

**Division 43: Planning, Lands and Heritage — Service 3, Heritage, \$16 162 000 —**

Mrs L.A. Munday, Chair.

Dr A.D. Buti, Minister for Finance representing the Minister for Heritage.

Mr A. Kannis, Director General.

Mr B. Harvey, Executive Director, Heritage Services.

Mr S. McLeod, Chief Finance Officer.

Mr G. Hamley, Chief of Staff, Minister for Heritage.

[Witnesses introduced.]

**The CHAIR:** The estimates committees will be reported by Hansard. The daily proof *Hansard* will be available online as soon as possible within two business days. The chair will allow as many questions as possible. Questions and answers should be short and to the point. Consideration is restricted to items for which a vote of money is proposed in the consolidated account. Questions must relate to a page number, item or amount related to the current division, and members should preface their questions with these details. Some divisions are the responsibility of more than one minister. Ministers shall only be examined in relation to their portfolio responsibilities.

A minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee. I will ask the minister to clearly indicate what information they agree to provide and will then allocate a reference number. Supplementary information should be provided to the principal clerk by close of business Friday, 3 June 2022. If a minister suggests that a matter be put on notice, members should use the online questions on notice system.

The first question goes to the member for Vasse.

[3.10 pm]

**Ms L. METTAM:** I refer to page 737 of budget paper No 2, volume 2 and the increase of 16 FTEs for the implementation of the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2021. Are these staff permanent or contracted?

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** Member, I do not think that is in this division. We are looking at heritage. That will be dealt with tomorrow.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Is this division 43?

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** This is, yes. That will be in tomorrow's session.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, this is service 3.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Okay.

**Ms C.M. TONKIN:** I have a question, and I have a vested interest because I believe an ancestor of mine might have been involved in the construction of Fremantle Prison. I refer to page 738, the asset investment program and new works in the 2022–23 state budget. What benefits will the overall \$12.6 million invested in Fremantle Prison have on improving our state's heritage and tourism offerings?

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** Thank you, member, for the question. The 2022–23 budget provides the largest single injection of capital funding into Fremantle Prison since it opened as a heritage tourism site in 1992. As it is our state's only built World Heritage site, we have a responsibility to the community to protect and preserve this iconic WA building. The budget allocation will ensure that maintenance works and repairs can occur, such as upgrades to the prison's hydraulic and drainage, fire and emergency safety and electrical systems. By preserving the heritage fabric of the site, we will continue to uphold our UNESCO World Heritage listing, which has positive reputational impacts for the state. These works will encourage increased community and tourism engagement, and improve accessibility for visitors with disabilities. Fremantle Prison makes a direct contribution of \$19.1 million annually to the Western Australian economy, including 122 FTE jobs through direct operations and tourism. The 2022–23 state budget offers significant investment into Fremantle Prison's already award-winning tourism offerings that will boost visitation and result in a stronger WA economy.

**The CHAIR:** I just realised, Minister Buti, you have been in the chair since 1.00 pm. Do you need a break or are you all right?

**DR A.D. BUTI:** We make them tough in Armadale! We will keep going; thanks very much, chair.

**Ms L. METTAM:** I have a different question, of course. I refer to page 741 and the cultural and heritage assets program under the details of controlled grants and subsidies. My question relates to severe tropical cyclone Seroja. Why does 2021–22 have an underspend of \$539 000 and what specific projects will that \$961 000 commitment be spent on?

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** Mr Harvey, are you happy to provide some information?

**Mr B. Harvey:** Certainly. Thank you for the question. There was an allocation of funding, about \$2 million, to assist with grants for heritage restoration after tropical cyclone Seroja that have been spread over a couple of financial years. That is essentially the split for that funding plus an administrative component on top of those figures.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Can the minister confirm that there was an underspend in 2021–22?

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** Yes. Mr Harvey will answer.

**Mr B. Harvey:** Yes, there was. We have not had as many applications as we anticipated coming out of the process. We have had staff up there to promote and advertise the program. We have discovered that in many cases the insurance coverage for a particular building was sufficient to repair or restore it to what it was originally. Also, people have not been able to put in claims because of the lack of professional services or tradies up there to do the work. So, in actual fact, we have had a much lower application rate than had been expected at this point in time.

**Ms L. METTAM:** What projects will the \$961 000 in this year's budget be specifically committed to and why is there no future funding going forward?

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** I will ask Mr Harvey to respond. It is not that there is no future funding. That is the allocation in this budget process but it is not an indication that there will not be any future funding. Anyway, I will ask Mr Harvey to answer that.

**Mr B. Harvey:** Member, the \$961 000 is the next allocation of funding to that and it will be dependent upon the number of applications that are received. There is a \$20 000 cap on applications, for any applications. It was really, as I said, that we were expecting far more applications than we have received so far. That is the funding that is available for any applications that we do receive.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** I refer to page 741, the “Details of Controlled Grants and Subsidies” table and the line item “Cossack Townsite”. As a former local member for that area, I thought it would have progressed by now. I understand that the government gave Cossack to the Ngarluma Yindjibarndi Foundation Ltd. It was chosen as the preferred proponent in December 2020. Could the minister perhaps give an update on where that project sits?

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** I might ask for some elaboration, but as the member knows, being a former member for this area, it is on the state Register of Heritage Places. The site is constrained and the City of Karratha decided not to proceed with the current arrangements due to ongoing management costs and unresolved planning and land management issues. Various negotiations and discussions have taken place, but noting these constraining works are being carried out, the department has sought approval to extend the caretaker contract until 30 June this year at a cost of \$0.46 million per annum. Because the town site is highly constrained, the land is not serviced. It is subject to natural hazards, including coastal erosion and an inundation risk, limiting the town site's potential developmental footprint. Funding of \$0.12 million is allocated each year for the conservation of the historic Cossack town site. The department recently obtained development application approval for a number of heritage works at the site. A tender document will be prepared to engage a builder.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** In 2020, the government announced that NYFL—that is, the Ngarluma Yindjibarndi Foundation—in conjunction with the City of Karratha would look at developing that site. Is the minister saying that after two years the City of Karratha has now pulled out and no development is going to take place as per the media release back in 2020? Is that correct?

[3.20 pm]

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** The arrangement with NYFL has been extended to 30 September this year and, as I mentioned, the department has obtained development application approval for a number of heritage works. It is a difficult issue and the City of Karratha has made its own decision on it. I mean, it has made its decision.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** Minister, I understand it is a very, very difficult piece of land and a very historic piece of land as well that is valuable to our heritage. What is the department doing to assist NYFL to come up with a viable plan moving forward?

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** Part of this is under the Heritage portfolio and part of it is probably under the Lands portfolio. It is complex. I mean, as far as the Heritage portfolio is concerned, the state government will continue to provide annual funding for the conservation of the historic Cossack town site. In regard to the overall development, that really comes under the Lands portfolio.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** Having been the member for that area and understanding that I have heard this all before many times, was it just an election ploy to say that we are going to do something about Cossack with the traditional owners and the City of Karratha, knowing that there is not a hope in hell that it can be developed because of all the issues the minister raised only five minutes ago? It is a media statement of nothing that was put out at the time.

**Extract from *Hansard***

[ASSEMBLY ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B — Tuesday, 24 May 2022]

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Chair; Ms Libby Mettam; Dr Tony Buti; Ms Christine Tonkin; Mr Vincent Catania

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**Dr A.D. BUTI:** No, is the answer to your question. I know that during my tenure as Minister for Lands we were working very hard on the issue. So, the answer to the member's question is no.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** As did many lands ministers before you.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** Well, there you go.

**The appropriation was recommended.**