

Division 27: Aboriginal Affairs, \$35 144 000 —

Mr I.C. Blayney, Chairman.

Dr K.D. Hames, Minister for Health representing the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.

Mr C.G. Weeks, Director General.

Mr A. Rayner, Chief Heritage Officer.

Ms D. Bentley, Chief Land Officer.

Mr J. Strickland, Acting Executive Director, Community Development.

Mr G. Kar, Acting Executive Director, Corporate Services.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIRMAN: The member for Victoria Park.

Mr B.S. WYATT: I refer to page 316, “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency”, and hopefully the director general will be able to address my question. The Aboriginal Legal Service has contacted me about the Aboriginal Sentencing Court in Kalgoorlie. The Department of the Attorney General is currently undertaking a review of that court and the consternation of the ALS is that it has been told there will be no stakeholder consultations as part of this review. Is the Department of Aboriginal Affairs aware of the review and will it have the capacity to assist the Department of the Attorney General in that review, particularly with a round of recommendations?

Dr K.D. HAMES: Mr Weeks will answer that question.

Mr C.G. Weeks: No, I am not aware of that. About six weeks ago I did a presentation to the ALS board, and we mentioned a one-stop shop facility in Kalgoorlie and its interest in the DAA being able to coordinate those types of services. We had a conversation about that, but, no, I am not aware of the review. Now that I am, I will certainly contact the director general of the Department of the Attorney General and make sure we are involved.

Mr B.S. WYATT: Excellent answer. Thank you, director general.

Ms L.L. BAKER: I refer to the “Spending Changes” heading on page 314 and the line item “Extension of Aboriginal Community Patrols”. This table shows that a lot of patrols have been extended for one year. There is \$2.5 million allocated to that line item for this year, and then nothing past that time. Is the minister expecting a big rush?

Mr C.G. Weeks: There is base funding for patrols of about \$2.7 million a year, and funding has been rolled over each financial year with which we have expanded the services. We went back to the Economic and Expenditure Reform Committee this year to seek further funding, but we are in the middle of a review, so the EERC has extended it for another 12 months, but we are obviously trying to get that as permanent funding across the out years.

Mr B.S. WYATT: Is the review into the patrols being conducted by DAA?

Mr C.G. Weeks: It is.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Is it an internal review?

Mr C.G. Weeks: We have engaged an external contractor. Mr Strickland has more information on that.

Mr J. Strickland: Quantum Consulting Australia has been engaged. It is currently undertaking a review and is due to finish it in about September this year.

Mr B.S. WYATT: Was that review commissioned by DAA?

Dr K.D. HAMES: Yes.

Ms L.L. BAKER: Will the community patrols pick up the Nyoongar Patrol as well?

Mr C.G. Weeks: Yes, all the patrols.

Ms L.L. BAKER: Can the minister give us an estimate of the cost of the review?

Dr K.D. HAMES: Mr Weeks will answer that question.

Mr C.G. Weeks: We have procured that, so Mr Strickland will know the answer.

Mr J. Strickland: Approximately \$68 000.

Mr B.S. WYATT: I have a more general question—more out of curiosity—about the role of the DAA in issuing move-on notices and prohibited behaviour orders. Answers I recently received in respect of PBOs state that in 2012, 50 per cent of PBOs were given to Aboriginals. In 2013, up to—

Dr K.D. HAMES: We need a page number and a line item.

Mr B.S. WYATT: I refer to page 316, “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency”. In 2013, Aboriginal people received 50 per cent of the PBOs issued. Does the department engage with the police or the Department of the Attorney General on the issuance of move-on notices, particularly when picking up those people? I will refer to one instance—I have the transcript on my computer—of a decision made this year involving an Aboriginal man who since 2006 has been issued with 463 move-on notices, and in the first four months of 2013 he has been issued with 31. The magistrate outlined the fact that this was a man with significant alcohol and sniffing addictions. He was homeless and lived in the area from which he was moved on, so he continued to return. When picking up these people, particularly homeless Aboriginal people, is the department engaged with the relevant government authorities to get a result outside this continual issuance of move-on notices and PBOs et cetera?

[5.10 pm]

Dr K.D. HAMES: Mr Weeks will answer that.

Mr C.G. Weeks: We rely mainly on patrols. Last year patrols had 82 000 contacts. The patrol program works on diversions and referrals, so we are getting people who are at risk of committing an offence and going to a lockup. With any sort of incident, the patrols actually divert them and will take them to either a sobering-up shelter or a safe place. In terms of the regional coordination, I chair the Aboriginal Affairs Coordinating Committee, which comprises the Commissioner of Police, the director general of housing and a whole range of government agencies. At a local level I can talk about Port Hedland, where we are heavily involved in working with people who are in Port Hedland for services and, I guess, a degree of homelessness. We have a role of trying to link them up with the service providers, so we will refer to housing or to a not-for-profit organisation. Obviously, we are trying to find policy responses to that. A difficult situation we have with community people is that they have a permanent residence in a remote community and then they come into town for services, so they do not qualify for permanent housing but they obviously need a place where they can be safe and access services before they go home.

Mr B.S. WYATT: There is no need to respond. This person clearly lives in the city, so he is being moved on continually from where he lives. Ultimately, a prohibited behaviour order is issued and inevitably broken. I was curious about whether the department was engaged in that space through the coordinating committees where that will take place.

Mr C.G. Weeks: We have worked with the City of Perth previously and provided some funding to look at homelessness in the CBD. I met with a lady last week—I cannot remember her name—who runs the homelessness awareness program. There are a lot of service providers out there, and we are finding that our role is moving more into making sure that people on the front line are able to access those services and make the referral.

Mr J.E. McGRATH: My question is more of a general one. It could probably be put under the spending changes on page 314. I was recently in Derby and I met some people there, in particular a gentleman who runs a drop-in centre for young Aboriginal children. It is run by the local council with some funding from government. These kids go to the drop-in centre after school. It is somewhere for them to go before they eventually go home. The issue is that some of these kids are going home to houses where there is no family life and it is a terrible environment. Sometimes they will go home and spend all night in that house in difficult conditions and go to school the next day without having a meal. The more this gentlemen talked to me about it, the more I realised that in this area this is a big issue, and I am sure it is an issue in a lot of other places. I have since written to the Premier and asked whether there is any way that government can help. These people would like to see in Derby some sort of safe house so that those kids would not have to go home at night if they were going to be in a situation that could be dangerous for them or could really have an impact on them. Do we have those sorts of places in some of these country towns? If we had to find some funding, would that funding come through the Department for Child Protection and Family Support or the Department of Health? Where might that funding come from, and what sort of work has this agency encountered in this regard or what sort of work has it done?

Dr K.D. HAMES: The member will be aware that Derby is not the only community that has this problem. In fact, it is endemic, in my view, across the whole of Western Australia, and not just for Aboriginal communities, of course; it is endemic for dysfunctional families of any colour or creed. Obviously, it is particularly a problem in Indigenous communities, and especially in remote Indigenous communities. But I will ask Mr Weeks to provide further answers.

Mr C.G. Weeks: Yes, it is something that the Department for Child Protection and Family Support will do through its safe houses. I used to work in the Department of Housing, and I know that in remote communities when we had been fixing up houses before, we had looked when the community had asked whether the department could allocate a vacant house for that purpose. There is some flexibility in doing that. I presented at a

Mr Ben Wyatt; Dr Kim Hames; Ms Lisa Baker; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr John McGrath; Mr Murray Cowper

Western Australian Local Government Association conference about two weeks ago, and I spoke to Elsia Archer, who is the shire president for Derby. Our commitment to Derby is that we have a permanent officer based in Derby. That position is vacant at the moment because that officer is doing other duties, but we see Derby as a priority location with some of the issues it has been facing. The previous Department of Indigenous Affairs employee was doing a whole range of youth activities with the young kids up there. But the member is right; we can do that during daylight hours, but at the end of the day they are going home to an environment that can have a whole range of issues. I know there is an appetite to do things around that, and again it is something that we will discuss with that agency and try to find a solution.

Ms L.L. BAKER: My question is really looking for an explanation of the spending changes on page 314. I refer to the line item “Public Sector Workforce Reform”. In 2013–14, there is \$601 000, and then \$44 000. I know that I should not look at the forward estimates because they do not count, but when I see \$44 000 and then \$1.4 million, I would like an explanation of what it means.

Dr K.D. HAMES: I think that is a very good question.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Forward estimates do count, but they just do not count with the Premier.

Ms L.L. BAKER: No, not according to the Premier.

Dr K.D. HAMES: No, forward estimates count as an estimate. They are not the budget for that year. Nevertheless, the member for Maylands makes a good point; that is, there does seem to be a jump, and we need to find out from Mr Weeks, who is frantically searching through his notes, exactly what the explanation is.

Mr C.G. Weeks: I might refer that one to Mr Glen Kar, the executive director for corporate services.

Mr G. Kar: A new public sector wages policy takes effect from November 2013. That revolves around the fact that agencies have now moved away from full-time equivalent ceilings to a salary cap. In terms of the actual increase, I would have to take that question on notice. I am not quite sure what the magnitude of that increase is.

Dr K.D. HAMES: Let everyone be clear what we are talking about. At the bottom of page 314 is the line item “Public Sector Workforce Reform”. For the current financial year, the department is giving up \$601 000. The following year that drops to \$44 000, and the year after that it goes up to \$1.418 million. The question is: why does it go up to \$1.418 million?

Ms L.L. BAKER: Maybe it is the a result of the review.

Dr K.D. HAMES: I do not know. Does anyone know?

Mr C.G. Weeks: I cannot explain the variance in 2015–16. Obviously, it is about the new public sector wages policy, which is linked to the consumer price index. But if I can take it on notice, we will get some more information on that one.

Ms L.L. BAKER: That would be great.

Dr K.D. HAMES: I do not understand.

Mr C.G. Weeks: I do not understand the trend.

Dr K.D. HAMES: I think we need to provide that as supplementary information. We will find an explanation for —

Ms L.L. BAKER: It is probably a very easy explanation, but it is —

Dr K.D. HAMES: — the big increase in the reduction in 2015–16 for the tenth line item on page 314.

[*Supplementary Information No A56.*]

Mr P. PAPALIA: I refer to the second dot point on page 316, which states —

The Sub-Committee will work closely with the Aboriginal Affairs Coordinating Committee ...

My questions relates specifically to the Aboriginal Affairs Coordinating Committee, whose objectives are listed in that dot point. Generally, the idea is that it will improve coordination, stop duplication and enhance effectiveness across government. Has the department overseen or commissioned any research to identify specific areas of need—that is, geographical areas of need—perhaps using measures such as incarceration rates and disproportionate representation of specific communities or neighbourhoods? I am talking about research independent of the department conducted by perhaps academics or other individuals to provide some insight into where we might more effectively target our activities.

[5.20 pm]

Dr K.D. HAMES: That is an interesting question and I look forward to hearing the answer. This committee was in the legislation. It lapsed under Labor years, but was then re-formed when I became the responsible minister. It allows all the directors general to get together on a regular basis to coordinate services between them to make sure that everyone is working together and not independently, as they did in the past. I would not have thought it was part of their roles, but one never knows.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Further to what the minister said, when was the committee reconstituted?

Dr K.D. HAMES: It was when we won government and I became minister—so in 2009, was that? Mr Walker, the chief executive at the time, played a big role in re-forming that committee; in fact, he advised me that it had not operated for some time but that it was required under the act and that I should re-form it, which I subsequently did, with him as the chair.

Mr P. PAPALIA: In the subsequent 18 months the incarceration rate in Western Australia increased by 27 per cent.

Dr K.D. HAMES: I think that is a statement, Mr Chair, not a question.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Forty per cent of them were Aboriginals.

The CHAIRMAN: Member for Warnbro.

Dr K.D. HAMES: That is the role of that organisation, but Mr Weeks will tell us more.

Mr C.G. Weeks: The Aboriginal Affairs Coordinating Committee has not directly commissioned any of that work, but it is aware of that work and uses a lot of demographic and census data. In 2009, the AACC picked out three priority locations to focus on. They were a remote community, Oombulgurri; a regional centre, Roebourne; and a metropolitan suburb, Armadale. At the time those locations were presenting some difficulty for people in lower socio-economic circumstances. The AACC has not really gone past that point, but at the moment it is looking at some place-based approaches around Kwinana and linking that in to police statistics showing where a lot of crime occurs. It is trying to get more sophisticated, but getting that data to connect is the key aim at the moment.

Mr P. PAPALIA: That is interesting. Does the AACC have the capacity, funding or ability to consider consulting criminologists, for example, or appropriately qualified academics independent of government in whatever particular field of expertise it may be to provide an independent assessment of what might be hotspots or—the reverse of a hotspot—an area of opportunity? What might be the best place to locate our renewed efforts?

Dr K.D. HAMES: I will leave that question free of political interference, even though I would like to give an answer myself, and see what Mr Weeks says.

Mr C.G. Weeks: In this budget, the department does not have a plan at the moment, but that is the core business of each of those line agencies. As part of preventive strategies, working together, I can make contact with some of those agencies involved in that space and find out more about that research and how they connect in. The department has relationships with the universities around a whole range of issues. Off the top of my head, I am not sure about the criminology aspect.

Dr K.D. HAMES: Further to that answer on the way the Aboriginal Affairs Coordinating Committee works, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs provides an administrative supportive role, but the Aboriginal Affairs Coordinating Committee is simply directors general from each government department getting together regularly for a meeting to discuss how they are working together. It does not have a budget of its own. If that group of directors together, particularly with the influence of Mr Weeks, says that this would be really valuable to our work as a department and to the committee, they could ask that a review be undertaken. That would then have to be funded through the Treasury process and organised by whatever director general was representative of whoever needed to do the survey. They would ask him to go off and do it; the committee does not have a budget in its own right.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I preface my further question by saying that my previous question was not meant to be accusatory or anything of that nature, and I understand the limitations of the departments to influence these things. However, in that coordinating role, has the department considered that at the moment there is no externally generated research within the Department of Corrective Services, whereby academics or other individuals access data to provide research from outside government? If there is research, it is being conducted directly at the behest of the department. I do not know whether that is true of other departments that participate in this committee. Has the committee considered, even without a budget, its ability to guide and urge departments to consider external expertise as a contribution to tackling the problem of greatly disproportionate representation of Indigenous people in the justice system?

Mr C.G. Weeks: Absolutely. The coordinating committee is a statutory committee, but in reality we are working together, because some of these solutions, especially around justice issues, will not come from one agency. Rather than sitting there and requesting all the responses from corrective services, it is my job to bring those other agencies together to ensure that we come up with a coordinated approach. Depending on the life continuum, there are certain entry points at which people make decisions on the pathways they take. That involves every service delivery agency. We do not want Aboriginal people to end up being incarcerated more than any other group, so we must ensure we are preventing that. We can do that only by coordinating those other service delivery agencies to make the impact that they need to.

Mr M.J. COWPER: I refer to page 316, and have a similar question. I note that in April 2013 the cabinet subcommittee was established, of which the minister is the chair.

Dr K.D. HAMES: No.

Mr M.J. COWPER: Why was this subcommittee established? Did it have anything to do with enhancing the work of the coordinating committee, because, as I understand it, it is attended by directors of various government departments?

Dr K.D. HAMES: No; as you can see, Mr Chair, I am not the chair. The chair is the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Hon Peter Collier. However, I do attend it and I am a member. It was created largely to look at the range of services provided by different government departments to Aboriginal groups and what mechanisms are in place to ensure that there is knowledge of what services are provided by all the different government departments and to look at the KPIs on performance across those departments. For example, in health, I fund, for a lot of money, a very large number of different services to Aboriginal communities, as do the Department for Communities, the Department of Sport and Recreation and so on. I take to that committee all the services that my department provides and report on the KPIs attached to those, and at the same time look at what other government departments are doing. There is a strong suspicion that three or four government departments may be commissioning exactly the same service for the same Aboriginal community without having proper KPIs on the outcomes. We want to look across the system to see whether we can get better value for money. If my department, the Department for Communities and the Department of Sport and Recreation are funding the same thing, let us try to get one provider of the funds, with clear outcomes, so that we know what we are funding. The difficulty is finding out what the commonwealth funds, because there is a vast lack of knowledge about what the commonwealth funds directly in Indigenous communities and how that goes together. It is a good idea. We are happy to put our stuff on the table. We think we monitor ours well. We have good contracts and good KPIs in place. It will be interesting to see what other government departments do.

[5.30 pm]

Mr M.J. COWPER: I refer to the committee that the various directors general attend. I note from reading some documentation that some directors general attend quite promptly, and others do not. I wonder whether Mr Weeks thinks there is some room for improvement in that area.

Dr K.D. HAMES: The member is asking Mr Weeks to do on the other directors! I do not know whether that is the case. It is a critically important committee. When I was Minister for Aboriginal Affairs 15 years ago, I remember going along to a meeting and learning that the Department of Health had decided to fund a sewerage system in a remote Aboriginal community—I think it might have been Wiluna—but the Water Corporation, which was responsible for managing that system, had absolutely no idea that this sewerage system was going to be put in place. These agencies found out about this plan when they were sitting next to each other around the table. It is critical to get that level of communication. I will ask Mr Weeks whether he wants to do on his fellow directors general!

Mr M.J. COWPER: I am not asking him to do; I am simply asking whether there is room for improvement in diligent attendance at these meetings.

Mr C.G. Weeks: Directors general have to attend a range of meetings. But they are very good, and if they cannot attend, they will send proxies. It is important that messages get back to agencies. I do not have an attendance list on me, but certainly the creation of this cabinet subcommittee puts a different perspective on that group. One of the challenges for the agency is that it should go through and provide that accountability role across government. The creation of a cabinet subcommittee reinforces the Department of Aboriginal Affairs' role across the rest of government.

Dr K.D. HAMES: That new cabinet subcommittee, particularly with the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs as its chair, will make the agencies that are on that committee lift their game in that area.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Clearly, the establishment of that subcommittee is an indication that the directors general, through their coordinating committee, have failed.

Dr K.D. HAMES: That is an extreme point of view to take. Those different directors general undertake a huge range of services and work in coordinating the services of their departments. Our subcommittee focuses particularly on funding processes for the delivery of services and how effective they are. We might get together and find it is all working beautifully, but time will tell. As I said in the health division, we are happy to put our stuff on the table. It helps when we are funding something. I have to say that we have not found everything is all sweetness and light in the range of non-government organisation funding in total. Although I have found nothing like this with the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, I found that my department was funding three separate organisations to provide swimming classes that would help prevent drowning. I wondered how on earth that would happen, but it was through circumstances along the way that different people put up projects and we funded them, and so it goes. We do not necessarily know in health what the Department for Communities is doing. It funds a lot of programs for Indigenous groups for things that may not relate exactly to health but are often linked to good, healthy outcomes. It is far better that we learn to work together. I know the member for Warnbro's glass is half empty, and mine is half full! That is the difference.

Mr B.S. WYATT: I refer to the dot point under "Heritage Reforms" on page 316 of budget paper No 2, which refers to the department developing a package of technical amendments. What is the focus of those amendments? Will there be changes to the register and the level of protection given to Aboriginal heritage sites; and when will that legislation be presented to Parliament?

Mr C.G. Weeks: I will pass this question to the chief heritage officer, but I will give some context first. The number one goal that we are trying to achieve is a balanced response to the heritage regime. The reality is that a whole range of proponents use that system to do work; it is not just industry undertaking mining, but local government doing infrastructure and facilities for the community. It is important we get a balance between those things and protecting Aboriginal heritage. We are focusing on significant heritage sites, as opposed to some that may be insignificant.

Mr B.S. WYATT: Will there be a distinction between significant and insignificant heritage sites through the changes?

Mr C.G. Weeks: Yes; the Aboriginal Heritage Act distinguishes between places and sites that are protected.

Mr B.S. WYATT: As a result of that, will sites come off the current register because they are deemed insignificant?

Mr C.G. Weeks: There is no intention to take sites off the register, but their classification as a site or a place is something that we will have to reassess.

Mr B.S. WYATT: Mr Weeks talked about a balanced response. Is it the department's view that the balance is too strongly in favour of sites going on the register?

Mr C.G. Weeks: I guess we have had 20 years of undertaking heritage processes. To be honest, what has happened is that the department has not classified a lot of those places as it should have. There are now items on the register that will be seen by people who log into the system as an identified heritage site, but it has not actually been classified by the department or the Aboriginal Cultural Material Committee. The department does not classify a site; the ACMC does.

Dr K.D. HAMES: I have worked in this field, not only as the minister for six or seven years, but also in the private sector with an Aboriginal heritage consultant firm for four years, and it is a dog's breakfast trying to work it out. Some of those sites were reported and classified without due diligence, and if we get a proper assessment of those sites by the ACMC, we will find that a site could be where somebody happened to camp for a night and for some reason it is registered as a site; but others that are very significant sites do not necessarily have adequate designations. It is good to have a review done to look at some of those issues and to get more clarity. We know that when the review is done, there will be sites that were registered 40 years ago because some very small artefacts were scattered around, but when someone goes to that site now there is nothing to be found, yet it is still registered as a site. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs does not have the staff to go out and assess those sites to make a determination as to what they are. It has to be done over time. As reports come in from people who are doing what I used to do as a consultant identifying the nature of sites, we need to get that on a proper register.

Mr B.S. WYATT: On the issue of due diligence of sites that have appeared without a referral from the ACMC, as a result of these proposed amendments, will the ACMC be required to review those sites or will that link between the ACMC and the head register be removed?

Mr C.G. Weeks: At the moment, when there is a proposal to develop a site that is on the register, the ACMC will be involved through that process. There is not a discrete process running parallel to that; it is through the section 18 process.

Dr K.D. HAMES: The reality is that a site should not be taken off the register until it has been reviewed. If there is an area that has not been reviewed and it has been there forever, it should stay there until someone has put in a proposal and it is properly assessed under section 18 by an archaeologist and an anthropologist, and then the ACMC can make a determination on whether that site should or should not remain on the register.

Mr B.S. WYATT: Will any change to the register come about as a result of those future processes—if you see what I am saying?

Dr K.D. HAMES: The answer is that it will come about through those future processes, as it should.

Mr B.S. WYATT: I asked when that legislation was likely to come to Parliament.

Dr K.D. HAMES: I will ask Mr Weeks if he has any idea whether that has been drawn up yet for cabinet.

Mr C.G. Weeks: It is very close to going to cabinet. Without giving a specific date, it is very close; it is imminent.

[5.40 pm]

Mr B.S. WYATT: Is that in terms of consultation with various Aboriginal groups? Is it something that has been factored in? This will cause some consternation, simply because the Heritage Act is being amended; regardless of the nature of the amendments, it will cause some consternation. Is there a process to consult, educate and inform Aboriginal groups around the state?

Mr C.G. Weeks: It is hard to talk about detail with it imminently going to cabinet, but government went out and consulted on the previous review done by Dr John Avery, so —

Mr B.S. WYATT: I think there were seven or 10 different Avery proposals, from memory; I will have to revisit some of them. Some proposed changes to the act and others did not; some were more administrative in nature. Are the technical changes reflective of those Avery discussion points?

Dr K.D. HAMES: I do not think I can say what is in it until we release it, but I noticed that the chief executive officer nodded.

Mr B.S. WYATT: He affirmed it?

Dr K.D. HAMES: He did. I do not know if one can nod in the negative!

Mr B.S. WYATT: In respect of governance and leadership, has a business case been completed and has it been approved by the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs? I note that this has been around for a little while now.

Dr K.D. HAMES: What page are you on?

Mr B.S. WYATT: Page 319. The department is waiting for royalties for regions money to fund this program. A question was asked in the upper house about this issue, and the answer was that the government was waiting on a business case to be presented to both the Minister for Regional Development and the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. No doubt the department is aware that some people in the Kimberley are very keen to see the development of this particular program. Has a business case been developed? Has the funding arrived from royalties for regions?

Mr C.G. Weeks: There is about the twelfth iteration of a business case. The reality is that that funding was identified two or three budgets ago, so despite the time that has passed and the purpose around that funding, more and more people are becoming aware of it and are wanting to utilise those funds for different purposes, and it started growing and growing. I met with the director general of the Department of Regional Development within the last month and we had a discussion about the way forward. I know that a range of conversations have been going on, but I have asked the Department of Regional Development to meet with the Western Australian Aboriginal Advisory Council—which is one of our boards, composed of Aboriginal people—to actually start the conversation there around what the governance and leadership aspects are.

Mr B.S. WYATT: In light of the fact that it has been around for a few budgets now, is this something that we can expect to be completed within 2013–14?

Dr K.D. HAMES: That would depend on the outcome of the meeting with the Western Australian Aboriginal Advisory Council because, as I have experienced before, it sometimes has multiple views and the number of views can depend on how many people there are in the room.

Mr B.S. WYATT: That is true. I was suggesting that this is the third budget that this has appeared in, and in light of the fact that we did not get the business case to get the money from royalties for regions, given the way that royalties for regions money is disappearing, the department might want to get it done very quickly.

Dr K.D. HAMES: I think the member makes a very good point. Mr Weeks recently had that meeting and the royalties for regions people are going to sit down with the Western Australian Aboriginal Advisory Council, and that is a good idea and shows progress. I would certainly suggest that the department try to bring it to a conclusion during this current financial year.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I refer to page 317 and the FTE employees lines in the “Heritage Management” and “Accountable Government” tables. Excuse me if we have already covered this, but there seem to be dramatic shifts in the number of people. Is that internal movement? How does the department explain the dramatic changes?

Mr C.G. Weeks: Yes, it was internal movements. When I took over the agency there were a whole range of issues within the heritage space and I felt that there had been a lack of investment in that space by the agency. So I started rearranging resources within the agency to put a greater focus on heritage. The shift the member has seen from “Accountable Government” is, in part, around the conversations we have had with the Aboriginal Affairs Coordinating Committee and the Aboriginal Affairs cabinet subcommittee. The agency’s role around that has changed; it is more about holding other government departments accountable for delivering the services, rather than the Department of Aboriginal Affairs coming in with its own policy positions sometimes. It is about us rationalising and not going out and doing the business that agencies have been created for, and moving into a space where we are identifying key performance indicators and holding agencies accountable for delivering what they are supposed to, so it is a major shift.

Mr P. PAPALIA: It looks like there was an overall drop in the combined FTEs of about 10 or 12—is that right? Was that unrelated to the restructure? I am talking about the “Heritage Management” and “Accountable Government” tables. Looking at those two combined, there were 126 FTEs in 2011–12, and now the number is 114.

Mr C.G. Weeks: We have four areas: heritage management, accountable government, community development and land. The breakdown will appear in the budget papers across those areas.

Mr P. PAPALIA: So it did not change dramatically?

Mr C.G. Weeks: There has been a reduction in FTEs across the agency, but that was because we had some vacant positions at the time, so it was part of the previous efficiency dividend.

Mr P. PAPALIA: So an employee cap was imposed and the department just happened unfortunately to be down at the same time, in much the same way as the Law Reform Commission was, and got stuck with the level it was at?

Mr C.G. Weeks: We had vacant positions, so our service delivery did not change. They were unfilled positions at the time, so they were counted as part of the efficiency.

Mr P. PAPALIA: One final further question. One of the areas impacted by that was community development, which lost in the order of a third —

Dr K.D. HAMES: Where are we now?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Page 318, on the “Community Development” table, the FTE line. That area lost one third of its staff.

Mr C.G. Weeks: Community development was an area that I created in the agency. We used to have a division called corporate strategy which dealt with a range of policy issues across government. I reformed that policy division into a community development division, so a couple of the FTEs went across to heritage to supplement its numbers.

Mr B.S. WYATT: Mr Weeks referred to the key performance indicators a minute ago, and he is right: the department is not a service delivery agency. In respect of government procurement policies, there was an announcement in November last year to exempt Aboriginal enterprises from the open and effective competition policy. Does that fall under —

Dr K.D. HAMES: What page?

Mr B.S. WYATT: Page 316, under “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency”. Does that fall under the Department of Aboriginal Affairs jurisdiction to monitor in respect of other departments, or is that something that is outside the DAA’s area?

Mr C.G. Weeks: Yes it is. Through the Aboriginal Affairs Coordinating Committee, we actually developed a state Aboriginal economic participation strategy. There are 20-odd agencies that are part of that strategy, and procurement reforms were an element of that. The state government changed the procurement laws around the ability to directly contract an Aboriginal organisation for contracts under \$150 000. That was something that we

did as part of our coordination role. In terms of Aboriginal economic participation, I do not have a unit that does that, but as the chair of that coordinating committee —

[5.50 pm]

Mr B.S. WYATT: As part of that strategy, particularly that procurement policy, is there a process for reporting back to that committee? Some departments may be very active in that space and are entering into lots of contracts with lots of Aboriginal corporations around procurement, and some are not. Is there an accountability mechanism?

Mr C.G. Weeks: Yes, there is. A senior officer group meets with those key officers, and they go through and track. In the actual strategy a range of actions and agencies are allocated against those actions. So we track that, and when we collate the information—I think we are coming up close to a 12-month review—we will submit that back to the Aboriginal Affairs Coordinating Committee, and then obviously try to provide that advice back to the cabinet subcommittee as well.

Mr B.S. WYATT: Will that review look at all parts of the economic development strategy, not just the procurement component? Is that right?

Mr C.G. Weeks: Yes, absolutely. There is a range of elements in and around workforce development. There are elements strongly around enterprise development, but there are employment aspects to it as well. It is one of those things that as government agencies we all employ people, so it is about making sure that when we are looking at doing that employment, we are getting the right mix of Aboriginal people and giving them opportunities at all levels. That is something that is not only in the strategy, but also in CEO performance agreements now. So as a director general, there are key performance indicators I have to sign up to in terms of meeting Aboriginal employment targets.

Dr K.D. HAMES: As you should.

Mr B.S. WYATT: Jigalong water: how are we going?

Dr K.D. HAMES: Is the member for Victoria Park declaring an interest there before he asks the question?

Mr B.S. WYATT: My father is no longer at Jigalong —

Dr K.D. HAMES: Is he not?

Mr B.S. WYATT: — so I can now ask without any interest whatsoever!

Jigalong water: is there any update on that? I know Aboriginal Affairs does not provide the water, but the department is obviously keenly interested.

Dr K.D. HAMES: We are aware of the very long history of the water issue in Jigalong, so what is the answer?

Mr C.G. Weeks: I am aware \$10 million was allocated, which was partly water and power; look, I do not have an update on where that is at. My early advice was that the \$10 million may not be enough to actually do everything that was required, so I actually met with a board member of Infrastructure Australia. I actually proposed that this would be a great opportunity for it to demonstrate it could do an infrastructure project in an Aboriginal remote community in Western Australia. I know it has been talking about a big bucket of money it has had for a number of years, so I asked the board member to take it back to the board to consider whether it could top up the state's \$10 million. The response that came back was that it was too small a project.

Mr B.S. WYATT: What sort of a top-up would it need to be beyond that \$10 million?

Mr C.G. Weeks: Horizon Power will be scoping that out, and then the money, I believe, is with the Department of Housing, so it will scope out that project around the \$10 million budget it has. But I know there is an appetite to look at how it could deliver those services in a different way and look at the power generation and how it does the water.

Dr K.D. HAMES: I will agree, because I want the answers, that we will provide a supplementary answer to the member for Victoria Park on the progress of the water provision.

Mr B.S. WYATT: Yes, the water and power.

Dr K.D. HAMES: We will provide information on water and power services for Jigalong as a supplementary answer. In that way I will make sure that I get the answers.

Mr B.S. WYATT: Minister, that is the first time a minister has offered me supplementary information!

Dr K.D. HAMES: It is because I have to sign it off, and then I get to see the answer.

[*Supplementary Information No A57.*]

The CHAIRMAN: The Chairman is tempted to ask about the football oval at Balgo, but he will not because he cannot.

Dr K.D. HAMES: About what at Balgo?

The CHAIRMAN: The football oval at Balgo.

Dr K.D. HAMES: I am not interested in footy; I am interested in a swimming pool at Balgo.

The CHAIRMAN: They want a football oval, too.

Dr K.D. HAMES: Bad luck for you, Mr Chairman!

Mr B.S. WYATT: I refer to the line item “Stolen Wages Reparation Scheme” on page 314 of budget paper No 2. I note that, effectively, the budget for that scheme has concluded. Does the minister have the figures for the number of payments and the number of applications?

Mr C.G. Weeks: Yes, I do. We received 2 026 applications. As at 30 June 2013, 1 263 applicants were deemed eligible, and they equated to \$2.5 million in payments. Of the applications received, 757 were deemed ineligible and were closed without assessment; the others were offered a review process. So, 198 applicants have undertaken that, and the review panel has considered 75 of these at the moment. Sixty-one have been upheld as ineligible, and nine have been overturned and deemed as eligible.

Mr B.S. WYATT: What was the main reason for the ineligibility of the 757?

Mr C.G. Weeks: I do not have that information in front of me, but I can refer that to Mr Strickland, if he has the detail.

Mr J. Strickland: The main reason for them being ineligible is that they were outside of the scope of the stolen wages eligibility criteria.

Mr B.S. WYATT: Just in terms of where they were, or what?

Mr J. Strickland: We had a high proportion of people coming in who were on pastoral leases or stations, which immediately deemed them ineligible. A number were outside the age range as well, but the majority were on stations or farms and just outside the criteria.

Dr K.D. HAMES: I was involved when we set those criteria, and it was very difficult. We had some clear information that some families had had money taken from their wages at some of the institutes they were in and put into a bank account, and they never saw those funds again; those ones were clearly eligible to get funding under the stolen wages scheme. But others worked with my father, for example, on Kimberley Downs and Oakby Downs stations. They were Aboriginal families who often were still mostly living in the desert, who had come with large groups of people. They were paid only flour and sugar and meat that they slaughtered themselves, but it was not just for the half a dozen guys who were helping my father—he was just employed there—it was for the whole community group. So, even though the wage in itself was not what would be paid to someone doing that, often that benefit came to the whole community who were otherwise living off the land. There have been lots of benefits, I presume, from the changes, but sadly the changes where full wages were required, often those whole communities then ended up at places like Balgo—the member for Victoria Park knows this history better than I do. But just on the determination, a lot of people who worked on those pastoral leases were hoping that the stolen wages scheme would apply to them, but it did not; it applied to those who had had their wages garnished and could not get the money back they had earned. That is all correct, is it not?

Mr J. Strickland: Yes.

Mr B.S. WYATT: I am done.

The appropriation was recommended.

Meeting suspended from 6.00 to 7.00 pm