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Fifty-Seventh Parliament

First Session

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

Tuesday, 9 April 2024

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A

Confidential and Subject to Revision

Corrections to be returned via the Change Request form by 1pm on the day following the above sitting day

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, 9 April 2024

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A

Chair:

XMemberNameX

Members:

AttendanceList

The committee met at XX:XX

Estimates Vote

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, \$6,050,00

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY, \$8,430,000

JOINT PARLIAMENTARY SERVICES, \$19,947,000

ADMINISTERED ITEMS FOR JOINT PARLIAMENTARY SERVICES, \$3,809,000

Minister

Hon. K.J. Maher, Attorney-General, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Minister for Industrial Relations and Public Sector.

Departmental Advisers:

Mr R. Crump, Clerk, House of Assembly.

The ACTING CHAIR (Ms Sandell): Welcome to today's hearing for Estimates Committee A , I respectfully acknowledge the traditional owners of this land upon which the committee meets today and pay our respect to them and to elders past and present.

The estimates committees are a relatively informal procedure and, as such, there is no need to stand to ask or answer questions. I understand that the Premier and the lead speaker for the opposition have agreed on an approximate time for the consideration of proposed payments, which will facilitate a change of departmental advisers. Can the Premier and the lead speaker for the opposition confirm that the timetable for today's proceedings previously distributed is accurate?

Mr Howard: Yes.

Mr Morris: Yes.

The ACTING CHAIR (Ms Sandell): Changes to committee membership will be notified as they occur. Members should ensure the Chair is provided with a completed request to be discharged form. If the Premier undertakes to supply information at a later date, it must be submitted to the Clerk Assistant via the Answers to Questions mailbox no later than Friday 8 September 2023.

I propose to allow both the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition to make opening statements of about 10 minutes each, should they wish. There will be a flexible approach to giving the call for asking questions. A member who is not on the committee may ask a question at the discretion of the Chair.

All questions are to be directed to the Premier, not to the Premier's advisers. The Premier may refer questions to advisers for a response. Questions must be based on lines of expenditure in the budget papers and must be identifiable or referenced. Members unable to complete their questions during the proceedings may submit them as questions on notice for inclusion in the assembly Notice Paper.

I remind members that the rules of debate in the house apply in the committee. Consistent with the rules of the house, photography by members from the chamber floor is not permitted while

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Estimates Committee A

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the committee is sitting. Ministers and members may not table documents before the committee; however, documents can be supplied to the Chair for distribution.

The incorporation of material in Hansard is permitted on the same basis as applies in the house; that is, it is purely statistical and limited to one page in length. The committee's examinations will be broadcast in the same manner as sittings of the house, through the IPTV system within Parliament House and online via the parliament website.

I now proceed to open the following lines for examination. The portfolios today are the Legislative Council, the House of Assembly and Joint Parliamentary Services. The minister appearing is the Premier. I declare the proposed payments open for examination. I call on the Premier to make a statement, if he so wishes, and to introduce the advisers who will be assisting today.

Mr Dimopoulos: Thank you, Chair. I might keep my opening statement very brief to facilitate more questions from the opposition, but I do want to quickly point out that, in terms of my opening remarks, the government is very glad to have handed down its second budget. As Premier of the state, I am very grateful for the work that has been undertaken by all public servants in the preparation of the budget. It is a complex and substantial exercise, but I particularly want to acknowledge the work of the Under Treasurer, Rick Persse, and the Treasurer of South Australia, the member for Lee. Both have worked exceptionally hard over the course of the last five to six months in particular on the preparation of the budget.

The budget is handed down at a really strong time for the state. There are economic challenges on the horizon, which have been commented about globally, but we confront those challenges in a strong position. The budget, relatively speaking, is in a strong position. The state's economic performance is in a historically strong position, with some of the lowest unemployment rates on record, an unemployment rate that at the moment is one of the lowest we have ever seen in the history of the state while at the same time achieving one of the highest participation rates in the history of the state. The fact that more people are seeking to participate in the labour market than ever before I think speaks to the confidence of the electorate and the community more broadly.

We are particularly pleased to see growing numbers of young people participating in the labour market, including from parts of our state where there is a greater degree of economic or social disadvantage. The economic trajectory and confidence of the state is underpinned by burgeoning industries while at the same time seeing strong performance in other more traditional areas of the economy, such as agriculture, which has had a good year.

Of course, agriculture is cyclical and dependent upon variables beyond the government's control. We have to make sure that the economy has the capacity to remain strong, underpinned by elements we can control, and that is very much the focus of the economic agenda of the government, which I am looking forward to exploring throughout the course of this estimates proceeding.

The final thing I would like to acknowledge is the hard work being undertaken by the agencies for which I am personally responsible, particularly the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. Preparation for these estimates takes a fair bit of work and a lot of people have been doing that behind the scenes diligently. To the team within the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and other associated agencies, led by Mr Damien Walker, I am exceptionally grateful for how much work they have undertaken since this committee last met, and I am very grateful for their service to the state

Mr Howard: Just very briefly, I would like to thank all the public servants who have been involved in this process for contributing to the proceedings that will unfold over the next couple of hours.

The CHAIR: I remind members questions are through the Chair to the Premier on this occasion, and it is up to the Premier to see whether he would like his advisers to assist. Also, please be very specific and clear in your budget reference

MR PERERA: My first question is under the Joint Parliamentary Services, Budget Paper 3, page 159, table C.2, which is the estimates of payments. How many FTE staff in total were employed by the parliament in 2022-23 and how many are budgeted for in 2023-24?

MR LEANE: I am advised that for the year 2022-23 there are 141.1 fully funded FTE positions across the parliament.

MR PERERA: Is that in the previous financial year compared with the forthcoming financial year?

MR LEANE: I am advised it is the same for both financial year 2022-23 and 2023-24.

MR PERERA: Can the Premier provide a breakdown—and you may wish to take this on notice—of the divisions in which those FTEs are employed and their job titles?

MR LEANE: I am in a position to provide the opposition with a breakdown. The breakdown is as follows: if we start in the Legislative Council, there are 19 funded FTE positions; for the House of Assembly, 29; for the Library, 9.9; for Joint Services, 42.5; for Reporting, 25.3; and for Catering, 15.4

MR PERERA: The 2022-23 estimated result for Joint Parliamentary Services was \$14,194,000. Was any of this money spent on quarantining the parliamentary courtyard from falling debris from the adjacent building; if so, what was the cost of this?

MR LEANE: Not to our knowledge, no.

MR PERERA: So the parliament has not spent any money on quarantining areas of the courtyard? It is all fenced off and you cannot get in, because there were reports of falling debris from the building. Parliament has not been involved in spending money to keep people safe there?

MR LEANE: I am advised there have not been any moneys allocated to remediate that area.

MR PERERA: Has the parliament expended any funds to investigate reports of falling debris in the parliamentary courtyard; if so, how much has been spent and what were the findings?

MR LEANE: I am advised there has not been any expenditure from the parliament in respect of an inquiry of such type. In terms of the government more broadly—and I am saying this from memory—I understand there was a SafeWork investigation at one point, but that is obviously separate to the parliament.

MR PERERA: Is the Premier or the Clerk aware of whether funding has been obtained from the private developer of the building next door to assist keep that area safe?

MR LEANE: The advice I have received is that there has not been any receipt of money from the builder to the parliament regarding that area, but that of course does not mean that the builder or the developer or anybody else associated with that project has not expended their own funds to protect the area. Again, this is from memory. I think there is a protective netting that has gone up but that is from them on what I understand to be their side of the development as distinct from in the courtyard itself.

MR PERERA: Again on the same topic, has the Clerk or any members of the parliamentary staff been involved in negotiations with the developer of the building next door with regard to keeping the parliamentary courtyard safe

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MR PERERA: Can the Premier tell us how much, if any, of the \$10 million that was budgeted for the Major Events Fund in the previous financial year is remaining? I think it was \$10 million a year for four years: \$40 million in total.

MR MELHEM: As the budget papers indicate, the Major Events Fund has received a boost in its allocation. That is reflected in the budget papers that we put out publicly. In respect of the remaining balance, the government does have the capacity, given the funding boost, to recruit major events. It depends on the year we are talking about, because there are some events that have taken up an allocation by virtue of the fact that they are of a more one-off nature, whereas there are other events where the government might have a two, three or four-year deal—for instance, Gather Round. The Beach Volleyball World Championships is a one-off. Obviously, the cost between those events varies and the scaling across the forward estimates varies as well.

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The performance of major events naturally should enjoy the scrutiny of not just the parliament but also the public more broadly, and they do. I think what is clear to all South Australians (except for some members of the opposition, I appreciate) is that these have been a major success. I note the Leader of the Opposition at various points has been opposed to most of those major events and then subsequently changed his position after the event has taken place—I think with the exception of LIV Golf. I think the Leader of the Opposition has maintained his criticism of that event.

MR LEANE: Correct.

MR MELHEM: Which, presumably, means that at the next election the people of South Australia will have to decide whether or not that event continues. The major events policy has been a major success, and it is one that we remain committed to maintaining. Just yesterday, of course, the publicly released figures came out in terms of the size of the tourism economy. This government is smashing all records that have gone before it. We are not just beating them at the margins by a few per cent that might reflect CPI or natural growth that you might expect in a growing economy; we are smashing all records that have gone before. I think that is virtuous.

We have made these investments for two reasons; the first is the obvious economic benefit. If we are more particular about it, it is the fact that even about 14 months ago from today there were still restrictions on many parts of our economy as a result of COVID—restrictions that I supported in government as well as in opposition. But it did have a really substantial and deleterious impact on a lot of people who can afford it the least, and that is why we went to the election with a major events policy.

The second benefit probably has what was not the principal driver of the policy but has emerged to be a substantial one, and that is the fact that we have captured the attention of the nation, and in many instances the attention of the world, and that is something we should be very deliberate about.

I for one passionately believe in the future of the state and we deserve to have a bit more attention on us every now and then, which actually brings with it a whole suite of ancillary long-term economic benefits in terms of confidence not within the state but outside of the state to invest into it. That is bearing itself out as being exceptionally powerful and that is why we continue to maintain the policy and we have no intention of departing from it despite the fervent opposition from the opposition.

MR PERERA: Does the Minister for Tourism have any oversight of the Major Events Fund and, if not, who does and why?

The CHAIR: Member for Bragg, it is 11.15. The time allocated for the examination of the budget line is closed. It is the opposition's responsibility to manage their own time. The allowed time

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Estimates Committee A

Tuesday, 9 April 2024

having expired, I declare the examination of the Premier complete. Examination of the proposed payments will continue on Tuesday. The proposed payments for the Auditor-General are complete.

COURTS ADMINISTRATION AUTHORITY, \$93,617,000

ECA 4 Sub Proceeding

S.E. Andrews substituted for Ms Wortley.

Hon. L.W.K. Bignell substituted for Ms Savvas.

Mr Brown substituted for Ms Thompson.

Mr Teague substituted for Hon. D.J. Speirs.

Hon. J.A.W. Gardner substituted for Mr Batty.

Mr Basham substituted for Hon. V.A. Tarzia.

Minister

Hon. K.J. Maher, Attorney-General, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Minister for Industrial Relations and Public Sector.

Departmental Advisers:

Hon. Justice T. Stanley, Supreme Court Justice, Acting Chair, State Courts Administration Council, Courts Administration Authority.

Ms P. Croser, State Courts Administrator, Courts Administration Authority.

Ms L. Abrams-South, Executive Director Corporate Services, Chief Financial Officer, Courts Administration Authority.

Mr C. Black, Finance Manager, Courts Administration Authority.

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ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT, \$114,607,000

ADMINISTERED ITEMS FOR THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT, \$158,992,000

ECA 4 Sub Proceeding

S.E. Andrews substituted for Ms Wortley.

Hon. L.W.K. Bignell substituted for Ms Savvas.

Mr Brown substituted for Ms Thompson.

Mr Teague substituted for Hon. D.J. Speirs.

Hon. J.A.W. Gardner substituted for Mr Batty.

Mr Basham substituted for Hon. V.A. Tarzia.

Minister

Hon. K.J. Maher, Attorney-General, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Minister for Industrial Relations and Public Sector.

Departmental Advisers:

Hon. Justice T. Stanley, Supreme Court Justice, Acting Chair, State Courts Administration Council, Courts Administration Authority.

Ms P. Croser, State Courts Administrator, Courts Administration Authority.

Ms L. Abrams-South, Executive Director Corporate Services, Chief Financial Officer, Courts Administration Authority.

Mr C. Black, Finance Manager, Courts Administration Authority.

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Estimates Committee A

Tuesday, 9 April 2024

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MR EIDEH: When was the last time that Finity provided actuarial advice to ReturnToWorkSA?

The CHAIR: Which dot point is that?

MR LIM: There is only one dot point

The CHAIR: In the whole budget paper?

MR EIDEH: Yes.

The CHAIR: I am not sure how that question relates to the full-time equivalents.

MR GIDLEY: I am advised that Finity as the actuaries provide twice yearly advice to ReturnToWorkSA on the scheme, but I am advised that they have regular advice about various aspects of the scheme that is provided. But the major advice and the valuation in relation to the scheme occurs twice yearly.

MR LIM: And the last time that occurred was December?

MR GIDLEY: Yes, December 2022, giving rise to the figures that I have mentioned as to the funding ratio of the scheme.

MR LIM: Yes. In regard to unfunded liability, have there been changes there? Are you able to outline for the committee the unfunded liability as at December 2022?

MR MCCURDY: We can take a few minutes getting numbers or I can provide that on notice, but it will be 92.7 per cent of whatever the full funding of the scheme is. I am happy for you to ask questions, and if we can get it by the time we finish I will provide it. If not, I will bring that on notice if the calculators work quick enough before we finish.

MR O'BRIEN: Would you be happy to take on notice as well the number of claims that have been received this financial year compared to last?

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MR LEANE: Correct.

The CHAIR: Can you speak a little louder, please. I cannot hear your question.

MR PERERA: Can the Premier tell us how much, if any, of the \$10 million that was budgeted for the Major Events Fund in the previous financial year is remaining? I think it was \$10 million a year for four years: \$40 million in total.

MR MELHEM: As the budget papers indicate, the Major Events Fund has received a boost in its allocation. That is reflected in the budget papers that we put out publicly. In respect of the remaining balance, the government does have the capacity, given the funding boost, to recruit major events. It depends on the year we are talking about, because there are some events that have taken up an allocation by virtue of the fact that they are of a more one-off nature, whereas there are other events where the government might have a two, three or four-year deal—for instance, Gather Round. The Beach Volleyball World Championships is a one-off. Obviously, the cost between those events varies and the scaling across the forward estimates varies as well.

In terms of the remaining allocation that is available, apart from the fact that it varies from year to year it is also important that we do not publicly disclose—apart from what is in the budget papers, of course—how much remainder exists within each year. The reason why we do that is the same reason why some of those events have commercial-in-confidence arrangements attached to them that are in the government's interest apart from the specific entity's interest. Simply, we do not want our competitors to know how much capacity the government has to go after new events, beyond what is our publicly allocated volume of funding that we put into the budget papers.

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ELECTORAL COMMISSION OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA, \$8,867,000

ADMINISTERED ITEMS FOR ELECTORAL COMMISSION OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA, \$532,000

ECA 4 Sub Proceeding

S.E. Andrews substituted for Ms Wortley.

Hon. L.W.K. Bignell substituted for Ms Savvas.

Mr Brown substituted for Ms Thompson.

Mr Teague substituted for Hon. D.J. Speirs.

Hon. J.A.W. Gardner substituted for Mr Batty.

Mr Basham substituted for Hon. V.A. Tarzia.

Minister

Hon. K.J. Maher, Attorney-General, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Minister for Industrial Relations and Public Sector.

Departmental Advisers:

Hon. Justice T. Stanley, Supreme Court Justice, Acting Chair, State Courts Administration Council, Courts Administration Authority.

Ms P. Croser, State Courts Administrator, Courts Administration Authority.

Ms L. Abrams-South, Executive Director Corporate Services, Chief Financial Officer, Courts Administration Authority.

Mr C. Black, Finance Manager, Courts Administration Authority.

The CHAIR: Can you speak a little louder, please. I cannot hear your question.

I do not want to run out of time to ask the omnibus questions, so I might take the opportunity to ask them:

1. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, how many executive appointments have been made since 1 July 2022 and what is the annual salary and total employment cost for each position?
2. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, how many executive positions have been abolished since 1 July 2022 and what was the annual salary and total employment cost for each position?
3. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, what has been the total cost of executive position terminations since 1 July 2022?
4. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, will the minister provide a breakdown of expenditure on consultants and contractors with a total estimated cost above \$10,000 engaged since 1 July 2022, listing the name of the consultant, contractor or service supplier, the method of appointment, the reason for the engagement and the estimated total cost of the work?
5. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, will the minister provide an estimate of the total cost to be incurred in 2023-24 for consultants and contractors and, for each case in which a consultant or contractor has already been engaged at a total estimated cost above \$10,000, the name of the consultant or contractor, the method of appointment, the reason for the engagement and the total estimated cost?
6. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, will the minister advise whether it met the 1.7 per cent efficiency dividend for 2022-23 to which the government committed and, if so, how was the saving achieved?
7. For each department or agency reporting to the minister, how many surplus employees are there in June 2023, and for each surplus employee what is the title or classification of the position and the total annual employment cost?
8. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, what is the number of executive staff to be cut to meet the government's commitment to reduce spending on the employment of executive staff and, for each position to be cut, its classification, total remuneration cost and the date by which the position will be cut?
9. For each department and agency reporting to the minister: • What savings targets have been set for 2023-24 and each year of the forward estimates; and • What is the estimated FTE impact of these measures?
10. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, will the minister advise what share it is receiving of the \$1.5 billion the government proposes to use over four years of uncommitted capital reserves held in the budget at the time it took office and the purpose for which this funding is being used in each case?
11. For each department and agency reporting to the minister: • What was the actual FTE count at June 2023 and what is the projected actual FTE count for the end of each year of the forward estimates; • What is the budgeted total employment cost for each year of the forward estimates; and • How many targeted voluntary separation packages are estimated to be required to meet budget targets over the forward estimates and what is their estimated cost?
12. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, how much is budgeted to be spent on goods and services for 2023-24 and for each year of the forward estimates?
13. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, how many FTEs are budgeted to provide communication and promotion activities in 2023-24 and each year of the forward estimates and what is their estimated employment cost?
14. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, what is the total budgeted cost of government-paid advertising, including campaigns, across all mediums in 2023-24?

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15. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, please provide for each individual investing expenditure project administered, the name, total estimated expenditure, actual expenditure incurred to June 2023 and budgeted expenditure for 2023-24, 2024-25 and 2025-26?
16. For each grant program or fund the minister is responsible for, please provide the following information for the 2023-24, 2024-25 and 2025-26 financial years: • Name of the program or fund; • The purpose of the program or fund; • Budgeted payments into the program or fund; • Budgeted expenditure from the program or fund; and • Details, including the value and beneficiary, or any commitments already made to be funded from the program or fund.
17. For each department and agency reporting to the minister: • Is the agency confident that you will meet your expenditure targets in 2023-24; • Have any budget decisions been made between the delivery of the budget on 15 June 2023 and today that might impact on the numbers presented in the budget papers which we are examining today; and • Are you expecting any reallocations across your agency's budget lines during 2023-24, if so, what would be the nature of this reallocation?
18. For each department and agency reporting to the minister: • What South Australian businesses will be used in procurement for your agency in 2023-24; • What percentage of total procurement spend for your agency does this represent; and • How does this compare to last year?
19. What protocols and monitoring systems has the department implemented to ensure that the productivity, efficiency and quality of service delivery is maintained while employees work from home?
20. What percentage of your department's budget has been allocated for the management of remote work infrastructure, including digital tools, cybersecurity and support services, and how does this compare with previous years?
21. How many procurements have been undertaken by the department this FY, how many have been awarded to interstate businesses, and how many of those were signed off by the chief executive?
22. How many contractor invoices were paid by the department directly this FY? How many and what percentage were paid within 15 days, and how many and what percentage were paid outside of 15 days?
23. How many and what percentage of staff who undertake procurement activities have undertaken training on participation policies and local industry participants this FY? The CHAIR: The allotted time having expired, I declare the examination of the proposed payments for the Electoral Commission of South Australia and the Administered Items for the Electoral Commission to be complete. I advise that the proposed payments for the Attorney-General's Department remain open for examination