

Southern Ports Authority —

Mr D.A.E. Scaife, Chair.

Ms R. Saffioti, Minister for Ports.

Mr K. Wilks, Chief Executive Officer.

Mr B. Granville, Chief Financial Officer.

Mr P. Laing, Senior Policy Adviser.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIR: This estimates committee will be reported by Hansard. The daily proof *Hansard* will be available online as soon as possible within two business days. Questions must relate to the operations and budget of the off-budget authority. The chair will allow as many questions as possible. Questions and answers should be short and to the point.

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 noon on Friday, 2 June 2023. If a minister suggests that a matter be put on notice, members should use the online questions on notice system to submit their questions.

I give the call to the member for Cottesloe.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I refer to page 657 of budget paper No 2. I am looking at port development. Coal importation is one of the areas I am interested in. The state government has committed to continuing with coal importation if it is required. There is significant doubt about the viability of a least one of the existing coal mines that provides for the government's power station. When coal was unloaded prior to Christmas, or at least over that period, two ships came in and there were substantial delays. I wonder about the capacity of the port to handle the importation of significant volumes of coal.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: As I understand, there has always been some level of coal shipment into Bunbury port. Around Christmas, there was an increase for the ongoing support for the south west interconnected system. I will ask Mr Wilks to provide more information.

Mr K. Wilks: The issues were of a short-term nature across the summer period when we had multiple importers trying to import at exactly the same time. It was further compounded by landside logistics issues in taking the coal away and trucking availability. The port could discharge it much faster than the landside logistics could take the coal away to the customers.

Dr D.J. HONEY: What is the capacity of the port to import and handle bulk solids, please, minister?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I think it was outlined that the port itself has capacity, it was just some of the landside logistics. I will ask Mr Wilks to provide further details.

Mr K. Wilks: It would depend on the product, but we have equipment available to do it at quite a considerable rate—500 tonnes an hour—that relies on trucking to remove the products.

Dr D.J. HONEY: What is the actual capacity of the port to import bulk solids in terms of tonnes per day?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: He just said.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Sorry, I missed it; I was distracted.

Mr K. Wilks: We are able to do at least 500 tonnes an hour.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Is that on a continuous basis or is it campaigned amongst other solids? Is it on a continuous basis for 24 hours a day?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I refer the question to Mr Wilks.

Mr K. Wilks: I can confirm it would be 24 hours a day.

Mr R.S. LOVE: I would like to get an understanding about the biosecurity of the coal. Two key points in the budget are the commitment to sustainability and the protection of the environment. I understand that coal is imported from Newcastle and Newcastle has been contaminated with the varroa mite, which is deadly for bees. What steps are taken to ensure the coal that comes in is clean to protect the apiaries and bee populations in Western Australia, where we do not have the varroa mite?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I think the member asked this question before and we said to refer it to the relevant minister. I am not sure whether Mr Wilks has any more information on that.

Mr K. Wilks: The port has sentinel beehives in accordance with the federal Biosecurity Act, which we check for any imported issues.

Dr D.J. HONEY: The minister indicated through her adviser that there are logistic issues on the port side. The port has plenty of capacity to import bulk solids, but there were significant issues unloading those bulk solids onto trucks. Is that a constraint in the port? Is an upgrade of facilities needed for loading solids onto trucks or handling trucks at the port or was it just a temporary logistics issue?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: The issue was the availability of trucks and truck drivers because of the volume that needed to be moved in such a short period. I remember having a discussion about it. The demand was great for a very short period so quite a lot of trucks and a lot of truck drivers were needed. As we know, similar to most other occupations in this state, there was limited capacity for the right trucks and the amount of truck drivers.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Is there a requirement to upgrade the port side facilities for truck access to the port or is it adequate?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: No, it is adequate. Of course, with the Bunbury Outer Ring Road, we are also going to have more efficient links to the port. We have a lot of land available in Bunbury.

The CHAIR: That completes the examination of the Southern Ports Authority. I do not think we are going to move to the Pilbara Ports Authority—are we, members? No. We say to the advisers from the Pilbara Ports Authority that we appreciate their attendance but their lucky number has come up today and they are not required.