

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND
FINANCIAL OPERATIONS**

2014–15 BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARINGS

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE
TAKEN AT PERTH
TUESDAY, 10 JUNE 2014**

**SESSION TWO
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

Members

**Hon Ken Travers (Chair)
Hon Peter Katsambanis (Deputy Chair)
Hon Martin Aldridge
Hon Alanna Clohesy
Hon Rick Mazza**

Hearing commenced at 4.48 pm

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN

Minister for Commerce, examined:

Mr BRIAN BRADLEY

Director General, examined:

Ms ANNE DRISCOLL

Executive Director, Consumer Protection, examined:

Mr DAVID GOODWIN

Chief Finance Officer, examined:

Ms KRISTIN BERGER

Director, Public Sector Directorate, Labour Relations, examined:

Mr PETER GOW

Executive Director, Building Commission, examined:

Mr JOHN O'HARE

Acting Executive Director, Industry and Innovation, examined:

Mr MARTIN CONNOLLY

Principal Policy Adviser, Office of the Attorney General; Minister for Commerce, examined:

Mr PETER GROVES

Principal Policy Adviser, Office of the Attorney General; Minister for Commerce, examined:

The CHAIR: On behalf of the Legislative Council estimates and financial operations committee, I would like to welcome you to today's meeting. Can I firstly ask each of the witnesses to confirm that they have read, understood and signed the document headed "Information for Witnesses"?

The Witnesses: Yes.

The CHAIR: I note that all the witnesses responded in the affirmative. Witnesses need to be aware of the severe penalties that apply to persons providing false or misleading testimony to a parliamentary committee. It is essential that all your testimony before the committee is complete and truthful to the best of your knowledge. This hearing is being recorded by Hansard and a transcript of your evidence will be provided to you. The hearing is being held in public, although there is discretion available to the committee to hear evidence in private, either of its own motion or at the witnesses' request. If, for some reason, you wish to make a confidential statement during today's proceedings, you should request that the evidence be taken in closed session before answering the question. Government agencies and departments have an important role and duty in assisting Parliament to scrutinise the budget papers on behalf of the people of Western Australia. The committee values your assistance with this.

Hon KATE DOUST: I have a range of questions over a number of different areas, but I want to kick off with a discussion around local content. I refer the minister to page 491 under the heading

“Significant Issues Impacting the Agency” and the subheading “Local Content”. The paragraph states, in part —

The high Australian dollar, the modularisation of resource infrastructure, and competition from manufacturing regions that have lower cost structures are factors that continue to work against local manufacturers.

I have a series of questions about this, and some of them may have very simple answers, so I might just work my way through them. Can the minister please outline where the funding for the industry facilitation program is located within the budget?

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: Perhaps I will ask Mr O’Hare to deal with that; there is no item as such. There is a reliance on —

Hon KATE DOUST: What a surprise, minister.

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: Sorry; I did not catch what you were saying.

Hon KATE DOUST: It is all right; go ahead.

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: It is my understanding that there is reliance on industry contributions, and there may also be a component from royalties for regions. Perhaps Mr O’Hare can expand on that.

Mr O’Hare: The royalties for regions program is included as a specific line item on page 496, for which we have \$6.5 million for 2014–15.

Hon KATE DOUST: I refer to the line item “Royalties for Regions Fund” on page 496 of the *Budget Statements*. Can the minister provide a breakdown of how that money is spent?

Mr O’Hare: Primarily we are working at supporting the industry facilitation support program, which provides funding for companies to undertake a range of activities. We also have an education program around that. Last month officers were in Karratha explaining to some 140 businesses how to access the IFSP program.

Hon KATE DOUST: Can the minister outline where the department is at with ProjectConnect? Has a new contract for ProjectConnect been put out to tender?

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: I am advised that we are not funding that program and that it has not been put out for tender.

I will just clarify one aspect about the answer relating to royalties for regions funding, which appears at the base of page 496. The figure is \$16.261 million for 2013–14 and there are other sums over the forward estimates. A component of that goes towards the local industry, but the balance of it, the majority, is related to mobile telephone communications towers as part of that program. Some of the royalties for regions funding, I am informed, goes towards local industry participation.

Hon KATE DOUST: Can the minister provide the exact figure that goes towards the local participation component? I am happy to take that on notice.

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: We will take that on notice

[*Supplementary Information No B1.*]

Hon KATE DOUST: Can the minister outline where funding for the industry participation branch is located within the budget?

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: I will ask the director general to respond.

Mr Bradley: Under “Industry and Technology” on page 489 is an amount of \$14.3 million. The industry participation unit is included in that figure.

Hon KATE DOUST: Did you say page 489?

Mr Bradley: On the bottom of page 489 the member will see the industry and technology budget estimate for 2014–15 of \$14.3 million. The industry participation unit forms part of that figure.

[5.00 pm]

Hon KATE DOUST: What is the actual dollar figure allocated to that unit?

Mr Bradley: There are seven employees in that unit.

Hon KATE DOUST: What is the dollar figure allocated to run that unit?

Mr Bradley: We do not have that dollar figure.

Hon KATE DOUST: Could we please have that figure provided on notice?

[*Supplementary Information No B2.*]

Hon KATE DOUST: What strategies has the department initiated to mitigate the significant issues impacting upon local manufacturers?

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: Are you talking about the industry facilitation support program generally?

Hon KATE DOUST: We now know that there is no funding for it. What is the government doing to assist local manufacturers to improve their local content?

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: There is the local participation unit, which works with project leaders to maximise opportunities for Western Australian-based companies to win work on major contracts. There is the tabling of the local content report from time to time, which indicates the number of contracts that have been won by local businesses, similar to the local industry participation framework that was launched back in July 2011. As far as the government is concerned, that has been instrumental in creating quite a number of jobs and job opportunities. There are seven employees, who have been mentioned, in the industry participation branch of the Department of Commerce. That is an increase from the four who were employed when the local industry participation framework was launched back in July 2011. The industry facilitation support program was introduced in October 2011. It provides some dollar for dollar funding to companies to undertake business improvements, including some capital equipment purchases, infrastructure enhancements and assistance to upgrade the quality of their occupational, health and safety standards so as to allow them to comply with those standards that are required by major resource projects in order to meet their demands. The information I have is that so far some 108 businesses have completed their projects and reported outcomes that they have achieved to the department, which includes some \$200 million in contracts that have been won and the creation of over 300 employment positions, and also apprenticeship opportunities.

Agreements have been entered into with companies such as Chevron, which runs a piloted and co-funded program focusing on Onslow. Some \$200 000 worth of funding was committed to Onslow-based businesses, and there is a second round of co-funding which will extend to businesses throughout the Pilbara. Discussions are underway with other major project proponents to run similar co-funded projects in other areas of the state, primarily around the resource industry. There is support generally for innovation through a number of strategies, such as the innovator of the year program and the like. There is the operation of the Innovation Centre WA down in Bentley, which provides advice to companies that are trying to start operations, innovators who are attempting to find a market niche for their ideas and to promote those ideas both within Australia and internationally, giving them training as to how to pitch for funding from interested parties and assist them in starting up businesses. That covers it broadly, unless there is something that I have overlooked.

Hon KATE DOUST: Thank you for that. I come back to that sentence I started out with, where I referred to the high Australian dollar, the modularisation of resource infrastructure and competition

from other manufacturing regions that have lower cost structures. In light of that statement that is in the budget, what impact do you believe these factors have had on the local content provisions outlined in the WA government local industry participation framework over the 2013–14 financial year? What impact will they have?

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: Can you refer me to that passage again.

Hon KATE DOUST: It is on page 491 under “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency”. It is under the heading “Local Content”. It starts off with “The high Australian dollar”. What impact will those three specific areas have on those local content provisions outlined in the local industry participation framework over this financial period?

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: In terms of the resource industry, plainly, they have their supply chains that they have already established through partnerships that existed long before those resource projects commenced in Western Australia. Part of the trick is to try to get these resource development proponents to turn to local industries that will provide the same or better services and the same or better product in a competitive way. At one point Western Australia and Australia generally could rely on the level of skill that it could apply to, say, manufacturing in order to obtain preferential treatment and contracts. However, over time there are Asian markets that have shown themselves to be equally adept at providing a quality product that can do so more cheaply. So, although it is ultimately desirable that as much as possible be drawn from the Australian market in order to be able to provide employment and wealth from these projects into Australia, particularly into Western Australia and particularly into local businesses, there is a necessity to be competitive. The trouble is the high value of the Australian dollar, combined with the high cost of manufacture and militating against that.

With regard to the modularisation of resource infrastructure, much of the components for many of these projects are manufactured overseas because those overseas manufacturers have the skill to prepare elements of a project in a cost effective way and an integrated way rather than specific pieces of work being done by a local manufacturer. It is not like building a house where you might have several trades working in unison or sequentially to put it together. Many of these projects involve large pieces of manufactured infrastructure that is done to a design that has modules or components that can be preassembled and then shipped over to Australia. What is necessary then is for our local manufacturers to be competitive in that. That again is a bit of a problem because some of our local manufacturers, although they may be very good at what they do, cannot operate to the same scale as some of the overseas manufacturers, who have the ability and the cost effectiveness to create large modules that can be prefabricated, shipped over and assembled on the spot.

Things like the Australian Marine Complex and the common use facility are very valuable in being able to provide opportunities for local businesses to contribute to various aspects of our resource projects but it is not the whole answer. There are issues of economies of scale involved and, of course, at the end of the day, competitiveness. Although these projects involve vast sums of money and it is easy to say that the resource development proponent has apparently bottomless pockets, not a dollar is made by that proponent until the first tonne of iron ore or the first barrel of oil is shipped and sold. These are very long-term investments and they need to understandably balance the risks that they incur and the profitability of their particular enterprise and to do it as cheaply and as effectively as possible.

[5.10 pm]

These are very long-term investments and they need to understandably balance the risk that they incur and the profitability of their particular enterprise and do it as cheaply and effectively as possible. So, there are challenges for the Australian market. The high value of the Australian dollar does not help us. The level of expertise that is available and the scale at which things can be done in Western Australia do not help us but work is being done by the department and by government generally to promote local content as much as feasible in order to contribute and gain the benefits of

these projects. Now, several strategies they have outlined have gone a significant way towards that but there is, of course, more work to be done. It is encouraging that companies such as Chevron are prepared to enter into co-funded schemes that will help build up some capacity in local economies to contribute to the projects that are in those local areas and, of course, there is a change gradually from the establishment of these enterprises and these resource projects to the production and shipping of the resource overseas. So, there will be a different emphasis. It will change from one of actually having to do an awful lot of construction work to one of maintenance and the manning of these operations. That may achieve some benefits to the local economy because the scale of operation that is necessary for the establishment of them will be over and the emphasis will shift. So, we are looking for opportunities.

Hon KATE DOUST: Thank you for that, minister. I am sure the manufacturing industry will be pleased to hear in WA that they are now shifting from design manufacturing to maintenance. I am sure that is very helpful.

The CHAIR: Member, if you can just finish on this area.

Hon KATE DOUST: I have two more parts if that is all right.

The CHAIR: If you can just finish off on this area, because there are a lot of other members who want to ask questions.

Hon KATE DOUST: I appreciate that Mr Chairman.

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: I am not sure that I said that it was design.

Hon KATE DOUST: Do not worry about that, minister, I said that you did not —

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: If you misunderstood my answer, then I would really like to clarify it for you rather than you going away with the wrong impression.

Hon KATE DOUST: Minister, I have got a couple of other questions. What are the values of contracts awarded to local industry since the local industry participation framework was introduced in 2011?

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: I am sorry I missed the beginning of that. What was it?

Hon KATE DOUST: What are the values of contracts awarded to local industry since the local industry participation framework was introduced in 2011?

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: My understanding that some \$57 billion in publicly announced contracts have been won by local businesses since the framework was launched.

Hon KATE DOUST: By local businesses?

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: Yes.

Hon KATE DOUST: What is the value of contracts awarded to local industry in the 2013 financial year?

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: I am informed we do not have that information here, but we will take that on notice.

[Supplementary Information No B3.]

Hon KATE DOUST: My last question on this, Mr Chairman, given that we now understand that there is no line item in the budget for an industry facilitation program and that there is no funding or there is no tender for Project Connect, you have now reduced to seven staff, and we know that the economic climate around the world is constantly changing, what plan does the government have in place to assist local manufactures in the future if economic conditions get worse?

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: There has never been a line item for that and my recollection is that I had informed you that, in fact, the number of people in that unit had increased, not decreased, from four to seven.

Hon KATE DOUST: You did not actually mention that. Mr Bradley said seven. I want to know: what is your plan for local industry for local content purposes if economic conditions get worse?

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: I have already outlined the strategies that are in place and that are continuing and, of course, the state of the economy will be continuously monitored and we will adjust the emphasis as we go along. I am not going to speculate on that. There is a strategy in place that is still working in the same way that it was designed to work with a view to promoting local industry. It is my recollection that I said that it increased from four to seven since it started up in 2011.

The CHAIR: I think we might move on to the next question.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: Minister, I have got a number of, hopefully, very brief questions. In budget paper No 3 on page 148, there is an item relating to the deregulation of travel agents. Additional expenditure of \$206 000 has been approved in the 2014–15 year to meet the up-front costs associated with the repeal of the Travel Agents Act. What are those up-front costs and why do we need the additional expenditure?

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: Can you clarify?

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: Budget paper No 3, page 148.

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: I do not think that is part of our division but as far as the travel agents repeal, there are several elements to it. One of them is that with the wind-up of the scheme, there will be a refund of the licence fees that still have several years available—the situation in Western Australia is that our travel agents have been licensed on a triennial basis. So, every three years they would pay a licence fee to cover that three years and they would pay a contribution into the travel compensation fund. Now, with the decision to dissolve that scheme, the state is faced with having to also wind up its part of that and hence the bill is being introduced in order to achieve that end. That bill has been introduced into the other place because it does involve a component of requiring money from consolidated revenue in order to refund the licence fees that still have some period to run. It seemed to the government to be unreasonable that if someone has paid their licence fee for three years and the scheme is going to dissolve over 12 months that they ought to be out of pocket for two years of licence fees. That might be the up-front cost that you are referring to in that part of the budget papers where, should the legislation pass, there will be a component to refund fees to travel agents and it may be that you are looking at a page that deals with Treasury rather than necessarily Commerce because the money would have to be drawn from Treasury to —

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: It is under the heading “Commerce” on page 148. I accept the explanation. I think it is reasonably valid. Unless there is a further element to it—I am going to get to page 488 on budget paper No 2 because this is why I raise this issue.

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: The one we have is on page 448.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: I raise this issue in budget paper No 3 because I want to get to the matters highlighted in 488 in budget paper No 2 where, quite rightly, as is spelt out in budget paper No 3, there is an ongoing savings from the abolition of the Travel Agents Act and the licensing requirements and we see a reduction in expenditure of \$188 000, I think, in each year of the forward estimates and that is accounted for there, but I want to know where in the spending changes for the 2014–15 year that \$206 000 figure that I highlighted is included. I do not see it in the spending changes that are in that table on page 488 of budget paper No 2. I am happy for you to take the question on notice, by the way.

[5.20 pm]

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: Perhaps the Commissioner for Consumer Protection could give you some part of that answer, and if there is any further detail that is not readily available —

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: I am sorry, minister, but there is some chatter in the room. I could not hear what you said.

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: I am sorry. Perhaps the Commissioner for Consumer Protection can answer part of that question, but to the extent that she cannot, we will take it on notice.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: Yes, I am happy for you to answer it on notice.

Ms Driscoll: I think we can deal with that.

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: All right, maybe we can.

Ms Driscoll: As I understand it, there are two things in operation. At page 488 of the budget papers, under “Deregulation of Travel Agents”, which is the fourth last entry on that page, there is, as you point out, an indication that as of 2014–15 onwards, \$188 000 will continue not to be coming into the department’s budget. What that is, essentially, is the money that was coming in due to the processing of licences associated with travel; because there is an intention to deregulate travel, we are no longer funded to, of course, continue that activity. On the balance side, midway on page 499 of the budget papers, there is reference under “Expenses”. The bottom entry, “Travel Agents Refund”, does, as the minister indicated, refer to an intention to refund travel agents who have paid up to three years for their licensing entitlement as the deregulation is implemented. So basically there is a recognition of our need to repay money back to travel agents. I might say that the revenue that we have received over the years is non-retained, so it does go to the consolidated account. That is why the budget is showing a return of the money to the department so that we can make those refunds at the same time the recurrent deficit relates to the fact that we would no longer be processing.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: Thank you for that, although I am still trying to work it out where it is included in the spending changes. From your answer, I am assuming that it might be in that section on page 488 that relates to consumer protection operating expenditure. But I take on board what you have just said, so I will move on. I do not think we need to continue.

Ms Driscoll: I understand the answer to that is because it is administered funds as opposed to controlled, but I could not interpret further.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: That is okay. Just speaking about that table on page 488, the final item there is “Labour Relations—Operating Expenditure”, \$500 000 for the 2014–15 year. An explanation provided in budget paper No 3, page 149, says that this —

Additional expenditure ... has been approved to allow the Department’s Labour Relations Division to continue to fulfil its responsibility for the coordination and governance of public sector labour relations, including providing technical advice to Government in relation to Public Sector Wages Policy.

So that is a one-off payment. I am interested to know what that actually relates to, because it is not a payment included for the following years of the forward estimates; it is a one-off \$500 000. What specific tasks will that fund in that 2014–15 period?

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: That reflects the additional FTEs that were provided as a result of a funding bid to maintain a certain number of officers, who were otherwise not going to be maintained, in order to deal with the enterprise bargaining agreements that are currently being negotiated over the next 12 months. Now, whether that number of FTEs is maintained into the future will depend on a budget bid in future budgets.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: How many FTE does that relate to?

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: I think it was five.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: I think I raised the Construction Contracts Act at these hearings last year. Section 56 of the Construction Contracts Act 2004 requires a review of the act as soon as practicable after the fifth anniversary of the commencement of the act. Has that review actually been undertaken?

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: Yes. In fact, by happy chance it was announced today.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: It was announced today!

The CHAIR: If that is the case, we can read the press release then, I am sure. So we might move on to the next question.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: I am happy to —

The CHAIR: We will move on to the next question. If there is a press release available for members to read, they can read the press release.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: I do have a follow-up question. My follow-up question on that one is: When is the review anticipated to be completed? When is it anticipated to be publicly available, tabled in the Parliament, as is required under that section of the act?

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: It is expected to commence this month and —

The CHAIR: It is in the press release, so we can move on.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: I am not sure if there has been a press release; I have not seen it.

The CHAIR: The minister is reading the press release to look at it. I am moving on to Hon Martin Aldridge.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: I have another question on that same topic. I want to know who is reviewing it, who is conducting the review? It think that is a legitimate —

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: It is being conducted —

The CHAIR: No, I am moving on. If Hon Martin Aldridge does not have a question, then I will go to Hon Paul Brown. But there are lots of other members asking questions, so Hon Martin Aldridge.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: On page 149 of budget paper No 3, spending changes for the Department of Commerce, there is an additional expenditure of \$670 000 over four years for the “Land Use Planning Initiative—Bushfire Risk Mitigation”. Could you perhaps tell me what the department’s responsibility is going to be in relation to that? It talks about licensing and regulation, bushfire risk and hazard assessors. I understand the department, specifically the office of EnergySafety, is conducting a review of private overhead powerlines—whether or not that is part of that same review and the funding attached to it.

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: So far as the powerlines issue is concerned, a policy is currently being developed between Western Power and the office of EnergySafety. It has nothing to do with this particular bushfire mitigation strategy, to my knowledge. It is being developed separately in order to work out how best to deal with private powerlines, if that is the issue that you are referring to—powerlines that are the responsibility of private property owners. So far as the bushfire risk mitigation strategy that the member is referring to and the funding, I will pass that over to Mr Gow, the Building Commissioner, to give you more detail on that.

Mr Gow: The bushfire risk mitigation strategy is being jointly done with the Department of Planning and the Department of Fire and Emergency Services. The particular part that we are involved in deals with the designation of bushfire-prone land, which will be done by the Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner. That then triggers a requirement to—under proposed planning laws—do a bushfire attack level assessment of the particular land, and then under the building laws that we control, design and certify that the relevant buildings comply with the building standards for those bushfire attack levels.

[5.30 pm]

In order to do those bushfire attack level assessments, there is a need to train and accredit and ultimately register bushfire specialists. The large chunk of this funding in this coming financial year is to set up a program for training bushfire assessors and accrediting them and getting that registration accreditation process in place for when those requirements come into effect on 1 May next year. The ongoing funding in the out years is to continue the registration process and to continue to develop the bushfire proposals to look at things like existing buildings, commercial buildings. The current rules apply only to residential buildings.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: Minister, the review you spoke about in relation to the policy development that the department is doing in relation to private overhead power lines is being done within the department's own resources?

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: It is being done in liaison with the Minister for Energy and the Department of Commerce because the Department of Commerce has responsibility for the Office of EnergySafety, so a joint policy is being prepared for that.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: Do we know when that policy will be finalised and whether it will be in advance of the next fire season?

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: We are hoping that that will be the case, yes; that is what we are working towards.

Hon RICK MAZZA: The question I have is in relation to budget paper No 2, page 489, the top line, where the department is looking to spend \$51.9 million over the five-year forward estimates. The only expenditure I could find is in budget paper No 3 on page 147 where there is approximately \$45 million being spent on regional telecommunications projects. I just wondered what the remaining \$6.9 million will be spent on.

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: Page 489?

Hon RICK MAZZA: Yes, page 489, the top line "Royalties for Regions Program". Those five years add up to \$51.9 million.

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: I see, right.

Hon RICK MAZZA: And budget paper No 3, page 147, you have \$45 million on regional telecommunications projects.

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: There are two programs mixed up in those figures. One is the completion of a mobile communications tower program—something like 113 towers over the last several years—and I think we have just completed, or are about to complete, the ninety-fifth of those. So there is the completion of that part of the program, then there is the \$45 million which has been assigned for the next phase of the telecommunications program. That is currently being committed for, I think, about 80 towers, which are being contemplated over the next three years. I think I made mention of some of this in the course of a motion debated several weeks ago. There are negotiations currently underway with the commonwealth on how that will be implemented. We had already worked out the priority for the next phase of towers based on a needs assessment. The key at the moment is to see what proportion of the \$100 million the commonwealth government has allocated to telecommunications expansion across Australia. We are hoping to have the commonwealth recognise that we have already done the groundwork for it rather than them apply their priorities according to their assessment of where need may be, and simply accept ours and proceed on that basis. I am hoping for some result in those negotiations fairly shortly.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I want to ask a question in relation to page 413, "Summary of Portfolio Appropriations". I wonder whether, through you minister, we can have an explanation for why administered grants subsidies and other transport payments show a continual decline. It was \$1.2 million in 2013–14 and in 2014–15 that is now down to \$556 million.

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: I am sorry I do not have that page at my disposal. I will have to take that on notice.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: It is in the budget papers.

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: I do not have that page of the budget papers.

The CHAIR: What page is it?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Page 430. It was in relation to commonwealth grants. I really want to know, given the commonwealth had not released its 2014–15 budget when there was the cut-off for the state budget, that being 14 April 2014, and, subsequently, given the federal budget has now been released, why has there been a cut to any grants or payments for specific purposes to your agency?

The CHAIR: Can I confirm what page you are referring to?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Budget paper No 3, page 77.

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: If there is a copy of that volume, I may be able to help. I do not have the whole volume as opposed to extracts that seemed relevant.

The CHAIR: What was your question again, member?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Has there been an indication of a reduction to any grants or payments for specific purposes to the agencies in terms of —

The CHAIR: To the Department of Commerce?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Yes, absolutely.

The CHAIR: Do they expect to lose any partnership money? You should know that one way or the other.

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: I do not believe we have any. There are a couple of projects that Commerce contributes to that are also funded by the commonwealth, one being the Employment Law Centre, which takes funds from the commonwealth but that is not really an agency of Commerce; that is a non-government organisation.

The CHAIR: Is it something that is funded by the Department of Commerce or the Attorney General?

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: No; Commerce.

The CHAIR: Are there any programs you are responsible for that will have to be cut as a result of the ending of national partnerships? Is that the question the member is after?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Two: first of all, your agency through Treasury would be the recipient of some commonwealth grants, I assume, for some purposes in your agency. First of all, will you be impacted by any reduction in the commonwealth grants as a result of the tightening up, if you like, of the federal budget?

[5.40 pm]

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: I am informed that we do not receive any funding of that character, so there will be no impact.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: If you want to take that one on notice in relation to the expiring of national partnership agreements, which is quite a separate area. Do you receive funding through national partnership agreements for any particular initiatives across the commerce portfolio; and, if so, what are they and what is likely to be the reduction, if any?

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: That is —

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: You do not have any?

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: We do not have any, no.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I understand there are 63 of these and a lot of them are due for expiry, so it is a fair enough question to ask.

In relation to redundancies, I wonder whether the minister could advise the committee how many redundancies are foreshadowed in your agency.

The CHAIR: While the minister is getting the answer, I will let members know that we have some questions on notice which include the redundancies that have been issued in the past financial year. That may be of interest to members. I note your question is about the future, not the past, but there is a question on notice that deals with the past.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I am wondering if we can broaden it to the forward estimates.

The CHAIR: While the minister is getting an answer, I was just making sure that members were aware that that document is available. I note your question was about the future.

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: Ninety-nine Department of Commerce staff were ultimately approved for voluntary severance. However, this equated to approximately 90 FTEs as some were partial FTEs —

The CHAIR: The question was about the future; that is why I have just made the point. We have your question on notice about the past. The member's question is: are there any further redundancies planned for the future?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Maybe I can help the minister. If he could take on notice the total number of redundancies that will occur in the 2014–15, 2015–16 and 2016–17 financial years. If we can then also have a break-up of the number of voluntary severances in 2014–15, 2015–16 and 2016–17 as opposed to involuntary severances. For the involuntary severances, if I can only also have them for 2014–15, 2015–16 and 2016–17.

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: The director general may be able to assist with part of that now.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: That is pretty straightforward. You may not have it here but I am asking for you to take it on notice.

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: He may be able to help with at least part of that question.

Mr Bradley: Member, we did provide an answer to a question prior to the hearing. Over the course of the last 12 months the agency has been substantially reduced in terms of its head count. It is not anticipated that we will be looking for any further redundancies at this stage. I am not aware of any government proposal coming forward to offer further redundancies. Clearly some people over the course of the next 12 months, or even 24 months, may come forward and it may be that they are assessed as fulfilling the criteria. But at this stage we are not planning any further redundancies. Any staff where the program may terminate, we will be looking to incorporate into the rest of the agency because there will be natural attrition occurring and, as I said, we have reduced by 99 over the last 12 months. That is a substantial reduction. We have still got further statutory responsibilities to ensure that we comply with, and we need everybody in that respect.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I assume that these savings to be made in terms of offering voluntary redundancies and reducing staff numbers through involuntary redundancies, I just thought that this was a key part of the fiscal action plan and it applied over the forward estimates because it was an ongoing means by which the government would save money, if you like. What you are saying is that you have virtually done all yours; therefore you are not anticipating any in the future, if I am hearing you right. Is that what you are saying?

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: That is right, yes.

Mr Bradley: Member, last year we were subject to some rationalisation in our budget. We have implemented that. We are not looking to take it any further.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Would it be fair to say that other agencies are in the same position in terms of —

Mr Bradley: I cannot speak for other agencies.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: It seems very odd to me. But anyway, a one-off rationalisation.

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: The challenge will be to constrain the expenditure over the forward estimates.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Page 430 of budget paper No 2 is the page that Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich was just referring to a moment ago. I want to make sure I can proceed with a question and that the budget paper has been provided.

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: No. Actually, we have budget paper No 3. That only goes up to page 300 and something.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: I note that at the back of the chamber there is an abundance of these papers. I wonder if it might be possible to ensure that volume 2 is provided; even the whole set.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Acquaint yourselves with them!

Hon NICK GOIRAN: It is budget paper No 2, page 430. In some respects it follows the questions of the previous honourable member. What you have there is part 9. It is a summary of the portfolio appropriations under the Minister for Commerce. The earlier page of course lists a summary of portfolio appropriations under the Attorney General. I am asking, minister, if it is possible for an explanation as to where any appropriations for WorkCover would be summarised. The reason I ask the question is because within part 9, the very final page of part 9—I probably can provide the exact page number, if you like—is a list of some expenses or some expenditure for WorkCover. But it is not clear to me where that would be listed under the “Summary of Portfolio Appropriations”. The WorkCover page is 406, Mr Chairman.

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: Thanks for that. WorkCover is funded by premiums from insurers. There is no appropriation for WorkCover in that sense.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: On page 506 is “WorkCover WA Authority”. It indicates that the total approved asset investment program for 2014–15 is \$846 000. So I am clear on this: is that \$846 000 that is provided by the state to WorkCover?

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: WorkCover, as I have indicated, is funded entirely out of premiums. This is based on forward decisions as to how to apply some of that funding that is obtained through those premiums. It really has nothing to do with the Department of Commerce in that regard.

[5.50 pm]

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Again, so that I can better understand the budget papers, why do the budget papers at page 506 list \$846 000 of expenditure for the asset investment program and not any other expenditure by WorkCover, albeit, as you have said, it is funded out of premiums? It would seem to me that if we are going to include some information about WorkCover, we should include all the information, not necessarily just the asset investment program.

The CHAIR: I think the member would be best served, in getting an answer to this, by attending one of the budget briefings put on by the committee of a similar function in the other place, where they get Treasury in. WorkCover is a non-line agency. You will see throughout the budget that there are a number of agencies where their capital asset investment programs are included in the budget but not their operating expenditure, and I think you will find that it is the same with WorkCover.

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: I am obliged, Mr Chair.

The CHAIR: That might help to move the debate along a bit, because we are running out of time.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Just to tidy this up, Mr Chair, your advice is that this is a question that I should have asked in the previous session when the Treasury officials were here?

The CHAIR: It depends on what you are trying to get to. One of the things with an organisation like WorkCover is that there would be an opportunity for you to indicate to the committee that you would like to have WorkCover come in when their annual report comes before the Parliament. As part of the annual report hearings, we tend to focus on those agencies that are non-budget. So if you have detailed questions about WorkCover, that might be the appropriate time. If you like, we can note as a committee right now that you would like us to get WorkCover in when we get to the annual reports.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: That would be much appreciated, Mr Chair.

I want to ask one final question of the minister with respect to this issue. I am hoping that the minister will be able to provide an update in respect to where we are up to with the workers' compensation reforms. I know this is a matter that has been gradually going since 2008, and there have been a number of bills before the Parliament, but there was supposed to be a final phase, including a complete rewrite of the workers' compensation legislation. I am wondering whether the minister could provide an update on that.

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: I am looking forward to receiving a copy of the review after the next board meeting, which I believe is some time in June; and, following that, there will be a further period of public consultation regarding the proposals that have been put up following the review of the legislation. I am informed it is rather substantial, so there may be quite a lengthy period of consultation that will need to be undergone before the legislation is in a position to be put forward.

Hon ADELE FARINA: My question relates to royalties for regions. The document indicates three different figures for royalties for regions. The table at the top of page 489 indicates that the royalties for regions program is valued at \$6.555 million. At the bottom of page 496, royalties for regions is \$6.5 million, and then halfway up that page, royalties for regions is \$6.723 million. I am wondering which of those figures is correct; and, if all those figures are correct, why are they different?

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: To cut to the chase, the chief financial officer will be able to address that.

Mr Goodwin: The short answer is that these are the effects of accounting treatments. The figure at page 489 refers to decisions regarding royalties for regions for this current financial year—decisions only. The figure at the bottom of page 496—the slightly lower figure—represents only royalties for regions for grants. That is the grants and subsidies table. There is a component of the royalties for regions programs that does not relate to grants, and therefore it is a slightly smaller figure. The figure towards the top of page 496 of \$6.723 million is the total for the royalties for regions program for that year. So one figure represents the decision this year, one represents the grants program only, and one represents the cumulative decisions to date. You will notice that they are all broadly similar figures. There is not a lot of difference. The raw figures are quite significant. But they are principally the same programs.

Hon ADELE FARINA: When is funding from royalties for regions to the department not a grant? If you are saying it is not all grant money, when does funding from royalties for regions for programs run by your department not constitute a grant to your department?

Mr Goodwin: There is a smallish component that relates to the regional workers' allowance, I believe. I am sorry. I cannot quote the details. But in terms of the other royalties for regions funding, it is relatively small. But it is a non-grant issue, and therefore it does not appear in the grants table, hence the difference.

Hon ADELE FARINA: My next question relates to the appropriations table on page 488. I note that the budget for 2013–14 was \$76 million, and the estimated actual is \$88 million, yet the budget estimate for the current financial year is only \$81 million, and in 2012–13, it was \$108 million,

which indicates that there has been a significant drop in funding to the department since 2012–13. There is also a further cut of about \$7 million between the estimated actual for 2013–14 and the 2014–15 financial year. What services will be cut in order to accommodate that reduction in funding?

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: I will refer again to the chief financial officer.

Mr Goodwin: The estimated actual for 2013–14 in fact is much greater than was originally budgeted for that year, for a number of factors. The principal impact arises from the payments made under the voluntary severance scheme, which made the 2013–14 payments almost \$6 million greater than was budgeted for. Additionally, for 2013–14, there were appropriations during the course of the year to cover a shortfall in accommodation costs. In addition to that, there was a significant change between the years in the grants program. The royalties for regions program for 2013–14 on page 496 indicates that the 2013–14 estimated actual was some \$4 million greater than was originally budgeted for. Largely, that would have been a timing issue. So when you are comparing the budget against the actual for that year, in fact the actual contains a number of costs that were not originally anticipated.

Hon ADELE FARINA: So there will be no cuts to services in the 2014–15 financial year?

Mr Goodwin: I can only say that the increased expenditure in 2013–14, by comparison to the 2013–14 budget, does not arise from any funding cuts. The impact of that, particularly when we are comparing the 2013–14 estimated actual with the 2014–15—those what I described a moment ago as largely one-off payments—gives an impression that the cost of services and the funding is significantly decreasing. In fact, a large part of that decrease arises from those same issues.

[6.00 pm]

Hon ADELE FARINA: At page 491, the “Outcomes and Key Effectiveness Indicators” table there shows the extent of consumer confidence in Western Australia’s trading environment, and it indicates that in 2012–13 it was 75.5 per cent; then in 2013–14, 75 per cent; and a budget target for 2014–15 is also 75 per cent. So we have seen a slight decrease in the extent of consumer confidence in WA’s trading environment. I would like the minister to, first, explain how these figures are obtained, because I am not sure what process you go through to ascertain the extent of consumer confidence, and what the minister’s views are about the fact that the department does not appear to be setting itself a higher target than it is already achieving for the forthcoming financial year in terms of improving that and whether that is a reflection of confidence in the department in actually ensuring that consumers are protected in the current environment and that they are adequately monitoring what is happening in the commerce industry.

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: The 2012–13 actual of 75.5 per cent is an actual. The others are the key performance indicators and the targets that have been set, so you are not going to necessarily have a correlation between them. But it is not demonstrating any reduction in confidence; it is the target that is expected to be achieved and hopefully surpassed. But perhaps Ms Driscoll can expand on that.

Ms Driscoll: The way in which this indicator is calculated is by virtue of a survey. It has actually been conducted over a period of 15 years, and it has two elements to the key questions that derive this indicator. It, of course, is statistically significant in terms of the catchment, and it is indeed run through an independent surveyor each year. So, the two key questions that are put to consumers are the extent to which a consumer believes businesses act fairly towards them, and for last year the result for that was 80 per cent; and then the other half of the component is the extent to which consumers believe they are well informed about their rights, and that one was at 71 per cent. Therefore, the average—I know you do not usually average these assessments, but it is all technically correct—gives us the 75.5 per cent. That is actually a good result relative to some of the years prior, where I think a few years back we had 68 per cent as the overall average. But,

historically, there have also been figures above 75 per cent. We have deliberately kept it as the same questions to have a good benchmark. In some ways the reference to consumers having a lower assessment of being well informed about their rights—there are some positives to that in that people need to be more wary of what they are confronting in the consumer market, and to have false confidence that they know the law outright is possibly not a positive in itself. As I said, the outcome is very consistent with the past. It is better than a few years prior. We just believe that it is a very useful benchmark. We ask a whole range of other questions too about their perceptions of different industries and the extent to which they believe they are getting a fair deal.

Hon ADELE FARINA: That does not actually answer the question as to why the department is not setting the target a bit higher than something you have already accomplished.

Ms Driscoll: I think the short answer is that in recent years we have achieved well below 75 per cent, and it seems to be an appropriate goal. Fortunately, last year it was 75.5 per cent.

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: I have a question on page 489 regarding the “Seniors Housing Information Service”. I did miss about 10 minutes of this hearing, so I am hoping no-one asked this before, Mr Chair.

The CHAIR: No-one has talked about it.

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: Okay. The “Seniors Housing Information Service” on page 489 is a dot point in relation to spending changes. I understand that it used to be funded by the Department of Local Government and Communities in 2013–14. Is that right? My question was: what was the level of funding in 2013–14 from the Department of Local Government and Communities?

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: Historically, the Department for Communities has not funded this service; it has been funded by Commerce. In future there will be a contribution from the Department for Communities towards this, and you will see that in fact there is funding of \$300 000 for each of the forthcoming three years, which is a combination of not only moneys from the Department of Commerce, but also from the Department for Communities and Treasury. So that is how it is made up.

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: Okay. Thank you for clarifying that. How many clients were supported in the service in the previous financial years? Do you have that information for 2011–12 and 2012–13?

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: The Seniors’ Housing Centre was established on a two-year trial basis back in 2011, and a contract was entered into with COTA WA to provide that service on behalf of the government. Over that period of time, over 10 000 seniors have had access to that service, with 5 200 individuals seeking advice—78 per cent of that to the department’s Seniors Housing Information Service, 22 per cent to COTA; and there being 5 600 attendances to presentations, events and expos—once again, 65 per cent through COTA’s existing networks and 35 per cent to department-run events. But I cannot give you precisely for that one year.

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: Thank you. I notice there is no forward estimate in 2017–18. Can you explain that?

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: That will be the subject of assessment in due course as to whether the program is one that ought to be continued in its current form and what the needs would be for funding. It may be that a lot evolves over the next three years where it is proved that an alternative is a better option. Similarly, there are other programs that are assessed from time to time to see whether they will continue in their current form or what the needs may be.

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: So you have not actually made a decision that the housing centre will not be funded at all in 2017–18.

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: We have not made a decision either way. It may be; it may not be. But that is for time to tell as to whether it is effective and providing a satisfactory service and what

its needs are in order to provide that service. So it is not being dismissed, but it is not being funded at this stage unless a case can be made for it.

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: Thank you. I had another question. Mr Chair, have I got time or is that —

The CHAIR: If you are very quick.

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: The reforms regarding the Retirement Villages Act on page 490, the first bullet point: minister, are you in a position to be able to discuss this? This has come up in question time about the proportion of costs that an administering body can now demand from residents.

[6.10 pm]

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: I am sorry; I did not catch that last bit.

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: There has been a bit of debate about how the costs can be passed on to residents. In the new regulation 11(3)(o) there is a suggestion that a proportion of the administering body's costs can be attributed to the residents. Does the minister know what that proportion is?

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: I think you might be referring to the membership of professional associations aspect, which is the subject of a disallowance motion brought by Hon Kate Doust, and will be the subject of debate in due course. The government has prohibited the recovery of just about all costs by the administering body. There was a debate between the operators and the residents associations, broadly speaking, about to what extent, if any, there ought to be a contribution by residents to membership of professional bodies by the owners or the administering organisation and that involved a value judgement as to whether some contribution ought to be called upon. The decision that I made after considering both sides of the argument was that, in this particular case, to a very limited extent, a 50–50 contribution was not inappropriate. Properly functioning industry bodies do have a contribution to make to the manner in which retirement villages can operate. They provide professional development for staff; they set standards for village management practices that the owner can provide and carry through to their particular village, and other professional advice that has a direct benefit to the residents. The information I had was that in the vast majority of cases, the amounts that would be called upon to be paid by residents is very small. As an example —

The CHAIR: Minister, I do not want to cut you short, but we are running out of time and I note that there are three other members who want to get questions in.

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: If I could just cut it short this way: it will be the subject of more fulsome debate in due course when we deal with the disallowance motion.

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: I just wondered if the minister had considered whether there would be an upper limit, or if he had some idea of what those fees would be.

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: Yes, the estimate is that for a single village operator of up to 49 units, the accreditation fee is \$1 500 per village per annum, which comes to about \$30 per unit, which comes to a maximum of \$15 that could be charged to any of the individual residents, which seemed not an unreasonable amount in the circumstances.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: I refer to page 490 of budget paper No 2 and the review of the plumbing regulation framework that was conducted, and as a result the review formed the basis for the modernisation of plumbing regulations. Could the minister indicate what changes were made that actually reduced the red tape for operators of small plumbing businesses, and in particular whether consideration was given to abolishing the multi-entry compliance certificate, which many plumbers have stated is effectively redundant; and whether, at some point, the notice of intention for major plumbing works will move from a triplicate book that is filled out and mailed, to an

online system which again would streamline and reduce costs, both for the department and small business?

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: I cannot immediately give you a historical account of the improvements that have emerged from the reviews in the past; however, a further review has been commissioned of the plumbing regulation framework generally. I have the report and I am currently considering the report and I will —

The CHAIR: Can we make that B4 and take it on notice, the detail —

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: But in that, can I get an explanation? In the budget paper it seems to suggest that the review has been concluded; it says that the review has formed the basis for modernisation of plumbing regulations, so I would like that clarified: whether the 2013 review is the review that the minister is referring to.

[*Supplementary Information No B4.*]

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: I refer to page 496 of budget paper No 2. There is an ongoing amount granted to Farmsafe Western Australia Alliance of \$70 000 per annum. I assume that is probably related to the WorkSafe function of the department, but could the minister perhaps clarify that for me and very basically tell me what the grant is for?

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: Yes, the purpose of the grant is to increase farm safety awareness and improve the capability of the rural community, through a series of occupational safety and health initiatives, and each financial year Farmsafe and WorkSafe agree on a set of performance targets that need to be met by Farmsafe if it is to continue to be eligible for grant funding. As you have noted, that is \$70 000 per annum in this particular case.

Hon KATE DOUST: I refer to page 490 and the subheading “Consumer Fraud” under the heading “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency”. I would like to talk about Project Sunbird, which I understand is run by WA Police and began in May 2012 to have a look at whether the transfer of funds from Western Australia to West Africa were the result of request for money scams. In relation to Project Sunbird, what is the Consumer Protection Division’s role; its project budget; how many employees are working on the project; and has any money been returned to WA victims?

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: I will pass the question over to the commissioner, who has had a very close involvement in that particular project and a very successful collaboration between the department, WA Police, Australia Post and Customs. She can provide you some detail on the manner in which that has been conducted.

Ms Driscoll: Currently within the Consumer Protection Division there are approximately five staff that have varying amounts of time dedicated to Project Sunbird. Essentially, there are two staff that are available as contact points in the event that they are contacted—I will talk briefly about how this operates—to alert them to the fact that they are believed to be subject to a fraud. We also have a very intensive database management where we are actually collecting all the data for each individual case, and oftentimes the same persona is presented to a range of different people, with the same bank accounts et cetera, so it enables us to trace particular activities. In essence, media is also a strong part of this particular program; indeed, to get recognition by people in the community and their relatives we actually need them to tell stories, as you would appreciate, in the media. We currently have about five staff working on this, and the police probably have, on average, about three staff working on the project. In essence, the police are reviewing money transfers that occur between five West African countries, and they sift out the material that is clearly related to company-to-company transfers or family relations. Then we basically send two letters: the first letter warns people in general terms that we think they are the subject of fraud, and from that first letter we are actually getting 60 per cent of people stopping sending money, and we are able to detect that from the ongoing transfers.

[6.20 pm]

Then through the second letter, which is much more directive, we are getting a further 40 per cent of the second group that are stopping. We still then scan to observe whether large amounts of money are still going out through those people, and then the police will physically attend the home of that person to convince them that it is indeed a fraud. The success we have had has been quite significant, obviously, in terms of the number of people stopping. Through the memorandum of understanding that has now been established with the Nigerian Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, the police have also had quite considerable success of course. In two cases, people have been arrested in relation to, of course, the very sad situation of Jette Jacobs, but also in relation to one of the property frauds. Also we have been successful recently in having \$400 000 returned from one bank account in China through our linkage to the Nigerian police. They were able to convince the Chinese banking authorities that it was a fraudulent transfer. We have been very successful with Western Union. They have certainly closed suspect accounts and in some cases actually closed suspect outlets. And certainly we have also had a lot of collaboration with the relationship online service providers. We believe that on the basis of the data to date that we, over five years, can prevent \$100 million being transferred from Western Australians to these countries and associated linkages.

Hon KATE DOUST: Are there any programs or is there a program budget for any education, consultation and promotion that would target regional Aboriginal communities to better educate them about online scamming and to prevent them being caught up in this?

Ms Driscoll: The police and ourselves have very much had a regional focus and have been to centres such as Carnarvon and Kalgoorlie to very much emphasise these issues, and we have been able to have people participate in telling their stories.

Hon KATE DOUST: I am asking specifically about remote Aboriginal communities, not Kalgoorlie or Carnarvon—I understand that. What are you doing in those places that are far-flung and where people are isolated?

The CHAIR: Is there a simple and quick answer to this, yes or no, because we really need to finish? Otherwise I will ask you to take it on notice, I think. Is there a quick yes or no answer?

Ms Driscoll: There have not been specific trends evident that Aboriginal people are involved in this form of relationship fraud.

The CHAIR: What I will do, though, is make that B5 and take it as supplementary information.

[Supplementary Information No B5.]

The CHAIR: There is just one question I want to finish off with. Is the Pilbara Fabrication and Services Common Use Facility still a project that the agency is the lead agency for; and when can we expect a government decision on whether they intend to proceed with that?

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: There is currently a business case being prepared in respect of that and it will come up for consideration maybe this year.

The CHAIR: Why has that business case not been completed? It was due to be completed by the end of last year? What is the hold-up?

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: That is my mistake. It has been completed. It is being considered.

The CHAIR: It has been considered or is still to be?

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: It is being considered.

The CHAIR: Was it completed by the end of last year, as proposed?

Mr O'Hare: It was completed by the end of last year.

The CHAIR: I think we will conclude the hearing at this point. The committee will forward any additional questions it has to you via the minister in writing in the next couple of days together with

the transcript of evidence, which includes the questions you have taken on notice. Responses to these questions will be requested within 10 working days of receipt of the questions. Should you be unable to meet this due date, please advise the committee in writing as soon as possible before the due date. The advice is to include specific reasons as to why the due date cannot be met. If members have any unasked questions, I ask them to submit them to the committee clerk at the close of this hearing. On behalf of the committee, thank you for your attendance today.

Hearing concluded at 6.24 pm
