

**South West Development Commission —**

Mr S.J. Price, Chair.

Mr D.T. Punch, Minister for Regional Development.

Ms M. Teede, Chief Executive Officer, South West Development Commission.

Ms H. Brayford, Director General, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development.

Mr P. Isaachsen, Deputy Director General, Industry and Economic Development.

Ms M. Carbon, Deputy Director General, Sustainability and Biosecurity.

Mr P. Gregson, Manager, Funds Management.

Ms C. McConnell, Deputy Director General, Primary Industries Development.

Ms L. Williamson, Chief Financial Officer.

Mr B. Mezzatesta, Executive Director, Operations and Compliance.

Mr C. Berger, Chief Executive Officer, Kimberley Development Commission.

Mr J. Gardner, Acting Chief Executive Officer, Great Southern Development Commission.

Mr C. Syers, Principal Fisheries Management Officer.

Mr P. Spalding, Acting Chief Executive Officer, Mid West Development Commission.

Mr R. Cossart, Chief Executive Officer, Wheatbelt Development Commission.

Mr T. Palmer, Chief of Staff, Minister for Regional Development.

Mr A. Buck, Senior Policy Adviser.

Mr G. Grounds, Senior Policy Adviser.

Mr A. Skinner, Senior Policy Adviser.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Can the minister explain to me what the resourcing is for staff? Does the South West Development Commission have its own discrete budget or is it simply reliant upon the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development for all its moneys?

**Mr D.T. PUNCH:** The budget is part of a previous division. It is allocated within that for the purpose of the development commission. Interestingly, that is part of a decision that was made back in 2013, which the member for Roe would recall, around funding those agencies out of the royalties for regions fund. In relation to the specific FTE for the South West Development Commission, I will ask Ms Teede to respond.

**Ms M. Teede:** There are 24 FTE.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Are those positions all filled at the moment?

**Ms M. Teede:** All of them are filled; the only one vacant is just about to be appointed.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** There are many different aspects of the new energy systems that affect the south west, such as the Collie closure and the windfarms off the coast of Busselton, Kemerton and Binningup being discussed. There are also other wind proposals throughout the landscape. We spoke earlier today about the south west timber plantation's change to softwood plantations. What role does the development commission have in trying to draw together all those different bits of industry change and incoming development to ensure that the people of the south west do not feel that they are losing a say over their own communities?

**Mr D.T. PUNCH:** I do not think the people of the south west would ever lose control of their ability to have a say. They certainly are not backward in making their views known. It is a very active community, as it should be. As with all development commissions, the South West Development Commission plays an important role in coordinating the work of government and interfacing with non-government organisations, business, industry and the local community. The South West Development Commission, in particular, had a significant change management role within Collie. I have to say, some outstanding work has taken place in Collie through the Just Transition agenda that we have. It has seen major new investment potential in Collie itself and a variety of expansion opportunities for small business. Indeed, the town has completely refocused itself as both an industry and tourism centre. There is a new energy and vibe in the town, and that is certainly a function of the development commission and a very strong local member as well.

Equally, for the people in the southern area, with the southern forests, change is not something that is unique to them. They have been living with change in the forest management agenda going back to the days of the Court government when Hon Paul Omodei was the first Forest Products Commission minister. Therefore, the South West Development Commission has been involved in a change process all the way through. As I have previously indicated,

the relationships that the development commissions built as part of helping to support communities through change are incredibly important.

Wind and renewables are on a completely new agenda. The offshore wind debate has been particularly disappointing, in my view, as there has been a lot of misinformation. We forget that it was a Morrison government that enacted the legislation to explore offshore wind, yet, interestingly, it is the current federal opposition that is violently opposed to it. The federal government speeches in the second reading debate on offshore wind energy make for interesting reading about how federal opposition members saw opportunities for regional development. This government's preference is to look at land-based wind opportunities, and the development commission is looking at the manufacturing opportunities associated with onshore wind. The development commission plays a central role in coordinating, informing and enabling people to participate in those changes and in the new opportunities, as it always has done.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Was the development commission consulted on the ramifications to the south west on any of the decisions made by the government, such as the closure of the timber industry or the Collie changes? Was the development commission part of the consultation process or was it completely sidelined by the government?

**Mr D.T. PUNCH:** If we take Collie as an example, the development commission has been involved from day one in looking at new opportunities for Collie, the changes that are happening within Collie and the changes that are certainly happening with the power stations coming to their end of life. Therefore, yes; the development commission has been involved in consultations. As a matter of course, every decision that the government makes through our cabinet process incorporates an assessment of regional impact. Regions are very much a part of this government's decision-making, and we govern for all Western Australians. Carrying our regions forward in a positive way means that Western Australia is a better state for it.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** In terms of the communication between the development commission and members of Parliament, what protocols are in place to allow communications between government members and the South West Development Commission? Are the same protocols in place for, say, members of the Nationals WA or the Liberal Party and the South West Development Commission?

**Mr D.T. PUNCH:** The protocols are very similar to the protocols that were in place under the previous government. There is a communications protocol. Members of Parliament contact my office when they wish to speak with an agency that I manage. There are occasions when the parliamentary secretary or another member may have a particular responsibility for an outcome and may report directly to me on that, but the general principle is that the communications protocols apply and, whether it is opposition members or government members, there is a discussion with my office.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Is the discussion with the minister's office about allowing the discussion with the development commission or is the discussion, with both government and non-government members, that every communication needs to go through the minister's office?

**Mr D.T. PUNCH:** I am not sure what the member is driving at, but if he wants to speak to the South West Development Commission, he contacts my office, discusses the purpose of the visit and, if there is a good reason for it, I do not see a reason why the member could not meet with the commission. We have certainly never refused an opposition member's request. I think it is simply a courtesy to let the minister who is responsible for an agency know when one wishes to speak to an agency.

**The CHAIR:** The completes the examination of the South West Development Commission authority.