers their money back through free rapid antigen tests?

Dr A.D. BUTI: No, not at all. I said that the member for Moore criticised us for giving free RATs to the public. He made the criticism. We have never said that we had an oversupply. I do not think that has ever been said. I would be interested to know whether Mr Love distributed the 1 000 that he received.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: The minister can ask him that question when Parliament resumes.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Maybe.

Ms L. METTAM: In relation to the purchase and distribution of the RATs, where was the supply from? Was it from the South Korean supplier or the WA distributor?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I will ask Ms Ingham to elaborate.

Ms K. Ingham: The Department of Finance sought to diversify its supply, so it bought from three different suppliers; all are local. One is an Aboriginal business and one is also on our common-use arrangement. We diversified through those three organisations.

Ms L. METTAM: How was the decision made about which product was utilised or purchased and where the department purchased these products from?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I will ask Ms Ingham to elaborate. The finance department, which is absolute expert in procurement, obviously has a list of suppliers. And we also have an Aboriginal procurement policy that we are very proud of, so it was great to have an Aboriginal business involved. Can Ms Ingham elaborate on the specifics?

Ms K. Ingham: Yes. Thank you, minister. I think there are two parts to that question, if I am understanding it appropriately. The Department of Finance got involved very much to support the Department of Health. We, obviously, are responsible for a number of things that are COVID-related. We were looking at the procurement of RATs for non-health settings. There are a number of reasons for that; we have the general population, schools and the critical worker protocol. All the RATs that we procured were seen as having an efficacy of 95 per cent or above, so very high sensitivity. Before we progressed with the actual procurement, I can confirm for the member that all the RATs that we purchased had also been through the post-market review that the Therapeutic Goods Administration is still conducting. We wanted to make sure that we were absolutely buying the best RATs that were on the market.

[5.40 pm]

Ms L. METTAM: Some concerns about the lollipop RATs have been raised in news reports recently. Is the minister or the department aware of these concerns? What assurance can the minister provide about the efficacy of this product?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I am aware and the department is definitely aware of those concerns that have been raised, but they have been approved by the TGA. Those concerns may be raised, but they have been approved. Ms Ingham might want to elaborate.

Ms K. Ingham: I can confirm that no defects have been reported to the TGA nor does the TGA have any registered concerns, which is actually a standard process for any medical product. Interestingly, the lollipop RATs, as we like to call them, which I think are the ones the member is referring to, got a little bit of social media. They come with some fairly strict instructions on how to use them and things not to do such as not eating or drinking in the 30 minutes before using them. People do not always read the directions for use. I want to actually add here that the Department of Health has received only 33 complaints and over seven million of these RATs have gone out. It represents about 0.0034 per cent of the total number. We do not see it as a significant issue.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I heard mention of three different suppliers. I might have missed it, but was there a price difference between each RAT supplier?

Dr A.D. BUTI: There was AM Diagnostics, Cole Supplies, and Stewart and Heaton. In regard to price differentiation, the expert here is Ms Ingham.

Ms K. Ingham: Yes, there is a variance in the cost. AM Diagnostics come in at the most expensive of the ones that we bought at \$6.95. The member's obvious question to that would be why we bought those. Those were the ones that we could quickly mobilise; we could get them here as fast as possible. Given how quickly Omicron was starting to spread in the east, that was one of the priorities for the procurement. With the other two suppliers, Cole Supplies was \$4.85, and Stewart and Heaton was \$6.16.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Who is Stewart?

Ms K. Ingham: That is our common-use arrangement contractor that looks after total apparel management for the state.

Ms L. METTAM: Is WA expecting any additional supplies as part of this contract or do we currently have the stock as anticipated?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Everything we have ordered, we have received. What happens in the future happens in the future. But what we have ordered, we have received.

Ms L. METTAM: So, the current contract does not allow for additional supplies to be received into the future and there is no possibility of additional stock.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Under the common-use agreement regime, if we needed to buy more, we could, tomorrow.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: There was a ban on rapid antigen tests, which was lifted towards the end of last year. My understanding is that the government's advisers said that because the Omicron variant was out of control in the eastern states, the government had to procure expensive rapid antigen tests, and the price got significantly cheaper, with the further two purchases costing around \$2 less than the first purchase. Did the earlier ban on these tests mean that the government was too slow in reacting and purchasing these rapid antigen tests and therefore paid a higher premium to be able to get them into Western Australia in a timely fashion? The advice was that Omicron was starting to be out of control in the east. We did not have those rapid antigen tests and we needed them now, and the government paid a premium because of the ban in this state. Is that the case?

Dr A.D. BUTI: What I can tell the member is that, as he knows, COVID has been a challenging issue for two years. No-one could predict that there was even going to be an Omicron variant. The only government that has been caught with its pants down on this is the former federal government with its vaccination rollout. We have not been caught short when it comes to providing RATs to people. In regard to vaccinations, if there has been any shortage here, it has been due to the federal distribution. We allowed part of our distribution of vaccines to go to New South Wales because of its poor management of COVID over there. I will not hear any criticism on the way that we have handled the COVID response in Western Australia and the supply of RATs and vaccinations. I will repeat: we are the only state that provides free RATs to households. If the member—Nostradamus—could have predicted that Omicron was going to be what it was, he should be going into another profession.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Those free rapid antigen tests are paid for by the taxpayer. Taxpayers are actually paying for those free rapid antigen tests; let us make that quite clear. I think we were the only state in Australia that actually banned rapid antigen tests, so we were behind the eight ball from day one. If that is not mismanagement, what is? Why did the government ban them? The rest of the world was purchasing these rapid antigen tests. Western Australia was not, and suddenly we were behind the eight ball and paying a premium.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Does the member want to know something? We got them at a cheaper price than the commonwealth paid. I do not know what the member's criticism is.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: All I know is that the government paid \$6 for one and then \$4 for another. That is a significant price difference. That is all.

Dr A.D. BUTI: We got them at a cheaper rate than the commonwealth paid.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Minister, further to the question, we have a Premier who banned rapid antigen tests in November —

The CHAIR: Which item number is this? Is it the same item number?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Yes, that is right. Yes, this is not just a general conversation. What is the member referring to?

The CHAIR: Is this still page 165? Yes, you are still on page 165.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Yes, thank you. It is page 165. Sorry; chair.

Dr A.D. BUTI: What is page 165?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: My further question.

The CHAIR: The first question was such a long time ago that we are refreshing the minister's memory.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Thank you. We saw the result of the ban, which flowed through until November. The cost of the purchase of those tests was then in the order of \$550-odd million. Now we have purchased tests that were apparently more expensive than the others. I do not know about a comparison with the commonwealth government. Perhaps the minister could enlighten us on the cost of tests in WA versus the cost for the commonwealth. What did the WA taxpayer pay for those tests?

Dr A.D. BUTI: No one supplier would have been able to supply the amount that was needed. We had to diversify the suppliers. It is also good business not to rely on one supplier. Really, the member's line of questioning is just absolutely pathetic.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: We are asking questions on behalf of the WA taxpayer.

Dr A.D. BUTI: It is a pathetic question. We obtained a supply of rapid antigen tests —

Mr V.A. Catania interjected.

The CHAIR: Member!

Dr A.D. BUTI: Excuse me—at a cheaper rate than the commonwealth did.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: What was the rate?

Dr A.D. BUTI: We obtained those tests at a cheaper rate than the commonwealth and we have obtained a quantity that has allowed us to distribute tests to every household and allowed the member, as a member of Parliament, to also distribute tests to his constituents. How the member can criticise that is beyond belief.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: It is because you panicked and bought a whole heap.

The CHAIR: Further question, member for Vasse, and we will move on after your next question.

[5.50 pm]

Ms L. METTAM: Thank you, chair. I refer to the procurement of the rapid antigen tests. I understand that there was a \$1.4 million investment in charter flights to deliver some of those rapid antigen tests to WA. Is that cost included in the Department of Finance's procurement, and why were the charter flights necessary?

Dr A.D. BUTI: In this item, we are looking at the procurement of this department, the Department of Finance. None of our procurements required charter flights.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I refer to page 165 of budget paper No 2, volume 1, and the third paragraph, which states —

RevenueWA continues to play a significant role delivering economic support in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes administering State and Commonwealth housing grants and payroll tax waivers for eligible businesses.

I refer to the state and commonwealth housing grants. Can the minister tell us how many housing grants were issued by the state and how many were issued by the federal government? If the minister could firstly answer that.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Is the member referring to the building bonus?

The CHAIR: It is the third paragraph on page 165, minister.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: It is not quite clear. It just says "housing grants".

Dr A.D. BUTI: All right. This relates to the building bonus and the HomeBuilder grant. For the building bonus, which is the state grant, 27 007 applications have been received so far and 21 661 of those applications have been paid. For the commonwealth HomeBuilder grant, which the department administers on behalf of the commonwealth, 21 772 applications have been received and 16 453 applications have been paid.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Does the minister have a breakdown of where those housing grants have gone to, and whether they have gone to metro or regional WA?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I do not think we have that here, but we can provide that on notice if the member would like that information. Does the member want to put that on notice?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Can it be given as a supplementary?

Dr A.D. BUTI: If the member wants to put that on notice, we can provide it, but we do not have it with us at the moment.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: But that is something that the minister could supply as supplementary information.

Dr A.D. BUTI: No; it is up to the member. If the member wants to put it on notice, he will receive the information.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I refer to payroll tax waivers for eligible businesses. How many businesses had their payroll tax waived?

Dr A.D. BUTI: That information has not been gazetted yet, but I will refer to Christopher McMahon, the Commissioner of State Revenue, to elaborate.

Mr C. McMahon: Thank you, minister. The waiver is under the emergency tax relief powers and requires gazettal of the waiver rules, which is currently underway. We expect that to be gazetted by the end of May. Eligible businesses will then be entitled to apply for the months of April, May and June of this year for a waiver of payroll tax for eligible large hospitality businesses.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Has no one yet had a waiver on their payroll tax, or have businesses already applied for the payroll tax waiver and the department is working through the detail? The government has made the announcement.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I will ask Mr McMahon to elaborate. My understanding is that some waivers have taken place but have not been gazetted, so we do not have the information on the numbers, but Mr McMahon can elaborate.

Mr C. McMahon: The rules regarding the waiver are publicly available, but until the gazettal takes effect, we are taking applications and holding those applications in the interim, pending any liability or payment of that payroll tax for those applicants, until the gazettal is in place. In terms of the numbers and amounts waived, until such time as the gazettal takes place, we will not actually be able to process them to give that figure, but that information will be available once the legislation is enabled.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I am trying to understand this, minister. People have applied for the payroll tax to be waived and they have obviously filled in a form with the reasons and the amount to be waived. Did the minister say that they could apply for the months of April, May and June of this year? Is that right?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Yes; it is April, May and June of this year.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Why is it for this year and not the last financial year? Excuse my ignorance, but why these particular months?

Dr A.D. BUTI: It is because that is when the relief was needed.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Going back a stage, when is payroll tax paid? Is it every month, every two months, or every financial year? When is payroll tax paid?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Let me explain about the eligibility of the waiver. The waiver is available to eligible hospitality businesses that have an annual payroll between \$4 million and \$20 million that experienced at least a 40 per cent reduction in turnover over any four-week period between 1 January and 30 April of this year compared with the same period last year. It has to be compared with last year. That is why it could not be put in for last year; we did not have anything to compare it with because of the COVID period. As Mr McMahon said, when the regulations have been drafted and gazetted at the end of May, we will have available the information that the member is seeking.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: When will those regulations be gazetted? Why has it taken so long for them to be gazetted? If a business is asking for a waiver of payroll tax, I would imagine that it needs some financial assistance pretty much now. Why is it taking so long, way after the need is there?

Dr A.D. BUTI: The legislation has to be in place. As the member knows, because he has been in this place a long time, things cannot just be done like that. They need to follow laws and regulations. The legislation that enabled this to take place is the Finance Legislation Amendment (Emergency Relief) Act 2022, which was given assented on 21 February of this year. We then have to undertake the drafting of the regulations. We have been moving as quickly as possible, but it has to be done properly.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: When does the minister anticipate that this will be finalised?

Dr A.D. BUTI: We anticipate it will be finalised at the end of May this year.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: At the end of this month?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Yes.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: That is Monday of next week.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Yes, it will be around then.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: It will be finalised by Monday?

Dr A.D. BUTI: That is when it is expected to be finalised. I will just get clarification of that. Yes, at the end of the month.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Therefore, on Monday, those companies with an annual payroll of \$4 million to \$20 million will receive their relief, or have the ability to receive their relief in payroll tax. Is that going to happen on Monday, or is it going to happen on Tuesday, 1 June, or is it going to take two weeks, or is it going to take another month? When will those companies receive that tax waiver in their bank account?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I will ask Mr McMahon to answer that.

[6.00 pm]

Mr C. McMahon: Thank you, minister. Payroll tax is payable seven days following the month that the wages were incurred. The waiver will not actually be a payment of moneys into a person's account. An applicant will need to apply for the waiver, at which point the tax will be waived and the liability will cease for that particular month.

It is not actually a payment of moneys to them. At this stage, we are dealing with applicants who are making inquiries about the waiver on an administrative basis and essentially deferring their liability or for them to take any action until such time that their application can be formalised when the regulations are gazetted and we can then process those applications. Essentially, once the gazettal occurs, we will move straight on to process the applications at that point and then have those discussions with applicants to let them know the outcomes.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Just to get some clarity, how long is that process? I ask this question because with the small business grants, for example, we heard about the announcement, and then months and months later the criteria were developed, and then months and months later the money actually started to flow. It is like announcements first; criteria last; work out the detail later. That is why I want to get some clarity on how long that process will be. A relatively small-to-medium business with a payroll of \$4 million may incur payroll tax of \$50 000 or \$60 000 over the months that it has deferred and not paid. Has that business been given assurances by the department that it will not need to pay that tax? Someone in the department may have looked at the books and said, “Yes, you’ve got a 40 per cent downturn, so don’t worry, mate. You won’t have to pay that money.” Suddenly, the department has received and developed the criteria, the person who gave the assurance has moved on, and another person within the department says, “No, sorry, buddy, you have to pay that \$60 000 or \$80 000”, or whatever it may be. Have those people who have contacted the department been given a guarantee that they will not be required to pay that payroll tax because the department has given assurances that it will be waived?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Member, since the announcement was made in March, those businesses have not been paying the payroll tax.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: That is my concern.

Dr A.D. BUTI: It has been deferred. They have not been paying it since March.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Have they been given a guarantee?

Dr A.D. BUTI: They have to apply.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Have they applied? If they have applied, does that mean that they have been approved?

Dr A.D. BUTI: An application does not mean an approval. Businesses have to apply and go through the process.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: How many businesses have been approved through the application process that the department has already conducted?

Dr A.D. BUTI: If a business meets the eligibility requirements, it will receive the relief.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I have one more question.

The CHAIR: Member, listening to the minister’s answers, there may well be people that have not yet applied. Asking for a number might not be particularly instructive for your purposes.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Okay. Firstly, what number of businesses have applied up until this point? Secondly, how long is the department going to leave open the application process for those businesses to be able to access this payroll tax waiver?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I might ask Mr McMahon to answer that question.

Mr C. McMahon: I do not have any information regarding applications, because, at this point, we are simply deferring the liability or the need to lodge a return for those taxpayers. The member asked how long the application process will be open. Once the gazettal takes place, the taxpayer will be able to make application for up to five years; there will then be an assessment period that applies to state taxes.

The appropriation was recommended.

Division 36: Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries — Service 4, Racing and Gaming; Citizenship and Multicultural Interests, \$23 297 000 —

Ms M.M. Quirk, Chair.

Dr A.D. Buti, Minister for Racing and Gaming; Citizenship and Multicultural Interests.

Ms L. Chopping, Director General.

Mr L. Carren, Chief Finance Officer.

Ms J. Shelton, Executive Director, Racing, Gaming and Liquor.

Mr J. Jegasothy, Executive Director, Office of Multicultural Interests.

Ms A. Cheetham, Director, Strategic Regulation.

Ms A. Kidson, Senior Policy Adviser.

Mr S. Padshah, Senior Policy Adviser.

[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 these details. Some divisions are the responsibility of more than one minister. Ministers shall only be examined in relation to their portfolio responsibilities.

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

I give the call to the member for Roe.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Thank you. I refer to page 547 of budget paper No 2, volume 2, regulation and reform, and the eighth paragraph, which refers to the department's response to the Perth Casino Royal Commission. Firstly, can the minister detail how many staff are employed in racing and gaming within the department?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Racing and gaming does not just involve the Perth Casino Royal Commission. What is the member's question?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I am sorry?

Dr A.D. BUTI: What is the actual question? The Perth Casino Royal Commission is not the totality of racing and gaming.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: No. I understand that. The department covers five areas. Does the minister know the total number of staff that deal with racing and gaming, as such?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I think that the member is actually referring to page 554.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Is the answer 117 FTE?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I will ask Ms Chopping if she is able to verify that that is the number of people working in racing and gaming.

[6.10 pm]

Ms L. Chopping: Thanks, minister. Thanks, member. The racing, gaming and liquor area within the department has a range of different functions. The total FTE are listed here. Within that area, the division splits into different branches. One branch deals with the regulatory services, so the legislation and policy matters. Other branches deal with inspections. There is now a specific area that deals with the Gaming and Wagering Commission, so gives support to the secretariat.

As an example, the inspectors in casinos had also been doing liquor inspections. Since I commenced last year, we have reprioritised within that area to focus predominantly on casino inspections. That is not to say that we are not still dealing with liquor matters. Generally speaking, they have their specific areas that they work in, but that 117 FTE is spread across all those areas.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Okay; I appreciate that clarity. Going back to the response to the royal commission, does the minister have a figure for what it will cost the government in its response to the commission?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Does the member mean the response to the royal commission report? Is that the question?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: That is right; the report and implementing any responses within the department.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I should let the member know that that part of this is not actually in this agency. It is the Department of the Premier and Cabinet that has set up a unit to deal with the response to the royal commission. It is actually not in this department and it is really not in this budget division. But in regard to the response to the royal commission itself, as I outlined when the report was handed down, we are working through that process. When we have finalised our response, that will determine issues of financial expenditure from the state.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: How will the minister, firstly, set about responding to the commission? Within the department, what are the first things? The department is obviously starting to respond to the recommendations. What process will the department go through to implement those recommendations from the royal commission?

Dr A.D. BUTI: As I indicated in Parliament, we will be introducing legislation in regard to the Gaming and Wagering Commission. I have also written to the Gaming and Wagering Commission. That legislation will provide certain changes to the way the Gaming and Wagering Commission operates and its powers and so forth. But a full response to the 59 recommendations, if I remember rightly, will be forthcoming when it is ready.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Can the minister tell me how many staff within the department have demonstrated experience in regulation of casinos either in Australia or internationally?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Is the member talking about the Gaming and Wagering Commission or the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Yes.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Which one?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: It is the racing and gaming within the department, as outlined.

Dr A.D. BUTI: The Gaming and Wagering Commission is not —

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: That is right—gaming and wagering.

Dr A.D. BUTI: It is supported by the department, but they are not employees of the department. That is different from the wagering and gaming employees in the department. Anyone who is in the department that works in gaming and wagering are not the regulators. The regulator is the Gaming and Wagering Commission.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I understand that. My question is: how many people within the department are employed to support the Gaming and Wagering Commission?

Dr A.D. BUTI: All right, so the member wants to know who provides the secretariat support. I will ask Ms Shelton if she would like to elaborate on that.

Ms J. Shelton: Thank you, minister.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: If you would just take the mask off, thanks.

Ms J. Shelton: In relation to the support for the Gaming and Wagering Commission, there are currently four FTE who support the Gaming and Wagering Commission as a secretariat function.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Has there been any turnover in those staff since the royal commission began and the royal commission report came out?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Since the royal commission was established, yes, there has been.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Would the minister be able to provide that detail?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I will ask Ms Chopping whether she would like to.

Ms L. Chopping: Thanks, minister. I can give a highly detailed, very, very long answer. I will start with a shorter answer, perhaps.

I arrived at the department on 31 May last year. As media reports would suggest, significant issues had been identified through the public hearings of the royal commission. We set about making a significant number of changes in terms of senior personnel within the area to ensure that we had stability and regulatory experience from a range of different organisations, so we employed some people from the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation and some people from the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety to bolster the services that were being provided by the team. It was a period of significant disruption because of the information that was coming to light through the royal commission.

Over the duration of the last 12 months, we have made significant improvements in areas such as conflict of interest; policies and procedures; delegated decision-making; gifts, benefits and hospitality; integrity generally; and training more specifically around regulation within that area and within the Gaming and Wagering Commission. New members have been appointed to the Gaming and Wagering Commission with regulatory experience. There have been some changes. Many of those changes involving staff leaving have resulted from retirement, usually for people aged over 60 years, some over 65. Some of those people have been with the department for a very long time; in fact, some of those inspectors had never worked anywhere else other than within the department and its predecessor agencies. That is my short answer. We can go through line-by-line in terms of some people have been promoted, some people have resigned, some people have retired. New people have arrived within the agency. Maybe I will say with departures from the agency, in 2019–20, we had eight people leave from that area; in 2020–21, we had seven; and in 2021–22, we have had 24. Now, that is an increase, but in my opinion, that was required to be able to do a refresh and reset, and we are on a stable footing now to continue and to implement the government's response to the royal commission.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Thanks for that answer.

Did the people who replaced those —

Dr A.D. BUTI: Can I just butt in there? What line item in the budget is the member referring to?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Paragraph 8 under “Regulation and Reform”, which states —

... The outcomes and recommendations of the Royal Commission are likely to have a significant impact on the Department and Gaming and Wagering in relation to governance arrangements and legislative framework.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I think we have given the member the answer he needs on that.

[6.20 pm]

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I have just one further question on that. Do the extra people that have been employed have equivalent, more or less experience than those people they have replaced?

The CHAIR: I do not know whether the minister is in a position to answer that.

Dr A.D. BUTI: We are not going to go into a human resource analysis of individual qualification of the mindset. Ms Chopping has given the member a thorough answer of how she has brought in new staff, how people have been moved and that people have regulations in other areas. The Gaming and Wagering Commission has also made new appointments. As the members knows, this year, we appointed Mr Colin Murphy, Dr Michael Schaper, Mr Michael Sarquis and Ms Deirdre O'Donnell; therefore, changes have been made. I am not really sure what else we can say.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I refer to page 546 and the banned drinkers register trial about two-thirds of the way down the table. I note that there is only one year's worth funding, of \$1.96 million. Is there any funding to potentially expand this to other regions such as, say, the midwest or goldfields? I know there has been a bit of activity, but will there be future funding?

Dr A.D. BUTI: At this stage, there are no plans to expand the banned drinkers register to other regions prior to the conclusion of the current trials. Those trials and their evaluation by the University of Western Australia will form the future of the program.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Will the minister evaluate the Kimberley and Pilbara trials?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Currently, the Pilbara trial is being evaluated by the University of Western Australia as that was the first trial.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Can the minister enlighten me about the evaluation method and how he would see that maybe expanding to other parts of the state?

Dr A.D. BUTI: The University of Western Australia has engaged the evaluation process and has undertaken consultation with key stakeholders in the relevant localities and state government agencies. The Department of Health, the Mental Health Commission and the Commissioner of Police have contributed to that evaluation and have provided relevant data on the trial.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: How many FTE within the department are dedicated to the banned drinkers register?

Dr A.D. BUTI: There are three.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: My question refers back to, once, again, the regulation and reform on page 547, paragraph 8, and the significant impact it will have on the department. There has been a lot of turnover in the department, as has been pointed out. How many staff have commenced and ceased over the last financial year?

The CHAIR: Member, I think that is a little vague for the minister.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Yes. I do not consider that relevant to this budget process.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: From the human resources issues or the FTE numbers that we were given to us earlier, I understand there has been quite some turnover.

The CHAIR: Yes, member, there were some figures given. But the extent to which you are asking now, I do not think that is something that is in the minister's capacity to be able to give you.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I am happy to turn back to page 554.

The CHAIR: No.

Dr A.D. BUTI: If the member wants to put a detailed question on notice, he can, and it may be able to be answered. I can give the member the commencement figures. This year, 28 FTE have started and 21 have left.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Did that take the number back up to around 117 FTE?

Dr A.D. BUTI: There are some vacancies, but they have been allocated around the 117 FTEs.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to page 546 under spending changes and new initiative, and the line item "Critical Maintenance issues". That line has \$1.6 million as an isolated item for this budget year. What is that funding for?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I do not think any of that is related to this portfolio; I am not sure. What is the member referring to?

Ms L. METTAM: Critical maintenance issues.

Dr A.D. BUTI: No; that is culture and arts.

The CHAIR: We still have multicultural interest to come under this division. Are there questions on that? I am sure the member for Mirrabooka might have one; we should have a cameo appearance by the government!

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I can ask one under multicultural.

The CHAIR: Excellent. What page?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I refer to page 565 and the line item “Multicultural Community Grants Program”. How is this allocation of \$1.06 million to this sector divided up, and how many agencies support this important sector?

Dr A.D. BUTI: This program is an annual half a million-dollar commitment from the Office of Multicultural Interests. Funding has been increased by \$500 000, doubling the budget to allow an annual \$1 million grant to now be provided for groups to apply for. This funding is provided to empower culturally and linguistically diverse communities throughout Western Australia to design, deliver and partner on projects that address their needs. An increase in funding will enable us to support activities that allow CALD communities to celebrate and promote WA’s diversity, build the capacity of individuals and communities, contribute to the civic and economic life of the state and improve the accessibility and effectiveness of services. There are a number of organisations, but the member can put a question on notice and I can give him the organisations that have received funding. Otherwise, does the member want me to read them all out, like last year? I could start doing it!

[6.30 pm]

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: No. I do not think that it is necessary to read them all out; thanks, minister.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Okay. But a number of organisations in the cities and regions have received funding, including the Shire of Katanning for the Katanning Harmony Festival. Unfortunately, COVID upset the arrangements this year. It is an outstanding festival that I hope to get to next year, member for Roe.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: It has an outstanding local member, too, and we are looking forward to the minister’s attendance next year!

Dr A.D. BUTI: I will be there, and I know that the member is going to be a great host.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to page 548 under multicultural interests and paragraph 14, in which there is reference to the department overseeing a cross-agency collaborative response to ensure the necessary services and social infrastructure supports. What agencies are involved in this cross-agency collaboration, and what funding is associated with, and attached to, this objective?

Dr A.D. BUTI: From my understanding, it is actually across all agencies, particularly health, the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and the Department of Communities. But I can ask for some elaboration from Mr Jegasothy.

Mr J. Jegasothy: Thank you, member. Thank you, minister. This is a collaboration with many state government agencies, primarily including those that support people in their settlement period. Those agencies include health, which provides vital services, the Department of Communities, which supports people who are vulnerable, and the Mental Health Commission. It also includes collaboration with federal government agencies, including those that provide social services and the Department of Home Affairs.

Ms L. METTAM: Are there any attached specific projects that shape this collaboration or funding?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Mr Jegasothy.

Mr J. Jegasothy: There is no funding attached from the Department of Local Government, Sport, and Cultural Industries. However, it does involve a number of recent collaborations with the Department of Health in regard to access to critical health services for people coming from Ukraine and Afghanistan who would be on temporary visas prior to being transitioned to visas whereby they would be eligible for federal government services, and similarly with the Department of Communities.

The appropriation was recommended.

Racing and Wagering Western Australia —

Ms M.M. Quirk, Chair.

Dr A.D. Buti, Minister for Racing and Gaming.

Mr I. Edwards, Chief Executive Officer.

Mrs C. Mills, Chief Racing Officer.

Mr M. Kavanagh, Senior Policy Adviser.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIR: Members, we are dealing with Racing and Wagering and the Burswood Park Board. I have a preliminary statement while your advisers are coming in, minister. This estimates committee will be reported by Hansard. The daily proof *Hansard* will be available online as soon as possible within two business days. Questions must relate to the operations and budget of the off-budget authority. I will allow as many questions as possible. Questions and answers should be short and to the point.

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

I call the member for Roe.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Thank you. Firstly, I wish Charlotte the best in her new venture over in Victoria.

Dr A.D. BUTI: What line of the budget is that on?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I refer to page 303, part 4, and Racing and Wagering in Western Australia. My first question relates to the works in progress table and I refer to business systems and products. There is a significant reduction in funding for this line item from \$22.93 million to just \$200 000 in the 2023–24 out year, and then \$1.6 million in 2024–25. Can the minister explain the changes in this funding?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Yes. I will ask Mr Edwards to answer that.

Mr I. Edwards: Thank you, minister. The big number that happened in the past was largely around the build of some of our key wagering systems. Those are very big capital projects that are typically one-off in their nature and will not be repeated at that kind of scale. What is left in the out years is clearly some smaller business improvements, but not the build of a new system as such.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: What were those bigger items in that originally large capital amount?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Mr Edwards.

Mr I. Edwards: The biggest amount within it was the build of our bet engine, which is the system that receives and processes all the bets through the TAB. We built that some years ago, and that would have been in the double figures—millions—so that would be by far the biggest single amount within that number.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Minister, I guess this leads on to the sale of the TAB, or I can deal with that in another question, if you like?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I do not think the member will find the TAB in a line item of this division.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: All right. I refer to page 136 of the *Budget statements*, which states —

The Government recommenced the sale of the Western Australian TAB ... and ... is working closely with Racing and Wagering Western Australia to progress the transaction.

Can the minister update me on the progress of how that sale is going?

The CHAIR: Member, this is under Treasury, which is another division.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Yes.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Member, the Treasurer was asked this earlier today, from my understanding.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: If that is the case, I will revert to page 303. But, chair, it does refer to —

The CHAIR: There is no point in canvassing my ruling. The fact that it refers to it another division does not give the member the capacity to ask questions in this division, as I understand it.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Yes. I guess my question was that —

The CHAIR: There is no point in asking it.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Go and listen to what the Treasurer responded to. The member will find the answer there.

[6.40 pm]

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Okay. The *Budget statements* refer to the fact that Treasury is working closely with racing and wagering, but I will move back to page 303, part 4, and the works in progress table. The next line down is other works and has the estimated expenditure of \$14.5 million this year, which drops by 86 per cent to \$1.97 million in the 2024–25 out year. What does other works involve, and why is there a drop in funding of such significance?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Mr Edwards, would you like to answer that?

Mr I. Edwards: Sure, thank you. This line covers items similar to the wagering systems we discussed earlier. This line is specific to our racing systems, or racing developments projects, and so it is specific to the racing industry. Again, in the past, there were things in that line around the purchase of property or the building of racing systems. What is in there for the future is more upgrades to existing systems—for example, a single national system through which we administer the thoroughbred code, and any upgrades to that, or in relation to that, are contained within that line.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Minister, what I am seeing here in these line items is a drop off in expenditure. Considering that racing and wagering is working closely with the sale of the TAB, are these drop offs in the works and budget line items related to the sale of the TAB?

Dr A.D. BUTI: No.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: That is a no?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Yes.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I refer to the third line item “Racing Systems Infrastructure and Minor Capital”. Once again, there is another significant drop in funding of 79 per cent from the estimate of this financial year of \$5.7 million to \$1.2 million in the forward estimates. Can the minister enlighten me as to what that one is all about?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Mr Edwards.

Mr I. Edwards: Thank you, minister. The \$1.2 million, which is in the out year, is really in relation to minor upgrades at owned facilities—for example, the Greyhounds as Pets facility or the Off the Track WA Estate, both of which we own. The \$3.1 million in the year 2022–23 is inclusive of a purchase of a second Greyhounds as Pets facility and the purchase of the existing one, which is currently leased. Therefore, the \$3.1 million is a little higher than what the \$1.2 million in the outer years is, which represents the improvements made to those sites.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Are there any works in that line item for the harness industry in relation to infrastructure and minor capital?

Dr A.D. BUTI: No.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: There is nothing in there. Therefore, is that particular line item basically all focused around the Greyhounds as Pets program?

Dr A.D. BUTI: What the member has to understand is that this does not include funding that RWWA gives to the industry. There is funding for various parts of the industry; it is just not within the budget.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: The next line down is “Wagering Systems and Products”. There is a significant drop off again in funding: \$43 million to \$5.7 million in the 2025–26 out year. Can the minister outline what the situation is there?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Before I answer it, I will say that the member’s line of questioning it is interesting. Because we have funding for a particular year—it might be for a particular reason—it does not mean the funding has to continue at that inflated level. However, to answer the member’s question, the \$5.1 million is for the development of wagering products to stay relevant for the wagering market, so that means it is for a specific purpose. It does not mean we have to keep it at that funding level forever. But, Mr Edwards, would you like to add to that?

Mr I. Edwards: I will add to that for further clarification perhaps. The \$5.1 million—in fact, that line for all the outer years—is typically people’s time, so it is for squads of teams who are working on developments to the TABtouch app, for example. It is capital investment, but it is effectively people’s time.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I refer to paragraph 1.3 on page 103. There are \$2.5 million for other works, including racing development projects, upgrades to the thoroughbred racing system and the racehorse welfare facility. Are those works completed or are they in progress? Can I have an update on those?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I will ask Mr Edwards.

Mr I. Edwards: Yes. There is a range of things in there, but they are typically in progress or planned rather than completed.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Is that money all about thoroughbreds, or is there any money for harness facilities or harness upgrades?

Dr A.D. BUTI: In regard to the Off the Track racehorse welfare facility, it is for harness and thoroughbreds.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Okay. Therefore, that money is for a combination of both.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Yes.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Are the horses that end up at the Off the Track WA Estate from right around the state—from our country racetracks, harness tracks, metropolitan tracks and the like?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Yes, indeed.

The CHAIR: That completes the examination of Racing and Wagering Western Australia. The last one we have is the Burswood Park Board.

Burswood Park Board —

Ms M.M. Quirk, Chair.

Dr A.D. Buti, Minister for Racing and Gaming.

Ms L. Kut, Chief Executive.

Ms A. Kidson, Senior Policy Adviser.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIR: This estimates committee will be reported by Hansard. The daily proof *Hansard* will be available online as soon as possible within two business days. Questions must relate to the operations and budget of the off-budget authority. I will allow as many questions as possible. Questions and answers should be short and to the point.

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

I call the member for Roe.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I refer to page 305 and the line item “Rolling Asset Replacement Program”, which is \$1.7 million over the out years. What is that program, and what are the priorities that are identified?

Dr A.D. BUTI: That line item involves upgrades to various existing park assets that are required due to the aging nature of those assets and the maintenance costs that have become increasingly more expensive and need to be upgraded. Also, the investment program is needed to reduce the risk of failure of certain assets on site and to meet the needs of the community.

[6.50 pm]

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I refer to the same page, further down the line to the master plan under new works. I refer to the Zipline investment of nearly \$527 000 for the ablutions and the Zipline zone. Has the contract been awarded for those items?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I might ask the CEO.

Ms L. Kut: The works are being done in collaboration with Main Roads. The actual contracts have not been awarded as yet but are due to be done in the next couple of months.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: What is the total investment for the Zipline master plan as such? Is there no other change to this \$527 000 figure?

Dr A.D. BUTI: No.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Does that figure include just the ablutions and the area around the Zipline, or is that cost a separate scenario?

Dr A.D. BUTI: Ms Kut.

Ms L. Kut: The Zipline activation itself is a Main Roads activity, and the Burswood Park Board is supporting the activity in the area by providing ablutions. The toilets are a good 1.2 kilometres away in the park. This is a facility within the Burswood Park Board, so, in support of the activity, the ablutions are being provided. In addition, there are some gazebos and barbeques that, as a park, we will provide as part of the community service.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Does the minister intend to go down the Zipline at some stage?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I am always up for a challenge. Will the member join me?

The CHAIR: That completes the examination of the Burswood Park Board. This committee is adjourned until 9.00 tomorrow morning. I now vacate the chair.

Committee adjourned at 6.52 pm
