

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON
ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS**

BUDGET STATEMENTS

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE
TAKEN AT PERTH
WEDNESDAY, 29 JULY 2009**

SESSION ONE

Members

**Hon Giz Watson (Chair)
Hon Philip Gardiner (Deputy Chair)
Hon Liz Behjat
Hon Ken Travers
Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich**

Hearing commenced at 9.33 am

BRADLEY, MR BRIAN

**Director General, Department of Commerce,
sworn and examined:**

DE JONG, MRS JULIE

**Acting Deputy Director General, Department of Commerce,
sworn and examined:**

HILLYARD, MR DAVID

**Director, Industry and Consumer Services,
Consumer Protection Division, Department of Commerce,
sworn and examined:**

GOODWIN, MR DAVID

**Director, Finance and Administration/Chief Financial Officer,
Department of Commerce,
sworn and examined:**

The CHAIR: On behalf of the Legislative Council Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations, I would like to welcome you to today's hearing. Before we begin, I must ask you to take either the oath or affirmation.

[Witnesses took the oath or affirmation.]

The CHAIR: These proceedings are being recorded by Hansard. A transcript of your evidence will be provided to you. To assist the committee and to assist Hansard, could you please quote the full title of any document you might refer to during the course of the hearing, and please be aware of the microphones and try to speak directly into them. I remind you that your transcript will become a matter for the public record. 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. If the committee grants your request, any public and media in attendance will be excluded from the hearing. Please note that until such time as the transcript of your public evidence is finalised, it should not be made public. I advise you that premature publication or disclosure of the uncorrected transcript may constitute a contempt of Parliament and may mean that the material published or disclosed is not subject to parliamentary privilege.

Members, it would greatly assist Hansard if when referring to budget statements volumes or consolidated account estimates you give the page number, item and program, amount and so on in preface to your questions.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I want to go straight to the line item page 516 of the *Budget Statements*, "Aboriginal Economic Development Unit (AED) — Discontinuation of Non-Operational Program". Can you explain to us what exactly the discontinuation of the non-operational program means?

Mr Bradley: I will try. The aboriginal economic development function in the agency was discontinued as a policy decision of the government, ratified by cabinet. In this part, where we are talking about the three per cent efficiency dividend, we had identified some money that was surplus to requirements and we used that money to satisfy the three per cent efficiency dividend at that time.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I understand that the Aboriginal Economic Develop Unit was signatory to a number of shared responsibility agreements. What happens to those?

Mr Bradley: I will defer to Ms Julie de Jong on that matter, but in essence we have an exit strategy to manage those outstanding issues, not only for the long-standing clients that the Aboriginal economic development people had over a period. There were also clients with whom we had just commenced discussions and entered into agreements. We have developed an exit strategy, and I will pass to Julie de Jong to complete the response.

Mrs de Jong: Further to what Mr Bradley was saying, there is a little bit of a time delay, as you can imagine, in terms of the discussions with those clients in the regions, the processing of those approvals and money being set aside to deliver on those commitments made over the past couple of months. The team has a couple of the AED people just closing off on those and making sure that the appropriate paperwork is in place. I will take the question on notice if you need any further details.

[Supplementary Information No A1.]

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Can you give us a little bit more of an explanation of what the exit strategy involves? Is there any more to it than what you have just explained?

Mrs de Jong: Yes, there is. Obviously in the case of those grants that have been assessed and approved, we need to, firstly, make sure that the appropriate paperwork is associated with those, and, secondly, follow up on those acquittals. They are still coming in, so part of the strategy is to identify those that are still in the process of doing that, and closing down some of those files. But, yes, you are correct: quite a number of activities are associated with the exit strategy.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Can you go through some of those other activities?

Mrs de Jong: No; I am sorry, not at this point. I will have to take that on notice.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I know one of the areas that they have been heavily involved in is Indigenous art, and there is a very successful program there. What is happening to that program?

Mrs de Jong: Are you talking about the arts commercialisation strategy?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Yes.

Mrs de Jong: Currently, I understand that there are discussion with the Department of Indigenous Affairs. Patrick Walker and a number of the executives have been in discussions about how that will be delivered through the Department of Indigenous Affairs. That is about as far as it has got at the moment, I am afraid.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Who is currently operating that program, then?

Mrs de Jong: At this point, AED is still working on those clients they have made a commitment to, and there will be a handover to DIA, I understand.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: When do we expect that handover to occur?

Mr Bradley: I do not think that is a question we can answer at the present moment, because, as I said, we are still working through that exit strategy. Staff in the Department of Commerce are still engaged in finalising these agreements and the acquittals. It will be a point in time.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: How many staff were involved the Aboriginal Economic Development Unit, and how many were in that program?

Mr Bradley: There were 23 staff, and we gave a commitment that we would try to redeploy those staff in the agency, in other public sector jobs et cetera, but we would have to retain some staff to run out those programs we are currently involved in. We have been fairly successful, and I think at the present moment we have just about redeployed the bulk of the AED staff that were part of Commerce, and we probably only have two or three for whom we do not have new positions at this point in time.

But we have still kept a couple of FTEs there to assist us with the completion of the task of running out the agreements that we had in train at the time.

[9.40 am]

Mrs de Jong: I just wanted to make further comment to your question in regards to the arts commercialisation strategy. We have a contractor, Tim Pearn, who is currently working on those. His contract expires in September. That is where the dialogue is at with DIA. Tim will continue to deliver on that strategy.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Is he the only person involved in that strategy?

Mrs de Jong: Specifically, yes. But I do understand that as a team there would have been a number of others who would have been assisting him.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Right. I believe it is linked to a national website. Is that right?

Mrs de Jong: Sorry, I cannot comment.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: All right. I just want to be clear about that. You are saying that there were 23 staff. You have redeployed the majority of them, all bar two or three, and you have kept two or three to continue to do the work. Am I right then in assuming that you have redeployed about 17? Is that about right or —

Mr Bradley: Pretty close to that.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: — is it 17 or 18 of them?

Mr Bradley: It is pretty close to that.

Mrs de Jong: Yes.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Right. So there was no actual staff involved in those programs transferred across to the Department of Indigenous Affairs? I mean, you were saying that you were transferring some of the functions over there. Is the intention to transfer any of those staff to the DIA?

Mr Bradley: The DIA have actually engaged some of the staff.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: So they have been redeployed there.

Mr Bradley: That is right.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Right.

Mr Bradley: They obviously had an FTE and they took that FTE.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: And can you tell me how many?

Mrs de Jong: There is only one, and then Tim Pearn, who is on contract.

Mr Bradley: One, plus Tim Pearn, who is on contract.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Right. Can I just be also clear about what functions it is proposed to transfer to the DIA. Is it purely the arts commercialisation program or are any of the other functions out of the Aboriginal economic development office being transferred across?

Mrs de Jong: Further to that, I understand that the arts commercialisation strategy will be taken up by DIA; however, there have been working groups—executive working groups—which Patrick Walker is leading, about how best to deliver the main functions of AED. It is not necessarily DIA taking up a whole gamut of them. It is a matter of who is going to accept the responsibility in other agencies. It would be like the Small Business Development Commission undertaking some responsibilities. DIA will undertake some responsibilities and, I think, the department of training. So there is a whole range of them. I understand that they have had two working sessions and have had some excellent dialogue. I am sorry, that is about as much as we know and have got to —

Hon KEN TRAVERS: And again, I just want to be very clear: in terms of providing the functions, other than through the consultant and winding down programs, you are no longer providing any of the previous functions of the office and none of the other agencies have picked them up. Is that correct? If it is not —

Mr Bradley: I cannot speak for the other agencies, but I can speak for our agency. Our involvement is simply in terms of addressing what is currently in train and in terms of the handover.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: But in terms of a—well maybe I can put it to you: have you as an agency formally handed over and provided briefings or any other information to other agencies to allow them to take up the functions?

Mrs de Jong: Only through the working group.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Only through the working group, which, from what you have just said to us, has not made a final decision on who is doing what, so —

Mrs de Jong: No.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I understand that you cannot know exactly what another agency is doing, but to your knowledge no other agency has taken it up at this stage.

Mrs de Jong: That is correct, yes.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Thank you. If I can I will just ask one other question. It follows on from that point. In terms of the staff, and I am happy for you to take this on notice, can you provide us with a breakdown of the number of staff—specifically those that were made redundant, employed in other parts of your agency or redeployed to other departments? I am happy for you to take that on notice and provide that.

[*Supplementary Information No A2.*]

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Director General, can I ask you whether—and I am referring to page 517, “Economic Audit” and the “Discontinuation and transfer of the AED function” and the anticipated savings being around \$11 million-plus. Did you offer this up to the economic audit panel?

Mr Bradley: It was a policy decision of cabinet.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Can I put it to you another way: was your agency instructed by the economic audit panel to make this cut?

Mr Bradley: The economic audit panel recommended to government that the cut be made and cabinet endorsed it.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Okay; all right. Just going back to the functions: whilst these functions were with you, the services that were provided were in three broad categories—that is, fostering business development opportunities. There were a number of subcategories to that. I would imagine that probably most of that would be picked up by the Small Business Development Corporation, although I do have some concerns in respect to that because I am told that these programs have not effectively been transferred and become operational as yet. And then there is building investment and asset ownership. One of the functions under that is assisting in the interpretation, translation and implementation of native title agreements to identify opportunities for asset and wealth creation, employment and business development. I guess from my point of view it would be very concerning if, for example, some of these key functions were actually not effectively transferred. I guess the question that I put to you is: by what way can we ensure that there is the effective transfer of all of these functions from your agency to the other agencies and be able to therefore identify those gaps that were not transferred? I wonder if you could give me some comments in respect of how we can ensure the monitoring of this.

Mrs de Jong: Member, from what I understand from Patrick Walker and the working group, that is exactly what they are talking about. They are breaking down those programs and working out who best could deliver on those. That is as much as I can say right now.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Okay. I am just wondering if anyone has any more questions in relation to the AED? Do I continue with that?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I do.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: I do.

The CHAIR: We might go to Hon Philip Gardiner.
[9.50 am]

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: Following up on the course that Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich took, on page 520 is the heading “Outcomes and Key Effectiveness Indicators”. Of the performance measures of KPIs on that table, the one that has moved most significantly and most favourably—superficially at least—is the bottom line, which is “Number of employment and business opportunities facilitated”. In the footnote, it states, “For the purposes of the effectiveness indicator, employment and business opportunities are specifically defined as employment opportunities, business start-ups, businesses development and expansion opportunities facilitated for Indigenous communities”, which I expect to be directly associated with the Aboriginal economic development unit. I live in a regional area and know a little bit about Indigenous communities. The 728 business opportunities facilitated, as defined by footnote (e), are a remarkably good performance. Am I reading that performance correctly? I can take that on notice, if necessary, but then I will have a couple of follow-up questions.

Mr Bradley: We would need to drill down on the actual number of 728. The difficulty we have is that these fee indicators —

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: Are not yours?

Mr Bradley: They have been basically recast because of the fact we lost resources, safety and science, and innovation and business came into us, so we have actually had to recast the indicator, and that is an 2008-09. We have actually had to recast it.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: So really those numbers may need to be clarified to give me the truth of what is going on.

The CHAIR: Member, would you like that as a supplementary question?

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: Please.

Mr Bradley: The note I have here, just briefly, is that to date the results for 2008-09 are unavailable. Based on half-year results, the department considers that the 2008-09 estimated actual result is 728. This was based on an estimate of employment opportunities of 696 and an estimate of 32 business opportunities. Whether I can drill down further on that, I do not know.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: If you could, please.

The CHAIR: Perhaps we could request that you look a little further to see if there is more information you can provide on that.

[*Supplementary Information No A3.*]

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: Even when you drill down a little bit, if you could identify the number or proportion of the opportunities facilitated that appear to be commercially sustainable as businesses. The relevance of that, of course, comes back to the questions of Hon Ken Travers and Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich. If it is doing that good, and I know how hard that is to do in Indigenous communities, we should not be dropping it.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: You commented earlier that you have redeployed 17 or 18-odd staff. The savings are only \$302 000. I was wondering if you could tell us now much was actually in the budget for the 2008-09 for the Office of Aboriginal Economic Development and how much of that you have actually retained. I struck me that it was more than \$302 000. With a full 23 staff, that is \$113 000 per staff.

Mr Bradley: The section 25 transfer, and that is the Treasury function of transferring money from one agency to another, allocated us a transfer figure of \$4.7 million, and Treasury, when they discontinued the function, removed \$4.4 million, so we believe we have \$300 000 surplus. When the section 25 was effected, Treasury allocated \$4.7 million to come across to the agency.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: That was to finish the complete year of 2008-09.

Mr Bradley: That is right. For 2009-10, Treasury only took \$4.4 million out of our budget. A large part of that \$4.7 million was grants.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: How much of it was grants?

Mr Bradley: It was about \$2.8 million.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: So there is still \$2 million.

Mr Bradley: Yes, \$1.9 million for salaries.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I am still not sure I see how that becomes an ongoing saving. Why was not the whole amount just taken out?

Mr Goodwin: I think there two issues that are being confused here. First of all, the first step in the process was an attribution of the three per cent efficiency savings, and I think that was referred to you in the earlier page as about \$300 000 or so. As Mr Bradley was explaining, the total funds that were transfer to the Department for Commerce from the former Department of Industry and Resources were in the order of \$4.8 million. A significant proportion of that, \$2.8 million or so, is grants. The rest, a little less than \$2 million, was dedicated to salaries and other operating costs for the unit. That, if you like, comprised the salaries for those 23 persons that we have just been speaking about. In addition to the employment of those salaries, an ongoing cost of about \$2 million, a grants program associated with the unit was also discontinued, and that is why it is ongoing savings. Does that help?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: No, but not much in this budget ever does make sense to me these days. Was there any assessment process undertaken of the work of the Office of Aboriginal Economic Development at any time in the last 12 months? In fact, when was the last time there was an assessment undertaken of the effectiveness of the Office of Aboriginal Economic Development?

Mr Bradley: I am not in a position to answer that question; I just do not know.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Certainly, under your watch there has never been one.

Mr Bradley: They only came to us in September and they were taken away virtually in January.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I think it follows on from Hon Philip Gardiner's question, so maybe you can take it on notice, whether or not you have any idea of what the impact will be in terms of employment and business opportunities that may be missed as a result of the closure of the organisation. Obviously, last year you were expecting 728. Have you got any indication or idea of what the impact might be?

Mr Bradley: Madam Chair, the short answer to that is no, we do not. One of the reasons that the government made the policy decision that it did was that it felt that there was duplication of service across a number of agencies. I suspect the short answer to that is that, hopefully, there is no diminution of activity in that regard.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: When you provide that detailed information, can you provide a detailed break-up of that \$2.8 million in grants? As a result of the working party between the agencies to identify where the functions go, have they identified, as part of that work, whether or not there are other grants available within the government that would fulfil the role of those grants? The comment was that there was a duplication of function. Does that include a duplication of function in grants that would be available to start up businesses?

[10.00 am]

Mr Bradley: We will attempt to answer the question.

[*Supplementary Information No A4.*]

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Has the working group identified whether some of the grants under royalties for regions would be available for the participants under this program to apply for, now that the grants under this program have ceased?

Mr Bradley: I am not aware if that is the case.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Mrs de Jong, you are on that working group, are you not?

Mrs de Jong: No, I am not on the working group.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Maybe you could take that on notice.

[*Supplementary Information No A5.*]

Hon KATE DOUST: My question relates to page 522, "Asset Investment Program", and the works in progress in relation to Bentley Technology Park. I have a couple of questions. The first question is a three-parter, so I might just run through that first and get a response and then ask the second one. The first part is: what action has the government taken to progress the Bentley Technology Park precinct project; is the government currently assessing funding models for future stages of the project, and, if so, what are the models being considered; and when will a decision be made on the future of this project?

Mr Bradley: Madam Chair, may I defer to Julie de Jong?

Mrs de Jong: Yes, member. The Bentley Technology Park precinct structure plan is moving forward. There is a working group that employs the local South Perth city and the Victoria Park shire, as you would be aware, and a number of key stakeholders that meet regularly to get their engagement in the process for going forward with this project. Currently what is slowing it up is getting the necessary approvals, particularly with regard to traffic, which is a pretty important factor for that area, and parking. Those two need to have the local shires' approval for that and the structure plan, the actual tech park precinct plan, cannot go forward until the shires have approved of that.

Hon KATE DOUST: Is there some sort of rough estimate of when decisions will be finalised on this? This has been going on for quite some time.

Mrs de Jong: Currently we are waiting on the City of South Perth, but I understand in the next couple of months, if all goes accordingly, some time early next year.

Hon KATE DOUST: Are you looking at the funding models for the future stages of the park?

Mrs de Jong: Yes, member. We are looking at the opportunity to have land sales to offset those costs associated with those developments.

Hon KATE DOUST: That was leading into my next question. So if you are going to do that, will the government quarantine the proceeds from those land sales in the precinct to go towards completing future stages of the project? So if you sold land, would that money then be quarantined to assist with the future development of the precinct?

Mrs de Jong: I understand your question, member. I cannot respond to that right now; we do not know.

Hon KATE DOUST: Also on page 522, under “Science, Innovation and Business”, the third and fourth dot points refer to —

- supporting industry development through innovation and commercialisation; and
- administering science and innovation programs and projects.

Can you provide some detail on what those programs and projects actually are? Aside from things like Inventor of the Year, which is a very good program, what else is the department doing to encourage active participation in the area of science and innovation in this state and to develop interest or engagement, particularly of students in this area for future employment?

Mr Bradley: I wonder whether the member could refer me back to the exact page.

Hon KATE DOUST: Page 522, at the top of the page, there is the heading “Science, Innovation and Business”, and I refer to the third and fourth dot points under that heading. I just want to know what sort of programs are you actually administering that will actually encourage participation in the area of science and innovation in this state?

Mr Bradley: At this stage can I say that we have suspended all the programs at this point pending the outcome of the science review, which we believe is imminent?

Hon KATE DOUST: That was going to lead into my next question. I understand that was due on 30 June.

Mr Bradley: Correct.

Hon KATE DOUST: Given that the report has not yet been tabled and it was due on 30 June, when will it be provided to the government and what has been the delay?

Mr Bradley: I do not believe there has been any delay. The actual report has been provided to government by the due date. It is now being considered by government.

Hon KATE DOUST: So when will that review and its recommendations be made available to the public?

Mr Bradley: It is yet to go anywhere near cabinet, so I suspect there are still a couple of months to be built into that process at this stage.

Hon KATE DOUST: I just have a last lot of questions and then I am happy to vacate my seat for another. My last lot of questions are in relation to page 519 and the tenth dot point, which refers to the broadband infrastructure. There have been quite a few announcements recently about a range of broadband-related developments, and we have been excited to see it actually get rolled out in Tasmania. There have also been announcements in relation to changes with the state broadband network and the announcement of the national broadband network. Given all those things happening, I have just got a series of questions. I want to know what progress has been made to provide broadband infrastructure to the Kimberley and to remote regions, as mentioned in the budget, in the first instance. So if you want to respond to that first.

Mr Bradley: I defer to Julie de Jong.

Mrs de Jong: Thank you, member. Are you talking about the national broadband network in your question?

Hon KATE DOUST: I am, but I understand that when the state broadband was canned that there was going to be some allowance for some parts of the state to still have the state set up —

Mrs de Jong: Involvement.

Hon KATE DOUST: Yes.

Mrs de Jong: Member, we are already accessing the national broadband network program, and as you would be aware we have now got a tender or the commonwealth has got a tender out for Perth to Geraldton connectivity.

Hon KATE DOUST: Yes.

Mrs de Jong: So, number one, under the national broadband network, that is going ahead. Further to your question with regard in particular to the Kimberley, we have got, through the team, a number of programs that we have been accessing, again through the commonwealth, to facilitate black hole and black spots. With the Kimberley, we have had activity up there with NewSat that had been delivering on some mobile telecommunications. So in terms of remote and regional areas, that is definitely on our agenda and we have been accessing the programs to do that. The Ngaanyatjarra lands project, as you will be aware, has been completed. It has been very successful and we are now looking at further up in the Kimberley in terms of mobile telecommunications down the main highways.

Hon KATE DOUST: So in relation to the Kimberley and remote areas, is there a time frame for when that will be completed and what will be the total cost for the state's involvement in that project?

Mrs de Jong: Member, I will have to take that on notice.

Hon KATE DOUST: That is fine.

[Supplementary Information No A6.]

Hon KATE DOUST: My final part: it was reported at the time of the state broadband network cancellation that the government would be focusing on a new site-specific approach to improve the network. So I ask: what does this site-specific approach entail, what funding has been provided to progress this project, and what areas are being considered for network improvement?

[10.10 am]

Mrs de Jong: Are we talking mobile?

Hon KATE DOUST: I think so, yes.

Mrs de Jong: I needed to clarify that because it gets a little bit confusing with some of the activity around to know what we mean by broadband. If we are talking mobile, from the telecommunications assessment that was undertaken it was identified that there are black spots on all the main highways. We are looking at a program to address mobile coverage all through our major highways up through the north and out east. I could not tell you specifically how much money we are looking at and I will take that on notice.

[Supplementary Information No A7.]

Hon ALISON XAMON: I would like to follow up on the question just asked by Hon Kate Doust in relation to the sites specific approach with broadband. You mentioned mobile. I am aware that a lot of areas in the metropolitan area do not have access to internet broadband and it is creating enormous problems for them. Is there anything —

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: Ask Uncle Kevin; he is going to fix it up, is he not?

Hon ALISON XAMON: Is there anything on track from a state perspective to look at that?

Mrs de Jong: I understand the question; I was trying to think of an appropriate response. Yes, they are concerns and we have received correspondence from people in certain areas of Perth that do not get appropriate coverage. We are trying to probably address that through the national broadband network. Again, Western Australia is working very closely with the commonwealth to make sure that we get suitably noticed, and is putting forward suggestions.

Hon ALISON XAMON: I am glad you are focusing on the Kimberley and remote regions, but it is my concern to make sure that these areas do not get left off the agenda, because they are also very critical.

I refer to the fourth dot point under the heading on page 516 regarding the three per cent efficiency dividend. Will the reduction in spending that has been indicated have any impact on the funding for the pay equity unit within labour relations?

Mr Bradley: That funding was provided for a finite period. That period has lapsed, so it is not part of the three per cent; it is discontinued.

Hon ALISON XAMON: When was it discontinued—from the new financial year?

Mr Bradley: Yes.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Can you tell me about the impact it will have on staff numbers and the work of the pay equity unit—how many people have been affected by that?

Mr Bradley: Approximately two people are involved. That function has now been absorbed into the mainstream policy directorate of the labour relations function.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Are you saying that, although the pay equity unit is not called that any more, you will be able to retain its 2008-09 capacity?

Mr Bradley: It has been absorbed into the main labour relations policy.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Is it likely to maintain the level of output that it had?

Mr Bradley: No, not to the same extent.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Given that WA's gender pay inequity of more than 27 per cent is the largest in Australia, can you advise what sort of specific initiatives the government is planning on implementing in relation to addressing the gender pay gap?

The CHAIR: That is probably a question more appropriately directed to the minister and, unfortunately, we do not have a minister or representative minister here.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Are there any projects at all in relation to gender pay equity being implemented by labour relations?

Mr Bradley: We will take that on notice to provide a fulsome answer to the member.

[Supplementary Information No A8.]

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: I come back to the point about broadband referred to earlier on page 519. You mentioned highways. I do not know quite what you mean by highways.

Mrs de Jong: There are a number of highways. There are highways and highways.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: When do you think the coverage will be for phone broadband?

Mrs de Jong: I have to take that on notice.

[Supplementary Information No A9.]

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: I understand that the Department of Commerce has responsibility for broadband in regional Western Australia as far as you can influence the commonwealth or Telstra or whoever is going to do it. In the agricultural region, with which I am very familiar, coverage is the first platform for health. If you are in the back paddock and have an accident and you cannot move but you have a mobile telephone and you have coverage, you can be saved. Is there a program to ensure blanket coverage over the agricultural region? If so, when will it be completed?

Mr Bradley: We are developing what we call a bush medivac WA program to enhance the health and emergency service organisations' capabilities to respond to emergency situations that were previously untenable due to lack of communications. The project stakeholders include Western

Australia country health, Department of Environment and Conservation, St John Ambulance, Royal Flying Doctor Service and the Surf Life Saving Association of Western Australia. The project is expected to be completed on budget and on time by the end of June 2010. It is a \$9.3 million project.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: Is that the communication between those organisations, or is it to cover the communication between me as a farmer in the back paddock and the doctor and/or the ambulance or whatever?

Mr Bradley: I think it is more to do with the communication between those organisations.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: I suspect that is right.

Mr Bradley: But separately, building on what Julie de Jong just explained with broadband, we are looking to tap into the royalties for regions to try to eliminate those black spots so that you will have the ability to tap into this function as well. That is approximately a \$40 million initiative.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: I appreciate that. Thank you. I refer to the next point on that same page concerning the SKA. Is the \$20 million investment in the hard science or is part or all of that \$20 million to do with the promotion of Western Australia's case to the international fora?

Mrs de Jong: What does it say exactly?

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: It states —

The Government's \$20 million investment in radio astronomy science ... a joint venture between the University of Western Australia ... is a significant factor in the enhancement of Australia's bid for the Square Kilometre Array.

Is all that money for the hard science or is there an allocation of part of that \$20 million for the promotion of our case to have it in the Murchison?

Mrs de Jong: The \$20 million is allocated for the international research centre mainly around science and education. A separate allocation of moneys is for promoting the Australia bid. The bulk of that will be coming from the commonwealth. As you are aware, CSIRO is a key player in developing the project. A lot of the profiling promotion will come from team Australia.

[10.20 am]

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: Is there any contribution out of Western Australia's budget to assist that promotion or to focus that promotion on what is relevant for us?

Mrs de Jong: Member, we have contributed some sums of money through our operational budget.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: Do we know how much, or can we get that on notice?

Mr Bradley: I am the member on the ASCC, which is the group that is overseeing the development.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: The Australian group?

Mr Bradley: That is the Australian group. As a normal departmental function, we are contributing to that by way of attending meetings and those types of things. One of the aspects of that meeting, or that group, will be to develop a communication and a promotional strategy; therefore, that is when the budget aspects will start to develop.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: Those promotional aspects are yet to be formulated from that group?

Mr Bradley: That is right. In terms of the day-to-day running, operational issues to bring it up to a certain point, that is all being funded out of the day-to-day running of the agency.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: I only mention it because I see it as a bit like an Olympic Games promotion. Not so much the corruption around it, but the rest of it.

Mr Bradley: We support your view on that.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: Moving now to page 520 “Outcomes and Key Effectiveness Indicators”, I think this comes back to the activity of the department concerning consumer protection, compliance and so on. I would have thought that that performance there of, let us say 95 per cent compliance—what is the benchmark? What is the best practice? I guess best practice is 100 per cent, but in real terms the extent to which traders comply with regulatory requirements—is 95 per cent a number with which you are happy?

Mr Bradley: I defer to Mr Hillyard.

Mr Hillyard: It is an outcome and it is a number that has been set that we have been looking to strive to achieve. I will put it into the context of how we do these checks. We go to various businesses and ensure that they have got their requirements in accordance with the legislation. If we visit a travel agent, for instance, there are a number of checks that we would go through. A fitness studio or a health club will have particular requirements to meet the code of practice, and we would go through those requirements. We call these “proactive visits” because we are trying to ensure that they understand their responsibilities and comply with all of those standards. We are always going to find minor faults in some of those compliance checks. It may be something along the lines that there is not a sticker on the window to show that the business is a licensed travel agent. Serious breaches then become a matter of investigation and prosecution action, but the compliance checks are about having a look at the state of the nation in terms of whether they are complying with their legislative requirements.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: The reason why it is of interest to me is yesterday we went through the same procedure with the Department for Communities, which has 60 people working in the community and family support section of the department, and I think that this part of the Department of Commerce has 429 staff. It is just interesting to see the relevance of the two areas. One is a compliance area and the other is dealing with people and letting them know how they can try and have less dysfunctional and better lives. It is just a mismatch. The question is: I presume those 429 full-time equivalents that you have got are mainly, in a sense, audit people who are going out on a proactive basis, are they?

Mr Hillyard: No. The 429 people across consumer protection will stretch from people who are certainly involved in the licensing functions and investigative functions but also in terms of policy work, giving advice over the telephones through our contact centres, our front counters and in our regional offices that are located in several locations across the state. The people who are actually involved in those compliance programs is very much a smaller number. Most branches would have one officer involved in proactive work and they would be out doing those inspection checks. For instance, in the retail trading hours area, there is one and a half inspectors out on the road. They would contribute to these proactive visits and compliance checks. In another part of retail, we have got one officer who deals with all of the travel agents, employment agents and health clubs. He would be doing those sorts of proactive checks, as well as people who would go out and do checks on, say, price scanners at supermarkets. We will have two officers go out and do a program of inspecting a number of price tags against what is being scanned at a particular time.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: Under the COAG arrangements that form part of the “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency”, do you think that that number will increase or fall as the harmonisation becomes more ingrained?

Mr Hillyard: Some of the areas will fall away as functions move to the commonwealth. For instance, as the credit functions and finance broking functions move to the commonwealth, we will not have responsibility for that. Those activities will fall away. In terms of national harmonisation of licensing areas, which we are still going to have a hand in—so perhaps a national standard for real estate agencies—you would still see a level of activity at a state level ensuring that the nationally consistent legislation is maintained in this state. Not all of the functions are going to the commonwealth.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: Some will be transferred, not eliminated, as well?

Mr Hillyard: Yes. The trade measurement functions are going across to the commonwealth, so those numbers will drop out of our overall bulk numbers of performance issues because that entire function is going to the commonwealth, as is finance and credit. We will still be involved in areas which are licensed and which have consistent licensing functions across the states; we will still be responsible for looking after those activities.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: It is interesting that in community services—I am sorry for the comparison in a way but it is hot in my mind because it was yesterday—uses not-for-profit organisations to do a lot of that work. In commerce, you do not get it that way.

Mr Hillyard: There are some connections to the not-for-profit area in tenancy advice and advocacy work. There is a funding program. Off the top of my head, about 14 NGOs are delivering for us community advice, education and advocacy on tenancy matters when we have a client base that is happy to go to an NGO but not to a state government agency. They have been funded out of the residential tenancies legislation and the rental accommodation account. There is a \$2.1 million program that funds those NGOs across the state.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I refer to page 521 “Consumer Protection” under “Services and Key Efficiency Indicators”, and specifically to the case of the bungled interest decision that headed back to SAT in relation to Chequecash Pty Ltd trading as Financial Express. You would be aware of that?

Mr Bradley: Yes.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: It was reported on the front page of *The West Australian*, as you know, about a week ago; it was a story by Gary Adshead. I just want to ask a series of questions in relation to it because it is very, very important, given the goals of the agency, which are ensuring an effective regulatory environment, enforcing the law and enhancing capacity. I want to make sure that we are doing all of these things. I am very keen to find out what has gone on here.

How many legal cases against other lenders have been halted because of the unlawful collection of information by the department?

[10.30 am]

Mr Hillyard: I do not think I can answer that in specific terms, so we will have to come back to you on that.

[*Supplementary Information No A10.*]

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Have you had any that have been halted?

Mr Hillyard: I am not in a position to comment. That is in a directorate that I do not run, so I cannot comment.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I understand that Ms Anne Driscoll is the Commissioner for Consumer Protection, so would that not fall directly under your portfolio responsibilities?

Mr Bradley: Anne Driscoll was going to be a participant this morning, but her father is ill, so that is the reason she is not here.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Okay. Sorry. Are departmental compliance officers who deal in this area of finance expected to understand the Credit (Administration) Act?

Mr Hillyard: Yes.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: How many officers are directly working on this case at any one time?

Mr Hillyard: On this individual case?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: On this individual case—that is, Chequecash Pty Ltd?

Mr Hillyard: We will have to take that on notice.

[*Supplementary Information No A11.*]

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Why did officers of the department make a total of 25 visits to the lender's office as part of a national compliance strategy? Does this not seem to be a bit of an overkill?

Mr Hillyard: I think I will have to provide, unfortunately, all these answers on notice.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Okay.

The CHAIR: That is because one of the witnesses is unable to attend this morning.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: It may well be easier if I provide all the questions on notice, and in that way we will be able to get satisfactory information back.

Mr Bradley: Would that be on notice to the minister or on notice to me?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: It will be on notice to you, Mr Bradley.

The CHAIR: Just to clarify, it will go to a minister, with a copy to Mr Bradley.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Would it as a matter of course?

The CHAIR: Yes. If you are happy with that, member, it would save time.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I do not have a problem with that. My next question is about your vehicle fleet. What is the number of vehicles currently in your fleet?

Mr Bradley: I believe it is 237.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Have you received an official instruction from the government to reduce your fleet by 10 per cent?

Mr Bradley: We have received advice that that is going to occur, yes.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Do you believe that your front-line services can be maintained if you lose 24 vehicles?

Mr Bradley: It is 24 vehicles over three years. Yes, we do.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: That begs the question why have them in the first place, but anyway—

The CHAIR: They may all be using public transport, or they may have taken to using bicycles!

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I refer to page 525. I am trying to understand the grants for the Office of Aboriginal Economic Development. You said earlier that that was about \$2.8 million. Where under "Details of Controlled Grants and Subsidies" does that appear?

Mr Bradley: If you look at the figure of \$2.845 million for industry development financial assistance, that is the Aboriginal economic development grants. That should not be there. They forgot to take that line out.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Well, it should still be there, because you paid them in the previous financial year.

Mr Bradley: No. This is for 2009-10.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: And we are talking about 2008-09. Oh! We have finally found some money for the government. Normally we are finding black holes. It will be pleased! We will have to tell the Treasurer!

Mr Bradley: They have definitely taken it!

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Are there any other programs in there or is that purely the Aboriginal economic development grants?

Mr Bradley: It is purely those grants.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Is that what they were called—industry development financial assistance?

Mr Bradley: Yes.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: It makes it really hard when different terminologies are used throughout the budget for different line items.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: It is to keep you on your toes!

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Yes! I suspect I know the answer to this, but the grants that Mr Hillyard mentioned earlier for tenancy advocacy, do they appear in this section anywhere?

Mr Hillyard: No. That is a funding program under the Residential Tenancies Act, and it is allocated directly to that. That does not come from a grant from government as such. It comes out of the rental accommodation fund.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Which is established under its own act, so that is not accounted for anywhere in this budget. Do you receive any of that money for staff or anything like that?

Mr Goodwin: Mr Hillyard is quite correct. It is not reflected in the main part of the budget, which is generally what we call the controlled funds for the department. At page 528 of the budget papers there is a heading “Details of Administered Transactions”. The grants that Mr Hillyard referred to, which are paid to this advice organisation—they are generally non-government organisations—are reflected on that page in the line for rental accommodation fund, grants, \$1.6 million.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: That is \$1.6 million, not \$2.1 million, which I thought was the figure that Mr Hillyard mentioned earlier.

Mr Hillyard: The figure of \$2.1 million is for next financial year.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: No. That also says \$1.6 million.

Mr Hillyard: I may be confusing some numbers. There is a range of funds that go direct to NGOs to provide these counselling services. There was also a decision made by government in relation to the State Homelessness Taskforce recommendations, and there is an allocation of \$500 000 per annum that comes out of that fund and goes to NGOs to provide financial counselling services through family and children’s services.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Where in the budget papers does that appear?

Mr Goodwin: I am not able to answer that question at the moment.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Will you take it on notice?

Mr Goodwin: Yes.

[*Supplementary Information No A12.*]

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Can you also explain why the estimated actual for 2008-09 was \$6.5 million? There would appear to be a fairly consistent amount of around \$1.6 million, but for the year just gone it is \$6.5 million. Do you know what that relates to? It is on page 528, the first line item under “Expenses”, rental accommodation fund, interest.

Mr Bradley: We will try to provide that.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: You do not know off the top of your head what that would be for?

Mr Bradley: No.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Hon Philip Gardiner referred earlier to page 519 and to the amount of \$20 million for the establishment of the International Centre for Radio Astronomy Research. Where does that appear in the budget papers?

Mr Bradley: We will need to take that on notice.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I am surprised you do not know where that is. Is that an ongoing amount or a one-off payment? Is any ongoing funding required as part of that research centre?

Mr Bradley: We will take that on notice as well.

[*Supplementary Information No A13.*]

[10.40 am]

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I will give a bit of a preamble to this. Recently I was in Geraldton talking to some of the people who are very keen for SKA to be located there. One of the things they pointed out was that we were falling behind in the international bidding process for SKA because we were not actively engaging Indigenous people in that process. For example, South Africa would provide flow-on benefits for people who are probably less fortunate than we are. The South African bid is heavily involved in using SKA to improve the lives of the people in South Africa, but we were not doing the same here. We need to focus on that and to lift our game, because we are dealing with the European Union and a number of other places that would see the way in which we treat our Indigenous people as an important factor in the success of our bid. Is there any funding for programs in this budget to seek to address that matter, other than cutting the Aboriginal Economic Development Unit?

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: The unit was transferred.

Mr Bradley: The answer I will give to your question is pretty much the same as my answer to the previous question. We are aware of the concerns that the bid needs a principle and a focus. There is little doubt that we seem to have the best site and the radio quiet zone. We have just signed a memorandum of understanding with Italy and we understand that Italy will be looking to bring the French on board as well. We are concerned about South Africa. The difficulty with South Africa's bid is that it has to get eight countries across the line, but it is also promoting the social benefits that might accrue to South Africa from the likes of the UK, the Netherlands and so on. We believe there is a need for a principle and a focus—picking up on the member's point that we need to elevate it to an Olympic-type status bid. We understand that. Those funds, at this point in time, are locked away in operational issues in the budget. We have not got to that point. It is still coming.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: There is no funding in the budget at the moment. Have you estimated what sort of funding you would require?

Mr Bradley: At the last Australian SKA Coordination Committee meeting, which is the national group, one of the issues we talked about was developing a cost-benefit analysis to take the SKA project forward. The decision is still a couple of years away, as you know. We elevated the consultancy so that it could put the tender papers together now, and when we meet in December we will have the tender papers to look at, approve and get out. We are hoping to have that up and running by the early part of next year.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: But there are no funds. Okay, we have got that.

I want to go back to the broadband program. Did you previously have funding in your budget to assess broadband issues across the state?

Mrs de Jong: When we were part of DOIR?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Yes.

Mrs de Jong: Yes, we had some small funds.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: How much?

Mrs de Jong: I am sorry, I could not tell you because it was not part of my responsibility.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: It is my recollection that there were some funds to assess broadband and increasing broadband connectivity across the state. At that stage, it was to engage federal programs for Western Australia. Is that correct?

Mrs de Jong: There were some activities, but I cannot be specific about those; again, they were not part of my responsibilities so I am not familiar with what they were up to. I will take that on notice.

[*Supplementary Information No A14.*]

Mr Bradley: Is the member referring to 2008-09?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Yes, in part, but either 2007-08 or 2008-09, any money that has ever been allocated for the expansion of broadband in Western Australia.

Mrs de Jong: Thank you.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: You mentioned earlier that you were hoping to address black spots via submissions to the royalties for regions program? Which program are you intending to apply for it under?

Mr Bradley: I did not know there was a separate program.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: There are a range of programs and different funds.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: There are different funds: the local government fund and possibly the regional infrastructure fund, but I do not know. I cannot help you.

Mrs de Jong: We have not been told where those funds will be coming from.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Have you been told that you will get it out of royalties for regions?

Mr Bradley: We are making submissions.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: When you say that you have not been told, what do you mean?

Mrs de Jong: We have been working with the royalties for regions people to put up a submission, but they have not articulated to us specifically where those funds will come from—that I am aware of—what arm.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: That makes sense. I refer to page 516 “Resources Safety Division—Reduction in Staff and Training”. I accept that has now been transferred out of your agency but it is still listed under your budget under “Reduction in Staff and Training”. Can you give us an explanation of exactly what reduction in staff and training occurred in that area when you had it?

Mr Bradley: No, I cannot.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: The reason being?

Mr Bradley: It is not my jurisdiction.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: But it is in your budget.

Mr Bradley: The basic figures were framed up to 31 December 2008, but I cannot explain how they have delivered that.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: It is saying here that \$255 000 of it was delivered under your watch. One of the problems we have with this is that I have no doubt, if we get the Department of Mines and Petroleum in, those officers will say, “Ask the Department of Commerce because it was done before we got it”.

Mr Bradley: I am suggesting that you ask the Department of Mines and Petroleum how they achieved that figure. That was the figure they had to achieve. They might have done it differently than the way I would have done it.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Were they not under your watch, at least in 2008-09? Were they not with you until 1 July?

Mr Bradley: No.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: When did they go?

Mr Bradley: 1 January.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I am surprised it was not included in the division for the Department of Mines Safety.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: What about WorkSafe? Do you have responsibility for WorkSafe still?

Mr Bradley: I certainly have.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Oh, good! Can I just ask you in relation to the WorkSafe division, that rationalisation of staffing and reduced expenditure, whether you could give us a bit of a breakdown on what those rationalisations mean? In other words, what will be rationalised and by how much?

Mr Bradley: We believe that to achieve that outcome over the next year, approximately five positions will not be filled as the positions become vacant. Primarily, they will be in the divisional support areas, such as management and the support to the library.

There will be reductions in travel undertaken by the inspectorate staff and in staff training.

[10.50 am]

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Can you give me a comprehensive list or is that it?

Mr Bradley: That is really it. We have given a commitment that no front-line inspectors' positions will be lost. We currently have 103 inspector positions or FTEs. We are currently trying to fill around seven vacancies in that area.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: A reduction in travel means that they may not be able to get out as frequently as they otherwise would.

Mr Bradley: Potentially, but we have to manage that.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: It always sounds better than it is on the ground. I have some concerns about taking that sort of cut and not impacting on front-line services.

Hon ALISON XAMON: I go back to page 528, picking up on the issue of the rental accommodation fund. My understanding is that the income that is accumulated from the interest from that fund is meant to be used to fund services for tenants and the like. There is a lot more income than expenses accumulated. What does the rest of that income generally cover? What does it usually go towards? Surely it does not go on general revenue.

Mr Hillyard: There are claims made against the account from the Department of Commerce, consumer protection's activities in relation to delivering tenancy services, like paying the bond administrator staff and the advice services that come out of the call centre and our policy and education areas. There are also claims against the fund from the ministry of justice in providing core services. The claims are made directly to Treasury to reimburse expenditures by the various departments.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Is there any way that I could get that breakdown?

Mr Hillyard: Yes.

[*Supplementary Information No A15.*]

The CHAIR: Hon Philip Gardiner, you look like you have a question.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: I am trying to conjure one up.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: That is how the budget was developed so why shouldn't you?

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: Wait until you hear what the question is, Hon Ken Travers. It is in relation to consumer protection but it is protection of the government. I want to see whether it comes under your jurisdiction. I am observing that with the infrastructure being planned and the government building houses and this, that and the other, in the building industry, the big building companies tend to get the business with government. Big government, big business, especially in regional areas like the Pilbara but in other areas, I suspect, as well. In schools, I have heard about this as well, with education. From the state point of view, I have great concerns that the building companies can see the state coming and add one hell of a margin on top because the big companies probably feel that they can satisfy the compliance and all the other stuff. Dealing with the small building companies, there is much more difficulty in perhaps educating them about compliance and so on. Is that an area over which your department has jurisdiction? In a way, Treasury is controlling the purse strings but my worry is that there is no check on Treasury if it is allocating contracts for government buildings to big companies that are adding these hefty margins. There is no-one saying, "This is too big; you haven't found other quotes from smaller groups who may do it far cheaper for the government." Does that come under your area?

Mr Bradley: It is definitely not us. My colleague from Housing and Works probably does not appreciate me referring to him. It would be either Housing and Works or procurement and Treasury.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: Treasury is the principal in this theme, quite often allocating money. But it is not you guys?

Mr Bradley: No.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I want to go back to page 525 and get a bit of an understanding about some of these controlled grants and subsidies. You may want to take them on notice. What is the Farmsafe WA Alliance and what is it for exactly? Also, could you give us an explanation of why we did not spend the money that was allocated for science and innovation in last year's budget? Was that because an active decision was taken during the year to delay it or were there projects that could not come off?

Mr Bradley: The projects did not come through for us to make the milestone payments. There were just delays along the way.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Is that why we have \$51 million this year that we expect to be picked up this financial year?

Mr Bradley: Yes.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: In terms of new money over the year, over the past three or four years what has been the average amount of new money going into that program?

Mr Bradley: Into science?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Yes, into science and innovation grants. How much of it is new money and how much is money carried over from previous years? Are you able to give us that figure? If you have it there, you can give it to us now but if not, you can provide it later.

Mr Bradley: I can answer the question for this year. There is no new money because of the science review so everything has been put on hold. There has been a substantial amount of money over the past three or four years with Innovate WA, centres of excellence programs et cetera. A lot of those programs have run out to about \$350 million all up. That is where some of that delay occurred because the milestones were not met.

With your Farmsafe question, that is mainly to do with running training programs in the farming communities. It is an alliance that has been receiving funding for a number of years that we feel

contributes to greater awareness in the farming community not only in terms of the farmers but also the children.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Is it an organisation with direct members or is it an organisation of other organisations?

Mr Bradley: I cannot answer that.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Perhaps you could provide us with information about that and the sort of work that it is required to do.

[*Supplementary Information No A16.*]

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Just to go back to the science and innovation grants, when we talk about new money, is the amount of \$29 834 allocated for next financial year new money or is that still rolling out money that was previously there?

Mr Bradley: It is mainly moneys rolled across.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: It would have been originally put in the budget.

Mr Bradley: We have not put in any new money this year.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Can you provide us with a breakdown—I am happy for this to be taken on notice—of all the money that has come under that science and innovation grants area, when it was originally announced and then a time line of how it is flowing out into the system for each of the different programs?

Mr Bradley: We have a table here that we can provide you with. It basically gives the budget, the approved commitment and the balance, which has not been utilised at this point in time.

The CHAIR: We might ask that you table that and we will take copies of it. Is it all right that it becomes a public document?

Mr Bradley: Yes.

[11.00 am]

Hon ALISON XAMON: I refer to page 525 and the funding of the Employment Law Centre of Western Australia. I might add that I was chair of the Employment Law Centre until late last year, so I am very familiar with the work of the ELC, and I am very pleased to see that its funding has been increased, because, as you know, it is well and truly value for money in terms of the services being delivered to government. I am actually asking about the forward estimates. We notice lots of work that the ELC is doing and the fact is that we really are getting a terrific service in terms of accommodating a whole range of people who otherwise would not access this stuff. It was always a real struggle having to go through these processes every single year. It took an enormous amount of time and energy from an already overworked workforce. What are the plans for forward estimates? What is the likelihood that that sort of funding will continue?

Mr Bradley: We have a similar view; we think it is value for money, and that is why we pushed for the funding to continue. We also believe that the commonwealth government has a role to play as well, because basically about 52 per cent or 53 per cent of the calls that come in are related to the commonwealth jurisdiction. We have been in dialogue with our counterparts in Canberra and they have agreed to support funding requests for future years, so we are looking at a 50 per cent basis.

Hon ALISON XAMON: You will be aware that the federal government previously pulled 100 per cent of funding from the Employment Law Centre immediately after WorkChoices was introduced, which almost gutted the centre until the state government, which was the Australian Labor Party at the time, actually stepped in to provide those services. That leaves the Employment Law Centre quite vulnerable, and I suppose I agree that there is a place for both governments to step up to the mark, but there is actually room for real expansion of that centre and a real need for it, as you are

aware. My preferred option would be for the state government to maintain its current commitment as well as the federal government stepping up. Is there any likelihood that that might happen?

Mr Bradley: That is a policy decision, member. At this stage, we have a commitment from the commonwealth government to fund it by 50 per cent.

Hon ALISON XAMON: So that is based on current services at \$372 000, going right through to forward estimates?

Mr Bradley: That is what we would like to happen, yes. I am sorry I cannot be more precise than that.

Hon ALISON XAMON: I may talk to you again next year. Thank you.

The CHAIR: I am aware that we have gone over our time allocation. We might conclude this hearing. Thank you for your attendance.

Hearing concluded at 11.02 am