

Division 16: Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety — Services 1 to 4, Industrial Relations, \$397 155 000 —

Mr S.J. Price, Chair.

Mr W.J. Johnston, Minister for Industrial Relations.

Mr R. Sellers, Director General.

Mr I. Munns, Deputy Director General, Corporate Services and Labour Relations.

Miss M. Bendotti, Acting Executive Director, Government Sector Labour Relations.

Mr J. Kwong, Chief Financial Officer.

Ms S. North, Acting WorkSafe Western Australia Commissioner.

Mr R. Sao, Chief of Staff, Minister for Industrial Relations.

Mr J. Welch, Principal 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 those details. Some divisions are the responsibility of more than one minister. Ministers shall be examined only in relation to their portfolio responsibilities.

A minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee. I will ask the minister to clearly indicate what information they agree to provide and will then allocate a reference number. Supplementary information should be provided to the principal clerk by noon on Friday, 2 June 2023. If a minister suggests that a matter be put on notice, members should use the online questions on notice system to submit their questions.

I give the call to the member for Vasse.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to page 233, budget paper No 2, volume 1, significant issues impacting the agency. Paragraph 18 states —

... initiatives drive awareness and support the government's commitments to the Enough is Enough Parliamentary Inquiry report.

I note that the *Enough is enough 2022 progress report* ran an initial pilot program in February 2023, with courses offered to industry from March 2023. How many courses have been run since the initial pilot program in February?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I will ask the Acting WorkSafe Western Australia Commissioner to explain where we are at with that program.

Ms S. North: There are several training initiatives through the mental awareness, respect and safety program. One that has just finished its initial pilot is the Thrive at Work in Mining masterclass series for senior leaders, which looks at how mining workplaces can help workers to get and stay well. It included an online toolkit and incorporated a community of practice to build and share knowledge among that cohort. It will look to do further training. There is also a psychosocial risk program. I do not have the numbers here, but it has commenced and run for some cohorts. There is also training in specialist investigations—that is, looking into the response, investigation and management of sexual harassment in the workplace. That is running and is providing training.

Ms L. METTAM: In relation to the initial pilot program —

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Which pilot program?

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to the response, investigation and management of sexual harassment in the workplace training. I understand that an initial pilot program ran in February 2023, with courses offered to industry in March. How many courses have been run since that initial pilot?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I will invite the Acting WorkSafe Western Australia Commissioner to comment, but I hesitate because there are a range of training programs. For example, there was a training program for bystanders that ran as a pilot. We are reviewing the outcome of that pilot. We have not yet agreed to continue the funding. There are lots of different pilots. Was the member driving at the masterclass series?

Ms L. METTAM: It is the pilot that began in February 2023 and it was titled response, investigation and management of sexual harassment.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: What page is the member reading from because it is a little confusing?

Ms L. METTAM: I am referring to page 233, which refers to other initiatives that drive awareness and support of the government's commitment.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Sure. There are a number of pilot training programs, each of which has different target audiences. Some of those pilot programs are now complete and we are reviewing the outcomes; some are continuing. If the member lets me know the name of the training program, that will assist Ms North to say where that particular program is at. Without the name of the program, it is very hard for me to answer.

Ms L. METTAM: The name of the program is response, investigation and management of sexual harassment in the workplace training.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Is the program the member referring to the one that was focused internally for inspectors?

Ms L. METTAM: It involved first responders, report receivers and those involved in workplace investigation.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: It does not appear that the name the member is using is available to me in any of the documentation regarding MARS. I do not know what the member is reading from. It is not from the budget papers, which is not a problem. I am trying to establish what document the member is reading from because that will then help me to say to Ms North, "This is the one I'm referring to." At the moment, I do not know what the member is referring to.

Ms L. METTAM: There is a reference, as I have stated, in the budget papers. It states "Other initiatives drive awareness". If other pilot programs began in February 2023, we can touch on those.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I can ask Ms North to explain where each of the different pilot training programs are at if that is what the member would like.

Ms L. METTAM: The name of the program is, as I have stated, response, investigation and management of sexual harassment in the workplace.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Okay; that sounds like the one that related to inspectors at WorkSafe. Is that the one the member is referring to?

Ms L. METTAM: Yes.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I ask Ms North to speak.

Ms S. North: There are two points I would make. In terms of the inspectors, training has been rolled out to WorkSafe mine safety inspectors in relation to dealing with sexual harassment matters and other psychosocial hazards. It might also be a reference to an externally provided course around managing and investigating sexual harassment, which has been delivered by FIFO Focus in partnership with the Australian Institute of Health and Safety, the Work Health and Safety Foundation and the University of Western Australia. That pilot has been completed and, from April, it has been available for enrolments. It will be provided on an ongoing basis. I do not have a number with me of how many persons attended, but it is commercially available.

[7.10 pm]

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Just to clarify, when Ms North says that it is commercially available, it is a commercial operator and, of course, we are subsidising the cost of the course. Again, the member can go to the FIFO Focus website for the psychological risk management capability enhancement program and enrol through that address.

Ms L. METTAM: What was the overall cost? What was the government's investment in this program? The name of the program was in the government's progress report. That is where I got the name of that program from.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Again, the name the member referred to, as I understand it, relates to inspectors. Of course, that is just part of government. Work health and safety in the mining industry is funded out of an industry levy, whereas the rest of WorkSafe is funded out of general revenue. The costs that we cover for the mining part of WorkSafe come out of that fund.

Ms L. METTAM: Out of the levy?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: They come out of the levy. The levy is in surplus so there is no issue with resourcing. Because the levy is in surplus, we have funding available to us if we need additional resources.

Ms L. METTAM: What is the cost of delivering the program?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I invite Ms North to explain what is happening with the inspectors and this training program.

Ms S. North: All the inspectors have participated in that. As we bring on new inspectors, they are also trained accordingly. Specialist inspectors receive additional training and coaching on their speciality.

Ms L. METTAM: How many inspectors have been involved in that program?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I am happy for Ms North to outline the number of inspectors that are in the WorkSafe mining activity program. As Ms North explained, all the relevant inspectors have been trained, all the new inspectors are trained as they come on and specialist inspectors are trained additionally for their specialist needs.

Ms S. North: There are around 58 WorkSafe mine safety inspectors.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to the eighteenth significant issue, which is the same line item. A campaign to increase the awareness of the WorkSafe 24/7 reporting line was to commence in the first half of this year. Can the minister confirm that the promotional campaign has commenced; and, if so, what platforms and materials have been used to carry out the marketing for that?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I again invite Ms North to comment, but I will also highlight that the commitment that we made at the time we tabled our response was to do an update last year, which we did, and then report through the annual report of the department each year. The annual report is not far away and all these details will be publicly available in the very near future. It is entirely up to the member what she asks us, but I make the point that all this information is about to be published in any case. I invite Ms North to update us now.

Ms S. North: The awareness campaign is planned to commence in June. We will do different phases through that campaign. The initial phases will focus on individuals who might need to report on workplace sexual harassment and also bystanders who might also need to be educated about the ability to make reports of that type. There will also be a phase for employers, managers and persons conducting a business or undertaking on their duties around notifying, and general messaging around sexual harassment as a work health and safety hazard, particularly for the mining sector.

Ms L. METTAM: The other part of the question was about what platforms and materials will be used to undertake the marketing of that.

Ms S. North: There are multiple modes. There will be digital formats and, I believe, some signage products as well. I think there were a few other formats, but I do not have that in my notes, I am sorry.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Another issue to contemplate is that we will know where all the workplaces are. Unlike for general industry that could be anywhere, these will all have to register and so we will know their location. I have been to a number of mine sites where there is already promotional material that is often prepared by companies that highlight how people can report sexual harassment not to their own agency or HR department, but to the regulator. I think we still have a long way to travel in this area, but there have been some improvements already and we look forward to WorkSafe doing even more.

Ms L. METTAM: Thank you, minister. Can the minister confirm that the pilot program for the Respect in Mining initiative has taken place; and, if so, how many small to medium-sized mining companies have taken part?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The Respect in Mining customised program is designed to increase the awareness and knowledge of gendered drivers of violence, the impact of gender inequality on women's safety and economic security, and the impact of gendered division in leadership and decision-making. The member can get to that through the Respect in Mining website. The program is currently in development for rollout in the middle of this year. If Ms North wants to make any further comment, I invite her to do so. No. She is happy that I have let the member know where that program is at.

Ms L. METTAM: How much was set aside to fund the development of the comprehensive data management for WorkSafe, which included systems for the monitoring and reporting of sexual harassment?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I invite director deputy general Ian Munns to explain where we are at. We are bringing together two existing databases, which are the database previously run by the old WorkSafe, plus the database that was run by the old Department of Mines and Petroleum's mining safety division. It is a project. Members cannot expect it to be completed quickly because it is a very significant piece of work. I invite Mr Munns to comment.

[7.20 pm]

Mr I. Munns: As the minister indicated, we have embarked on a major piece of work called the compliance and regulation system. That is designed to replace the two existing systems that were in use by the workplace safety regulator. The first system is the WorkSafe Information Systems Environment, which had its inception in the general industry sector, and the second was the safety regulation system that was used by the mines safety people. Those two systems are not compatible. With the introduction of the Work Health and Safety Act that brought all the arms of the workplace safety regulator under a single legislative framework, it made sense to bring all the systems the inspectors were using into a single place and commence this program of work.

We have completed the business case, which resulted in the allocation of funding, as outlined in the papers. That business case then underwent a gateway review process whereby an independent body of IT experts reviewed the business case. That concluded there was a compelling case to proceed with the introduction of a completely new

system rather than revamping the existing systems. As a consequence of that process, we are looking at two options. One is described as a commercial-off-the-shelf system or a COTS system. The other one is an enterprise system, which is a platform on which we can then build the system we are after. We have just completed a request for information process with which we went out and tested the market as to what is available. That process closed on 9 May and we had quite a number of responses that gave us information about COTS programs and/or the enterprise service platforms. The idea behind putting out a request for information was to give us a greater understanding of what was available in terms of modern systems that we could go to that would allow us to do risk-based and evidence-based regulatory activities. It also gave us a greater idea of what the actual cost of introducing those systems will be because of the mixture of capital costs, ongoing costs and a variety of other cost aspects. We are in the process of evaluating those request for information responses. A number of them covered both platforms and we are evaluating those and using that information to design a request for tender. Prior to the request for tender, we are expecting to put out an early tender advice on Tenders WA in about October. The purpose of that is to ensure that as many people as possible are aware that the request for tender is coming and therefore enable us to get the best response we can to a request for tender, which will follow in about November.

We are in the process of analysing all our processes. We are working over two different systems at the moment, so we have a number of processes to do the same thing across the business. At the moment we are identifying the best way to do things. Regardless of where the system comes from, we are identifying the best way to proceed in terms of capturing the data, making it assessable, extracting it for our evidence-based regulation activities and making it available for data sharing to our external parties that are interested in finding trends and using it for their purposes to enhance workplace safety. Once we have designed the specifications, we will put it through a further gateway review process in which an independent group of people will examine whether our request for tender is robust and gives good clarity to potential respondents, and then we will issue it. We will be separately forming an assessment panel to review the responses we receive. Again, we will be looking to bring in people who are experts in technology and blend them with people who work in the business so that we are able to identify not only the programs or systems that will deliver what is needed as a user, but also what system will technically fit into our system in terms of its architecture. That will be undertaken in early 2024. We think we will have the answer by then as to who will be the successful respondent and we will then commence the work of introducing that new system.

As the minister said, it will be a long-term piece of work that will also include the process of migrating all the data from the existing systems across to the new system, whichever one it will be, so that we do not lose the history. Risk-based and evidence-based regulation relies on a history of compliance behaviour. We want to be able to access the list for the last 30 years in the case of the WorkSafe Information Systems Environment, and as part of the new system as we go forward.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I want to emphasise that government information technology projects have a history of not going well; therefore, we must be cautious because this is so critical. If we think about it, WISE has been there for 30 years. This is a prosecutorial agency and its investigations often lead to prosecutions; therefore, it has to have access to the evidence to build its brief for the commissioner to make the decision about what the agency chooses to prosecute. Please do not underestimate the complexity of this system. I am pleased to hear the detailed response that Mr Munns gave to make it clear that we are taking this seriously. The budget is available, but we have to get it right.

Ms L. METTAM: Thanks minister and Mr Munns. I have a further question. I refer to another recommendation of the report. Has the memorandum of understanding between the Western Australia Police Force, the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety and WorkSafe Western Australia been completed, or where is that at? Can the minister outline what information-sharing arrangements have been agreed on?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Before the WorkSafe Western Australia Commissioner went on annual leave, he updated me on this. I will ask Ms North to make a further comment.

Ms S. North: We are well advanced in the development of the memorandum of understanding with the Western Australia police. It is not yet finalised, but it is well advanced. In terms of other measures, we have also set up regular meetings with the WA police with a focus on sexual harassment and workplace safety issues. We meet with them periodically and that has provided us with some good working communications.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I emphasise that there is a much higher level of engagement with WA police. For example, the allegation of rape at Roy Hill that was made the other day is obviously a police investigation, but WorkSafe was engaged with WAPOL on that investigation. On the other hand, when we have a workplace fatality, which is a matter that will end up with this commissioner being the prosecution, the police help us obtain the evidence because they have those specialists. The member can see that we have a much better relationship with the police. If we go back seven or eight years, every time there was a workplace death, the next inspector on the list did the investigation. Now we have specialist investigators to investigate workplace deaths. We have psychosocial investigators to investigate matters related to psychosocial issues. We are better than we used to be and we have a much better relationship with the police than we used to have.

Ms L. METTAM: Does the minister anticipate that the MOU will be finalised by the end of this year, given the progress already made?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I will let Ms North answer.

Ms S. North: That is a matter that will need to be worked out between both parties, but I feel it has developed to such a state that that would be foreseeable.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I note that both the WorkSafe Western Australia Commissioner and the Commissioner of Police are independent office holders that the government cannot direct—obviously, DMIRS is different. The government cannot tell the regulator or the police what to do. They have to be satisfied with the terms, and because they are both prosecution agencies, they have to be satisfied that they are not going to get in the way of their responsibilities under law. I am pleased the police commissioner is working so closely with the WorkSafe commissioner but, again, it is a complex piece of work.

Ms C.M. TONKIN: I refer to the table on page 231 of the *Budget statements*. The last line refers to additional resourcing for the Work Health and Safety Act 2020. Can the minister please advise what that funding is for?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I thank the member for the question. Additional resourcing has been allocated to provide improved services in relation to WorkSafe licensing functions and work health and safety inquiries, noting a high demand for those services. Nine temporary positions have been converted to permanent. Resources have been provided to further communicate the requirements of the work health and safety laws over the next financial year. If Ms North wants to explain that further, I invite her to do so.

Ms S. North: We have had a particularly high demand in terms of licensing and plant registration. These additional resources will assist us to provide good customer service around those items as well as through inquiries. As people continue to engage with the new work health and safety legislation and seek to apply it in their workplaces, it will lead to a number of inquiries through our contact centre. Providing these ongoing resources to the contact centre will be very advantageous, as well as having the additional communications strategy in place. Communication will be ongoing through both online and other formats to further communicate new aspects of the work health and safety legislation.

[7.30 pm]

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I just highlight that because there is a new framework for the occupational licensing and high-risk activities, there is a transition process underway. I get a lot of correspondence from people dealing with the new structure and the commissioner is using his powers—he is on long service leave at the moment—to manage the transition, but it is a major piece of work because it is a different structure and a different intellectual concept for the new legislation compared with the old one.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to the “Spending Changes” table on page 231 and funding for the mental awareness, respect and safety program, which concludes at the end of 2024–25 after two years of funding. Can the minister explain whether first responders, report receivers and those involved in workplace investigations of sexual harassment will cease to receive these training sessions after the funding has ceased in 2024–25?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: In a moment I will ask Ms North to make a comment. This is, of course, the question the member asked of my friend the member for Riverton in his capacity as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Commerce, so we are actually prepared for this one. The funding is available, but it has been allocated for services at this stage. Of course, as new services become necessary, the funding envelope is still available. I will ask Ms North to explain further.

Ms S. North: There is substantial funding for the MARS program to continue. It provides a range of different services; training is one of them and there is research and other communication work associated with MARS as well. We anticipate that the ongoing expenditure will be informed by the major research pieces that have been conducted, so there are some large landmark studies. As further information comes through, that will inform the decisions around the best use of funding going forward, but I certainly anticipate training continuing to be an area of focus.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I just emphasise that the funding shown in the budget is where we have allocated the money to a specific activity. Of course, the resource is still available; it just has not been allocated to a specific activity. We would expect some of the activities that are currently underway to continue and we would expect new activities to be created and funded as well. But I emphasise that it is not a budget question, because we have the money; it is allocating it to activity.

Ms L. METTAM: How many first responders, report receivers and those involved in workplace investigations have been involved so far?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I do not want people to confuse the training that is being done for the WorkSafe people with the training that is being done for the broader community. As Ms North explained, training has already been rolled out to every WorkSafe inspector, with additional training for the specialists, and as new people come on, they are trained up in these new understandings for their work.

Ms L. METTAM: Yes. Is there a number?

Ms S. North: There are 58 inspectors in the WorkSafe mine safety area.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Remembering that there is a completely separate number for general industry. The Western Australian mines inspectorate is the best-resourced inspectorate in Australia. It has more people per 100 000—which is the measure that is used—than other jurisdictions and it is the best-resourced regulator.

Ms L. METTAM: For clarification, how many have been engaged specifically in the MARS program for 2024–25?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Ms North explained that all 58 have been trained. Of course, we have specialists. Not every victim of sexual harassment wants to talk to the next inspector, so we now have specialist inspectors. We had already started to engage psychosocial inspectors from 2017, but this has highlighted psychosocial challenges in workplaces and therefore we have had an uptick in our specialist capacity for psychosocial responses. All inspectors are trained, but we have these specialist ones that —

Ms L. METTAM: So it would be more than 58?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: No, it is 58—that is the number in the mines inspectorate—and all of them have been trained, but some are trained as specialists. They might be psychologists or have broader psychosocial capacities than would a general inspector. If we think about it, historically, most workplace inspectors were either ex-union officials or had formerly worked as health and safety officers for private sector agencies. Now, because we are looking at the psychosocial dimension, we need to go to a new idea about which people we draw. We have also created investigators as well, so we now have former police officers and other specialists who have training in forensic questioning. There is all this additional capacity because we now have this broader issue. I will also highlight that when I became minister, there were a number of prosecutions that ended up being brought for relatively minor offences because the investigations had not produced the evidence to support a more severe prosecution. That is why we have invested in investigators who have better skills in looking at what happened, rather than just having the traditional WorkSafe inspectors. Additionally, we have also recognised that, with psychosocial hazards, we need a different background and that people might need to come out of the medical profession or whatever, so we are hiring these people as well. We have a different background for our inspectors and therefore there is a whole range of new training being provided. That is as true of WorkSafe generally as it is of the mines safety part of WorkSafe.

Ms L. METTAM: I have a new question. I refer to page 241 and the funding set aside for “Circle Green Community Legal” in the table headed “Details of Controlled Grants and Subsidies”. I note that the government funds the not-for-profit Circle Green Community Legal Centre to provide guidance, information and referrals to Western Australians affected by sexual harassment. I wonder what promotional work, if any, the government has undertaken to ensure that those working on mine sites or across the industry understand that they can utilise these services?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: That is a very good question. The mining industry Respect Infoline has been run by Circle Green as a triage service and social work support for people in the mining industry affected by sexual harassment, sex-based harassment and sex discrimination. It is, of course, available now because it builds on an existing service provider that had already received funding from both commonwealth and state governments for a range of areas. In terms of the promotional activities, I am happy for Ms North to further explain.

Ms S. North: At this stage I am aware of some direct communication to those who subscribe to WorkSafe’s email newsletter and who go online to look at the email newsletter, as well as other online content and social media content.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I again emphasise that we know where the workplaces are and we also have HSRs registered, so HSRs and other workplace contacts receive the advice that we provide.

[7.40 pm]

Ms L. METTAM: I note that the progress report states that the government’s funding to Circle Green will provide additional custom triage and non-legal social work to support those working in the mining industry. The government funding to Circle Green in 2020–21 was \$430 000. I note that will remain the same each financial year until 2026–27. I appreciate that Circle Green is a not-for-profit organisation, but has it had to shift how it operates? Is this expanding their capacity and workload, and the need for additional staff?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: We were already funding them for \$330 000. It is an extra \$100 000.

Ms L. METTAM: So it is a boost?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Yes.

Ms L. METTAM: How was Circle Green selected?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: It was a government decision. Going back in time before Circle Green was formed, there were community legal services for each activity. There was one for renters, one for industrial relations et cetera. Those organisations decided to amalgamate to reduce their administrative overhead. That became Circle Green. I forget the name of the organisation that it used to be —

Mr J. Welch: The Employment Law Centre of WA.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Yes. It used to be the Employment Law Centre. It got funding from us and the commonwealth government. When we came to government, we boosted that funding because it had not received any extra money in years. They were the obvious people. It is true that some around the place have said we should have funded UnionsWA to do that because it is another not-for-profit organisation active in the area, but I do not know that everybody here would have agreed. We thought that given Circle Green already had strength in this area, it was the appropriate partner.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I am again seeking the minister's guidance on page 232, protecting workers and supporting consumers. I assume that I am now in the right section to deal with those matters. A range of safety issues were identified by the inquiry into the agricultural industry in Western Australia. From the minister's point of view, are there any outcomes resulting from that report, given that the final draft report was submitted to the WorkSafe commissioner in February?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I want to make some comments, and then I am going to hand over to the acting commissioner. I emphasise that the WorkSafe commissioner used his powers under the new work health and safety legislation to order an inquiry. It had nothing to do with me. Obviously, he said he was going to do it and I said "That sounds good". However, it was entirely his decision; he is not directed by me. That report came back to him, but he is on long service leave—I wish I got that. I will get Sally North to speak as the acting commissioner in a moment.

I want to highlight an interesting article from *Farm Weekly* today by Trevor Whittington, the chief executive of WAFarmers. It is titled "Money, Power and Guns". He states —

Any farmer who is still having family and friends come up for a fun weekend blasting away at foxes and rabbits (I await the RSPCA campaign to protect the roos after they finish with live exports) on a weekend, needs to have a long hard look at the Industrial Manslaughter laws and what a fatal shooting accident on farm could mean in the courts.

I want to point out that someone does not need the work health and safety legislation to know that it is against the law to shoot somebody and kill them. The idea that it is only because the work health and safety legislation has come in that it is illegal to shoot somebody is just bizarre. It does not do Mr Whittington any credit to stir up things like this. It is completely unhelpful.

We are trying to work through the challenges of the agricultural industry where workers compensation costs are five times higher than the average. The number of deaths in the industry are extraordinary. There are more deaths in the agricultural industry than in the mining industry. There are something like 15 000 people in agriculture and nearly 150 000 in mining. The people who die in farm workplace accidents are often family members. At what point do the representative bodies of the agricultural industry begin to take these matters seriously?

It is not good enough that the leadership of WAFarmers makes stupid remarks like this. He might say "We are just trying to be funny", but that is the problem; workplace safety is a serious issue and this sort of ridiculous childish behaviour by Mr Whittington is unacceptable and he should know that. I will ask Ms North to comment on the report.

Ms S. North: The WorkSafe WA Commissioner, Darren Kavanagh, tabled a response to the independent inquiry in April. That is available on our website. The work of the independent inquirer was very much appreciated. This is a really serious work health and safety issue, as the minister has highlighted. The rate of death and serious injury in the sector is a great concern to us.

The response is very supportive around most of the recommendations, noting that two of them are somewhat outside the agency's scope. However, there are recommendations in there for us as a regulator and we have already taken some steps to start implementing those—noting that this was a month ago. We will be looking at what we can do to strengthen our information and advice to the sector. One of the pieces of feedback we got was that people wanted to better understand the hazards on a sector by sector basis. They would like the information presented in a bit more of a drilled down way so that they can understand what the major hazards are for their sector and to have more information about serious and fatal incidents. One of the risk perception issues we are facing is that some people in the sector do not always feel that the incidents they hear about relate to them and the risks they might be taking.

By providing more detailed information around the nature of the hazards in the different parts of the agricultural sector, the report found, and we agree, that would assist those stakeholders to better understand those risks.

Another recommendation that we are progressing is around providing an advisory service. We will be using regular operational funds to do a pilot process. That is where advice will be provided independent of the regulator. Stakeholders advised the inquirer that that would be very helpful to them to better understand their risks. There will also be further work to identify information products, whether they are codes of practice or smaller, simpler information products. Indeed, those information products will be multilingual where appropriate based on the sectoral issues. We will be working with industry stakeholders. We have also reinvigorated an industry stakeholder meeting to engage them on issues like this and identify what information products will be of most value to them. That is another important part of the information piece. Additionally, as a regulator, we need to look at the compliance piece and make sure that we have the right number of inspectors focusing on the agricultural sector and doing a mix of risk-based proactive and reactive work. We have identified some positions for that and we will also engage additional people to work in that part of the inspectorate.

Those are the main things that we have started to progress. We will continue to monitor how they are going and liaise with industry on the progress that we make.

[7.50 pm]

Dr D.J. HONEY: I know Mr Whittington and he is someone who takes safety seriously. Hopefully, he was trying to get people's attention.

As the minister and I both know, there is nothing new in the changes to the Work Health and Safety Act on the requirement to provide a safe workplace. Nevertheless, in custom and in practice, it is evident in the safety results we see that there is perhaps a lack of awareness on farms around that. Given, as the minister pointed out, there is a relatively small number of people involved in the agricultural sector, has there been an awareness campaign? I say that in the context, as the minister knows, of being a farmer by birth. It is not apparent to me from visiting farms that there is the level of awareness that we might think there should be, outside of their moral obligations, about their specific legal obligations.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: We will continue to engage with the peak bodies and others. I will get the Acting WorkSafe Western Australia Commissioner to make some further comments.

Ms S. North: Certainly we will be having further communications. The inquiry report puts forward some of the options that the inquirer found would be most effective to reach this group specifically. I should also note that we have done significant promotion of the work health and safety legislation for all sectors and some messaging has been directed at the sector specifically as part of our routine work. Additionally, employer and employee peak bodies received funding to do promotional work on the work health and safety legislation, and have indeed done work of that type, although that was, of course, broadly to industry.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Are the peak bodies that have been provided funding WAFarmers, the Pastoralists and Graziers Association and vegetablesWA? Were grower groups included in that list? I only say that because a large cohort probably engages with their grower groups as opposed to maybe some of the peak bodies. If the outcome that the agency is seeking is to engage and increase safety, it is a box-ticking exercise if it is talking to WAF, the PGA and vegetablesWA. There are other organisations; I spoke to the commissioner about this issue when the minister first raised it.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: We will always consider how we can go about it. Again, the commissioner is independent, so I invite the acting independent commissioner to make some comments.

Ms S. North: The peak body funding was announced back in 2021, well in advance of this inquiry. That was intended to be broadly across all industries. As such, it did not include agricultural peak bodies specifically because it was a relatively small number of entities that received funding.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I am in the middle of a very significant storm with the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act and people looking for information. This is a similar situation, with people wanting to know what their obligations are. Government entities quite often come to my electorate, in particular, at times when it is not convenient. These are quite often one-person businesses. They are busting themselves to get the crop in or off and then government rolls into town and says, "We've got some information to share with you." Can I be assured that there is going to be an information and education opportunity in a format that will get an outcome as opposed to just ticking a box?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The law is 14 months old now. It has been in for a while. Firstly, WorkSafe had a roadshow and did other things. It went to regional Western Australia. I am sure that not every farmer went to those sessions. I read some of the agricultural newspapers and I see ads from service providers reminding people to come and talk to them. I will put it this way: engagement with the small business sector, whether it is in regional Western Australia or the metropolitan area, is very similar. In the same way that a person running a deli in Balga is probably under

immense pressure because of all the challenges they have, I accept that a farmer is also in a bad situation, but in the end this is about responsibilities. As the member for Cottesloe pointed out, although there are significant improvements in the legislation, particularly the idea of the person conducting a business or undertaking, which was not in the old act, this obligation has existed since 1986. I do not know that there is a farmer in Western Australia who started their business before 1986. Does the member know what I mean?

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Big call, minister.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The idea that this is the rollout of something new is a misunderstanding. It is new legislation and the PCBU is a great idea and it removes some challenges, but the point that the employer is responsible for safety on the farm is nothing new. It is more than 30 years old.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I agree with the minister that that is clear. There is no argument about the law. The law is the law and it has been the law. My anecdotal experience is that some farmers take this responsibility as seriously as industry. From what I have seen on large corporate stations, I think the pastoral industry is a really good exemplar of outstanding practice and the practice we want to change. I go to Liveringa station, for example, and the safety is superb in every regard. It is managed as well as a mine site because it is owned by a mine owner who applies all the same standards. Before I could go onto the site, I had to do an induction and an induction test. That was recorded and documented and kept by the manager of the operation, who manages the station on behalf of the owner. Equally, I have been on other stations where I do not think anything much has changed in the last hundred years in the way that safety is regarded. I have a suggestion that perhaps the minister can take on. Is it worthwhile doing a bit of a beta test on awareness? If the first time a farmer is going to properly become aware of this, regardless of whether they should know it, is when an inspector turns up, gets a charge book out and the bloke or the woman loses their farm, is it worthwhile doing a bit of a test of awareness? I appreciate everything the minister said and that they should be aware, but I am concerned that a significant number are not aware, and it would be worthwhile to test that before we move to inspectors prosecuting.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I am happy for the acting commissioner to make some comments. The first option is not prosecution; I want to make that clear. That is not the case now and it never has been. I invite the Acting WorkSafe WA Commissioner to comment.

[8.00 pm]

Ms S. North: There was a lot of information and consultation as part of the independent inquiry. The inquirer met with a large number of people and visited different areas. I think that contributed to spreading awareness around the issues. I appreciate that information and education is what industries ask for, and we came across that in the information we got. It is a big part of what we do. In the actions that we will be taking, a large part of information will be there. We will work with industry and be advised around the appropriate formats and how best to reach operators in the sector, but we do a fair bit and that will be a major part. The other thing is the advisory service. That will be something that people will opt into so that it will not come at an inconvenient time. We have run a service somewhat like that in the past, and it was highly regarded and found to be very useful. We will look to do that.

Generally, when an inspector goes to the workplace, they are also providing a lot of information and education and they may on occasion issue a compliance notice, but, again, that does not have a direct cost associated with it. Inspectors help people understand the requirements, they provide a fair and reasonable amount of time for work to be done, and it is when there is less communication that a prosecution is considered and, generally, in a case when there is fairly serious concern.

I also advise, just to have it on the record, that the commissioner's response to the independent inquiry is available online if people would like to look at that.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Just to go a bit further, part of the response from the commissioner is to establish a dedicated agricultural team of six inspectors led by senior inspectors so that there is a bit more of a focus. The commissioner is considering the establishment of an agricultural advisory assistance program, which would be funded internally, to try to engage with the sector, and is looking to establish an agricultural assistance advisory fund. They are all under active consideration. The agricultural safety advisory committee, which will be chaired by the commissioner, is a forum, like there is for other sectors, for the peak bodies to come and engage with WorkSafe WA. There are processes, and of course we could always do more.

The other recommendation of the report is for a levy on workers compensation. That is a matter for government rather than the commissioner. We will look at that. We do not want to push up costs unnecessarily, but we will consider it.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Is there potential for the department to have some pro forma-type documents that outline what operators might need? For example, if they need to do a risk assessment, they need to put in engineering controls and the hierarchy of controls, which the minister is aware of. The requirement to have safe work instructions requires

them to have training records and the like. If there were some pro forma tools, that would be an enormous aid to the individual farmer and their partner who are running a significant farming operation.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: These types of things are available. I will let Ms North explain.

Ms S. North: Yes, some tools of that type are available at the moment on the website, but we appreciate the feedback that we have also heard from industry that there might be more that we can do to assist in that space. We are happy to look at either improving the current tools or expanding them if there is demand for that.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I also encourage everybody who has engagement with the peaks, and grower groups and farmers themselves, to remind people that they are in an important industry, but other industries have the same challenges. To the extent that people think they are the only ones suffering—I am not going to use the term “siege mentality”—they do perhaps not engage with the opportunities that are available to them. If they were more open to engaging with the resources that are available, it would improve their outcomes, and that is what we want to see.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I think it is cultural change, which is tough.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Indeed.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I think the minister may have touched on it, but I will admit that my alertness is not what it was at the start of this process. How are inspectors paid? How is that money recovered for the inspectors or how is it proposed that that will be done?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: WorkSafe for general industry, except mining, oil and gas, is paid for out of general revenue. The oil and gas and mining industries have their own levies and WorkSafe is paid for out of that. It was always envisaged that dangerous goods would come into WorkSafe at some point in the future. Dangerous goods currently has its own funding arrangements, and this change is not proposed for tomorrow.

The other area is electrical safety. When I first became the minister, I was Minister for Commerce as well, and we went through an extensive process. It was pointed out to me by the agency why electrical safety does not belong with WorkSafe. That will remain a separate safety regulator. The reason is that it is about the equipment as much as the workforce. The workforce is already covered by WorkSafe; it is the equipment that the safety inspector is regulating, so it is not the same as what WorkSafe does.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I am thinking of dangerous goods, minister. It opens an enormous can of worms on farms.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The reason we would bring in dangerous goods is that there are more resources at WorkSafe. That is one of the reasons we brought the two regulators together, because the sum of the two is bigger than the two parts separately. As an example, we are able to share legal resources and in future we will be sharing the IT platform. We are able to share the prosecution experiences. These are the things we can benefit from. An investigator can do an investigation at a mine site today and a different workplace tomorrow and their costs can be allocated appropriately so that they are not cross-subsidising, but we get better value out of it.

That was one of the challenges for us with Circle Green Community Legal, because we know that people who do not work in the mining industry will use the sexual harassment service at Circle Green. The \$100 000 comes from the mining fund, so we keep an open mind about whether we would fund it in addition to that, because we know that the mining industry is not the only one that has sexual harassment. We all know that it is common in other industries, such as hospitality and media. Other industries have these problems.

Mr H.T. JONES: I refer to page 232 of budget paper No 2, volume 1. Paragraph 9 under “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency” refers to silicosis. It identifies that there has been and will be significant work in relation to the management and the risks faced from high silica content products. It is likely that further work will be needed to deal with these products, particularly manufactured stone benchtops. Can the minister provide advice on what he thinks the further regulatory changes might be, and their impact on the department?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I thank the member for the question and I acknowledge his interest in this topic. It is pleasing that Western Australia has been in front of the decisions of others and has been acting on silica for some time. When I came to office, it was an issue raised with me by a range of organisations, including the Construction, Forestry, Maritime, Mining and Energy Union. We funded some research that went on to use new technology to identify a number of people who had silicosis who had been missed by previous occupational monitoring. It says in the budget papers that there are 32 cases, but we are now aware of 43 cases of silicosis in Western Australia.

This is a really major issue. In February this year, the national work health and safety ministers agreed to progress reforms to improve workplace safety with regard to exposure to respirable crystalline silica, particularly in the process related to engineered stone. The agreement was made to deliver national awareness and behavioural change initiatives, ensure stronger regulation of high-risk silica, and conduct further analysis and consultation on the prohibition of the use of engineered stone. Consultation on the implications of a ban on high-silica-content

engineered stone is being progressed by Safe Work Australia. Western Australia is actively contributing to that and we look forward to the outcome of all those decision and consultation regulation impact statement processes that the commonwealth is running.

We support the idea of banning the import of high-silica engineered stone. We continue to work with the other states. We have lowered our exposure threshold here in Western Australia. We are prepared to go further on exposure thresholds; however, there are challenges because the current level is set because the equipment used to monitor the dust can measure at that level and if we go below that, it is hard to measure. It becomes more complicated and potentially a lot more expensive to do the measuring. We acknowledge that silica is also present in underground mining. The mining industry has a long history of managing silica risks. I am not a medical person, but it appears that there are higher risks with the engineered stone compared with natural stone that might also contain silica. The Western Australian mining industry is required to monitor workplace air quality and report that to WorkSafe. It has been doing so for over 40 years. We find that about 96 per cent of those exposures do not exceed the limit. We will continue to work with the mining industry, but the focus of the reforms at the commonwealth level are on engineered stone.

I also make the comment that Western Australia is the only state that has a fully integrated health and safety inspectorate. That means both mining and general industry are regulated under the same set of procedures. We have to make sure that the rules are practical for the mining industry because we do not want to get in the way. Queensland and New South Wales have a separate regulator and, therefore, they have different processes. We have to make sure that the mining industry is properly assessed. We will continue to monitor for disease in the mining industry because we do not want to see silicosis, but at this stage, silicosis does not appear to be a challenge. We will continue to monitor it and if tomorrow we find that there is a new challenge, we will act on that as well.

[8.10 pm]

Dr D.J. HONEY: It may interest the minister to know that I am a qualified National Association of Testing Authorities assessor for respiratory dust and the like. I have been concerned about this area for a considerable time. My observation on building sites is that there is a cavalier attitude towards all dust, including dust that is likely to have silica in it. I routinely see people cutting stone material and aggregates that contain crystalline silica and the like without water on their device and, in particular, without wearing any respiratory protection and clearly no protective equipment. Will there be a greater focus on workplace inspections? We tend to see that the larger, established build developers, like a Dale Alcock, seem to have some level of compliance, but, from many, we see zero.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: It is interesting because I think we all have a challenge about manufactured stone. When this was being looked at earlier this year, I went to my home and looked at the benchtops and they are all natural stone, and I thought, "Oh, well, there you go." Then I noticed that the table and sideboard in our dining room were manufactured stone, so it is more prevalent than we all realise. The thing about manufactured stone is that there are alternatives. Some manufacturers are now looking at low-silica manufactured stone. We do not know what that will look like because we need to see whether it has a lower disease risk. That is the question for us, rather than the silica content. However, it is good to see industry moving very quickly to respond to that.

We did 150 inspections and sent 1 000 improvement notices, so there is an active program inside WorkSafe to respond to silica risks. I will invite Ms North to make further comment.

Ms S. North: Thank you for the observations. As a regulator, the construction industry presents particular challenges in the nature of some of the work. In addition to the program mentioned by the minister, which focuses on engineered stone and silica risks, we have also done significant work on silica risks in some other sectors. One of those sectors is wall chasing. Wall chasing is an activity that is fairly transient, and it can be difficult to regulate. We have met with the stakeholders in the chain of responsibility to try to influence better practice. Over time, we are seeing some better practice and increased use of wet cutting in the construction sector, but there is more to do not only in terms of information and compliance, but also by industry, because, at the end of the day, this is now an extremely well-known hazard. It has been publicised quite clearly that silica is a risk, and employers and workers are increasingly aware of that risk. Therefore, I think awareness has improved. Different technology is becoming more available, so there is a range of improved tools and equipment for the construction sector that are practical and can help reduce the risk, including some tools that are really quite advanced and can reduce the airborne crystalline silica quite substantially.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Obviously, banning that material will go a huge way towards preventing further injuries, but as the minister would be extremely well aware, with asbestos we saw this long tail of asbestos injuries through householders, workers and others working on that material. I do not have a proper understanding of the regulatory environment around identifying that material, but I do know that in all the workplaces that I worked in, there was a very strict requirement around identifying asbestos material, having a register and following a program for the removal and the like. Will there be a requirement like that for these engineered stone materials? I appreciate that

the majority of it will be in private households. However, will workplaces and the like be required to identify the material and perhaps have a register in the same way that asbestos was dealt with?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I think we are at an earlier stage of the process, and I am not sure where that is going to go. Asbestos can shed fibres even when it is in situ. I am not aware of whether engineered stone is a risk when it is not being worked on; therefore, I am not certain that the risks of the two products are the same. However, I do not believe that anybody is considering that at the moment, but who knows what might happen in the future.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I refer to page 232, budget paper No 2, and protecting workers and supporting consumers. Can the minister provide an update of whether the overall wage theft prevention strategies work has progressed?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: This is about the supplier wage audit unit that has been established within the department to monitor issues around contractors to government. It is an important element of our wage theft response, and, of course, other issues come out of the wage line. In March 2021, we made an election commitment to create a small specialist employment conditions audit and compliance unit. As part of its wage theft strategy, the intent of the supplier wage audit, or SWA, was to proactively monitor and audit the compliance of government suppliers, particularly in high-risk industries, with employment obligations under applicable industrial relations laws and instruments. Remember that many of them could be covered by commonwealth legislation. The supplier wage audit unit has been operational since 11 November last year and has commenced its audit of suppliers. It is part of the private sector labour relations division because it really cannot belong to government sector labour relations. The Procurement Act 2020 compels specified public sector entities to procure goods, services and work subject to procurement directions and associated rules. The rules require standard contract documentation to be utilised for preparing types of procurement for purchases of more than \$50 000. Standard contract documentation has been amended to provide authority for the SWA to conduct audits and refer instances of noncompliance to the appropriate regulator, which could be the commonwealth. For instances in which the standard contract documentation is not utilised, a range of strategies are in place to ensure maximum coverage. A set of model clauses has been drafted by the State Solicitor's Office and is available on the Department of Finance's website for public sector entities to insert into non-standard contracts. In addition, when individual bespoke contracts are drafted by the SSO, the appropriate clauses that provide authority for the SWA are inserted. Procurement for works are currently not required to utilise standard contract documentation and, therefore, in these instances, the contracting entity should consider inserting the model clauses in contracts to provide the necessary authority for the SWA. In establishing the SWA, there was consultation with stakeholders, including public sector entities, unions, professional associations and industry associations. The majority of stakeholders were supportive of the initiative, although concerns were raised by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia about implementation time frames. Of course, many employers think it is good idea because it stops their competitors undercutting them through lower wages. The SWA is working collaboratively with the Department of Communities, the Department of Transport and the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development in conducting three audits at the moment. The audits in progress are examining suppliers in the cleaning and security industries.

[8.20 pm]

Dr D.J. HONEY: Thank you very much, minister. It is a worthy cause, I believe.

Ms C.M. TONKIN: I refer to page 232 of budget paper No 2 and paragraph 8 under the significant issues impacting the agencies. To facilitate dialogue between key stakeholders in the construction sector, the government has set up the Building and Construction Consultative Committee. Can the minister please provide some advice on its progress?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I thank the member very much for the question. It was an election commitment of the Labor Party that we set up the Building and Construction Consultative Committee, which was established late last year. The committee has developed its strategic plan, which outlines key initiatives to address the priority reform issues within the commercial construction industry. The committee is serviced by the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety's private sector labour relations division. The committee started in June and has completed its strategic planning to set its own agenda for its priorities over the next five years. The concept behind the BCC is to bring industry partners together to talk about shared goals; it has representatives of employers, employer associations as well as unions and others. The strategic plan has four priority areas of focus: contributing to a new approach to apprenticeships, reporting on options to reform industry culture, providing advice on contractual framework issues in the commercial construction sector and supporting the implementation of participative approaches to best practice work health and safety. It is being led by industry. As it happens, on 8 June, I will attend my first meeting. For a range of reasons, I have not been able to go along before. I have met with the chair, Reg Howard-Smith, who is a former chief executive officer of the Chamber of Minerals and Energy of Western Australia. I am sure that the Nationals WA holds him in high regard.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: He was my boss.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: There you go! Excellent. As I said, I am sure he is held in high regard. He is certainly held in high regard by members on this side of the chamber. Perhaps Mr Munns might like to add more information.

Mr I. Munns: I can confirm the minister's information that it has started to prepare its strategic plan. The committee held its first meeting in July last year. The committee has met on four occasions, three of which have been what we would describe as regular meetings. Those meetings took place on 7 July and 3 November last year and 9 March this year. The committee held a specific strategic planning workshop on 30 March, which led to the development of the plan. That plan is in draft at the moment and is currently being finalised. It works off the four main areas that the minister outlined. The committee sits within private sector labour relations and recently we allocated a dedicated resource to assist the chair and committee to push forward with its strategic initiatives.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I want to add that the idea is to get the industry together to talk about things. We have representatives from across government so that when there are issues—it might talk about issues relating to training—those issues are fed back into other parts of government. The other thing is that normally committees are self-sustaining and have their own agenda. I have asked that I be provided with the minutes and agenda because clearly it is important for government to listen to members of the BCC. One would not normally expect a minister to get the minutes of a committee like that, but because of the particular nature of the operation, I have asked it to do that. I understand that after I met with the chair, he spoke to the committee members and they share my view that that is a good idea. That will be a way of keeping government up to date with the operations of this important committee, which is looking at matters in the commercial construction sector. I make it clear that this is not related to the cottage building industry, which is very important, I am sure. The one that we are focusing on with this process is the commercial construction sector.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I seek the minister's guidance in the first instance. I refer to page 232 of budget paper No 2 and paragraph 11, which states that the department will continue to devote significant resources to deliver on its consumer justice strategy. Is this the umbrella under which consumer issues that relate to community aged-care facilities sit or does that fall completely outside the purview of the minister's department?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I do not know that it falls within the purview of my department. The good news is that it is a wonderful question, but it is not related to industrial relations.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Chair, can I have a new question?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The Minister for Commerce handles matters like that. I assume that she would be able to give the member an answer.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Sorry; did I cut the minister off?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: It is all right. I do not feel any hurt or angst. Please feel free to continue.

Dr D.J. HONEY: The minister has been very polite and kind.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I always try to be.

Dr D.J. HONEY: On page 232, paragraph 8 refers to the Building and Construction Consultative Committee. We touched on this a bit in relation to silica, but the third line refers to reporting for options to reform industry culture. Can the minister outline what is being done in that regard? It is a bit like farming in that that is the industry with the next greatest concern, which is reflected in the number of injuries and deaths.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I thank the member for the question. This includes a range of issues; mental health is a clear one. Tomorrow, I go off to Mates in Construction, which, of course, the government of Western Australia is funding as an outcome of another election commitment. It includes gender issues. We have talked before with the member's colleague about *Enough is enough: Sexual harassment against women in the FIFO mining industry*, but we know there are gender issues in the building and construction industry. Relationships and subcontracting arrangements also go the question of culture. Again, this is not the government's agenda, this is the industry participants sitting down and giving themselves some tasks, one of which is to examine the industry's culture and what could be done to improve it.

[8.30 pm]

Dr D.J. HONEY: I did not want to revisit all the initiatives, but it seems as though there would be an enormous synergy with some of the training packages and things that have been developed for the mining industry that could almost be rolled over. Is there an intention to maximise that synergy?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Indeed. Thank you very much. Safe Work Australia's proposed law reform on gender issues is going to lead to amendments in the model legislation, and that will then flow down into Western Australia's work health and safety legislation at a future date. I am sure that will assist all industries, not just the mining industry. I have commented before that it is not just the mining industry that has these challenges. Again, this is one of the advantages of bringing the regulator together as a single entity. It can share experiences and take note of information. We are now in a stronger position to support the building and construction industry as it deals with the challenges around gender diversity. The focus can be everywhere because it is not just an industry problem; it is a community

Extract from *Hansard*

[ASSEMBLY ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A — Thursday, 25 May 2023]

p67b-80a

Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Bill Johnston; Ms Christine Tonkin; Dr David Honey; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Hugh Jones

problem. All violence against women starts with disrespect. To the extent that we are able to work on that as a community, we will have improvements. This is an opportunity for the building and construction industry to take account of what is happening in other industries.

To finish, I will talk about the concentration on apprentices. Everyone in the industry knows that apprentices are important. A separate agenda is being run by the Department of Training and Workforce Development to support the rollout of more and more apprenticeships. That fits very well with the industry's agenda that we have talked about.

The appropriation was recommended.

Meeting suspended from 8.32 to 8.40 pm