

Chairman; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Terry Waldron; Mrs
Glenys Godfrey; Mr John Castrilli; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Peter Tinley

Division 3: Premier and Cabinet, \$187 789 000 —

Ms L.L. Baker, Chairman.

Mr C.J. Barnett, Premier.

Mr P. Conran, Director General.

Mr T. Leeming, Executive Director, Community and Human Services.

Mr D. Smith, Deputy Director General, Economic and Deregulation.

Mr R May, Deputy Director General, Community and Human Services.

Ms K. Andrews, Acting Assistant Director General, State Administration and Corporate Support.

Mr A. Murphy, Executive Director, Land, Administration and Native Title Unit.

Ms F. Roche, Executive Director, Office of Science.

Mrs A. Boland, Acting Director, State Administration.

Mr B. Graham, Principal Policy Adviser, Office of the Premier.

Mr S. Taylor, Director.

Mr G. Meyers, Director, Finance and Information Services.

The CHAIRMAN: This estimates committee will be reported by Hansard. The daily proof *Hansard* will be available the following day.

It is the intention of the Chair to ensure that as many questions as possible are asked and answered and that both questions and answers are short and to the point. The estimates committee's consideration of the estimates will be restricted to discussion of those items for which a vote of money is proposed in the consolidated account. Questions must be clearly related to a page number, item program or amount in the current division. It will greatly assist Hansard if members can give these details in preface to their question.

The Premier may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee rather than asking that the question be put on notice for the next sitting week. I ask the Premier to clearly indicate what supplementary information he agrees to provide and I will then allocate a reference number.

If supplementary information is to be provided, I seek the Premier's cooperation in ensuring that it is delivered to the principal clerk by Friday, 3 June 2016. I caution members that if a minister asks that a matter be put on notice, it is up to the member to lodge the question on notice with the Clerk's office.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIRMAN: Leader of the Opposition.

Mr M. McGOWAN: My question relates to page 71 and is about employees, the total cost of service and full-time equivalents et cetera, which appear about halfway down the page. It has been announced that the director general, who is sitting next to the Premier, will be retiring some time soon. What is the date of retirement of the director general? Who will be acting director general post the retirement of the director general and what are the Premier's plans for replacing the director general? I heard the Premier indicate at some point that he would not look for a full-time replacement until at least after the state election, which is a sensible way to approach it. I want to confirm that that is his intention.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Yes. Mr Conran has indicated his will to retire from the public service. I expect that that will not happen until July or August; indeed, a date has not yet been set. An acting position will be put in place. I expect the acting position to be filled by a person from the existing department. I have said that we will not proceed with a permanent replacement until after the election.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Just to clarify the issue, has the Premier settled on a person to fill the role of acting director general or is that a process —

Mr C.J. BARNETT: No, but, as I said, my expectation is that it will be someone within the public service, probably most likely within the existing department.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: My question relates to page 67 and the "Scitech Revitalisation Program". Can the Premier advise what that involves and what the government is up to in finding a new home for Scitech?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Yes. The government made a commitment to provide a site and \$15 million towards a new Scitech. I recognise that a new-built Scitech will cost significantly above that; we are always conscious of that. Scitech has some years to go on its existing lease at its current location. The state government has provided some limited further financial assistance for the minor upgrade of some facilities there. The new site for a new Scitech

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A — Tuesday, 24 May 2016]

p39b-68a

Chairman; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Terry Waldron; Mrs Glenys Godfrey; Mr John Castrilli; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Peter Tinley

will be within the cultural centre, but that project is still probably a few years away. We are working with Scitech on that. Basically, it will be near the new Museum—in that broad vicinity.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I want to confirm that the Premier's original intention was to have it near the stadium and that that is no longer the intention.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: That was one of the sites put forward. Scitech looked at that site. It had some advantages, but the view was that having it more into the central business district of Perth would be a better location. I agree with that. Work has been done in examining the availability of space around the cultural centre, and that can be done. Scitech has looked at that. Mark Barnaba looked at different locations and they were compared, and the broad consensus is that the cultural centre is the perfect location. It can be accommodated and, of course, it ties in with the Museum and other facilities there. That is the plan, but some practical work is still to be done.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: What is the expected construction time frame?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The existing lease, from memory, runs through until 2018, with options until 2023. I think a new Scitech would be in the early 2020s in reality.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I refer to the fourth dot point on page 70 under "Services and Key Efficiency Indicators", which relates to the communication of government policies and activities. As I understand, there is a contract for service for Robert Taylor to promote the budget. How much is that costing the taxpayers of Western Australia and what is the period of the agreement?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Mr Taylor did work on the budget. He performed the normal role in preparing budget material in a very digestible and readable form. He did a very good job. That is no different from what successive governments have done. He had a contract for a limited period of time. I think the value of that contract was around \$100 000.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: What was the period of time for that \$100 000 payment?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The period is from January 2016 to June 2016, and the estimated final cost of the contract is \$100 000.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Is that contract likely to be extended?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: No. It is specifically to work on the presentation of the budget materials. There was less printed material—in fact, very little. Most of it has gone online in a format that has been easy for the public to access.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: What capacities does he have that public servants do not have?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Robert Taylor is well known as a very experienced journalist. The skill of a journalist is to translate sometimes complex information into a simple and digestible format that is very presentable. He is experienced in that area and did a good job. When the budget comes around, every government has to draw in additional resources to deal with the workload that goes with that. This government has fewer Premier and ministerial staff than previous governments, so occasionally we draw in an additional resource, and in this case it was Robert Taylor for the budget.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I refer the Premier to what he just said and also to page 70 relating to administrative support to the Premier and "Average Operating Cost per Ministerial Office". I have a couple of questions up-front. What is the current number of full-time equivalents in the Premier's office? It is my understanding that not including staff drawn in, there are at least 24 staff in his office. Can the Premier confirm what the number is and potentially who those people are?

Secondly, what is the salary, including all on-costs, or all additional entitlements, perhaps, of the Premier's chief of staff?

[2.10 pm]

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The total number of full-time equivalent staff is 24.5, including both public servants and term-of-government employees. The total across my office and all ministerial offices is 220 FTEs, which compares to the final days of the Carpenter government at 246 FTEs.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I asked the Premier the salary of his chief of staff.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I do not have that in front of me. I am prepared to provide that as supplementary information.

Chairman; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Terry Waldron; Mrs
Glenys Godfrey; Mr John Castrilli; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Peter Tinley

Mr M. McGOWAN: I am seeking the salary and additional entitlements of the chief of staff. The Premier tables a ministerial resourcing report every now and then, but it does not detail that information. I am interested in that information.

The CHAIRMAN: Is the Premier happy to provide that?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Yes; I will provide details of the salary and any other entitlements of the chief of staff.

[Supplementary Information No A20.]

Mr T.K. WALDRON: The second dot point on page 69 refers to counter-terrorism efforts. We have seen the horror of terrorism attacks overseas, particularly in Paris and Brussels et cetera. Have our agencies conducted any counter-terrorism exercises to test our response should we have such an incident?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Yes. I must say that the commonwealth and all states work very well, as do their respective agencies, on counter-terrorism activities. A counter-terrorism exercise called Exercise Spartan was held in Perth from 19 to 21 April this year. As I say, the dialogue between the various security and intelligence agencies has been very good. I think all states have responded very rapidly to any request from the commonwealth, both about exercises and any legislation or referral of powers, and cooperation between the police has been good. Although the main focus tends to be on Sydney, Melbourne and perhaps Brisbane, we are very conscious that Perth is isolated and can be vulnerable.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: They would plan to continue to do that into the future on various occasions. I wonder whether some of our strategic assets in the north of the state were also looked at.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I do not have any details on that—the director general might be able to add something there—but we are conscious that they are exposed assets.

Mr P. Conran: In answer to Mr Waldron, yes, there is quite a focus on assets in the north, particularly from a commonwealth perspective, and also from a state perspective, for obvious reasons. The critical issue that was dealt with in Exercise Spartan was Defence aid to the civil power—that is, when can Defence be called in to assist a state in relation to counter-terrorism incidents. That was a very successful exercise; I think all parties were pleased. We will get a report on that through the Australia–New Zealand Counter-Terrorism Council in the coming months.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Did that exercise include cyber attacks? Is it right that there was a cyber attack on the state government several years ago?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I refer to the director general.

Mr P. Conran: I am not entirely sure whether cyber was a specific issue in that terrorism exercise. Cyber security is a particular issue being looked at now through the Council of Australian Governments and within the state government. For obvious reasons, it is an issue taken very seriously. It is interesting to note that Edith Cowan University has an exceptional reputation in relation to cyber security issues and we are looking at how we might work with it on cyber security and in considering the development of a cooperative research centre in relation to cyber security. We will see how that develops over coming months. My recollection is that in one incident, there was some suggestion of cyber invasion in relation to one of our departments. That issue was picked up and has been addressed and there is a greater level of alertness about that issue across the sector, and regular checking is going on about that matter.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Was it a state party that made that cyber attack in Western Australia?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I am not aware of that.

Mr P. Conran: I think the general response to national security issues is that we do not discuss where it is from. I am happy to provide a briefing on what I know if that would suit.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I will take a briefing; that will be great.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I refer to the service summary at page 69 and the line item for government policy management. I understand the Department of the Premier and Cabinet has some role in relation to the policy settings for the new Perth Stadium. It was announced today that possibly access to seats at the new stadium for existing members would include a \$3 000 up-front cost, plus the normal annual membership fees. Is that something the Premier's department has been made aware of or understands to be the case, or is it a policy setting under the arrangements with the new stadium operator?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I am not aware of any proposal like that. There has been ongoing discussion about the number of stadium memberships. No; I do not think that is correct. I cannot see any up-front payment of \$3 000.

Chairman; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Terry Waldron; Mrs Glenys Godfrey; Mr John Castrilli; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Peter Tinley

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: It came through the Fremantle Dockers. Is there any possibility that an up-front payment will be required, on top of the annual membership, to secure a seat, potentially on the wing?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I am not aware of that detail but I would think that would be a membership issue for the Dockers or the Eagles. If they choose to structure premium seats in that way, that is a matter for the clubs.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The Premier has not been made aware of it? Is it something the Premier would rule out as part of the new arrangements?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: No; we do not rule anything in or out. We want to make sure the stadium maximises revenue but on an equitable basis for everyone. Obviously, Dockers' and Eagles' memberships will translate into seats, and we are notionally preserving 10 000 seats for general admission.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Has stadium membership been finalised yet? Will there be specific stadium memberships at the new stadium?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: There will be some stadium memberships; the exact number is yet to be finally determined. The stadium operator obviously wants more of those, and I want less of those, so we will finally reach a compromise.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: On the issue of the stadium, I note that the government is borrowing \$423 million through the design–build–finance–maintain—I think that is the right title—for a part of the lease, and that the interest payments on that will be at the rate of 7.7 per cent. Has the government looked at borrowing that money itself, because, of course, the government of Western Australia can borrow at a much lower rate than 7.7 per cent?

[2.20 pm]

Mr C.J. BARNETT: As the member knows, it is a design, build, finance and maintain project. Those details of the exact financial arrangements of the stadium relate to the Department of Sport and Recreation and Treasury, not the Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I was under the impression that the DPC was part of the management and oversight.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: No, primary carriage is with the Department of Sport and Recreation and Treasury. My involvement as Premier is more with the policy aspects of the stadium, like the number of seats that might be for standing memberships.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Just to clarify that, the question of paying 7.7 per cent interest on that \$423 million of borrowings is not a policy issue?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: It is not an issue for the Department of the Premier and Cabinet; it is an issue for the Treasurer or the Minister for Sport and Recreation—I would suggest the Treasurer.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: In relation to the stadium membership issue, when does the Premier believe that will be concluded?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I would expect that to be concluded once finalisation of the operating agreement with the operator, Stadium Australia, has taken place. That is one of the points being negotiated as we get very close to finalising that agreement.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Any particular date?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I would think we are talking about weeks.

Mrs G.J. GODFREY: I refer to the eleventh dot point on page 68 of the *Budget Statements*. Can the Premier outline the outcomes of the state government's deregulation and regulatory reform agenda since it was announced in March 2015?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I think there has been a cross-government focus on deregulation. The saga of the potato industry demonstrates that it is a lot easier to deregulate than it is to regulate. Similarly, we have seen measures taken with respect to the taxi industry over the last few days. Some key areas include the planning portfolio. Again, although things like development assessment panels might be controversial, they have certainly freed up a lot of planning decisions and allowed them to move more quickly. We have seen quite dramatic deregulation in the mining industry, which has resulted in our mining industry being rated number one in the world by the Canadian group—I forget its name—in terms of ease of getting a project up and going. We have also started to work through individual areas. A forum was organised by the Minister for Commerce around the building industry, and a lot of quite obvious and long-overdue reforms have been put in place there—just to standardise approvals, definitions and the like. A similar forum is being planned for the tourism, retail and hospitality sectors in which there is loads and loads of unnecessary regulation. We will continue to do that; it is an ongoing role for

Chairman; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Terry Waldron; Mrs Glenys Godfrey; Mr John Castrilli; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Peter Tinley

government to continually try to get rid of obsolete or unnecessary and burdensome regulation. Of course, we have also acted to get rid of a lot of committees and the like. I am still frustrated with that; I think there are a lot of functions of government that are no longer required. Although it is perhaps a trivial matter, I still wonder why it is that the state government appoints members of country cemetery boards; I cannot see why that is the case, but a lot of this stuff is laid down in legislation and therefore requires acts of Parliament to be corrected.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: How many pages of regulation have been introduced since the Premier became Premier?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I would not have a clue, but I can guarantee that every time this place passes a bill, it brings with it regulation. I would hope that more modern, recent regulation is appropriate, but we live under the burden of regulations dating back almost 100 years in some cases and which serve no real purpose, and it is those regulations that need to be got rid of. We also have the regulatory review unit, which looks carefully at any new regulations coming in. Society demands all sorts of restrictions and controls, and this place usually responds by regulating.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I refer to the issue of the taxi reform that has been announced in recent weeks. Does the Premier have any support or sympathy for increasing the amount of compensation available to taxi plate owners in the industry?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I do not think we will ever satisfy taxi plate owners, particularly if they have paid \$200 000 or \$300 000 for their taxi plates. I just make the observation that they did not pay the government that money; they were taxi plates bought in the market from other private individuals.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Not always.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: We have offered, essentially, \$20 000, and people staying in the industry have rights over the rank-and-hail part of the market, so we hope that will work its way through. When an industry has been so heavily regulated and protected, it is always difficult—not so much from a policy point of view, but from an equity point of view—when deregulation takes place, but I do not think it is up to the taxpayer to assume all the potential losses of participants in a market in which, of their own free will, people have chosen to go out and pay large amounts of money to other individuals for taxi plates.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: There have been no private sales since 2006, but previously they were bought from government. In relation to this, we have seen industry-funded compensation schemes across a number of industries. Why was that not something that the Premier and his cabinet discussed or considered as part of the deregulation process?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: There clearly was discussion about levels of payment, or compensation if the member wants to call it that, and the figures that were released by the minister last week are the figures that we settled on.

Mr M. McGOWAN: With regard to the potato industry, what is the average payment for a potato farmer as part of the government's compensation scheme, and how does that compare with a taxidriver?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I would not think it valid to compare growing potatoes with driving a taxi, but I do not have that information. The question should be asked of the Minister for Agriculture and Food, who is handling that matter. Indeed, as the legislation goes through Parliament, there will be opportunities to ask questions on that.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I refer to the second last dot point on page 71 of budget paper No 2 under the heading "Government Policy Management"; this reads "support for the functions of Cabinet and Parliament". During the estimates hearings last year we had discussions about the Ministerial Code of Conduct arising from questions surrounding the Minister for Transport and his financial affairs, and the Premier's recognition that he had technically breached the code of conduct. Will the government's new code of conduct see the light of day before the election; and, independent of those changes, has any action been taken in relation to the Minister for Transport's private trust issues?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: When the Minister for Transport came into this Parliament, he had a number of assets in various legal and commercial arrangements. Some of those that attracted public attention he has divested himself of, probably at some personal cost, but he has done that, and I am satisfied with all his reporting and accountability.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Will we see the new code of conduct before the election?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: There have been no changes made to the way in which cabinet operates in terms of disclosures and the like. I think that is working well. There are also some proposed amendments that are not all that dramatic. I do not know that it would be public, but if this government is re-elected, we would certainly start with a revised code of conduct at the start of the next term of government.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Are there still outstanding conflict of interest issues for the Minister for Transport and his ownership of shares through his trust arrangements?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I think those shares have probably been disposed of by now. There is a very limited market for those particular shares; it was not a listed company. But every minister is required, at the beginning of cabinet, to disclose any conflicts of interest that arise, and that happens. Every second or third cabinet meeting, someone will raise an issue. Generally they are not real conflicts of interest, but they are recorded in the minutes of cabinet, and if there is a genuine or potential conflict of interest, that minister will leave the room and that will be recorded as well. I am satisfied with the way in which the arrangements work, but I repeat: should this government be re-elected, we will bring in a revised code of conduct which will include some tightening and clarification, but the process is operating well.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: How many times have ministers excluded themselves from cabinet deliberations in respect of conflicts of interest?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Which conflict of interest?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Any conflict of interest—how many times?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I would have to go through the minutes of cabinet meetings, and I am not going to do that, but I would say that every second or third cabinet meeting a minister will declare a conflict, and those conflicts of interest do not generally relate to their own circumstances or pecuniary interests. For example—I will not name the minister—a minister recently left the cabinet room because he had been advocating on behalf of a constituent, as we all do, and a matter relating to that constituent came to cabinet and he therefore exempted himself. There was no direct interest to himself, but because he had an association with that person and their issue, he left the room. That is strictly enforced.

[2.30 pm]

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I think this is actually quite important information that the people of Western Australia should know about. There is nothing wrong with a person excluding themselves from cabinet, but if the Premier is saying that this is a regular event —

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I said that every two or three meetings someone might leave.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: If the government is having 40 cabinet meetings a year, the Premier is saying that at least 13 ministers are having conflict-of-interest issues that lead to them having to leave the room. As the Premier knows, not all conflicts of interest lead to a minister leaving the room.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: This cabinet takes a very strict view. Generally when ministers leave the room, they really are not required to do so in terms of the Ministerial Code of Conduct, but they do so to ensure that there is no accusation or even perception of a conflict of interest. Another example that comes to mind is a minister who declared a conflict of interest because a member of his family worked for a particular company that was named in a submission. I am certainly not going to agree to provide the information the member is requesting because that would effectively amount to divulging cabinet's agenda.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: No; I am asking for the number of times ministers have been absent, not the agenda issue.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I am sorry; I am not going down that path.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I want to clarify that the Premier said that not everybody who has a conflict of interest is excluded from cabinet. Is the Premier saying that everybody who declares a conflict of interest is then excluded from further consideration of that matter at that cabinet meeting or do people who declare conflicts of interest that are considered minor participate in the debate?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: When there is a genuine conflict of interest, which is extremely rare—in fact, I cannot think of one in recent times. Probably the closest would be when a member of a minister's immediate family is involved or the company that a person worked for is involved in an issue. I think it would be quite appropriate for that minister to leave the room. The other conflicts of interest are people simply saying that they know a person or have had some association with an issue. That is not strictly a conflict of interest but, generally, that minister will offer to leave the room and I will agree to that. Sometimes so-called conflicts of interest are raised and I will rule that there is no conflict of interest and the minister is not required to leave the room. I make that ruling on the spot. Look, if the member is trying to suggest that ministers are in and out the doors of cabinet, that is just not true.

Chairman; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Terry Waldron; Mrs
Glenys Godfrey; Mr John Castrilli; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Peter Tinley

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I am not trying to suggest anything; I am just trying to understand the Premier's answer. For example, when the Treasurer made a decision to give a company that he owns shares in \$40 million without a tender, that was not considered a conflict of interest.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: What is the member talking about?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: When the Treasurer gave money to Telstra.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Is the member talking about the mobile phones?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Yes, when Telstra got \$40 million from the government without a tender. The Treasurer made the announcement in a media release about a company that he was a part owner of, and that was not a conflict of interest.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: It could be argued that that should be declared, but there would be no tangible effect on Telstra from sponsorship of mobile phones.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: There is no tangible effect? So the fact that Telstra's competitors were not given an opportunity to participate in that is not important?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: That is your argument; it is not mine.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I was not asking for that.

The CHAIRMAN: I think that the Premier has answered the question.

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: Before I ask my question, I just want to make the point and record in *Hansard* that this is my and the member for Wagin's last estimates committee hearing.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I wondered why he was smiling!

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: Hopefully, we might get one or two questions in.

I refer to the third dot point at page 68 about the collaborative science relationships with government at a national and international level. What is the Chief Scientist doing to broaden the state's economy?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I think we have a very good Chief Scientist in Professor Peter Klinken. It is important that the state has identified five priority areas in science to focus science effort in the state. The Chief Scientist has been able to develop a high level of collaboration between, for example, the universities, industry and national bodies such as the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation. We are also using the significance of Western Australia in Asia to build some international relationships. Sometimes those relationships come a little bit by chance. I visited Nanjing, in the Jiangsu province, in China. I was talking to the party secretary in Nanjing and it emerged that the national centre for botanical research in China was based in Jiangsu province. Out of that discussion, collaboration has begun between the centre and the Department of Parks and Wildlife on botanical biodiversity. Similarly, work has been developed jointly between the University of Mumbai and the University of Western Australia on Indian Ocean studies. We are also slowly stepping down the path of building a special relationship with A*STAR, which is the major scientific and technical research body in Singapore. I am aware that there are a number of other applications in the medical area. I think that Western Australia under the leadership of the Chief Scientist is doing excellent work in science collaborations within Western Australia, nationally and increasingly internationally. I am very pleased with the way that that area is going.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I have a question about the sixth dot point "support for the functions of Cabinet and Parliament" at page 71 about the communications area of the department. How much longer will the Bigger Picture advertising campaign run? What agencies are involved in the campaign, and what is the expected total cost of the Bigger Picture campaign?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The Bigger Picture campaign is a coordinated program that has been funded from the existing resources of various departments. As the member is aware, it covers a wide range of departments. There has been a focus on transport information to the public. There has been a focus on education, so that people know what is going on there. There have been programs on health and so on. The program is probably winding down to some extent at the moment; I expect that will be the case. Under this government, there has been significantly less expenditure on advertising and it has been better; it has been more effective. The member probably does not like to hear that it has been effective. It has been coordinated and has used a range of mediums.

Mr M. McGOWAN: It is totally political.

Chairman; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Terry Waldron; Mrs Glenys Godfrey; Mr John Castrilli; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Peter Tinley

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The Leader of the Opposition may say that, but I do not agree with that. People are interested in the campaign. People are interested in the new hospitals; in live information on transport, road blockages and accidents; and in self-managing schools. How do I know that? I know that because the response rate to those programs has been enormous. The campaign has worked far better than placing a traditional advertisement in the newspaper.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Can the Premier provide by way of supplementary information the expected cost of the Bigger Picture campaign for 2016–17, including a breakdown by agency?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The expenditure for 2015–16 was \$900 000.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Is that the total for the entire Bigger Picture campaign across government?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Total advertising was \$4.3 million, which includes a range of other advertising not simply the Bigger Picture campaign—that is, advertising across government.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Did the Premier say that the total spend for advertising across government was \$4 million?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: For various campaigns, yes.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: It is impossible that \$4 million was spent on advertising across government. What does that \$4 million represent?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I do not have a figure for the Bigger Picture campaign by itself. I am sorry, I did mislead the member. The total for advertising in 2014–15 was \$22.7 million. That was for advertising across all government agencies and for all programs, which includes road safety, health messages and whatever else right across the board.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Is that excluding government trading enterprises?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Yes, it is for government agencies including Tourism WA, the Road Safety Commission, the Housing Authority, the Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority, the Potato Marketing Corporation, WA Police, the Mental Health Commission, the State Heritage Office and Challenger Institute of Technology. The \$4.3 million is for the Department of Education and is a component of the \$22.7 million.

[2.40 pm]

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Was the Bigger Picture program a component of that \$22.7 million?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Yes.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: That was for 2015–16. What is the expected budget for the Bigger Picture campaign in 2016–17?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: We do not have a budget as such for the Bigger Picture program, because if a program is run, it is funded out of existing departmental advertising budgets. There is not an additional allocation for the Bigger Picture. Whatever expenditure the departments might have had on promotion and advertising has been drawn together into the Bigger Picture format.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I am not asking for the additional allocation. What is the expected expenditure on the Bigger Picture campaign in 2016–17? The Premier just said it was winding down, so obviously it must be less than \$4.2 million. Can the Premier confirm that?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: No; we do not have a budget for 2016–17 for the Bigger Picture.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Why did the Premier indicate it was winding down? What is the reason behind that, and by what degree is it winding down?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: It is winding down because most of the programs of this government that are out there for public information, such as transport projects, hospital projects and school reform, have been run. I am not saying that there will not be some Bigger Picture advertisements; it just will not be at the scale that it has had previously. In all the major areas of government, we have run those information programs. That information is online and the public knows where to access it, and that is what they are doing.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Does that mean that the government is planning another campaign—for instance, around the sale of Western Power or Fremantle port—that might replace this? Would that be part of the Bigger Picture campaign also?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: No, that will not be.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Is the government not running a campaign around that?

Chairman; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Terry Waldron; Mrs Glenys Godfrey; Mr John Castrilli; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Peter Tinley

Mr C.J. BARNETT: No. I have not agreed to that. I know that it has been suggested, but that is something I have not yet agreed to and probably will not agree to.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I note that the Bigger Picture website still has the Metro Area Express light rail project starting construction in 2019 and finishing in 2022. This confuses me, because I understood from what the Minister for Transport said that it was too dangerous to build MAX light rail. Is the website right or is the minister right?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I do not see that is too dangerous to build a rail, but there are issues of getting a rail through tight streets, and I think that is what the minister referred to. Most light rail systems around the world face that issue—Sydney is facing that at the moment. Our decision was to defer MAX light rail; so, it still stands as a government project, albeit pushed out. But it is no great secret that the government is looking at what is the most effective public transport rail system going into that central–north area of Perth, which is the glaringly obvious gap in our rail network. We will be looking at options—the existing proposed MAX light rail versus a heavy rail system, probably including underground sections. Those decisions have not been made but they are being looked at.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Given that this is on a government website, how much money has been allocated in the budget papers to start the MAX light rail construction in 2019?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Off the top of my head—I do not have the number—I think the member will find that in the order of several hundred million dollars has been allocated and still remains in the forward estimates. The forward estimates are what they are, and \$427 million shows up in the forward estimates for what is notionally MAX light rail. Whether it remains light rail or some other form of rail remains to be seen. However, there is still \$427 million in the forward estimates.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: How can the government advertise something that it has not made a decision on? The government is advertising MAX light rail, and it is saying that it is considering the underground heavy rail option to Morley—we understand that. However, how can the government advertise MAX light rail if a decision on it has not been made?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: We are not advertising it. It just sits in the forward estimates, where it was originally placed.

Mr M. McGOWAN: It is part of the Bigger Picture campaign.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Yes, because I have said that we have not changed that decision. We have pushed out MAX light rail, but it remains there with \$427 million in the forward estimates. If and when we change to a different transport mode, that will be changed, but we have not, in a sense, abandoned or deserted MAX light rail. It stays there as the base option.

Mrs G.J. GODFREY: The second last dot point on page 68 refers to the Partnership Forum. I am interested in the relationship between the public and not-for-profit sectors. How will the Partnership Forum contribute to and support improved outcomes for Australians?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: This government is very proud of what has been done between government and the not-for-profit sector. Back in around 2010, the additional funding of \$600 million over four years was a huge change. It has enabled all the major not-for-profits to retain staff and pay them better, which has resulted in enormous stability and better services. Central to that has been the Partnership Forum between the heads of major government departments and the heads of major not-for-profit organisations with, essentially, an outside and independent chair. That has brought the government and non-government sectors closer together with greater cooperation and greater understanding. As a by-product it has also brought government departments together because they sit around the same table. The changes have been dramatic. Most of the change has been through additional funding. Increasingly now, both government and non-government are looking at ways of better delivering services, making sure that less is spent on administration and more on direct service delivery. I think we will see progressively some consolidation in the non-government sector. Small agencies tend to consume relatively high amounts of money just in administration, so some of the bigger agencies are providing, for example, management and payroll services and the like for some of the smaller groups, because we still want that variety and spontaneity in the sector. It has been an outstanding success. I hear nothing but praise from both government departments and the not-for-profits about the way in which that cooperation has worked, and I hope that becomes a permanent feature of social services in Western Australia.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The sixth dot point on page 71 refers to support for the functions of cabinet and Parliament, which comes back to the communications area. A subcomponent of the Bigger Picture campaign was the

Chairman; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Terry Waldron; Mrs
Glenys Godfrey; Mr John Castrilli; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Peter Tinley

BigPic 360 promotional bus. Since February this year, what activity has been undertaken by that bus—in particular, what events has it been stationed at—and what has been the cost of that bus?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: No new money is attached to the bus; the cost simply comes out of existing advertising budgets. The bus has been associated with the Gateway WA project, which I think everyone would agree is an outstanding success. It has been based at Elizabeth Quay so that people could find out more about what was going on there. It has also been associated with the Perth City Link, which is rapidly approaching conclusion. Most recently, it was at the new Perth Children's Hospital, and there was huge public interest in being able to look at computer-generated images of the new hospital and to know the sorts of services and facilities that will be available for children, staff and parents. It is a little bit gimmicky, if you like, to have a bus there, but the public like it. It is a low-cost way for people to get information. When it has been parked in the vicinity of the children's hospital, many people have used it. It is good and smart, and a lot cheaper than television advertising.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Back to the question—where has it been since February this year?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I gave the member the examples.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Since February?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I think the children's hospital was the most recent event. It is not used very often.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Is it still parked at the Shenton Park depot?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I do not know where it parks itself. It is an old bus.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: It is not an old bus. It is being used to deliver existing services. Is it still there, and is it something that the government will keep using and paying for as part of the Bigger Picture campaign?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: It is a Transperth vehicle, as the member knows. The member says it is not an old bus, but it is due to retire from service in July 2017 when it will be 18 years old and past its use-by date.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: It is due to retire; it has not yet retired.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: It is an old bus that is reaching the end of its working life.

[2.50 pm]

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: What is the Premier doing with the bus? Is it in the depot?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I imagine it will get scrapped when it is retired. I do not know what happens to old buses. There must be an old bus graveyard somewhere.

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: I might buy it for my retirement.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The member for Bunbury would like it down on his foreshore.

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: I might go travelling around Australia, Premier.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: That would be good. It is an old bus that is approaching the end of its useful life. It has been used in this way. The public has endorsed it. I heard the accounts of the children's hospital experience, and so be it. This time next year it will be no more.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Is it still being used for Bigger Picture promotion? Will it be used between now and March next year, and how much will that cost?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Yes; an event is planned for information on Yagan Square. I do not think it is happening yet, so it will probably be in June this year. Yagan Square is under construction and will be the town square that will become the centre of Perth. It will have quite extraordinary information available on tourism destinations and activities around Perth. People walk past there in their thousands every day. The bus will be there for a while and people can find out exactly what is being built in Yagan Square, which will be a very respectful recognition of Aboriginal people. It will have gardens and art. I do not know what form the art will take but it will reflect on Aboriginal people at the time of first settlement. People who are interested can ask questions. The bus will be there giving information on Yagan Square. I do not think it is particularly expensive to park a bus in a car park and let people go on board and have a look at what is going on.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: How much will it cost?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I do not know. It is funded out of existing budgets. We do not have a bus budget. In the case of Yagan Square, I imagine it will be funded out of the Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority at minimal cost.

Chairman; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Terry Waldron; Mrs
Glenys Godfrey; Mr John Castrilli; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Peter Tinley

Mr M. McGOWAN: Can the Premier confirm that the Bigger Picture bus will be scrapped or sent off to bus heaven, or however he put it?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: It will be retired in 2017.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Will that be immediately after the state election?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The bus will finish its working life in 2017.

Mr M. McGOWAN: All right; just after the state election. On page 70, the third dot point is “promotion of Western Australia’s interests overseas”. As the Premier knows, he receives support and assistance from the agency in promoting Western Australia overseas when he travels, which is an important part of the role of the Premier of the state, particularly with our trading partners. There have been reports recently that the Premier has cancelled trips to China and Japan, our two major trading partners. Are those reports correct?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I did originally intend visiting China and Japan as Premier, but primarily as Minister for State Development. As the Leader of the Opposition knows, we had a change of portfolios. Bill Marmion is now Minister for State Development so he will be going on that trip. The new Minister for State Development and the new Minister for Agriculture and Food will be travelling together. I decided that because we have two new ministers in those two key portfolios of state development—which is basically mining and petroleum—and agriculture, neither of whom have been to China —

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The transport minister nearly went to China!

Mr C.J. BARNETT: If the member is not interested, we will stop there.

Mr M. McGOWAN: When were those trips planned for? Were they separate or together—that is, one and then the other? Was the proposed itinerary broader than, if you like, state development, which is predominantly mining interests, or did it include tourism, intergovernmental contact and the like?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Whenever I travel, or any Premier travels, the agenda is obviously wider, but it was primarily around mining and natural gas. Other issues would have come into it, but when I decided not to proceed, the trip had not been finalised in any sense. As Premier, I have travelled several times to Japan and China. I am well known, if I can say so, in those areas. I meet with political leaders and the heads of state-owned enterprises and trading houses. I have been dealing with them for 20 years. When we changed the portfolios, I was keen that the new minister with responsibility for the resources industry and the new minister with responsibility for agriculture be introduced into that area. The Leader of the Opposition should bear in mind that we hosted LNG18, the eighteenth International Conference and Exhibition on Liquefied Natural Gas, here in Perth so all the people I would have met with in China and Japan were in Perth and I had meetings one after the other with all the major companies. That was another factor.

Mr M. McGOWAN: When was the trip scheduled?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: It was planned during the winter break, but it was never finalised.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I have a strong view that Premiers should lead those sorts of trips and, as the Premier knows, China and Japan’s strongest relationship with this country is with Western Australia. It is unusual that the Premier would not go on a trip of that nature after it was already scheduled, irrespective of the change in portfolios, because the tourism portfolio is very important. Were there any other reasons that the Premier decided not to go?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: When the Leader of the Opposition says “scheduled”, I was proposing to travel there. Arrangements were not in any sense put in final form and dates had not been determined. There you go. When the Leader of the Opposition says “lead” the trip, I do not know what he means. I do not lead trips; I go on trips by myself with a staff member or two. I do not lead delegations or groups of ministers, if that is what the Leader of the Opposition means. I have never done that in my life.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Premier, I refer to page 68 of budget paper No 2. The seventh dot point refers to the celebration of the 400th anniversary of Dirk Hartog’s landing. Could the Premier outline what commemorations the government plans will take place on what I think is a pretty important historic occasion?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: It is; 1616 to 2016 is a very significant period in Australian history, with 1616 being the first authenticated landing on Australian soil by a European. Captain Janszoon in the *Duyfken* probably sailed down a river in the Gulf of Carpentaria, but there is no evidence that he or his party got off the boat and went ashore. There is some dispute over his place in history and that of Dirk Hartog. A replica of the *Duyfken* was built, and Michael Kailis was the leader in that. I remember it well, because I launched the fundraising campaign for the *Duyfken* all those years ago. The *Duyfken* replica will sail up there and will be in Shark Bay. It is important to have a Dutch ship of that vintage there. Access to the island is difficult. I have never been on the

Chairman; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Terry Waldron; Mrs Glenys Godfrey; Mr John Castrilli; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Peter Tinley

island, but there will be a small event on the island, probably not much more than a morning tea, just to be there to mark the moment. I expect that 50 or 60 people might be on the island, and others may go there privately. I think lots of people with their own boats may head out there, but the official party will be limited. The state government has already invested quite a lot into Denham through the redevelopment of its foreshore. The jetty has been restored and there will be various artworks and the like—I have yet to see them—commemorating Dirk Hartog, and a festival will be held on the Denham foreshore. It will be a great event. Some people in Denham had a grander event in their sight, but we have kept it in proportion. A lot of people from around that part of the Pilbara and the midwest will turn up. Also, there will be a significant Dutch presence as part of that. I cannot confirm all the details at this stage, but there will be a very prominent Dutch presence.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Is there any thought about doing something with the replica of the plate? Has the Premier thought about doing something with that?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: From memory, a replica will be on the foreshore. There will be quite a lot of material. The interpretive centre in Denham will have an exhibition. The Museum will also have an exhibition about Dirk Hartog and, I guess, the Dutch sailors heading for Batavia who were blown by the roaring forties onto the Western Australian coast. A lot of material will go into our schools about that part of our history.

The CHAIRMAN: I remind members that there are six more divisions in this section. We are approaching the end of the first hour. That is food for thought for later.

[3.00 pm]

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I refer to page 70 of budget paper No 2. The first dot point refers to administrative support to the Premier and the fourth dot point refers to communication of government policies and activities. I remind the Premier that on 3 November 2010 he announced that \$16.5 million would be provided to Claremont Football Club for the rebuilding of its facilities. Why was a \$300 000 success fee paid to Mr Denis Marshall as part of the grant? On how many occasions did the Premier meet with Mr Marshall in relation to that grant and the redevelopment?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: LandCorp redeveloped the area around Claremont Oval, and I think that is a very good inner-city development. We talk about the need for higher density close to the city, and that is an example of where it has been supported by the local community—it has not been controversial. The first of the major apartment houses is basically finished. Claremont Football Club had a long-term lease to redevelop Claremont Oval, and the state government, through LandCorp, basically bought out that lease and restructured it. The payment to Denis Marshall was a payment from Claremont Football Club, not the government, and Denis Marshall basically pulled the project together and helped manage it. So, that is a relationship between Denis Marshall as an individual and Claremont Football Club. The government, and I as the local member, if the member is going that way, had no role in that whatsoever, and in fact I had no knowledge of it until I read about in the local newspaper.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: On how many occasions did the Premier meet with Mr Marshall prior to the grant being given to the club; and how many times did the Premier meet with him afterwards?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I cannot answer that, for the simple reason that Denis Marshall and I are good friends. I see him quite frequently in my electorate office and I see him around socially. But I do not back away at all—as a local member, I strongly support the development of Claremont Oval and I strongly support Claremont Football Club. I am a vice-patron of the club. Denis is probably the most famous Claremont footballer ever. We are friends; he coached me and the like, so we go back a long way. But I was not involved in formal meetings about that project. That was a matter between LandCorp, Claremont Football Club and the Claremont town council.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: So was the Premier not aware of the decision to give Mr Marshall \$300 000 of the \$16.5 million that the government gave the club, as a success fee, when he was lobbying the Premier about the project?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: He was not lobbying me. We both shared an aspiration from day one, as did many people, mainly members of Claremont Football Club, to see the club have better facilities, and we supported the development, as did the Town of Claremont. I have said that I was involved as a local member in encouraging that project, but as it went ahead I was not party to the commercial negotiations between the Town of Claremont, Claremont Football Club and LandCorp. I was simply a local member and a vice-patron of the club supporting what I think is a very good project—something we all do in our electorates.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: If the \$16.5 million grant, of which \$300 000 went to Mr Marshall, did not have anything to do with the Premier —

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I did not say that.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: — how come the Premier made the announcement on 3 November 2010 as Premier of the state of Western Australia?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: What—announcing a payment to Denis Marshall?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: No.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Exactly; of course not.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The payment of the \$16.5 million grant to Claremont Football Club was announced by the Premier, but the Premier is saying he did not have anything to do with the decision to give the money away.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I am the Premier, I am the member for Cottesloe and I have an association with the Claremont Football Club—it is the sort of thing that I would announce. However, that does not mean I was part of the negotiation. Again, can I stress that with regard to the payment, which the member described as a success fee—I do not know that that is fair description—Denis Marshall was basically employed by Claremont Football Club to bring the project together, which he did, along with others. That was the fee negotiated between Claremont Football Club and Denis Marshall.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I agree with the Premier's statement that Mr Marshall got his \$300 000 because he put the deal together; I understand that. I want to get this clear—who valued that lease at \$16.5 million?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I imagine that would have been LandCorp's work; it would have done that. The project had to stack up, and Claremont gave up rights over that oval, which has allowed private development to take place, so it basically gave up land that it had a lease over, and that was bought out by LandCorp. It is proving and will prove to be a very successful development. Other West Australian Football League clubs want to do the same.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Will they all get a \$16.5 million grant from the government?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: No, that will depend on the value and the amount of land available. Claremont Oval was unique. It is obviously a high-value suburb. There is demand for apartments in the area and the land area surrounding the playing surface of Claremont Oval is large. Probably the other club that might be comparable is East Fremantle. Swan Districts Football Club is looking at doing the same, but it does not have as much land around its oval. I am looking at my friend, the member for Wagin, who is also a vice-patron of Claremont, and I think he would agree with that.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Finally from me on this topic, why was the Premier's electorate office consulted before the circular to the members of Claremont Football Club was circulated?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I am not sure that it was. I think Claremont Football Club sent through a note about it. I did not see it. I do not think it was necessary to send it to my electorate office. I imagine Claremont Football Club thought it was just being courteous.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: So when it sent the email to the Premier's office saying, "Once you give us the go-ahead, we'll send it out", does the Premier not think that that was seeking approval?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: No, it was not, and it certainly did not need approval, because I was not involved in the transaction. So I was as curious about that as the member for Cannington would have been.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Page 71 of budget paper No 2 refers to support for the functions of cabinet and Parliament. My question goes particularly to the alliance agreement with the National Party and how it is administered through the cabinet process. For example, the National Party was obviously not party to a number of cabinet decisions made this year, such as the sale of Fremantle port and the cabinet submission for the authority to draft and then print the legislation. How was that administered through the cabinet process? For example, how does the cabinet secretary deal with the cabinet minutes and cabinet decision sheets afterwards if the National Party is not party to that cabinet decision?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The cabinet secretariat does not distinguish between Liberal Party ministers and National Party ministers; it just deals with the government and deals with all ministers on an equal basis.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: In this instance, the National Party said it was not part of that cabinet decision. Therefore, how is it administered, if it said it is not part of the cabinet decision? For example, if there is a follow-up from a cabinet decision and the Minister for Regional Development needs to consult or undertake some evaluations, or whatever needs to happen, how is that administered through the cabinet process if three cabinet members are not part of the formal cabinet process?

Chairman; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Terry Waldron; Mrs
Glenys Godfrey; Mr John Castrilli; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Peter Tinley

Mr C.J. BARNETT: They are still part of the cabinet process. However, if, for example, the National Party ministers exempt themselves from a particular topic, such as the port, if the member likes, the minutes simply record that they are absent for that section.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: If as part of a cabinet decision there is the requirement for a minister to undertake some follow-up work—for example, to ask their agency to examine the regional impacts of the sale of Horizon Power—is the cabinet minister subject to that decision, even though that minister is a National Party minister who believes they are not part of the cabinet decision?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: That is too complicated for me. That sort of situation has not arisen. However, if, for example, government wanted information from an agency and the minister had exempted themselves and did not want to be part of the process, I would use my rights as Premier to get that information.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Horizon Power would be a logical example. If there was a follow-up request that the regional development minister examine the impact on the regional economy of the sale of Horizon Power, and that minister was not subject to that cabinet process because he is part of the National Party, would the Premier use his authority to direct the agency to get that information?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: If I needed to, but that situation has not arisen and I do not expect it to. The member should bear in mind, if she is talking about the example of Horizon Power, that the responsible minister is Dr Nahan.

[3.10 pm]

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Sure. He is the minister responsible for the legislation, but he may ask the Minister for Regional Development to undertake a particular study.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I am not about to. It is a silly hypothetical.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: No. It is a further question. It is about the administration of the government and the alliance system. From how many cabinet decisions have National Party members exempted themselves?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I am not divulging cabinet details.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I am not asking the Premier about who said what in a cabinet meeting.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: It does not matter. I am not divulging discussions in cabinet. The member has named them. The issues on which the National Party has taken a different position are in the public arena.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Can I go through them? The sale of Horizon Power, the sale of Western Power —

Mr C.J. BARNETT: This is not a quiz session.

The CHAIRMAN: I wonder whether this is deviating a bit too far from the dot point that the member for West Swan raised.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The dot point refers to support for the functions of cabinet. This relates directly to support for the functions of cabinet. Is the Premier able to outline the decisions from which members of the National Party have exempted themselves?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: It is in the public arena.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Can the Premier reiterate them?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I am not reiterating them and I am not discussing cabinet. It is in the public arena that the National Party has taken a different position on Fremantle port. National Party ministers were present during some of the initial discussions, but they took that position and from that point on exempted themselves from cabinet discussion of that matter.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: So the sale of Western Power and Horizon Power has never gone to cabinet in any way?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The government has not made a decision on that. I have made a public statement numerous times that the government is yet to make a decision on the sale of Western Power.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The Treasurer does not believe that.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Read the budget speech. It is quite clear. We have said that should a decision be made, it will not be before the next state election.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I refer to the proposed sale of Utah Point. Were National Party ministers part of that decision?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Yes, they were part of that decision.

Chairman; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Terry Waldron; Mrs Glenys Godfrey; Mr John Castrilli; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Peter Tinley

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: I want to direct the minister to page 68 and the sixth dot point under the heading “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency”, which states —

The Office of Science is supporting the Chief Scientist of Western Australia in leading a review of Western Australia’s current data linkage capabilities to ensure a whole-of-government approach that delivers benefits to Western Australians.

Could the Premier provide an overview of that work?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: We are getting into a bit of a stretchy area for me when we get into data linkages and the like.

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: I am very interested in that.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: However, the member for Bunbury would be aware that earlier this year, we appointed the state’s first Chief Information Officer, Giles Nunis, and I think he is making a huge difference to government in the information and communications technology area. He and Peter Klinken are working well together; there is a bit of a crossover, I guess, between science and IT and the like. With the development of the Square Kilometre Array and the associated Pawsey Supercomputing Centre, Western Australia now has an enormous capacity to handle big data, and that is being used across health, social research, mining and a range of areas. Perth has the largest computer capacity in the Southern Hemisphere, which is a huge advantage beyond the SKA. Bill Marmion, as Minister for Innovation, is leading it. A lot of public information and government records are now becoming available that people can access and do research on. Obviously, we want to protect people’s confidentiality and we are still working through that in the health area, but there is a huge capacity to do very sophisticated health research on a population basis using health records. The Department of Health is quite rightly resistant; it is not against the concept, but it is very resistant because it does not want confidential health records to be compromised. It is an area in which Western Australia is starting to lead, and it is a collaborative effort between government, universities and the private sector.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I take the Premier back to his answer regarding page 70, when he talked about the staffing levels within ministerial offices. He indicated that there are 220 full-time equivalent positions in his ministers’ offices. Can the Premier provide by way of supplementary information the number of staff per ministerial office and his office for that purpose? The Premier said 246 —

Mr C.J. BARNETT: At the end of the Carpenter government, yes; that is correct.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Is the Premier able to provide by way of supplementary information those two pieces of information that he has referred to?

The CHAIRMAN: Does the Premier want to provide that as supplementary information?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: No; if I can provide it now, I will. This document has details for the current government as of 21 April 2016 and the Carpenter government as of 28 August 2008. The total number of full-time equivalent positions under the Liberal–National government is 219, and under the Carpenter government it was 246. I will table that information.

The CHAIRMAN: You cannot table information. You can distribute it to other members, but you cannot table it.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I will do it that way.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Following on from that, halfway down page 70, under the heading “Efficiency Indicators”, it refers to the average operating cost per ministerial office. Next financial year, \$2.9 million is allocated; in the last financial year, \$2.6 million was spent. Is the Premier able to provide by way of supplementary information a breakdown of the actual operating cost of the Premier’s office, each minister’s office, and the Leader of the Opposition’s office?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: No, I suggest that is probably not available. I do not think that sort of detail is there.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Why? It would be right there.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I just do not think it is.

Mr M. McGOWAN: It would be right there.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I am not convinced that that information is available.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: With respect —

Mr C.J. BARNETT: This is a leaner administration than the previous one—significantly leaner.

Chairman; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Terry Waldron; Mrs Glenys Godfrey; Mr John Castrilli; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Peter Tinley

The CHAIRMAN: Premier, are you finished? Member for Cannington, a further question.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I am addressing you, Mr Chairman. I am drawing your attention to the statement made at the start that answers are to be relevant et cetera. I make the point that if there is an average figure, it must by implication mean that the total amounts are known; otherwise, we could not arrive at an average. All we are asking for is the basis of the calculation. It is in the budget paper right there.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: We will provide what information we can in that regard, but I am not going to send people on an expensive exercise to find that out. We have moved ministerial offices into —

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I want to know where that figure comes from.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: We will provide what we can to answer the member's question. I am not going to specify exactly what it will be, because I do not know what is available. We will provide information on the costs for individual ministerial offices and the Premier's office.

The CHAIRMAN: As far as is available.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Yes.

[*Supplementary Information No A21.*]

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Just to clarify, I am seeking the cost information that led to the calculation on page 70, as is available; obviously the information is available, otherwise the government would not know the average cost.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I said we would provide information on the cost of individual offices, both the Premier's office and ministerial offices, and the Leader of the Opposition's office.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: The eighth dot point on page 68 refers to safety on our beaches. What are the government's plans to continue to address safety at our beaches, particularly with the new swimming enclosures? I know that the enclosure at Albany has been welcomed. I think one enclosure was blown away a bit in the storm the other day. Can the Premier give us an outline of the plans there?

[3.20 pm]

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The state government has spent around \$28 million on shark safety at beaches. The major expenditure has been on the switch from fixed-wing aircraft to helicopters and extended services along the metropolitan beaches, and the introduction of helicopter services in the Bunbury to Margaret River region. Also, the building of swimming enclosures has proved to be effective. The City of Cockburn has built its own enclosure—good on it. I think that is the one that was damaged in the storm. The state government built the first state-funded swimming enclosure at Dunsborough, then Busselton and, as the member said, in Albany. We are also building one at Sorrento, which will cost more because of the wave conditions and deeper water. We announced a further enclosure at Quinns Rocks in the budget papers. I expect that the state government will fund perhaps one to two swimming enclosures in the coming years.

The number of potential sites is limited because they need really protected water. That is certainly the case in Dunsborough and Busselton. The protected water in Rockingham would be a potential area. I think there are protected areas in Mandurah where it would work. We will run out of locations but the enclosures are effective. They generally go out about 100 metres and are about 300 metres long. It is not like a swimming pool; people can get out there and have a decent swim. It takes away a lot of the stress. There is no doubt that parents feel a lot more comfortable if their children are swimming in those areas. I think it has been cost effective. I know there is a lot of controversy about the shark situation. I cop that, but Western Australia and Australia had never experienced seven fatalities in three years. The public was baying for something to be done. Not everything worked out as planned but I think the aerial patrols and the swimming enclosures have proven to be effective.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Has it led to school swimming classes? I know it was a concern at the time.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Swimming classes are certainly held down in Dunsborough and so on, and I imagine it is probably the case in Cockburn. We would expect that. Surf clubs also use them for Nippers programs and the like. Surf clubs were losing members and parents were pulling their kids out of Nippers programs because of the fear of a shark attack. It is still there. I think we have had only one fatality since that period, which was on a fairly remote south coastal beach. Also, obviously, surfers and divers and the like are being a lot more careful and cautious. But the threat is still there. Sharks are regularly sighted close to those areas.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I refer to the fourteenth dot point on page 68 of the budget papers. It states —

The Department will support the Premier in the State's contribution on national infrastructure initiatives ...

Chairman; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Terry Waldron; Mrs Glenys Godfrey; Mr John Castrilli; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Peter Tinley

On what major projects or initiatives has the state sought funding from the commonwealth? Has the state government sought financial assistance for the Metro Area Express light rail project?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: No. There has been discussion and a list of a variety of projects was submitted, primarily through the transport portfolio. Obviously, in more immediate times, I think Gateway WA was a great success; it was about two-thirds commonwealth funded and one-third state funded.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Yes. Anthony Albanese did a good job.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Yes, he is easy to work with; there is no doubt about it. NorthLink WA—the Swan Valley bypass, if you like—was similarly done on that basis. Roe 8 was jointly funded. As the member knows, the commonwealth recently contributed \$500 million towards the Forrestfield–Airport rail project. Metro Area Express is out there somewhere into the future—MAX or MAX version B, whatever it might be. There have been a variety of projects. In northern Australia, the priorities proposed to the commonwealth were the Broome–Cape Leveque road and the Great Northern Highway upgrade program, which has various components including Marble Bar Road, Minilya–Exmouth Road, Port Hedland road and Tanami Road. That is in the north of Australia as well, so there are two proposals.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Has the state sought funding from the commonwealth for the Pilbara integrated electricity network?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: No.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: To clarify, this state was the only state that did not put in a formal submission to Infrastructure Australia last year; is that correct?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: No, we put in submissions, but we tend to work on a slightly different time frame from the other states.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I am not talking about particular business cases or particular projects but I understand that there was a formal submission process last year about which Infrastructure Australia wrote in its report that WA was the only state not to put in a formal submission.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: It might surprise the member, but we do not grovel to Infrastructure Australia. We make our own decisions on infrastructure projects and on each of them, I dealt directly with the Prime Minister of the day.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Does the Premier confirm that we were the only state not to put in a submission to Infrastructure Australia?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: No, it had proposals from us. It knew exactly what —

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: We did not put in a formal submission but we did submit individual proposals. I understand that the proposals we submitted were for the Perth Freight Link and now we have submitted a proposal for the Forrestfield rail link. Can the Premier confirm that?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The Forrestfield rail link has received \$500 million of funding from the commonwealth.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I understand that is currently going through a formal assessment through Infrastructure Australia.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: No. The money will be paid this financial year.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: That was goods and services tax compensation; it was not a process recommended by Infrastructure Australia funding because that process is still underway. Can the Premier confirm that?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The money will be paid this financial year; call it GST, Infrastructure Australia or whatever you want to call it. It is \$500 million that will be paid to the state government and it is dedicated to the Forrestfield rail link.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Is the Premier telling me that the federal government funded the Forrestfield rail link before approving it through a business case process?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: It was agreed between the Prime Minister and I, and it has happened.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Is it normal that federal governments commit funding to projects without positive business case assessments?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I can name some other projects too: sinking the rail line through Perth —

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Sure.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The Ord River scheme was negotiated between me and then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd under exactly the same circumstance.

Chairman; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Terry Waldron; Mrs
Glenys Godfrey; Mr John Castrilli; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Peter Tinley

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: No, I am fine with this. It is quite normal and it is a good process that the commonwealth commits funding without going through the business case proposal. If that is what the Premier is saying, I am fine with it.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Kevin Rudd, Malcolm Turnbull and Tony Abbott were all the same.

Mrs G.J. GODFREY: I am not sure whether we are on to the Public Sector Commission yet?

The CHAIRMAN: No, we have not got there yet.

Mrs G.J. GODFREY: I defer to the member for Wagin, then.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: I refer to the fifth dot point on page 68 that states, “The Office of Science has launched the Science and Agribusiness Connect program ...”. Has that just been launched or is it underway? I wonder whether that is happening now or is it just starting off? It is a question of personal interest.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I asked the Chief Scientist have a look at agriculture, particularly its research capacity and level. There has been a lot of debate about agricultural research being reduced and I think that is true, but I had a concern that the quality of agricultural research is not as high as it needs to be, so some work is going on in that regard. Having said that, I visited the facility at Merredin on genetically modified crops and I was very impressed by the sophistication of its work. We are doing some work in upgrading —

Mr T.K. WALDRON: That was my main point.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Agriculture has welcomed that. Scientists, particularly in the genetics area, are coming from outside of agriculture because a lot of the science is very similar. We have some proposals to revamp facilities for the Department of Agriculture and Food Western Australia, which will include a very sophisticated science component. That is yet to be realised but it is not far off.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Through the Seizing the Opportunity Agriculture initiative, I know that there is the grains, beef and sheep research that I talked about in the other estimates committee. Because we have different areas of research, has any thought been given to having a dedicated agriculture research centre in Perth where people who come from overseas can go before they go out to other places?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Yes, that is part of the process. It would not be a large centre but it would be very high level research, particularly about genetics, for example, within grains. As the member knows, the broader proposal is to have more farm-related research concentrated around Northam.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I refer to the ministerial air charter service on page 67 of budget paper No 2. There is a note at the bottom that states —

- (a) The additional funding required is not disclosed in order to avoid prejudicing commercial negotiations.

Is the department increasing the amount of air support that it is receiving?

[3.30 pm]

Mr C.J. BARNETT: No. I will ask the director general to comment on this, but the two aircraft the government uses are coming to the end of their lease. As I understand it, it will probably be necessary to replace those at some stage in the next couple of years. Obviously new aircraft will be expensive but I think their operational costs will be significantly lower, with better fuel economy and the like. That is something that will be confronting government in the next couple of years. I will ask the director general or one of his staff to comment on that.

Mr P. Conran: I think the Premier has just about answered all of the questions. It is correct that at some point in the future the planes will have to be replaced. We are in the process of extending the leases on both of the planes for another year. One of them will come up in 2017 and the other in 2018. The extension of the lease terms will necessarily incur some cost. We are maintaining confidentiality for commercial reasons in relation to that, but would be happy to provide a briefing to the opposition on that matter, on the basis that it is commercial material. As members are probably aware, a small group of people would be interested in the area of ministerial air charters, so we do not wish to pursue disclosure on that in a public way at this point. As the planes get older, the cost for maintenance and regular checks increases. These are planes that could potentially last for longer but the cost of maintenance will increase. At some point there will be a crossover between the cost of purchasing new planes and the cost of maintaining and continuing leases of the older planes.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: When the contract is agreed, will the department make the total value of the contract public?

Mr P. Conran: I could not see any reason why that would not occur; it would be FOI-able in any event.

Chairman; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Terry Waldron; Mrs Glenys Godfrey; Mr John Castrilli; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Peter Tinley

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: How many times has the ministerial jet been out of WA—used to fly away from Western Australia?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I will answer that. The jet is the only one capable of it. The only time is for COAG when I and obviously Premier and Cabinet and Treasury officials travel on it. The decision on its use outside the state, I preserve as my decision. The only time it has been outside, apart from my usage, has been when I allowed the Minister for Regional Development to fly to a meeting in Darwin; commonsense prevailed and he flew on from Kununurra. The director general has just said that when there have been emergencies—for example, refugee boats—it has gone to Christmas Island and so on. It has been deployed by the commonwealth when there have been emergency situations, but I do not allow it to be used other than by myself because there is a group of people going.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Just to clarify that answer, how many times has it been used to leave Western Australia?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: It has been used every COAG meeting.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The Premier goes to COAG on the jet?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Yes.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Oh.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: But the jet will generally be full of staff.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Okay. Is that not more expensive than catching a direct flight to Canberra on Qantas in the afternoon?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: No, it is less expensive.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Does everyone travel up the front in Qantas?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Under the lease arrangements, that is the most economical way, and, as I think has been the case with successive governments, to the best of my memory, the only time it has ever been used interstate is for COAG meetings. For example, when I went to the last two grand finals, I did not use the jet. In fact, I bought, out of my own pocket, a ticket on a commercial airline, paid for privately by me. I do not know whether previous governments have always done that.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: They have. What is the cost then to fly to COAG? Does the government have to pay for the plane to stay overnight?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Clearly the plane and the pilots are there. Generally it is a one-night stay, yes.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: How much does that cost?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I do not know off the top of my head. The arrangements for the leasing of the aircraft are such that there is obviously a fixed or upfront charge and the usage of it is not that expensive. Given that the government leases the aircraft, it is economical to use it when several people are travelling in it.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The Premier is saying that because the government pays a large amount upfront —

Mr C.J. BARNETT: For access to the aircraft, yes.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: My question relates to policy management outlined on page 70 of the *Budget Statements* and to the management of the Elizabeth Quay project. What ongoing role does the Premier's department have in relation to that project and in overseeing any communications, advertising or any of the festivities there?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The project both during construction and in operation comes under the Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority. All arrangements around the opening and the Fringe World Festival there were done by the MRA. Obviously I have an interest in the project, as does my department, but we are not involved on a day-to-day situation. When an issue arises there—for example, with the water playground—as with any government agency when any issue arises, my department and I become involved in trying to resolve it one way or another. However, we are not involved in the day-to-day issues. Obviously, I have taken an interest in that project in terms of policy decision—for example, that the ferries will come into Elizabeth Quay. They are decisions I have been involved in, but not in a day-to-day management role.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: In relation to the opening events and the opening month's festivities, was that something the Premier's agency and communications group were involved in—in organising many of those events or understanding or ensuring there were events to be held within that first month?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: They were organised by the MRA. I am sure my staff were involved in discussions around that. The opening of Elizabeth Quay was very simple. There were a few fireworks or a light show that was quite

Chairman; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Terry Waldron; Mrs
Glenys Godfrey; Mr John Castrilli; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Peter Tinley

modest, a couple of speeches and an unveiling of a plaque, and there were 25 000 people there, but the member could hardly call it an extravaganza—she has not used that term, but it was not; it was a very modest opening. The MRA very cleverly negotiated to have the presence of the Fringe Festival there, and it was incredibly popular. We have seen noodle festivals and other things take place. Obviously, if I am involved, my staff are involved, but the organisation of those events was done through those at the MRA; they were their ideas and initiatives.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Was there any involvement by the Premier’s agencies and him directly about the opening date—about having it open by the end of January or in that summer period?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Obviously, if I was going to be opening it, my availability was part of the factor. However, the choosing of a date, opening it by the end of January, was on MRA advice. It said it would be ready for the end of January, so that is what we worked on. The date of 29 January, from memory, was settled around mid-December. I was a bit surprised; I thought it might have been a little later. It did not really matter to me too much, but the MRA said it would be ready by 29 January and I said, “Okay, we’ll go with that”—and that was it.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: In hindsight, does the Premier think he opened it too early?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: No, I do not at all.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The Premier does not have any second thoughts —

Mr C.J. BARNETT: No.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: — or concerns?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: No. It was the right time to open it. It was a good time to open it in that summer period just after Australia Day. People were on holidays and school had not gone back. Children could come. There were thousands of children at the opening. I think it was the perfect time to open it.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: There was a keenness to open it because of the number of people the government could get to the opening event.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I imagine that was a consideration of the MRA. The MRA selected the opening date; I agreed with it.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Even though it obviously was not ready.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Well, it was as ready as we were going to get. A lot of construction had to take place on it, and it was there. It was fantastic. We all know the problems that have occurred at the water park, but the water park was opened in the afternoon. When we cut the ribbon, there were literally thousands of people queued up because they wanted to see Elizabeth Quay. Why not let families come while it was still the holiday time? We can be a little bit generous sometimes. There was huge public interest in having a look at Elizabeth Quay and I was amazed and pleasantly surprised that 25 000 turned up for the opening, because it was hardly an extravaganza, but it was a great event.

[3.40 pm]

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Is the Premier’s agency responsible in any way for paying the \$200 000 a week that it costs to maintain Elizabeth Quay?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The MRA is responsible for Elizabeth Quay.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The Premier’s agency is not paying those fees?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: No; the MRA operates independently, and reports to the Minister for Planning. I think it has done a terrific job. All but one or two of the land sites have been sold.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: None of them has. One site is on a promise. No site has sold.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: There is no site with construction on it yet.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: No sites have been sold. There has not been any land sold.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I know you hate the project but the public love Elizabeth Quay.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: About 1.6 million people have been there.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The first hotel will start in the next couple of months, and that will go up and apartments will go up and over the next five to seven years we will see all that site occupied. A little further down the track there will be a national gallery of Aboriginal art as part of Elizabeth Quay. We have preserved the prime site for that as part of the long-term planning.

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A — Tuesday, 24 May 2016]

p39b-68a

Chairman; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Terry Waldron; Mrs Glenys Godfrey; Mr John Castrilli; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Peter Tinley

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Is that the site over the river?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: At the end, yes.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Over the river.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: It will extend across the river. It is a piece of land at the end, yes.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The Premier's agency is not involved. What is the Premier saying about the sale of land; which blocks have been sold?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: If the member asks the planning minister, she will give him details.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I have.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Lots have been sold or are under offer; they are under contract. We are very pleased with the land sale.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: One site.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Has there been transferral of consideration?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I know what the Leader of the Opposition is trying to say, but the sites are acquired.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: It is only one site—the Chevron site.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: That is what the member is saying. What does he think the Ritz Hotel will be built on?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: It is still owned by the MRA.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Construction is about to start. I know you hate it; I know you are against Elizabeth Quay. That is fine. We know where you stand. You have never got a major project underway.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I am against poisoned dolphins. That is right; I do not want a poisoned dolphin.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Was the dolphin poisoned by Elizabeth Quay? It was outside Elizabeth Quay.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: No; I just said that I am against poisoning dolphins.

The CHAIRMAN: That is hardly a dot point on the agenda.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Sit back and watch as Elizabeth Quay develops and becomes the focal point of Perth. It has already changed Perth.

The CHAIRMAN: I will move on to the next question.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I have another question on this issue.

The CHAIRMAN: I will allow one more.

Mr M. McGOWAN: What additional cost estimates has the Premier received for the repair work on the children's playground and the cost to taxpayers of the repair work for the sewerage pipes that are angled the wrong way?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: My understanding is that it is totally at the cost of the contractor and subcontractor.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Is that agreed with the contractors?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I do not think they have much choice; that is the agreement—that is the contract.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Is that disputed by the contractors?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Not to my knowledge.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Not to your knowledge. Can we get advice?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: There may be a commercial dispute, but the work has been undertaken by them at their expense.

Mr M. McGOWAN: But there may be a commercial dispute? That is the Premier's view. Is that the agreement with the contractors or is that subject to negotiation?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: That would be under the terms of the original contract. They may dispute that; for example, they may say there was some design fault or whatever else. Who knows? But, as it stands right now, that is the responsibility of the contractors.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Coming back to the land sales. Can the Premier give us a list of the blocks that are sold, who the purchasers are and what was the consideration paid for these blocks?

Chairman; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Terry Waldron; Mrs Glenys Godfrey; Mr John Castrilli; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Peter Tinley

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The Minister for Planning and the MRA will be able to provide that information.

Mr M. McGOWAN: There is a lot of speculation around that after the next state election Chevron will withdraw from its arrangement. Has the Premier had any discussions with Chevron on its intentions about that block, and has Chevron given an ironclad guarantee that it will go ahead?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Chevron has assured me that although its office accommodation has been deferred, which I agreed to—it has its hands full with both the Gorgon and Wheatstone projects; it did not want to be distracted by having to go through the process of developing office accommodation and all that goes with that, and I agreed with that—it will build that accommodation for its office for some very good reasons. Obviously, it wants to consolidate all its office workforce into one site. As an American company operating in a sensitive sector, it has security issues and the like, so it will move into its new build; whether it owns it itself or it has a third party do it, it will have a Chevron building.

Mr M. McGOWAN: When does it plan on commencing?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The deferral is for two years.

Mr M. McGOWAN: When does that conclude?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I do not have the dates in front of me, but it is a two-year deferral.

Mr M. McGOWAN: A deferral of construction?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Yes. When it purchased the site there was an obligation to build. We have agreed to Chevron extending the time of that obligation for two years.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Does Chevron not have the opportunity to go back to the state at its option? Is that correct?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I am not sure of those details. I do not know why the Leader of the Opposition is suggesting that will happen. I can assure him that an American company of Chevron's standing will have its own building and security provisions for a variety of reasons. The build will be elevated about three stories above ground for exactly those reasons. It will be a purpose-built building. This is Chevron's biggest investment in the world. It has made a lot of other discoveries; it is here for the long term. I do not know why the Leader of the Opposition is trying to talk down Western Australia. This building will happen. Elizabeth Quay will be a stunning success. If you are ever Premier, I can guarantee that you will be there cutting ribbons to open buildings, too, and taking credit for it.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I just want to be sure it will happen, basically.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Yes, it will happen.

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: I want to go to —

Mr C.J. BARNETT: You talk down the state all the time, don't you?

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: I was going to refer back to page 68.

Mr C.J. BARNETT interjected.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Hang on, the member for Bunbury has the question.

Mr M. McGOWAN interjected.

The CHAIRMAN: Leader of the Opposition, it is finished. The member for Bunbury has the call.

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: I was going to refer to the dolphins, but I thought I had better not.

I refer to the tenth dot point on page 68 under "Significant Issues Impacting the Agency", where it states —

The Department, in collaboration with relevant agencies, is working towards finalisation of the Strategic Assessment of the Perth and Peel Regions ...

With the scope that represents in terms of environmental approvals, can the Premier inform us about what was done to ensure the community is well informed about those draft plans? It is pretty important, I think, that they are given every opportunity to express their views on those draft plans. Can the Premier elaborate on that for us, please?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The strategic assessment of the Perth and Peel region is an enormous undertaking. As the Minister for Environment says, no capital city in the world has ever attempted something like this; that is, to basically cover that vast area and to designate which areas need to be protected for conservation biodiversity reasons, whether it be Carnaby's black cockatoo and the like, and which areas can have residential or other types of development. There has been continual consultation and discussion throughout. The draft report is now out

Chairman; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Terry Waldron; Mrs
Glenys Godfrey; Mr John Castrilli; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Peter Tinley

there. Some landowners will be affected adversely and some will be affected positively so, inevitably, a lot of people will complain about this and that, and that is a process to be worked through. If we can bring this to a successful conclusion, as I am sure we can—not everyone will be happy—it will resolve questions of conservation, biodiversity protection and the whole development of the Perth and Peel area. I think it will be an enormous achievement. It was done for Melbourne but that was relatively simple compared with the area being tackled here and the unique environment and biodiversity of this state. I expect there will be lots of little issues going on but we will get there through a lot of hard work. The biodiversity of this state—both animal and plant variety—in that area will be protected. That will be an extraordinary environmental achievement. As I say, no other city in the world has contemplated anything like this. Western Australians should feel proud of it. There is a fair way to go and there will be lots of meetings and arguments and visits to local members and ministers and the like but we will continue. This is a once-in-a-millennium-type project. If we get it right, it will serve this city and its people well for decades to come—maybe centuries to come.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Was the Department of Transport required to provide an infrastructure or transport plan as part of the initial development of the Perth and Peel Green Growth Plan for 3.5 million?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Not as such, but obviously infrastructure corridors, whether they be for transport or utilities, form part of it.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Would it have been better to have a transport plan as part of the Green Growth Plan?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: No.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: What is the expected cost of implementing the Green Growth Plan? A lot of the cost involves purchasing land.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I think the total cost over about 30 years is something like \$1.2 billion.

Mr S. Taylor: That is correct. The estimate is based on a draft of the city agreement over 30 years.

[3.50 pm]

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: How would the government endeavour to pay for it?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: We will pay for it out of consolidated revenue and there will probably be some disposal of government land. It will be expensive; protecting the environment is not cheap, but it is a long time frame—more than 30 years—and that will be manageable.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I was a bit flippant about the transport plan. Did the Premier request from the Department of Transport some infrastructure certainty so that the government could develop a land-use planning document, like the “Perth and Peel Green Growth Plan for 3.5 million”, based on a transport plan?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: We do not base conservation on a transport plan; it is integral to it and there are already designated corridors for utilities, transport and the like. I have no doubt that the transport agencies will form part of it—I was not directly involved in that—but we do not predicate conservation on a transport plan any more than we might predicate it on any other part of the planning process.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: It is conservation, but land use, and is not land use entirely dependent on the transport plan?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: No, it depends on housing, commercial developments, subregional centres, navigation and all sorts of things.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Navigation?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Yes—postal navigation, port facilities.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I just want to clarify this. Is the Premier saying that all the issues he just outlined are included in the “Green Growth Plan”, but how people get from one place to another is not part of the “Green Growth Plan”?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: No, a transport plan is a transport plan. This is an environment plan. Clearly, this process has gone on for several years, and recognition of corridors, whether they be for utilities or transport, forms part of that. Clearly they form part of it; it would be nonsense if they were not included. They form part of it, as do areas suitable for residential development, as do areas in which there is likely to be more intense urban development and subregional centres, as do existing conservation estates and future areas of conservation, and as do the river systems.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Is the Premier saying that transport connectivity is an integral part of the “Green Growth Plan”?

Chairman; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Terry Waldron; Mrs
Glenys Godfrey; Mr John Castrilli; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Peter Tinley

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Like other components, we could not develop a green growth plan if it did not allow for corridors.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: But the Premier said he did not get the transport agencies to provide a plan in advance.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: No, I did not say that. I did not say that at all.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: He did; that is exactly what he said when he answered the question a couple of minutes ago.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: No, I did not. The question was: was a transport plan submitted as part of this? I would think a lot of transport information was, but we did not stop the conservation program to go —

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: No, nobody —

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I have answered the question; the member can interpret it any way he wants to. This is a broad environmental and planning document, and if it succeeds—it will—I think it will be a huge step forward in terms of conservation and biodiversity protection. Clearly, the existing infrastructure, the existing zonings, the corridors for transport and the corridors for utilities are all going to form part of the plan, but did we say, “No, stop the strategic assessment of the Perth and Peel regions while we do a transport plan and then we’ll re-start the SAPP”? No, we did not. That is the context in which I was answering.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Does the Premier understand that in contemporary planning processes, transport is done as an integrated part of the location of land uses?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: We can define “integrated” on many levels. There is a level of transport information —

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: But the Premier is aware of that, is he?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: No, I am not aware of that.

The CHAIRMAN: Members, for the benefit of Hansard, we need to have little gaps in between.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Obviously, transport information, along with a whole lot of biodiversity information, the migration patterns of animals and information on plant varieties, all go into something as complicated as a strategic assessment; they all do.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: I refer to page 67 of budget paper No 2 and the last line item under the heading “Spending Changes”, which is “Western Australian Meth Strategy”. It is great to see an investment in and focus on this huge problem via this strategy. Could the Premier let us know what the process is for beginning that strategy and any major points of the strategy and how it is going to take place?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The money has been allocated and obviously that comes under the responsibility of the Minister for Mental Health. The judgement that government took was that although a lot of measures have been taken to try to curtail the supply of drugs into the market, it is difficult, particularly in respect of meth, which can be manufactured virtually overnight. I think the community demand is, quite rightly, for greater rehabilitation, whether residential or not. Some of them have already been thought through, but those various components will be put in place by the minister—and obviously the Department of the Premier and Cabinet will be involved, as will other agencies. It is a huge social, health and law and order issue that we face in respect of meth.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: There is a big problem in some of our rural towns, both the larger regional ones and the smaller ones. I presume that will be part of the strategy also. I know the focus will be on the metropolitan area to start with.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I agree with the member. I will not name them but there is no doubt that meth has a hold on many small country towns I have visited in the last few months—probably more so than in the metropolitan area; maybe there are wider services over a more dispersed population. It is causing huge stress in rural communities. I am also fearful that meth is now getting into Aboriginal communities to a greater extent, and that could be absolutely devastating. I would not assume that it is going to be primarily in metro areas; we are very conscious of the problems in country towns.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: It is great to have the focus on it, though. Well done.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I refer to the third dot point on page 69 of budget paper No 2 under the heading “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency”. It refers to Yarloop and I have a few questions. Is the Premier planning to reopen Yarloop as a town or community? Secondly, a range of community members have expressed concern about the management of the clean-up, and I will take the Premier through those concerns. There are concerns that local contractors have been missing out and there are also concerns that it has become very difficult to get a tradesperson to come and do a simple job without being stopped and not being permitted to

Chairman; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Terry Waldron; Mrs
Glenys Godfrey; Mr John Castrilli; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Peter Tinley

enter the town. There are also concerns that local contractors are missing out even though their pricings may be a bit less expensive than, say, interstate contractors who have received some of the arrangements. My questions are: Is the Premier planning to reopen Yarloop; and, if so, when? Secondly, what is the Premier doing to resolve some of the issues that have been put forward by residents about the lack of opportunities for local contractors to undertake some of the work at Yarloop?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I am aware of some of those complaints that have come from Yarloop and the vicinity. The state government has allocated \$12 million to the clean-up of Yarloop, and we expect all of that to be expended. The work is complicated, it is complex and it is expensive. From memory, I think the working figure is about \$50 000 per house, bearing in mind that the value of the houses in Yarloop is not particularly high. As the work has continued, there have been issues around asbestos resulting from the fire and the burning down of houses with a lot of asbestos in them. As sites have been excavated, other contaminants have been found, including heavy metals and the like. This is not a simple clean-up. With great respect to local contractors, this is very expensive, specialist work, but we still believe that it can be completed within the originally estimated six to nine months. It is not only around the households; there are also the railway workshops, and there was actually also a foundry operation there long ago, so heavy metals and other materials have been found. For Yarloop to continue as a healthy, safe place to live, it will require extensive expenditure by the state government and extensive removal of material, not only from around houses but also from playing fields, school sites and the like. I understand some of the local anxiety and that people feel that a lot of money has been spent that does not need to be spent, but can I just assure them that that money does need to be spent. If Yarloop is to continue as a town, and I sincerely hope it will, it needs to be safe—it needs to be safe for young pregnant women, infants and the like. There is no short cut to that. This government had a similar experience when we cleaned up Esperance after the lead poisoning event, when birds were dropping out of the sky. We spent more than \$30 million on the clean-up of Esperance. This is not on that scale, but it is nevertheless very, very significant. It is frustrating for local people, but we are going to do it, and do it properly. If that takes a bit longer and even costs more than \$12 million, the state government will spend that money as an investment in the future of Yarloop and in protecting the health of the people who live in Yarloop. I do not apologise for that; that is the reality.

[4.00 pm]

Mr M. McGOWAN: Will Yarloop reopen as a town; and, if so, what services will be provided there? If the Premier is concerned about the capacities, if you like, of local contractors to undertake that work, on what basis does he express those concerns?

[Ms L.L. Baker took the chair.]

Mr C.J. BARNETT: This is highly specialised work. We are talking about heavy metals and other materials yet to be identified. In some sites it is unknown what might be there. I think Yarloop has a long history, which is probably not different from many other towns and maybe even suburbs of Perth in that when there was waste material, or whatever it was, people simply buried it. They buried it in their backyards or under the house or it was left lying around on former industrial sites. Yarloop is a small town, but it was an industrial town that had furnaces and the like making all sorts of materials—it was very technically advanced in its day. The contractors that have been employed at Yarloop worked on the hills bushfires clean-up. It was a relatively simple job to clean that up; this is a complex job for a small community. The cost of restoration will be close to the value of the property in some cases, but we are restoring those sites so that they can be returned to the owners. There have also been frustrations trying to find people to get their permission to go onto their sites and finding people who rented properties to get their permission to go onto their sites. Not surprisingly, but somewhat sadly, after the fire many people simply left the town, and they have been difficult to find. I know that people resent that areas of Yarloop have been closed off, but that has been done for public and community safety.

The former state Governor, Dr Ken Michael, has been employed to provide advice to government on the future of Yarloop. Certainly, I expect that Yarloop will continue but at this stage I cannot say what its economic future will be. I certainly hope and I believe that Yarloop will continue as a township, but it will be probably on a smaller scale. A lot of public facilities have gone—maybe the state will play a role in rebuilding some of those—power supplies are being reinstated and a lot of the existing utility services are there. The next stage in the process will be Euan Ferguson's report, which should be released shortly.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Considering a range of people are awaiting the Premier's decision, when does he plan to make a decision on the future of Yarloop?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: That will be around midyear—maybe a bit later. The first task is to clean up the town and be assured that it is safe. I do not think that the Leader of the Opposition or anybody else would want a situation in which women having babies are living in, and children are growing up in, that environment if we cannot be

Chairman; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Terry Waldron; Mrs Glenys Godfrey; Mr John Castrilli; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Peter Tinley

100 per cent sure it is safe. I will cop the criticism, as will the government agencies involved, but we will not compromise the safety of children and unborn children.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I refer to the first point on page 69 that states that the government is in negotiations with the commonwealth government for reform and investment in Aboriginal affairs. I assume that that refers to remote communities from which the commonwealth government, under the prime ministership of Tony Abbott, pulled out resources and provided the state with a payment of \$90 million or thereabouts for two years to support remote communities, and then withdrew from the field altogether for the first time in 50 years. What is the plan for remote communities? Will the state continue to support them so that they can provide those essential services that they have been providing in the way that they have been provided historically?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Those services have continued and, for some of them, we have been trying to find more efficient ways of doing that. The reality is that we have 273 remote communities, many of which were sponsored by a previous federal government—I think the Hawke government. The communities were not there before, but now they are there and that is an issue.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Did you say the Court government?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I said the Hawke government.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The Hawke government—I am sorry.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: It is not only about the provision of essential services—power, water and so on; it is also about opportunities for education, school attendance, dealing with domestic violence and dealing with neglected children. Sadly, in a number of communities that is the harsh reality. When I made comments along that line, everyone jumped all over me like a ton of bricks, except for one person—Noel Pearson.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I do not wish to go over the Premier's comments. He can talk about all the issues, and we know that there are lots of issues. My question is: will the state support the remote communities to continue their existence by providing services or will it not do that?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Neither the state nor the commonwealth supports every Aboriginal community. I think around 100 communities do not have government-funded services. They are probably the very small communities where there might be just a family group. Obviously, we are going to continue to support Aboriginal communities, but I imagine, over time, that the number of communities will fall because it is not possible to provide education and quality health care, let alone employment, in 273 remote and often very small communities. It is a huge social issue that will not be solved overnight; it will be a generational or maybe a multi-generational issue. At the moment, when people want to talk about closing the gap and all the other issues, a lot of them just say the politically correct thing, which is easy to say. When that issue arose and I made the comments that I did, I had just that week read a report about the neglect and abuse of children as young as 10 years in a number of those communities. If I perhaps reacted in a bit of an extreme way, I do not apologise or regret that because it was about time someone said something about what was going on, rather than turning a blind eye. I was not prepared to ignore the fact that little 10-year-old girls were being abused on a regular basis. I do not want to demonise Aboriginal people or Aboriginal communities. It is not only in Aboriginal communities, but it is there, and the Commissioner of Police verified that. It is a massive problem. We have Third World conditions in a First World nation.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will return to my question. I recall what the Premier said and it was not exactly along the lines that he is now saying it was.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Yes, it was.

Mr M. McGOWAN: No, you did demonise Aboriginal men.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I did not demonise Aboriginal people. I object to that; I absolutely object to that!

Mr M. McGOWAN: That is what you did.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I refuse to answer the question. If you are going to accuse me of demonising Aboriginal people —

Mr M. McGOWAN: Let us get back to the question because when the Premier says —

Mr C.J. BARNETT: No, I am not going to answer it.

Mr M. McGOWAN: — that he imagines there will a reduction in the number of communities over time, I am asking, on behalf of the member for Kimberley, to be honest with you, for certainty for the existing communities that receive state government support, not the 100 or so that do not. Outlying families might go and live

Chairman; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Terry Waldron; Mrs
Glenys Godfrey; Mr John Castrilli; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Peter Tinley

somewhere or other, but will the 120 or 140, or thereabouts, communities that have received commonwealth government support for basic services continue to receive those services via the state or will they not?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: That will be looked at on an individual community basis in consultation with the people living in those communities. It will not be simply about so-called water and power services; it will be about access to education, the safety of the people in those communities and the like.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Who is undertaking that work?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: It has been undertaken by a cabinet subcommittee involving the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, the Minister for Mental Health; Child Protection and the Minister for Regional Development.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Has the Premier received advice that any community should close as a consequence of this process?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: No, not at this point. Mind you, this government closed Oombulgurri. The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs closed Oombulgurri because of the chronic abuse of children there, and that was quite a sizeable community.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I have a question that refers to the first dot point on page 69 about the department's support of Aboriginal justice reforms. Noting that the number of Aboriginal people in Western Australian prisons has increased by 13 per cent since this time last year, what do the Aboriginal justice reforms entail?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I suggest that the member ask the minister.

Mr P. PAPALIA: What reforms is the Premier's department supporting in accordance with this dot point?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The department does not have prime carriage of that issue. We are trying to do a range of things to stop people being sent to jail for what some might call relatively minor offences—although that is rare. Generally when someone is sent to jail, it is for a serious offence. We are also trying to improve facilities within prison systems. The new facility being built in the goldfields will, I think, be a lot more suitable for the rehabilitation of prisoners and the like. A lot of programs are run through the Department of Corrective Services and justice, but I will not go into them now.

[4.10 pm]

Mr P. PAPALIA: Further, noting that the number of Aboriginal people in prison has increased by 13 per cent since this time last year, and the government has been rolling out this program, is there any process in place to determine whether the Aboriginal justice reform program that this department is supporting works or is not working?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I think the member will have to judge that over time. Everyone would want to see fewer people in prison and particularly fewer Aboriginal people in prison, but, as I said, it is not easy to get sent to prison. It is not easy. In almost all cases it will be a serious crime.

Mr P. PAPALIA: It is not true. It is a complete falsehood.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: If the member does not like the answer, he can wander off.

The CHAIRMAN: Premier, I think we have finished. Member for Wagin.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: At page 67, under "Spending Changes", the sixth line item refers to the "Resolution of Native Title in the South West of Western Australia", which I know people have been waiting to happen; it has been a long process. Could the Premier just give us an update on the current status and the benefits he sees flowing from that?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Yes. The Noongar (Koorah, Nitja, Boordahwan) (Past, Present, Future) Recognition Bill 2015 has been through both houses of Parliament and will shortly be law. It will recognise by statute the position of the Noongar people as traditional owners of the south west of Western Australia, including Perth. Although it may be seen as symbolic, I think it is an incredibly important step forward. The state government continues to work on the issues of setting up the trust, which will receive \$50 million a year for 12 years. The management of that and all those processes of land reallocation and all of that, will take place. The critical point is that the six Indigenous land use agreements are now going through the Federal Court of Australia. There are some appeals by different Aboriginal groups, but I expect that process will come to an end, certainly before the end of this year. That will allow the actual formal agreement to be concluded, and then the whole settlement will come into play. Hopefully that whole process, as exhausting as it has been, will be finished this calendar year and then I imagine 1 July next year will be the beginning of the trust and all those operations. It is a huge step forward and I congratulate both the Aboriginal groups through the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council and also the native title unit involving both the Attorney General and the Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

Chairman; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Terry Waldron; Mrs
Glenys Godfrey; Mr John Castrilli; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Peter Tinley

They have done an outstanding job, and the member has come from that part of the world. It has been interesting; around Australia people have been slow to recognise that this, in every respect, will be the most significant native title settlement in Australian history both past and future, in terms of the area covered, the value of the settlement and the number of Aboriginal people involved and the complexity of it. It is an enormous social achievement for this state.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Is the Premier confident it will provide more certainty to people in those regions?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Yes it will, because now, whether it is a government agency, a local government wanting to do something or a private proponent, people will not have to go through the native title process; that would have been settled. The land that is preserved and the ownership or control by Aboriginal people will be determined and therefore we will not have this complex and time-consuming process.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: That is a good thing.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The fourth dot point from the bottom of page 68 states that fundamental reform of GST sharing remains the highest reform priority. Is it not the case that over the course of the last eight years that our share of GST has gone from around 80 cents in the dollar down to 30 cents in the dollar? If fundamental reform of GST has been the Premier's highest priority, has it not been a monumental failure?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: There you go again, always negative!

Mr M. McGOWAN: Just a statement of fact, I would have thought.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Always negative.

Mr M. McGOWAN: It is a statement of fact.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I think my record stands in fighting for a fair go for Western Australia.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Did the Premier meet with the Prime Minister?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I am answering the Leader of the Opposition's question now—through successive Prime Ministers.

Mr P. PAPALIA: At least the Premier is consistent.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: You snigger at the state; that is what I cannot stand about it. You snigger at Western Australia. Although the opposition tries to continually present it as though this was a function of the GST, it was not. The sharing arrangements are between the commonwealth and the state; it is under the Commonwealth Grants Commission. The GST brought no change to that system whatsoever.

Mr M. McGOWAN: It should have.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: It should have but it did not, whatsoever.

Mr M. McGOWAN: That was the opportunity.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I am answering the Leader of the Opposition's question. Western Australia finds itself in a situation in which we, on a per person basis, pay more GST than any other state. We tend to have higher incomes and higher spending, but putting even that to one side, the fact that Western Australians get back 30 cents in the dollar is a disgrace—an absolute disgrace. I am incredibly disappointed in successive Prime Ministers who show sympathy but fail to act. When Malcolm Turnbull, the current Prime Minister, was over here he said, "That is a matter for the states." It is not. It is a matter for the Commonwealth Grants Commission and the only politician in this country who has any authority over it is the federal Treasurer. Different Treasurers on numerous occasions, dozens and dozens of occasions, have intervened over the years to change rules relating to the Commonwealth Grants Commission. But on this, the biggest issue, they have failed to act. Indeed, Malcolm Turnbull said, "Leave it up to the states"; I would welcome that. If responsibility for sharing the GST was given to the states, the states would at least sort it out, one way or another. The commonwealth has shown a lack of intellect, a lack of recognition of our Federation and a lack of ability to deal with the most significant fiscal issue in the Australian Federation.

We have won the argument; no-one is arguing against me now. The academics have stopped arguing, the politicians have stopped arguing, the commentators and journalists have stopped arguing, even individual members of the grants commission have stopped arguing. We have won the argument, and, yes, we have not got the result. That will not stop me trying to pursue it. I do not care who is Prime Minister or how sensitive the moment might be, I will continue to do so. I am not picking on South Australia, because I have always said that Western Australia would cop something like 75 cents in the dollar. We are the strongest economy and the most prosperous state, so for us to give up a quarter of our GST is not an unreasonable outcome as a rule of thumb.

Chairman; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Terry Waldron; Mrs
Glenys Godfrey; Mr John Castrilli; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Peter Tinley

Looking at states such as South Australia, which boasts it has no coal-fired power station and how it depends on renewables, how did it fund that? Out of our GST. Now it is expecting us to run around and fund and buy steel off its crumbling steelworks to support its economy. South Australia demanded that we buy Australian-made cars to support its car industry. I tell you, I have had enough of it and I think most other state Premiers have. It is about time some of these states were given an incentive to stand on their own two feet and the people of Western Australia got a reasonable, fair share of that funding, which is for the states, for funding what? Schools and hospitals. The reason John Howard brought that into place is that most state government spending goes population based to health care, schools and policing and the like. That is why the GST was seen as a stable and modest growth of funding for the states. It has not worked out that way, and it is to the great shame of successive Australian Prime Ministers and Treasurers that they have failed to front up to an absolutely fundamental issue. Had the opposition and successive people in the Leader of the Opposition's position stood by the state government, they would have helped.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Considering the opposition opposed the introduction of the GST and considering when the GST deal was signed in 1999 Treasury recommended to the government that there would be a falling return to Western Australia considering the growth in our royalties revenue, I ask the Premier once again: Has it not been a fundamental failure on the part of the state government to resolve this issue? Secondly, did the Premier raise this issue with the Prime Minister last week when he was here? Thirdly, did the Premier agree with his Treasurer, Dr Nahan, when he indicated last week that the best way of trying to get a message to the federal government was for people to vote Labor in the coming federal election?

The CHAIRMAN: There are three questions.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I am not going to answer the last couple, but I will comment on what was being said.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Why not? Why is the Premier not going to answer it?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Because they do not relate to the estimates.

Mr P.C. TINLEY: Does the Premier raise it with him every time, though?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Yes, I do, when I talk to Malcolm Turnbull. I did not see him during his visit earlier this week, I did not see him that time, but every time I see him, I speak to him. I speak to the Prime Minister regularly; we have been friends for probably 20 years. We have that relationship.

Again, if the Leader of the Opposition wants to have a political argument, we can have one. He tries to apportion blame on a previous state government and a previous Premier and Treasurer instead of standing up for Western Australia. That is why you snigger and sneer, because you do that instead of standing up for Western Australia.

Mr M. McGOWAN: In light of the fundamental failure of your government —

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Every other state Premier and every other state opposition blames the federal government. You blame the state government; you are the only one in Australia who does that.

Mr M. McGOWAN: You are the only politician still at the Council of Australian Governments who had any say in signing up to that deal. You are the only one.

[4.20 pm]

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I was not the Treasurer.

Mr M. McGOWAN: In light of the Premier's failure at that time to get a better rate of GST and his own financial mismanagement over the last eight years, does he feel any remorse or guilt over the state's level of debt and deficit that is now confronting us?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I do not know what point of the estimates the Leader of the Opposition is looking at. I have answered questions about the GST, and I will continue to fight it. Western Australia will eventually win that argument.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Premier, do you —

Mr C.J. BARNETT: No; I heard your question.

Mr M. McGOWAN: This is the only opportunity we get to question you.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: You get to question me every day of the week. You have not asked me a question in about the last three weeks.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I can ask you questions back and forth here.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: You get a question every sitting day and you never ask a question.

Chairman; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Colin Barnett; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Terry Waldron; Mrs
Glenys Godfrey; Mr John Castrilli; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Peter Tinley

Mr M. McGOWAN: You do not answer them. Here I ask: do you feel remorse or guilt —

Mr C.J. BARNETT: If you do not ask them, I cannot answer!

The CHAIRMAN: Members, Hansard cannot record two voices at once.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I assume the Leader of the Opposition has asked me a question.

The CHAIRMAN: Premier —

Mr M. McGOWAN: I do not ask you during question time because —

The CHAIRMAN: — and Leader of the Opposition! We need some order for Hansard.

Mr C.J. BARNETT interjected.

The CHAIRMAN: Premier, we had a question from the Leader of the Opposition. Does that question still stand? Please go ahead.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The question was about state debt. State debt is higher than it should be. State debt is, however, manageable. The state debt forecast for the coming financial year at \$3.9 billion is a horrendously high figure. I compare it with the \$4.7 billion this state loses in GST. If Western Australia were treated equally with every other state, it would have a budget surplus of about a billion dollars. That is the bottom line.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I refer the Premier to page 70 and the first point under “Services and Key Efficiency Indicators”, which is “Administration of Executive Government Services”. Is it going to be the Premier who is the person to whom administrative support will be provided up until March 2017?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I do not understand the question.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Will you be the Premier receiving the support detailed in the dot point until March 2017?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I do not understand the question. I cannot see the relevance to the estimates.

Mr P. PAPALIA: The dot point refers to administrative support for the Premier.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: It is a smart alec question; you should not have allowed that.

The CHAIRMAN: Premier, I am sorry, but it does relate to a dot point.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: It is not a serious question.

The CHAIRMAN: If you do not want to answer it, just let me know.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: It is a silly question, and it is a stunt.

Mr P. PAPALIA: If you are not going to be the Premier at some point between now and March 2017, will you guarantee that you will not resign from Parliament?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Which part of the estimates talks about when I might resign from Parliament? At some stage I will retire; that will happen at some stage.

The CHAIRMAN: I agree, Premier—that is not directly relevant to a dot point in the budget papers.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: It is a silly question by a silly person.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: I notice the third line item, “Kimberley Girl Program”, under spending change on page 67 of the *Budget Statements*. I have not heard of the Kimberley Girl program—I should have!

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The member should know about that; it is not all about football.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Could the Premier explain the Kimberley Girl program?

Mr P. PAPALIA: You are the only one in the state who does not know! You were a minister.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: You know everything, member, I know, but I am a human being.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: There are a lot of programs for boys, built around football, particularly through the Clontarf Foundation and the work of Gerard Neesham, that are well known and well supported by successive governments. In my view, there are no similar programs of that scale available for Aboriginal girls. Kimberley Girl, which now extends into the Pilbara as well, is a program that gets young girls, teenagers and girls in their early twenties and teaches them various life skills, including grooming and activities that prepare them for work. A lot of the attraction might be that they hope they are going to become a model. That may happen for a few of them, but a lot of them gain skills in presentation and they can get office jobs and succeed, and they stay away from drugs, unhealthy influences and the like. I have seen the program over the years a few

times. The department is involved, because basically I became involved. Although there is a fair degree of private sponsorship for the program, which is run through Radio Goolarri, it was struggling to survive. They approached me and I looked at the program, and through the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, \$200 000 funding was provided to keep the program going. That is intended to be temporary. We hope that private sponsorship will pick it up and take it on. It is a terrific program, and when I was up there in the middle of last year I met a number of the girls—they took photographs on the beach—and saw some of their programs and went to their graduation event; it was terrific. There were girls from all sorts of different backgrounds and with different appearances. They were incredibly proud, and the crowd there for this event was probably a thousand people comprising family members and community members. They were cheering these girls—some of them were glamorous, some were not, but they were incredibly proud of what they were achieving. It is a great program and I would like to see more of that for young Aboriginal girls—in fact, for young girls everywhere. We do a lot for boys; we can do more for girls.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Its sounds like a great program. If it has expanded into the Pilbara because it has been successful, would the Premier support, or are there any plans for, expanding it further, because I think it could be needed in other areas of the state? I know the government cannot do everything at once.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: This is uniquely Kimberley and pretty well all the girls who have been through the program have got good jobs; a lot of them have gone on and studied at university or done a training course. They all had ambitions, and now they have the confidence to go ahead and do it. They had lots of mentors supporting them. I do not think it would be called Kimberley Girl in the south west of the state; it would be called something else, but the concept is a terrific one and really good. I think the member would agree, as a sports person, that lots of programs are available for boys around sport, and for girls maybe it is fashion, make-up, speech and all sorts of different things that might appeal to them.

The appropriation was recommended.

[4.30 pm]