

Division 21: Infrastructure WA, \$5 195 000 —

Ms R.S. Stephens, Chair.

Mr M. McGowan, Premier.

Mr P. Helberg, Chief Executive Officer.

Mr A.P. Brender-A-Brandis, Acting Chief Financial Officer.

[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 Premier 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 Premier's cooperation in ensuring that it is delivered to the principal clerk by close of business Friday, 1 October 2021. 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 Leader of the Opposition.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I refer to page 288 of volume 1 of budget paper No 2. The first paragraph under "Significant Issues Impacting the Agency" says —

Infrastructure WA undertook a significant external consultation program in 2020–21 to support the development of the draft State Infrastructure Strategy ...

I am after a little bit of information about where the consultations took place, how each of the workshops was attended, how they were advertised and how far in advance people were given notice of the workshops.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will provide an overview and then ask Mr Helberg to comment. There was extensive consultation in creating the infrastructure strategy. There would have been scores of stakeholder meetings, workshops and the like across Western Australia, with a huge number of invitees. I will let Mr Helberg explain it; it was very comprehensive.

Mr P. Helberg: The consultation process was quite extensive. At the beginning of 2020–21, we released a discussion paper that set out how we were going to go about developing the strategy. It really stated the objectives and our remit and also the methodology that we were proposing. During that year, we embarked on an extensive consultation process. We visited 10 regions, including the metro area, where we workshopped and obtained feedback around what we were proposing to do in tackling the development of that strategy. During the course of the year, we had a total of 11 workshops in 10 locations, as I said, including one each in Bunbury, Karratha, Broome, Albany, Mandurah, Northam, Kalgoorlie, Exmouth and Geraldton, and two in Perth. In addition to that, we established several stakeholder groups—one in particular involved all state government agencies—and we held several meetings with them to work through the issues from their perspective. We also established an external stakeholder reference group through which we engaged with peak industry bodies, business more generally and the industry to workshop some of the issues we were proposing to tackle as part of the development of the strategy.

[4.40 pm]

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Could the Premier provide by way of supplementary information the information about the regional roadshow—where they went, the attendance at each of those meetings, how those meetings were advertised and how far in advance—if that information is available?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I am happy to provide that. I will not provide the attendees, because I think that might breach —

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Numbers.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Yes.

We will provide the locations of the consultation events, workshops and the like across regional Western Australia in 2019–20, 2020–21 and 2021–22; the number of attendees—bearing in mind that we cannot control that; it is up to people whether they come—and whatever the process of invitation was. We will not provide the names of the attendees.

[*Supplementary Information No A5.*]

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I have a further question about the process. I note that on the website there is a section where feedback can be provided on those workshops, and that closed on 20 September. Was any feedback received; and, if so, how much—in terms of emails or contacts? What were the results of that feedback? Could we have that also provided by way of supplementary information?

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will let Mr Helberg explain the feedback and the process.

Mr P. Helberg: We released a draft strategy on 21 July and from that date we embarked on an eight-week public consultation period, during which we again visited all the regions. We held sectoral workshops to discuss issues at a sectoral level. There were also further online workshops that we will include in the supplementary information. That period closed last week on 15 September, and we are currently in the process of collating all the formal submissions. The last time we received an update, we had received just under 200 formal written submissions.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Just to clarify, are they the submissions in response to the draft strategy? Maybe they are one and the same, and I have it mixed up, but there is a section on the website that says “sector workshop feedback”, which closed on 20 September and, I think, specifically related to the workshops that have been held. It was feedback from people who attended the workshops, so how they went and what the feedback was. I was interested in whether any feedback was received through that process; and, if so, from whom, how much, what the results were and how it was collated.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I will let Mr Helberg explain how the feedback was collated and what the general feedback was.

Mr P. Helberg: As part of our engagement program and plan, we did a survey to obtain some feedback about the effectiveness and engagement program since the release of the strategy. We received significant feedback that indicated general satisfaction with the engagement program—the extent that we consulted, the number of workshops and their effectiveness. That survey was tailored not to the content of the strategy, but to the engagement process more broadly and testing the levels of satisfaction around the process.

Mr R.S. LOVE: I refer to the strategy and the time line of when its implementation might begin to influence capital and investments of the government going forward, noting that we have a budget being prepared now with forward estimates four years out, and major projects such as Westport and others will probably still be ongoing at that point. How does the Premier see this beginning to have an influence on the decisions of government, seeing that there is such a large lag of investments already and some have been put on a two-year hiatus, which will push them further into the forward estimates? There are also things like the Collie rehabilitation—I think the mines minister has indicated that it will cost up to \$3 billion to rehabilitate mines, power stations and everything at Collie. That is not mentioned in the strategy at this point, but it is known that it must occur. I am wondering about how this can be turned from the strategy into having a real influence on government.

[4.50 pm]

Mr M. McGOWAN: I thank the member for the question. Obviously, this is about public sector investment. The strategy is public sector investment, not private sector investment. The plan is this: we released the draft state infrastructure strategy for comment earlier this year, on 21 July. By the end of this year, the final state infrastructure strategy will be submitted to me and the cabinet. By law, within 60 days, the Premier must accept the strategy or return it for further consideration. The intention is that the strategy will be tabled in Parliament in March 2022. By September 2022, the government’s response will be tabled in Parliament, and then the response will be implemented by government. Just bear in mind that other states have done this and it is not as though we are starting with a blank sheet. We are starting with an infrastructure program that is already in place, but this will influence government policy over time. Infrastructure spend, which as we know is \$30.6 billion or thereabouts across the forward estimates, will be influenced by a strategy that has included consultation with the entire community—the business community, regional towns, suburbs—about what people want and need in the future, so we are not building things that do not meet the needs of the community over the long term.

As I have said numerous times in here, the New South Wales strategy, which came in nearly 10 years ago, has significantly influenced government infrastructure investment, but it also influences opposition policy in the lead-up to an election. People look at the infrastructure strategy for what they commit to. It is not binding, because governments are elected and make decisions, issues come along and so forth. It is not binding, but it is very influential on what government does. This work is very important, and it is independent of government. It has an independent board. It has a process that creates a strategy that will guide investment for decades to come. It is a small expense for, firstly, potentially big savings, and, secondly, a big improvement on what is delivered for what is needed.

Also, it helps with the provision of applications to the commonwealth for infrastructure funding—it can help with what we put to the commonwealth under Infrastructure Australia. We have been very proactive in what we put to Infrastructure Australia for funding in Western Australia. The member might recall that my predecessor was not

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Chair; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Shane Love

so keen on that process, so he did not really engage in that, whereas we have, and the results are there for everyone to see: a record infrastructure program, and commonwealth funding for roads, rail and numerous other things around Western Australia, because we engage with the commonwealth to seek support. That has been a good thing. That is the process. I think it is a very wise investment and will be a very good document that will influence government policy forevermore.

The appropriation was recommended.