

**PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS**

*Statement*

**HON MARTIN ALDRIDGE (Agricultural)** [6.04 pm]: I rise tonight to raise a couple of issues before the house. I did not get a chance to comment on the seventy-third report of the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations, but a matter came to my attention during the estimates process this year that I want to raise. In the 2016–17 budget estimates hearings of the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations, I asked a question prior to the hearing of the Minister for Regional Development about the Surf Life Saving Association of Western Australia and a one-off grant of \$3.3 million. Question 11 was, in part —

- (d) *Will you provide the business case for the expenditure of funds?*

Answer: No.

- (e) *If no to (d), why not?*

Answer: The considerations with respect to the provision of the grant were subject to Cabinet deliberations. In any event the funding is continuing a suite of services many of which have been operating for a number of years and were supported by the previous Government.

It was made public by the committee on 16 October 2017. I am not sure when the committee received that information, but that was the date on which it was released by the committee. I will return to the seventy-third report of the committee, which was tabled in May this year. Section 3 of the report is about the provision of information to the committee. Members who were members of this place in the thirty-ninth Parliament would be aware that the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations did a very good report titled “Provision of Information to the Parliament”. I think it was the sixty-second report. The committee has since made a practice of reporting in its post-budget inquiry hearings which ministers refused to provide information to Parliament, which I think is very valuable. Three ministers were identified in the May report. They were the Minister for Regional Development, the Minister for Emergency Services and the Minister for Tourism. The report indicates that the Minister for Emergency Services and the Minister for Tourism met their obligations under section 82 of the Financial Management Act. Paragraph 3.5 states —

As at 22 March 2018, the Minister for Emergency Services and the Minister for Tourism had notified the Parliament and the Auditor General of their decision not to provide information to the Committee. The Committee will contact the Minister for Regional Development on that matter.

I made inquiries with the committee staff this week. I am not sure whether that correspondence with the Minister for Regional Development occurred but a report was tabled and debated in this house that identified the Minister for Regional Development’s failure to meet her obligations under section 82 of the Financial Management Act 2006. We are now 256 days past the date on which the standing committee released that information, so I think that has well and truly exceeded the 14 days required. I would like the Minister for Regional Development and her staff to consider this matter. I looked at tabled papers this week to see whether the minister had given notice to both houses of Parliament under section 82. I discovered that she had not. I not only discovered that, but I also noticed that she has never tabled a section 82 notice in this place for an answer that she has refused to provide to the Council. I think that is a very serious matter that the minister and her office should be taking on notice and considering, particularly in light of the interest of the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations in this issue.

Another matter has caused me some concern and frustration over the last fortnight. It refers to a question on notice that I asked the Minister for Education and Training. It was question on notice 1120. It stated —

I refer to question on notice No. 635, answered on 11 April 2018, and I ask again:

- (a) will the Minister please provide a detailed breakdown of the \$64 million in savings per education service cut proposed in your media statement of 13 December 2017; and
- (b) if no to (a), will the Minister please advise when the Minister’s obligations in respect to section 82 of the Financial Management Act 2006 will be completed?

The minister answered on 8 May 2018 —

- (a) There is no longer \$64 million in savings. On 11 January 2018, I announced a revised estimate of \$41 million of savings measures. Further details were provided in my response to Legislative Council Question on Notice 198.
- (b) Not applicable.

I trundled off to question on notice 198 and realised it was a question asked by Hon Alison Xamon. It was asked of the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Health, and was about psychiatric services at Joondalup Health Campus. That was odd, and then I thought that the minister might have meant question without notice 198, rather than question on notice 198. In an effort to correct the record, without wasting my one question a day in

question time, I submitted question on notice 1416 on 14 June, which was two weeks ago, in which I refer to question on notice 1120 and the minister's reference to question on notice 198, and asked whether that question was correct. To this date, I have not had an answer. That answer is not due until 23 August. It is important to note that the minister would have received this question two weeks ago, when I lodged it. I then looked at question without notice 198, which was from Hon Donna Faragher to the Minister for Education and Training. It read —

Will the minister provide a table of all savings measures that were identified by the Department of Education and approved by the minister on or before 13 December 2017 and which formed part of the minister's announcement on that same day; and, if not, why not?

I think I am on the right track. It is the same subject matter that I was inquiring about, so I think my earlier question contained the wrong reference. Hon Sue Ellery replied —

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. I am unable to provide an answer today. However, I undertake to provide an answer to this question in the next sitting week.

That takes us to 12 April, which was, I think, the next sitting week, and I believe the Leader of the House; Minister for Education and Training was away on urgent parliamentary business—no, I have jumped ahead. On Tuesday, 10 April 2018, Hon Sue Ellery provided an answer to question without notice 143. She said —

I have information for Hon Donna Faragher on question without notice 143, asked on 22 March 2018, which I undertook to provide. Part of the answer is in tabular form so I seek leave to have it incorporated into *Hansard*.

Leave was granted. It took me some time to establish the link between question without notice 143 and question without notice 198. The reason is that a correction was made by Hon Samantha Rowe on Thursday 12 April. She said —

I refer to advice that was provided to Hon Donna Faragher on Tuesday, 10 April 2018 after question time. The Minister for Education and Training advised that the information she was providing was in response to question without notice 143, which was asked on 22 March 2018. The incorrect question number was used. The information she provided was in response to question without notice 198, which was asked on 29 March 2018.

It took me the best part of a week, with the enormous assistance of our wonderful clerks and Hansard, to get to the bottom of this. It concerns me that two weeks ago I lodged question on notice 1416 which, I would have thought, would trigger within the office of the Minister for Education and Training the need to correct her answer to question on notice 1120, if I am not mistaken. That has not occurred. The other issue that it raises is that, when a member makes a correction to the record, there is no link between that correction and the original statement. Whether that is a minister answering a question, or simply a member correcting something said in error, when people examine the record it is very difficult to establish the links. In this case, I have pointed out that there were many links, and we have not actually resolved all those links yet, because I have not had a correct answer, if indeed the answer I was given was incorrect. It has not been provided yet, so somebody looking at this record in a month, a year or 100 years' time would find it very hard to establish the correct answer is to my question, for the reasons that I have set out tonight. That is something we are going to need to consider as a house. We will need some sort of technical solution to overcome this.

*Statement*

**HON SUE ELLERY (South Metropolitan — Leader of the House)** [6.14 pm]: I will just give a quick response to Hon Martin Aldridge. There are two issues, really. One is the technical point that the member raised. I am not able to assist him with that.

In the matter of trying to track down the answer and needing to seek assistance, the member should be able to seek the information through the Parliament, and I do not discourage him from doing that, but equally I invite him, if he finds himself in an incredibly frustrating position, which clearly he did, to give my office a call, and we will try to resolve the problem. If it was about tracking down the numbers, we would be happy to assist the member.