

Mr Troy Buswell; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Chairman; Dr Kim Hames; Mr Paul Papalia; Ms Jaye Radisich; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Dan Barron-Sullivan; Dr Steve Thomas

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**Division 38: Housing and Works, \$195 997 000 -**

Dr S.C. Thomas, Chairman.

Mrs M.H. Roberts, Minister for Housing and Works.

Mr R.J. Mitchell, Director General.

Mrs R. Bradley, General Manager, Business Services.

Mrs K. Fijac, Deputy Director General, Housing.

Mr S. Hamilton, Executive Director, Aboriginal Housing.

Ms L.M. Brooks, Acting Manager, Financial Planning and Reporting.

Mr J. Coles, Deputy Director General, Works.

Mr G. Vlahos, Manager, Financial Planning and Budgeting.

Ms J. Provost, Director, Government Regional Officers Housing.

Mr R.J. David, Director, Country Housing Authority.

**Mr T. BUSWELL:** Before I ask my question, can I just check whether the minister is happy to take questions about the housing authority, which is outside of the division, and the Country Housing Authority, which is listed separate to the division?

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** Sure.

**Mr T. BUSWELL:** Okay; done.

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** I know the former government did not, but we are just more accountable.

**Mr T. BUSWELL:** We have had conflicting advice from the government about what we could and could not ask questions on. I appreciate the minister being so open and transparent in all these things.

Page 686 has a line item under the capital works program called "Perth Arena". It is a \$320 million capital investment, if I could use that term. Is the minister still confident that that project can be delivered for that \$320 million budget, and that she will meet her deadline to have that project completed by October 2009, in time for the Hopman Cup in late 2009?

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** We are certainly still aiming to complete that project by the end of 2009. As the member may be aware, the tenders for this project have closed. I think that it is public knowledge that there were two tenderers, and because the tender process is not complete, I cannot divulge too much about those tenders. What I can say, though, is that there is a whole range of factors to be taken into account. I think that the budget amount will not be varied from greatly, but that cannot be said definitively until such time as we accept one of the tenders. Although a preferred tenderer has been identified at this point in time, there are ongoing consultations between the appropriate officers of the department and the personnel from the preferred tenderer. We are not in a position to announce the successful tenderer.

**Mr T. BUSWELL:** A further question if I may.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Further question.

**Mr T. BUSWELL:** Given that it appears that the tenders may well be over the budget of \$320 million, what is the government's most likely strategy in dealing with this scenario? Will it be looking to increase the funding allocation, or will it be looking to change the specification, and in particular the specification as it relates to the adjacent car park?

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** These are matters that will have to go before the cabinet. I choose at this time not to speculate on what the answer to that would be.

**Mr T. BUSWELL:** Can I deduce minister that that is the situation though - that the tendered amounts are over \$320 million?

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** I am not at liberty to disclose whether or not it is over or below that amount at this time. I can say, though, that I expect that very shortly I will be able to make very clear the costs, what is being delivered, and in what time frame. However, I am not able to do that today because the tender process is not complete.

**Mr T. BUSWELL:** We will sit on the information; we will keep it in house. I have struggled to find in the forward estimates any allocation of recurrent expenditure to the Perth arena project. Now that the government

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has effectively chosen to build and operate this project, I am interested in understanding what allocations or provisions have been made in the out years in the budget to cover any losses associated with the operation of Perth arena. Has any thought been given to what the amount would be? In other words, how much will taxpayers -

[4.20 pm]

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** Point of order. We are dealing with the capital works program but the member is asking me to answer questions on the recurrent funding. He may find that in future years the recurrent funding for the arena would be under an entirely different agency. This division is essentially the Department of Housing and Works. This part of the agency was formally known as “public works” and is involved in construction and not in ongoing management.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I suggest that the answer the minister has just given is the appropriate answer for the question asked. Therefore, we will move on from the point of order. I direct the member for Vasse that that will remain the answer. If the member wants to ask more questions on this issue - we might come back to him again - he will have to take a different approach so that the same question is not repeated.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** I refer to “Item 78 Housing Authority - Indigenous Housing” on page 681 of the *Budget Statements*. I note that Mr Shane Hamilton has a different role this year from his role last year. It is my understanding that he was operating as the chief executive of an Aboriginal housing section within the Department of Housing and Works. Is it true that his role within the department has changed? Are the direct links that used to exist between the Department of Housing and Works and the Aboriginal Housing Board still present? Has the arrangement within the Department of Housing and Works changed over the past few years?

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** Mr Shane Hamilton was not employed by the Department of Housing and Works last year. I understand that he was employed by the Department of Justice last year and began working for the Department of Housing and Works only this year.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** My apologies. However, the rest of my question still stands.

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** I am not following what the member is getting at.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** I understand that the management of the provision of housing for Indigenous communities has changed within the Department of Housing and Works. Has it changed? If it has changed, how has it changed? What are the links between the department and what was the Aboriginal Housing Board?

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** It might be of interest to the member to know that the person who headed the section that Mr Shane Hamilton now heads is Mr Danny Ford. Danny Ford now works for one of my other agencies in the Department of Indigenous Affairs. I am very pleased that Mr Ford has been able to take his expertise across to the Department of Indigenous Affairs. I will ask Mrs Fijac to comment on the exact organisation of the unit within the Department of Housing and Works.

**Mrs K. Fijac:** Mr Shane Hamilton is the acting executive director of the Aboriginal Housing and Infrastructure Directorate. That directorate reports to me as deputy director of the housing services portfolio. There is also an indirect linkage of that position to the director general, Mr Bob Mitchell.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** I get back to my previous question: how has it changed over the past two or three years?

**Mrs K. Fijac:** The department has been restructured over the past year or so. It has been divided into two portfolios - the housing portfolio and the works portfolio. Under the housing portfolio that I head, Shane Hamilton is the acting executive director of Aboriginal Housing and Infrastructure Council and reports directly to me and has links to Mr Bob Mitchell, as the director general.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** Has that changed the input of Aboriginal people into the provision of housing? In particular, is the Aboriginal Housing Board still operational and does it still recommend where the commonwealth and state government joint funding for Aboriginal housing in Western Australia should be spent?

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** Yes, the Aboriginal Housing Board still exists. I do not think that any of the changes have resulted in negative results. I have been very pleased with the changes made to the Department of Housing and Works over the past year, particularly since the appointment of the new CEO, Mr Bob Mitchell, and also the appointment of Mrs Fijac and Mr Coles in their respective positions. The department is operating much more effectively than it used to. When I took on the role of Minister for Indigenous Affairs, I made it clear that I regard Indigenous affairs as a priority. I have made that clear to both the CEO and to the director of housing. Housing issues are integrally linked to Indigenous outcomes. This is an area of great importance to me and the department, and I have made it a priority. In addition, we have trialled new schemes in Halls Creek, which I will talk about in more detail later if someone asks me about it. We have developed a very successful relationship

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with the federal minister that resulted in Minister Mal Brough and I announcing a \$112 million state-federal package last week that will be of immense benefit to Indigenous people. It is fair to say that this area has probably never had more focus, and Indigenous people have been a key priority for improving the Department of Housing and Works' services, particularly in remote and regional areas.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** I do not think it is fair for the minister to say that at all, and I do not agree with her.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** I refer to the first dot point under significant issues and trends on page 681 of the *Budget Statements* that outlines large projects being undertaken by the department that cost more than \$10 million. I would like the minister to provide some detail of the number and type of projects that are on that list.

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** I thank the member for Peel for that question. Some 64 projects are worth more than \$10 million. Those values represent the amount of funding for projects managed by the Department of Housing and Works. The projects include the major additions to the Albany Residential College at a cost of \$12.3 million; the CBD court project for court services, for which \$47.5 million is being expended under two items; under the Department of Corrective Services, the Bandyup Women's Prison will receive \$15.1 million, the Bunbury Regional Prison will receive \$15.1 million and the metropolitan low-security women's prison will receive \$13.1 million; the Westralia Square fit-out will receive \$15.6 million; the Wooroloo and Karnet Prison Farms' perimeter fence option will cost \$13.7 million; and the Department of Culture and the Arts will receive \$63.5 million for the construction of the new performing arts venue. Under the Department of Education and Training, many schools and colleges now come in above the \$10 million mark. It is suffice to say that the cumulative amount of projects that the Department of Housing and Works is managing for the Department of Education and Training totals \$511.5 million for 23 projects. Of those projects, 19 are schools at a total cost of \$421.2 million. I can see the member for Swan Hills sitting next to the member for Peel, and one of those schools is the new Ellenbrook high school, which will cost \$26 million. I am not sure whether any of the other schools are in the member for Peel's electorate.

**Ms J.A. RADISICH:** I suspect there are a few in mine.

[4.30 pm]

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** In the Department of Environment and Conservation, the biodiversity site centre at Kensington is allocated \$16.2 million. In the Department of Health, \$1.684 billion is being managed. That includes \$17.4 million for the Albany Regional Resource Centre, stage 1. There are lots of works at hospitals, the biggest of which is the Fiona Stanley southern tertiary hospital, stage 1, which is allocated \$710.1 million; and a variety of projects in health. There is \$130 million for the Department of Industry and Resources, including the Australian Marine Complex. Under the Department of Sport and Recreation, the AK Reserve projects total \$96.9 million. The Great Southern Development Commission has the Albany entertainment centre, and the WA Police service has a range of new police complexes. I am happy to provide any additional information the member wants on any of those projects, but this is the biggest capital works program any government in Western Australia has ever put forward.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** So there will be massive increased demand on the minister's departmental staff, which will probably require us to employ more people, contrary to some of the recommendations from the opposition of late.

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** That is right. The staff are managing a huge number of projects and unprecedented demand, and they are doing it very well.

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** My question relates to apprenticeship initiatives on page 684 of the *Budget Statements*. Can the minister explain what the department, as a leading construction agency, is doing to address trade skills shortages in the Western Australia building and construction industry?

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** I thank the member for Collie-Wellington for an excellent question. This is one of the department's achievements of which I am most proud. Only on Friday night I welcomed 23 more apprentices, I think was the number, into the DHW program. Their parents and other people were at the function and I think this is one of the most positive things the department has been engaged in. In February last year we commenced our pilot apprenticeship scheme, which aimed to address the skills shortage in the building and construction industry. The member for Collie-Wellington will recall that once upon a time the state government was one of the biggest trainers of apprentices and trainees in the state.

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** Someone shut down the Midland workshops or something like that.

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** I will not get started on the Midland workshops or we will never finish! I have just outlined for the member for Peel the government's huge construction program. It is certainly my view and that of the government that we should be doing more to make sure we have suitably trained apprentices and trainees entering that industry. The scheme has now entered its second year of operation and has been achieving

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excellent outcomes for the department, industry, apprentices and their families. We have partnerships in place with group training organisations that engage the apprentices and employ them across the full scope of the department's maintenance and construction programs, including housing. We now have three metropolitan group training partners - Skill Hire, West Australian Group Training and MPA Skills. Between them this group of trainers employs 63 apprentices in the metropolitan area. They are engaged in a variety of trades - painting, decorating, carpentry, joinery, refrigeration, air conditioning, glazing, bevelling, plumbing, gas fitting and electrical. I would also like to mention what the department is achieving in regional Western Australia, which I know will be of great interest to the member. In Halls Creek, the department is delivering a substantial construction program over the next three years, including the construction of public housing, government regional offices housing and community housing and also the refurbishment and construction of a hostel. In order to ensure the community receives long-term employment benefits in the construction industry, we have put training programs in place with those projects in conjunction with Kimberley Group Training, the Kimberley College of TAFE and the Wunan Foundation. At this stage the program has engaged three apprentices and eight trainees, who are receiving job training with the government contractors. The apprentices and trainees have now completed eight months of training and are achieving excellent results. In Hedland, the department has established a construction industry training program with South Metropolitan Youth Link. That is a program that employs construction industry trainees. They are receiving on-the-job training with the department's contractor, Jackson Construction, in the Hedland New Living program. Across both Housing and Works apprenticeship programs, the department is on track to achieve its forecast capacity of approximately 150 apprentices and trainees within the 2007 calendar year. In answer to the question, I think the department is now making a substantial contribution to reducing skill shortages and making sure that a lot of young people can get that link to a really worthwhile job where they will learn very valuable skills that they will be able to take anywhere in the state and use.

**Mr T. BUSWELL:** I am sorry for my momentary inattention. I was enthralled by that answer.

I refer to the second dot point from the bottom of page 684 of the *Budget Statements* that relates to 140 William Street. It says that negotiations have been completed for an agreement to lease office accommodation. Can the minister confirm the amount? My understanding is that it is 22 000 square metres of pre-committed office space. What is the amount of rental and what are the terms associated with it? I understand it was a 15-year period.

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** Yes, I understand the 22 000 square metres is correct. What was the other question?

**Mr T. BUSWELL:** What is the rate per square metre for the rental?

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** I might ask Mr John Coles to comment if he can.

**Mr J. Coles:** I cannot provide the exact details for that office building, but to give the member some idea of current Perth costs for commercial space in the CBD, the current going rate is \$340 per square metre, and some mining companies are paying up to \$400.

**Mr T. BUSWELL:** I have a further question: minister, why can I not be given information as to how much has been committed for the 22 000 square metres on this development, which I understand is the Evolution consortium?

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** I understand we will be paying market rent, but if the member would like me to provide that by way of supplementary information, I am more than happy to take that on notice.

**The CHAIRMAN:** The minister will provide as supplementary information the rent to be paid for 22 000 square metres at 140 William Street.

[*Supplementary Information No B6.*]

**Mr T. BUSWELL:** Following up on that, I understand the minister has office space guidelines of 15 square metres per FTE, or something along those lines. Therefore, the minister will be looking to accommodate 1 466 FTEs in this pre-committed space.

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** We have to let them have some foyer area and walkways.

**Mr T. BUSWELL:** The minister is 100 per cent right and, as always, on the ball. My understanding is that the space allocation includes all work areas, conference and meeting rooms and reception areas etc, so the 15 square metres includes all the things the minister just talked about. I got that from the policy document.

[4.40 pm]

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** Excellent.

**Mr T. BUSWELL:** I am intrigued to understand where the 1 466 people, give or take one, will be sourced from. Was this pre-committing process in line with the Department of Housing and Works office

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accommodation policy No 2 - Procurement of Office Accommodation? Was it referred to the Government Accommodation Committee as part of that process? In other words, were the usual DHW processes followed for the procurement of office accommodation?

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** The 22 000 square metres referred to there is to accommodate staff from three agencies; namely, the Department for Planning and Infrastructure, the Department of Housing and Works and LandCorp.

**Mr T. BUSWELL:** I also asked whether the proposal and the pre-committal of 140 William Street were consistent with the approach used through DHW policies for office accommodation procurement, and whether it was referred to the Government Accommodation Committee.

**Mr J. Coles:** That was discussed at the Government Accommodation Committee, which I am a member of. The tender for that was a private sector arrangement, which I think the minister is aware of. The three departments that the minister referred to were part of the expression of interest in the tender document to start with. It was processed correctly under all the proper processes through both the tender process and the Government Accommodation Committee.

**Mr T. BUSWELL:** I refer to the pre-commitment of 22 000 square metres at 140 William Street. At any stage in the process was there any, I suppose the term is market testing? In other words, did the government seek expressions of interest from other property developers who may have been able to provide 22 000 square metres? Was that market tested against the outcome that was ultimately determined with the consortium?

**Mr J. Coles:** As part of the assessment panel, outside leasing agents were employed as consultants to assess outside values. The arrangements in the expression of interest were to provide a certain portion of it for the government. At that stage, the accommodation committee had assessed the renewal of our leases. Some of our accommodation requirements were being taken by mining companies.

**Mr T. BUSWELL:** Was it generally tested in the broader market?

**Mr J. Coles:** There was a tender process whereby each tenderer put in their proposal for it.

**Mr T. BUSWELL:** I understand that. I am sorry, Mr Chairman. Did DHW go to developer X or developer Y who may own an area on which a big building was to be built in due course and ask: if the government committed to 22 000 square metres, which is a fairly big chunk of that building, for 15 years, what cost could the government have it for, as opposed to dealing with a consortium for 140 William Street?

**Mr J. Coles:** Under the tender requirements, we could not do that because the tender was seeking expressions for that space. We could not go out to other companies during the tender process and ask them to provide the same level of space. That would have been an improper practice.

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** The sole objective of the construction of 140 William Street is not to find 22 000 square metres of office space. The government has a number of objectives in developing that site in the city centre. I believe that, once the building has been constructed on that site, it will provide many benefits for the city centre as such. I think it will be a very good thing to have so many people working in the heart of the city. It will improve substantially that area of the city and will fit in very well with the new railway station.

**Ms J.A. RADISICH:** I refer to the last dot point on page 685 of the *Budget Statements* under major initiatives for 2007-08. I note that the department is embarking on a graduate development program, which I guess will build on the apprenticeship scheme that the minister and the member for Collie-Wellington discussed earlier. Can the minister tell us what benefits this program might bring to the department and new graduates of subjects such as architecture and engineering?

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** We regard the graduate development program as a strategic investment in the development, transfer and utilisation of project management skills within the works and building services portfolio of the department. The program is aimed at university graduates and provides a two-year structured work placement program that encourages formal training and personnel development opportunities, supported by a mentoring process. At the end of the program, graduates will be expected to commence a one-year return-of-service obligation, drawing on educational disciplines such as project management, architecture, engineering, planning and business management. It is intended that graduates will provide integral support and potential leadership and mentoring to new graduates.

In addition to the graduate development program at the beginning of 2007, the department commenced two other programs - an internship program and a health graduate program. The internship program is a partnership between the department, the Royal Australian Institute of Architects and the Council for the Built Environment Design Professions. It was established in 2006 with an intake of four interns. The program for each intern involves four six-monthly rotations through private sector architectural consultants and the department. It is

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intended to fast track the transition of graduates into the workplace and give them some experience in the delivery of major capital works projects. It is interesting from talking to our senior people in the department or, indeed, people in the professions of architecture or engineering who are involved in the building industry, to learn that many of them reflect on the great grounding they received in one of the earlier versions of the Department of Housing and Works. Indeed, many of the architects and engineers who are engaged in doing work for both the government and private industry in Perth had their first training and their first jobs with the department. In a way, this is similar to the apprenticeship scheme that the member for Collie asked about whereby people with tertiary qualifications can receive some experience working with government on these big projects and developing expertise. Hopefully, as part of that return-for-service obligation, some significant benefits will flow back to the department.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** I refer to Keystart on page 695 of the *Budget Statements*. Can the minister tell us the exact limit on the amount that can be accessed for a Keystart loan and whether it has changed in this budget? I am aware that people wanting to access Keystart loans are facing significant difficulties in the current climate, because the limit on borrowing is too low given the rapid escalation in the price of houses.

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** Off the top of my head, I cannot recall the limit for Keystart loans. The first limit for Keystart was \$365 000. That clearly fits within the Keystart limit. We identified a vast number of suburbs in which there were houses priced at \$365 000 or less. I can take that question on notice and give the member the exact upper limit.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** The first homebuyer stamp duty threshold has increased to \$500 000, so I expected there would be some increase in the Keystart limit, given the stamp duty threshold reflects an understanding of the obvious change in the market.

[4.50 pm]

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** I believe that there has been some increase. I am advised that the maximum property value has gone up to \$585 000.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** That is good news. A lot of people could not access loans through the Keystart program under the previous lower limit. Despite the significant -

**The CHAIRMAN:** Is this a further question? We need to number questions.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** Yes, I have a few questions on the Keystart issue. Despite the strong demand from people wanting to buy a house, the estimate of expenditure goes down from \$462 000 for the 2006-07 financial year to \$427 000 for 2007-08. Last financial year the estimated expenditure was \$664 000. Therefore, only two-thirds of last year's estimate was expended. Can the minister explain the reason for that?

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** Yes. The advice that has been provided to me is that it is a matter of competing products in the marketplace. When Keystart was started, it was a new product. Similar products have been developed by other state governments and most of them have fallen by the wayside. Keystart operates in a very prudent way and it is very careful about the loans it offers. It does not offer the lowest interest rate in town. Other lending institutions do that. Keystart, when it was initiated, was the first of its kind in offering a product to people without a substantial savings history or appropriate deposit. It was a scheme set up for people who did not have the deposit or the savings history required by the banks. They were new to the marketplace. Now there is a lot of competition in the marketplace. Members would be aware of products such as Wizard home loans. It seems that no banks per se, but other institutions such as Aussie and Wizard home loans, are targeting those people who previously were Keystart clients and offering them a loan. I suspect that they looked at the Keystart business and saw that despite the fact that Keystart was taking on clients who had poor savings history and very little by way of deposit, or indeed no deposit, there was a relatively low default rate on the loans. Other businesses have taken up some of that market. We have done what we can to address that, including increasing the value of the loan. What also occurred is that a number of people who took out Keystart loans five or more years ago have done incredibly well because there has been a significant increase in property values. While they may have taken out a Keystart loan five or six years ago for \$250 000, their house might now be worth \$500 000 and they are now either refinancing or upgrading to another house and, when they do so, they are going to a lending institution other than Keystart. In a sense, Keystart has done its job. Keystart does not necessarily need to keep its clients for the rest of their life or the life of their loan. Keystart clients are at liberty, if their financial circumstances improve or their equity in their house increases, which has been the case in recent years, to choose to refinance with a bank or another institution. Because of their now substantial deposit, they can often get a lower interest rate elsewhere.

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**Dr K.D. HAMES:** Further to that, is it true that the significant reduction in applications for Keystart coincides with the Department of Housing and Works taking over its management from the outside agencies that had previously been managing and promoting it?

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** At the same time as what, sorry?

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** It was managed by three outside groups, including one of the trade unions. They were advocates of the Keystart program. A department was created within the Department of Housing and Works to take over the management of that program. Does the time the department took over the management of that program coincide with the time the applications for Keystart loans started to decrease?

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** I am not up with the history of it. I do not think that is the case, but I will ask the director general to comment on that.

**Mr R.J. Mitchell:** The relationship between the issues the member raised is not valid. The downturn is simply as the minister described; that is, there are many housing loan practitioners, such as Wizard home loans, that offer a similar package and people are moving to those more flexible packages.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** Further to that, I apologise, but I did not ask the minister or the director general for an opinion. We are here to talk about what is in the budget. The opposition has been criticised for going away from that and the minister and her advisers are doing the same. Does the time that Keystart was brought in-house under the Department of Housing and Works match the time when the reduction in Keystart loans commenced? If the minister cannot provide the answer now, I would be happy to have the information on the dates and values provided as supplementary information.

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** I am not sure that the member's questions are appropriate, given the line items that he is referring to. He is asking me about events that happened in the past. He is trying to equate the drop in Keystart loans to an event that, we understand, occurred several years ago and is not in line with what he suggests. Frankly, if the member believes that, he should do his own research and demonstrate that that is the case.

I refer to the bottom of page 695, as did the member. The final line on the page refers to First Start and adds \$100 million to the \$420 million. The First Start scheme participants are required to use Keystart. It will necessarily have some impact on the number of Keystart loans that are taken out over the next three years, that being the time line we have committed to the First Start scheme.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** I need to finalise this.

**The CHAIRMAN:** This is the member for Dawesville's last question on this item.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** I am not saying that there is a connection; I am wondering whether there may be a connection. I am asking the minister to provide when exactly it was that the Department of Housing and Works took away the management of Keystart from the outside bodies and brought it in-house. It is a fairly simple question.

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** I said that in rough terms it was several years ago.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** That is an ordinary answer.

**Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN:** I refer to the incomes statement at page 688. Under the category of income there are two main components: user charges and fees, and rent. Can the minister provide a rundown, firstly, of the rent component and advise why it is projected to increase by 55 per cent over four years, and the user charges and fees, which I notice will increase by 104 per cent over three years? How has that been calculated and what stock does it apply to?

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** I want to make sure I am answering the question correctly. Is the member referring to halfway down page 688 under the heading "Income"?

**Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN:** Yes, the total income of the two main components of user charges and fees, and rent, which add up to around \$811 million this year. Can the minister provide some background on what stock they apply to and explain the reason for the significant increases over the next three years?

[5.00 pm]

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** I am told that the total increase in income to \$187.667 million, or 34.79 per cent, between the 2005-06 actual and the 2006-07 budget is due largely to increased client turnover activity.

**Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN:** Are we talking principally about housing stock?

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** This is works. It is not housing.

**Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN:** What stock are we talking about? Is it all construction property?

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**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** This is not stock. This is to do with public works.

**Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN:** Yes, stock - property. Sorry. Let me use another word. Is that the rental income for all construction property that is managed by the department?

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** I think the member is on the wrong track. This is client turnover activity. Mr Coles will explain it.

**Mr J. Coles:** The rent figure relates to the whole-of-government commercial property portfolio. The member will notice that in the *Budget Statements* we mention the substantial increase in commercial property leasing rates. The increases in rents reflect the current boom in the property market.

**Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN:** How is the increase of 55 per cent over the next four years calculated, if we go back to the estimate for 2006-07?

**Mr J. Coles:** We do the projections over a 10-year modelling exercise, based on advice from professional private sector leasing agents about the available space in the metropolitan area and the projected growth of government. Several factors go into developing that model.

**Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN:** How does the rate of return on these construction or commercial properties - I do not think they are called commercial properties in this sector - differ from the broader rates of return in the commercial sector?

**Mr J. Coles:** At the moment, one of the fastest growing returns on investment is in commercial property. As the member has mentioned, there has been a boom in residential property from investment return. However, that is starting to turn in Perth. The commercial property side, particularly with the resources boom, is fuelling a substantial increase in investment return.

**Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN:** How does the rate of return on the government's construction or commercial stock compare with the rate of return on commercial stock in the private sector?

**Mr J. Coles:** The returns are reasonably comparable - from the monitoring process we have done - with those in the private sector.

**Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN:** Is there any report that will provide a direct comparison between the two sectors?

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** I do not think so, but I will ask Mr Coles.

**Mr J. Coles:** There is not a formal report, but if the member wanted some comparison, we could provide a table.

**Mr D.F. BARRON-SULLIVAN:** I would appreciate that as supplementary information.

**The CHAIRMAN:** What is the minister undertaking to provide?

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** I am undertaking to provide a comparison between the rates of return on commercial property in the private sector and in the government sector.

[*Supplementary Information No B7.*]

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** I refer to "Major Achievements For 2006-07" at page 684. The fifth dot point on page 685 refers to the excellent Fixing Our Schools program. A number of schools in my electorate are benefiting from that program. How many schools have received assistance through that program?

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** The Fixing Our Schools program was announced in 2004 to address the backlog of maintenance in government schools. The department conducts building inspection assessments in schools every two years on behalf of the Department of Education and Training. The value of identified maintenance has been increasing steadily over the years. An amount of \$65 million has been announced for the Fixing Our Schools program. It commenced in 2004-05. The final year is 2007-08. All state schools will receive funding to address high priority maintenance work identified through the building condition assessments. Work is coordinated through the Department of Housing and Works. The department's personnel, and private sector service arrangers, assist individual schools to compile work programs and proceed with the procurement process. Typical big-ticket items for maintenance in schools include repairs to and painting of the building fabric, replacing floor coverings, roofing repairs and replacement, paving repairs and air conditioning replacements. Some of the larger projects that have been completed under the Fixing Our Schools program include roof replacement and electrical services upgrade at John Forrest Senior High School, at a cost of around \$1 million; replacement of veranda ceilings at John Curtin Senior High School, at a cost of \$700 000; and electrical services upgrade, roof repairs and general painting at Hedland Senior High School, at a cost of about \$600 000.



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A substantial amount of work is being carried out in schools. All schools are benefiting from that program to some degree.

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** The seventh dot point on page 685 refers to the supply of standard transportable buildings. Can the minister explain how the department is managing the urgent request for transportable buildings?

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** I thank the member for Collie-Wellington for his question. The Department of Housing and Works has initiated a two-year contract for the supply of standard transportable buildings to meet the increasing demand for short-term and emergency accommodation. The transportable building relocation services section of the Department of Housing and Works arranges for the supply of open-plan transportable buildings, 12 metres by six metres. Since September 2006, 13 buildings have been purchased at a cost of \$615 000. Another six buildings are under construction. Some of the sites to benefit from this initiative have included Cable Beach Primary School, Hyden Primary School, Manea College, Mt Margaret Remote Community School and Broome Regional Prison. Recently, the department was asked to urgently relocate the Meekatharra School of the Air from Meekatharra to Beachlands Primary School in Geraldton because of a fire. We worked closely with the Department of Education and Training for the relocation of a 12 metre by 12 metre general office and classroom to be used as a principal's office, and the construction of a transportable studio room and toilet block. These had to be operational by May 2007. I am pleased to advise that this tight deadline was achieved in a 10-week construction period. I believe the Department of Housing and Works has significantly lifted its game in this area and is now able to deliver these transportable buildings in a more timely way when emergencies occur.

**Mr T. BUSWELL:** I refer to pages 694 and 698, and to land releases by the Housing Authority. In last year's budget documents, the Housing Authority set a target of 3 041 for the number of lots to be released.

[5.10 pm]

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** Where is the member referring to?

**Mr T. BUSWELL:** I am referring to the section headed "Land" on page 694. It says that land development in the coming year will yield 3 101 lots. I know that the minister is a stickler for knowing what line items members are talking about. Last year the target for 2006-07 was 3 041. What target is the authority aiming to actually release?

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** This is another area in which the Department of Housing and Works has progressed remarkably. About 10 years ago, it released 1 459 blocks. In 1999-2000, the figure was 1 406; in 2000-01, it was 1 429; in 2001-02, it went up to 2 146; in 2002-03, it was 2 131; in 2003-04, it was 2 330; in 2004-05, it was 2 859; in 2005-06, it was 2 907; and the estimate for 2006-07 is now 3 087. Since the people sitting opposite were last in government, we have doubled the amount of lots that we are releasing onto the market on an annual basis.

**Mr T. BUSWELL:** The minister indicated last October that there would be 506 lots yielded in the Brighton Estate at Butler in a joint venture between the Department of Housing and Works and Ocean Springs Pty Ltd. How many lots are planned to be yielded in that subdivision this financial year?

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** We may have that figure here somewhere.

**Mr T. BUSWELL:** According to the minister's press release, it is expected to yield 506 lots. I am wondering what the actual yield will be.

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** While we are looking for that information - we do have it here somewhere - perhaps we might go to the next question and I will undertake to answer that question shortly.

**Mr T. BUSWELL:** Also, at Somerly Estate at Clarkson, in a joint venture between DHW and Urban Pacific Ltd, there was an estimated lot yield of 481, plus an extra 596. Therefore, it was estimated that there would be 1 077 lots there by mid-2007.

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** We will have exceeded those targets. Somerly is well ahead of schedule.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Member, are you rattling off things here or is this part of the original question? How many questions would the member like as part of this question?

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** I am looking for an actual lot number for Brighton Estate at Butler for the member for Vasse. Can we go on with some other questions, Mr Chairman?

**The CHAIRMAN:** Would the member for Vasse like to receive that as supplementary information?

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**Mr T. BUSWELL:** I am sure the minister will come back to it.

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** I am happy to come back to it in a moment.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I advise members that we are up to section 38. We still have to deal with sections 39, 40, 41 and 42, and we have about 47 minutes to go.

**Mr T. BUSWELL:** Mr Chairman, I seek clarification. By my records, we are not due to finish until nine o'clock tonight. I am wondering whether we have not been short-changed two hours with the minister, which we are all very excited about.

**The CHAIRMAN:** My apologies.

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** I reassure members opposite of two things. Firstly, I am anticipating being here until nine o'clock answering their questions. Secondly, having had a thorough examination of our files with us today, we do not have the exact release figures for Brighton at Butler or Somerly at Clarkson, which is two sets of figures, not four. I am more than happy to provide that by way of supplementary information for the member for Vasse. I will provide the figures on how many lots have been released in the time frames that the member for Vasse asked about for both Brighton and Somerly.

[*Supplementary Information No B8.*]

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** I refer to "Social Housing" on page 694 of the *Budget Statements*. I note that the first paragraph refers to 922 dwelling completions. On 22 December last year the waiting list for public housing was 14 980. How long is that waiting list now, and how will those 922 properties address issues relating to the waiting list?

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** I can advise that in March 2007 the waiting list was 14 938. With the additional 922 properties that the member has referred to that we will be constructing this year, we expect that we will be able to increase the number of public housing units available by about 250.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** Referring to construction of housing prior to this year, when 922 properties will be constructed, I notice that the figures are roughly similar. In 2005-06 it was less, at 853. In 2001-02 it was 931. My memory is probably failing me with age, but I was fairly certain that we were constructing a greater figure than that in the last stages of my ministry. I thought a figure of 1 300 was the rough figure. If I am wrong - it is only 931 for 2001-02, so it seems unlikely that I am right - could the minister tell me what those figures were and what the difference is? Am I adding in other sorts of constructions? I am fairly sure that the figure that the former chief executive gave to me each year was around 1 300.

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** The figure for 2000-01 was 1 382; for 2001-02, it was 1 069; for 2002-03, it was 1 035; for 2003-04, it was 952; for 2004-05, it was 857; for 2005-06, it was 729 and for 2006-07, it is 940. The dwelling units completion figure cannot be looked at in isolation from the other movement of stock within the Department of Housing and Works because whilst we might complete a certain number of dwellings, we also have to take into account the number of dwellings that are sold in a particular year and the number of dwellings that are essentially ruined or written off, as happens from time to time because of the state of particular dwellings. We cannot look at a construction figure and say that there will be a net increase in the amount of housing provided. Under the heading "Capital Contribution" on page 696 is an entry "Total Cost of Capital Works Program". Our capital works program has been increased significantly for housing construction. The estimated actual figure in 2006-07 was \$952 922 000. The figure for 2007-08 is \$909 950 000. Last year when we sat here that figure was \$806 million.

[5.20 pm]

The forward estimate for 2008-09 was \$818 million, and in the out year for 2009-10 it was \$822 million. In this current financial year it is now \$909 950 000 instead of \$806 million; and instead of being \$819 million it is \$1 232 541 000; and instead of being \$822 million in 2009-10 it is up to \$1 175 362 000. That is the considerable amount of additional money from the consolidated revenue fund that we have put into public housing because we have acknowledged this need. As part of managing all our programs, including the New Living program that the member for Dawesville is familiar with, we will aim to increase the amount of housing. The amount of public housing is not solely dependent on how many construction units are developed. Over the next four years, we undertake to deliver at least an additional 1 000 housing units of intrastate public housing. That is roughly 250 units a year over a four-year period. The additional money we have allocated for that in the budget is a significant amount into the out years, and that will enable us to increase the stock.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** The figures the minister read for each year's construction do not match the figures on page 52 of the 2005-06 annual report of the State Housing Commission for the government's public rental

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housing statistics. It lists the building commencements by customer type, which are “families, singles and seniors”. It has a total figure of 931 -

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** That may not be completions. We would have to look at that chart to compare it with the figures we have.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** It is not a big deal. I will provide it to the minister and get a clarification later as to the difference.

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** I am referring to dwelling unit completions.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** It is the government’s document, not ours. I will provide the minister with a copy and ask her to clarify that matter off the record at a later time.

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** I am very happy to do to that.

**Dr S.C. THOMAS:** I refer to the first dot point on page 699 that also relates to the last dot point on page 700. The minister can take her pick. Those dot points relate to the Amarillo development, which I am sure we are all keen to hear more about. Will the minister provide the latest position on the Amarillo development and explain why the Department of Housing and Works and not the Department for Planning and Infrastructure is now pushing this agenda? I would have thought that the development of the old Amarillo farm, which is inland from Safety Bay and Golden Bay, would have sat more appropriately with the Department for Planning and Infrastructure.

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** I am very happy to answer the member’s question. The member may or may not be aware that the land in question is owned by the Department of Housing and Works and was acquired back in December 1991. The Amarillo site is a 4 005 hectare farm property at Karnup. It was not purchased then for immediate use but was set aside for future land development for the Department of Housing and Works. My understanding is that when the department purchased this land, it anticipated that it was unlikely to be required to be used by the department for up to 20 years. We will deliver the project roughly within that timetable. We think it is a great site. It is located approximately 54 kilometres from the central business district and is 10 kilometres from the centre of Mandurah, which has undergone an incredible expansion. It also abuts a proposed major regional industrial area that will hopefully provide employment. We expect Amarillo to yield about 25 000 lots, which would certainly meet much of the future housing needs in the south west corridor. I understand that the government has allocated \$2.7 million in this year’s budget for investigative studies to commence this year. Page 700 of the budget papers states that the studies will address issues including environmental management, employment potential, transport connections, community formation and urban design.

**Dr S.C. THOMAS:** That is stated at the bottom of page 700, but the funding is not mentioned in that dot point.

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** The funding is \$2.7 million.

**Dr S.C. THOMAS:** Is that specifically listed anywhere else in the budget?

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** I expect so. I am looking for the page. It is probably under the heading of “land development”.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** There is a reference to land development on page 696.

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** The member for Dawesville mentioned page 696. If he did, he is probably correct because at the top of the page is the heading “land” and the second line is “development - 2007-08 Program”. A considerable amount of money is listed there. Within that considerable amount of money, \$2.7 million is allocated for Amarillo’s further advancement.

**Dr S.C. THOMAS:** How much has the Department of Housing and Works spent to date on the Amarillo project and the proposal, not including the \$2.7 million set aside for this coming financial year?

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** The principal cost that was expended was for the original purchase of the property in 1991. I do not have that figure to hand. Other than the purchase of the property, expenditure on the property has been minimal. There has been some minimal expenditure on maintenance of the site but it is a very low-maintenance site. There has been some minimal expenditure on getting some consultants and other people to provide advice on it. This will be the first big injection of funds into seriously developing the Amarillo site, and \$2.7 million has been allocated for that, which will vastly exceed the money that has been spent on the site to date, other than the original purchase price.

**Dr S.C. THOMAS:** Does the minister expect that the wetlands that exist on the Amarillo farm will be taken into consideration for its development? If so, what impact is that likely to have? Will the minister ensure that

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the development application and processes that the department goes through to develop the Amarillo farm will have to meet the same levels and criteria that other developers and private developers must meet when dealing with wetlands?

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** I think the member is speaking with his environment hat on. We need to be, and are, very concerned about the environment regarding the development of this land. A very detailed site analysis will have to be undertaken, particularly with regard to the watertable and drainage management studies. They will be required to be undertaken as a prerequisite, as I understand, for the metropolitan region scheme amendment to take place. Further to that, apart from trying to meet the highest standards of environmental management and development, we are looking also at other measures that we can utilise during the development to minimise greenhouse gases and to put in place water efficiencies that are beyond the five-star standard. Very careful and agreed strategies must be put in place for the management of this subdivision. I would like that to be best practice. That will be our aim and my view is that we will either meet or exceed the requirements placed upon us.

[5.30 pm]

**The CHAIRMAN:** The member for Peel.

**Ms J.A. RADISICH:** Mr Chairman, what about a fair apportioning of questions around all attending members?

**The CHAIRMAN:** The member for Swan Hills is next. The member has to put her hand up to get the call.

**Mr P. PAPALIA:** I refer to page 686 and the capital works program for Fremantle Prison. Will the minister tell us how the department will continue to ensure the long-term sustainability of the Fremantle Prison heritage precinct?

Several members interjected.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Members, I have been very fair. The opposition has had two or three questions in a row, but government members are allowed to ask questions. If the member for Vasse is feeling ill, he may leave the chamber.

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** I assure members that people well beyond Fremantle care about Fremantle Prison. This site is recognised nationally, and hopefully soon will be recognised internationally. It is one of the first sites built by convicts in Australia and one of the few three-storey prison structures of its type. In addition to that proud heritage, we also launched the very successful Fremantle Prison tunnels tour in 2005. It will mean that some 165 000 people will visit the site in 2007. I might add that that is well beyond the population of Fremantle. In fact, it had some international prominence on a television program last year. We have seen a 58 per cent increase in visitor levels over the past five years. The retained revenue at the prison has risen from \$2.9 million to \$3.5 million; that is a reflection of the increased visitor numbers. As I said, the site was recognised for national heritage listing in August 2005. In 2006 approval was granted for the department to work with the Australian government and representatives of New South Wales, Tasmania and Norfolk Island on the nomination of Fremantle Prison for the World Heritage List as part of a serial listing of Australian convict sites under the theme of "forced migration". I think this is a great opportunity for the prison and it will certainly list it internationally as an icon. In 2007-08 there will continue to be a focus on the improved use of visitor space in the gatehouse and we will continue to introduce new visitor service infrastructure such as cafe, toilet, gallery and interpretation facilities. We really want this to be a vibrant centre that can be enjoyed by all Western Australians and, as it is proving to be a major tourism drawcard for this state, for interstate and international visitors as well. If any members are interested, I am more than happy to organise a visit or a tunnel tour for them.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I think we would still be able to hear the member for Vasse in the tunnel when we were up the top!

**Ms J.A. RADISICH:** I know that members of the opposition will be very interested in the question I am about to ask. I refer to the issue of home ownership on page 695, under the Housing Authority division of the minister's portfolio. The opposition frequently attempts to criticise the government about the rate of home ownership in Western Australia, but from my reading of the budget papers there seems to be a great deal of endeavour and initiative by the minister and her department to facilitate home ownership by as many Western Australians as possible. I ask the minister to tell us about her initiatives.

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** The most significant housing affordability initiative we have launched this year is the First Start shared equity scheme, which was announced in February 2007. That will assist a thousand homebuyers in 2007-08, with a total of 3 000 homebuyers being assisted over a three-year period. There have been 4 112 registrations up to May 2007 - that is a lot of interest - with 1 350 loan applications being sent to clients who are considered to be eligible for loans. Obviously there are a lot of people who do not qualify or

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who do not follow up to the second stage. Of the loan applications sent out, 305 have been received back and 190 of those have been approved or pre-approved for a loan. Some of those have settled and a further 115 applications are currently being assessed. The authority and Keystart will continue to work closely with land developers to produce more innovative and affordable housing and land packages. For example, the display homes that have been constructed in the Housing Authority's Banksia Grove joint-venture project can be replicated for approximately \$365 000, with further project homes and group houses being developed to provide affordable solutions to home ownership. These packages involve the creative design of suitable houses on smaller lots that are targeted mainly at first home buyers so that they can gain entry to the market. I think this is an increasing trend as we join more joint-venture developments to look at how we can provide more affordable lots to market, smaller homes and smaller lots, and more innovative products - perhaps townhouses and the like - so that the cost of the land component can be reduced. Hopefully, more people will then be able to take that first step towards home ownership. It is also expected as part of our initiatives to help people get into their own homes that Keystart will provide about \$290 million for first home buyers. The housing industry will obviously benefit from the injection of funds.

**Dr S.C. THOMAS:** How many successful applications were there?

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** I have already said that - 190.

**Mr T. BUSWELL:** I refer to page 686 and the completion of a review of the current office accommodation policies. The current policy says that the amount of net lettable area allowable for newly acquired offices is determined by applying a formula of the number of FTEs times 15 square metres. Minister, this space allocation apparently includes all work areas, conference meeting rooms and reception areas. Is it likely that that space allocation will change as a result of this review?

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** The most recent four administrative office fit-outs we have undertaken since that 15 square metres per FTE ratio was introduced have achieved that. In fact, we have achieved an average of 14.95 square metres per full-time employee. Those major fit-outs included the government's shared services in the Mason Bird building in Cannington; the Department of Education and Training's shared services in Bennett Street, East Perth; the Department of Environment and Conservation and the Department of Water in The Atrium at 168 St Georges Terrace; and the Health Corporate Network at 181 St Georges Terrace. I suppose what I am pointing out is that in the most recent fit-outs we certainly have achieved that 15 square metres per full-time employee ratio. The member is right; the policies are currently being reviewed. Part of that review will focus on the occupancy density ratios, open plan fit-out design and cost, disabled access, sustainability, procurement methods for leased accommodation, and the use of internal or external negotiators. As the member has rightly pointed out, occupancy density ratios are under review, although I would not expect a lot of change given that where we have fitted out new buildings we have been able to meet the criteria.

**Mr T. BUSWELL:** I have a follow-up question. I notice that in the last year or so, the Attorney General was provided with a new office on the fourth floor of London House. He has 605.5 square metres, which based on 15 square metres per FTE means he would have 40 FTEs on his staff. I notice, for example, the minister's own office has 587 square metres.

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** Smaller than some others.

**Mr T. BUSWELL:** The minister would have 39 FTEs in her office.

Most other ministers have an office space, which, according to the government's own guidelines, would accommodate 40 FTEs when we all know that they have maybe 20 FTEs. I am wondering why there are two sets of standards - one for the Western Australian public sector and one for ministerial officers.

[5.40 pm]

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** As I think I may have pointed out, there are some existing offices and departments from the past. As a result, the costs in completely refitting out an area can often exceed some of the advantages of reducing the number of square metres that people enjoy. I think it has been standard practice, probably since the beginning of government in this state, for ministerial offices to enjoy a higher ratio than other offices. I do not know the specifics regarding London House. Mr Coles might like to comment.

**Mr J. Coles:** As the minister said, while some of those leases could be fit-outs, they may be five plus five leases. To reduce them further, we would have to wait for the renewal of the five-year lease renewal process. Also, there are some conference and hearing rooms on some floors of London House. If the minister wishes, we can provide more specific information on that.

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**Mr T. BUSWELL:** Out of interest, so that I can get an idea of the largesse the minister has extended to herself in her office, not that I am assuming that it would be over the top with things like china and expensive works of art -

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** The size of my office has not increased since the member for Darling Range last occupied it.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** How many FTEs does the minister employ?

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** Probably fewer than the member for Darling Range employed.

**Mr T. BUSWELL:** How many - 15?

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** Somewhere in that order.

**Mr T. BUSWELL:** Not the 40 that the policy -

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** A number of people work part time and so forth.

**Mr T. BUSWELL:** It is a pretty standard measure.

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** That is right.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** My question relates to Indigenous housing on page 697 of the *Budget Statements*. I note the work that is being done by the government. I can go to other sections to talk about what is being done at Halls Creek and Kalumburu, but it is not necessary to do that because I want to ask a more general question. Does the minister have figures that she can provide now or as supplementary information that compare the amount of housing availability and the average number of occupants in each dwelling for Aboriginal people around Halls Creek with the number in Fitzroy Crossing; and compare the number at Kalumburu with those at Balgo, Looma or Oombulgurri? A lot of attention and money is being focused on two specific communities.

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** One is Halls Creek. Which is the other one the member says we are focusing on?

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** Is it not Kalumburu? The minister announced Kalumburu in her recent funding package. Surely the needs at communities such as Balgo, for example, are just as bad as those at Kalumburu. Conditions at Oombulgurri are not quite so bad, but it suffers a reasonably serious housing shortage, as do most other similar Aboriginal communities. If we compare like with like, are those two communities worse off than the others? Why has the minister specifically focused attention on those? Is the minister prepared to provide by way of supplementary information some specific comparative figures for Aboriginal housing?

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** It is certainly true to say that the government has put an enormous focus on Halls Creek. In fact, it has invested an addition \$36.6 million, although it is not all for housing. Some of it is for the hostel and other things that fit within other portfolio areas. When the focus first went on Halls Creek, some said it should be a priority and that we should reprioritise money out of other communities. I firmly rejected that proposal because, as did the member for Dawesville, I could see that Halls Creek was not the only community in need. If we had a forward program of building houses in other communities in the Kimberley or Pilbara, I did not like the idea of having to stall those projects to redirect money to Halls Creek. That is a view I put very strongly to cabinet. I am very pleased to say that my colleagues agreed with me and gave me additional money for Halls Creek. The member is quite right, there are significant needs in many of the other communities; there is significant overcrowding in communities other than Halls Creek and Kalumburu. However, at the very least, we have attempted to maintain our building and housing programs in those other communities and, at the same time, inject additional money into Halls Creek. We have adopted a new approach to how we are handling Halls Creek, and we have put in place a community reference group. I attended a meeting of that group only last week. More than 20 people attended from various parts of the community. I was very reassured with that community involvement. We also have established a management committee headed by Peter Yu, who works in with all the government agencies so that we can ensure that things are being delivered on the ground. At the community reference group, people from various housing areas and communities raised their issues, and they are receiving focus and attention, and we have had good community feedback. There is lots more to be done in other communities. I have had good discussions, as I have said, with the federal Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** I do not want to hurry the minister, but we need to deal with Indigenous affairs, so I hoped the minister could keep her answer concise.

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** We still have more than two hours to go.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** Yes, I know, but I am not scheduled.

**Ms J.A. RADISICH:** That is not our problem.

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**Dr K.D. HAMES:** Yes, but the answer is becoming fairly long and tedious.

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** As part of the package, I want to do things to address housing, but we must also address a range of other issues in Indigenous communities. Not only communities at Halls Creek and Kalumburu have benefited from the latest package announced of \$121 million that I signed up to with Mal Brough; there are significant benefits for a range of other communities. In addition, he also agreed to the capital works funding of three more remote police stations. As a state, we have agreed to staff and recurrent fund those stations. That will mean new police stations going into Parngurr, Wingellina and Looma where, for the first time, there will be proper policing in those communities, so that we can start to do something about child abuse and the like. We will keep a watching brief on the housing in all those communities. I do not think providing figures on the number of persons per household in all the other communities is appropriately asked for as part of the estimates hearings, but if the member wants to put those questions on notice to me, I will endeavour to answer them.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** Aboriginal housing is one of the components of the Keystart program. Is that being maintained? Has it increased? Someone suggested to me that some of the old ATSIC money is being used to help provide support for Aboriginal people for home purchases. It seems very strange that that could happen.

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** There is no more ATSIC money; it has gone.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** That was my view also. Is the minister not aware of any outside funding?

[5.50 pm]

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** It is a separate program. When the member says Keystart -

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** It comes under the minister's budget.

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS:** Yes, it does. There is the Good Start program for existing homeowners, a disability access scheme and an Indigenous scheme. My understanding is that it has remained relatively constant in recent years; it has been maintained. In the past couple of years about 35 Aboriginal homeownership schemes have been entered into, and that is on a par with where it has been over time.

**Dr K.D. HAMES:** That concludes our questions on this item.

**The appropriation was recommended.**