

Division 40: Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions — Services 2 and 6, Tourism, \$118 813 000 —

Ms S.E. Winton, Chair.

Mr P. Papalia, Minister for Tourism.

Mr M. Webb, Chief Executive Officer, Rottnest Island Authority.

Ms M. Reynolds, Executive Director, Rottnest Island Authority.

Mr V. Ianni, Director, Business Services/Chief Financial Officer, Rottnest Island Authority.

Mr I. Johnson, Principal Policy Adviser.

[Witnesses introduced.]

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 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 principal clerk by Friday, 31 May 2019. 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 call to the member for Vasse.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to budget paper No 2, page 589, and paragraph 20 under "Joint Management and Visitor Services". It states —

The reliability and capability of the Rottnest Island Authority's online booking system ... is of paramount importance in ensuring the Island's ongoing competitiveness.

What action is the minister taking to improve the Rottnest Island booking system, which is still experiencing outages? Is there additional funding to upgrade the booking system; and, if so, how much?

Mr P. PAPALIA: What was the first part of the question, member, about the outages?

Ms L. METTAM: What action is the minister taking to improve the Rottnest Island booking system which, as I understand it, from reference to a recent question on notice, is still experiencing outages?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I might ask the executive director to answer that.

Ms M. Reynolds: Thank you, minister, and I thank the member for the question.

We commenced a review of our online booking system after some outages on 1 July 2018, and the reason for those outages related to credit card compliance standards that had been introduced globally. Since that time, we have been working very closely with Oracle Hospitality, which is the service provider for our online booking system, and we have commissioned a series of upgrades to our system, one as recently as April, in which we looked at the credit card interface. In addition to that, we are looking at efficiencies within the existing booking system; that was in May 2019. It continues to be an ongoing requirement that we provide reliable access to our booking system. The review has recommended that we introduce a one-stop shop for all our bookings—not only for our accommodation, but also for tours on the island. We have commissioned that body of work and have already started it. We have factored in a body of work in 2019–20 to upgrade our system.

Ms L. METTAM: Thank you for that response. When will the island's IT strategic plan be publicly available?

Ms M. Reynolds: It is currently in draft form and being considered by the board, so we are anticipating that within the next couple of months the document will set the strategic direction for all of the information technology for the authority.

Ms L. METTAM: Is there additional funding to upgrade the booking system? Does the minister feel assured that there will be no further outages in the coming year?

Mr P. PAPALIA: The upgrades to the system are being funded through capital expenditure from the island's budget of \$700 000.

Ms L. METTAM: The second part of the question was: is the minister confident that, with these actions being taken, there will be no future issues with the booking system going forward?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I think we can never rule out challenges with technology in the future, anywhere, anytime. It was a legacy system that had confronting challenges associated with the change in credit card management around the globe. There was a challenge with our ability to be able to continue to use credit cards to pay and to have bookings made in an efficient way. The authority is working on that. This is an upgrade. I think it will be enhanced; I hope it gets better. What we do know is that we have consistently had record numbers of visitors to Rottnest Island since we took office. As recently as last month, the figures had risen again by a further eight per cent on the previous year. Although it is frustrating and annoying, it is not an impediment to growing the number of visitors. The proposal is for a more expansive response than just fixing the booking system. We want to make it much more integrated with other services and opportunities for people to book other activities and the like. That will be much more attractive for the user. The main focus is on the visitors. It will be a step change in the service that we provide. One can never rule out problems with information technology in the future; that is just not possible.

[12.10 pm]

Ms L. METTAM: Will people be able to book accommodation and get information about accommodation at Pinky's Beach Club, for example, and be able to book other activities on the island as well?

Mr P. PAPALIA: Yes, that is the aim. Through our system people will be able to book for those accommodation providers that we do not control as well. I hope in the long run that full integration will be what people experience, even to the extent that the ferries will be integrated. There is a degree of it at the moment, but if people are able to go to one site and book all of that, it will be much more attractive for the user.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I refer the minister to page 589 of budget paper No 2, volume 2. Paragraph 13 states that visitation to department-managed lands and waters is remaining steady, with an estimated 20.4 million visits. I note that the minister is looking to increase the charges of visitation to those parks. What impact does he see happening here?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I know we have staff from the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, but they deal with just Rottnest Island. The wider DBCA activity will be answered by the parliamentary secretary in another estimates committee. I think it may even be after lunch in this location, so the member could ask that question then. I can answer questions on Rottnest; that is fine. The member will be able to ask the question; he just needs to ask it under the appropriate portfolio.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to page 589 of budget paper No 2 under "Significant Issues Impacting the Agency". Paragraph 19 states —

Maintenance and renewal of marine infrastructure, especially Rottnest Island's jetties, to improve visitor safety and operational efficiency is a priority.

Did the family who was hurt in the Rottnest Army jetty incident receive compensation or is it currently seeking damages from the state?

Mr P. PAPALIA: That is not a question that we would answer in this forum. Firstly, it is a legal matter. Secondly, the agency that is addressing the matter of compensation is not Rottnest Island; it is not the Rottnest Island Authority's responsibility.

Ms L. METTAM: Further to that question, and specifically relating to the work that will be undertaken by the Rottnest Island Authority, can the minister provide time frames on those upgrades?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I will ask the executive director to respond with regard to the main jetty and the fuel jetty and the construction of the new barge ramp with cargo handling facilities.

Ms M. Reynolds: I thank the member for the question. We have already commenced work on the barge landing and also the fuel jetty. A fair amount of pre-work goes on beforehand. Ideally, factoring in the "Rottnest factor", which might cause things to change time-wise, we anticipate the fuel jetty commencing in the financial year 2019–20 and the barge landing commencing, pending the approvals, in 2020–21. We look towards the main jetty upgrades in the final two years.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: A total of \$16.2 million is allocated for the Rottnest jetty upgrades. Considering the length of the jetty, it does not seem to correlate when \$6 million was allocated to the Esperance jetty, which is 500 metres long. What will the \$16.2 million do for us?

Mr P. PAPALIA: If the member wants a detailed outline of what work is encompassed by the spend, he might have to put that question on notice. There are business cases for the task and then they go to Treasury for approval, and the process for getting that information will take longer than the supplementary time frame. If the member is

asking what we are going to get, it is going to be a new fuel jetty, because that is a timber construction. The main jetty will be an upgrade because we would not knock that whole thing down, and there will be a whole new barge ramp and cargo handling facility. We are talking about a significant bit of kit. Where the old Army jetty used to be will be a barge landing area for taking the logistics out of Thomson Bay. It is a lot of effort and there will be a massive change to the efficiency of the island and safety around not having to take those logistics through the town site where people are walking around. That will be a very big change. Those tasks have not gone to tender, so knowing exactly what we are going to pay for individual parts of the project is not possible at the moment. They are big jobs.

Ms L. METTAM: Can I ask a question regarding Kings Park?

Mr P. PAPALIA: No, because that will come under the DBCA after lunch. This is just the Rottnest section. I know that the executive director is sitting here, but I can answer on just Rottnest and then the parliamentary secretary will assume responsibility for environment more generally.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I will try a question relating to page 587 of budget paper No 2. In the “Spending Changes” table, reference is made to the Helena and Aurora Range under “Plan for Our Parks”.

Mr P. PAPALIA: That is the same scenario. Apart from Rottnest, anything to do with the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions will be covered in a different section this afternoon.

The appropriation was recommended.

[12.20 pm]