

Division 43: Planning, Lands and Heritage — Service 2, Lands, \$71 472 000—

Mrs L.A. Munday, Chair.

Ms R. Saffioti, Minister for Planning representing the Minister for Lands.

Mr A. Kannis, Director General.

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

Mr S. McLeod, Chief Finance Officer.

Ms A. Gibson, Executive Director, Land Use Management.

Mr B. Hennessey, Acting Chief of Staff, Minister for Lands.

Mr E. Carmody, Senior Policy Adviser.

[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.

Any questions? The member for Roe.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Thank you, Deputy Speaker. I refer to page 730 of budget paper No 2, volume 2, and item 3, “Land Supply and Social Housing”, which states —

Work is also underway to deconstrain and divest surplus land owned by the Crown and the Western Australian Planning Commission for social housing development and other strategic planning ...

What are some of the areas that have been identified, and how many of those areas have been identified for social housing?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: This relates to the housing diversity pipeline. Work is being undertaken through a cross-government committee, chaired by the Minister for Lands together with myself as the Minister for Planning, with representatives from DevelopmentWA, the Department of Communities and the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage. The aim is to identify unutilised land or, as we call it in business, “lazy land”, or government surplus land, and go to the market to get expressions of interest about its development. I think there are currently 12 sites, including two in regional WA, and this is the first tranche. We are seeing not only the government sector but also councils that may know of, have a management order of or own freehold land and are keen to participate in the next round. We try to identify land that is not very productive. We have gone out to the market through a registration of interest process. We will now go through a formal tender process to get proposals to develop on those pieces of land with the aim of having a certain percentage of social housing. We are also very keen to engage the community housing sector, which has access to a number of commonwealth programs. We are looking at different types of initiatives. They may include the government selling the land or giving the land to the proponent, leasing the land, or a number of different mechanisms. We asked for the market to tell us what it wants, what incentives it wants for each block, and also what it can deliver in terms of social housing.

[5.40 pm]

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Has the minister sensed that there is a large amount of interest from the private sector or the community in general to take these developments forward to social housing, or is the interest going towards other projects?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: No, we have seen a lot of interest. I think 60 submissions have been received. I said 12—I think there are 11, but there is another one at Smith Street, so there are 12 including Smith Street and 11 are going through this particular process. We have seen a lot of interest at the registration of interest stage. Like I said, there were 60 submissions. As Minister Carey and myself have outlined a number of times, this is a new way of trying to create new housing opportunities whereby we have identified sites and are trying to de-risk those sites in terms of the cost of the land, the planning regimes underpinning them and maybe other infrastructure costs. We are trying to de-risk.

In return, we will get a real community benefit through social housing. There is a lot of interest and now our challenge is to crystallise that interest into activity. Of course, the market is pretty hot at the moment, but we are trying to get a commitment to as many of these projects as possible over the next six to 12 months so that we can get that activity underway as soon as possible. The implementation time frame of the projects will vary, as will the percentage and type of social housing. Importantly, one of the key drivers is to have social housing diversity by delivering not only four by twos, but also two by ones. We need housing dedicated to older people and people with disabilities. We need a real diversity of supply to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to live in what are very exciting precincts.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Is the government also providing encouragement in the form of some sort of headworks subsidy or the like to encourage these people to join in with the government to improve social housing?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: We have not provided up-front funding for these areas, but we are asking the market to tell us what it can deliver, and there will then be a formal assessment process. Someone may come up and say, “If you provide the water infrastructure, we can build you 10 storeys and provide 20 two-by-one accessible units.” That may be compared with someone who does not request any headworks but will build five storeys and provide 10 units. Assessments will be made, and we are developing an assessment tool so that we can have a very clear assessment framework to see what will deliver the most benefit. As I said, this is something that both the minister and I are very passionate about. People come forward to us as ministers to tell us about their great ideas. We are now asking them for their great ideas and how can they convert those ideas into activity. This is really a test of the industry and how innovative and proactive it can be. It is quite funny, because in this process we get a lot of people asking us what the project involves. We are leaving it to the market to see how much it can deliver on behalf of taxpayers and how much we can leverage out of these sites.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I refer to the Government Regional Officers’ Housing situation. As the minister knows, there is a shortage in every area—south west, north west or wherever. Is the government working to alleviate the scenario in conjunction with these 12 areas that the minister is potentially working on?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The initial tranche is to target social and community housing. As I said, this is the first range of land. I do not visit many councils that do not tell me about a block of land that has been sitting there doing nothing, and they want to try to get something happening with it. We see this as something that will continue to grow and develop. We will be tackling GRO housing. There are some interesting ideas being put forward by councils, and we are very keen to look at how we can develop more GRO housing in partnership with the market and those councils. We are also very keen to get that diversity of supply and make sure that we have appropriate dwellings for different types of workers in the regions. I am personally in charge of the market-led proposal process, and we may utilise the MLP process or a targeted problem or opportunity statement to try to encourage more ideas on how we can develop more housing in regional WA. Just to reiterate, the minister is very happy to work with local governments on this. He is visiting a lot of regional councils. As I said, there are a lot of good ideas out there, and it is really just us trying to work with those councils to help them deliver those good ideas.

Mr R.S. LOVE: I was going to ask a new question, but the minister just said something that I want to follow-up on. The minister talked about MLPs—that is, market-led proposals. Who within the wider mix of ministers within the super-department is responsible for the oversight of those market-led proposals? I understand it used to be conducted from one department, the Department of Finance, and was transferred to the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage at some point. Which minister oversees that process? Which section or service delivery area is in charge of that process?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: It is under Planning, so it is my portfolio. I referred to it in this section because I think we need to explore all opportunities to get more regional housing, whether it be through this housing diversity pipeline, through MLPs or problem or opportunity statements, or through working with councils and supporting their projects. I think we are open to all ideas to support new regional housing initiatives.

Mr R.S. LOVE: I will move on to a new question. I refer to page 731 and the thirteenth paragraph, “Carbon Farming on Crown Land”. Could the minister please explain what funding is being allocated to support change to enable carbon farming on crown land, and what categories of crown land that might entail? Is it any particular tenure? Is it unallocated crown land as a pastoral lease or a general lease? What is the tenure of that crown land?

[5.50 pm]

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I do not have a lot of specific detail, but the continued development of WA’s carbon farming opportunities is a key element of our climate policy. As the member knows, carbon farming is a process of changing agricultural practice to increase the amount of carbon stored in the soil and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The state government is exploring opportunities for other forms of carbon farming that could be undertaken on crown land. These were built upon existing carbon farming methods that have already been approved for use in WA. The state government is progressing detailed design of the initiative announced in December 2021, which will invite competitive proposals on selected areas of unallocated crown land currently managed by the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions. We currently have a system whereby we are inviting proposals on

unallocated crown land for carbon farming initiatives. In addition, in parallel, we continue to progress a range of amendments to the Land Administration Act with a view to ensuring that, among other things, a new and more flexible form of non-exclusive lease-held tenure that is suitable for broad-scale uses is made available. It is expected that the new form of leasehold tenure will facilitate the practical implementation of the state's carbon farming initiative, as well as other broadacre initiatives and proposals. I think there are two processes underway: one relates to inviting proposals for the use of unallocated crown land, and the other involves changes to the Land Administration Act to facilitate these types of initiatives on pastoral leases.

Mr R.S. LOVE: A change to the use of a pastoral lease would have native title implications. If the pastoral industry is to enable carbon farming, if it involves something different from what it has been doing before, will there be any assistance available to the industry to help it to make that change?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I will refer to Mr Darcey to comment.

Mr R.S. LOVE: I will just reiterate. As I recall, one problem was the length of tenure for some pastoral leases. That is one issue that would trigger a native title implication.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Sure. I will refer to Mr Darcey to comment.

Mr M. Darcey: Thank you, minister. The form of carbon farming that is currently available to Western Australia in the pastoral state is human-induced regeneration. That is where people remove stock from certain areas to allow carbon sequestration into the landscape. That is seen under the legislation as a pastoral purpose. It is consistent with the use of the land to graze animals and is therefore able to be used on pastoral lands. The commonwealth requires 25 years' permanency for that process, and that is partly constraining for some pastoralists whose pastoral lease is running out. The proposed new diversification lease will have a longer potential period for that to be used, and it can be used for both carbon projects and grazing, so if people want to do a carbon project on a diversification lease, they could do both carbon farming and grazing.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Would that not trigger a native title situation? Will the department assist pastoralists to work through that? If the lease is lengthened, they are going to have to negotiate their way through that situation.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I will refer that to Mr Darcey.

Mr M. Darcey: No, because the human-induced regeneration process is seen as a pastoral purpose, so it is the same native title situation as the current pastoralism. However, a new diversification lease would require an Indigenous native agreement to be negotiated because of the change of land use.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I refer to page 741 of budget paper No 2, volume 2, and the line item "Cossack Townsite". That budget item goes back to 2021–22 and flows on. How is the town site program progressing?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Was the question how much we are spending each year?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: How is the project progressing? It was announced two years ago and there does not seem to have been a lot of progress.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I think we answered this in the last session, but I will provide some further information. The Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage is working with the City of Karratha to revitalise the project. Members of the local planning scheme, which I think I approved, have recently approved to facilitate the activation and development of Cossack and Jarman Island respectively. The department is working with the Ngarluma Yindjibarndi Foundation on this development proposal for Cossack. I do not think much has progressed. I will throw it to Mr Darcey to provide any further comment.

Mr M. Darcey: Thank you, minister. The NYFL, as I will refer to it—the Ngarluma Yindjibarndi Foundation Ltd—was successful in the registration of interest process to take control of the Cossack and Jarman Island precincts. It was partly waiting for the planning changes to allow those sites to be used for low-impact tourism operations. We are currently supporting and continuing to work with that organisation to manage the built heritage assets on the Cossack town site. We are working with the NYFL to develop a business case for it to take over the area more fulsomely; that has a way to go. I think that the NYFL has a lease—it certainly has control over the land—until the end of June, and by that time we hope that it will have landed a project for low-impact ecotourism.

Mr R.S. LOVE: I refer to page 729, the table "Spending Changes", ongoing initiatives, and the third line item from the bottom, "Northampton Lead Tailings Project". If I recall, that is a Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage issue. Can I just get an update on the progress of that project, when it is expected to be completed, and any other updates the minister can give me?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I refer to Mr Darcey to provide that.

Mr M. Darcey: Thank you. The Northampton lead tailings project has been successful in removing all lead tailings from the town site itself. A containment cell has been built just out of town to contain those lead tailings, and that has been completed. There was some trouble with Cyclone Seroja and there are issues with getting vegetation coverage

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over that containment cell, and we will continue to work on that. As part of the project, there are two other sites—the Wheal Ellen and Wanerenooka mine sites—which we will continue to look at to assess contamination and public risk. Effectively, the stages of cleaning up the lead tailings from the town and making the town safe for human habitation is complete. There are some mine closure operations still to be completed.

The appropriation was recommended.

[6.00 pm]