

Division 65: Parks and Wildlife, \$204 408 000 —

Ms J.M. Freeman, Chairman.

Mr A.P. Jacob, Minister for Environment.

Mr J. Sharp, Acting Director General.

Mr G.J. Wyre, Director, Nature Conservation.

Dr J.C. Byrne, Director, Corporate Services.

Mr P.D. Dans, Director, Regional Services.

The CHAIRMAN: This estimates committee will be reported by Hansard staff. The daily proof *Hansard* will be published at 9.00 am tomorrow.

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. It will greatly assist Hansard if members can give these details in preface to their question.

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 he 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 committee clerk by Friday, 30 August 2013. 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 with the Clerk's office.

I now ask the minister to introduce his advisers to the committee.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIRMAN: I give the first question to the member for Gosnells.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: I refer to page 166 of the *Budget Statements*, which relates to the separation of the Department of Environment and Conservation and the creation of the Department of Parks and Wildlife and the Department of Environment Regulation. What has been the cost of creating the new agency?

Mr A.P. JACOB: I thank the member for the question. This was an election commitment that the Liberal-National government took to the 2013 election. It was the first of the new commitments we made in the area of conservation and biodiversity to separate the Department of Environment and Conservation into two dedicated arms, being the Department of Parks and Wildlife, which is focused on the conservation side and roughly reflects 80 per cent of the former agency; and, the Department of Environment Regulation, which focuses on compliance, regulation and licensing. I will pass to the director general to give more detail.

Mr J. Sharp: I cannot give a specific cost as such. It was done within the existing budget of the agencies. The two were created by the separation of the two agencies within the existing budget.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: That response is disappointing. Perhaps I can help by referring to specific areas. For example, I notice that the Department of Parks and Wildlife has a new logo. I imagine there was a cost associated with the creation of that logo. In passing, what does it represent? Does it represent a native plant of some description? I could not identify it.

Mr A.P. JACOB: I will pass to the director general in just a second. As to the symbolism of it—I had a bit of work to do with that as minister—principally it relates more broadly to a **myrtaceae** flower. It has a callistemon reference, so it picks up on the flora as well as fauna. Traditionally, wildlife has focused on fauna rather than flora. We felt it was important to have that type of plant representation.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: So it does not represent a particular Western Australian plant?

Mr A.P. JACOB: The member is interrupting me before I have finished. The colours particularly go back to the *Nuytsia floribunda*, which is quintessentially a Western Australian tree. It picks up on that Western Australian Christmas tree-type flower. It is a bit of callistemon and a bit of *Nuytsia floribunda*. I will pass to the director general to detail how we went about the creation of the new emblem.

Mr J. Sharp: No cost was associated with the production of the logo. It was produced by a staff member —

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: From the sounds of it, it was the minister!

Mr J. Sharp: No, it was produced for the minister by a staff member who is a graphic artist.

Mr A.P. JACOB: It is a fantastic logo. I would love to claim it if I could, but unfortunately I cannot!

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: On the issue of cost associated with the creation of new agencies, what will be the costs of new signage and letterhead associated with the new offices?

Mr A.P. JACOB: I will pass that to the director general in the first instance.

Mr J. Sharp: The cost will be minimal because we will replace signs as they require replacement. Information panels will stay information panels with the current identification until such time that they need replacing. There has been some signage at state headquarters at minimal cost.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I refer to page 793 of the *Budget Statements* and to the heading “Spending Changes”, one of which is program rationalisation. What programs are contemplated as coming under this heading?

Mr A.P. JACOB: I am happy to go into more detail. In the first instance program rationalisation is a key part of the government’s fiscal action plan for the 2013-14 budget and the program rationalisation aspect of the fiscal action plan will, we hope, achieve savings totalling \$526 million in net debt terms from a range of programs across government. I will hand over to the director general.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: The minister has not answered my question.

Mr A.P. JACOB: I have not finished.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: You were going to hand over to the director general.

Mr A.P. JACOB: Yes.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I am asking the minister programs come under that category. Surely that is something the minister would know.

Mr A.P. JACOB: Member, I will hand over the director general and follow up further if need be.

Mr J. Sharp: The programs to be rationalised will be identified with the minister, but the figure amount has been indicated and that will be negotiated in terms of all the current activities of the agency and across all programs and, to some degree, will be reflecting the other item, which is public sector workforce where redundancies are applied for and where they occur and where they have the least impact on the performance of the department.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: It looks as though it is back to the minister. In the year 2014-15, for example, an amount of \$4.455 million is identified under that heading. That is a fair bit of precision given that the minister does not know what programs will be rationalised at this time. Can the minister distinguish that from any efficiency dividends that the department has to make?

Mr A.P. JACOB: As I said, this is specifically associated with this year’s budget’s fiscal action plan. It is not directly associated, as far as I am aware, with the efficiency dividend that has previously applied. As to the exact programs, these are the targets that we are seeking to meet within our budgets. All agencies have had to meet requirements in this regard. The specific programs in this area have not yet been identified, as far as I am aware.

Mr J. Sharp: I can add that the program rationalisation figure is different from the efficiency dividend figure, which is the \$1.4 million figure, which is a movement in appropriation.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I ask one final question on this issue. Is this an amount dictated as a percentage or otherwise from Treasury and that is the reason the minister does not know which programs will be rationalised? Was this figure presented by Treasury and the department told that that is what it has to meet?

[7.10 pm]

Mr A.P. JACOB: There are goals broadly across government that agencies have to try to find and live within; that is, broader government budget means. We have goals within our agency to contribute towards that. We are one agency in a broader government and we are playing our part.

Mr J. NORBERGER: I refer to “Details of Controlled Grants and Subsidies” on page 799. I note that funding is listed next to “Environmental Community Grants Program” for the previous two years but nothing for 2013-14 and beyond. Has this program actually ended?

Mr A.P. JACOB: I thank the member for that question. As a part of its 2008 election commitments, the Liberal-National government pledged \$6 million over four years for an environmental community grants program. The

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program was subsequently introduced at our next budget in 2009. It is a good opportunity to stress that we not only honoured this commitment over four years, but also exceeded it by allocating over \$6 million to around 600 community-based recipients for a range of local environmental programs. I also point out that in the absence of this program going forward from this year, a range of other grants programs are also available for similar projects from a variety of other sources, some of them state government and some from other agencies as well. At a state government level, there is Lotterywest and the Swan River Trust. The Department of Planning has the Coastwest funding program, and even the commonwealth government provides funding. I am aware that in our local council area, local government grant funding also goes out. Obviously, we are dealing with significant budget pressures this year. There was a decision made not to extend the program this financial year.

Ms L.L. BAKER: I refer to service 1, headed “Nature Conservation”, on page 796. I am looking at the FTE line; the net cost line. Where are cost savings being made there?

Mr A.P. JACOB: Is the member talking about the figures 822 to 811?

Ms L.L. BAKER: Yes.

Mr A.P. JACOB: Again, it is very similar to the member —

Ms L.L. BAKER: I just want to know which programs will go.

Mr A.P. JACOB: It is dealing with full-time equivalents, not programs, member. Again, it is very similar to the answer to the member for Girrawheen’s question. With the government’s fiscal action plan, we have goals of around 1 200 or so voluntary redundancies across government. The Department of Parks and Wildlife is playing its part in that area. I do not think decisions have yet been made on who those people will be. That is an operational matter for our chief executive officer. I will hand over to him in just a second to deal with that a little further.

Ms L.L. BAKER: Before the minister does that, I am quite happy to take advice from the CEO but I am wondering which endangered species’ recovery plans in particular will be impacted by this?

Mr J. Sharp: As the minister has indicated, we are going through a process of identifying voluntary redundancies. Some full-time equivalents will obviously come out of nature conservation as a proportion. There will be no specific recovery plans reduced or ceased because of the number of staff. That is 11 staff over a total of 822.

Ms L.L. BAKER: To define definitely: none will be impacted by this? All staff will continue?

Mr J. Sharp: That is right—they will all continue, yes.

Mr F.A. ALBAN: I refer to the sixth dot point on page 795 relating to the department’s role in fire management. I understand that after the fire at Two Peoples Bay last October, WorkSafe issued the department with a series of improvement notices. Can the minister advise what the department has done to comply with those notices and to thereby improve safety for fire crews?

Mr A.P. JACOB: I thank the member for Swan Hills for this question. It is certainly an issue that has a lot of relevance in his electorate. The member is right—WorkSafe issued 10 improvement notices on the department —

Ms M.M. QUIRK: Sorry, how many was that?

Mr A.P. JACOB: Ten—following on from what is commonly known as the Black Cat Creek fire near Two Peoples Bay nature reserve. This was a fire in which several then Department of Environment and now Department of Parks and Wildlife fire crew members were severely burnt. One, Wendy Bearfoot, tragically died as a result of injuries she sustained in that incident. WorkSafe issued 10 improvement notices on the department. Of those 10, the department has now met eight of those. Those ones related primarily to providing training and information to all staff involved in fire suppression. They also related to personal protective equipment, escape routes, reading spot weather maps and forecasts, the use and provision of protective blankets, and radio communications. Two of the outstanding issues relate to providing appropriate and adequate plant in the event of a burn-over or entrapment. This includes things such as heat shields for vehicles and windows, and vehicle water spray protection systems.

I also point out to the member that Department of Parks and Wildlife fire managers have been consulting closely with front-line staff; that is, those who are actually at the coalface and have to deal with fires during the course of their work. We have been consulting with them over the measures needed to comply with the two outstanding crew protection notices issued by WorkSafe. The Department of Parks and Wildlife has already modified seven new fire trucks. I believe that as of today, a further 21 fire trucks have been retrofitted. Retrofitting of necessary

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equipment to other vehicles in the firefighting fleet will continue. It is expected that these modifications will be completed by the end of November this year for all of our south west-based trucks. However, it may take up to the middle of next year for the fleet of 110 trucks to be fitted with water spray protection systems. I also point out that the department's primary focus continues to be that crews will not be in a position to need this equipment as it will try not to have them in a position to deal with burn-overs in the first place.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I did not quite hear what the minister said. In terms of the 21 vehicles that have been retrofitted, they have been retrofitted with heat shields and what else did the minister say?

Mr A.P. JACOB: It is 28—seven new trucks and 21 were retrofitted.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I want to know what with?

Mr A.P. JACOB: Heat shields for the windows and replacement of exposed wiring. The water spray protection systems form an element to this as well.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: What was the last one; I cannot hear?

Mr A.P. JACOB: Water spray protection systems. I will pass over to the director general for more detail on that one.

Mr J. Sharp: I will ask our director of regional services, who manages fire, to give the exact detail.

Mr P.D. Dans: The minister is correct: the most significant modification has been roll-down window radiant heat shields. They will be fitted to all windows on vehicle cabs. Critical wiring and underbody components, hydraulic components and things, have had fireproof lagging installed. Plastic components in and about the cab of the vehicle have been replaced with aluminium and steel components. They are the measures that have been put in place and will be put in place for all of our south west fleet by the end of November this year. The matter that the minister referred to—the vehicle deluge or water spray protection system—there is quite a bit of engineering development involved in that. It is used in other jurisdictions but in various configurations. As the minister indicated, that is likely not to be fully implemented across the fleet until the middle of 2014.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: The minister mentioned training and information to staff on fire suppression and also PPE. Has new PPE been supplied to all officers?

Mr P.D. Dans: We are in the process of consulting with our front-line firefighters on the configuration of the new personal protective equipment. The personal protective equipment that DEC utilises at the moment, specifically in respect of the fireproof or fire-retardant clothing, is currently compliant, but we have sourced some other fabrics from the United States that we think will be superior and will perhaps overcome one of the issues that arose at Black Cat Creek in that staff had their personal protective equipment with them in the cabin of the vehicle but some did not actually have it all on at the time of the burn-over. The avenue we are pursuing is that officers wear one uniform to work in the morning and that uniform meets the high standards of flame retardance. That is what we are pursuing. We will certainly have some of it rolled out but we will not have adequate supply from the eastern states supplier to have every individual officer in the new PPE for the upcoming 2013–14 southern bushfire season. We will certainly prioritise the allocation of that.

[7.20 pm]

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I think the evidence is that all appliances allocated to the south west will be fully compliant by the beginning of the fire season. Is that correct?

Mr P.D. Dans: There is no standard as such to be compliant with, but the measures I outlined earlier—the roll-down radiant window heat shields, the underbody protection of critical components in wiring and the replacement of plastic parts in the vehicle cab—will be in place by the end of November for all our fleet in the south west land division.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I am asking how many of them.

Mr P.D. Dans: It is about 100, plus or minus one or two.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: Does this retrofitting include advanced global positioning system tracking devices, which send a distress signal and allow the vehicle to be tracked live on a web-based mapping system?

Mr P.D. Dans: All the department's light and heavy fire-fighting fleet has had GPS tracking systems installed for at least five years. That is trackable on a live five to 30-minute update cycle on a mapping system. It does not have a duress alarm or a distress alarm feature built in. Obviously, all our vehicles have a multitude of other radio-based communications and telephone communication systems.

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Ms M.M. QUIRK: Finally, where is the money coming from to do these modifications? Can the minister show us where it is in the budget?

Mr A.P. JACOB: I will hand over to the director general.

Mr J. Sharp: It is within the existing budget. Dr Byrne might help with the line item. It is based in our current budget. It is not identified as a line item as such.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: Is it in capital expenditure? Whereabouts is it?

Dr J.C. Byrne: The budget statements do not go down to that level of detail. It is really part of the total cost of services for each service and for the department as a whole.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: Is it under “Supplies and services” under “Cost of Services”?

Dr J.C. Byrne: Yes. The income statement does include supplies and services. It is also in the appropriation, under “Total cost of services”.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: That is down to \$781 000 in 2013–14.

Mr D.C. NALDER: I refer to the fifth dot point on page 795, which mentions the Parks for People initiative. Can the minister provide details of what this program entails?

Mr A.P. JACOB: I thank the member for the question. I refer members to the asset investment program on page 798, which shows that the estimated total cost for Parks for People is \$6 million. Immediately below that is another \$14 750 000 for the caravan and camping action plan. We also have a \$300 000 recurrent funding component for the Parks for People program, which is noted on page 794. These two programs are interlinked and they represent a budget commitment over four years to create more affordable, high-quality camping and caravan facilities in our national parks and conservation areas. This has been done in recognition of a diminishing number of private caravan park operators across the state and also an expectation, as I outlined to the house last week, that visitation rates to our conservation lands and waters is around 16 million a year and have increased 55 per cent over the past decade and will most likely grow by around 80 per cent over the next decade. Indeed, the numbers are already demonstrating how popular parks are here in Western Australia and how important it is to ensure that facilities are continually expanded and upgraded so that Western Australian families can continue to access affordable, high-quality holiday accommodation in a world-class reserve system. It is important to stress that this program is not just about visitors in the tourism sense but it is also for that holiday-at-home message and the domestic market as well and something that will particularly benefit all our constituents. The \$21.5 million over the next four years will initially focus on campgrounds in Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park in the south west, D’Entrecasteaux National Park on the south coast, Lane Poole Reserve near Dwellingup, Dryandra Woodland and also Logue Brook Dam.

While Parks for People is particularly focused on the south west and also into the midwest, as was outlined in our election commitment for this program, the caravan and camping action plan will be more broadly based across the state with a focus on the south coast and also in the midwest as well as a little bit of the caravan and camping action plan in the midwest. The programs are being financed through royalties for regions and they are in line with this program’s aim to stimulate the tourism sector in regional Western Australia. I would also like to point out that in addition to Parks for People and the caravan and camping action plan, the Department of Parks and Wildlife will also be spending around \$18 million over the next year on other facilities in national parks and also other lands —

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: Madam Chair, the minister is simply reading the speech. He could have sent that message across to the member.

Mr A.P. JACOB: I am just referring to my notes, member.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: It is extensive reading.

The CHAIRMAN: Minister, as I outlined in the opening statement, the questions and answers should be short. You have answered the question that the member asked you and you have moved on to another section. If you want to wrap up, that would be good.

Mr A.P. JACOB: As I said, it is a fantastic project, which is one of the key commitments that we took to the election and one that I have been very proud to see fully funded in this budget.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: My question relates to the Parks for People program and the caravan and camping action plan as well. I notice that there is a total of some \$40.7 million, which involves \$6.3 million going to the Department of Parks and Wildlife. This is reflected in part on page 797 in the asset investment program. There is mention of \$6 million over three years. I notice from budget paper No 3 that a sum of \$4.7 million is going into

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the caravan and camping action plan this year. That is on page 225 of budget paper No 3. I am trying to tally that up with the commitments made during the election and an amount promised for certain national parks. Can the minister advise whether the election commitment money is additional to the programs that are detailed in the budget as the caravan and camping action plan and People for Parks?

Mr A.P. JACOB: I was going through a fair bit of detail earlier in response to the other question and the member did halt me at that point. That was a fairly convoluted question. I am not really sure what the member has asked.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: There was a \$20 million election commitment. The minister has already mentioned the national parks that will be the beneficiaries of money.

Mr A.P. JACOB: I mentioned some of them. The member interrupted me halfway through.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: Would the minister like to continue then?

Mr A.P. JACOB: Yes; that is not a problem. That also includes \$4.8 million for parks and roads in the Gngangara improvement program. Specifically, the \$11.7 million royalties for regions funding includes \$5.9 million for major road upgrade and visitor facilities in Kalbarri National Park and \$2.9 million to upgrade viewing structures at The Gap down near Albany. Major works under the \$4.8 million improvement program will focus on Cape Range, Kalbarri, Millstream-Chichester, Cape Le Grande, Yanchep and John Forrest national parks, as well as Yellagonga Regional Park, Penguin Island nature reserve and Gngangara Park.

[7.30 pm]

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: The election commitment referred to \$20 million for Wellington National Park, Leschenault Peninsula Conservation Park, Leeuwin–Naturaliste National Park, the proposed Moresby Range Conservation Park, Lochada and Karara ex-pastoral leases, John Forrest National Park—did the minister mention that—D'Entrecasteaux National Park, Shannon National Park, Big Brook State Forrest, Blackwood River National Park, and Lane Poole Reserve—no, I do not think he mentioned that one —

Mr A.P. JACOB: I did.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: The minister did. The minister can see my point that a promise was made of \$20 million to the parks that I just listed and they are not included in his list. In other words, from the Liberal Party election promise there is an additional \$20 million that needs to go to the environment budget for those national parks.

Mr A.P. JACOB: Good luck prosecuting that one member because we have actually exceeded the funding that was promised in the policy portfolio document.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: No, the minister has not listed those national parks and said how much they are getting. The minister missed most of the parks that I just listed.

The CHAIRMAN: Does the member want to put his question?

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: I am waiting for the minister to explain why the national parks that I have just listed are not also on his list of beneficiaries. I am putting it to the minister that there is an additional \$20 million promised, based on Liberal Party election promises, that is destined for those other national parks, conservation parks and ex-pastoral lease country.

Mr A.P. JACOB: I have had a pretty good look at the policy and there was a \$20 million commitment for the Parks for People program, and this year's budget has a \$21.5 million spend on the Parks for People program. I will pass over to the director general if he wants to try and answer the question.

Mr J. Sharp: There are a couple components. There is \$6.3 million allocated that is not called Parks for People. There is an additional \$14.75 million that has come from the caravan and camping action plan to be added to that \$6.3 million to give a total of \$21 million in a capital program for visitor facilities, caravanning and camping within national parks. There is also an existing capital program, a four-year \$20 million royalties for regions program that is moving into its last year—it has spent \$11 million in its last year because it has taken time to get to the implementation phase—and that is why the total spend in capital expenditure indicates a \$29 million spend in our park system.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: By my reckoning, and I am going off the media release that the minister put out last week, on 14 August, the \$40.7 million of royalties for regions is broken down into \$6.3 million to the Department of Parks and Wildlife and \$34.4 million to caravan and camping in Tourism WA, \$4.4 million to Main Roads, and \$18.7 million to caravans and camping in the Department of Parks and Wildlife—that is \$40.7 million. The minister gave an exhaustive list of parks that are recipients of this money, the list did not

include a number of parks that were in the Liberal Party promises, therefore, I would assume, that given we have got a \$20 million figure associated with those promises, that the total amount of this combined program is actually \$60.7 million. Am I right?

Mr A.P. JACOB: The member keeps referring to a promises document. I am not really sure of the document the member refers to.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: Yes, of course I do. The Liberal Party promises document.

The CHAIR: Member let the minister finish.

Mr A.P. JACOB: As I have said, I think we have outlined pretty clearly what is in that commitment, and all-up it is \$40.5 million.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: Is the minister familiar with the Liberal Party promises document.

Mr A.P. JACOB: Yes.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: Then why in the minister's exhaustive list of parks that would be receiving money from the Parks for People program and the caravan and camping action plan did he not list some of the parks listed in the promises document? I say it again, these parks are attached to a \$20 million figure so surely that means that the government's media statement from last week of \$40.7 million needs to be combined with this promise of \$20 million.

Mr A.P. JACOB: I can hear what the member is trying to say but it is an incredibly long bow and not really the point of estimates.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: It is not a long bow at all. It is holding the minister to his promises—\$20 million for these national parks and conservation parks.

Mr A.P. JACOB: I feel that we have answered the question on a number of levels.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I refer to page 793 and the reference to "Bushfire Suppression". Further to the evidence given earlier to the member for Swan Hills about modifications being made to appliances, what is the total cost of those modifications?

Mr A.P. JACOB: I will hand over to the director general on this one.

Mr J. Sharp: I will pass to the director of regional services in a moment, but suffice to say they are not fully costed; there are some components of the fit-out that are still being evaluated, and there are some components we have the costings for.

Mr P.D. Dans: The modifications I mentioned earlier are costed somewhere in the order of \$2 million to \$2.5 million across the entire fleet of 110 heavy firefighting trucks.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: What needs to be done and what is the likely estimated cost of that?

Mr P.D. Dans: As mentioned earlier, the design and engineering specification for the vehicle cab spray, or deluge protection system, has yet to be decided on. It is a little early to estimate the cost of that device. I would be clutching at straws.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: Can the minister explain why all these things were not fitted at the one time; why the shields were not fitted at the same time as the spray protection system?

Mr A.P. JACOB: Again, I think that it is best I hand that question over. In the Department of Parks and Wildlife, I imagine they see a lot of use.

Mr P.D. Dans: WorkSafe WA issued nine improvement notices late in January; I think it was 25 January 2013. The notices related to the majority of the earlier training and awareness requirements that the minister referred to. They did refer to the roll-down radiant heat shields, so the department embarked on a hasty and extensive design-and-procure process for those items. Later in the year, I cannot quote the date, I think it was April or May, a tenth improvement notice was issued that included the requirement for the department to fit the cab deluge or water spray systems. That is the reason why they have not been done concurrently. Presently, the heavy firefighting fleet is being cycled through the Department of Parks and Wildlife's heavy fleet provider, the fire unit provider, which is South West Fire Units in Collie, and it can only handle something in the order of five or six, perhaps up to eight a week.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: Does the minister agree that there would be some economies of scale because I understand the Department of Fire and Emergency Services is also fitting similar appliances?

The CHAIRMAN: Member, a question needs to relate to the issue under discussion.

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Ms M.M. QUIRK: It is. The minister would be aware that the Department of Fire and Emergency Services is fitting similar protections to the 667 appliances of their own and local brigades. I am wondering why a joint tender was not done between the Department of Fire and Emergency Services and the Department of Parks and Wildlife given that the same components will be installed in appliances, meaning there would have been some economies of scale.

Mr A.P. JACOB: I think I will refer that to Mr Dans.

[7.40 pm]

Mr P.D. Dans: There was significant liaison between the two agencies following the issuing of the improvement notices late in January.

The requirement of the improvement notice, from my recollection, initially was 30 June, which was not achievable. We appealed to the WorkSafe Western Australia Commissioner to that end and subsequently it has been extended to 30 September for those three components that I spoke about—namely, the underbody protection, the radiant heat shields and replacement of the plastic parts. We were in liaison with the Department of Fire and Emergency Services all along and looking at what other jurisdictions in Australia were doing and borrowing what we figured were the best bits from those. I am not aware of the status of the rollout of the DFES modifications in accordance with the election commitment, but we have our supplier. I think DFES uses, given the size of its fleet—it is significantly larger—a number of suppliers. I am not aware of the detail of its procurement or fitment process.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: The minister is aware that in February this year, the then Minister for Emergency Services put out an election commitment of greater protection for WA firefighters, which relates to the \$12.3 million that Mr Dans has talked about. How is it that firefighters at DEC were not included in that election commitment? How is it that the election commitment related to firefighters who volunteered for local government or DFES but DEC firefighters were excluded from that commitment?

Mr A.P. JACOB: I thank the member for the question. First of all, it is the Department of Parks and Wildlife now, not DEC. Secondly, we are meeting that commitment —

Ms M.M. QUIRK: It was DEC at the time.

Mr A.P. JACOB: Thirdly, it is more of a policy debate matter rather than an estimates matter, I suspect.

Mr J. NORBERGER: I refer to the second dot point on page 794, which covers the Kimberley science and conservation strategy. Could the minister tell me what is the current status of this strategy and, in particular, what is being achieved on the ground?

Mr A.P. JACOB: I thank the member for the question. It is the centrepiece of this government's environmental legacy, if you like, so far; hopefully, there will be a few more as we go forward. This started as a commitment in the 2008 election of \$9 million towards the Kimberley science and conservation strategy. When the strategy itself was released on 17 June 2011, that funding went out to \$63 million. There was a further commitment in the state election in our conservation and biodiversity policy for another \$15 million and this budget has seen \$18.5 million go into it. This will take the total spend on the Kimberley science and conservation strategy over eight years to \$81.5 million. It is quite simply the largest conservation spend in the Kimberley of any government and I suspect it is the largest conservation investment ever undertaken in Western Australia for a specific region. The centrepiece of the strategy is the Kimberley wilderness parks, which will be the state's largest interconnected system of marine and terrestrial parks.

Our election commitments for this round include new parks at Camden Sound, extending the great Kimberley marine park all the way north out to the Northern Territory border. A terrestrial park and a marine park will be created at Horizontal Falls. There will also be the Roebuck Bay and Eighty Mile Beach marine parks. Wandjina national park will be Australia's largest national park at 20 000 square kilometres or two million hectares. I have spoken about this previously, but a very key part, which may come up later, is that we are protecting 30 of the Kimberley's most environmentally significant islands and we will use these as refuges for native plants and animals that may be threatened on the mainland. Visitor facilities in many of the parks are also being upgraded and will continue to be upgraded. Of very great importance and I think one of the real shining lights of this program, which has not yet received the recognition I think it deserves, is the opportunities for Aboriginal involvement and employment in land management. This includes joint management of the new marine and terrestrial parks. Early dry season burning programs, which have already been successfully delivered on over eight million hectares annually, combine traditional Aboriginal burning practices and the traditional owners' on-ground knowledge with twenty-first century science. Aboriginal rangers are working with us in helping to tackle feral animals, particularly feral cattle and wild pigs. Key partnerships have also been established with a number

of not-for-profit groups, such as the Australian Wildlife Conservancy, for conservation across the Artesian Range.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: I have a point of order, Madam Chair. The minister's answers seem to be disproportionately long for people from his own side when he has already been tipped off to the question, compared with his answers to our side, which are remarkably brief.

Mr A.P. JACOB: It is because my side asks questions and does not just make statements.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you, minister! That was a point of order; it does not call for an interjection. We already know that. Member, there is no point of order, but I would bring you back to the statement that I made at the opening that you should be short and to the point. Minister, can you wind up that answer, please.

Mr A.P. JACOB: I have wound up that answer, thank you very much, Madam Chair; there was just a lot to talk about.

Ms L.L. BAKER: I refer to the service summary on page 794. My question is about why that service summary does not contain any mention of how the government intends to fund the transfer of staff to the Bunbury offices that it committed to opening. Can the minister please just tell me where is the funding for the Bunbury move; who is going; and has the government made a decision on that yet, in line with its promise?

Mr A.P. JACOB: I thank the member for the question. Yes, there was an election commitment in and around a move to Bunbury and there will be ongoing internal work on that matter. If you like, that entire commitment is not funded in the first year of what will be four budgets under this government. It will receive priority along with other election commitments in future budgets. The internal work is ongoing. I already had the opportunity to head down with the member for Bunbury and visit the site. I looked at Leschenault Estuary and have had good discussions with some local people down there. A lot of work is being done behind the scenes.

Ms L.L. BAKER: That is great. Has the minister picked a site?

Mr A.P. JACOB: Yes, but as I said, principally, a number of our key commitments have been met and funded in this budget, which is our first budget of four, and that one will be coming up in future years.

Ms L.L. BAKER: Who will be going?

Mr A.P. JACOB: Member, I think that is getting way ahead of us; it is very early days at this stage.

Ms L.L. BAKER: So, you have picked a site but you do not know who is going there or how big the building will need to be or what it is going to need to have the capacity to respond.

Mr A.P. JACOB: What was the question?

Ms L.L. BAKER: You have picked a site but you do not know who is going to be in there, who will move, when they will move or what the role of those people is likely to be.

Mr A.P. JACOB: Again, sorry, member, that was more of a statement; I am just trying to get the question.

Ms L.L. BAKER: No, I said: Is that what you have done? Have you picked the site without knowing any of the details around who is going, when they are going and how many people are going?

The CHAIRMAN: Do you want to reframe the question, member? The minister needs the question reframed.

Ms L.L. BAKER: On the site that the minister has picked, is he aware of who will go there, when they will go and the capacity of the building that the department will build on the site if there is not already a building on it?

Mr A.P. JACOB: A preferred site has been picked and some preliminary costing work was done in and around that site. As I said, these tend to be fairly large building projects and there would be ongoing work in and around that, given that a very significant proportion of the Department of Parks and Wildlife's workforce is already based outside of the metropolitan area. Indeed, I think it is slightly more than 50 per cent of our workforce. A lot of our work is in and around the south west, so I think that the member can draw her own conclusions about the large proportion of the workforce that may be based in that area. But in terms of getting down to specific work, no, we have not reached that point yet.

Ms L.L. BAKER: Sorry, minister. Can I just have one further question, Madam Chair?

The CHAIRMAN: One further question, member.

Ms L.L. BAKER: Again during the election, the government promised a headquarters for the department in Bunbury priced at about \$15 million. Is that what the minister referred to when he said he had gone down to assess the site? Where is that \$15 million, if not in this year's budget, because it is not showing in any subsequent years either?

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Mr A.P. JACOB: I think that was the member's initial question as well. It was not the question that I was referring to; it was the one that the member was referring to. If you like, that is the commitment that the member is referring to and, yes.

Ms L.L. BAKER: So the commitment was not —

The CHAIRMAN: No, member; that is it. Member for Swan Hills.

Mr F.A. ALBAN: I refer to "Parks and Visitor Services" at the top of page 797 and the income target of some \$32 286 000. How much of this figure is to be derived from national park entry fees and will these fees increase in 2013–14?

[7.50 pm]

Mr A.P. JACOB: There are 30 national and conservation parks across the state that attract entry fees. These fees are retained by the local Department of Parks and Wildlife office. They contribute to the cost of park management and also the maintenance of visitor facilities in specific parks where there is a high level of visitor infrastructure. These parks seem to have a higher level of roads, car parks, boardwalks, toilets and such. The daily entry for a vehicle with up to 12 legally seated passengers is currently \$11, and this will increase to \$12. There is also a range of good value extended park passes for regular users of the parks. For example, local residents who regularly use their local park for recreation can purchase an annual local park pass for just \$20 a vehicle. This will increase to \$22 a vehicle, but this still offers great value. The target income from all park entry fees for 2013–14 is roughly \$3.88 million.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: I have point of order, Madam Chair. This is my third session today and I have not had another minister who has waffled on with stuff he could have handed over to members, if they were genuinely interested.

The CHAIRMAN: The minister is answering the question. I have asked the minister to ensure that his answers are short and to the point. The minister knows this. Minister, can you ensure that you just answer the question?

Mr A.P. JACOB: I think these are answers to key questions, and I thought the member for Gosnells would be interested in the detail.

As I said, the target income from park entry fees is just under \$3.8 million this year. It is important to note that these fees have not increased since 2009. Members will understand that because of the cost of changing signs and promotional material on park fees—again picking up on an earlier question about the logo; it is more efficient and affordable to increase the fees every three to four years. This obviously explains why every three to four years we get that slightly larger jump. The government has approved an increase in park fees that represents more than the cumulative increase in CPI, but it is very important to note that increase does not represent more than the cumulative CPI level over the last four years, although it would if it were taken year by year. However, as I said, given the cost associated with upgrading signs and information, it is better we review it periodically over longer periods. Being able to charge entry fees will assist the Department of Parks and Wildlife in maintaining our world-class park system. It is important we have an element of user pays. It is only a token element, but it encourages people to a greater appreciation of what they are there to enjoy.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I refer to "Employees (Full Time Equivalents)" on page 796—in particular to forest management employees. I note that the 2012–13 budget estimated there would be 273 FTEs. Is this number consistent with recommendations about succession planning and increased demand for forest management employees? Secondly, how many of those 273 FTEs are currently on leave for stress, incapacity or post-traumatic stress disorder?

Mr A.P. JACOB: This goes back to the earlier question by the member for Maylands, which we dealt with in the nature conservation area and through broader government policy. I will pass over to the acting director general on the issue in the forest management and sustainable forest management areas.

Mr J. Sharp: The difference between the budget target and the estimated actual is three staff. There was a significant increase in 2011–12 from 269 FTEs, which called for an increase of less than one per cent. That was related to the production of the forest management plan for which extra resources were made available in the planning process. That is now coming towards conclusion. I cannot answer the question about people on stress leave, but perhaps Dr Byrne knows.

Dr J.C. Byrne: The number of employees on stress leave is not high. We have the precise figures available and we could provide that information to the member by way of supplementary information. Can I go on further? The member asked about succession planning and whether that had been allowed for in the future. Yes, it has. The succession plan does not increase the number of employees, because we made sure we have good plans to replace them as they leave or retire.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I am interested in fire management employees and how many of the 273 staff are fit for duty.

Mr J. Sharp: I understand it is a very minimal number. Mr Dans may be able to answer that.

Mr P.D. Dans: I confirm that with our conservation employees who make up our front-line firefighters, which I think is what the member is getting at, we will maintain numbers at 286 throughout the south west forest region. That is the number we had in place last year. That is a mix of permanent and seasonal conservation employee front-line firefighters. Last year the figure was in the order of 15 of that 286 who were deemed to be not front-line fire-fit, but those particular officers still had a role in the department's fire suppression effort; it might have been running meals, manning a fire-spotting tower or assisting to reload a water bomber—those types of roles. But for one reason or another, they were deemed to be not fit for the front-line firefighting role.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I have a further question on employee welfare and health. The minister would have been sitting in cabinet when there was agreement to pass some so-called presumptive workers' compensation legislation for cancers prevalent in firefighters employed by the Department of Fire and Emergency Services. Did the minister make representations for DPW staff to be similarly covered; and, if not, why?

Mr A.P. JACOB: There are two key points on that. First, it does not relate to a specific line item.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: Yes, it does; it relates to page 796, "Employees —

Mr A.P. JACOB: Secondly, I am not about to divulge what is discussed in cabinet; and the member knows full well I will not do that. However, I will answer the substance of the question on the announcement on workers' compensation for a range of cancers that are particularly prevalent in exposed firefighters. The first tranche particularly deals with career firefighters.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: Some of your officers are career firefighters.

Mr A.P. JACOB: One of my colleagues has made an announcement in and around that. There is an undertaking that the Department of Parks and Wildlife firefighters, along with volunteers, will be looked at in the second round.

Mr D.C. NALDER: I refer to details of controlled grants and subsidies on page 799. The 2012–13 budget included an item for the Kimberley Toad Busters but there is nothing for this year nor for the out years. Can the minister advise what is happening with these grants?

Mr A.P. JACOB: Again, as part of our 2008 election commitments, the government pledged funding of \$1.2 million over the four years.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: Madam Acting Chair, this question has already been asked.

Mr A.P. JACOB: No, it has not.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: A question has been asked about grants and the minister said exactly the same thing: it was part of the commitment in 2008. The minister is again giving the same response. This is just wasting time.

Mr A.P. JACOB: The member is incorrect. This is another line item. To be honest, I thought the member might ask a question on this.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: It is the same line item for community grants.

Mr A.P. JACOB: No, it is not. I draw the member's attention to page 799.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: It is the Kimberley Toad Busters this time, but it is the same answer!

[8.00 pm]

Mr A.P. JACOB: It is a completely different line item. I will go back to the member for Alfred Cove's question. Again, a commitment was made by the Liberal–National government going into the 2008 election that we would fund \$1.2 million over four years for the Kimberley Toad Busters. This was expanded by a further \$300 000 during the course of the government. Again, it is an example of a commitment that the previous Liberal–National government not only met but exceeded. Indeed, we could roll that answer out across all of our election commitments in the environment portfolio going into the 2008 election. At the time, \$1.5 million was for on-ground works with the aim of preventing or at least slowing the spread of cane toads across the Kimberley. Unfortunately, despite the best efforts of Kimberley Toad Busters and like-minded groups, cane toads have continued to spread across the Kimberley at the rate of around 50 kilometres a year since first arriving in 2009. It is now clear, I believe, that, despite the best of intentions and an outstanding level of commitment from these volunteers, these works have not been able to prevent the spread of the cane toad across the landscape, and accordingly it has been decided not to allocate further funds towards these on-ground activities.

Extract from *Hansard*

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However, the government remains committed to implementing its cane toad strategy, and also to putting our dollars into the areas in which we believe we can have the most effect in trying to tackle the cane toad problem. This investment is specifically about three things at this stage. It is about protecting wildlife in the 30 Kimberley islands, as I mentioned earlier in my Kimberley science and conservation strategy, by creating refuges in which local fauna can exist without the threat of cane toads. It is about preventing the establishment of new populations, either on the islands, or those hitchhiker populations further ahead of that advancing front. It is also about continuing to invest in and support investigations that can identify innovative means of reducing cane toad impacts on local wildlife, in the hope of a possible biological control agent at some stage in the future. In talking about biological control agent, the example would be the 1080 poison that was discovered in earlier years. We might be able to find something like that for the cane toad. A lot of very good research is being done in that space. The University of WA has recently cracked the genome of the cane toad. I also had the privilege of launching a fantastic cane toad app that I think will help in preventing local amphibians from being unfortunately killed by being mistaken for cane toads.

The appropriation was recommended.