

**Division 5: Governor’s Establishment, \$8 104 000 —**

Ms M.M. Quirk, Chair.

Mr M. McGowan, Premier.

Mr H. Gretton, Official Secretary.

Mrs R. Hamilton, Chief Finance Officer.

[Witnesses introduced.]

**The CHAIR:** The estimates committees will be reported by Hansard. The daily proof will be available online as soon as possible within two business days. I will allow as many questions as possible. Questions and answers should be short and to the point. Consideration is restricted to items for which a vote of money is proposed in the consolidated account. Questions must relate to a page number, item or amount related to the current division, and members should preface their questions with 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 84, division 5, “Governor’s Establishment”, and spending changes. The budget provides \$480 000 for “Ongoing Initiative” and “Government House Security”. Could the Premier provide some further detail regarding this line item and also explain why it is allocated for only one year?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I am a little reluctant to talk a lot about security for Government House, but, obviously, we have had to invest significantly in security for senior public figures in light of what has occurred in the last couple of years in Western Australia. There is an additional security presence at Government House. The member may recall a break-in there a couple of years ago and people may also note, when they drive down the street, some of the issues that go on there. That just requires additional expenditure. I will hand to the official secretary, but that is obviously judged on a yearly basis, based upon assessments.

**Mr H. Gretton:** The \$480 000 is for what could be described as extra ongoing security, so we have security personnel at Government House who are employed by Government House, but during Governor Beazley’s time there was the break-in and, subsequently, it was decided that two security personnel should be on site at all times. To make sure that we have two security personnel on site at all times, we need the extra security and we use outside security agents for that. That is what that cost is. We do not have ongoing funding for that at this stage, so that is the amount of money that is spent to provide that security.

[3.50 pm]

**Ms L. METTAM:** Just to clarify, there is obviously no ongoing funding here under Governor’s establishment, but is there ongoing funding provided by another agency?

**The CHAIR:** If it is another agency, I am not sure that the Premier is required to answer.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** There is an ongoing security review. Obviously, the Governor, like other senior people such as the Chief Justice or me, has police resources sometimes allocated to them depending upon the circumstances and the decision of the police. That is just an ongoing thing that has been in place for Governors, Chief Justices, Premiers and opposition leaders at times, and visiting federal and international figures forever. That is what occurs. There is enhanced security. The member may have noticed that there is a new fence at Government House. It is just the nature of the way things have developed in the last few years, which we all understand, but I do not think we need to really talk about it too much.

**Ms L. METTAM:** I refer to page 85 of budget paper No 2 and paragraph 2 under significant issues impacting the agency. How is public accessibility to Government House being improved?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I know that over time Governors have been hosting more events in the Government House grounds. There are swearing-in ceremonies and the grounds are opened for picnics and so forth on scheduled days. In 2022–23—bear in mind this has not finished—there were 32 Executive Council meetings, 25 swearing-in ceremonies, 93 callers, one reconstitution of the ministry, 193 Governor-hosted functions and 18 school visits. Then there is also access to the grounds, and I have participated in some events there. That is a good thing and I suspect that will continue to grow. It will be very different to what it was historically when not much of that would have happened, so that is good use of a major facility in the centre of the city.

**Extract from *Hansard***

[ASSEMBLY ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A — Tuesday, 23 May 2023]

p43b-45a

Chair; Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Mark McGowan; Ms Mia Davies

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**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** I refer to page 85 of budget paper No 2 and the service summary table, which shows spending on the Governor's establishment falling from \$8.313 million for 2023–24 to \$7.42 million for 2024–25. Can the Premier explain that cost reduction? There is also another entry on the income statement page in relation to lower accommodation costs and spending on supplies and services.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** To explain the reduction, the security arrangement covers one year and then we assess whether it continues or there is another arrangement, so that is \$480 000. Conservation funding expires this year, and that was to address priority maintenance. I do not know whether the member has been to Government House lately. It has been improved out of sight. The building is 170-something years old so it needed some refurbishment. I was watching a program last night about the Tower of London. That is what happens with old buildings; over time they cost a lot. When I went to Canberra when Malcolm Turnbull was in office, he told me that the refurbishment of the Lodge was \$21 million. Honestly, after having seen the building, five Lodges could have been built for that, maybe 10! The nature of these old buildings is that the refurbishment and maintenance continues to cost money. A program has been implemented that is expiring. The roof has been replaced, a lot of water issues have been resolved, as have problems with the air conditioning, damp and other ongoing issues. I suspect there will not be a big problem for decades.

**The CHAIR:** You are not after some sort of imperial honour, are you, member for Vasse?

**Ms L. METTAM:** Hey?

**The CHAIR:** It is all right, go on!

**Ms L. METTAM:** I refer to page 88 and the table under income statement. The footnote tells us that staff numbers have increased from 34 to 38 this year. What are the extra staff doing and why are they required when the Governors of the past have coped with lower staff numbers?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** The Governor filled some vacant positions. The FTE numbers have not increased but some positions that were vacant were filled.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Four positions?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Four positions that were vacant were filled.

**The appropriation was recommended.**