

TRANSCRIPT

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

Inquiry into 2016–17 financial and performance outcomes

Melbourne — 15 February 2018

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

Ms Fiona Patten

Witnesses

Mr Chris Eccles, Secretary,

Ms Rebecca Falkingham, Deputy Secretary, Social Policy,

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

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

Ms Monique Adofaci, Acting General Counsel,

Mr David Butler, Acting Executive Director, Governance Policy and Coordination, and

Mr Joseph Yeung, Chief Financial Officer, Governance Policy and Coordination,

Department of Premier and Cabinet.

The CHAIR — I declare open the public hearings for the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee inquiry into the 2016–17 financial and performance outcomes. All mobile telephones should now be turned to silent.

I would like to welcome the Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet, Mr Chris Eccles; Ms Rebecca Falkingham, Deputy Secretary, Social Policy and Service Delivery Reform; Mr Simon Phemister, Deputy Secretary, Economic Policy and State Productivity; Mr Tony Bates, Deputy Secretary, Governance Policy and Coordination; and Ms Monique Adofaci, Acting General Counsel.

I would also like to welcome all witnesses sitting in the gallery: Mr David Butler, Acting Executive Director, Governance Policy and Coordination; and Mr Joseph Yeung, Chief Financial Officer, Governance Policy and Coordination. 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 and 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.

Members of the media must remain focused only on the persons speaking. Any filming and recording must cease immediately at the completion of the hearing.

I now give the witness the opportunity to make a very brief opening statement of no more than 10 minutes. This will be followed by questions from the committee. Secretary?

Visual presentation

Mr ECCLES — Thank you, Chair, for the opportunity to make an opening presentation. The Department of Premier and Cabinet continues to lead the public service in delivering public value, supporting delivery of the government's agenda and stewardship of the public interest. I am pleased to be able to report on the department's activities during the 2016–17 financial year.

As my comments in the annual report note, over the past year I have challenged my department to double down on the public service mandate, which is to uphold integrity, act with purpose and remain uncompromising in the delivery of robust, high-quality service and advice. The result has been a number of outstanding achievements throughout 2016–17 spanning the full suite of the department's objectives, which are outlined on this slide, as we work to achieve DPC's vision to be recognised and a respected leader in whole-of-government policy and performance.

The next slide deals with our structure. It should be noted that the family violence and service delivery reform group, which supported the whole-of-government family violence reforms, was removed from DPC's structure on 1 July 2017 due to the establishment of Family Safe Victoria.

This slide details DPC's portfolio of related agencies. The Latrobe Valley Authority is an addition since we last met, having been established in November 2016 to support workers and their families impacted by the closure of the Hazelwood power station and mine to secure the economic future of the Latrobe Valley and to support community-building investments and activities.

This slide provides an overview of DPC's output performance structure. I would like to highlight just a few of our many achievements from this past year which have contributed to DPC's performance.

Service Victoria: the department has led reforms in the transformation of service delivery and is reforming the way that government does business and interacts with citizens.

The commencement of the national disability insurance scheme in Victoria: the rollout started in the north-east end of Melbourne on 1 July 2016 and is being rolled out across Victoria over a three-year period.

We had the launch of *Absolutely Everyone — The State Disability Plan for 2017–20* in December 2016, which came into effect on 1 January 2017. This is the state's third disability plan, and it seeks to improve outcomes for all 1.1 million Victorians with disabilities, including the 105 000 Victorians expected to be eligible for NDIS individualised supports. The plan sets out a vision for an inclusive Victoria which supports people with a disability to live satisfying everyday lives based on 10 key principles and 27 actions across communities — health, housing and wellbeing, fairness and safety and contributing lives.

The highlights of the strong policy outcome output included the release of *Ending Family Violence: Victoria's Plan for Change*, which outlines the implementation approach for all 227 recommendations of the Royal Commission into Family Violence over the next 10 years.

It is appropriate to pause at this point to recognise the passing of Minister Fiona Richardson, Australia's first Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence. Minister Richardson was a DPC minister for 2016–17. Those that had the opportunity to work with her saw a woman who was compassionate, formidable and deeply committed to empowering victim survivors of family violence. We are deeply saddened by her passing and are committed to continuing her extraordinary legacy.

The Premier's Jobs and Investment Panel focused its collective effort on boosting the Victorian economy in 2016–17, supported by my department and in collaboration with industry and the community. The panel conducted a public consultation on the Victorian workforce, digital transformation and disruption, amongst other things.

Victorian. And Proud of It — an important policy statement which draws on Victoria's immigrant past and maps out our multicultural future. This program celebrates the shared values that unite all Victorians and encourages all Victorians to contribute and belong. This campaign went right across Victoria with an interactive exhibition that showcased stories of Victorians living by our shared values and making their contribution to our community.

In early 2017 DPC launched a new flexible work arrangements policy, All Roles Flex, where all jobs can be worked flexibly. This was done in recognition of the value of a diverse workforce and empowers its people to balance work and life priorities. I am pleased to report on the success of its implementation, with results from our 2017 People Matter survey revealing that 56 per cent of DPC employees who responded to the survey had taken up flexible work arrangements and 94 per cent were aware of the organisation's policies and procedures on flexible work arrangements.

This chart reveals our output performance. Overall we achieved 72 per cent of targets. One measure was not able to be reported on, which related to the proportion of LGBTI grant program recipients who meet or exceed grant outcomes. This was because the grant application, assessment and awarding process has only recently been completed. This slide outlines our full-year budget actuals by output groups.

I conclude on this slide, which outlines the key financial results of 2016–17 compared to 2015–16 and provides a summary of DPC's audited financial position for 2016–17 as reported in the department's annual report. The increase in income from government and the increase in expenses from transactions in 2016–17 relate to the full-year impact of significant new initiatives assumed by DPC, including prevention of family violence, the national disability insurance scheme reform, work on multicultural affairs and social cohesion initiatives and work carried out by the Latrobe Valley Authority.

Separately, the increase in total assets is mainly due to valuation gains recorded in DPC's land, buildings and cultural assets. Thank you, Chair.

The CHAIR — Thank you, Secretary. We might commence with Ms Ward.

Ms WARD — Thank you very much for your words about Fiona Richardson. We really appreciate it. With that in mind, I would not mind referring you on to prevention of family violence. Can I ask you to go, please, to page 30 of your annual report under:

Number of meetings, forums and events held for Women and Prevention of Family Violence consultation/engagement with key stakeholders

The target there was ambitious, and it seems to have gone down pretty well — very well, I would say. Could you, please, talk us through how that engagement has occurred, the target that you had set, how you have obviously exceeded it and how that happened?

Mr ECCLES — Thank you for the question. I might ask Ms Falkingham to take us through the answer.

Ms SHING — Just for the purposes of all witnesses appearing today, too, can you bring the microphones quite close to your mouths? We have got some acoustic trickery in this room that often makes it difficult for us to hear over the air conditioner and the ceilings. That would be wonderful if you could. Thanks.

Ms FALKINGHAM — No worries. Thank you for the question. I should just also echo the secretary's comments. For those of us that worked really closely with Fiona, she never let us forget how important prevention was, and it would be the centrepiece of everything we would do in family violence into the future.

As you are aware, the Royal Commission into Family Violence called for a significant effort and investment to build a future where all Victorians live free from family violence and where women and men are treated equally and respectfully. Immediately following the royal commission's release the government committed to a significant reform agenda that you are aware of, an implementation of all recommendations of the royal commission and a number of significant prevention recommendations. In undertaking this critical work a genuine commitment to effective and widespread engagement and consultation has been undertaken and continues to be undertaken, and it is a power of work. We are very, very grateful for all the work that happens at a community and an NGO level. They dedicate an enormous amount of their time freely and with absolutely the spirit that we intend to go on with.

The establishment of the Victim Survivors Advisory Council — it would be remiss of me not to remind members that it is the fourth anniversary of Luke Batty's death this week. His mother chairs our Victim Survivors Advisory Council, and her legacy will endure for decades to come. We do have victim survivors with diverse experiences of family violence, representing Aboriginal, culturally and linguistically diverse, LGBTI and rural and regional communities, as well as women with disabilities, older people, young people and families who have lost their lives to family violence. As the reform work commences and progresses, formal consultation has occurred through a number of forums that I will go to now.

The plan for change — as I said, the victim survivors group and other forums contributed greatly to the establishment of *Ending Family Violence: Victoria's Plan for Change*. We had the Family Violence Steering Committee, the Indigenous family violence partnership forum, the LGBTI family violence working group, the Ministerial Taskforce on the Prevention of Family Violence and other forms of Violence Against Women — a group that Minister Richardson did chair — the diverse communities and intersectionality working group and the industry task force.

In addition to that extensive consultation, DPC also supported the minister in the development and release of two really critical prevention documents: *Safe and Strong: A Victorian Gender Equality Strategy*, which was released in December 2016, and *Free from Violence: Victoria's Strategy to Prevent Family Violence and All Forms of Violence Against Women*, which was released in May 2017. *Free from Violence* was also developed following extensive co-design, consultation and evidence processes. We put a lot of effort into building the public services capability when it comes to co-design so we actually engage in a partnership arrangement with all of our prevention colleagues. The task force comprised several senior leader representatives from expert areas in prevention and gender equality, including representatives from women's health services, academia, peak bodies and a range of really diverse communities. *Free from Violence* was also developed in consultation with other key advisory bodies. We have gone to great lengths to make sure intersectionality issues when it comes to the prevention of family violence are really embedded in our reforms into the future.

We have had the Family Violence Steering Committee and the Aboriginal family violence co-design forum and targeted consultation with the LGBTI Taskforce, victim survivors and our diverse communities group. All in all

each of those groups generally meet about six times a year, and the steering committee meets once a month. As I said, it is a massive effort, and that has gone into the development of not only our long-term 10-year plan for responding to family violence but our specific prevention plan that we continue to work through in terms of what our priorities are for the coming years.

Ms WARD — We have heard in the course of these hearings from the chief commissioner that on average they receive family violence calls every 7 minutes a day — that is, over a 24-hour period every 7 minutes they will have a phone call about family violence. I see in the performance measures the line item under the one I mentioned — ‘Number of women participating in funded programs, projects and events’ — is nearly double what you had expected it to be. Do you want to talk to how and why you think that has occurred? Thank you.

Ms FALKINGHAM — Sure, and I think the commissioner of police spoke about this as well. We had always envisaged that shining a light on family violence would bring forward a massive response in terms of women feeling much more supported and confident in reporting family violence. We are also finding that that is not just direct calls to Victoria Police; it is direct calls to all of our NGO services, our health services in particular. We are even finding now direct referrals into schools in terms of where people are seeking advice and assistance, and —

Ms WARD — Have you got any data on the amount of calls for assistance and support that you are receiving?

Ms FALKINGHAM — Right now we are in the process of establishing our information unit that will be able to collate into the future. Right now it depends on whether they get escalated to Victoria Police or they are reported back through our NGO contracts. Into the future our information-sharing IT system will be able to record that much more consistently across the state. I should mention also that obviously the government has committed to the first five support and safety hubs, where we will start to see a lot more consolidation of that data and information.

Ms WARD — So would you expect to see these numbers continue to grow until they get to a tipping point and then start to drop off?

Ms FALKINGHAM — We are hoping that we are starting to see that. We had always envisaged towards the end of this year a plateauing of some of those numbers and having a much better understanding of re-reports because, as you know, that is often tangled up in the datasets that we look at.

Mr D. O’BRIEN — Good morning, all. Secretary, if I could start, please, on programs within DPC, the department was responsible for generating 502 million in total expenses from transactions for the various programs it operated in 2016–17. Which programs operating within the department lapsed at the end of the 16–17 financial year?

Mr ECCLES — I might call on Mr Bates to help us with that answer.

Mr BATES — Good morning, Mr O’Brien.

Mr D. O’BRIEN — Perhaps just to save coming back to me, I am also interested in those that lapsed and you had to then wind up because there was no ongoing funding and then those where funding was ending but had then been provided and how much had been provided and for how long.

Mr BATES — I can run through the programs that were lapsing at the end of 16–17. In terms of which ones we kept going, I may need to come back to you. We had about a half-million-dollar program in veterans affairs which lapsed at the end of 16–17, but that was around the Long Tan anniversary celebrations, so I do not think we need to continue with that one. We had funding for Service Victoria, which notionally lapsed at the end of 16–17, but a very substantial amount was carried forward into 17–18 to allow for the completion of the build, and I can talk further about those financial details if that is helpful.

Mr D. O’BRIEN — You said a substantial amount. Have you got the amount there?

Mr BATES — I think it was approximately \$59 million that was carried forward from 16–17 to 17–18. We had some funding, about \$2.6 million, for interpreter remuneration in the multicultural affairs portfolio. That

was one-off funding, and I think we have gone back into the budget process to seek ongoing funding for that boost to interpreter remuneration funding.

Ms FALKINGHAM — I might jump in and help there. In the 17–18 budget we committed 21.8 million because we had led a review into interpreter services. That now puts in place a long-term sustainable model for interpreter services.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — For what, sorry?

Ms FALKINGHAM — Long-term interpreter services.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Interpreter services, okay. Thank you.

Mr BATES — There was one-off funding for the commissioner for privacy and data protection office to implement a new IT and monitoring system. That was for about \$420 000. We had a further \$400 000 for the public record office to boost and reconfigure some of their storage facilities out at North Melbourne. We had \$2.8 million for the Victorian Public Sector Commission, which was around building public sector capability and integrity, and I think that funding has also been subject to subsequent budget year bids. We had \$1.5 million for the relocation and fit-out of the Victorian Ombudsman's office. The lease on the Ombudsman's premises came to an end and the landlord refused to extend at that location, so we moved them into a new location on Bourke Street.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Sorry, the 1.5 million, was it ending?

Mr BATES — Yes, so the previous accommodation lease ended and the landlord would not renew, so we found them new facilities and had to do a complete new fit-out of the building for the Ombudsman and her office.

In the women's affairs portfolio we had 300 000 for economic and social participation opportunities for women. That was transferred to DHS. That program was transferred to DHS at the end of 16–17. We had just over \$1 million which was around feasibility work for the implementation of the transfer of staff under the NDIS. That was a fixed-term piece of work which we did not need to continue. Then there was a further fixed-term piece of work, a separate allocation of 2.45 million, around workforce and skills planning related to the NDIS transition.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — That 2.45 million, that is finished?

Mr BATES — Yes.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — And there was no further funding or major bid?

Mr BATES — Yes, there was some further work in 17–18 around the continuation with some separate allocation, but that main part was completed. There was a package of probably close to \$8 million in the Aboriginal affairs portfolio around self-determination and strong Aboriginal culture, a grants program for community infrastructure and support for the Aboriginal cultural heritage management arrangements. They lapsed, and I think all three received new funding in the following budget. Then in the family violence portfolio there was a group of targeted programs around initiatives to support adolescence, initiatives to support adults and also initiatives to support seniors. The three of them together totalled \$2 million, which also completed in 16–17. The ongoing programs have all been transferred to DHHS.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Okay. Just to assist the committee, would you be able to table that document if it is in a table-able format or provide it to the secretariat?

Mr BATES — Yes.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — That would be useful. Thank you.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Good morning, Secretary and officers. Just following on from the questions posed to you by Ms Ward, obviously it is an unprecedented investment in family violence prevention, 572 million in one financial year. In that year, as you stated, Secretary, at the beginning, it was under your responsibility, your

agency's responsibility. Page 5 of budget paper 3 refers to a commitment of 272 million specifically for family violence prevention. I just wondered if you could tease out a bit more from what you were saying, or Ms Falkingham what you were saying, to Ms Ward. What are the tangible results on the ground? Setting up programs is obviously the start, but what tangible results did you see on the ground? I do not want to lead a horse to water, but less women in precarious situations or more children in safe homes?

Ms FALKINGHAM — Thank you for your question. I will focus on the 572 investment, because we have seen some really tangible outcomes. So we have seen 9000 more women and their children supported by family violence case management in 16–17. We were able to implement an additional 5000 flexible support packages in 16–17 and that can go from things as simple as making sure people have got enough money for groceries or they can get a bond for a new property. It is really available, using commonsense kind of principles, to make sure that women and their children have what they need, particularly at that point when they first leave the family home. Also within those packages there is the ability to make sure that women who want to stay in their home can have the tools to enable them to stay safe in their own homes.

We have also boosted sexual assault support services. So if you can imagine, a further 1900 victim survivors of sexual assault received individualised treatments and supports. We have also strengthened responses to men who use violence, so again an additional 1900 men were able to access behavioural change programs. We are not seeing anything like that number of people being put through those programs anywhere in this country, so it is quite extraordinary when you think about the long-term legacy those male behaviour change programs will have. I should mention that we are in the process at the moment of working with Robyn Kruk, who is currently reviewing all of our perpetrator programs, and we hope by the middle of this year we will have a really comprehensive approach to how we manage perpetrator interventions into the future.

We have also provided an additional 1100 counselling places for women and children in 16–17, which again is a massive boost in terms of the types of counselling supports we have never been able to provide before. We have also had 26 innovative therapeutic responses to family violence. In relation to prevention, we have been able to rollout programs like Respectful Relationships. We have been able to actually make sure that the right supports are in the right organisations, to enable them to stop family violence before it starts by actually embedding in workplaces, in schools and a whole range of different organisations. I know, even in our own organisation, we have gone to a lot of effort to make sure that managers are really equipped to be able to respond to people experiencing family violence but also having prevention built into an organisation structure and being able to ensure our people are really equipped to respond to those issues.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Just on the prevention, the unprecedented investment I imagine, I do not know as much as you do about it, but it would be mainly at the victim end, so treating victims and supporting victims? But you were talking about prevention before people become victims. In that financial year, what elements of that funding, what programs went to prevention? I know Fiona, the then minister, was very keen on the work done on Respectful Relationships to prevent men effectively becoming abusers. Can you talk about investment in that year in relation to prevention?

Ms FALKINGHAM — Sure. So as I mentioned, it is important to acknowledge that there is not much evidence to support what works in terms of male behaviour change programs, so we are really leading the world at the moment in trying to understand seeing what works in different programs. So I think it was about 8 million that was invested in that perpetrator work that, as I said, will report this year, which is everything from how we work within the prison system to better equip people to be able to respond better in those types of situations. The world-leading television campaign that has now been supplemented with social media and print advertising really we have already had extraordinary response to in terms of people clicking through on those advertisements. We can provide you some of that detail, through the Chair, on what type of responses people are getting to that.

So that was the start of our work at that stage, and the government will be announcing more details around the next stage of that work, particularly our work with Our Watch, who as you know are a really proud partner with the Victorian government and are a national body now in terms of the prevention response. We have been working with them on much more detailed, individualised supports through the — I think we had 10 million a year around prevention in last year's budget. That was to go to really tailoring to specific workplaces or schools or even to education settings more broadly how we can make sure that prevention is really taught, understood and learned across those organisations.

Mr T. SMITH — Welcome, Secretary. Have there been any substantial refurbishments of ministerial parliamentary secretary offices in the 2016–17 financial year that you can advise us of?

Mr ECCLES — Not to my knowledge, Mr Smith. The answer is no.

Mr T. SMITH — Thank you very much. Last year you advised us that the Premier spent \$122 507 buying Facebook friends for 2015–16.

Ms WARD — I think they were your words, Mr Smith.

The CHAIR — Order.

Mr T. SMITH — Can you advise us the costs associated with Facebook advertising charged directly to the Premier's office in 2016–17?

Mr ECCLES — The total Facebook advertising spend for 2016–17 was 162 261.

Mr T. SMITH — Thank you very much, Mr Secretary. Can you provide the committee with the Facebook advertising record for the Premier for 2016–17, which includes the campaign, the amount spent and the interaction?

Mr ECCLES — We do not record, use or have additional access to the engagement metrics, so presumably there is another way in which you can source that information.

Mr T. SMITH — Thank you very much. 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 any other minister which has been subject to the department paying for Facebook promotion?

Mr ECCLES — We do not have any involvement in the Facebook activities of other ministers. Our only involvement is with the Premier and that is simply because buying Facebook advertising requires a credit card. They do not have a credit card. They use our credit card to purchase the Facebook advertising and then the office is charged for that expense.

Mr T. SMITH — In terms of the way those approvals are given for the content of the Facebook advertisement, are there any thresholds for which it becomes overtly political and therefore not appropriate for the public to be paying for it, as opposed to, say, a political party?

Mr ECCLES — That is a matter of judgement for —

Mr T. SMITH — Let me rephrase it. Is there a policy in DPC with regard to what is paid for and what is not paid for on a Facebook page?

Mr ECCLES — There is a policy that relates to the activities of the public service. As I said, this is a matter for the Premier and the Premier's office as to how they engage with social media, including Facebook. They are not subject to the same constraints that the public service is subject to.

Mr T. SMITH — So last year you said there are no guidelines for DPC on social media.

Mr ECCLES — We are subject to guidelines, Mr Smith.

Mr T. SMITH — So you are?

Mr ECCLES — Yes.

Mr T. SMITH — I am just trying to understand, I suppose, if you like, the demarcation between you, DPC and the Premier's office and who gives approvals for what to be paid for by the public to go onto the Premier's Facebook page.

Mr ECCLES — We simply provide, I think as I have said, the service on behalf of the Premier's office through the fact that we have a credit card facility. We do not have any other involvement.

Mr T. SMITH — Okay. There are social media guidelines for the department.

Mr ECCLES — Yes.

Mr T. SMITH — And they were worked up in 2016–17, were they?

Mr ECCLES — I might ask Mr Bates if he can help us with the detail around the guidelines and their content and when they were activated.

Mr T. SMITH — Sure. That would be great, thank you.

Mr BATES — Good morning, Mr Smith. The guidelines are really just an extension of the code of conduct around people not making public comment on the administration of the state. It really is just an extension of, can I say, the written guidelines, so there is nothing particularly different about the social media guidelines for public servants. There is also, I will just say, a cybersecurity dimension in there as well, in which we advise our staff that they should not be identifying where they work in the cybersecurity space. We know from the Australian Signals Directorate and others that threat actors who want to try and hack government systems actually do model a lot of the social media stuff, so things like if people put on social media, ‘It’s a real pain that they’ve changed and I have to update my password’. So we give them guidelines around that sort of stuff, but it is really just a general code of conduct that people should separate their private lives from their public lives. That is pretty much the extent of the social media guidelines for the public service.

Mr D. O’BRIEN — Are they published publicly, like internally, or can we get a copy of the guidelines?

Mr BATES — Certainly.

Mr D. O’BRIEN — Thank you. Can I just clarify, and you may have answered this in response to Mr Smith, with respect to the advertising on Facebook that the Premier might do, does the department have any role in clearing what the content is?

Mr ECCLES — No.

Mr D. O’BRIEN — If government funds are being expended on any government advertising campaign, presumably the department approves it and makes sure that it meets the guidelines — that it is not party political, for example. Is this something that the department needs to look at?

Mr ECCLES — It is met from an annual appropriation that is available to the Premier’s office in the same way there is an annual appropriation to the Leader of the Opposition’s office. Our visibility, our engagement and our supervision of the expenditure against that appropriation is as it should be. So long as it is lawful, we would then presumably have a role in ensuring that the expenditure is lawful, but ultimately these are matters for the Premier to determine how his and the office’s appropriation is expended.

Ms SHING — Just to continue on that matter, Mr Eccles, I take from the evidence that you have just given that you are effectively saying that this is a remittance process from the Premier’s office in relation to the expenditure of advertising. Is that correct?

Mr ECCLES — Yes, it is.

Ms SHING — So there is no qualitative oversight or compliance oversight undertaken by DPC in relation to the way in which a VPS code of conduct or equivalent might apply by virtue of the fact that it is a very different environment in which the Premier’s office and the Premier conduct their own affairs.

Mr ECCLES — That is correct.

Ms SHING — So on that basis, is that the same case for the Leader of the Opposition in relation to the remittance function which is undertaken by DPC?

Mr ECCLES — That is correct.

Ms SHING — And in relation to advertising within print media for the period of 2016–17, can we get those figures too, please, in relation to print, whether it is the mainstream newspapers or whether it is anything else that is featured in metropolitan or regional publications?

Mr ECCLES — I think we might even be able to do that now if that would be helpful.

Ms SHING — That would be fantastic, Mr Eccles, if you would not mind.

Mr BATES — I am not sure if I can.

Mr ECCLES — I have spoken too quickly.

Ms SHING — That is all right. We have the enjoyment of your company for some time yet, so either at some point during today's hearing or further down the track —

Mr ECCLES — We certainly have that information. It is just whether it is to hand.

Ms SHING — Fantastic. And if we could get an understanding of the proportion of the total spend which has been spent on electronic advertising through social media, Facebook and other platforms, because there are a number of other social media platforms which might also be covered, and the extent to which that compares against print media for the 16–17 period, that would be appreciated.

I would like to go just very briefly to the Latrobe Valley Authority and the work which was undertaken as part of the transition and development stage. In that sense I note there is a crossover between the two relevant reporting periods, one being the 16–17 period and then the other being the 17–18 period. In the context of 16–17 and the work undertaken to commence the operations of the Latrobe Valley Authority, can I get an understanding about how the outcomes have been met pursuant to the 16–17 budget update, at page 109, in relation to local stakeholders, the targeting of funds and the rationale for establishing this authority as an Australian first in effect to tackle the challenges at a policy, social and economic level? There is just a little bit in that. Mr Phemister, I am happy to throw to you or somebody else as they might see fit.

Mr PHEMISTER — Thanks, Ms Shing. I will take that one. Thanks very much for your question. Obviously the Latrobe Valley Authority sits in my part of the department. To be fair it could have sat in any area of the department because it is not, strictly speaking, solely an economic challenge. Even if it was, there is very much a strong focus on social policy as well as part of what the LVA does.

Ms SHING — So you are saying it is a whole of Victorian government challenge?

Mr PHEMISTER — Yes, indeed. The secretary referred earlier to the fact that the Latrobe Valley Authority was announced pretty quickly after the announcement of Engie to close their Hazelwood plant and mine. We had been cooking up an intervention in the Latrobe Valley for some time before that, however. Obviously the Latrobe Valley has many natural assets and is a proud part of the state's history, both economically and socially, but over time there has been an increasing reliance on the electricity sector to generate employment and opportunities.

There are also a whole lot of social challenges in the valley and equally a whole lot of strengths. It is a pretty unique part of the state, so we had been cooking up what we consider a pretty unique response. So by the time Hazelwood happened, I would not describe it as exclusively catalytic for the Latrobe Valley Authority, but it was certainly an opportunity for government to intervene in a different way. The announcement of the establishment of the Latrobe Valley Authority was supported by \$266 million of investment. I have got a detailed breakdown of how that investment —

Ms SHING — If you could provide that on notice, that would be wonderful. I note that we do not have terribly much time.

Mr Eccles, just to add to the questions that I asked to be perhaps taken on notice around advertising expenditure, for the purposes of print and electronic media and advertising, could you break that down for the opposition as well as the Premier's office or the Leader of the Opposition's office, for the purposes of that expenditure in the event that you have that available?

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

Ms SHING — Not in terms of content, just remittance of funding.

Mr ECCLES — Understood.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Can I just clarify, Mr Phemister, if you have got that information available now, could it be provided to the secretariat rather than literally taken on notice and —

Ms SHING — Sorry, I did not want to have it —

Mr D. O'BRIEN — No, that is fine, I understand that. But if you have got it there, if you could provide it to the secretariat today while you are here, that would be great.

Mr PHEMISTER — That is the Latrobe Valley Authority's budget, Mr O'Brien?

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Yes, the breakdown that Ms Shing was just asking about.

Mr PHEMISTER — Of course, yes.

Mr T. SMITH — Secretary, last year the estimate for the 15–16 year for ministerial staff costs was 26.6 million. The actual was 29.2 million, an 11 per cent blowout. In 16–17, what was the budget estimate for ministerial staff costs?

Mr ECCLES — The 2016–17 actual expenditure on ministerial staff was 33.5 million.

Mr T. SMITH — That was substantially larger than what was estimated, was it not?

Mr ECCLES — The allocated staffing budget was 32.2 million.

Mr T. SMITH — Could you explain the actual figure and why that was greater than the estimate?

Mr ECCLES — No, I cannot. I do not have that information with me, Mr Smith.

Mr T. SMITH — Secretary, as of June 2015 in the office of the Premier and ministerial offices there were 21 chiefs of staff, 6 ministerial directors, 175 ministerial staff and zero casual staff. What were the figures as of 30 June 2017? Could you also itemise of those numbers how many were in the office of the Premier?

Mr ECCLES — In 2016–17 there were 253 full-time equivalent ministerial staff in total. This includes the 87 staff within the Premier's private office and 166 staff across the other ministerial offices.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Sorry, 87 did you say?

Mr ECCLES — That is correct.

Mr T. SMITH — So 87 in the PPO. How does that compare with similar jurisdictions around Australia?

Mr ECCLES — I do not have that information before me, Mr Smith.

Mr T. SMITH — Are you able to provide on notice a table which lists all of the chartered flights taken by either the Premier or DPC ministers, the destination of those flights and the costs to the department, and who took the flights, for 2016–17?

Mr ECCLES — Absolutely.

Mr T. SMITH — Thank you very much.

Ms SHING — He just saved you an FOI application, Mr Smith.

Mr T. SMITH — He did; that is why I asked him. What action did DPC undertake to fulfil the Premier's request to audit ministerial mobile phones in 2016–17?

Mr ECCLES — I am constrained in commenting publicly on matters that may have been considered by cabinet directly or indirectly, including speculation on whether an audit was undertaken.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Can you confirm if the audit was undertaken?

Mr ECCLES — I cannot confirm that the audit was undertaken.

Mr T. SMITH — Did you have discussions with KPMG about undertaking an audit?

Mr ECCLES — I did not.

Mr T. SMITH — Before being sacked by the government, the Victorian privacy commissioner raised concern about the Premier's audit of ministerial mobile phones. Can you advise what action DPC undertook to comply with the then commissioner's request?

Ms SHING — On a point of order, that presumes a sacking as the basis for the question. Mr Smith, you might want to rephrase rather than seeking an opinion from the secretary.

Mr T. SMITH — I am not rephrasing.

The CHAIR — I am not aware that the individual involved was sacked, but I am happy for the question to stand.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — You cannot censor our questions, Ms Shing.

Mr T. SMITH — I am asking a question.

Ms SHING — You cannot mislead the committee or the witnesses.

Mr T. SMITH — Mr Eccles is perfectly capable of answering this question.

Ms Ward interjected.

The CHAIR — Order! Ms Ward. Questions need to be truthful.

Mr ECCLES — As a matter of fact, the former commissioner was not sacked; his position concluded with the establishment of the new position.

But to get your substantive question, on Thursday, 1 December 2016 we became aware through routine media monitoring that confidential information regarding additional police numbers had been provided to radio station 3AW. As I said, I am not authorised to discuss cabinet matters, and I cannot comment further on that. However, to go to your point about the role of the commissioner, he issued two requests for information, one to the Premier and one to me. The Privacy and Data Protection Act does not allow the commissioner to compel the production of cabinet material and allows me to issue a certificate to that effect. In response to the commissioner's two requests, I issued two certificates certifying that the information requested by the commissioner was cabinet material.

Mr T. SMITH — Okay. Did DPC provide any advice to the Premier or the Special Minister of State which indicated that the Premier's request to have ministers' mobile phones audited for leaks would be in breach?

Ms SHING — Sorry, what does this have to do with the output measures? Can we tie this back to something in the budget —

Mr T. SMITH — It occurred in 2016–17. I thought that was —

Ms SHING — No, just because it occurred in 2016–17 —

Members interjected.

Ms WARD — It does not strengthen your argument —

Ms SHING — It is sloppy preparation, Mr Smith. Draft your questions properly, or get someone else to do it properly.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Stop defending your Premier, with his 87 staff. He has got enough people to look after himself there.

The CHAIR — Order! Mr O'Brien.

Ms WARD — No, it is about you asking accurate questions that are relevant, Mr O'Brien, which both of you are struggling with.

The CHAIR — Order! Ms Ward! The question you are asking may breach cabinet discussions and the role that —

Mr D. O'BRIEN — That is up to the secretary to answer.

The CHAIR — Order! Mr O'Brien!

Mr T. SMITH — The secretary is a big boy. He is very capable of answering these questions.

Ms WARD — As is the Chair of conducting this meeting. Maybe you would like to let him do it.

The CHAIR — Order! Ms Ward, please! I am just making an observation, Mr Smith, that the secretary may be constrained in relation to the question that has been asked. I would encourage you to give some thought and consideration to the way in which you frame your question so that the time of the hearing is not taken up in these debates around points of order.

Mr ECCLES — Thank you, Chair. I have lost contact with the question.

Mr T. SMITH — Yes, so have I.

The CHAIR — Can you rephrase the question, briefly?

Mr T. SMITH — I am not going to have these questions audited by you lot.

Members interjecting.

The CHAIR — Order!

Ms SHING — On a point of order, Chair, I was just accused by Mr Smith of running a protection racket. I would seek that you withdraw that immediately on the basis that I find it offensive.

Mr T. SMITH — I do not withdraw that.

The CHAIR — Mr Smith, I ask you to withdraw. We are operating under standing orders. If a member takes offence and you are asked to withdraw, you are —

Mr T. SMITH — If this is how this is going to roll today, we —

The CHAIR — You are asked to withdraw. Withdraw, Mr Smith.

Mr T. SMITH — No.

The CHAIR — You are asked to withdraw. Withdraw.

Mr T. SMITH — No.

The CHAIR — Okay. We are having a 10-minute break.

Mr Smith, Ms Shing has asked you to withdraw. I would ask that you withdraw now, please.

Mr T. SMITH — Chair, I was explaining to your MPs that they were engaging in interference about me asking a reasonable question to the secretary of the department. The comment that I made was actually not directed to Ms Shing as an individual —

Ms SHING — ‘She’s running a protection racket’.

Mr T. SMITH — It was related to Labor MPs inhibiting my ability to ask questions pertaining to 2016–17 on a matter of public importance.

The CHAIR — Mr Smith, the customs and forms of the house are that if a member takes offence to a word or a comment made by another member and seeks a withdrawal, a withdrawal is provided unconditionally. They are just the forms and customs of the house. Again I would ask that you withdraw.

Mr T. SMITH — Chair, it is incredibly frustrating for us, when asking perfectly reasonable questions —

The CHAIR — No, Mr Smith, I am asking — this will be the third time I ask you and I will not ask you again.

Mr T. SMITH — It was a comment that was made in the plural to three —

The CHAIR — I am asking —

Ms SHING — ‘She’s running a protection racket’.

The CHAIR — Order! Ms Shing!

Ms SHING — They are your words.

The CHAIR — I am asking that you withdraw. If you do not withdraw, I will be reporting this matter to the Speaker forthwith.

Mr T. SMITH — Okay.

Ms SHING — I have a couple of questions which I am going to ask on behalf of Ms Pennicuik, who is not here today. On that basis she has asked that the following questions be read into this session. She has asked me to direct you to the DPC 16–17 annual report and the section under ‘Aboriginal affairs’ at page 26. Page 26 of the annual report highlights that the department delivered two phases of community consultation on treaty. How much did the government spend on the treaty process and how much was spent on attempting to ensure that clan elders were consulted with? That is the first question, which has two tranches. The other one is for the second half of the session, so I will hold that in abeyance for now, if you could provide answers on notice to that.

Ms FALKINGHAM — No problem. Thank you for the question. The government in 2016–17 — our reference is BP3, page 6 — invested 3.8 for direct engagement with Aboriginal Victorians to progress the self-determination agenda, including the treaty process. It is critical from our perspective, and I know from the Aboriginal working group’s perspective, that the treaty process is open and inclusive. That is why the working group and the government have ensured that every forum and community consultation on treaty has been open to all Aboriginal Victorians. Nothing in the process to date has or will preclude participation of clans and family groups in the treaty process.

Ms SHING — And if the amounts could be provided too, that would be helpful for Ms Pennicuik.

Ms WARD — I will also continue on with Aboriginal affairs, if I may. If I can get you to go to budget paper 3, page 296, and if you go down one-third of the way through to ‘Participation of Aboriginal people in local Indigenous networks’, could you please talk us through the process and say what that has delivered for the Aboriginal community?

Ms FALKINGHAM — Sure. Thank you. As I said, the government’s commitment to self-determination extends beyond the treaty process and is about transforming the way we work together. It is ensuring that Aboriginal Victorians are at the heart of all of our decision-making. The unique knowledge, skills and expertise of Aboriginal Victorians are fundamental to informing our policy design and program implementation. To

achieve the lasting and transformative change the Victorian government acknowledges that it must share power and resources with the Aboriginal community and ensure the community has the capacity to effectively lead self-determination reform. Our investment in progressing an ambitious self-determination agenda includes the 39 local area networks, which represent the largest government-enabled network of Aboriginal people in our country and are an example of self-determination in action.

For example, during 2016–17 the LANs held 10 community forums across Victoria to showcase their local projects and case studies, and to provide culturally safe spaces for participants. These community forums allow participants the opportunity to explore and evaluate new ways to implement the Victorian Local Aboriginal Networks' five-year plan, which runs from 2016 to 2020. The BPP 3 target for the Local Aboriginal Networks participation in 2016–17 was 2343, and the outcome was only marginally lower, with only 2297 participants, which is a huge number of participants.

DPC is confident that the LANs are increasing engagement with the Victorian Aboriginal community. In fact the half-year target for 17–18 has been exceeded because the successful implementation of the LAN five-year plan has attracted increased participants. We were seeing a real groundswell of people wanting to be part of that process. It is a process that has been looked at from other states and territories, which are quite envious of our Local Aboriginal Networks.

Ms WARD — So any Torres Strait Islander person or Aboriginal person can attend any of these forums and meetings —

Ms FALKINGHAM — They can.

Ms WARD — Including the Aboriginal Youth Council?

Ms FALKINGHAM — Absolutely.

Ms WARD — How are you measuring the success of the program? What are the indicators that you are putting in place?

Ms FALKINGHAM — We have a range that go to not just participation but also to the quality of the engagement. We often speak to people after the sessions to see what outcomes they think have been delivered and where we can improve. We have quite a big framework that again I do not have with me but we can provide through the Chair.

Ms WARD — So they are providing quite a useful service in terms of advising DPC on how to move forward and new policies that can be created?

Ms FALKINGHAM — Absolutely. Every one is unique, as you would imagine, and have very different forms of feedback and mechanisms. Some are much more mature than others, and we have had to try and ensure we have as much cross-collaboration as we can to make sure that the LANs are learning from one another and also that we are bringing to bear key challenges and opportunities for LANs and sharing that across the state.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Secretary, can I just go back to seek clarification. You gave some figures before for ministerial staff. I understand that was full-time equivalent. Do you have the numbers for the actual headcount in ministerial offices, including the Premier's office?

Mr ECCLES — Just bear with me. No, I have only got the number which is the full-time equivalent, so I do not have the actuals.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Are you able to provide that on notice, do you think? You should be able to provide that notice.

Mr ECCLES — We should have that information, so we will.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Yes, thank you. Can I just go back to the questions that Mr Smith was just prosecuting — or trying to prosecute. Did DPC provide any advice to the Premier or the Special Minister of

State which indicated that the Premier's request to have ministers' mobile phones audited for leaks would be a breach of the Privacy and Data Protection Act?

Mr ECCLES — Again, I am sorry, Mr O'Brien, that I cannot take the answer any further than I took it before, which is that it relates to a cabinet matter and I cannot comment any further.

Mr T. SMITH — Mr Eccles, if I could just ask with regard to the Victorian government architect's role in the proposed changes to Fed Square, with Apple being given an opportunity to build a store there —

Ms WARD — In the 16–17 period?

Mr T. SMITH — I understand that in 2016–17 there were ongoing consultations between the Victorian government architect and Apple, and I was wondering if you could enlighten the committee as to who approached who and his role in the creation of this?

Mr ECCLES — It is actually a 'she' — Jill Garner.

Mr T. SMITH — My apologies.

Mr ECCLES — The Victorian government architect sits within Mr Bates's portfolio, and I know he has a comprehensive response.

Mr BATES — Mr Smith, the architect's office has been involved over a number of years in the preparations for the possibility of changes at Fed Square. The architect was approached by DEDJTR, the economic development and jobs department, who have oversight responsibility for Fed Square, and that actually happened in mid-2015. Just before 2016–17 the architect's office did a design review at the request of Fed Square and DEDJTR, looking at some of the early proposals. During 2016–17 they also were involved in a number of consultations with stakeholders. They had meetings with representatives from the City of Melbourne, from DEDJTR and Donald Bates, who was the original architect of the square. They met with Apple representatives, the company Foster and Partners, who are architects that Apple have retained to design the square, and also with the management team from Fed Square. In 2017 they also had further consultations with Oculus, who were the landscape architects that have been employed to help with the integration of the proposed building into the broader space at Fed Square. They also had some discussions with the planning team from DELWP and with board members from Fed Square.

The role of the architect in those meetings was really to talk about the site principles. I know the architect had a very major concern about, as we call it, universal access, which is making sure that people of all abilities can get to the store and get around the square. I know in some of the early designs the architect was concerned that they were not 100 per cent accessible, so she gave feedback in relation to that, and I think had been working closely with Fed Square around — the architect's view is that you do not lock the things as they were when the square was built 20 something years ago, as long as that there are sympathetic evolutions of the space. I think she was trying to help the different parties come to an architectural view on that. But there were no formal design reviews during the 2016–17 year. There were design reviews, as I said, just in May 2016, and I think there was another one just after the end of the 2016–17 year.

Mr T. SMITH — So you approached Apple or Apple approached the government?

Ms WARD — In 16–17.

Mr BATES — In terms of the architect, she was approached by DEDJTR as the department that oversees Fed Square.

Mr T. SMITH — Okay. Sorry. I understand. So presumably Apple approached DEDJTR or DEDJTR approached Apple?

Ms WARD — In the 16–17 period.

Mr BATES — I understand what the architect's involvement was, but the broader discussion about who approached who I do not have any information on, Mr Smith.

Mr T. SMITH — Was DELWP involved in 2016–17?

Ms SHING — DEDJTR.

Mr T. SMITH — No, DELWP.

Mr BATES — DELWP were during — one of the architects meetings was with DELWP in 16–17.

Mr T. SMITH — Right. That is very interesting — thank you, Mr Bates — because the secretary of DELWP said yesterday that he had no conversations —

Ms WARD — When it comes to Apple.

Mr T. SMITH — With Apple or anything to do with this project in 16–17.

Ms WARD — ‘When it came to Apple’, was his answer.

Mr T. SMITH — Which we found very, very concerning yesterday, because we could not understand how there could have been a planning application lodged —

The CHAIR — Do have a question, Mr Smith?

Mr T. SMITH — in September 2017 —

Ms WARD — You have misunderstood what occurred, Mr Smith.

Mr T. SMITH — if DELWP had nothing to do with it in 16–17. So we will be going back to the secretary of DELWP, absolutely, on that one.

Mr BATES — I will just make clear, Mr Smith, that it was the architect who was talking to DELWP. I have got no information to say if DELWP were involved in any discussions with Apple; it was the architect at Fed Square talking to DELWP.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Secretary, I am interested to find out more about the refugee and asylum seeker settlement support provided in the 16–17 budget. I understand 38.3 million was provided in that year’s budget over the five years, and that was additional funds. I also understand there is a component of 53 million over four years under the Jobs Victoria line item, but an element of that — I think 6 million — goes to target culturally diverse Victorians and refugees and asylum seekers. Budget paper 3, page 103, talks about settlement support for asylum seekers. This is an issue close to my heart, not only because I have a diverse electorate but also because I previously worked in that portfolio. Could you give us a sense of what achievements or what impacts that investment had in that financial year generally with settlement services for all cohorts but particularly the Syrian refugee cohort?

Ms FALKINGHAM — Thank you for your question and for your ongoing interest in this area. As you know, the settlement of refugees and asylum seekers is primarily the responsibility of the commonwealth government. However, Victoria still plays a really significant leadership role in providing additional settlement support to new arrivals and funds a range of specialist programs to help support refugees and asylum seekers to settle in our state. In the 16–17 budget the Victorian government boosted support to specifically benefit refugees and asylum seekers through a budget allocation of 38.3 million over five years, which covered — and it was a whole-of-government budget package — multicultural affairs, health and education portfolios.

Funding provided to the multicultural affairs portfolio was to support a coordinated, integrated and early intervention approach to settlement of refugees and asylum seekers across Victoria. That included the 18 million over four years to engage strategic engagement coordinators to strengthen the capacity building and participation program and for strategic early childhood support and justice initiatives. As you are aware, the work that we do in this space is really individualised, really tailored, in terms of one-on-one face time, which is very intensive in terms of how we make sure we really package and tailor around families and individuals the right types of supports at the right time.

In the health portfolio the government allocated 10.9 over four years to meet the priority health and welfare needs of refugee arrivals, and that is as diverse as looking at some of the health care that is provided through our

maternal health centres all the way through to our emergency departments. So it was a comprehensive package looking at the health needs of refugee arrivals.

With respect to education, there was 9.4 over five years to improve educational outcomes for refugees, asylum seekers and migrant young people. Again that is really intensive one-on-one support within the classroom, within the school community, within preschools and within the TAFE settings to ensure that the right services are available, particularly with a lot of language support, as you would imagine, to support asylum seeker and migrant young people.

A further 53 million over four years was allocated through, as you mentioned, the Jobs Victoria Employment Network to assist disadvantaged jobseekers into work. This includes those from multicultural, refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds. A total of 6 million was allocated to the Jobs Victoria pool to specifically target culturally diverse Victorians — that is the first time we have ever done that — including refugees and asylum seekers. We are seeing the benefits of that in terms of the number of young people — and there are case studies that we can again provide to you, via the Chair — who have accessed that program and have gone on to sustainable long-term employment and are really effecting change within their peer cohort as well in terms of getting their peers into similar types of work programs.

Strategic partnerships have also been critical to deliver coordinated settlement support for new and emerging communities across Victoria. We had 14 strategic partnerships being funded through the 2.85 million per annum over four years through the capacity building and partnership grants program, which amounts to the total of the program. These partnerships bring together settlement and asylum seeker services providers, including the peak multicultural organisations, local government and other local stakeholders, to take a more coordinated approach to settlement and other issues affecting culturally diverse communities.

We had a further 1.8 million across four years being allocated to the Refugee and Immigration Legal Centre to support its role in providing legal advice to asylum seekers. This includes assistance in lodging claims for protection with the commonwealth government. We are the only state to provide that service at the moment. This funding will enable Refugee Legal to provide advice and assistance to over 5700 asylum seekers in Victoria over four years and fill gaps left by the withdrawal of the commonwealth's funding.

As you know, in late August 2017 the commonwealth announced that around 400 asylum seekers transferred to Australia for medical treatment would be placed on final departure visas and expelled from Australia. In response, as you are very aware, the Premier announced the Victorian government will step in and provide urgent income and accommodation support to more than 100 of those asylum seekers who are in Victoria. As a result, we are now providing a 600 000 package of urgent support. I should say that this is genuinely a whole-of-government initiative, and we are really grateful for the collaboration that has occurred across Health and Human Services and across the justice and the education departments, and in particular our colleagues in the housing sector. It is funding for accommodation costs and, where possible, to keep people in their current accommodation, which as you know is really important in terms of providing that stability into the future; funding to cover costs for basic life necessities, such as Myki cards, clothes, food and medical support; and direct service delivery to meet urgent needs within this group.

We are also working with a number of community organisations to deliver the package and make sure that, as I said, it is a really locally based, tailored support service to make sure that we are giving people the support and respect that they need and deserve. As I said, it is a really coordinated package, and we continue to look forward to the outcomes of those people we are supporting going on to living and really being part of the Victorian economy and our community.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Secretary, as you are aware, section 44 of the Victorian constitution states that to be a member of Parliament you must be enrolled correctly and entitled to vote. In 16–17 the VEC, jointly with the AEC, began an investigation into whether the member for Melton and the member for Tarneit were correctly enrolled at their principal place of residence at the time of the 2014 election. Can you advise the status, as of 30 June 2017, of that investigation?

Mr ECCLES — I do not have that information before me, Mr Smith.

Mr T. SMITH — The VEC does come under DPC?

Mr ECCLES — The VEC is part of the broad family of entities within the portfolio, but they are an independent statutory authority. The communication I have with the commissioner is when he, as a matter of courtesy at various points, tells me what is going on in his world. I have no access to any information in relation to that particular matter.

Mr T. SMITH — So DPC have not provided any advice or evidence to the VEC or the AEC for this investigation?

Mr ECCLES — Not to my knowledge.

Mr T. SMITH — Do you have any understanding of when the VEC will conclude its investigation?

Mr ECCLES — No, I do not.

Mr T. SMITH — Okay. That is a very succinct answer. Thank you very much.

Ms SHING — I would like to move back to discussions on the Latrobe Valley. There is a lot going on, Mr Phemister. It is good to see your enthusiasm for answering questions on this subject matter. The worker transfer scheme was a model which was the culmination of extensive negotiations between government, unions and operators. In early 2017 an agreement was reached after an extensive period of negotiation and discussion with all three power generators as a national-first to support the transfer of up to 150 workers displaced by the cessation of operation at Hazelwood. Taking you to the presentation which Mr Eccles opened with and the strong policy outcomes for the relevant period, there was a reference to the Latrobe Valley Authority's outcomes as one of the highlights for the financial year. But what in substantive terms has been delivered through the implementation and resolution of the worker transfer scheme as far as economic benefits and social and other benefits for this particular part of the world?

Mr PHEMISTER — Building on the answer earlier, as part of the Latrobe Valley Authority is a worker transition service. That service has been offered to anyone in transition in the Latrobe Valley, be it Carter Holt Harvey or Hazelwood, or anybody else in the community, to be honest — it is an open door policy — who feels as though they might need a bit of a leg-up in applying for or looking for work.

Ms SHING — So it is not just for workers displaced by Hazelwood?

Mr PHEMISTER — No, absolutely not. What has been really interesting down in the valley is the majority of people through that service have been from Hazelwood, mainly because there has been an outreach service, so there has been a really dedicated communications effort to anyone who is displaced through Hazelwood, be they a direct employee or in a supply chain.

Ms SHING — So that includes contractors?

Mr PHEMISTER — Absolutely, yes. Contractors, or even people from the cafe down the road effectively.

Ms SHING — So the supply chain and people in related businesses. There are dry cleaners and laundrettes. There are people in the supply chain within the valley and further beyond.

Mr PHEMISTER — What has been interesting on the businesses, say, the laundrettes, for example — laundrettes are a good example — we have a laundrette in the valley that has actually grown since Hazelwood closed. So there has been a business transition service that sits alongside to help businesses that were formerly reliant on Hazelwood for income to diversify. In good news, there are more jobs in the valley today than there were before Hazelwood closed. So what we have seen —

Ms SHING — Notwithstanding the closure of Hazelwood and the closure of Carter Holt Harvey, beyond the relevant period?

Mr PHEMISTER — Taking a measure from the ABS, as precise as the ABS can get, if you take the amount of jobs a week before Hazelwood and you take the last statistical reporting period, there are more jobs in the valley than there were before Hazelwood shut their doors.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — They are all at the LVA.

Ms SHING — Like the Liberal candidate and one of the aspirational National candidates, Mr O'Brien.

Mr PHEMISTER — There is a 9000 job net improvement in the job numbers.

Ms SHING — A 9000 job improvement net?

Mr PHEMISTER — Correct. What we have seen is businesses diversify. The transition service, which is a service we would like to see go to business, has not been as heavily relied upon from the supply chain — Hazelwood workers, yes. We have seen a lot of people through the door. All the Hazelwood workers were offered the service, but we have seen well over 350 other people from different organisations — Carter Holt Harvey, and just people transitioning or interested in a career change or a career launch.

Ms SHING — So the work associated with developing the framework for the worker transition program was obviously not based on any template, because there was not one. What was the work undertaken during the period from the announcement by Engie of its intention to cease production at the end of March 2017 and the actual commencement of the worker transition service and the worker transfer scheme?

Mr PHEMISTER — The best templates we saw were global. What we knew going into this exercise was that you cannot successfully transition economies. We did not replace one big mill with another big mill. Basically what we were after was diversification. We had the kind of goal in mind, and we had just been through the highly successful worker transition services for the automotive industry. The difference there is that there was a longer lead time, but it was the same principle and we learned a lot from that experience, Ms Shing. Basically identify the supply chain, identify the impact on workers and then help the supply chain diversify, and then offer outreach services and then in-house services for displaced workers.

It was really successful with automotive, and we got to take that IP and localise it for the valley basically. One of the things that we did that worker transition did not in the automotive sector and other previous large-scale transitions was that we went community-wide. It is a geographically defined area rather than an industry defined area, so we had the benefit of going community-wide. We have built a lot of IP with our partners, DEDTJR, in how to successfully transition workers and firms, and the lesson has been intensity and flexibility.

Ms SHING — Just finally, what does the interaction of the worker transfer scheme and the Back to Work scheme mean for people within that cohort of people either displaced or in a situation of longer term unemployment?

Mr PHEMISTER — What we have seen is we have stimulated a bit of job growth through the abolition of fees and charges for establishing new roles in the valley. We have got a whole lot of incentives and information that sit alongside the employer side and a whole lot of subsidies and incentives alongside the employee side. The worker transition service that you have referenced a few times was a dedicated transfer service — it was a dedicated part of the transition service — and that is a particularly hands-on exercise that actively looks for people who are ready to go into early retirement from other firms, supported through pretty generous arrangements from the employers that were brokered through the state to create opportunities and pathways for people exiting out of Hazelwood.

Ms SHING — When you say 'the valley', just for definitional purposes that means different things to different people depending on who you are talking to — and I say that as someone who lives in the valley. What is the definition of 'the valley' for the purposes of the worker transfer scheme and indeed this broader transitional package?

Mr PHEMISTER — Worker transfer is defined by Hazelwood employees, so it does not have a geographic boundary. You can live wherever you like. If you are a Hazelwood employee and you are impacted, you are part of the transfer team. We do not draw a hard boundary around access to the services. As you know, we work across the three local government areas down there.

Ms SHING — So that is Baw Baw shire, Latrobe city and Wellington shire councils?

Mr PHEMISTER — Correct, but the boundaries are porous and we are pretty pragmatic when it comes to the different services we offer.

Ms SHING — Great. Thank you for that, Mr Phemister.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Secretary, last year we heard from Ms Falkingham about \$3.2 million that had gone into five different pilot programs with respect to combatting extremism in particular. Three of those were pilots in northern and south-eastern areas of Melbourne, with the focus on Islamic-inspired extremism — one focusing on right-wing extremism, and options for a fifth pilot were under consideration at the time. Can you update us on what the fifth one became and also on any outcomes from the others?

Ms FALKINGHAM — I apologise. I do not have that information at hand, but we are very happy to provide it via the Chair.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Are you able to tell me if the pilots have concluded or are still underway?

Ms FALKINGHAM — My understanding is that they are at all different points of evaluation. But again, as you are aware, given the sensitivity around these pilots, we are very happy to provide you with a briefing outside of this meeting on the status of each of those projects if that is helpful.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Sorry, just to clarify, is it you do not have the information or you are not prepared to provide it to the committee?

Ms FALKINGHAM — I do not have the detail of the fifth one. Also, given the sensitivity of the detail of those pilots in terms of who we are working with and what communities, again I am really happy to organise a separate briefing for you.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Okay. Are you able to tell me how much of the social cohesion budget has been spent on those programs in 16–17?

Ms FALKINGHAM — So 4.538 million has primarily been invested across that range of projects, which includes the 2.5 million for the five community support group pilots, the 0.33 million towards the JVEN, 0.950 million for the social cohesion pilots in schools, 0.495 million for grants for community-led projects, 0.210 million for frontline staff training and 0.550 million for research grant programs. In addition to that, there was obviously money put in to support the unit in terms of policy capability in an ongoing way.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Okay. I understand there are about 300 people on extremism watchlists with Victoria Police in the state, but there have also been reports of extremism recruitment taking place in our prisons. Has there been any work by the department to target funds to extremism within the correctional centres?

Ms FALKINGHAM — Again, there are projects underway in terms of partnerships with Victoria Police and others, but again that is information that is quite sensitive. Again, I am happy to organise a separate briefing for you on those matters.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Okay. What about in terms of the expenditure on those? Do you have any information on —

Ms FALKINGHAM — Not broken down in that way, I am sorry.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Without going into the detail — and I appreciate the sensitivity of them — are you able to tell us names of programs, if there are specific individual projects that are underway?

Ms FALKINGHAM — Unfortunately I am not, no.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Okay. What about with respect to returning jihadis who might be in either our correctional centres or youth justice facilities? Are there programs underway to assist with those?

Ms FALKINGHAM — Not through multicultural affairs. That question is probably better placed with the Secretary of the Department of Justice and Regulation.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — With respect to Victoria's CALD communities — culturally and linguistically diverse communities — consultations in 16–17 were at a four-year low, with the total number of consultations at just 62. Can you explain why there has been a drop in those consultations according to the annual report?

Ms FALKINGHAM — As you are aware, there are a range of targeted initiatives for CALD Victorians through the work of our division. We have gone through extensive work around the four key policy areas where

we have had more intensive consultations. The consultations have been more intensive, so we did not anticipate that — obviously we still run the range of partnerships we have every year on year but we have not had the same number of people coming forward for some of those forums.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — You may need to provide this on notice, but could you provide us with a list of the number and nature of individual meetings, engagements and consultations that were undertaken by the Victorian Multicultural Commission chairperson and/or the VMC representatives or staff which involved state government MPs only — that is, where no other Parliament members were invited?

Ms FALKINGHAM — I can put that request to the commissioner. As you are aware, she is independent and operates under her own legislation. We are more than happy to put that request directly to her, though.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Just finally, were any departmental resources used to prepare or assist with the establishment of a Labor friends of African communities, which occurred last year?

Ms FALKINGHAM — Not to the best of my knowledge. We obviously prepare a whole range of forums and activities for Minister Scott, but I am not aware of the event that you are speaking about.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Thank you.

The CHAIR — Ms Shing has got a question now on behalf of Ms Pennicuk.

Ms SHING — Yes. Thank you. On behalf of Ms Pennicuk, the portfolio area that she has asked for me to read a question on is women. The question relates to the Victorian gender equality strategy, which was launched on 5 December 2016. It notes the DPC general questionnaire coverage on substantial expenditure relating to 'reducing violence against women', which is one of the key objectives of the gender equality strategy, and the outcomes and expenditure on other elements of that strategy are, according to Ms Pennicuk, less clear. So she has asked for an outline of some of the outcomes relating to other areas of the strategy as her first question.

Ms FALKINGHAM — Sure. Thank you for the question again. The 2016–17 budget included the first specific funding allocation of 9 million over two years to promote and achieve gender equality — 7 million in 2016–17 and 2 million in 17–18. Funding was used to support the implementation of *Safe and Strong*, the Victorian gender equality strategy. As I mentioned earlier, some of that funding was used for the extensive consultation across Victoria with a range of forums that were held in all communities.

Safe and Strong aims to build the attitudinal and behavioural change required to deliver gender equality, including efforts to reduce violence against women. To achieve these outcomes, *Safe and Strong* included a range of founding reforms which set a new standard for action by the Victorian government. It set out a series of early actions which have been delivered in key settings — as I mentioned, workplace, education, training, media and sport. We have worked with those sectors quite intensively around their programs, their procedures, their frameworks within their own organisation when it comes to gender equality. There is the development of gender equality legislation, gender audits of public service workplaces, targets to lift the women's public sector leadership.

A detailed implementation plan is also being used to guide the use of funding and delivery of projects over the next two years. Measures are in place to monitor the effectiveness of *Safe and Strong*, including the establishment of — which was also very important to Minister Richardson — the gender equality data baseline, identifying additional targets and annual reporting to Parliament on progress towards gender equality.

Ms SHING — Thank you. I do have a supplementary. I might wait until after the break to proceed with that one on behalf of Ms Pennicuk.

The CHAIR — We will come back to that after the 10-minute break.

Ms Shing has got a supplementary question from Ms Pennicuk.

Ms SHING — Further to the question that was asked before the break, Ms Pennicuk has indicated she is particularly interested in progress made in relation to gender responsive budgeting and/or gender impact analysis, which Ms Pennicuk understands was being developed in 2016–17 as part of the gender equality

strategy and as part of the 17–18 budget development process. Ms Pennicuik’s question is: has that work been done and, if so, where, and can we hear a bit about that work?

Ms FALKINGHAM — Thank you again for your question. We did release a gender impact statement with the budget in 16–17, as you are aware. Unfortunately now the work in women’s has moved across to the Department of Health and Human Services. That is why the question is better directed to them. But I am aware that they are working intensively with the Department of Treasury and Finance to make sure that this year’s statement is obviously much more evidenced and resource-based for tabling with the budget in May.

Ms SHING — Excellent, and any further information you might wish to provide on notice I am sure Ms Pennicuik would be grateful for.

Mr D. O’BRIEN — Secretary, just a couple of questions going back to departmental spending. How much money was spent in 2016–17 on legal fees fighting the Ombudsman case with respect to the Labor red shirts issue?

Mr ECCLES — I might ask general counsel to address that, Mr O’Brien.

Mr D. O’BRIEN — Sure.

Ms ADOFACI — Thank you for that question. For the financial year 2017 DPC paid \$116 980 for legal services in relation to the Ombudsman litigation.

Mr D. O’BRIEN — Thank you. Can you give me a figure also on how much was spent for legal fees on any issue for ministers or staff in the period?

Ms ADOFACI — I do not have that information.

Mr D. O’BRIEN — Okay. Could it be provided on notice then, please?

Mr ECCLES — To the extent that the information is available and appropriate to provide, absolutely.

Mr D. O’BRIEN — What would be the qualification, sorry, Secretary, with respect?

Mr ECCLES — I don’t know. I turn to my general counsel to see if there is any relevant qualification.

Ms SHING — Danny, can you just repeat what the legal advice is that you are seeking? I just could not hear that last bit in relation to —

Mr D. O’BRIEN — Legal fees on any matter.

Ms SHING — On any matter.

Mr D. O’BRIEN — For ministers or staff.

Ms SHING — Thanks.

Mr ECCLES — We will provide the information.

Mr D. O’BRIEN — Thank you. In 2016–17, how many ministerial staff made formal complaints of any sort, whether relating to bullying or OH&S matters?

Mr ECCLES — I can only speak for complaints that may have come to DPC’s attention and to the best of my recollection and on the basis of advice, the answer is none.

Mr D. O’BRIEN — Could I perhaps ask you to check that? I am not doubting your recollecting skills, but if you could check that on notice, as I am talking all ministerial staff, of course, in this respect.

Mr ECCLES — I will take it on notice. There are —

Mr D. O’BRIEN — That may include workplace claims, workplace incident claims — WorkSafe, sorry, I am saying. So including all those either complaints or other issues that have come up.

Mr ECCLES — If there are legal proceedings related to the complaints or if there are privacy considerations in relation to the complaints, I will provide you the information that I am able to provide you, where it is appropriate.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Sure. Finally, what was the cost of production for social media content from an external source, external to DPC, in 2016–17?

Mr ECCLES — We will need to take that on notice, Mr O'Brien.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Okay. Thank you.

Ms WARD — I just wanted to go over the Victorian Centre for Data Insights, if I could. That was announced in November 2016, and it is in DPC. I just want to know how it is working in terms of helping with service delivery and helping agencies across the board connect with each other, particularly in relation to family violence?

Mr BATES — I will just check my notes, Ms Ward, and come to you in a moment.

Ms WARD — Thank you, that's okay. I keep asking the Chair to play *The Girl from Ipanema*, but it doesn't happen.

Mr BATES — So the centre was established in April 2017 when we appointed our first chief data officer, Mr Julian Hebden, and the establishment of the data insights centre is part of the government's information technology strategy. So some of the key things that the centre has commenced work on, the first major piece, was work around setting up a framework. You might be familiar with the Victorian Data Sharing Act, which went through Parliament late last year. We had found, out of the centre for data insights and some other parts of the public sector reform team and following on from some of the work implementing the family violence recommendations, that there was a deep reluctance of public sector staff to share data. I think this is a product of us teaching our staff for 20 years about privacy. So even when there were mechanisms in place for them to appropriately share data, staff were still very reluctant to do that. So we have been doing quite a bit of work, as I said, with the Victorian Data Sharing Act, as well as some other training packages, to tell staff when it is reasonable and appropriate for them to share data.

So there is a framework piece that the centre has been working on, but they have also developed some pretty strong data analytics capability. Some of the projects that they worked on already: they developed a model to support the Victorian building cladding task force, so it was a model where they took in a lot of information about buildings and building design where we did not have precise detail on exactly what cladding had been used where. So it was a risk-based model that the task force used to prioritise their physical inspections of buildings. It was one of the first products that the centre developed.

We have been working on a data reform strategy to try and again lift the capability and understanding of the public sector in the use of data, which has a number of actions. I've mentioned behaviour and cultural change, but also we are building a data dictionary so we can actually, from DPC, have a full view of all the data holdings across different departments and look at ways that we can be connecting them. One of the things the centre has been working on also is there is a real barrier to entry when we are trying to drive public service agencies into better use of data. There are a number of big, heavy-duty statistical packages which have been around for decades. They tend to be coming out of multinational companies, and they tend to be very expensive. So it is like \$25 000 per person per year licences.

One of the projects the centre has undertaken is they have been identifying can I call it low-cost products with similar things. So they have identified products such as Tableau, Power BI, R and Python which have the same capability as the older and more expensive stuff but means we can actually roll out data analytics more broadly across the public sector. They have the benefit that the packages they have been identifying tend to be the ones that graduates coming out of university are familiar with. I am trying to lower the cost of departments using these data analytics tools. As I have mentioned, we have been building a data asset register so we know where all the data holdings are across different parts of government, and we are working together with Treasury on a data valuation project so we can understand the value that we could be getting around making better use of our data.

Just some of the other projects we have got going at the moment: working with DHHS around trends in child protection to better understand how children are interacting with the protection system, and we trying to develop some predictive models so we can more early identify children at risk. We are doing a lot of analytics to support the regional partnerships. We are working with the infringement management and enforcement service to have a better understanding of debtors and the profile of folks with unpaid fines, and again trying to see if we can use some of that analytics into policy development to help with fine recovery.

They are doing some work around predictions around NDIS workforce participation and working with the NDIS branch in DPC to model what we think we will need in terms of workforce going forward. They are working with the veterans branch in DPC to track employment outcomes for ADF veterans who are returning into the community after their service to the country, and also working on a project where we are analysing labour hire use and consultancy use within the public sector to try and identify where we have got hotspots or if there are particular trends that we can see where we can try and reduce expenditure in those areas.

They are the big ones we have got at the moment, but just some of the other ones that they are doing: working in partnership with DELWP on assessing air quality, using the internet of things, so trying to get into much more low cost, lots and lots of sensors. They are doing some crash data analysis work with VicRoads and also some SmartRoads development with VicRoads. You see some of this as the traffic lights on freeways, but there is a lot more to that work. They are working with Justice around detailed analysis on outcomes of the Victorian road safety strategies and also working with Land Use Victoria on some projects around land utilisation analytics to inform better use of land. The other one they are doing is modelling around emergency management in natural disaster response, including some detailed projects around modelling for evacuation from the Great Ocean Road and the Otways in cases of large bushfires. We have really tried to push them into lots of spaces to try and drive data into a lot of the decision-making that is happening within government.

Ms WARD — You mentioned the assistance that data collection and sharing is providing with regional partnerships. How are you connecting with the commonwealth? Is the commonwealth also sharing data with Victoria to help inform what you are doing?

Mr BATES — We have had some very good discussions with CSIRO's Data61. Data61 have got a really good layered dataset where they are making readily available a whole lot of ABS data and other economic data, and we are partnering with them to include some of the state data into their products and import some of their product back into our systems as well.

Ms WARD — So it is a huge amount of work that you are undertaking, and it obviously has immense benefits. How many people are employed in making this happen?

Mr BATES — I will just have a quick check. The team is probably at about 15 or so people at the moment. So that it is in the core centre for data insights. A lot of what we are doing, as I say, is trying to build partnerships and lift capability with other agencies as well.

Ms WARD — It is a huge job. Thank you.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Secretary, DPC obviously plays a coordination role with respect to the Ice Action Taskforce. I am wondering if you can provide, presumably on notice, a list of the KPIs directly associated with the Ice Action Taskforce expenditure.

Mr ECCLES — Yes. I will take it on notice.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Thank you. Can I move to some family violence questions again now. With respect to Safe Steps, are you able to tell us how many calls were made to Safe Steps in the 2016–17 year?

Ms FALKINGHAM — Unfortunately I do not have that information on me, but again I am happy to provide it.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — If you are able to also provide how many were answered and how many went unanswered, if that information is available, and — you may be able to answer the final one — what monitoring mechanisms the department has for oversight in the Safe Steps organisation?

Ms FALKINGHAM — We always have a very rigorous contract arrangement with Safe Steps in relation to call taking, monitoring and responses. So again within the constraints of that contract, I am happy to provide you with that information. We obviously have to seek that information now back by via Family Safety Victoria and the Department of Health and Human Services, but I am very happy to do that for you.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Continuing on family violence, the support and safety hubs that were announced, 448 million in the 16–17 budget, could you update us on which areas they will be in and whether locals in those areas were consulted and how with respect to those safety hubs being established?

Ms FALKINGHAM — Sure. Thank you for your question. Support and safety hubs were a key recommendation of the Royal Commission into Family Violence, and they did recommend 17. The government has already made a commitment to the first five and has fully funded all 17 in the 17–18 budget year. The hubs will scale up over time, with operations commencing in the first five in early 2018. Implementation for the five launch areas is underway. They will be located in Barwon, Bayside Peninsula, inner Gippsland, Mallee and north-east Melbourne. For commencement of the physical hubs operations, they are going to provide visible, non-stigmatising initial contact points, multidisciplinary risk and needs identification, coordinated engagement, service planning and allocation, brief interventions such as practical support and some of those flexible support packages I mentioned earlier, service system navigation and monitoring, and flexible responses tailored to individual needs.

There has been extensive consultation across the state in relation to everything from design to operations. As Family Safety Victoria is no longer part of the DPC portfolio, I am happy to get the detailed local consultation plan from them and provide it to you.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — You said that the first five will be operational in early 2018. Have you got actual dates for those as yet?

Ms FALKINGHAM — They are all different, and to be very frank they are all subject to different lease negotiations that are occurring at the moment. But they are all imminent.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — And the other 12? Any idea of the timing of those?

Ms FALKINGHAM — The government will announce later this year the next phase of those hubs. As I said, they were funded over the forward estimates, so there was no expectation that the 17 would be rolled out in the 17–18 financial year. I think it is worth putting on the record that we have had a lot of feedback from the family violence sector that they did not want us to rush the hubs. It is significant reform and does go to the fact that we are going to be working very differently with the NGO and the community sector. So the consultation has been very intensive. What we want to make sure is that those hubs actually tailor local need, so there is not going to be a one size fits all.

I will give you an example. Obviously in the Mildura region, given the high proportion of Aboriginal family violence we are experiencing there, we have been working with particularly our ACCOs around what the best service model for Mildura will look like. So each hub will look different in terms of the support and services, but they are really also really victim centred. So that group that Rosie Batty chairs has been intensively involved in what that design looks like. Often what looks good from a public service perspective in terms of hub design might not be what victim survivors want to see, so it has been really important from our perspective that they are owned and really are places that victims feel they can go to. They can do self-referrals, they can get referrals from Victoria Police. So it has been important to us that they are really victim led.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Are you able to tell us what the capacity of each hub will be?

Ms FALKINGHAM — It will be different depending on the demand in the area. So we have really calibrated: we have done a lot of heat mapping to understand what services are already available in a hub area and what services we have more demand for. So each one will be slightly different in terms of what the expectation of the contact hours will be and support services in every hub, but when the government launches detail later this year of the first five hubs, that will be available.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Two final questions. I know the department is keen to ensure that they are not operating as silos or that those services are not operating as silos. How will you achieve that? A related question, I guess, is for those geographic areas that are a long way from a hub, how will they be serviced?

Ms FALKINGHAM — That is why it was really important that the 1.9 billion in the 17–18 budget was really comprehensive. So that meant that victim services were rolled out statewide while we were having the transition to the support and safety hubs. We are really open to the fact that we are not going to be replicating a lot of existing services. We needed to make sure they were appropriately funded for the type of demand that they were getting through their doors. That work has actually been occurring.

We are in conversations with all communities in relation to the future and the future rollout. In some instances the royal commission spoke to, obviously, the need for there to be access points, and a really, really tricky conversation, as you would imagine, with the Aboriginal-led organisations was about hubs, and given our commitment to self-determination, what the hubs look like for an Aboriginal community. It has been really intensive work that we want to get right before we start the rollout.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — This is to Deputy Secretary Falkingham. Just back to multicultural affairs. With specific reference to the jobs component of that investment in the 16–17 financial year, can you give us a bit more detail around the sectors, partner employers and cohorts in terms of age groups or ethnic background?

Ms FALKINGHAM — That have been through the program so far?

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Yes, that that investment was made for. Which groups have benefited from that investment?

Ms FALKINGHAM — It is a very broad cohort, and I am really happy to provide that to you through the Chair. I do not have the detailed breakdown with me at the moment.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — I just want to find out a bit more about the Victorian government's contribution to employing people who are either disadvantaged because of their status as asylum seekers or, my favourite topic, because of unconscious bias, that we have raised a couple of times in this forum. Can you give us a bit of an update on both DPC's role in that financial year but also more broadly the public sector's role in bringing in people that are not as advantaged as you and me? Even if you could start with the update to the unconscious bias project in that year.

Ms FALKINGHAM — Sure. I will start with Recruit Smarter, which as you know has been a very successful program and is now oversubscribed in terms of the number of organisations that want to work with us. The Victorian government — being Victoria's largest employer — has a really important role, as you point out, in leading and driving inclusive recruitment practices. Recruit Smarter is a multisector collaborative initiative for the Victorian government to tackle unconscious bias and drive inclusive recruitment practices. It brings together really prominent Australian businesses, and I will just run through some of them. So Dow Chemical, Transurban, United Energy, Westpac, PricewaterhouseCoopers, the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria, the Department of Justice and Regulation, Ambulance Victoria, VicHealth, WorkSafe and the EPA. There is a longer list that I am also happy to provide.

Over the last 18 months Recruit Smarter has seen 35 public, private, academic and non-government organisations participating in this initiative, working innovatively together to trial different ways of recruiting inclusively and stopping unconscious bias. The project is about, as you know, removing barriers to ensure prospective workers can get jobs with the skills, experience and qualifications they have regardless of their background. It had three strategic components. The first was the pilot project, which commenced in late April 2017 and concluded in January 2018. The data is currently being analysed and will be released shortly. We have had a whole —

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Sorry, what dates were they — in September?

Ms FALKINGHAM — It started in April 2017, and it concluded at the end of January 2018, and the data is currently being analysed. We have had sub-working groups bringing together HR practitioners and workforce specialists from participating organisations to develop recommendations for best practice in recruitment processes. We have had knowledge-sharing seminars from a wide range of businesses, even though they are not

pilot members, looking at how they can implement some of the practices so far. We are, as I said, in the final stages of implementation and on track to schedule and deliver the findings later this year. It will obviously go to the secretaries board prior to it being released by government in terms of how we embed Recruit Smarter in our practices in the public service longer term, but I know the Premier is really keen to drive Recruit Smarter across the private sector and so we will be using those findings to really drive and leveraging our commitment to unconscious bias, across the broader Victorian economy.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Two quick follow-ups to that: is there a sample size? You said 35 agencies are involved, which is excellent, but how many positions in the pilot were recruited through blind means?

Ms FALKINGHAM — To my understanding it was just a little over 250 positions.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — That is good — 250 positions.

Ms FALKINGHAM — So it is quite a big sample size.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Yes, that is great. The last supplementary is — and it is up to, obviously, Mr Eccles when he is ready to report — what relevance would this have to board appointments? This government is proud to talk about and deliver, actually — in fact ahead of schedule — 50 per cent female representation on boards and in some sectors more than 50, but I do not know how we are faring on the cultural diversity elements of those boards.

Ms FALKINGHAM — It is a really good question and one that, again, the Premier is really driving us to do better with in terms of the fact that we have been so successful with our gender commitment. Now when a board appointment comes to government we ask the questions, ‘Where do we fit with LGBTI representation? Where do we sit with CALD representation? Where do we sit with Aboriginal Victorian representation?’. And often a group that is forgotten is people with disability living in Victoria.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Yes, that is right.

Ms FALKINGHAM — And so what we are doing is we are working with each of our ministers across the range of appointments that come up to make sure we have got, as a starting point, a better dataset, because right now, through the public service commissioner, they are driving a lot of work in trying to get a better baseline in terms of all of these appointments and then working with our cabinet secretary, Mary-Anne Thomas, who is a big proponent of making sure our boards are as diverse and inclusive as possible.

As you are aware, it is not just about appointing people to the boards; it is making sure that there is the capacity, the capability, the tools and the drivers to sit behind and support those people being really active members of the boards into the future. We are hoping to be able to get to a point where we have similar types of discussions across all Victorian government boards, paid and unpaid, in terms of making sure we are as inclusive and diverse as possible so that then we can take that leadership and really leverage it to the private sector.

Mr MORRIS — Good morning, Secretary. Can I refer to the *Victorian Government Advertising Plan 2016–17*. One of the elements reported there was the spending on the major transport infrastructure projects funding, which was pretty close to \$4.1 million. Could I ask you how much of that funding, or that spending, has been used to advertise the projects, not just the disruptions caused by the projects?

Mr ECCLES — I do not have that information with me, Deputy Chair, but I am happy to provide it to you.

Mr MORRIS — Provide it on notice? Thank you. The 2016–17 DPC annual report talks about a 16 per cent decrease in policy services timeliness as part of that report, on page 21 — down from 95.80 per cent. Given that there are an extra 230 FTEs in the department and salary costs are up 42 per cent, what is driving that decline?

Mr ECCLES — My assumption is that it is to do with just the sheer volume of the policy services that we are having to drive, including, for example, something as important and basic as correspondence. The activity of the government is generating an enormous interest from the community, and so we are trying to keep pace with that particular demand. As you can see from the data, we do have a bit of work to do.

Mr MORRIS — Can you give us an indication, perhaps on notice, of those 230 additional FTEs? As I say, wages costs are up 42 per cent. What sort of additional resource are you putting into that area?

Mr ECCLES — Yes. I think we might be able to help you now, Deputy Chair.

Mr MORRIS — Okay. That would be even better.

Mr BATES — I am just trying to read the very small font I have got here, Deputy Chair, so if you bear with me for a moment.

Mr MORRIS — Yes, I have the same problem.

Mr BATES — Sorry, it is a really small font, so I will just be a moment. I have got it now. So between June 16 and June 17, some of the areas where we had the increases — sorry, that is the agencies. I might just keep looking for a moment, Mr Morris, so I can come back to you in a tick, maybe after your next question.

Mr MORRIS — Okay. Either that or on notice if it is —

Mr BATES — Yes.

Mr MORRIS — Yes. We have had a few dodgy photocopies ourselves this week, so I can relate to that.

Can I move on to Service Victoria, if I may. I think the annual report indicates that Service Victoria continues to lag behind the scheduled rollout, with less than half the expected allocated funding used in the 16–17 year. Given that presumably an efficient rollout of Service Victoria was factored into the outputs when they were crafted, what is the current estimate on the additional cost of service provision across the budget sector caused by the delay to the implementation of this project?

Mr ECCLES — I do not believe that we ever calculated a reduction in government expenditure in the areas that were going to be the subject of Service Victoria's agenda other than a general assessment that, that over the forward estimates and beyond, pushing service transaction to an online environment is going to, by definition, save costs. But there has never been an attribution across service delivery domains of what the saving would be and therefore it forming part of budgeting.

Mr MORRIS — In May last year Minister Jennings told this committee that there was a business plan being implemented for Service Victoria. Can you indicate to me what the current status of the business plan is and if it has been released or when it is going to be released?

Mr BATES — Yes, I can, Mr Morris. Quickly if I can run through just either side of 2016–17 and where we are in the gateway review processes and then that will take us to where the functionality is at the moment. Just before the start of the 2016–17 year we had a gateway 3 review, which was readiness for market, and that was in preparation for going out to market for the prime contractors. So it is Deloitte Digital who have been building the core website that is visible. The other main partner is Salesforce, who are providing the customer relationship management system at the back end. We had that in June 2016.

In March 2017 we had the final tender decision, so gateway 3 ticked off the go-to-market approach and then we had responses back. We then had the gateway 4 tender decision in March 2017. That one came in at — but I think we had a few red recommendations, which were mainly around the configuration of the technical team in Service Victoria, and we have addressed all of those ones. So we had five red recommendations, and we have addressed all of those. They were around improving agency representation on the project control board. One of them was that the gateway review recommended that we have the legislation pass the Parliament. I think the legislation is still before the Parliament. The recommendation was that we enter into detailed memorandums of understanding with the agencies whose services we were going to transition in, and we have done that with Victoria Police and VicRoads and in the aquatic sports space with fisheries for fishing licences, so those MoUs are all in place.

There was some stuff around reviewing the role and position descriptions, of particularly the program director at Service Victoria, which we did, and also about us continually updating the project implementation plan. I know it is outside the year here, but I can report we had the gateway 5 readiness for service review last week, and that has come in with a green. So we have got the green light to go to full production.

In terms of where Service Victoria has been over the last year and a bit, we had a within-the-public-sector closed test run in 2016–17, so towards the end of the year. We were particularly using that for what I will call

the user experience thing. We had some practice transactions there where we got people to go onto the website and then we were running feedback sessions afterwards, like did it make sense and did it feel right to them. Then in October we opened it up for what we called a beta test, so people have been doing live transactions. I knew it was there so I went and renewed my wife's car registration in October and it all worked. The money went out of my account and I then jumped across to the VicRoads system to make sure the rego had been paid and it had.

In that beta phase we have had just over 14 000 transactions through the Service Victoria beta site. That includes 1 700 people who have updated their details on their working with children card. As I said, in the aquatic sports space we have had just over 1900 fishing licences issued. We have had just over 2400 either motor vehicle or boat registrations renewed and we have had a further 4500 people use Service Victoria to check if their rego is current.

The pleasing one, I think, is with Victoria Police. We have made Partysafe registrations available on Service Victoria, so we have had just under 250 people register parties with their local police station through the Service Victoria channel.

With that green light from the gateway 5 review that we have just been through we expect we can go into full production in the next little while. I can duck across to my iPad if you are interested in the financials during 16–17 as well.

Mr MORRIS — I am really interested in the business plan and whether there was a discrete business plan or whether it was simply the gateway process that was —

Mr BATES — There is a project implementation plan as well, which we are describing as horizon 1 and horizon 2. I will just quickly get you the transactions that we have got at the moment. As I said, some of the ones we talked about there are in horizon 1, which is the first group of transactions we are bringing on. We will also be bringing on some births, deaths and marriages transactions. We are just waiting for them to finish an upgrade of their core systems before we start linking to them. Then that will take us, we think, to the middle of this year where it will be operational with a range of transactions. We are also in discussion with a number of other agencies who want to move some of their transactions into Service Victoria.

The pleasing thing, I think, Mr Morris, at the moment is we have got to the point now where other government agencies are coming to Service Victoria and saying, 'Can I join?', because they have seen that the system is stable, it is working. We have got a payments gateway there. We have negotiated some pretty good rates with the bank, so if people look very, very closely they may find that paying for a licence through Service Victoria will be marginally cheaper than through the home agency because they have higher merchant fees on their credit card transactions. And we are talking to some of the alternative PayWay payment options like PayPal. We do not have that operational yet, but we are also trying to modernise and bring those things as options on the Service Victoria space.

As I said, car registration renewal, car registration check, boat registration renewal, fishing permits, working with children, and Partysafe. As I said, we will be trying to add births, deaths and marriages requests later in this year. And we have also added from Victoria Police 'register my house'. So if you are going away for a month's holiday and you want to register your home with the local police station, that one is, I think, nearly operational as well now. Those are the sorts of key things that we have working in Service Victoria. My expectation is we will probably go into full production in the next month or two.

In terms just of the benefits that we had in the original business case around the investment logic map, we had allocated 10 per cent of the benefit to improve customer satisfaction, so it is just easier to do your transactions with government. We are looking at a 20 per cent reduction in effort or 20 per cent of the benefit. It is easier to do the transactions with government, so you do not have to hunt around for websites. A lot of what we did in the beta testing was: what were people looking for when they came onto the website, and we have reordered how they see a lot of the transactions when they hit there.

We are looking actually to reduce the cost of transactions to government, so less paper processing and things being done electronically. We are looking for a change in channel mix, so again it is taking people away from — even if it is going to Australia Post to pay their bills because there is a transaction fee that agencies incur there. A couple of the other big ones that we think will improve regulatory compliance — so lifting

people's awareness of the policies and improving awareness of government policy settings in their particular space. I have to say it is going pretty well. I can quickly do a budget, if that is of interest.

Mr MORRIS — I think, via the Chair —

The CHAIR — It has been nearly 14 minutes, Mr Morris. I think we might come back to that.

Mr MORRIS — Can I just say, the implementation plan — can that be made available to the committee?

Mr BATES — Yes, we can get an updated version of the project plan.

Mr MORRIS — That would be good, but I do thank you for a fulsome answer.

Ms SHING — It was indeed a fulsome answer. I would like to talk about the equality component of budget paper 3, page 103 and the reference to combating homophobia. I do note that the 16–17 state budget made an investment of \$29 million towards combating homophobia and providing services and facilities for LGBTI Victorians and that, as part of this overall spend, there was \$2.5 million allocated to initiatives to combat homophobia, biphobia, transphobia and discrimination against people with intersex variations. So there was \$1 million allocated in 16–17, with \$500 000 dedicated to the LGBTI regional and rural roadshow, which is about bringing services, assistance and access to conversations to people in regional and rural Victoria. Nearly two dozen towns have had the benefit of this roadshow, with community organisations and councils having input and many hundreds if not thousands of people attending.

I would like to talk about the substantive benefit and return on this investment as it relates to combating homophobia in the context of not just the number of towns that have been visited as part of the roadshow, but what the outcomes have been for this cohort of Victorians who have had, including within the relevant reporting period, a very tough time in the context of some pretty relentless public commentary about what it means for us to be LGBTI Victorians. Whoever wants to take that, feel free to dive right on in.

Ms FALKINGHAM — I will jump in. Thank you for your question. As you know, the LGBTI Equality Roadshow is being led by the commissioner for gender and sexuality, Rowena Allen, who drives us all to do excellent work in this portfolio. The roadshow began in November 2016 and is ongoing. To date it has visited 23 towns across rural and regional Victoria. The roadshow works with regional and rural communities to reduce discrimination and promote LGBTI inclusion by connecting communities to support LGBTI people in rural and regional Victoria and by providing really practical steps on how to promote LGBTI inclusion. Just on that, I think we have been overwhelmed by the number of councils and local governments that have actually taken their own steps and their own initiatives to actually build their own frameworks for how to support LGBTI people in the community.

Ms SHING — So based on that evidence you have just given, there is an identified need from within regional and rural communities for supports to be provided to LGBTIQ Victorians?

Ms FALKINGHAM — Absolutely. I think that, having had the privilege of attending a number, the overwhelming emotion and sharing of stories that have come from the roadshow — I must say that our equality team have been exceptionally moved by the response to the roadshow. People that have never spoken publicly about their experience were coming forward to actually say and to write letters in follow up to Minister Foley and to talk about the fact that they have had the courage to then become leaders in their community and support more junior and younger people in the LGBTI community — you cannot put a dollar value, as you know, on the impact that is going to have on communities in the longer term. Building awareness and training service providers so that services become more inclusive and accessible has been another one of the outcomes from this process — the number of service providers that may have never even thought about the fact that their programs were not inclusive — to actually sit down and talk to them about what they can do, what is best practice and how they can better support the community.

The roadshow so far has actually engaged with over 2000 attendees and 200 community organisations, so you can imagine, as you are very aware, the complexity and logistics involved in that. The community consultations were held to discuss progress in terms of growth, and in sharing what works and what is not working at a community level.

Ms SHING — That is going to vary enormously, though, depending on where you are within the state. I would imagine, similar to answers you have given in response to other questions today, that the communities within the LGBTIQ community would vary enormously around particular characteristics, needs or identified priorities. How has the roadshow actually tackled that? I would imagine the experience as it relates to accessing services is very different in some parts of the state as compared with others.

Ms FALKINGHAM — I think one of the really important aspects of the program has been how the equality branch has taken back the feedback they get from local communities about the varying needs and support services, and their inclusivity. They actually talk to our partners, be it in DEDJTR or be it in Health and Human Services, around the types of tailoring that needs to take place, or even to restart and reengineer programs from an inclusive perspective. You mentioned earlier as well obviously the fact that the roadshow occurred during the prolonged national marriage equality debate. I think that one of the things that the commissioner discussed was the fact that it was really empowering and a great opportunity to actually show the Victorian government cared and really wanted to support and work very differently in terms of how we do support and how we do include LGBTI communities. The commissioner will talk about how, in terms of the timing, it probably could not have been better in terms of being out there and talking directly, and showing a different side to that debate.

Ms SHING — Just by way of a supplementary — if there is the capacity for qualitative and quantitative responses to be provided on the extent to which the marriage equality postal survey and broader public debate featured as part of the work undertaken in these roadshows and in the visits over the relevant reporting period, I would be very grateful to see that where it can be provided.

Ms FALKINGHAM — We are very happy to do that.

Mr MORRIS — Secretary, in June 2017 the Minister for Equality issued a media release regarding the proposed same-sex marriage plebiscite. And of course the plebiscite itself had a very satisfactory outcome. That is a personal opinion, but certainly I think it was an excellent outcome.

The CHAIR — Wholeheartedly endorsed by other members of this committee.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Personal opinions are all right now from that side obviously.

Mr MORRIS — The minister indicated in that announcement that he was allocating \$500 000 with a particular focus on projects for vulnerable groups, with the stated intention of supporting mental health. I am wondering whether you can tell the committee: did the department, in implementing this government commitment, have a scientific basis or rationale for those particular grants, or was it simply — as, frankly, it appeared to be on the surface — a partisan incursion into the debate?

Ms SHING — I did not think it was a partisan debate, Mr Morris.

Ms WARD — No, I thought it was a debate about equality.

The CHAIR — Order!

Ms SHING — Is that not the whole reason that all but four of your party voted for marriage equality?

The CHAIR — Order, Ms Shing!

Mr MORRIS — The same media release described the plebiscite as 'damaging'.

Ms SHING — It was not a plebiscite, Mr Morris; it was a postal survey. Let us get the terminology very, very clear.

Ms WARD — No, it was not a plebiscite, and I think it was very clear how emotionally damaging it was to a number of people.

Mr MORRIS — I am reading from the media release, mentioning 'plebiscite'.

The CHAIR — Order!

Ms FALKINGHAM — We became very aware during the debate around marriage equality that a high number of people were coming forward to mental health and more broadly health services seeking support and counselling. Organisations providing mental health support to LGBTI Victorians reported quite a massive increase in unmanageable demand for their services, in number, severity and complexity, during the debate. As a result, the Victorian government did announce 500 000 to provide LGBTI Victorians with additional mental health and wellbeing resources and support in response to the proposal to hold the plebiscite.

The Victorian government did go through a really robust process around the allocation of those grants, really based on who could provide those services. There are not that many people in Victoria that can provide really tailored LGBTI counselling and mental health services, and in fact this has raised the need to actually look at what more we can do to acquit more health and mental health services and to be able to provide those into the future.

In 2017 a VicHealth study of 2200 Victorians, including around 900 LGBTI people, found that LGBTI Victorians reported an average mental health wellbeing score of 73.6 compared to heterosexuals, who rated their mental health wellbeing as 77.5. So before this process started we were already dealing with a huge demand in mental health services for our LGBTI community. The grants that were allocated were really based on where the demand was, as I mentioned, and also who was equipped and who was accredited to provide those services.

Mr MORRIS — Just picking up that point, can you indicate to me the rationale for directing 100 000 of that 500 000 to Headspace Mildura, run by Mr Ian Seal?

Ms FALKINGHAM — It was based on the services that that organisation currently provides, and there was demand for those services at the time.

Mr MORRIS — Twenty per cent of the total quantum available went to a service servicing a relatively low population.

Ms FALKINGHAM — But they do also provide services beyond their region.

Mr MORRIS — Okay. Can I ask you about the acquittal process? I am advised that there was 100 000 made available to the Victorian Pride Centre to establish a virtual platform of web-based resources that in fact never went up, so I am just wondering how the department followed up on how the money was spent.

Ms FALKINGHAM — That is not my understanding, Mr Morris, but I am happy to follow that up. We have rigorous contracts with any funding that we provide in the equality portfolio, so I am very happy to provide you details of what we contracted them to deliver and what they have acquitted against.

Mr MORRIS — It would be good if you can provide that information, and certainly it would be preferable if in fact the site did go to air, so to speak.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Secretary, last year we asked you about the expenditure on the special adviser to the Premier, the member for Footscray. During the reporting period it was revealed that Khalil Eideh was also a special adviser to the Premier. Can you provide the committee with any expenditure associated with Mr Eideh's special adviser position?

Mr ECCLES — I do not have that information before me.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Was there any?

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

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Can you take that on notice, Secretary?

Mr ECCLES — I will take that on notice.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Likewise it was confirmed that Ms Thomson had a departmental office — in a different department, I acknowledge. Prior to his resignation as special adviser, did Mr Eideh have a special office?

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

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Can I again ask you to take that on notice and get back to us?

Mr ECCLES — Thank you.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Did DPC provide any advice to Mr Eideh with respect to the closure of and changing of the locks on his parliamentary office, and was there any assistance provided to any staff?

Mr ECCLES — No.

Ms WARD — I would like to shift the focus to veterans and the support that is being given to veterans in Victoria. If I can get you to have a look at page 29 in your annual report, where you talk about support to veterans in Victoria over the 16–17 period, can you talk us through the challenges that veterans over that period have experienced and how the department has responded to that?

Mr PHEMISTER — Thanks, Ms Ward; I can. Obviously the recent period, and particularly this year, is a big deal for veterans as we celebrate the centenary of World War I. However, obviously our veterans and commemorations are not limited to veterans from World War I. Obviously there are a range of conflicts that Australians have participated in that are part of the commemoration and support exercise.

Firstly, on the commemoration side, the centenary of World War I has spawned a great deal of activity on the community side of remembrance, and that is a really important part of respecting our war veterans and supporting our war veterans. Commemoration activities are important to both the community and the veterans, and when these two things align we think that is the most powerful.

So \$5 million over four years was dedicated to commemoration activities, including the Anzac centenary roadshow and Anzac centenary grants program. That is on the commemoration side. On your question about supports, Ms Ward, obviously veterans affairs and post-service support is the responsibility of the federal government. However, the state has been increasingly getting involved to make sure those supports do not fall short of the needs of veterans. One example we have in the state is some mental health supports that have been provided to veterans and also some employment advocacy and support that have been provided to veterans. One of the really joyful things that I have been involved in in the last two years, particularly back through this financial year, was the establishment of the veterans employment strategy.

Ms WARD — Could you explain that? I suspect there are a number of people who do not understand the significance of that program and what it actually means to veterans.

Mr PHEMISTER — Of course. The significance of the program is really clear to me. We have retired Major General McLachlan leading the exercise for us, and nobody can provide a perspective quite like him when it comes to post-service years of veterans. We ran the program out of Veterans Affairs rather than through mainstream job services or other services provided to vulnerable groups for one particular reason: definitely veterans are unique, but secondly, there is a real reluctance from veterans to be loaded up with other cohorts. I think they — coming from David's comments — would in some ways stigmatise veterans in their pursuit of employment. While we had a lot of conversations with David and the veterans council about that, where we landed was that we have a really highly skilled group of veterans — people exiting the defence forces.

Over the years our veterans affairs portfolio has been aimed at the World War I commemoration and the Anzac commemoration, but actually what we are seeing is a lot of really terrifically talented people coming out of the defence forces that are perceived by the community as scarred in some way, shape or form but actually are highly talented, productive individuals. If what they need is some support to get them out of the service and into jobs, then we are happy to provide those supports, and that is exactly what this program does.

We actually have a few younger veterans who work for us on this program. It was important to us that they were the ones who designed it, so with David's leadership, obviously retired, and these young veterans, we got a really great insight into the process of, if you like, demilitarising a mode of working and then the challenges faced in engaging with the labour market, be it through job search supports, mental health supports, training supports or anything else the veterans themselves tell us they need.

Ms SHING — I am just going to leap in very quickly. You said that there is a perception about people being scarred. In many cases they are, so post-traumatic stress is in fact a big component of this. How is that worked into the employment strategy as part of assisting with adjustment and indeed full participation?

Mr PHEMISTER — Ms Shing, that is a really great question. I should say that there are many who are not as well. What is important to us is that, on exiting the military, services are on hand to help people really get on top of and understand whether they do have post-traumatic issues. They sometimes do not become apparent straightaway, so it is really important that supports are not seen as a transaction; it is an ongoing support. And that is one of the unique parts of this program. Yes, there are definitely mental health services provided and the Department of Veterans' Affairs have responsibility for that, but we do step in, and obviously the state mental health system is really strong, and we give the veterans access to that. But it is not an assumption as people come out. It is certainly a checkpoint and a service that is offered, rather than assumed.

Ms WARD — A slight segue — you spoke about the investment in commemorations and so on. There was \$1 million during this reporting period that was invested in the celebration of Long Tan. I know what happened locally. We had some fantastic things with my DViets and the vigil that we held at David Wallis's grave and so on in Eltham. Can you talk to us about what happened statewide and also the contribution of the federal government in this space?

Mr PHEMISTER — Yes. I can talk about Long Tan from a state perspective. I may have to take the exact contribution from the federal government on notice; I do not have the numbers or stats available to me.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — It would probably be better to ask the federal government.

Mr PHEMISTER — The Battle of Long Tan commemoration was a really great moment. I am not sure whether you participated — you said you did in Eltham, and we had obviously the big moment at the Shrine where the Premier led a really touching service that involved a lot of veterans from different regiments and different countries and nations. It was a really moving moment when the Premier spoke. We had a lot of veterans who in some way felt alienated from traditional commemoration services, and I think that was the marked experience from the Long Tan commemorations this year. Yes, we did put a lot of energy into it, and you were there, so you would have noticed there were a lot of schoolchildren involved, and there is a whole education campaign built up around Long Tan. What we think we got out of that, from a commemoration perspective, is an evolution of the spirit of Anzac and an acceptance that Long Tan very much built on the legacy of Anzac and is a core and proud part of Australia's military history. That was the goal, and we think based on that day and all the local services we achieved it.

Ms WARD — I think you are right. My local Vietnam veterans were very appreciative of the work that went in and it really did mean a great deal to them.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — I understand the difficulties veterans have with traditional ceremonies, and I highly recommend everyone read a book called *Well Done, Those Men* by a Gippsland author, Barry Heard. He tells of his experiences in Vietnam. It is a cracking book and just a brilliant reflection on the troubles that Vietnam veterans still have today.

Secretary, a couple of cost questions: can you provide details of the department's energy costs in dollar terms over the 2016–17 financial year and whether there is an increase, decrease or otherwise on previous years?

Mr ECCLES — In the interests of time, Mr O'Brien, I do not think we have it with us, but we can provide it to you.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — I ask for a breakdown on electricity and, if you have gas, gas as well.

Mr ECCLES — We will provide what we have.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — That would be great, thank you. Likewise could I ask for the interstate travel costs for DPC staff and also any ministers or ministerial staff for the period in question? Would you have that?

Mr ECCLES — Yes.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Also any international travel costs for DPC staff, if that could be made available to us, please.

Mr ECCLES — Yes.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Secretary, there was an advertisement recently for staff in your department — insight officers — where the Department of Premier and Cabinet is recruiting a passionate team to work within an innovative digital insights programs. That is recently. My question is with respect to the financial year that we are talking about, whether that team was already operating or whether that team is now new?

Mr ECCLES — It was not operating in the reporting period and is a relatively recent initiative.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Okay. So that team, the ad was for one. Is it one staff member or is it quite a number?

The CHAIR — We can come back to that in May if you like, Mr O'Brien.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Indeed. Secretary, in a similar vein, the number of communications staff across the public service in January 2017 was 1252. I understand as at January this year it has increased to 597. In the last two years that has gone up from 802. In other words, it is a 99 per cent increase in communications staff across the public service in the past two years. Can you explain why that has occurred?

Mr ECCLES — I can have a crack at a general explanation about the need for there to be a commensurate increase in the volume of communications by government to align with its aggressive policy agenda. There is a lot going on and therefore the need to communicate what is going on to the community is at its most elevated.

I am sure that if we were to break down the specifics of the increase in the number of communications professionals, you would see a direct alignment to the areas of government activity. I am happy to go back and provide you with the information about the breakdown of the communications personnel to government activity, but I reckon I would take a punt on there being a very close alignment between the growth and the areas of increased government activity. That ranges from the infrastructure agenda right through to our department where in Aboriginal Victoria we now have dedicated communications expertise. I reckon those two examples would be replicated across the public service.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Potentially, Secretary. It is a doubling of communications numbers. We have not had anything like a doubling of activity in government.

Mr ECCLES — There has been a doubling of infrastructure investment, so I expect that the volume of communications associated with that would bear some relationship to the quantum of the increase in investment.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Thank you.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Secretary, I just want to ask about the Shrine of Remembrance. Your annual report shows a huge increase in the reporting period of student participation. If we go back 2013–14, 51 000, and up to the reporting period, 69 000 for 16–17 is a huge increase. I just wanted to get a sense of what investments were made that led to 19 000 — I do not know if we are talking about a 20 per cent increase or more — in student participation at the shrine?

Mr PHEMISTER — Thank you very much. I can walk you through that. Anybody who has been down to the shrine, it is obviously an icon of Melbourne. Now with the advent of the museum underneath and the landscaping, it makes it a far more accessible and engaging place to visit as well as touching, which it has always been.

The numbers of shrine visits have been consistently high over a number of years. If you followed participation in commemoration, there was a downturn in living memory, but what we have seen recently is an enduring uptick and a real consistency in that uptick. We are seeing 50 000, 60 000 on a yearly basis. Obviously they peak around Anzac Day, those visits. Over the last four years of reporting period we have seen some wet days, we have seen some really cold days, but the weather has not deterred those peaks in attendance.

The investment in the museum underneath — for anyone who has not been there, it is a really compelling set of exhibitions — has indeed boosted numbers. What we are seeing is a more engaging visitor experience. Sometimes raw visitor numbers are not the best of guides for commemoration. Sometimes it is a walk by. What we are seeing now, I would argue, is that while the numbers have been consistent over the last four years, we are seeing a far longer visit from people and a far more engaging visit. The idea is education. We are seeing a

trend towards school groups now visiting the shrine not just for the photos and the spectacle of what is an amazing monument but an engaging experience through the commemoration exhibitions underneath.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Beyond the iconic status of the shrine and the 100-year commemoration of Anzac Day, what else explains the increase? It is a huge increase. Did you provide assistance to schools? Was there an investment of assistance in schools? I cannot recall.

Mr PHEMISTER — There indeed was.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Transport, is that right?

Mr PHEMISTER — There is, Mr Dimopoulos. I can go right back to basically —

Mr DIMOPOULOS — What interests me more about that is those who need transport may be schools with a lower socio-economic profile or those further away from the centre of town in regional Victoria.

Mr PHEMISTER — Yes. We are seeing that. I have got in my notes here from Veterans that TripAdvisor continues to highlight the shrine as Melbourne's number one tourist destination. I suppose we should get that on the record.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Number one? I thought that would be my office.

Mr PHEMISTER — Right. What we are seeing — and I think it goes to Ms Ward's question earlier as well — is that with Long Tan being commemorated in such a sincere way, we are seeing lots of different demographics go through the shrine. It is not just about going in with the World War I commemoration experience in mind; we are seeing more and more.

What we have provided is a range of subsidies for schools. We have actually outreached to schools to bring students in, hence the demographic change I was talking about in terms of visitors and visitor engagement. So, yes, there have been investments to subsidise travel in for school students.

There are also investments made to help people get to large commemorations. Long Tan is a great example. Down in Gippsland we had a great participation for people going to Gippsland. If local branches told us there were people having a difficulty getting to the shrine, we helped out either with logistical management — in some cases subsidy — in partnership with the local RSL branches and other veterans bodies to make sure people could actually access those larger events.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Fantastic. Thank you.

Mr MORRIS — Secretary, regarding the whole-of-government family violence output, which was identified in the 16–17 budget, according to the *Rolling Action Plan 2017–2020* there is \$133.2 million allocated to additional headlease properties available for households impacted by family violence. I am just wondering how many properties have become available, within the reporting period of course, for households impacted by family violence and how many of those properties have in fact been occupied.

Ms FALKINGHAM — Thanks, Mr Morris, for the question. That does relate obviously to the expenditure as part of the 1.9 billion in the 2017–18 year. We do not have that information at hand because the director of housing holds all that information, so we are happy to refer that question to the director of housing.

Mr MORRIS — Given that it is a whole-of-government program, that is why it is being addressed to DPC. So can you obtain that information on —

Ms FALKINGHAM — I can, but unfortunately I have got the 16–17 information with me, and that is why I do not have the 17–18 information with me.

Mr MORRIS — Yes. So despite the fact that it was the 16–17 budget, are you saying there is no expenditure in the 16–17 period?

Ms FALKINGHAM — Sorry, you are referring to *Rolling Action Plan 2017–2020*, which was a response to the 2017–18 budget.

Mr MORRIS — The 17–18 budget? Okay. The advice I have is it is 16–17.

Ms FALKINGHAM — There was a component of the 572 which was absolutely for headleasing, but that does not relate to the *Rolling Action Plan*. That was the initial investment of the 572 in the 16–17 budget.

Mr MORRIS — If we forget the *Rolling Action Plan*, have any properties been acquired or made available, and how many have been occupied in the 16–17 year?

Ms FALKINGHAM — Yes, they most definitely have. As I said, I just do not have that information at hand.

Mr MORRIS — In the 16–17 year?

Ms FALKINGHAM — Yes, it was part of the 572 million that was part of the 16–17 budget.

Mr MORRIS — And are you able to obtain that for us?

Ms FALKINGHAM — I will get that from the director of housing for you, Mr Morris.

Mr MORRIS — Thank you. I have a further series of questions, sort of picking that up. I am wondering, of those who received a lease, how many were already on the public housing waiting list? For the next two I do not know whether the information is in fact recorded, but I just want to find out which groups in the community are affected, whether there is a record of how many properties were leased to male victims and how many properties were leased to members of the LGBTI community. But I am also interested in knowing what resources, if any, have been made available to these survivors as a pathway to permanent housing.

Ms FALKINGHAM — I am very happy to provide that information to you. It is worth noting, though, that often we do not ask people to identify, and also that relates to any issues of safety when it comes to how these people have been given that crisis accommodation.

Mr MORRIS — Yes. That is why I phrased it the way I did — if the information is available. And, finally, the sorts of resources specifically provided to those in headlease properties to aid their recovery into permanent housing.

Ms FALKINGHAM — Absolutely. That is linked to the flexible support packages that the up to \$7000 per annum people are able to get access to, so we can provide you with that information.

Mr MORRIS — Thank you for that. I have been provided with information that is not appropriate for your department so I am not going to go there, Chair. I do not know if Mr O'Brien has anything he wants to take up.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Very quickly, we talked about the Latrobe Valley Authority before. Could I get, and on notice if necessary, the budget for the authority itself — so not what it is spending but for the admin of the authority — and also a breakdown of the staff numbers within the Latrobe Valley Authority, including a breakdown of the executive versus officer level staff?

Mr PHEMISTER — Mr Morris, I can. I actually have some —

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Mr O'Brien.

Mr PHEMISTER — Sorry, Mr O'Brien. I can indeed. I have some details of the breakdown now. You are talking about the administrative component of the budget, so it is the \$20 million Latrobe Valley administrative component.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Yes, as opposed to —

Mr PHEMISTER — The 266.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — grant funding and all the other stuff. Yes, just the authority itself.

Mr PHEMISTER — I can definitely do that.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — If you have got it there, I am happy to take it now.

Mr PHEMISTER — I do not have the staffing breakdown by classification level. I have a bit of detail on the administrative budget, the split between salaries and non-salary expenses, but it is probably best to capture all that in one.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — That would be great, on notice. Thank you.

Ms SHING — I would also like to keep going with the Latrobe Valley Authority to the extent that we are already on that subject matter, and I note that as part of establishment costs there would be a need to engage with community, industry, employers and representative bodies as part of the development of the worker transfer scheme. When the authority was first set up, how was the methodology determined for engagement with industry, employers, local government and representative bodies, and how was that worked through as part of effectively a whole-of-government response to what was happening in the Latrobe Valley at that time? I am looking for measures of success around the way in which that dialogue began during the relevant reporting period.

Mr PHEMISTER — Yes, sure. I will get into the launch of the Latrobe Valley Authority because, once it was all public and the community was looking to engage. it was a tumultuous time in the valley obviously. Engie announced its departure from the valley, and within 24 hours we had stood up an information service. The shingle was out the front. Within 24 hours an information service — a hotline — was established. Immediately we called around all the local governments, the three local government areas down there, and to the best of our ability tapped into their local networks. But we already had a terrific regional partnership down there and so we immediately used that regional partnership as our conduit to community. We have a really great leadership in that regional partnership, and at that point in time it was already established with a great, strong membership base.

We directed the Latrobe Valley Authority to the regional partnership in the first instance as their conduit from community. They had already had their first assembly at that point in time, and that gave us a whole lot of intelligence for establishment. The first thing the CEO did after the shingle went up and the information service was provided — because there was a lot of uncertainty and a lot of people upset and psychosocial support was just as important as economic support — was to start to establish community networks to actually co-design how the valley authority would run with local community.

Ms SHING — And to what extent — and I note that there were acting arrangements —

The CHAIR — Order! We might take that question on notice. If there is a question, briefly, Ms Shing.

Ms SHING — No. You know what, I can just have a conversation about it.

The CHAIR — 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 should be provided within 10 business days of that request. All recording equipment must now be turned off.

Witnesses withdrew.