

VERIFIED VERSION

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

Inquiry into 2015–16 Financial and Performance Outcomes

Melbourne — 16 February 2017

Members

Mr Danny Pearson — Chair

Ms Sue Pennicuik

Mr David Morris — Deputy Chair

Ms Harriet Shing

Mr Steve Dimopoulos

Mr Tim Smith

Mr Danny O'Brien

Ms Vicki Ward

Witnesses

Mr Chris Eccles, Secretary,

Ms Rebecca Falkingham, Deputy Secretary, Social Policy, Family Violence and Service Delivery Reform,

Mr Simon Phemister, Deputy Secretary, Economic Policy and State Productivity,

Mr Tony Bates, Deputy Secretary, Governance, Policy and Coordination,

Mr Chris Miller, General Counsel, Department of Premier and Cabinet.

The CHAIR — I declare open the public hearings for the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee inquiry into the 2015–16 financial and performance outcomes. All mobile telephones must now be turned to silent. I would like to welcome Mr Chris Eccles, Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet; Ms Rebecca Falkingham, Deputy Secretary, Social Policy, Family Violence and Service Delivery Reform; Mr Simon Phemister, Deputy Secretary, Economic Policy and State Productivity; Mr Tony Bates, deputy Secretary, Governance, Policy and Coordination; and Mr Chris Miller, General Counsel. In the gallery is Ms Susan Middleditch, Executive Director, People, Culture and Operations. Any witness who is called from the gallery during this hearing must clearly state their name, position and relevant department for the record.

All evidence is taken by this committee under the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act, attracts parliamentary privilege and is protected from judicial review. Any comments made outside the hearing, including on social media, are not afforded such privilege. The committee does not require witnesses to be sworn, but questions must be answered fully, accurately and truthfully. Witnesses found to be giving false or misleading evidence may be in contempt of Parliament and subject to penalty.

All evidence given today is being recorded by Hansard. You will be provided with proof versions of the transcript for verification as soon as available. Verified transcripts, any PowerPoint presentations and handouts will be placed on the committee's website as soon as possible.

Witness advisers may approach the table during the hearing to provide information to the witnesses if requested, by leave of myself. However, written communication to witnesses can only be provided via officers of the PAEC secretariat. Members of the public gallery cannot participate in the committee's proceedings in any way.

I will now give the witnesses the opportunity to make a very brief opening statement of no more than 10 minutes, and this will be followed by questions from the committee.

Visual presentation.

Mr ECCLES — Thank you, Chair, and thank you for the opportunity of making the opening presentation. I will indeed be as brief as possible. This is just to remind us all about the core purpose of the Department of Premier and Cabinet, our vision and our objectives.

That slide deals with our structure. I just want to make one supplementary point in relation to the structure, which is that towards the end of June 2016 there were structural changes to ensure DPC could adequately respond to the family violence reform project and deliver the 10-year family violence plan. We formed a new family violence and service delivery reform group, which consolidated all of the family violence response branches into one group to expedite our response to the Royal Commission into Family Violence. The Office of Prevention and Women's Equality was also established at that time to enable the creation of the Victorian gender equality strategy and to lead the development of a prevention strategy for the 10-year plan.

That slide just shows our portfolio of related agencies.

The next slide is just the summary description of our output performance structure. Just now to pause on some of the highlights, without going through all of them, first I just want to pick up the China strategy, the vision being that Victoria becomes China's gateway to Australia, based on the strength of our connections and the depth of our understanding of each other's people, culture and economic needs. The strategy was developed through consultation with stakeholders in Victoria and China. Deeper connections at the government, community, business and individual levels will result in more investment, more jobs and more opportunities for Victorians.

The other one is Service Victoria, which has been established to simplify how Victorians interact with the state government when it comes to basic transactions. In 2015–16 Service Victoria completed its planning phase, which saw it working with users to validate the proposed approach, reduce risk and prepare for its implementation phase in 2016–17, leading to a subsequent allocation of \$81 million in the Victorian budget to further this work. This investment is funding new systems, processes and digital platforms to deliver a better customer experience and tackle the rising costs of providing such services through multiple inefficient platforms.

In relation to the next output group, the highlights, I just want to make mention of the government's immediate response to the Royal Commission into Family Violence. I will not detain the committee with that, because I am sure it will come up through the course of the hearing.

The other couple that I just want to mention include the Aboriginal treaty. DPC organised a number of free and open-to-all community events, forums and publicly accessible resources to facilitate discussion with Aboriginal Victorians about their treaty aspirations. Across the two days of the forum approximately 400 people attended and over 4000 people watched the forum online. There were 267 000 interactions on social media over the week leading up to and during the forum.

I think I should just briefly mention the Anzac centenary. To mark the Anzac centenary, DPC coordinated the development, management and delivery of a range of commemorative events and activities, including the Anzac centenary roadshow and support for the 5000 Poppies project to travel to the Chelsea Flower Show and Western Front.

Finally, there is our work in relation to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex inclusion, and in 2015–16 Victoria's first gender and sexuality commissioner was appointed.

In relation to the next output measure, just a couple of quick points. In 2015–16 more than 35 000 people visited Government House, including 20 000 visitors when the house was open to the public on Australia Day, and in relation to the sometimes neglected Public Record Office Victoria, they had a sterling achievement: approximately 2500 million digital images of public records were digitised from PROV's collection. They were accessed online globally as a result of third-party digitising agreements in place with Family Search.

In the next output group, one highlight is the establishment of Infrastructure Victoria as a statutory authority and the appointment of the board and the chief executive officer. In 2015–16, IV publicly released 12 research and consultation reports contributing to the 30-year infrastructure strategy that was delivered in December 2016.

Just on this chart, which reveals our output performance report, a simple data point — that overall the department fully achieved 84 per cent of its target measures in the context of what was a reasonably challenging environment.

The next slide outlines our full-year budget actuals by output groups.

We then have a brief summary of our key result areas for 2015–16 compared to 2014–15, which is reflected in the annual report, and then the year ahead. These describe some of the initiatives for DPC in 2016–17: once again operationalising the China strategy; administering a grants program to fund small-scale jobs, innovation and economic development projects that support disadvantaged communities; delivering a new whole-of-government service capability through Service Victoria; continuing to support the government's efforts to strengthen integrity and accountability in the public sector; delivering a 10-year family violence plan that will change the way government funds, delivers and evaluates social services; delivering a public sector innovation strategy; seeking to deepen our engagement with Aboriginal communities; preparing for the transition to the NDIS; and contributing to the procurement of a pride centre that will provide a safe place for Victoria's LGBTI communities.

The CHAIR — Thank you, Secretary. I might lead off if I may. Your presentation refers to the Hazelwood mine fire inquiry, and I note that on page 22 of your annual report you also allude to this particular piece of work. I was wondering whether you could advise the committee as to the work that was undertaken by the Department of Premier and Cabinet in 2015–16 in relation to drafting the Victorian government's implementation plan in response to the Hazelwood mine fire.

Mr ECCLES — I might ask the responsible deputy secretary, Mr Bates, to address the question.

Mr BATES — We had a team within DPC who did a lot of support for the reopened inquiry. We had I think three people pretty much working full time on the reopened inquiry during much of 2015–16, so they spent a lot of time in the valley and then a lot of time just working with both DHHS and with other government agencies around reviewing the recommendations and setting up tracking systems to track the government's response to recommendations and the undertakings that had been provided.

I think they are probably the key highlights, Mr Pearson — so three people working pretty much a large part of the year during 2016 with lots of community engagement. They spent a lot of time in the valley talking to community organisations and running public consultation sessions to get the community's feedback into how recommendations were going and what actions were being put in place to monitor and implement them.

The CHAIR — I am assuming it was full-time equivalent positions, the three, so it was three full-time people, or was it three by headcount?

Mr BATES — It was effectively three working full time on the issue.

The CHAIR — So in terms of the 2015–16 year for those three people, what do you think the split roughly might have been between spending time down in the valley talking with local stakeholders who had been impacted by the fire, as opposed to playing more of your traditional coordinating role across government that DPC would traditionally perform?

Mr BATES — The leader of that team, I would have said, for probably six months of the year was spending two days a week in the valley, so she was down there very regularly meeting with local government and with community groups. So the manager would probably have spent 30 to 40 per cent of her time in the valley doing that sort of stuff, with some of the other staff spending more time back in the office doing coordination across different government agencies.

The CHAIR — In terms of some of that community consultation and discussion that occurred, did the team leader bring back any salient points which particularly resonated with the department in terms of the valley's response to Hazelwood, what they hoped for and what their expectations were of the government in the course of the 2015–16 year?

Mr BATES — We did a lot of discussion with particularly Emergency Management Victoria and with the inspector-general of emergency management around how we were collecting information, publishing it and feeding it back to the community. So I think her consultations gave us quite an insight into how the Latrobe Valley community wanted to both be briefed but also understand how we would be tracking and reporting on the remediation actions and undertakings in the future.

Mr ECCLES — Chair, I might just add that the important connection back to the whole of government was through the State Crisis and Resilience Council that I chair, so it was almost a standing item on every meeting of the SCRC that there would be a report back on progress with all Hazelwood matters.

The CHAIR — And in terms of the nature of the work that was undertaken, was it mainly reactive in terms of implementing the plan or was it proactive in the sense of trying to ask how we can ensure this does not occur into the future, do you think?

Mr BATES — I would probably characterise it slightly differently. I think a lot of it was linking, can I say, the bureaucracy in government departments to how they could better consult, share information and get feedback from the community in the valley, so it was almost a bit of a translation exercise to try and make sure that we could clearly have information understandable and readily accessible to the community in the valley, and then feeding back that into both the State Crisis and Resilience Council and the inspector-general of emergency management so that we could, can I say, clearly try and track progress in plain English and make it so that people can have more ready access to understand what actions are progressing and how they are going.

The CHAIR — As a consequence of the work that was undertaken in 2015–16, I am assuming that from the department's perspective that has created some intellectual property that might be able to be utilised in light of more recent events — that is, that in terms of the expenditure that was undertaken in that year, rather than being an exercise which effectively acquitted the plan and therefore, you know, we can just put that off to one side, I am assuming that work that was undertaken by the department has been an investment that can be drawn down in the future.

Mr BATES — Yes. We have captured a lot of the learnings from the community consultation that we did in the valley to both handle when we have got large ongoing recovery situations in other parts of the state, if we have incidents like that, but we have also been able to develop lists of key community leaders that we can also re-use in some of the other issues that the valley is going to be going through over coming times.

The CHAIR — Terrific. Thank you very much for that comprehensive answer.

Mr T. SMITH — Welcome, Secretary. On Tuesday we heard from the Secretary of the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources in relation to the member for Footscray and her ministerial suite at the department. The secretary advised that he was asked by DPC, potentially by the office of the Premier, to find office space for the member for Footscray. So who asked the department of economic development, what was the specific purpose and was no office available for her at DPC?

Mr ECCLES — Thank you for the question, Mr Smith. I am not aware of who in particular asked the question of the economic department to find the accommodation either within the department or within the Premier's private office. I know the request was made; I am not familiar with the individuals who made the request.

Mr T. SMITH — I do not understand why a backbencher gets an office in a ministerial office.

Mr ECCLES — You are asking me to speculate on something that — —

Mr T. SMITH — But it is being funded by DPC.

Mr ECCLES — Well, it is being funded by the Premier's private office, Mr Smith.

Mr T. SMITH — Well, that is DPC.

Mr ECCLES — DPC provides global funding for the Premier's office, so ultimately the source of funding is DPC, but this was an arrangement activated between the Premier's private office on behalf of Ms Thomson with the department. I do not know whether Mr Phemister has any greater detail as to who conducted the actual discussion.

Mr PHEMISTER — No, sorry.

Mr ECCLES — No, so we are not able to provide the name of the individual within DPC or the name of the individual within the Premier's private office.

Mr T. SMITH — So can you give me some advice as to what role the member for Footscray is performing for DPC and how much it is costing?

Mr ECCLES — Well, the role is for the Premier, as the Premier has indicated in Parliament, and I probably have nothing to add to the Premier's commentary in Parliament about the nature of the role being exercised by Ms Thomson. Suffice to say she is an adviser to the Premier in relation to all matters dealing with his international travel responsibilities.

Mr T. SMITH — And what is the expenditure on that?

Mr ECCLES — Regarding the expenditure for Ms Thomson, I understand there has been a request for that information and we are in the process of collating the documentation to respond to that request — it is an FOI request — so I do not have the information.

Mr T. SMITH — So for 2015–16 you cannot tell me today?

Mr ECCLES — No, I cannot.

Mr T. SMITH — Can you take that on notice?

Mr ECCLES — Yes, I will.

Mr T. SMITH — Thank you very much. When was the member for Footscray appointed as a special adviser to the Premier?

Mr ECCLES — I will take that on notice as well, Mr Smith. I do not have the precise date.

Mr T. SMITH — Can you perhaps also shed light on how — you have indicated she has a role with regard to international travel — that is different from what, say, Mr Dalidakis is attempting to achieve overseas?

Mr ECCLES — Ms Thomson is, as the Premier has indicated in the Parliament, an adviser to the Premier. The Premier has a responsibility as the head of government for leading our international engagement, and he has sourced the advice of Ms Thomson to support his international and the government's international agenda.

Mr T. SMITH — So do you provide briefs to her?

Mr ECCLES — As an adviser to the Premier, Ms Thomson is not conferred with independent legal or executive authority. Briefings are provided from DPC to the Premier, and it is then for the Premier to determine whether they are made available to Ms Thomson, so we do not provide advice in the form of briefs directly to the adviser.

Mr T. SMITH — So does she have a minstaff email?

Mr ECCLES — I do not know the answer to that question.

Mr T. SMITH — I think you will find that she does. So what other privileges has she got that other backbenchers do not get?

Mr ECCLES — That is probably not a question where I can shed any light.

Mr T. SMITH — But, Mr Eccles, it is a very strange situation, this, and I am trying to get my head around how a backbencher gets these sorts of privileges that no-one else seems to get.

Mr ECCLES — Again, I refer to the Premier's answer to the questions in Parliament. I cannot add anything further.

Mr T. SMITH — Okay.

Ms WARD — I would like to speak about something that actually does affect people's day-to-day lives in this state, which is around the DPC's annual report on page 12. It is your introduction, I guess, Secretary, where you talk about the Women in Leadership initiative and talk about your support for the commitment to the Male Champions of Change initiative. Can you talk to me about how this is being implemented within your department?

Mr ECCLES — Thank you very much. As you suggest and as my introduction in the annual report indicates, we are taking a lead role in modelling gender equality in the public sector workforce. It includes leading the progressive introduction of gender auditing across Victorian government departments to measure performance in areas such as pay equity, leadership development and mentoring, flexible working and organisational culture; using the outcomes of the gender auditing pilot to guide the development of targets for gender equality in the public sector; monitoring the implementation of all the All Roles Flex policy across the Victorian public service; implementing the Special Minister of State and Victorian Secretaries Board's commitment that, one, all roles across the public service will become flexible and, two, the introduction of a target across the service of appointing at least 50 per cent of women to executive roles. Just a reflection on our performance as a department: there has been a positive and continuing trend in increasing female executive numbers in core DPC. We need to lead by example.

Ms WARD — Have you got that data?

Mr ECCLES — Yes, Ms Ward.

Ms WARD — Thank you.

Mr ECCLES — As of June 2016, women represented 39 per cent of the total executive officer numbers in core DPC, compared to 34 per cent in June 2015. If you will allow me to go beyond the annual report to complete the story, as of December 2016 that number had risen to 49 per cent.

Ms WARD — That is fantastic.

Mr ECCLES — Thank you. Yes, we are very proud of that achievement.

Ms WARD — You should be. So would you consider your department to be leading in this area?

Mr ECCLES — I would not presume to say that we are leading. I think as a collective the secretaries board have a responsibility, if you like, to raise the performance of the sector as a whole. I would say DPC is historically coming off a lower base than some other departments, but we are determined, as are the other secretaries, to improve our performance, and I think that is represented by the achievement of nearly half of our executive workforce being women.

Ms WARD — Terrific; thank you. Regarding the Male Champions of Change, what are the kinds of cultural shifts that you have implemented in your department?

Mr ECCLES — The most important initiative in sponsoring executive leadership of women in the department is to actually understand the conditions that lead to the absence of that leadership, so I initiated a series of workshops with not just executive women but women at all levels to interrogate what it is that they are finding impedes their progress into the executive ranks. And then we calibrated that information with advice from males about their perception of what the impediments were to the representation of women in our executive workforce.

Ms WARD — Did you find discrepancies in their views?

Mr ECCLES — Surprisingly not. There was a common understanding between the two groups as to the factors, some of which go to our recruitment practices — that our recruitment practices unconsciously discriminate against women, and that can be not just as simple as panel representation but also the means by which we go through short-listing and so on.

There was also something that I found really interesting in the younger women, who were not as confident as the younger males in putting forward their proposition for promotion. It is not quite a confidence deficit, because these are very, very confident young women, but it is just their reticence to put themselves into an overt competitive process. The males tended not to have such a problem with putting themselves forward on the basis of their view of their self-worth and relevance for the job. So our responsibility is to shore up the confidence of our young women, to say, 'You have every right to have a crack in the same way that your male counterparts are prepared to have a crack'.

Ms WARD — That is good. So what are the long-term objectives then that are listed in the gender equity strategy?

Mr ECCLES — I might ask Ms Falkingham to help us with that, thank you.

Ms FALKINGHAM — Obviously a lot of work went in over the last 12 months into developing Australia's first gender equality strategy, which is something that our gender equality and prevention team are really, really proud of, working under Minister Richardson's leadership. *Safe and Strong: A Victorian Gender Equality Strategy* aims to build the attitudinal and behavioural changes that we would like to see to not only reduce violence against women and deliver gender equality, but we are focused on four key objectives, which are: Victorians live free from gendered norms, stereotypes and expectations; Victorians are empowered, healthy, safe and strong; as Victorians we value and champion gender equality, which goes to the issues the secretary has just described; and the Victorian government is a leader on gender equality.

We are in the process now of developing a strategy to look at everything, particularly from an economic base, around why gender equality is so important to our state, reviewing the range of existing data sources. We have huge data gaps. When you look at the issues like PAEC, it is very hard to be able to provide the evidence and the case behind why it is so important to bring about the change we need across our entire community. Obviously getting that baseline right is something that we will deliver over the next 12 months, and then setting a complete set of gender equality targets by June 2018. So there is a lot of work to do, and we are working in really close partnership with the community to make sure we get it right.

Ms WARD — Terrific. So how is DPC helping the government to achieve the policy of 50 per cent of representation of women on boards?

Ms FALKINGHAM — The commitment around women on boards was set out by the Premier at the end of March 2015, as you are aware. DPC takes that commitment very seriously. We interrogate every single appointment that comes before cabinet, and we ask the question: if not a woman, why not a woman? Really having that lens in DPC I think has really driven departments to change their approaches to appointments. Also having the right tools in place to work with departments is really critical — that when the first response is, ‘Well, there are no suitable women’, to actually go through and give departments the kind of support they need. Obviously, as the Premier has announced, since the commitment, 51 per cent of all paid appointments between March 2015 and December 2016 are now women, so that is something that we are enormously proud of.

To support the commitment, we do have a new Victorian women-on-boards program, and that is the key to meeting our commitment of ensuring we have a pipeline of talented women ready to go and making sure that they are aware of the opportunities that exist. We found that, talking to a lot of women, they do not know about a lot of the opportunities that come up. We are making sure we have as transparent processes as possible, that as many processes we have around appointments are put out publicly and that we can try and make sure we really lift that number.

Ms WARD — Fantastic. Thank you very much, and thanks for your leadership in this area.

Mr T. SMITH — Just a quick follow-up, and then I will pass to Mr O’Brien— thanks, Chair. Just following on what you were saying before about expenditure for Ms Thomson’s office, if I could just expand that question slightly, particularly in relation to what we discussed last year with the palatial refurb of the Special Minister of State’s office: have there been any other substantial refurbishments of ministerial or parliamentary secretary offices in 2015–16 that you could advise us of?

Mr ECCLES — Not to my knowledge, Mr Smith.

Mr T. SMITH — Could you potentially take that on notice and have a look for us?

Mr ECCLES — Certainly.

Mr T. SMITH — Thank you very much.

Mr D. O’BRIEN — Good morning all. Mr Eccles, you will remember the Trade Union Royal Commission reported in December 2015. I am just wondering what advice or what role DPC had in relation to TURC — whether any officers were monitoring the hearings or the evidence given throughout that process.

Mr ECCLES — Thank you for the question. Not to my knowledge. I am not aware that DPC officers were involved in monitoring the proceedings of the royal commission.

Mr D. O’BRIEN — Did DPC prepare any advice for the Premier or any other parts of government relating to TURC either before or after it reported and also including on the former Government Whip in the upper house, Mr Melhem, or the Premier’s industrial relations adviser, Mr John-Paul Blandthorn?

Mr ECCLES — I am afraid I have no knowledge of that and have no information to answer the question.

Mr D. O’BRIEN — When you say you have no knowledge, no advice was prepared by DPC?

Mr ECCLES — Not to my knowledge.

Mr D. O’BRIEN — Do you know if you or any officers in the department had any conversations with the Premier, the Premier’s office, with Mr Melhem or Mr Blandthorn about these matters?

Mr ECCLES — Again, it is testing my memory, but I do not recall having any conversations with either the Premier or his office around either of those individuals.

Mr D. O’BRIEN — There was obviously significant media pressure around the issue at the time for Mr Melhem in particular and questions over government members’ involvement. So there was no request for advice from DPC on how to handle this?

Mr ECCLES — Again, I can only speak to my knowledge of the issue, and I have no knowledge of that.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — I also want to know if there was any external advice sought by the department, and I take on board that you do not believe there probably was, but for all of those questions where you say 'Not to my knowledge' can I ask you to take them on notice and check whether any of that advice was provided or sought by the department?

Mr ECCLES — I will take that on notice, thank you.

Mr T. SMITH — Secretary, if we could move to the Facebook page of the Premier. In the first eight months of 2015–16 the department paid \$72 000 to promote the Premier's Facebook page. What was the total figure for this reporting period?

Mr ECCLES — I do not know the answer to that question, Mr Smith.

Mr T. SMITH — You do not know the answer?

Mr ECCLES — No, I do not.

Mr T. SMITH — You paid 72 grand for eight months and we want to know how much it was for the full year, so could you come back to us on that?

Mr ECCLES — I will.

Mr T. SMITH — Is that not a bit strange that taxpayers are paying for — —

Ms WARD — Point of order: where are you citing those figures from, Mr Smith?

Mr T. SMITH — The point is — —

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Excuse me, Chair, a member of the committee has asked a valid question. You have got to cite references, and I am asking you, Chair, to ask Mr Smith — —

Mr T. SMITH — It was in the *Australian* on 31 March 2016. How is that?

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Well done. Did that take a lot of effort, Tim?

The CHAIR — Order! You are reporting from a newspaper article in the *Australian* from 30 — —

Mr T. SMITH — 31 March 2016. Do you not think it is bit strange that the taxpayer is paying for something that is overtly political?

Mr ECCLES — Mr Smith, you are asking me to venture an opinion, and I am not sure that my opinion is particularly relevant.

Mr T. SMITH — I disagree. How many likes were generated for the Premier's Facebook page from this paid advertising?

Mr ECCLES — Again, you have me at a disadvantage. I do not know the answer to that question. How many likes, did you say?

Mr T. SMITH — How many likes.

Mr ECCLES — I do not know.

Mr T. SMITH — The Premier is using our money to pay for likes on his Facebook page. I thought it was a reasonable question.

Mr ECCLES — Whether reasonable or not, I still do not know the answer.

Mr T. SMITH — Can you provide the committee with the Facebook advertising records for 2015–16, which includes the campaign, the amount spent and the interaction?

Mr ECCLES — If we have that information, I will make it available to the committee.

Mr T. SMITH — In terms of wider Facebook promotion across the reporting period, are you able to provide the committee with a list of figures for each departmental project paid for another minister which has been subject to the department paying for Facebook promotion?

Mr ECCLES — If that information is available, which I presume is an expansion of your first request, then we will look at that as well.

Mr T. SMITH — Does your department have guidelines with regard to this sort of use of Facebook?

Mr ECCLES — Not on social media. We have no guidelines on social media.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — There are presumably advertising guidelines?

Mr ECCLES — Yes, there are advertising guidelines.

Mr T. SMITH — So who is authorised to promote the Premier's Facebook page?

Mr ECCLES — I would imagine it is the Premier's office.

Mr T. SMITH — It was reported that the departments in the Andrews government spent almost \$800 000 on Facebook advertising in eight months — —

The CHAIR — Order! Mr Smith, is this the same article you are quoting from?

Mr T. SMITH — Yes. What was the total figure for 2015–16?

Mr ECCLES — I will have to come back to you with an answer.

Mr T. SMITH — Can you also provide a breakdown for each agency and department and the costs of Facebook advertising charged to the taxpayer?

Mr ECCLES — If that information is available, I will make it available to the committee.

Mr T. SMITH — Thank you very much.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Just before I go on to my main question, Mr Eccles, good morning.

Mr ECCLES — Good morning.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Good morning, officers. Does the Leader of the Opposition, Matthew Guy, get taxpayer-funded support from DPC in any way, shape or form — him or his office?

Mr ECCLES — The office of the Leader of the Opposition?

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Do you mean in 2015–16?

Mr DIMOPOULOS — In 2015–16. Did it receive funding in 2015–16?

Ms WARD — Or support.

Mr ECCLES — The office of the Leader of the Opposition received support from the DPC appropriation.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Okay. You could probably take this on notice too, but could you tell us whether any of that went to communications, whether it be social media or letters or the old-fashioned postal service for the Leader of the Opposition in 2015–16?

Mr ECCLES — I will certainly take that on notice.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Thanks, Mr Eccles.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Back to the big issues, I just wanted to ask you in relation to your annual report, page 112, you have an infrastructure planning and major projects branch. Major projects, if I may be partisan,

are what this government is characterised by in many respects. In my community we have got level crossing removals. We have got four in my community, nine across that same line. I just want to understand the role. Obviously I know it is a role the Level Crossing Removal Authority essentially have carriage of, but what role does your department play, and that branch perhaps, in the process of procurement in relation to level crossings generally but in my community specifically?

Mr ECCLES — Thank you very much for the question. I will turn to Mr Phemister because the branch falls within his group.

Mr PHEMISTER — Thanks, Mr Dimopoulos, and good morning, committee. Obviously the LXRA form the primary duties around level crossing removals, and they sit under the guidance and leadership of the coordinator-general. What we do in DPC is we will sit across special purpose steering committees for the big infrastructure projects — you mentioned big infrastructure. We are sitting at the moment across Melbourne Metro, western distributor and LXRA. The role we will play with LXRA is twofold. We will play a critical friend role through the governance process, and the primary purpose of that is not to second-guess the engineering of a level crossing removal but to make sure that level crossing removals are undertaken with the broader community and broader transport network in mind. Now the recently created Transport for Victoria has that as a core purpose, but if there is a new school build or perhaps a new civic build just down the road or there is a piece of land that is being developed for a precinct purpose or a particular planning purpose, we will make sure that intelligence is available to the LXRA and we will make sure their planning complements that. Again, Transport for Victoria is responsible for broader network planning, but we see it as our role just to make sure that the guys have double-checked that they have got the broader network and broader community at heart when they are undertaking both their consultations and constructions.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Does that include local government?

Mr PHEMISTER — Sorry?

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Does that stakeholder group — you have got PTV, buses; you have got schools — —

Mr PHEMISTER — Indeed. Mr Dimopoulos, what we do also, the second role, is a quality assurance role, so at all stages of the life cycle of a project right from conceptualisation to designing through development and construction we will check in at major points when major levels are due. So to take your point around consultation, the consultation plan around all 50 level crossings but then down level crossing by level crossing comes through that steering committee, so that is where we get the opportunity to critique the validity of the consultation program. If we see a gap, like local government or like landscape architecture or like one of the bus companies, that is when we will advise the LXRA of a potential shift.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Thank you. My understanding is that the government has completed 10 level crossings and more this year than the whole of the last decade before the Andrews government came to office, so obviously that is a significant agenda of work that has been accomplished. They are my words; you do not have to repeat those words, because they are slightly partisan, but they are the facts. I just want to get a sense from you — and it is an issue that came up in my community as well — about the packaging of these. People will ask, for example: ‘Well, you are doing these four; why not these two that are on another line but are quite close?’. Packaging works is important in terms of achieving efficiencies, speed, a whole range of other things in project delivery but also important in terms of the benefits it may have to freeing up an entire rail line, which is a separate issue altogether — you are in a separate stakeholder group when you are a commuter to when you are a driver trying to cross through a crossing. So I just want to get a sense, if you can give us some more detail, about the packaging of these across Victoria and what you are looking for when you package them.

Mr PHEMISTER — Of course. You have basically hit on our two main criteria: there is cost efficiency and project efficiency. Obviously if there is a team on a level crossing and there is one down the road, the procurement process will tease out if it makes financial sense to package those, but the second point goes to network disruption. As again you pointed out, if the line is to be closed for a particular removal because it requires a particular removal technology or project method, then that will be packaged up with others so that we can minimise disruption to, as you describe, the road and the rail network. They are the two criteria. Of course we are on a learning curve, so what we are seeing with the removals is the first 10 were undertaken really

quickly; the next 11 that are in train now are happening, we feel, at an even faster clip, and we are ever achieving greater financial benefits from packaging because we are learning on the procurement side as well.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — A last, wrap-up question — —

The CHAIR — Briefly.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — The social procurement aspect of this project, I saw basically good intentions and announcements. Have you seen any delivery yet of the social procurement aspects of this project, or when could we see that?

Mr PHEMISTER — One of the benefits of the scale of these infrastructure projects — and this is not just for the level crossing removals but across Melbourne Metro, western distributor, some of the other big road projects — we are seeing is the application of the VIPP. This is the Victorian government's procurement policy basically where we have apprentice targets and we are seeing some really innovative ways of using Aboriginal employment in procurement. We are actually seeing contractors come to us with ideas about social procurement and social opportunities, and they range from demographic groups, employment opportunities for young people or people out of work, right through to how they can engage with the local community while they are undertaking the level crossings. Some of the great stories are we do not only have apprentices on the level crossing removal sites but all the people who are working on those sites are using the local businesses so that local businesses get a kick along as well during the construction process. So there is the formality through the policy, which is being well exercised —

Mr DIMOPOULOS — And the stuff that just happens.

Mr PHEMISTER — and there is the stuff that just happens.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Thanks very much.

Mr T. SMITH — Secretary, last year the estimate for the 2015–16 year for ministerial staff costs was \$26.6 million. What was the actual?

Mr ECCLES — I will see if my colleagues have immediate access to that information. If not, we will need to take it on notice. I do not wish to detain the committee and I do not think we have it to immediate hand.

Mr T. SMITH — On notice is fine. As of 30 June 2016 had the department calculated an estimate of the 2016–17 staff costs?

Mr ECCLES — I am advised that we have included it within the 2016–17 budget.

Mr T. SMITH — Okay. As of June 2015 in the office of the Premier and ministerial offices there were 21 chiefs of staff, six ministerial directors, 175 ministerial staff and zero casual staff. What are the figures as of June 2016?

Mr ECCLES — Again, I will come back to you with that information.

Mr T. SMITH — Could you also itemise, of those numbers, how many are in the office of the Premier?

Secretary, apart from the ministerial staff detailed above, ministers and the member for Footscray, does anyone else have access to a minstaff email address, and if so, for what purpose?

Mr ECCLES — Again, I do not have an immediate answer to that question. If we can source the information, we will provide it.

Mr T. SMITH — Thank you. I am happy to keep going, if you want me to. On 4 August 2015, Secretary, Mr Blandthorn wrote a memo with regard to the behaviour of one Peter Marshall, with regard to the way that he interacted with ministers, members, staff and departments — —

Ms WARD — On a point of order, Chair, can I please ask the member to whom the memo referred was sent? Who was the memo intended for, please?

Mr MORRIS — Chair, on the point of order, the standing practice of this committee and all parliamentary committees is that if someone is asking a question, they have the opportunity to complete the question, in full, and then if there is a point of order, it is taken. But this is a deliberate attempt to interrupt Mr Smith in the course of his asking a question.

The CHAIR — Okay. That is a fair observation, Deputy Chair. Yes, Mr Smith should conclude his question. But one observation I would make, Mr Smith, is that when you are quoting from articles or referring to articles, if you could provide the reference either at the start or at the conclusion of your question, that would probably help the witness.

Mr T. SMITH — This is from the *Herald Sun* of 30 August 2016, referring to a memo by Mr Blandthorn of 4 August 2015 regarding the ongoing dispute with the UFU. In his memo to DPC he says:

You may consider asking Marshall to be more respectful to all ministers, members, staff and departments and to treat them with the respect that he would demand himself ...

My question is: what steps did you take with regard to — —

Mr ECCLES — Can you remind me of the date of the memo?

Mr T. SMITH — It is 4 August 2015 from Mr Blandthorn. In it he says:

You may consider asking Marshall to be more respectful to all ministers, members, staff and departments and to treat them with the respect that he would demand himself ...

Now my question is: what actions did you take to protect your staff from the obvious outrageous sort of behaviour that Mr Marshall had been engaging in?

Ms WARD — Chair, my point of order was just for whom was the memo intended. A memo was created, but who did the memo go to?

Mr D. O'BRIEN — He said — to DPC.

Mr T. SMITH — To DPC. This is public record stuff.

The CHAIR — Ms Ward, I think that was covered in relation to the newspaper article.

Mr ECCLES — I must say you have me at a disadvantage. I was not aware that the memo was provided to DPC. I have not seen that memo.

Mr T. SMITH — You have not seen the memo?

Mr ECCLES — No. Or not to my knowledge.

Mr T. SMITH — So you have not had to take any actions to protect any of your staff from the actions of Mr Marshall at any level?

Mr ECCLES — I have had no cause to, because no-one has raised it with me — no cause to seek to introduce any measures to protect, as you call it, my staff from anyone or from the person you described. No-one has come forward with any — —

Mr T. SMITH — No-one? Not a jot?

Mr ECCLES — Not from my department.

Mr T. SMITH — Okay. Thank you.

Ms PENNICUIK — Thank you, Secretary, and everybody from the department who is attending today. I would like to ask a question about public order and safety that is mentioned in the response from the department to question 5 in the entity-specific questionnaire on page 20. But first I would like to just follow up on your response to Mr Smith's earlier questions about the Premier's Facebook page. So are you confirming, Secretary,

that for the Facebook page the costs of Facebook boosts et cetera and just maintaining the Premier's official Facebook page is paid for by your department?

Mr ECCLES — I actually do not know the answer to that question, and I think it was part of what I was going to bring back to the committee if I could provide further information.

Ms PENNICUIK — Okay. So basically you are going to take it on not notice as to whether it is and by how much it is.

Mr ECCLES — That is correct.

Ms PENNICUIK — Thank you. Just on that, before I go to public safety, the DPC annual report on page 68 lists, right down the bottom under 'Supplies and services', that purchases of services went up from \$32 million in the previous year to \$40 million in the period we are talking about, and IT expenses went up from nearly \$8 million to nearly \$11 million in the period we are talking about — so quite substantial increases. I wonder if you have any information as to why those two items have increased so much.

Mr ECCLES — We are about to get some information that might be able to help you. We might come back in a minute if you want to pursue some other lines of inquiry.

Ms PENNICUIK — Yes, I would. I would like to turn to that question I just mentioned, which is on page 20 of the response to the entity-specific questionnaire, and it is about public order and safety. The initial budget was \$75 million-odd, but only around \$57 million was spent, which was a 23 per cent decline. The explanation for that is:

This is due to underspends across several of DPC's integrity agencies (for example, Freedom of Information Commissioner, Independent Broad-based Anti-Corruption Commission, Victorian Inspectorate, Public Interest Monitor and Local Government Investigations & Compliance Inspectorate).

It is quite a large underspend, an almost 25 per cent underspend, in those integrity agencies. I wonder if you could provide some extra information as to why that is the case. For example, I think everybody around this table would be experienced in applying for FOIs, and members of the public and others as well. It is hard to see how that particular agency could be underspending, but also in terms of the IBAC getting more active, it is hard to understand how that could be underspending, so if you could provide some advice on that.

Mr ECCLES — I will ask Mr Bates to address the question.

Mr BATES — Thanks, Ms Pennicuik. Most of the underspend actually is in IBAC. So as the government went through some of the integrity system reforms, there was a substantial increase to IBAC's budget in 2015–16. They are still basically in the staffing-up mode and still getting to grips with the new referrals that are coming through, so just about all of that underspend was actually within IBAC.

Regarding the other agencies — FOI, inspectorate, public interest — I think there was a small underspend by the Public Interest Monitor, but the vast majority is in IBAC. As the questionnaire says, they have carried most of that funding over into the 2016–17 year.

Again we have got more of the integrity reforms coming through. Mandatory reporting from secretaries of suspected corruption commenced before Christmas, so we expect that we will see an increase in the activity load of IBAC going forward. Yes, it really was just that we probably gave them too much money in 2015–16.

Ms PENNICUIK — Thank you, Mr Bates. My follow-up question was going to be: given the reforms and the recent legislative changes, are you anticipating actually having to increase it more or keep it as it is and see how it goes? What is the plan there?

Mr BATES — The precise level, particularly of IBAC's budget going forward, is subject to the budget deliberation process, so I cannot answer that at the moment, but we are seeing an increase in their workload.

Ms PENNICUIK — Yes, you would think with the legislative changes there would need to be.

Mr ECCLES — If I could just come back to the unanswered part of your question, I am advised that \$6.5 million of the \$8 million related to Service Victoria and the setting up of that particular project. Because

the investment is funding new systems, processes and digital platforms, it has a strong concentration on the information technology side of the business.

Ms PENNICUIK — Okay, thank you.

The CHAIR — Secretary, I want to turn now to Indigenous affairs. At the outset I want to place on record my profound disappointment at the decision of the City of Boroondara to abandon the welcome to country. I think it is an appalling and disgraceful decision. In your presentation you refer to seeking to deepen our engagement with Aboriginal communities, and I was wondering if you could advise the committee what work the department undertook in 2015–16 in relation to developing a treaty with the First Australians in Victoria.

Mr ECCLES — Thanks, Chair. I will ask Ms Falkingham to address the question.

Ms FALKINGHAM — Thank you for the question. As part of the self-determination agenda, between 2015 and 2016 we held three community forums. The Victorian Aboriginal community called for a treaty within that very first forum. In March the government committed to developing a treaty with the Aboriginal community. Between April and May consultations were held in Mildura, Horsham, Shepparton and Bairnsdale, and on 26 and 27 May a statewide Aboriginal forum was held to bring together Victoria's Aboriginal community and agree on a process to determine a self-determination treaty and an Aboriginal representative body.

We also allocated in that financial year \$3.5 million over four years to develop Aboriginal leadership and self-determination, and some of that funding has been spent on the statewide consultations that we have had. It has been very clear through the treaty process that we cannot just have statewide forums. We need to be working with individual communities around what treaties look like. 'Treaty' means different things to different people. To really get a good sense on the ground what local Aboriginal communities are looking for has been really critical, so that work continues.

We had another forum at the end of last year at the convention centre that heard really passionate contributions about what the model for representation should look like. That work will continue this year. We have a treaty working group that is made up of key Aboriginal leaders right across our community, and traditional owners are being represented on that working group. That work will continue throughout this year.

The CHAIR — In terms of 2015–16, was any work undertaken to look at what would be an appropriate mechanism for the treaty? Would you look at having a treaty and then using that as a basis for forming a legislative response in terms of an act of Parliament which would give effect to the treaty, or would you look at some other form of mechanism to give effect to the treaty?

Ms FALKINGHAM — It is a really interesting question. There are lots of models that we have looked at internationally. For example, we had some Canadian representatives come and talk to us about what their representative body looks like. It is fair to say that it is a very mixed kind of view in terms of what the legislation should look like to support the treaty representative body. The community is not in a position yet to say what form they want it to take at this time point in time. We have done a whole body of work that was presented to the Aboriginal community in December around a range of different options, and we can provide that to the committee if that is useful.

The CHAIR — I think that would be interesting. So legislation is one option. Have you got any other thoughts as to what the alternative options might be if you were not to go down the path of legislation?

Ms FALKINGHAM — In terms of what the legislation would look like?

The CHAIR — Let us suppose a treaty is agreed upon between the state of Victoria and the various Indigenous communities in Victoria. Passing legislation to give effect to that treaty would be one option, one mechanism, to give effect to that treaty. If you did not go down the path of legislation, what might be some of the other options available to the state to give effect to that?

Ms FALKINGHAM — Other models look at everything from memorandums of understanding with community to local compacts with communities. I think there is a strong desire to have something at a statewide level through legislation, but as I said, that is what the community still has not told us that they have all agreed on in terms of the direction that they want to take. We have had different kinds of examples in Victoria over the

last three decades around different kinds of agreements we have had with Aboriginal communities. I think the community will be looking for something that is more solid than a funding agreement or a period-of-time agreement. As I said, that is what they are working through now. I would not want to pre-empt that, because we have been really careful about making it clear that it is up to the community to tell us what they would like that representation to look like.

The CHAIR — Thank you.

Mr T. SMITH — If I could clarify, Mr Eccles, you said previously with regard to the memo by Mr Blandthorn that you were not aware of any issues regarding Mr Marshall's conduct with regard to DPC.

Mr ECCLES — If I could just perhaps clarify, I have received no complaint and therefore not activated any response. If I received a complaint, I would activate a response.

Mr T. SMITH — I did not ask if you received a complaint, though. That is not what I was asking. I was asking whether you were aware of those issues. You said you were not, but I find that very hard to believe, given the minister resigned during the reporting period.

Mr ECCLES — Sorry. I was aware generally of the issue because there was media commentary around it. But there is much media commentary around many things.

Mr T. SMITH — I was not really asking about media commentary. I was asking about your role as the secretary of a department that was having negotiations with this individual. From what I am aware of, some of those negotiations became particularly acrimonious, at which your staff were present. I am finding it very hard to believe that you are not aware of this man's behaviour potentially within the confines of your departmental building.

Mr ECCLES — My responsibilities relate to initiating any measures that are required in the event that there is a complaint around particular behaviour that impacts upon their ability to do their job. I received no complaints about the behaviour of the individual, and therefore I was not required to take any response.

Mr T. SMITH — Did you receive — —

Mr MORRIS — Sorry, can I just clarify?

Mr ECCLES — Yes.

Mr MORRIS — Secretary, are you saying if you do not receive a formal complaint, then you have no responsibility to take any action at all?

Mr ECCLES — I did not say a formal complaint, Deputy Chair — a complaint both of a formal and informal nature. I received neither.

Mr T. SMITH — Did you receive a complaint from the minister — the former minister?

Mr ECCLES — I have not received any such complaint.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Secretary, I just want to ask about the department's role in the Back to Work scheme, which I understand is a DTF scheme, but I believe DPC played a small role. Indeed we had evidence to that effect the other day from the DTF. There were documents obtained from the State Revenue Office, detailed minutes of the Back to Work steering committee, which state that the Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry entered into a partnership with the Department of Premier and Cabinet to promote the Back to Work scheme. Could you outline the details of the arrangements of that partnership?

Mr ECCLES — Mr Phemister will be able to help you.

Mr PHEMISTER — Good morning, Mr O'Brien. Thanks for the question. You are very right. The SRO administered the Back to Work scheme, and in the early days we were asked to look at different promotion opportunities around government for Back to Work, so we just put the guys at the SRO in touch with the people in skills, for example, and then — —

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Sorry, just to clarify — asked by the Premier's office or by DTF?

Mr PHEMISTER — It was DTF in this instance, as part of their communications campaign around Back to Work. As part of that we spoke to VECCI about whether or not they could use their networks to promote the Back to Work scheme to make sure that eligible employers were aware of the scheme. In the end we did form a partnership with VECCI, and it was basically around a call-out program to employers. They also used some social media and articles in their kind of standard publications and correspondence; they were not charged as part of the contract. The main contract we struck with VECCI was around call-outs, and they called out to 7500 employers to make sure they were aware of the scheme amongst a few other policies of government, so it was not just a straight expense to Back to Work.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — So it was not only for Back to Work that there was a contract for promotion with VECCI?

Mr PHEMISTER — Indeed, yes.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Was there a financial benefit for either party or an in-kind benefit?

Mr PHEMISTER — No, we struck a contract with VECCI, and it is on our register. So we struck a contract for \$62 700 inclusive of GST and, like I say, I have got the deliverables of the contract here if you want me to go into that.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Yes, I was going to say, what are the measures of success with respect to that contract?

Mr PHEMISTER — Sure. Basically VECCI engaged people to do call-outs, and if we did call-outs, most businesses or some would take our calls; others would not. With VECCI we had a really high response rate. I am sure Mark Stone could go into greater detail if you need me to track it down, but VECCI contacted 7500 employers. They provided a lot of in-kind support that was not charged to the contract, just by promoting the forums, standing VECCI events. They also ran a few articles in the Victorian chamber of business magazine, and they provided a direct link from the VECCI website to the SRO application page, which actually was a pretty hot thing for the Back to Work process.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — What was the success rate then of the contract?

Mr PHEMISTER — I reckon I would have to go back to the statistics to look at causality, so bear with me on causality or coincidence. Once VECCI got involved, Back to Work take-up accelerated.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — That contract, is that publicly available? You mentioned it is on the register, but are the details of it available?

Mr PHEMISTER — It is a commercial contract. I am sure elements would be, and I am more than happy to provide a headline of the contract to the committee.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Could we have that on notice if possible? If there needs to be commercial bits redacted, I would understand that, but if we could. So we had feedback of people being called, and people were actually told, as I understand, 'Don't worry if you don't think you're qualified. We can find all the loopholes and help you get through'. Obviously the intention was to try and get as many people into the system as possible.

Mr PHEMISTER — The intention of the contract was to make sure as many people were aware as possible, and obviously Back to Work was about initial employment. The SRO are ultimately responsible for administering it, so if there were loopholes, speak to the commissioner of the State Revenue Office. It was a pretty rigorous process, and I would be shocked if one of our contracts led to that type of conversation. VECCI actually showed us the call sheet they were using and showed us the commentary they were using, and it was by no means about loopholes and sort of exploiting a line of government funding. It was all about awareness.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Have you heard any similar reports of those sorts of things with respect to loopholes or workarounds? Have you heard any other anecdotal feedback in that respect?

Mr PHEMISTER — It might be a question, Mr O'Brien, for the SRO. My conversations with the SRO were that their system stood up really well. It was a pretty simple process. The eligibility guidelines were pretty

clear, and Mr Broderick from the SRO was pretty clear with us that they had not received any kind of attacks or fraudulent applications halfway through the scheme. I might have to check with him what their total wrap-up was.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Okay. That would be great if you could. Thank you.

Ms WARD — Before I get onto my question regarding prevention of family violence, I just want to follow up from Mr Smith's questioning and assist him. Secretary, could you please also provide the committee with the numbers of opposition staff who were allocated on 1 July 2015 and also again on 30 June 2016? And that would include casual staff. Could you also let us know what the non-staff costs were for the opposition leader's office, please?

Mr ECCLES — I will — —

Ms WARD — I am assuming this is all on notice.

Mr ECCLES — Of course.

Ms WARD — Thank you. Were there any office refurbishments for the opposition in this period? Could you give me the gender breakdowns for the Leader of the Opposition and his office and the opposition offices during this period? And could you also please tell me how many cars from the drivers pool were allocated to the opposition and for whom they were allocated, please?

Now that I have assisted Mr Smith in his queries, I would like to speak to you about prevention of family violence, please, which I consider to be very important. Can I refer you to pages 22, 28 and 29 of the department's annual report, which outlines DPC's role in responding to the family violence royal commission and reforming the approach to family violence prevention? Can you please update me on the actions that have been taken and how successful or not they have been?

Mr ECCLES — Ms Falkingham is leading our effort in that regard.

Ms FALKINGHAM — Can I clarify that you just want a response in relation to prevention rather than the whole family violence package?

Ms WARD — Yes.

Ms FALKINGHAM — Between 2015 and 2016 we had a whole range of prevention programs targeted at both general and risk population groups. Evidence shows us that focusing on workforces, local government and schools are key settings for preventing family violence, and then having an overarching strategy that looks at how we target the general population.

There are four programs we currently lead. The first is our Partners in Prevention program, which is currently led by the Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria, which has met and delivered all of its objectives around how to provide better training to workforces in relation to prevention.

Our workplace equality and respect project, which is currently being led by Our Watch, was in line with the royal commission's recommendation 192 in relation to extending how we actually understand and respond to workplaces and their role in responding to family violence.

We have a workforce development program on gender and disability led by Women with Disabilities Victoria. We have done a lot of work on really understanding how to prevent family violence in relation to diverse communities and developing an intersectionality plan around how to respond to family violence in those communities.

Finally, we have got a local government preventing violence against women program led by the Municipal Association of Victoria.

Minister Richardson has announced that we will be releasing a prevention strategy later this year. That is under extensive consultation at the moment with all of our key prevention partners.

The government also released at the end of last year a major campaign around how we respond to family violence that has also been rolling out in key communities. It is not just a TV campaign; there are key social media and there are lots of resources that go along with the campaign to help schools, communities and workforces — —

Ms WARD — Again, to help Mr Smith, could you talk to us about how that social media is working — how it is targeted, the objectives and why you are using social media?

Ms FALKINGHAM — Yes. I think the commissioner of police might have mentioned to you when he was here earlier in the week that Victoria is taking a very different response to people's, and particularly women's, willingness to come forward and talk about family violence. We think that has a lot to do with how we are using all of the different kinds of advertising communications techniques, and giving people confidence that when they call or they respond on social media or on other platforms that they are going to get the service response they would like to see.

Ms WARD — Social media can actually be a softer way of approaching people and helping people access information.

Ms FALKINGHAM — Absolutely, and building communities of practice. One of the things that the former Australian of the Year who chairs our Victim Survivors' Advisory Council, Rosie Batty, is really keen on is how do you use social media in a much less confrontational way to have communities of practice, to have women be able to feel how in a contained room within social media they can share their story but at the same time get the services and response that they need. So she is auspicing a project for us at the moment that looks at how to use that online platform to really reach out to women, particularly women in diverse communities and help them have that kind of support online.

We have a website now that includes audio insights from victim survivors. If you go to our website now, you will hear that. We did a lot of work with victim survivors and what were the key messages they want the rest of the Victorian community to hear about in terms of having their voices heard. We now also have a subscription across all of the social media platforms where people can get up-to-date information about everything that is going on in our family violence response. That is also about bringing together for the first time in one place all the different services we currently have available at a local level so people can actually just click through. It can be online support, it can be telephonic support and it can be in person support. We are trying to use different platforms of social media to be able to help people respond.

Ms WARD — So there is advertising with the social media, because people would not be able to find it otherwise, I would expect?

Ms FALKINGHAM — Yes, there is. The campaign that was launched earlier this year — the campaign that we referred to — 'There is nothing good about dads who abuse women', has a whole range of different platforms. We do advertise within those platforms, because we think it is really important that a lot of people do not just receive their communication and their messaging through television advertising or even print advertising anymore.

Ms WARD — But even with platforms like Facebook it can be quite a silo of information, so I would think the advertising within that would be quite important?

Ms FALKINGHAM — It is really important, and it is really important that we get the click-throughs to the website, but then also it is about partners in the NGO sector who are delivering those services. We saw a really big spike following on from the launch of the TV advertising. Also, over January we saw spikes — which is the normal time that we generally see them — in family violence incidents, and the number of police going out over that Christmas period is particularly important. We have tried to make the connection. As I said, it is a pretty sophisticated campaign. It is not just relying on one form but also bringing it together. We had Our Watch and the domestic violence resource centre all part of the campaign, which is not something we generally do in building a campaign, so it is owned and managed across the entire family violence service.

Ms WARD — How do you anticipate being able to measure the effectiveness?

Ms FALKINGHAM — That is very important to us, so it goes to a whole range of different ways. It is not only how people see the actual advertising itself, but when they move through the service system, how responsive people are. We have had real principles around person-centred client satisfaction surveys built into them. We are really thinking about how we work with our partners in terms of future contracting, around how people have perceived not only the advertising but, as I said, how they have been serviced as they move through the service system.

Ms WARD — Thank you.

Mr MORRIS — Good morning, Secretary. I am referring to the matter that was referred to the Ombudsman by the Legislative Council on 25 November 2015. I am wondering if you can advise the committee what the total legal costs incurred by the department were in 2015–16 in relation to that matter?

Mr ECCLES — I might ask the general counsel to address that question.

Mr MILLER — To clarify, there obviously have been two proceedings in relation to this matter.

Mr MORRIS — Now a third, but that is outside the scope, yes.

Mr MILLER — And a third proceeding in prospect, before the High Court. What I am happy to volunteer to the committee today is the total costs incurred by the department by way of legal fees up to February, so quite recently. What I do not have before me is the breakdown of costs as at 30 June 2016, but the total costs incurred by the department in relation to these matters — the two proceedings — are \$67 105.03, and those figures are inclusive of GST.

Mr MORRIS — And that figure would represent costs purchased from outside, but I assume it does not include departmental time on it as well?

Mr MILLER — No, those are out-of-pocket external costs, Deputy Chair.

Mr MORRIS — External costs, so department time is extra. Secretary, either for you or for your staff, can you indicate why the Attorney-General was first represented by DPC rather than DJR in this proceeding?

Mr MILLER — I will take that. Thanks, Deputy Chair. Just to clarify, the solicitors on record for the matter are the Victorian Government Solicitor's Office, and VGSO have retained counsel, the Solicitor-General of Victoria, and junior counsel to assist in the matter. The department, at the outset of the matter, provided some support to the Attorney-General in relation to this and continues to provide a very small level of support. The reason for that really surrounds the content of the proceedings. As you might be aware, Deputy Chair, the litigation concerns at its heart the construction of the referral provision, which is contained in the Ombudsman legislation. The department is quite close to that legislation, being the department that supports the special minister in the administration of that legislation, so we bring a particular perspective to the operation of that legislation and the issues that the litigation raises. But in terms of an ongoing role, I think it is fair to say that the department's role in that litigation is fairly minimal. The work has more typically been intensive legal work conducted by the Victorian Government Solicitor's Office and counsel.

Mr MORRIS — Just before I go on, can I go back to my first question then and just clarify whether that \$67 105 — does that amount include VGSO costs, or is that simply counsel?

Mr MILLER — Yes, it does, Deputy Chair.

Mr MORRIS — It does include the VGSO costs, thank you. Again to you, Secretary, will you make all legal advice on the merits of the matter available to the committee?

Mr ECCLES — I would need to take advice as to whether I am able to satisfy that request.

Mr MILLER — I think, Deputy Chair, we will have to take that one on notice. Those might be matters over which the government might wish to make a claim of executive privilege.

Mr MORRIS — Okay. Can I ask you: if the decision is made to refuse access, can you indicate to the committee why that decision was taken?

Mr ECCLES — We will take legal advice on the whole of your question.

Mr MORRIS — Secretary, does it concern you that there may well be a perception that the department is being politicised in prosecuting this case? Because the department is obviously acting on behalf of the government in challenging the Ombudsman's jurisdiction, whereas really those that ought to be challenging the Ombudsman's jurisdiction are the affected members of the Australian Labor Party, the Labor MPs, because after all no minister is being investigated by the Ombudsman; simply members who were MPs at the time and had no ministerial responsibility.

Mr ECCLES — Deputy Chair, I would always be concerned about perceptions or allegation of the politicisation of the department, but the circumstance that you raise is conventional and consistent. We have legal advice about the legitimacy and appropriateness of our role, and therefore that does not invoke a concern around politicisation.

Mr MORRIS — I must say if, as has been argued, there is a need to challenge the Ombudsman's jurisdiction, that is a matter that goes to the powers of the Parliament — and that is what the government has argued — and then surely it should be the Parliament that is prosecuting the case or the advice, going back to the earlier question, at least being available to all members of the Parliament, if it is not political.

Mr ECCLES — I understand the question. I am not sure I can add to my earlier remark, which is we will take advice about appropriateness of providing the committee with the legal advice.

Mr MORRIS — Will you table that advice?

Mr ECCLES — If the legal advice that we receive about whether we are able to provide you with that advice comes back in the affirmative, then we will make it available to the committee.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Secretary, you talked about the China strategy in your presentation, and I know the Premier announced a China strategy in the reporting period; I think it was April. I am just wanting to get a sense about what was done in the 2015–16 financial year in relation to that. What does it entail? What work has been done? It is a pretty important relationship, I imagine.

Mr ECCLES — Indeed, and it is the first such strategy that has been stood up by this government, and the process for its development is as important as its content. So I might ask Mr Phemister to provide you with some information, not just around the content of the strategy and its significance but also the means by which we are able to develop the strategy.

Mr PHEMISTER — Thanks, Mr Dimopoulos. I have actually got the China strategy here. It is something we are pretty proud of as a department and, as the secretary said, the process of developing it was as important for us as the product itself. There are many comparisons around the world. Most jurisdictions now have some sort of China plan, given the scale of the economy and the importance to the global economy. What we did differently, we think, was that we had a really long conversation with our partners in China about what they would like to see in the plan, and we tried to design a plan that was absolutely mutually beneficial. So this is not about how we are going to — and you can read some other jurisdictions' plans, and they are about how that individual jurisdiction is going to make the most of the Chinese economy and drive better economic outcomes for that jurisdiction.

We thought a much more strategic play was to form a broader relationship with China. If you think about the connections Victoria has with China, which are longstanding, it is a genuine partnership. We need that commitment at a people-to-people level rather than just viewing it all as an economic transaction. It goes without saying that the scale of the Chinese economy now is such that small changes to demands coming out of any part of China, let alone the entire country, can have a profound impact on the national economy, let alone the Victorian economy.

Given the service exchange we are experiencing between our two jurisdictions, the process of this plan was even more important. So visitor economy numbers are going through the roof from Chinese visitors. Chinese capital is on the march globally, and Victoria is seen as a really safe destination for Chinese capital. We saw that through the port transaction. We are seeing it through a lot of exchange between Victoria and China, and

obviously the education industry in Victoria is one that is not only, again, based on an economic transaction but based on a genuine commitment to enriching the lives of Victorians and Chinese.

One of the really great parts of the development of the strategy is that our primary partner in Jiangsu, which is our longstanding, 37-year-old sister city — which was an incredibly insightful thing to embark on all those years ago, now joined by Chengdu as a new sister state, or province in their case. One of the lovely things was that our primary partner in drafting this from Jiangsu was somebody who had formed a relationship with our jurisdiction decades ago, spent time here, spent time working here — I am not sure who instigated it — spent time working in our own organisation, and to meet with him and other senior leaders of China whose children or nephews or nieces have had some experience through our education system made for a pretty profound connection in the development of the plan. All of that said — that all sounds very nice — we still do have some pretty hard-edged goals through the strategy, and through the Premier going every year of the term we are creating some pretty deep connections, and all the members of cabinet have obviously been requested to visit over the four years.

We have some outcomes around, as I said, trade, investment, visitors and students, and we are at pains to say that through every one of those transactions we want to see mutual benefit. That is how global trade works, and that is how we believe Victoria is more strategically well placed than other jurisdictions. I could prattle on about this for a while. As I said, we are pretty proud of it, but I might stop.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — That is great. Just a couple of follow-ups. The minister for small business and I think the Premier announced the biggest e-commerce firm globally, Alibaba, coming to Melbourne with the chairman of that company. As an example, I suppose what I want to try to discern if we can — you talked about visitor numbers, you talked about global movement of Chinese capital and then you have got Chinese firms headquartering in Melbourne — is there any way you can say at this point or even in the reporting period that we are bucking or we are above the national average in either Chinese visitor numbers, in companies headquartering here, in student numbers? Or are we heading that way? Somebody — I cannot remember who it was now; Richard Bolt I think it was or one of the secretaries — said that his understanding was that other states have closed some of their offices overseas, and we are actually doing the reverse. I just want to get a sense of: is Victoria different? Is this strategy working?

Mr PHEMISTER — Indeed. The best answer to that can come from some of the ambassadors globally, who talk about the difference Victoria has in global markets. Austrade has the same experience. Victoria is a player in our own right but we are part of ‘Team Australia’ as they say in Austrade, so leveraging off all the federal resources. The difference is quite profound. One of the lead indicators to us is access, so if you look at the access Victorians get when they go overseas compared to some of our other counterparts in other states, because of that on-ground presence — for example, when the Premier was last there the mayor of Beijing opened up an invitation to him.

The headquartering of Alibaba actually came through a personal understanding and connection to Victoria. This is a globally significant firm that really is operating at such a scale that incentives and wooing do not really matter, because everybody wants them and everybody is prepared to chuck resources at them. What mattered was the deep connection we created on the ground through China and the expansion into western China, which is kind of the new frontier of the Chinese economy. The expansion we are seeing there through the relationship with Chengdu and also the opening up of our VGBOs in western China is categorically having a profound impact on access, and the flow-on through trade and investment we think is pretty evident.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — In finishing up, I like the distinction you made about the approach to drafting the strategy. I think that is important, and you would expect with the Victorian history of gold rush and Chinese migration that we would have a level of sophistication when we are framing a trade or a China strategy, rather than just framing it from an Anglo-Australian perspective. So it seems to have worked. Thank you for your answers.

The CHAIR — The Deputy Chair on a point of clarification.

Mr MORRIS — No, no, just a quick question. I think it will be a quick question; it depends on the answer of course. Secretary, I just wanted to ask you about the behavioural intelligence unit, which I understand was set up in March 2016. Can you indicate to the committee its role, its budget, who is heading it up and what the staff complement is?

Mr ECCLES — Certainly can. It falls within Mr Bates's group, so I might ask him to take you through the detail.

Mr BATES — It is a behavioural insights unit, which was set up, as you said, in August last year. It is part of our public sector innovation team. It is using — it is called behavioural economics or behavioural insights or nudge economics — to try and do some of the public sector reform and public sector improvement-type works. I think we have got about 6 staff on the team at the moment. So we have got psychologists, we have got some data scientists — we have got quite a diverse group in there. It is headed up by Sam Hannah-Rankin, the director. Some of the things it has been working on: they have been doing stuff with immunisation, work with DHHS about ways to lift immunisation rates; they have been working with the SRO around ways that you can communicate with people to try and encourage them to pay their taxes on time; they are working with VicRoads also around road safety campaigns and those sorts of messages. So it is trying to take that a lot of that modern psychology-anthropology-economics intersect to just improve both the performance of the public sector and citizens' behaviour and compliance with some of the key health and safety messages that we are trying to get out.

Mr MORRIS — Can we get information, either now or later, on the budget and the cost of the unit?

Mr BATES — Yes.

Mr MORRIS — On notice?

Mr BATES — Yes.

Mr MORRIS — Thank you.

Mr T. SMITH — Mr Eccles, I want to get a better understanding of your role and also your deputy secretary Mr Bates's role during 2015–16, but particularly during April, May and June, with regard to negotiations with the UFU. What role did you have? What role did Mr Bates play in those negotiations?

Mr ECCLES — Yes, certainly. Mr Bates worked with other government officials in relation to the CFA EBA. I also was involved as appropriate, an example of that being the communication to the acting chair of the government's position on the CFA EBA — a personal briefing of the acting chair at the time.

Mr T. SMITH — Who is the chair, sorry?

Mr ECCLES — The acting chair, John Peberdy, at the time. So Mr Bates can speak to his particular involvement, but mine included the example I have just provided. Also, you might be aware of my involvement in facilitating a meeting between the chair and CEO of the CFA with the president of the Fair Work Commission, which was reported last year. So if you would like me to elaborate on that particular aspect of my involvement, I am happy to, but otherwise I can ask Mr Bates.

Mr T. SMITH — I would, and then I would like Mr Bates to pick up after you.

Mr ECCLES — Just to elaborate, it was as part of our ongoing efforts to resolve the issues in relation to the CFA EBA. On 8 June I invited the chair and CEO of the CFA to a meeting with me and the president of the Fair Work Commission. It was an informal discussion of the principal outstanding issues. The invitation was warmly welcomed by the acting chair. That meeting took place on 9 June. The president characterised his involvement in terms of a private discussion where he would make certain propositions directed to the known concerns of the board and management. The president then offered to codify those propositions. Those propositions were codified, the chair welcomed the codification, and those propositions were then provided by me to the chair and the CEO.

Mr T. SMITH — And yet there has been no resolution.

Mr ECCLES — There has been no final resolution of the issue. My involvement was unremarkable in the sense of it being a matter where we were seeking to activate as many initiatives and processes as possible to bring this to a timely resolution.

Mr T. SMITH — But were you ever present at a meeting with Peter Marshall?

Mr ECCLES — No.

Mr T. SMITH — Mr Bates?

Mr BATES — Mr Smith, I was asked by the secretary, I think, in around April of last year to try and pick up the negotiations with the UFU. So I was given a document that was a listing of the outstanding issues between the UFU and CFA that came out of a Fair Work process that had run from probably about November 2015 to January 2016. There was a list of about 35 or so issues, as I recall it, that were still unresolved. So through April I probably had a sequence of, I would say, five or six negotiating sessions with Mr Marshall where we made progress on a number of the issues. At the end of that process there were probably four or five things that we could not get agreement on, and I strongly encouraged Mr Marshall to go back into a Fair Work Commission process. Once I had had that sequence of meetings with Mr Marshall I briefed the then chief executive of the CFA, Ms Nolan. We met on a Saturday afternoon at 1 Treasury Place with Treasury officials and myself for about — —

Mr T. SMITH — When was that?

Mr BATES — I would have to go back and check my diary, but it felt like it would have been the first weekend of April last year. Ms Nolan, I think, had one of her deputy chief fire officers with her, and we ran through a number of the issues with Treasury officials present to help with the costings. I then had a sequence of probably another five or six meetings with CFA and Industrial Relations Victoria over the next few weeks where we tried to again progress the issues, and we eventually ended up back in Fair Work trying to get the commission to help finalise those last issues.

Mr T. SMITH — What were the four or five issues you could not reach agreement on?

Mr BATES — There were the consultant-agreed clauses.

Mr T. SMITH — Which ones?

Mr BATES — There were a number of consultant-agreed causes in the draft agreement. CFA management had actually conceded most of them previously in writing but when we got to the end were trying to withdraw that concession. So there were ranges over consultant-agreed clauses in the agreement. There were 20 or 30 clauses around consultant-agreed. I think probably the other major issues were the powers of the chief fire officer. We also at Fair Work talked a bit about seven on the fireground, so how many trucks would get dispatched to fires, and I think we got a sensible outcome there with some assistance from Fair Work.

Mr T. SMITH — How was Mr Marshall during the negotiations?

The CHAIR — Last question.

Mr BATES — Look, he is an animated character, I would say, at times. Over 25 years — —

Mr T. SMITH — Did you ever — —

The CHAIR — Last question.

Mr T. SMITH — Did you ever feel threatened?

Mr BATES — No. Over 25 years I have been involved in negotiations with health unions, with CPSU and with the Police Association. Mr Marshall's behaviour was, can I say, part of the theatre that I expect in those sorts of negotiations.

Mr T. SMITH — Were you aware — —

The CHAIR — That is enough, Mr Smith. Secretary, I would like to ask you a question. When you were here last year I asked you a question about what the department was doing in terms of providing work experience and internship opportunities for African Australians. You might recall that I have got a very large African Australian community in my electorate, many of whom are trying for their children to get an education and, we hope, to get off welfare, get into work, get out of public housing, do all the things that we hope for any new wave of migration to achieve. I was just wondering whether you could update the committee on what

actions occurred in 2015–16 in terms of trying to foster and encourage those opportunities for African Australians.

Mr ECCLES — I can provide a comprehensive response to that question. The 2016–17 budget allocated \$4.5 million for additional settlement support for people of refugee backgrounds. Many of the initiatives, which include regional support, sports, employment, legal assistance and early childhood programs, will directly support African communities. Within this package one initiative specific to African communities is the South Sudanese partnership fund, which is \$1 million over four years, which will fund the South Sudanese community to develop and implement programs that respond to community priorities.

The multicultural affairs portfolio has also been heavily involved in the implementation of the Jobs Victoria Employment Network to identify and fund employment projects for culturally diverse communities, including African communities. This includes \$4 million over five years from 2015–16 from the multicultural affairs portfolio committed to specifically target disadvantaged jobseekers from culturally diverse backgrounds. Preliminary data indicates that the network has a high proportion of participants from culturally diverse backgrounds, including people of African backgrounds.

The establishment of the African ministerial working group and the development of an African communities action plan is also supported by DPC through the multicultural affairs and social cohesion division. The multicultural affairs portfolio funds scholarships to increase the number of interpreters, including in African languages. In 2016 Somalian Dinka speakers were funded to take a new online course for interpreters.

DPC funds two leadership programs, which build the leadership skills and capacity of both existing and potential leaders from new and emerging communities across Victoria. The African leadership development program, established by the African Think Tank, is funded \$50 000 per annum through the division. The new and emerging community leadership program is funded via an allocation of \$200 000 per annum until 2017–18. The program is delivered in two regional locations each year as well as in Melbourne, and students come from a wide range of communities, including those from Africa. The strategic partnership grants category of the capacity building and participation program provides up to \$230 000 per annum to 14 partnerships across Victoria to support multicultural communities, including refugees and asylum seekers, and to strengthen community harmony, social cohesion and economic outcomes. Partnerships are currently consulting with target communities in their area to assess the needs and develop community action plans in response.

The CHAIR — Order! Secretary, sorry. We are currently inquorate because we do not have five members seated at the table, so could we just pause for a moment?

Quorum formed.

Mr ECCLES — The strategic partnerships grants category of the capacity building and participation program provides up to \$230 000 per annum to 14 partnerships across Victoria to support multicultural communities, including refugees and asylum seekers, and to strengthen community harmony, social cohesion and economic outcomes. Partnerships are currently consulting with target communities in their area to assess their needs and develop community action plans in response. Under the refugee action program, which was incorporated into the strategic partnership grants program in 2016, plans were developed for a range of African communities, including those from Burundi, Congo, Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, the Congolese and Eritrea. The multicultural affairs portfolio also helps communities celebrate and share their cultures with the wider community. Under the 2016–17 multicultural festivals and events program, the government has provided \$240 000 to 43 groups identifying as African for community festivals and events.

The CHAIR — Thank you, Secretary, and I do want to declare my participation on the African ministerial working group as well.

Certainly from what I see in some African-Australian communities there are some differences across gender lines in the sense that a lot of the younger female African Australians are studying and they seem to be performing better academically than their brothers, and boys are sometimes dropping out or they are not as fully engaged in an academic experience. So I am just wondering, from the department's perspective, are you looking at trying to refine strategies in terms of the young African Australian women, providing those work experience/internship opportunities with a focus on graduate entry, for example, and with young African males either encouraging them, if they cannot stay at school for longer and increase their education, and providing

opportunities for pathways into employment or the VET sector as a way of ensuring that they are gainfully employed?

Ms FALKINGHAM — It is something that we are really, really concerned about, and that is why we have an IDC across our economic department, our education department, our Treasury and obviously in DPC and health and human services that is really trying to build intensive programs into the future and looking at everything from what is driving African communities in terms of the education choices they are making to what is preventing them and what are the barriers to employment at the moment. Those differences between genders are of critical importance to us in terms of the gender equality strategy as well.

I think that we mentioned last time we were here that we were just about to embark on a piece of work around looking at unconscious bias in terms of recruitment, particularly looking at African communities and barriers to recruitment at the moment. We have been overwhelmed by the desire from business and from the community sector to be involved in that process. We will be launching later this year a pilot that will run for 18 months that goes to those issues of what are the barriers to keeping people in employment at the moment and attracting more people from diverse communities into the Victorian public service.

In terms of your direct question, as I said, we are trying to bring together all the resources across those five departments to really build the case and the evidence to support how we ensure longer term employment opportunities for particularly African males.

Mr MORRIS — Keeping to the theme, just to follow on a bit, in May 2015 the Minister for Multicultural Affairs announced \$25 million over four years to address social cohesion and community resilience, marginalisation and extremism and a task force to look at ways to combat racism and bigotry with a focus on addressing anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. I am wondering if you can just provide advice to the committee in terms of allocations to the following areas: the cost of the operations of the social cohesion and community resilience task force and of the whole-of-government reference group.

Ms FALKINGHAM — The \$25 million that the government has allocated over four years goes to, obviously, social cohesion but also how we build community resilience. We do have that task force that is chaired by the Deputy Premier that is overseeing that work at the moment. In relation to the specific action, we have the community resilience framework that actually is the guiding document in terms of how we have allocated that \$25 million.

Mr MORRIS — Sorry, I did not quite catch that bit.

Ms FALKINGHAM — The framework is what the government is using to guide the actual allocation of the \$25 million. So far we have had \$3.2 million that has gone into delivering five community support group pilot programs over 12 months. Three of those pilots are in northern and south-eastern areas of Melbourne with a focus on Islamic-inspired extremism, one pilot is focusing on right-wing extremism, and options for the fifth pilot are currently under consideration and will go to the task force shortly. The pilots are being designed to provide trusted, non-punitive pathways to support individuals who may be radicalising towards violent extremism. Obviously that group is heavily advised by Victoria Police.

The task force has also used part of that \$25 million to establish the Research Institute on Social Cohesion as a community of practice comprising academics, researchers, practitioners and government officials. Since we have announced that, over 250 people have actually joined and become members of that institute. We have spent half a million dollars in terms of research grants to be undertaken over the next 12 months, and a second research grant opened in September last year, so a lot of that allocation will also happen in the coming months. Almost \$600 000 has gone into the community resilience round, so 12 projects have been funded so far. We have not released the details of those grants yet publicly, but we will shortly and we will make sure that that is provided to the committee.

Mr MORRIS — Okay. Without going into the detail, can you indicate in terms of the community initiatives or community programs, particularly with regard to emerging violent extremism and the involvement of some youth unfortunately from multicultural backgrounds, what proportion of the \$25 million will go into that area?

Ms FALKINGHAM — My memory is that it is about a quarter, but I will provide you that information.

Mr MORRIS — Yes, if we could just confirm that. Finally, the total cost of the office of the chief resilience officer and the unit. Are you able to provide us with the costs and the KPIs of that unit on notice?

Ms FALKINGHAM — We can provide that to you.

Mr MORRIS — Thank you. How are we going for time?

The CHAIR — You can keep going.

Mr MORRIS — Same subject: there have been some changes to the grants programs for the purposes of multicultural affairs and citizenship. I am just interested now in finding out in terms of grant administration and grant allocation who, first of all, administers the grants and, secondly, who determines who gets what.

Ms FALKINGHAM — Obviously we have the Victorian Multicultural Commission that is tasked and provides advice to government in terms of the allocation of those grants. Each of the grant programs has a different kind of governance model in terms of who is the final authoriser of those grants, which we are happy to provide you.

Mr MORRIS — That would be helpful. While the advice is to government, government is the final arbiter in those things?

Ms FALKINGHAM — Yes. That is always how the VMC has operated in terms of providing independent advice, and it is really important under the act that they continue to provide that advice to us.

Mr MORRIS — Yes, I appreciate that. The other in terms of information for the grants in the 2015–16 year is: can we have a list of the cumulative amount in each category — how much was allocated to which organisation or project and the timing of the application to the announcement?

Ms FALKINGHAM — Absolutely. The only thing I will mention is that in terms of the countering violent extremism grants a lot of it is very, very sensitive information. We are happy to provide you with a separate briefing on the details of those rather than — —

Mr MORRIS — That is fine. I have got one quick one that could be on notice, if that suits you.

The CHAIR — Yes. Go for it.

Mr MORRIS — Just in terms of access to a couple of documents, which may well be theoretically public but have been very difficult to run down is my understanding, one is multicultural and one is not, so I will address my requests to the Secretary. The *LGBTI Inclusion Plan for 2015–16*, can we get a copy of that?

Mr ECCLES — Yes.

Mr MORRIS — The *Cultural Diversity Inclusion Strategy 2015–18*?

Mr ECCLES — Yes.

Mr MORRIS — We can?

Ms WARD — Wouldn't it be 2015–16? Or 2015–18, sorry.

Mr MORRIS — It might be a typo, but I have got 18 here.

Ms WARD — Okay. I suspect it is 16. We are not at 18 yet.

Mr MORRIS — I do not profess any policy expertise in the area. That is not to diminish the importance of the area; I simply do not have that expertise.

Also, with the multicultural media grants program, is it possible to obtain a list of the outlets or organisations which actually receive funding under that program and also those that were unsuccessful.

Mr ECCLES — I can see no problem in providing you with that information.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Secretary, we had a discussion last year, I think, about unconscious bias.

Mr ECCLES — And my answer was entirely unconvincing.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — That is right, it was, and I think the Minister for Multicultural Affairs felt the same. There was no conversation between he and I about that, just the events that followed made me think that. That announcement I think was made in that reporting period — in the 2015–16 year. I just want to find out a bit more about it. The pilot involved yourselves, DTF and some private companies, but I did not really get more of a gist of it from the media. And I have another couple of quick follow-ups after that.

Mr ECCLES — At the risk of further revealing my ignorance on this matter, I thought I would refer to Ms Falkingham.

Ms FALKINGHAM — As I mentioned, the government has launched Recruit Smarter, which is our new pilot around how we address unconscious bias in recruitment practices. As I said, we have been overwhelmed by the number of different companies and community sector businesses that have come forward wanting to be part of the pilot. I do not want to steal the minister's thunder, because he will be announcing it very, very shortly in terms of the partners that are involved in the project. It will run as an 18-month pilot, and what we have had to say to a number of the partners that cannot necessarily be involved in this first pilot is that what we will do is develop best practice guidelines as to how we can take it out across the whole of Victoria. It is also something that we have mentioned to our colleagues in the commonwealth — that they might want to think about how they could draw on the expertise that comes out of this as well.

We have taken our time to get it right. I think we have had examples in the past where we jumped to — that we are going to reduce unconscious bias without having the evidence base to support the type of pilot we want to see. So we have had lots and lots of engagement with multicultural communities themselves to really understand from their perspective what is driving what they see as the bias that is occurring. As I said, the minister is going to release the details later this month, so we will leave it to him to talk about the individual companies we are working with.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Sure. I know there is an announcement on the weekend. I am not sure if that relates to that. From what you can reveal, did I just dream it or did you say 18?

Ms FALKINGHAM — I said an 18-month pilot and 35 participating organisations.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Gee, that is incredible. So 35 predominantly from the private sector?

Ms FALKINGHAM — The private sector but also the community sector as well. We have wanted to have a balance across the entire economy in terms of understanding how and being able to compare and contrast what we are doing in the public service that is different to, for example, one of our major banks that might be one of those partners and understanding that unconscious bias.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Do you know how long the pilot will run for?

Ms FALKINGHAM — Eighteen months.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Sorry, you said that. Apologies. Just off the back of that, the government departments you can tell me at least were DTF and DPC, yes?

Ms FALKINGHAM — Yes.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Just on the back of that and Ms Ward's earlier questions in relation to women on government boards, which obviously I am proud of as well, despite the fact that I am not a woman. I think it is the right thing to do — —

Ms WARD — He is an evolved male.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — I am an evolved male. I think all the talent that exists in the Victorian population should be harnessed for the good of the community. This is just a personal opinion, but I think not just in the last couple of years but for several years now we may have lost a bit of sight of cultural diversity on government

boards. I remember that when I was in the multicultural affairs portfolio there was a target to achieve a certain amount of people who come from diverse backgrounds on government boards. I cannot remember whether it was 5 per cent. I cannot remember what it was, to be honest. I just want to get a sense of the thinking in the reporting period, particularly given that the stuff we are talking about with the pilot is associated, that DPC has done in relation to diversity on government boards. That means diverse women, obviously, as well as men.

Ms FALKINGHAM — I will just mention also that DELWP, DHHS, Victoria Police and the TAC are also involved in the pilot, so it is a fairly comprehensive representation of the public service and the public sector.

In relation to multicultural women in particular being represented on government boards it is our next area of key focus. One of the things that we used to do much better is actually have better data and reporting around multicultural representation on boards. One of the things that Minister Scott is very passionate about is how we make sure that we are applying not only a gender lens but also a multicultural lens.

Even in the work we are doing as part of our core work in DPC, when we are going through the appointment process with cabinet, we are asking those questions, the same as when we ask gender questions at the moment: what is the diversity within that board? We might not have a target yet, and we are obviously looking at what we could do to further support and promote greater diversity of representation. It also comes up in relation to people with disability and in relation to Aboriginal representation as well. So we are trying to build a comprehensive strategy around having greater diversity on boards.

One of our starting points at the moment is working with the Victorian public service commission around how to get that database at the moment, because it has been eroded over a long period of time. There is also the work that we do through the work of the chair of the Victorian Multicultural Commission. She is a great advocate of more women and greater representation of multicultural women on boards, so we are working directly with her as well as looking at what more we can do to support that work.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — I have similar experience in terms of reticence. I have encouraged some women in my community to apply for government boards, with the narrative that we are looking for talent. It is interesting; in their own fields they feel confident, I am sure, in their own relationships and their own professional pillars, but the amount of times they have said to me, ‘Are you sure? Really? What would I be doing applying for a government board?’, whether it be a water board or whatever. These women are professionally accomplished, so it is interesting.

I think similarly it exists within first-generation migrants. There is a reticence. I think basically we need to build confidence. I think part of the confidence — and this is my last question to you — is actually really good role models. To be frank, Helen Kapalos is an excellent role model, but she is also from a community that is well represented in every element of Victorian life, from politics to academia. I think beyond the chair we need some other role models to be promoted, if you could give a thought to that, from the Afghan community to the African community and, as the Chair says, from other communities. I would be interested to see when we are here next year what work has been done to promote those role models from the smaller communities that do not see themselves represented.

Ms FALKINGHAM — One of the things that I think is a really important point — and we look forward to being able to report more progress next year — is that one of the things we are doing is looking at the multicultural policy and the gender equality strategies and the notion of how do you better role model. I also get a lot of women talking to me about that issue in terms of, ‘I’ve not done enough. I’ve not had enough experience’. We are working with senior board chairs around having a spot at the board for an observer, particularly to get younger women seeing what happens on a board and understanding it.

We are also looking at having better training programs. I know one of the barriers for multicultural women is often that the programs we run at the moment around experience on boards are almost week-long intensive programs, so we are working with all the providers to look at better ways of providing training that suits people’s lives. They may not be able to go offline for a week, so how can we have night sessions, build it into Saturdays or do whatever works better for women of different backgrounds?

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Thank you so much.

Mr T. SMITH — If I could return, Mr Bates, to where I was cut off last time, when were you authorised to begin negotiating on behalf of the government?

Mr BATES — From recollection, Mr Smith, it would have been about the first week of April 2016.

Mr T. SMITH — Why did that happen?

Mr BATES — I think the secretary conveyed to me that the negotiations had gotten to a deadlock and were not moving at all, so I was asked if I could try and pick up negotiations and move them to resolve some of the issues and get the process back into the Fair Work Commission.

Mr T. SMITH — Is it rare for essential agencies such as yours to be drafted in?

Mr ECCLES — If I might reflect on that more broadly, it is common for us to be drafted into matters of whole-of-government significance for the state. We have been drafted in to lead the transition process in relation to the NDIS.

Mr T. SMITH — I know, but I am talking about an EB.

Mr ECCLES — We have been drafted to lead the whole-of-government family violence response.

Mr T. SMITH — Mr Eccles, what other EB have you been given charge of negotiating on behalf of the government, your particular department?

Mr ECCLES — I have not been given charge of negotiating any EB, and I do not think Mr Bates was in charge of negotiating. He was one of the team who were assembled for the purpose of this particular activity, and I asked him.

Mr T. SMITH — Who was on that team?

Mr ECCLES — Members of IRV, Industrial Relations Victoria, and individuals who have subject matter expertise. So when an a matter is of significance to the state and significance to the government, it is not unusual for this department to be activated.

Mr T. SMITH — This has not happened in the last two years, but for this time, for an EB?

Mr ECCLES — I think that is probably right. It represents the significance of the matter.

Mr T. SMITH — So you were drafted in in April, Mr Bates, and you said before you met with Lucinda Nolan on a Saturday in April. What differences of opinion did you have with Ms Nolan and the CFA? You indicated you had a difference of opinion with Mr Marshall. What difference of opinion did you have with Ms Nolan?

Mr BATES — I am probably getting close to cabinet advice that both CFA and we were putting to the minister, so I might need to just check. I think basically CFA were keen to reopen and renegotiate a large number of items that had been previously conceded by their negotiating team during 2015, so they wanted to reopen a whole lot of issues, whereas I was probably keener to focus on that list of 35 or so that had come out of the Fair Work process.

Mr T. SMITH — Okay. You said before that Mr Marshall was an animated character, and I accept that you said that you were not and did not feel threatened. But with regards to your observation of an animated character, as it was in 2016, what does that entail? Is it swearing?

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Chair, can I just raise a point of order on this issue? The witness just talked about getting to the area of cabinet in confidence about the content of negotiations. I think, to be frank with you, the flavour of the negotiations as well is actually, for me, just as much a matter of confidence as well — so how people conducted themselves at a negotiating table.

Mr MORRIS — That might be a matter for you, but it is also a matter for the public.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — That is not my view, on a point of order.

Mr T. SMITH — My question stands as put.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — It is not for you for your question to stand. It is for the Chair to rule, Mr Smith.

The CHAIR — Again the secretary might want to add to this. I am conscious that, as I understand it, this EBA has not been resolved yet, so these matters are still live. I do not think a witness saying something which might have a material impact upon those negotiations would be helpful, nor if the question is basically asking the witness to provide a frank character assessment of people who have been involved in that negotiation. If Mr Bates wishes to elaborate further — —

Mr MORRIS — With respect, Chair, it is not up to the committee to be helpful to negotiations. It is a matter of finding out the facts, and that is what we are seeking to do here.

The CHAIR — My point, Deputy Chair, is the fact that the negotiation has not been wrapped up, it has not been resolved, it is still ongoing, and I think it is important that whatever evidence is given here does not detract from that.

Mr MORRIS — I mean, let us be frank. If we come back to this next year, the ruling will be that it happened outside the 2016–17 hearings — ‘It happened in 2015–16, so you cannot talk about it’. It happened in the year under discussion, and we are asking a series of legitimate questions about it.

Mr ECCLES — Chair, if I may, we have been comprehensive in our description of DPC’s involvement in the process to date. It is an ongoing process that has to date involved and will continue to involve cabinet and committees. We have to be extremely vigilant in ensuring that we do not get to the deliberations preceding cabinet discussion, which may indirectly expose cabinet deliberations. So I would ask that the committee is sensitive to that particular constraint.

The CHAIR — Sure.

Mr T. SMITH — My question stands as put. I asked a previous question in regards to Mr Marshall’s behaviour. It was described as animated, and I am pursuing that line of questioning per the answer of my previous questions. It is entirely reasonable.

The CHAIR — I think the witness has answered that question unless he wishes to further elaborate.

Mr BATES — Chair and Mr Smith, I just say that the vast majority of discussions were, I will just call them, normal discussions where we would put different views. Occasionally we would get some animated language but, as I said earlier, it is no different to my experience in negotiating with other union officials over the last 20 years.

Mr T. SMITH — Was any animated language used in the direction of a woman?

Mr BATES — No. Not in — —

Mr T. SMITH — Was there any behaviour that you witnessed that would give rise to a reasonable expectation — accepting your experience in these matters — to someone who perhaps is not as experienced of bullying or unacceptable behaviour?

Mr BATES — Not that I saw, Mr Smith, in my negotiation sessions. In fact it would go the other way that Mr Marshall had some of his industrial officers with him who were female, who would often interject and speak and correct him, and he never reacted in an adverse way — to the point where what I was seeing sort of did not tally with the public persona.

Mr T. SMITH — When you became aware of Mr Blandthorn’s memo, what steps did you take with regards to the people you had been working with to ensure that they had not been exposed to any language that had crossed the line, so to speak?

Mr BATES — I had a limited number of subsequent meetings with Mr Marshall on points of clarification with my staff there, and he never raised his voice or did anything with my staff present.

The CHAIR — Last question.

Mr T. SMITH — Has Peter Marshall ever called you out of hours?

Mr BATES — Yes.

Mr T. SMITH — How late?

Ms WARD — Just to clarify, Mr Bates, with the questioning that you have received from Mr Smith, you were saying that the CFA were wanting to negotiate items which had already been agreed upon, that they were backtracking on items that had already been agreed upon with the agreement. Is that correct?

Mr BATES — Yes. So their negotiating team during 2015 had either conceded some points or in front of the Fair Work Commission, when asked to identify clauses that were still in dispute, they had come up with a list that were in dispute, and when we went back to subsequent processes they then started identifying extra clauses.

Ms WARD — So you actually went backwards.

Mr BATES — Yes.

Ms WARD — Thank you. In regards to the regional partnerships, Secretary — again, sorry, it looks like I might be stalking your introduction to your annual report.

Mr ECCLES — I welcome the stalking.

Ms WARD — On page 11 you talk about the regional partnerships, and you say:

The partnerships will give regional communities a greater say about what matters to them and will ensure their voices reach the heart of government.

With this agreement and the nine regional partnerships that the department has begun, how is that actually occurring?

Mr ECCLES — Mr Phemister is leading our work in that regard.

Mr PHEMISTER — The history of the regional partnerships goes back to the regional statement. There was a recommendation in there and quite an elaboration on the new governance model that has been brought to life through the regional partnerships. These partnerships replaced the previous regional management forums. They were big forums that were consultative and points of discussion for local communities, but they were primarily public servants effectively sitting around a table with the odd invitee.

The regional partnership model — and I will get to your question, which is about how they have an impact — is that public servants are there to facilitate a process. For example, I am the Victorian state government deputy secretarial representative for the Barwon regional partnership. We are there to facilitate the partnerships, but ultimately control has been handed over to the regional partnership. Our chair is a local businesswoman in the Barwon region. The deputy chair is the CEO of Deakin University. They are running the regional partnership, and therein lies the absolute difference of the regional partnership model.

The regional partnerships themselves prepare plans off the back of their regular meetings, their community consultations, but also an annual event where community and stakeholders come together to help test the views of the regional partnerships and ultimately prepare a plan that then gets put to government.

The observation at the forums that ran last year, which I think is the greatest endorsement of these, were some of the regular points of consultation or people who are serial attendees at consultations. They made the observation there were people in the room that they had never seen before from local communities. I picked that up the other day just down in the Latrobe Valley. That was an observation I received, and it was certainly one I received in Barwon.

The product of those forums, as I said, is a plan that is submitted to government through the regional and rural committee, which has a diversity of ministers. Obviously I cannot go into membership of committees. That also finds its way to the heart of the budget process and the policy process. Now we have three ways for those regional partnership views to get to the table at the heart of government decision-making, and this, as outlined in

both the Brumby review that informed the regional statement and the regional statement itself, means there is a distinct regional committee. There is a direct line into the budget process, which is formalised. My colleague from the Department of Treasury and Finance and I make sure that happens through the budget process. Then there is a line of inquiry. For any relevant policy decisions that get taken, we make sure those policy decisions through the policy committees at least accord with the view to the regional partnerships. If they do not, it is a really useful point of inquiry for us.

Ms WARD — What is the process then for the regional partnerships? You have talked about how the process works. When it reports back to government, how do you make sure that that line of communication stays open and that government understands what the regional partnerships want to achieve in their communities?

Mr PHEMISTER — Absolutely. Late last year and early this year regional partnership chairs were invited to come in and speak to ministers directly. There is an ongoing line of communication between the Minister for Regional Development — —

Ms WARD — Who decides who talks to what ministers? Is it based on who the regional partnerships want to talk to?

Mr PHEMISTER — There are two ways. There is a front door through the Minister for Regional Development, who has Regional Development Victoria, who can help triage inquiries and ministers. Obviously there is a lot of local interest through local MPs, and there is a lot of portfolio interest. The formal structure, though, to make sure — and it is the fail-safe — is that there is a regular appointment with a standing group of ministers, where chairs of regional partnerships and their deputies come to present their priorities. That is staged at strategic times during the year to influence both the budget process and key policy cycles, and that gets thoroughly documented.

Ms WARD — What is the process that you have got in place to measure the effectiveness of these partnerships?

Mr PHEMISTER — For every regional partnership we prepare basically an outcomes framework, or our colleagues in public sector reform did. Then regional partnerships have been tailoring those. In Barwon there is a particular set of issues based on the indicators we made available to the partnerships, and we will track those along time. While everyone agrees to the longer term indicators, what we are now looking for are some of the lead indicators that the regional partnership can engage with. That goes to points, to be frank, of community engagement and a few movements. We are not going to see changes in youth suicide rates down in Barwon immediately, so we will look for some leads. All of those regional partnerships are well advanced on tailoring an outcomes framework for their local community.

Ms WARD — Terrific. Thank you.

Mr MORRIS — A different subject, Chair. If I can turn to the issue of family violence, Secretary, the DPC annual report identifies the ministers that are connected with the department, but can I ask you with regard to your role: who do you report to in terms of the prevention of family violence portfolio, the Special Minister of State or the Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence?

Mr ECCLES — The reporting lines are multiple, Deputy Chair. The Premier has a direct and personal interest in it. At the risk of exposing too much, he chairs the relevant committee, and therefore I have a direct relationship with him because of his direct oversight. The Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence has a deep and abiding interest not only in the subject generally but in particular matters related to prevention, so I have a relationship to support her. The Special Minister of State has responsibility for a number of matters associated with family violence that are of a whole-of-government and cross-cutting fashion, whether it is workforce excellence or whether it is the information platform reform. There is no one single answer to your question. It is not a single relationship.

Mr MORRIS — So is the committee you are referring to the Family Violence Steering Committee or the cabinet subcommittee?

Mr ECCLES — There are a number of parts to the architecture. There is a cabinet committee. Again, I am exposing the fact that the Premier has taken such an interest that he chairs that, so I have now trespassed, but I think it is an acceptable trespass. He chairs that committee. Then there is a committee that I also chair, which is the family violence subcommittee of the Victorian Secretaries Board, which was recommended by the royal commission. I might ask Ms Falkingham to talk a bit about the other parts of the infrastructure just to complete your picture.

Ms FALKINGHAM — We have a Family Violence Steering Committee that is co-chaired by Fiona McCormack from Domestic Violence Victoria and me. Currently that has about 30 people represented from peak organisations. We also have victim-survivors represented on that group. We also have the Victim Survivors Advisory Council, as I mentioned earlier, that Rosie Batty chairs, and then we have a whole range of subgroups and working groups underneath that. We also have a whole-of-government IDC to represent, as the secretary has mentioned. There are pretty much very few ministers or departments that do not have a role to play in responding to family violence, so we have cross-representation of all those departments and agencies on that group as well.

Mr MORRIS — Secretary or Ms Falkingham, whoever is appropriate, I understand that of the 227 recommendations from the royal commission the minister for family violence has direct carriage of seven. Can you confirm if that is the case and indicate which those seven are?

Ms FALKINGHAM — Sure, and obviously I support the minister in both her capacity in prevention and also women. The thing about the 227 recommendations is that there is really in most cases not a single minister who is responsible. There are a huge number that are of a whole-of-government nature that the special minister has coordination responsibilities for. In relation to those direct gender equality and women recommendations, there are more than just those direct seven that the Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence has responsibility as co-lead on.

Mr MORRIS — So just in terms of finding out who has responsibility, you mentioned that there are more than seven for Minister Richardson. Is it possible to get a list of who is the lead for each one?

Ms FALKINGHAM — Absolutely. We have a breakdown across all 227 of who is the lead and the co-lead that we have actually shared with the Family Violence Steering Committee, so there will not be an issue in sharing that with this committee.

Mr MORRIS — That would be good. Going to page 12 of the departmental questionnaire, could you advise the committee: excluding the cost of the royal commission, what was the total amount of expenditure in 2015–16 that the Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence had responsibility for?

Mr ECCLES — I am not sure. I do not think we are able to provide that information directly.

Ms FALKINGHAM — We can provide it to you out of session, though.

Mr MORRIS — Thank you. Just moving on if I could to a slightly different subject, page 29 of the annual report refers to the establishment of the Family Violence Steering Committee, and we have already had some discussion about that. I am wondering what discussions the department has had, or the steering committee has had, with regard to a tax or a levy to meet some of the costs of the family violence initiatives.

Mr ECCLES — The committee would not have traversed that particular issue. That would be the responsibility of government more specifically, not the committee.

Mr MORRIS — Has the department done any modelling or given any consideration to — —

Mr ECCLES — We are looking at all options, Deputy Chair, for supporting the investment of government.

Mr MORRIS — And while it is a little bit outside the scope of this hearing, I am just wondering whether there is a time frame on that.

Mr ECCLES — A time frame?

Mr MORRIS — Yes, to come to a conclusion one way or the other on the issue.

Mr ECCLES — The government has given a commitment to release its response in the near future. We have a budget in early May. I would imagine that it will become apparent as part of the announcement of the general investment support for the response to the royal commission.

Mr MORRIS — So you would anticipate that it is in the budget time frame.

The CHAIR — Secretary, if I could come back to your presentation in relation to the DPC output group highlights for 2015–16, you referred to the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan, which occurred in the reporting period. This was obviously an incredibly important event for our veterans and for the state. Could you advise the committee what work was undertaken by your department in terms of the preparation for that celebration?

Mr ECCLES — Mr Phemister will be able to help you.

Mr PHEMISTER — Thanks, Mr Pearson. I am not sure if any members of the committee were able to attend the anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan at the Shrine of Remembrance. It was very touching with the amount of schoolchildren there and the amount of Vietnam veterans there who were actually overcome with emotion during the day. That was certainly expected by the trustees of the shrine, who are deeply connected to the individuals involved, but there were many caught off guard on the day at just how profound the experience was.

The preparations for the Battle of Long Tan were at the Shrine of Remembrance, and there were a whole range of other local community-based events. That was a co-production basically between the shrine and the veterans branch in the Department of Premier and Cabinet under the leadership of the Minister for Veterans. It was a specific idea to hold an event at scale at the shrine specifically for the anniversary of Long Tan through the veterans affairs portfolio.

The work we did was basically ground up. I do not want to claim that the veterans branch did all the leg work. As I said, the shrine were incredible. We had a lot of great support from the department of education, because it was primarily an event geared around Vietnam veterans and helping schoolchildren understand the significance of the Vietnam War, with the Battle of Long Tan being, if you like, the kind of Gallipoli event of the war.

So to answer your question directly, we had a conceptualisation role, we had a logistical role and we had a funding role to support the event, and then we took that role and leadership to other local communities as well.

The CHAIR — What level of engagement over the course of the reporting period did you have with Vietnamese-Australian veterans?

Mr PHEMISTER — They were welcome to march. It was a terrific moment when they came up the hill towards the shrine. Another feature of the day was the diversity of communities involved. Obviously when we reflect on the Vietnam War and the Battle of Long Tan we think about obviously our Australian veterans and the Vietnamese who fought alongside and who obviously were on the other side as well. But what the day really brought home was the diversity of participation both of Australians from diverse backgrounds but also of those from different nationalities who were in some way impacted by the Battle of Long Tan. That was another great takeaway from the day, and it came of course through the ceremonial dress that was evident visually, but it was also profound in terms of the reception that the different groups from the different battalions from Australia but also the Vietnam regiments received on the day.

The CHAIR — Are you proposing to do any other events? Given the fact that I think Australia's involvement ceased in about July 1971, are you looking to any other events to recognise the contributions made by those Australians who served in Vietnam?

Mr PHEMISTER — Yes, absolutely, Mr Pearson. What veterans affairs have successfully done over the last decade, and obviously in partnership with the shrine trustees and the RSLs around the state, is to evolve the narrative of the Australian legacy through different events. Obviously there was a period in Australia's history where the Vietnam War was not celebrated in quite the same way — participation, sorry; not the war at all, but the participation and the legacy of those who served was not celebrated in the same way as the kind of more mystical and long battles in World War I and World War II.

What we are seeing now, through Vietnam, Korea, Iraq and Afghanistan, is an evolution of the consideration and appreciation of veterans — servicemen and women and those affected — by the veterans community and the community at large. So what we are seeing is that once upon a time we had lots of events structured and lots of grant rounds structured around World War I and World War II, and that legacy continues and growth in participation continues in those ceremonies around Australia and the world. What we have seen in the last decade is the growth of legacy and remembrance ceremonies and celebrations for those wars.

The CHAIR — Thank you. Briefly, Secretary, just changing tack slightly, I think if we look back to public administration in the late 19th and early 20th century, assets were built by the state because of market failure, and those assets were physical in nature. I suppose you could look at Sir John Monash's role in the establishment of the State Electricity Commission of Victoria in the 1920s. That was the creation of a physical asset that the state needed to acquire as a result of market failure that ultimately became quite valuable subsequently for future generations.

I am just wondering — and I think we touched upon this when you were last with us, last year — in terms of the reporting period for 2015–16 has your department looked at the way in which information and data collected by government can be harnessed or utilised or collected in order to try and potentially create almost like a 21st-century asset that might be able either to be utilised to deliver public services more efficiently and more effectively but also potentially to be monetised in some other way in the future?

Mr ECCLES — I might ask Mr Bates to have a crack at that.

Mr BATES — Thanks, Chair. We have got a number of initiatives going in that regard. Probably one of the first ones is Service Victoria, which is around trying to move a lot of the admin from being paper based: you have to go into VicRoads outlets to either do your licence renewal or change your rego and those sorts of things. So we have got quite a program going of trying to develop systems where citizens can do a lot of their transactions with government online. That is working away.

Probably the other big one we have got going in DPC is that we have been funded for and are setting up a data insights unit, where we are trying to look at all of the large and diverse data holdings across the government and look at how we can link those in a way that still protects people's privacy but use it to inform policy development and program design. There is a large overlap with Ms Falkingham's family violence thing. There is a strong theme through the family violence royal commission about the data being in silos and the emergency services not being able to get access to the information they need. So we have got a lot of work around cross-linking.

Also we have got a thing called the DataVic policy, which is around making a lot of the data more accessible to the private sector, so there is quite a bit of work going on in terms of getting data to be in an accessible form that can be readily consumed by particularly private sector IT developers. So there is a lot of value we think. You can see the simple examples where we have, out of the transport area over the last 12 months, managed to get a lot of the timetables into electronic form that Google Maps and others have been able to pick up, so we think there is a lot we can do in terms of formatting, processing and making data available that will be helpful to stimulate economic development in the ICT sector.

We will also be doing a bit of looking at some of the more traditional data holdings and seeing if there are players that would be interested in purchasing access to develop new products. I would say that it is not an area that the public sector is traditionally great on, in terms of looking through these very large data holdings that we have and figuring out how to make them accessible to the public or to generate some rate of return that helps offset the cost of the systems. So we have got a sort of multitier strategy going in that space.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Can I just go to some Aboriginal affairs matters. Secretary, can you tell me: does the department or the minister receive annual reporting on the financial records for the Framlingham Aboriginal Trust?

Mr ECCLES — Ms Falkingham will be able to assist.

Ms FALKINGHAM — Yes, we do.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Are those records publicly available?

Ms FALKINGHAM — Not as a matter of course, but we are quite happy to see what we can make available to you.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — I understand, I think under the Aboriginal Lands Act, that these balance sheets and profit and loss should be available to anyone who wants to see them, so they can be tabled. Can they be made publicly available or — —

Ms FALKINGHAM — Sorry, for what time period? For 2015–16?

Mr D. O'BRIEN — For the purposes of this, yes, 2015–16.

Ms FALKINGHAM — Yes, we can do that.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Could you also tell me where the state government funding for the trust is in the 2015–16 budget papers, if you have got it there? Is it a specific line item?

Ms FALKINGHAM — I will have to take that on notice. I do not think we separate out by line item, but I am happy to check.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Okay. The department presumably is aware that the current chair of Framlingham is an undischarged bankrupt. Was the department aware of that?

Ms FALKINGHAM — Sorry, can you repeat that?

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Is the department aware that the current chair of the Framlingham Aboriginal Trust is an undischarged bankrupt?

Ms FALKINGHAM — Yes, we are aware of that.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Is it possible that a person in such a situation can be chair of a committee of management?

Ms FALKINGHAM — Yes, that is correct. Sorry, he is not currently. I will not get into the details — I am happy to take that on notice — but my understanding is he is not currently bankrupt.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — I do understand from a report from 2012 that the current chair's bankruptcy was extended by a period of five years, which would cover up to now.

Ms FALKINGHAM — That matter is still before the High Court, which is why we are in this situation, but I am happy to provide you with some additional information.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Are there currently court proceedings as to what that status is with respect to his bankruptcy?

Ms FALKINGHAM — I will double-check, but that is my understanding.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Is that the reason why he has been allowed to remain in that position, even though the act specifically prohibits someone from being a bankrupt?

Ms FALKINGHAM — I will take that on notice and come back to you.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — There have obviously been some other allegations of improperly obtained shares with respect to the Framlingham trust, and there were questions raised in the past about financial management, including a reference to \$670 000 in possible anomalies. What action is the department and the government taking to ensure that taxpayers funds are being protected with respect to this particular trust?

Ms FALKINGHAM — That is a matter that the minister takes very, very seriously, so there are some ongoing investigations into that matter, which I cannot speak about today, but I am happy to provide you what we can on notice.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — The minister said last year that she was very concerned about Mr Clark's appointment to the board and the department was reviewing funding provided to the Framlingham trust to ensure full transparency. Has there been a review undertaken of his position and also of the finances with respect to Framlingham?

Ms FALKINGHAM — There are ongoing reviews in relation to the finances of Framlingham, yes.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Sorry, there is an ongoing review?

Ms FALKINGHAM — There are ongoing reviews in relation to Framlingham.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Can you tell me the status of that, when we are likely to see an outcome?

Ms FALKINGHAM — That will be a matter for when we report finally to the minister on those matters, whether she makes those matters publicly available.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Has there been any evidence, therefore, that state funding has been misused or misappropriated so far?

Ms FALKINGHAM — I have not been aware of any evidence to say that they currently are being misused, but as I said that review is still underway, so until I receive that final report I am not willing to say whether it is accurate or not.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Are you able to tell me how much state government funding goes to the trust?

Ms FALKINGHAM — Again I am happy to take that on notice for you.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — If you could provide that information as well, that would be good. The minister has the ability to appoint an administrator. Has there been any discussion with respect to that?

Ms FALKINGHAM — Yes, there has been.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — No decision has been taken at this stage?

Ms FALKINGHAM — Not at this stage, no.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — I will move on to another matter. There were 79 recommendations in the *Always Was, Always Will Be Koori Children* report. How many of those have been adopted in full?

Ms FALKINGHAM — Most of those matters fall within the responsibility of the secretaries of the Department of Health and Human Services and of the Department of Justice and Regulation, but I am happy to provide you the details of the recommendations that DPC has responsibility for.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — But from a whole-of-government perspective I understand you have a fairly intimate involvement in the implementation of this particular report.

Ms FALKINGHAM — In terms of this particular report the Department of Health and Human Services has lead responsibility for implementation.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Are you able to answer the question from a whole-of-government perspective: how many of the 79 recommendations have been adopted in full?

Ms FALKINGHAM — We will take that on notice.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Thank you. Again you may need to take this on notice, but could you provide an example of any recommendations that were only accepted in part or that were rejected and why this was the case?

Ms FALKINGHAM — Yes, happy to do that.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Secretary, I just want to talk to you about population growth and also assist Mr Smith in his shadow ministerial responsibilities. This reporting period, 2015–16, saw major transport

announcements and saw the creation of a new portfolio of suburban development. I believe that Melbourne is considered to have the fastest outer suburban growth of any state or territory, or second fastest perhaps of any state or territory in Australia. Page 112 of your annual report again talks about the infrastructure, planning and major projects branch, which I gather now comes under the capable deputy secretary.

We talked earlier about the level crossing project and the whole-of-planning approach that your department takes in its role in advising on that project. We have got, for example, the Mernda rail extension and a whole range of other things to support suburban growth. What work did your department do in 2015–16 to support a strategic planning approach to Melbourne and Victoria's population growth?

Mr ECCLES — I might start by referring to the work of Infrastructure Victoria, because the 30-year strategy has as one of its key recommendations the need to address infrastructure demands in areas with high population growth — that is, both greenfields, established areas and also our regional cities. We are at the moment recognising the importance that Infrastructure Victoria placed on that as a priority need for our infrastructure investment. We are paying active consideration to that in preparing our response to that particular recommendation, so there will be a focus for the government's agenda through its response to the report which will be due out later this year. But at the next level, I might ask Mr Phemister to take up where I have left off.

Mr PHEMISTER — Obviously population growth is a good sign for us. We are I think experiencing net positive interstate migration and obviously net positive international migration, and we are indeed the fastest growing jurisdiction in Australia. Projections are — and these are very public numbers — out to 2051, if you believe some statisticians, and earlier than that if you believe others, that based on the current trajectory Melbourne will be Australia's biggest city. If you think about the growth opportunities at the fringes of Melbourne, which as far as we can tell do not exist elsewhere in the world — and again this was planned many years ago when these areas were quarantined — —

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Can you repeat that last bit again?

Mr PHEMISTER — We have some growth opportunities at our city's fringe, and these opportunities were created years ago by someone with the good foresight to quarantine areas like Fishermans Bend, which has the capacity to take up 80 000 residents.

I am starting in Melbourne. I can go to suburbs and then regional and rural communities. If you think about Sydney by comparison — and we often do, even though there are probably better examples and analogies for us around the world — the Barangaroo precinct in Sydney is a significant at-scale development and opportunity for growth near the CBD. It is dwarfed by the opportunities at Fishermans Bend alone. If you consider Fishermans Bend alongside potential at E-gate, alongside the development that is unlocked through the station blocks in Arden-Macaulay, Melbourne has I believe unparalleled opportunities to absorb growth, which obviously sits at the heart of our economic growth as well.

The benefits of the work that Infrastructure Victoria have done go to the heart of your question because, yes, there has been a history of Mernda line extension-like projects and these things are ongoing and required every year — not just for population growth but to service existing communities. Obviously with \$7 billion to \$9 billion of infrastructure going out the door every year at the moment there is quite a lot of work in that space.

What we have found through Infrastructure Victoria work — and the most profound recommendation I think — is a non-build first response to population growth. So the submissions to IV were really interesting: people conceptualising growth as us kind of literally doubling our infrastructure. But obviously over the years that has not been the case. We have experienced profound efficiencies through existing infrastructure. If you think about the port alone, the efficiencies that can be derived through our port will take us forward for decades, if not a generation, without the need to kind of expand or duplicate — sorry, we do not need to duplicate; definitely expand.

The creation of the suburban development portfolio for us complements the regional development portfolio that is working well in regional communities. Again, it is not just about the hard infrastructure; it is about soft infrastructure. It is about projecting growth and having insight into education, health and human services, and really, at the heart of it, it is about citizens getting access to better services and more amenity. There are many dimensions to that, be it travel times, be it access to schools, GPs, green space et cetera. But the benefit of the suburban development portfolio for us lies in the benefit of the regional development portfolio, which is to say it

takes a program and portfolio-agnostic view to the utility and lives of those people that are covered by the geography. That is our hope for suburban development — and the answer I blurted out before to Ms Ward about regional partnerships we will now be rolling into metropolitan partnerships, and the suburban development portfolio has carriage of that.

Ms WARD — Thank you. On page 112 of your annual report you talk about a coordinated policy approach and working closely with DTF, DEDJTR and DELWP. How does that process work? How are you able to work with those three portfolio areas, and who has overriding oversight?

Mr PHEMISTER — Sorry, Ms Ward — I have got the annual report — in respect to?

Ms WARD — Major projects.

Mr PHEMISTER — Of course, yes.

Ms WARD — Sorry. I am following on from Steve's question.

Mr PHEMISTER — Of course, and the secretary might like to go with that.

Mr ECCLES — The overall coordination of major projects is auspiced through the infrastructure coordination committee, which is an IDC comprising the secretaries of all relevant departments that I chair. We realised early on the need for there to be maximum coordination between departments to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of our infrastructure investment, and we stood up that coordination committee almost from the get-go.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Just quickly, where does suburban development, Minister D'Ambrosio's portfolio, sit?

Mr PHEMISTER — In DELWP.

Mr MORRIS — I will just ask a couple of quick questions, and then I will pass to Mr Smith, if I may.

The CHAIR — Four minutes.

Mr MORRIS — I am just interested in continuing the Aboriginal affairs theme of Mr O'Brien. I am just wondering whether the position of director, treaty, has been filled?

Ms FALKINGHAM — We have ongoing vacancies at the moment, so our director position is actually about community strengthening, that is currently vacant. Is that the position that you are referring to?

Mr MORRIS — I believe so, yes.

Ms FALKINGHAM — That is currently vacant.

Mr ECCLES — While on that and without wanting to interrupt the proceedings, I just think it is important that in the interests of full disclosure I provide information to the committee that the chair of Framlingham is not currently bankrupt.

Mr T. SMITH — My question is again to Mr Bates. I just want to clarify: what was the first date you met Peter Marshall?

Mr BATES — I would have to check, but I think it would have been around 28 March or 1 April 2016. That was the first time I ever met him — and I would have to check. It was around that week.

Mr T. SMITH — So I just want to get one thing straight in my mind. By the end of 2015 the government's policy was to roll over the 2010 agreement. So what sparked a different view in DPC, and why did you then begin negotiating directly with the UFU outside the scope of the then minister and the CFA?

Mr ECCLES — Our view is not relevant in this context. We are responding to the government's initiative in this respect.

Mr T. SMITH — So you were directed by the Premier to negotiate outside the scope of the CFA and the then minister directly with the UFU?

Mr ECCLES — We were not directed by anyone. We were — —

Mr T. SMITH — So why were — —

Mr ECCLES — Well, we were — —

Mr T. SMITH — I am not asking your view. There was a policy; it changed. I am trying to piece together the 2015–16 year with regard to this dispute.

Mr ECCLES — Given the nature of the dispute and its ongoing character, it was appropriate that DPC and in particular Mr Bates, given his experience, would seek to move the issue along.

Mr T. SMITH — But you are negotiating with the UFU without CFA and the minister being present.

Mr BATES — Yes, that was what was happening, Mr Smith. The talks had broken down, and the aim was to try and move some of the issues forward and get everyone back into the Fair Work Commission, which is what we did.

Mr T. SMITH — What I am trying to get at is: there was a policy in 2015 — —

The CHAIR — Last question.

Mr T. SMITH — Well, it is the same question. There was a policy in 2015. Something changed at the start of 2016.

Mr BATES — I only joined the department in March last year, Mr Smith, so I was not privy to any of the previous decisions.

Mr T. SMITH — Mr Eccles, if you could perhaps?

Mr ECCLES — There comes a point in every matter where intervention is required to resolve an impasse. That point was arrived at, and we activated Mr Bates to assist us in seeking to resolve the impasse.

The CHAIR — I would like to thank the witnesses for their attendance. There were a series of questions that were taken on notice. My last count was 36, but I think there might have been some subsets to some of those questions, so good luck to Hansard and the secretariat trying to sift through all those! I would like to thank the witnesses for their attendance. The committee will follow up on any questions taken on notice in writing. A written response will be provided within 10 business days of that request.

Committee adjourned.