

Questions taken on notice and further information agreed to be supplied at the hearings

Portfolio:	PREMIER
Witness:	Mr MOULE
Committee member:	Mr RIORDAN
Pages of transcript:	4 – 6

Questions:

Mr RIORDAN: My question to the Secretary, please: what is the total legal cost paid for Department of Premier and Cabinet legal representation during the COVID inquiry?

Mr MOULE: Thank you, Deputy Chair. As the inquiry is still ongoing, that matter has not been finalised. The intent would be to absolutely report those matters in the normal course of events.

...

Mr RIORDAN: Could you give the committee a ballpark of what we might have racked up so far in this Coate inquiry for the Premier's office?

Mr MOULE: I do not have that material at hand, Deputy Chair, but I am happy to provide some information.

Mr RIORDAN: Can you take that on notice?

Mr MOULE: Yes.

Mr RIORDAN: I think it would be useful to have a sense of where we are heading with it as it has almost finished. Secretary, what is the total legal cost paid for Mr Andrews's legal representation during the Coate inquiry?

Mr MOULE: I give a very similar answer, Deputy Chair: I do not have that material in front of me, but to the extent that I am able to I am happy to pursue that—

Mr RIORDAN: Take that on notice? Thank you. Secretary, what is the total legal cost paid for Mr Eccles's legal representation—your predecessor—during the Coate inquiry?

Mr MOULE: Those costs would be incorporated in the overall costs of the Department of Premier and Cabinet related to the Coate inquiry, so they will form part of the figures that you were asking about with your first question.

Answer:

DPC costs

As at 4 December 2020, the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC) had been invoiced approximately \$1,011,000 (incl. GST) in relation to external legal services relating to the COVID-19 Hotel Quarantine Board of Inquiry (Inquiry). However, DPC's insurer has

confirmed it will meet these costs (less a deductible of \$25,000) pursuant to DPC's existing insurance arrangements.

Premier costs

The Premier is separately represented from the Department at the Inquiry. I can confirm that DPC has not provided any funding to support the Premier's legal representation.

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Portfolio:	PREMIER
Witness:	PREMIER
Committee member:	Mr HIBBINS
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Question:

Mr HIBBINS: Thank you. Some of the evidence that we have heard in regard to our multicultural communities for this inquiry—and I will just read to you from a submission from the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria—stated:

By far the overarching problem cited both by community members and multicultural organisations was the lack of coordination by the State Government of a taskforce including multicultural organisations and ethnic associations with long experience in working directly with ethnic communities.

...

Communities and organisations mentioned difficulties in accessing updated, official information in different languages, in a timely manner.

Do you accept this criticism of the government's response?

Mr ANDREWS: Sure. Mr Hibbins, I am happy to concede that there will always be learnings when it comes to public messaging, behavioural change and public awareness in a dynamic, often fearful environment where there is a great diversity, which is a great strength but presents challenges sometimes. It is a unique event. If it is okay with you—because I do not want this sense that we have not done a lot and that all of our agencies and partners have not done a lot—and **if it would be of interest to you, in addition to my answer today I can write to you or write to the committee and provide you with a full accounting of all the translated material, the social media interactions in language and what must be thousands of meetings that will have been held over the course of the year around outbreak management.**

Answer

Throughout the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the Victorian Government has worked to translate information for Victoria's diverse multicultural communities, translating vital information into 58 languages. Translated information can be accessed here:

www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/translations

A dedicated Coronavirus Hotline [1800 675 398] has also been established to provide advice 24 hours a day with access to interpreters, and in-language advertising campaigns focusing on restrictions, testing and ways to stay safe have been running throughout 2020.

We have also invested an additional \$3 million to boost interpreting and translating services, including increasing access to translated information and upskilling translators and interpreters on coronavirus (COVID-19) specific language translations.

We also know that communicating with multicultural Victorians is not simply about translating information. It's why we have implemented a number of initiatives to engage effectively with multicultural communities throughout the pandemic, including:

- regular roundtables to share critical information and to gain insights into community experiences during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.
- dedicated audio and video in-language content, and a series of in-language videos in 56 languages with community ambassadors, ensuring communities had a trusted voice on news of restrictions and how to stay safe
- supported a daily broadcast multilingual news service in 22 languages in partnership with the National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasters' Council for distribution to Victorian community radio stations and online
- developed cultural observances campaigns strategy to ensure Victorians continue to understand and observe restrictions around significant cultural and faith events
- provided regular briefings to the multicultural sector on the latest coronavirus (COVID-19) information
- utilised long-established communication channels of the Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC) to distribute health information

The Victorian Government is also working closely with local councils and their community and service provider networks including ongoing engagement and communications activities and establishing outbreak response community working groups.

We've also established local partnerships with six councils across Melbourne to undertake targeted engagement and communication activities, including working with health providers, service providers, local bicultural workers, community health champions and community groups to improve understanding of COVID-safe behaviours and access to supports.

In August 2020, we also established the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Communities Taskforce to coordinate support for Victoria's CALD communities, including the provision of culturally appropriate meals, emergency kits, outreach calls and online outreach.

The CALD Communities Taskforce has also focused on international students and temporary migrants, who have been some of the hardest hit during the pandemic. This includes promotion of targeted testing across priority locations, the development of tailored promotional videos including to encourage testing and supports for migrant workers returning to work to stay COVID safe.

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Portfolio:	PREMIER
Witness:	PREMIER
Committee member:	Ms VALLENCE
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Question:

Ms VALLENCE: Did any of the private security who worked on the hotel quarantine program for the returned travellers also work at hotels where healthcare workers stayed for the Hotels for Heroes program?

Mr ANDREWS: I could not answer that question.

Ms VALLENCE: Will you take it on notice?

Mr ANDREWS: I am happy to provide you with whatever I can relevantly add.

Answer:

Security services were not provided in the Hotels for Heroes program. Frontline workers were staying voluntarily at the Hotels for Heroes sites and therefore security was not required.

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Committee member:	Ms VALLENCE
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Question:

Ms VALLENCE: As we have heard earlier, Victoria will recommence accepting international arrivals. **Can you tell us what budget provisioning has been made for these returning travellers relating to the new hotel quarantine arrangements from 7 December? Whereabouts is that in the budget?**

Mr ANDREWS: I cannot provide you with a definitive number. Some of those matters will still be subject to work that is ongoing. Some of the staff costs, which will represent the lion's share of the total budget, will be made up from the redeployment of staff that are already employees. I am happy to take on notice, and again—

Ms VALLENCE: On notice where it is in the budget?

...

Mr ANDREWS: Well, there are many contingencies in the budget. Not every item has its own line item. But I am more than happy to provide you any relevant and appropriate information.

Answer:

As part of the restart of Victoria's hotel quarantine program and international flights returning to Melbourne on 7 December 2020, the government is finalising the arrangements and resourcing implications for COVID-19 Quarantine Victoria. These arrangements will be reported in due course.