

**Division 44: Planning, Lands and Heritage — Service 1, Planning, \$97 512 000 —**

Ms S.E. Winton, Chair.

Ms R. Saffioti, Minister for Planning.

Mr V. Davies, Acting Director General.

Mr T. Hillyard, Chief Property Officer.

Mr M. Hanrahan, Chief Finance Officer

Mrs K. Bonus, Chief Planning Officer.

Mr D. Caddy, Chairman, Western Australian Planning Commission.

Mr D. McFerran, Principal Policy Adviser.

[Witnesses introduced.]

[12.40 pm]

**The CHAIR:** This estimates committee will be reported by Hansard. The daily proof *Hansard* will be available the following day. It is the intention of the Chair to ensure that as many questions as possible are asked and answered and that both questions and answers are short and to the point. The estimates committee's consideration of the estimates will be restricted to discussion of those items for which a vote of money is proposed in the consolidated account. Questions must be clearly related to a page number, item, program or amount in the current division. Members should give these details in preface to their question. If a division or service is the responsibility of more than one minister, a minister shall be examined only in relation to their portfolio responsibilities.

The minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee rather than asking that the question be put on notice for the next sitting week. I ask the minister to clearly indicate what supplementary information she agrees to provide and I will then allocate a reference number. If supplementary information is to be provided, I seek the minister's cooperation in ensuring that it is delivered to the principal clerk by Friday, 30 October 2020. I caution members that if a minister asks that a matter be put on notice, it is up to the member to lodge the question on notice through the online questions system.

I give the member for Vasse the call.

**Ms L. METTAM:** I refer to page 695 of budget paper No 2, the table "Spending Changes", and the amendments to the Planning and Development Act 2005. What is the \$2.76 million in 2021 and the \$1 million the following year specifically allocated towards?

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** That is the additional resources to implement the planning and reform amendments; namely, the amendments to the Planning and Development Act. It is the additional cost to implement the new State Development Assessment Unit and associated reforms.

**Ms L. METTAM:** If the allocation is for the operation of the State Development Assessment Unit, what is the expenditure for other than FTE?

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** Sorry, can the member explain what she is after?

**Ms L. METTAM:** Can the minister outline what proportion of the funds is dedicated to FTE and what those funds are for?

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** It is \$1.5 million in 2020–21 and \$792 000 in 2021–22. That is 12 months and six months of funding, in a sense, for additional staff; that is, \$2.3 million over those two years is dedicated for FTE. The rest of the cost is for things such as corporate overheads, business case systems development and professional advice, so potentially further assistance in finalising some of the reform initiatives. This relates to the entire act reform. Employee expenses would include the SDAU but may include other works such as implementing planning reform; for example, new regulations and other works that have been required, extensive community consultation, consultation with relevant industry bodies, and further advice on some of the reform initiatives. It includes not just the SDAU but also other initiatives.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Was that allocation predicated on the original project threshold of development projects of a value of \$30 million and above? The legislation now applies to developments with a value of \$20 million for metropolitan and \$5 million in the regions.

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** Yes, it was, but as has been the instruction internal to the department, we have said that if any resource allocation issues arise, we will do whatever is required to ensure that the unit is staffed correctly and properly, and we are doing that. There is a unit, but we want to ensure that all the other associated parts are running

Ms Libby Mettam; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mrs Jessica Stojkovski; Mr Shane Love; Mrs Alyssa Hayden; Mr Matthew Hughes

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correctly. We are trying to make sure that the Main Roads Western Australia referral process is quicker and also better targeted, as well as the referral process across agencies and the role of design review panels. There is activity across agencies and also across government to help that. Additionally, we also anticipate—I think it is in the budget papers—additional revenue through application fees for many projects.

**Ms L. METTAM:** How many development applications have been lodged with the SDAU? Can the minister provide that information by way of supplementary information, or table it?

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** We cannot table information. I will go through it. Three applications have been formally lodged, and there have been nine intents to lodge and 22 requests for pre-lodgement. That is the current status as of 21 October.

**Ms L. METTAM:** How many development applications have been referred to the SDAU pathway via the minister or the Premier's recommendations?

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** Zero.

**Mrs J.M.C. STOJKOVSKI:** We have been talking about the amendments to the Planning and Development Act. Can the minister outline the progress that has been made this year and the works expected to be undertaken in the next 12 months?

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** A unit has been established in record time and is receiving applications. The government also wants to finalise a number of different regulations. They have been out for consultation, in particular with the Western Australian Local Government Association and industry. We are finalising those regulations, which are all about cutting red tape and creating consistency across the state. The feedback has been pretty positive. We intend to finalise those soon as well. With the SDAU established, plus the finalisation of the regulations and other reform initiatives across government, such as Design WA, a lot of reform initiatives are in place and we are well on the way to helping and supporting sensible and better developments across our suburbs.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I refer to page 695 and the table "Spending Changes". Under "Election Commitment" an amount of \$20 000 this year and \$35 000 in each of the forward estimates is allocated to the Swan Valley Planning Bill 2020. An exact replica of that appears in the Western Australian Planning Commission documents in the next section, which we will not have time to get to. Is that the same amount of money? Is that money doubled up? What is the actual figure?

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** It is a transfer of funds from the Planning Commission to the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I refer to page 125 of budget paper No 3. The Swan Valley Planning Bill is mentioned as a major spending change since the midyear review. A figure of \$125 000 has been approved for sitting fees for the proposed Swan Valley committee, which will come into effect under that planning bill. Would that cost, along with the other costs outlined in this section, normally be borne by local government in providing those same sorts of services? Will there be any charge to any of the property owners in the Swan Valley planning area to offset the cost to the state of the activities that have been vacated, if you like, by local government in that area of planning?

[12.50 pm]

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** There will be no additional costs. As I said, application fees would then be coming to us, not local government, so it is a redirection of existing fees being payable but no additional fees.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** To confirm, there will not be any charges contemplated to provide the services for the Swan Valley area?

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** No.

**Mrs A.K. HAYDEN:** Can the minister advise what the \$125 000 in 2020–21 to 2023–24 is actually attributed to?

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** The member for Moore just raised the relevant section of budget paper No 3, which says —

**Mrs A.K. HAYDEN:** That is right; the Swan Valley Planning Bill.

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** Yes. The member for Moore just asked about this exact issue. It is for the sitting fees.

**Mrs A.K. HAYDEN:** Can the minister advise whether it is for the Swan Valley leadership group or the statutory planning group?

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** It is primarily for the Swan Valley Planning Committee. When we talked about the bill, we looked at a voluntary situation for the leadership group, but the money could be for the leadership group, too. I do not think the legislation prevents that happening. It is primarily for the planning committee because it is a statutory role, but there may be contemplation for the leadership group, too, as we finalise that, if that bill is passed by the upper house.

**Mrs A.K. HAYDEN:** If money is going to the Swan Valley leadership group, has the minister appointed the group as yet? Does she have a prepared list of names of who is likely to be in this group?

Ms Libby Mettam; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mrs Jessica Stojkovski; Mr Shane Love; Mrs Alyssa Hayden; Mr Matthew Hughes

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**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** No, I have not. As I said, payments to the leadership group are being considered; I did not say it was definite. It is being considered and we are waiting to know what happens with the bill. Given what is happening in the upper house, hopefully the bill gets passed by the opposition by the end of the year, but I am not sure what is happening given some of the delays on other legislation. Hopefully, the bill will be passed; otherwise it will not be passed before the election.

**Mrs A.K. HAYDEN:** Considering that this was an election commitment in 2017, why has it taken so long to prepare the Swan Valley Planning Bill? What kind of developments have been approved by the Swan Valley over the previous four years that would have been prevented by this bill if the government got it in earlier as it committed to?

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** We asked the late John Kobelke to undertake a review of the Swan Valley. As the member knows, Mr Kobelke has passed away. We released the action plan and then we brought in the legislation. It has been with the upper house. The upper house does not pass bills very quickly, so, hopefully, it passes the bill by the end of this year. The bill has been sitting there.

**Mrs A.K. HAYDEN:** Hopefully, the upper house makes it a priority.

**Mr M. HUGHES:** I have a question.

**The CHAIR:** I am well aware, member for Kalamunda. The next person on my list was the member for Darling Range, but she is happy that was called. Member for Vasse.

**Ms L. METTAM:** I refer to page 697, “State Planning Policy 3.6—Infrastructure Contributions”. How long has this state planning policy review taken and why? How much has this process cost to date?

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** I will get some confirmation on the review. The review has been complex because we are trying to get a policy that works for developers, landowners and councils, so it has been hard to get the right balance. We did consultation last year. Of course, COVID hit and we turned our attention to other elements of planning reform. We hope to finalise that by the end of the year. I do not have costs, but I think it has just been part of the overall budget of government, so there is been no additional appropriations for the department for this developer contribution policy.

**The CHAIR:** I am just alerting members to the time. We still have the Western Australian Planning Commission if members want to go there, so be aware of that.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Could I request the entire list of SPPs that the department has reviewed over the course of the last four years?

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** We can provide a list of SPPs that have been reviewed over the past four years by way of supplementary information.

*[Supplementary Information No A24.]*

**Ms L. METTAM:** How many SPPs have also been finalised in this period? I am seeking that information.

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** I will provide by way of supplementary information the SPPs that have been finalised over the past four years.

*[Supplementary Information No A25.]*

**Ms L. METTAM:** What proportion of the planning budget has been spent on sundry issues related to the minister’s action plan for planning reform and to what degree has reform in the planning portfolio been accomplished in this term?

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** It is a pretty open-ended question.

**The CHAIR:** I know, minister. I ask you to try to keep it brief. There are five minutes to go!

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** In a sense, we are trying to implement reform in how we deal with developments across government. There is a broad spectrum of planning instruments and policies and the member mentioned SPPs. We have been revising SPPs to be more contemporary and better able to deliver planned suburbs. We have completed the Design WA suite of documents. We have released apartment and medium-density designs. Precinct design has been launched for public comment—water, SPP. Numerous documents are out for consultation and are also being implemented.

Then, of course, there is planning reform itself. We are looking at the strategic assessment pathway and how we can have a smoother, more transparent and more sustainable planning system for larger projects.

We have issues such as how we make sure there is certainty about schools. It is a contentious issue. An issue we have all had to deal with within our electorates is when we have our land being put aside for schools and we need a time frame of implementation. How that land is positioned and where those schools are put are also contentious issues. Across the entire agency, I would say that we are trying to always improve how we better manage the developments.

**Extract from Hansard**

[ASSEMBLY ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A — Thursday, 22 October 2020]

p399b-402a

Ms Libby Mettam; Ms Rita Saffioti; Mrs Jessica Stojkovski; Mr Shane Love; Mrs Alyssa Hayden; Mr Matthew Hughes

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We have the Creative Community Consultation Toolkit, which we are also working on to make sure that we have a better, more transparent way of how we deal with a community, so there are a lot of elements.

In relation to the question of the proportion of the department's activities, I would say that we try to do it whether we are implementing a scheme amendment or looking at a structure plan. In everything that we are doing, we are trying to make sure we have a better planning system that creates active precincts and better connected communities.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** While we are talking about planning and referring, could the minister outline when she thinks the review of the Residential Design Codes Volume 1 might be undertaken and completed, and the bushfire planning review? Where are both those projects at? When are they expected to be completed?

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** Residential Design Codes Volume 1 will go to the commission in November. On bushfires, we had started that reform, but, unfortunately, there were the bushfire events over east. We were using the CSIRO to give us scientific evidence about changing the maps and were able to redefine some of the maps within the metropolitan area. But we are continuing to work across government to implement that reform. Basically, we engaged CSIRO in response the royal commission, but it had to put that work on hold. We are restarting that work. Early next year there will be some movements on reform for that issue.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** When does the minister expect that might be complete?

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** There was a staged implementation. I am sorry; I do not have all the information in front of me. The maps, which is the key thing, are being implemented in the first quarter of next year.

**The appropriation was recommended.**