

Division 44: Western Australian Planning Commission —

Mr S.J. Price, Chair.

Mr J.N. Carey, Minister for Planning.

Mr A. Kannis, Director General.

Ms J. Lundberg, Assistant Director General, Strategy and Engagement.

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

Ms P. Rodic, Director, Planning Reform Projects.

Mr V. Davies, Assistant Director General, Heritage and Property Services.

Ms C. Hay, Chief Finance Officer.

Ms S. Cardenia, Assistant Director General, Business and Corporate Services.

Ms C. Comrie, Chief of Staff, Minister for Planning.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIR: The estimates committees will be reported by Hansard and the daily proof 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 those details. Some divisions are the responsibility of more than one minister. Ministers shall be examined only 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 noon on Friday, 31 May 2024. If a minister suggests that a matter be put on notice, members should use the online questions on notice system to submit their questions.

Do we have any questions? The member for Vasse.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to page 736 under “Outcomes and Key Effectiveness Indicators” and note that the target for the percentage of development applications determined within the statutory timeframe failed to reach the 2023–24 target. What factors have contributed to the delay?

Mr J.N. CAREY: A number of different factors could be at play. It is dependent on the proposed application. It might be that further consultation is required. It may be that more information is required from the applicant. It may be that information is required from the local government. It is difficult for me to give just one answer because it is dependent on the application and the context of the application.

Ms L. METTAM: How many applications are referred to in those figures?

Mr J.N. CAREY: What was the question?

Ms L. METTAM: What quantum of subdivision applications are we talking about? How many does that represent?

Mr J.N. CAREY: Is that in terms of how many subdivisions are represented within development applications?

Ms L. METTAM: Yes, within those figures.

Mr J.N. CAREY: Does the member mean the number of development applications determined during the year? Is she referring to the figure of 367?

My apologies: the member referred first to development applications and there is a separate section on subdivision applications. Is the member referring to that one?

Ms L. METTAM: I am referring to the subdivision applications.

Mr J.N. CAREY: Is it the 2023–24 estimated actual?

Ms L. METTAM: Yes.

Mr J.N. CAREY: The number of subdivision applications determined during the year was 2 133 and the number determined within statutory timeframes as listed here was 1 943.

Ms L. METTAM: Further to the percentage of subdivision applications determined within the statutory timeframe on page 736, the budget indicates an improvement in processing time due to additional resources. How many full-time equivalent employees were added to the development application processing effort in the past year?

Mr J.N. CAREY: Over the past three years, median timeframes for development assessment panels have progressed well. Since the introduction of our first tranche of planning reforms in 2020, processing timeframes have trended downward over time. For an application that does not require advertising, for example, the median processing time is 60 days. We are seeing a good trend.

The staffing is only at a service level, so I do not have individual staffing numbers, but I will ask the director of planning reform projects, Phillida Rodic, to say some further words on that.

Ms P. Rodic: The allocation of planning staff in the statutory process tends to be across multiple fields. They might look at structure planning, subdivisions and developments because those often integrate; therefore, there is generally not a dedicated staff member working on just development applications, which makes it a little difficult to provide an immediate answer to the question. However, we can certainly look at the number of FTEs and the proportion of time spent on those different processes in time. As I said, we do not have specific staff dedicated just to development applications, other than in the state development assessment unit, part 17 and part 11B.

[8.40 pm]

Ms L. METTAM: I will ask the question the minister thought I was asking before, which was about the figures for the development applications within the statutory timeframe. How many applications is the 81 per cent budget target referring to?

Mr J.N. CAREY: The number of development applications to determine within the statutory timeframe was 298. The number of development applications determined during the year was 367.

Ms M. BEARD: I refer to paragraph 3, “Land Acquisition”, on page 735. Can the minister advise what strategic land acquisition on behalf of the state the commissioner has undertaken over the past 12 months?

Mr J.N. CAREY: Is the member referring to the metropolitan region improvement fund?

Ms M. BEARD: Yes.

Mr J.N. CAREY: I want to be clear. The properties that are acquired for this can be quite expansive. They can be for public purposes, such as roads, public transport, Bush Forever sites, parks, open space and other land development. Basically, it is to ensure that the land is held for the state. It is for current and future infrastructure, environmental conservation, as I said, and for public open space. Of course, it also provides for strategic land acquisitions for significant projects. That differs each year according to what the Western Australian Planning Commission identifies. I put on the record that the owners of reserved land can retain, sell or offer their property to the WAPC or make a claim for compensation if their development rights are affected by the reservation. They purchase a property at its current market value. This is important—it relates back to Mira Mar and the same approach. It ignores the effect of reservation and obtains two independent valuations to advise on its price. For 2024–25, I am advised it includes additions to parks, recreation reserves and progressing the purchase of remaining land parcels identified as being part of Bush Forever sites.

Ms L. METTAM: We want to move on.

The CHAIR: As in, move on, move on?

Ms L. METTAM: We want to move on to DevelopmentWA.

The appropriation was recommended.