

ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS COMMITTEE
QUESTIONS ON NOTICE SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

Friday 26 June 2015

Department of Agriculture and Food, Western Australia (DAFWA)

Supplementary Information A1: Hon Martin Pritchard asked –

How much was spent [on Buy West Eat Best] in the 2014-15 financial year?

Answer

Net cost of operating the Buy West Eat Best program (ie. salaries and operating costs, minus revenue, mainly from member fees and sponsorships) during 2014-15 was \$270,565.

Supplementary Information A2: Hon Darren West asked –

How much was the contribution that DAFWA was making [to Crop Updates]?

Answer

The Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) contracted the Grains Industry Association of WA to deliver the annual Crop Updates events in 2013, 2014 and 2015.

In 2012, DAFWA agreed with GRDC that it would make an in-kind contribution over the three years totalling \$142,150.

DAFWA's agreed in-kind contribution consisted of staff time (\$62,172) and associated on-cost and operating (\$79,978).

GRDC has not yet awarded the contract for Crop Updates in 2016 and beyond. If Grains Industry Association is successful in winning the new contract, then DAFWA will give consideration to providing in-kind support at a level to be determined.

Supplementary Information A3: Hon Ken Travers asked –

You have talked about reducing the department from the current 900 to 700. How many of those cuts in staff numbers will be in the biosecurity area?

Answer

Biosecurity is a core responsibility of the department and while some cuts to staff in the biosecurity and regulation area will occur a target has not been set. Based on forward estimates, it is anticipated that FTE numbers in the biosecurity area may be reduced by about 15% or around 30 FTEs.

Until a review of the department's operations is completed, an assessment of biosecurity and regulatory risk and threats across each directorate and industry sector is finished, and funding opportunities are explored, the exact number is unknown.

Supplementary Information A4: Hon Ken Travers asked –

How much is allocated in the budget for the task of the expert panel [for a detailed review of what a future DAFWA should look like]

Answer

There is no specific allocation in the budget because the Minister for Agriculture and Food directed DAFWA to undertake the review after the budget papers were finalised.

The scope of the review is subject to ministerial endorsement but, at this stage, it is anticipated that the cost of the expert panel will be in the order of \$100,000.

Supplementary Information A5: Hon Paul Brown asked –

Can the DG or the department provide us with some information around some of the 92 000-plus parcels of land; and if you can identify those areas that are going to be impacted by DER's continued support of the environmentally sensitive areas act?

Answer:

Environmentally sensitive areas (ESAs) are administered by DER rather than DAFWA.

According to DER data, the number of land parcels that are subject to an ESA is 9,277. (The figure of '92,000-plus' referred to in the question roughly equates to the entire number of alienated land parcels in the south west of the state.)

The ESA concept was established in 2005 as part of an arrangement which enables land holders to undertake minor clearing – for purposes such as fencing and access tracks – without needing a clearing permit. That is, they are exempted from the standard clearing provisions of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986* (the Act).

As a safeguard, particularly sensitive areas are protected by being designated as an ESA, which excludes them from this exemption. ESAs are established on the basis of criteria relating to world heritage areas, certain categories of wetland and areas of rare flora. They include a buffer zone outside of the 'sensitive' area itself.

An ESA on a land holding does not prohibit clearing on that holding: it simply removes the exemption. Affected land holders can still apply for a clearing permit under the pre-existing processes stipulated in the Act; and 923 clearing permits have been granted on ESA-affected land parcels since their inception in 2005.

Supplementary Information A6: Hon Darren West asked –

(a) Under what authority do you as Minister prescribe an area as per the Biosecurity and Agriculture Management (Declared Pest Account) Regulations 2014?

Answer:

Areas are prescribed by *the Biosecurity and Agriculture Management (Declared Pest Account) Regulations 2014* by the authority of the *Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007* (BAM Act).

(b) Why is there no correlation between the specific area of a recognised biosecurity group and the area prescribed under the regulations?

Answer:

Section 130(1) of the BAM Act allows the Minister to determine a rate that is chargeable for a financial year on land in a "prescribed area". The definition of "Prescribed" under section 4 of the BAM Act means prescribed under regulations made under the Act.

Under section 169(2) a body is eligible for recognition if the body is established for a purpose which includes controlling declared pests in a "*specified*" area. This provision does not refer to a "*prescribed*" area because the area in which a group works is not prescribed by regulations; the area of operation is a matter for the group.

The local government areas currently prescribed under the regulations are the same specified areas of the recognised biosecurity groups in the pastoral region.

Supplementary Information A7: Hon Darren West asked –

How much has been spent to date to address the issue of cotton bush?

Answer:

The estimated cost of the 2014 cotton bush compliance operations in the Peel-Harvey and Leschenault Biosecurity Group areas is \$102,250.

Supplementary Information A8: Hon Ken Travers asked –

Can we have supplementary information though about what the location of those regional positions that have been abolished are?

Answer:

The number of positions abolished at DAFWA regional locations is tabulated below.

Regional locations	No. of positions
Albany	8
Broome	2
Bunbury	11
Esperance	2
Geraldton	4
Karratha	1
Katanning	3
Manjimup	3
Merredin	1
Moora	2
Narrogin	6
Northam	5
Southern Cross	1
Vasse	1
Waroona	2
Total	52