

**Division 41: Planning, Lands and Heritage — Services 2 and 4, Lands, \$70 850 000—**

Mr I.C. Blayney, Chair.

Mr B.S. Wyatt, Minister for Lands.

Ms G.D. McGowan, Director General.

Mr M. Hanrahan, Chief Finance Officer.

Mr M. Darcey, Assistant Director General, Land Use Management.

[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.

The member for North West Central.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** I refer to page 608 of budget paper No 2, volume 2. The first paragraph under "Significant Issues Impacting the Agency" makes reference to building 150 000 new homes and unlocking land around Metronet stations and infrastructure. Can the minister confirm the total amount of land area expected for planning use change as a direct result of Metronet?

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** Does the member mean planning change by zoning changes?

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** I refer to zoning changes and how much land the state government will be required to purchase to fulfil that.

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** That question is more for the Minister for Planning, so the member might want to put that question specifically to her. I cannot remember the exact number, but I know that over 90 per cent of the required land has already been purchased.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** The minister says 90 per cent of land has already been purchased, so what is the total cost of that land purchase? Is that in the minister's area of responsibility?

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** The vast majority would have been purchased over time through the metropolitan region improvement tax et cetera, because a lot of those rail corridors were established years ago. The Metronet land sales program—if that is something of interest—has a target of \$305 million, which will be generated by the sale of land assets unlocked for disposal by Metronet infrastructure and planning. Of the \$305 million target, \$205 million has been earmarked to be sold to LandCorp and the Department of Communities for development. But I do not think that actually answered the question the member asked. In terms of the percentage of land that requires zoning changes, the member will have to ask the Minister for Planning.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** Does the modelling to show the government how much it has purchased the land for and how much it is going to sell it for come under the minister's jurisdiction, or is that under the Minister for Planning's jurisdiction?

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** That is Minister Saffioti's jurisdiction.

**Mr D.C. NALDER:** I refer to page 607 and "Spending Changes". Under "New Initiatives" is the "Geraldton Alternative Settlement Agreement", which has an estimated actual of \$552 000 in 2018–19, a budget estimate of \$2.082 million in 2019–20, and around \$5 million for each year of the forward estimates. I do not know what that is, and I could not find any notes on it. What is that spending change and what does it relate to?

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** Those are good questions. The Noongar native title agreement was negotiated under the previous government, and then, obviously, we have had some obstacles with the registration and court process. The Geraldton native title settlement will be the second largest in the state. I will put that on the record while I can. The Department of the Premier and Cabinet is leading negotiations with the traditional owner negotiation team, the

State Solicitor's Office and others. Currently, the traditional owner negotiation team consists of 12 representatives from the southern Yamatji, Widi mob, Hutt River, and Mullewa Wadjari applicants. This has been a long-term native title—originally a dispute, now a negotiation. It took a long time to resolve the boundaries with the different groups, but that has now been resolved.

**Mr D.C. NALDER:** This tribe was in the Yamatji group?

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** That is correct. This is the biggest component of the Yamatji native title claims. It will be significant because it is based around Geraldton and surrounding areas. The government has so far committed \$47.4 million over 10 years in implementation costs, of which \$18.42 million—which is what the member can see in the forward estimate—is really about delivering the land and heritage benefits under the proposed Indigenous land use agreement. We have a fairly tight time frame imposed on us by the Federal Court. We are required to reach an in-principle agreement by 30 July this year and then have it authorised by the end of December this year. This has been a long-term effort that is now reaching the pointy end. That is what that money is for. If we can do this, it will be the second largest settlement of native title in terms of size in WA. Of course, like Noongar deals with a very large percentage of the population of WA, Geraldton also deals with a significant portion. There is a lot of freehold land and farming tenure. It is going well, but the court has imposed a very tight time frame on the state.

[7.10 pm]

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** Under the “Land Asset Sales Program” on page 609, the government is looking at managing the divestment of surplus or underutilised state property. This might be too specific a question for estimates, but I notice that the Graylands site has been decommissioned. Adjacent to the Graylands site is the disabled horseriding facility. Does the minister have any information on whether the Graylands site may be amalgamated with the disabled horseriding site?

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** That is a very specific question. I can come back to it, but I suspect that supplementary information might provide a generic answer.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** I will put it on notice. I thought it might be a bit too specific. I understand that the site is adjacent to Graylands. There was a police-owned site in the vicinity. That particular not-for-profit organisation really cannot relocate anywhere else and is a bit concerned about being moved on from that site. If it is amalgamated, it will be quite a big parcel of land.

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** I do not know, but I will look into it.

**Mrs L.M. HARVEY:** I will put it on notice.

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** Thank you.

**Mr D.C. NALDER:** My question relates to asset sales and mistakes of previous governments. I am not politicising it because I think it has happened on both sides. Demographic changes in communities have meant primary schools have closed down. Governments of the day have said, “We don't need it, we'll sell it”, and then, a generation later, when demographics change—people have passed on and new families move in—all of a sudden we are short of schools and we are trying to acquire land. Sometimes there is a short-term gain to be made by governments saying, “We can realise \$300 million here” and they tend to grab it and leave the problem for the future. How do we ensure there is proper strategic planning in government departments to ensure that land is not being sold off that may be required in 10 or 20 years?

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** That is a good question. I can probably make some general comments around Education in particular. I will provide an example from my own electorate. When I was in high school, student numbers at Lathlain Primary School were down and the department was keen to sell that land. There was a bit of a local backlash to that. At that time, Lathlain was an older area but it has now fundamentally changed. It is now a very young area and the school is bursting at the seams. Agencies need to get better at modelling their own requirements around land use. What traditionally happens is that agencies will come through us for land sales without thinking about their own requirements. I suspect it is one of those things that governments will get right by and large, but along the way they occasionally get it wrong. It is a fair question that, I think, over time, we get better at managing. One thing I find is that we are forever putting money into the education budget to buy land in the outer suburbs of Perth that was effectively sold by the state to a developer. At some point along the way we could have made a different decision. It is a fair call.

**Mr D.C. NALDER:** The department of planning undertook an analysis through the population being at 3.5 million and beyond in the future. When I was a minister I tried to get the Department of Transport to work alongside that to understand the strategic planning. Is there a need for Lands to ensure that Education has undertaken this work so that we do not make some of those obvious errors in the future? Is that occurring; that is, long-term strategic planning on where primary schools need to be located, if the population is still expected to grow towards three million by 2050, and five million by the late 2060s and early 2070s?

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** It is a good question. I will ask the director general to make some comments, but ultimately the purpose of Perth and Peel@3.5 million and the plethora of planning documents et cetera—not just through Planning but through the agencies, whether it be Transport et cetera—is supposed to do that work. I will ask the director general to make some more specific comments.

**Ms G.D. McGowan:** Although it is a question for the Minister for Planning, as recently as about a fortnight ago, I, along with some of my senior staff members, met with the director general of Education and staff to talk about that very topic, at the request of government. There have also been ministerial-level meetings. We are now working quite closely with Education on school sites more generally in the planning for both primary and high school sites, looking at how we can do a little more work in that space. A lot of active work is going on.

**Mr D.C. NALDER:** It is not just education. It makes sense to me, if we are planning a city for 30 years' time, that the elements of hospitals, schools, police stations, courthouses, prisons, whatever it might be, are taken into account. We need to know where they should be located over that same sort of time frame so that it is mapped out. We would then understand where public transport needs to feed to and where the key activity centres are. All these things need to be done well in advance so that we are not paying a premium for that land in 30 years' time when it becomes a crisis to build it. Too often governments from both sides are crisis managing and are very focused on this. How do we ensure we lay those foundations? Referring to the population being at three million in the future, how certain is the minister that due consideration has been given to land requirements for the state to ensure we are not selling off an asset that we will have to spend a lot more on? Is the minister comfortable that those decisions have been made in the right manner or is that work in progress as the department goes through that?

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** I think it is. Perth and Peel@3.5 million is to do that very thing. The efforts of Metronet et cetera is to ensure that land is utilised well. The key person sitting around here at the moment is the director general so I will let her provide some comments.

**Ms G.D. McGowan:** Thank you, minister. We have really increased the level of spatial mapping across the metropolitan area that actually includes infrastructure. There is current and potential future provision in there as well. That, combined with looking at surplus government land or land that is under the control of the state, is very much part and parcel of what we are doing for Metronet. Obviously there is legislation before Parliament at the moment to establish Infrastructure WA. We would see the infrastructure coordinating group, or a subset of the Western Australian Planning Commission, still doing the lower-order coordination; that is, projects of less than \$100 million or whatever threshold Infrastructure WA finishes at. We are now able to map the impacts of any demographic change where we see the future population that is outlined in Perth and Peel@3.5 million and what that will mean in terms of infrastructure provisions, including schools and hospitals. My favourite is always cemeteries, because that is one we often overlook.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** Is there a spike in FTEs in the department because of the infrastructure bill that has gone through, and perhaps a number of FTEs have been recouped to the Infrastructure WA side of things?

**Ms G.D. McGowan:** I would love there to be a spike to that degree, but no. There are a couple of changes in the FTE provisions. We have some staff in relation to the implementation of the south west settlement and the Geraldton alternative settlement, but in this particular budget the main provision has been around the Metronet provision. From memory, it is about \$8.5 million, which will provide another seven staff. We currently have about 10 staff, from both the land use management side and the land use planning side of the agency, working with the Metronet team. Metronet itself has only a few core staff and the rest have been supplemented by placements from agencies. The other addition to that is an intake of seven graduates a couple of months ago added to the spike. It is actually settling down with the coming together of the agencies.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** I refer to “Details of Controlled Grants and Subsidies” on page 618 of the *Budget Statements* and the line item “Bushfire Risk Management Planning”. Can the minister confirm whether funding for this program ceases at the end of 2019–20 and has not been allocated from elsewhere in the budget thereafter?

[7.20 pm]

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** That is in respect of this component but the emergency services levy funding component of \$35 million carries on.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** Of the \$5.76 million allocated next year, how much is for risk management on regional crown land?

**Mr M. Darcey:** All of it. The money is distributed through the Department of Fire and Emergency Services and the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions for the management of crown land primarily inside of town sites but also adjacent to towns in the regional context.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** Is the minister able to provide a forward plan of the bushfire risk mitigation spend for the year ahead?

**Extract from *Hansard***

[ASSEMBLY ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A — Wednesday, 22 May 2019]

p248d-251a

Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Ben Wyatt; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Dean Nalder

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**Mr B.S. WYATT:** The funding comes this way but DFES plans how it is rolled out.

**The appropriation was recommended.**