

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND
FINANCIAL OPERATIONS**

2014–15 BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARINGS

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE
TAKEN AT PERTH
FRIDAY, 13 JUNE 2014**

**SESSION ONE
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD**

Members

**Hon Ken Travers (Chair)
Hon Peter Katsambanis (Deputy Chair)
Hon Martin Aldridge
Hon Alanna Clohesy
Hon Rick Mazza**

Hearing commenced at 9.30 am

Hon KEN BASTON

Minister for Agriculture and Food, examined:

Mr ROB DELANE

Director General, examined:

Mr GREG PAUST

Executive Director, Corporate Strategy and Operations, examined:

Mr JOHN RUPRECHT

Executive Director, Agricultural Resource Risk Management, examined:

Mr TERRY HILL

Executive Director, Irrigated Agriculture and Diversification, examined:

Dr KEVIN CHENNELL

Executive Director, Livestock Industries, examined:

Mr JOE MURGIA

Chief Finance Officer, examined:

Dr MARK SWEETINGHAM

Acting Executive Director, Grains Industry Development, examined:

Mr PETER METCALFE

Executive Director, Regional Operations and Development, examined:

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Good morning everyone. On behalf of the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations, I would like to welcome you to today's hearing. Can all of the witnesses please confirm that they have read, understood and signed the document headed "Information for Witnesses"?

The Witnesses: Yes.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: For the benefit of Hansard, all the witnesses are indicating in the affirmative. Witnesses need to be aware that severe penalties apply to persons providing false or misleading testimony to a parliamentary committee. It is essential that all your testimony before the committee is complete and truthful to the best of your knowledge. This hearing is being recorded by Hansard and a transcript of your evidence will be provided to you. The hearing is being held in public, although there is discretion available to the committee to hear evidence in private, either of its own motion or at a witness's request. If, for some reason, you wish to make a confidential statement during today's proceedings, you should request that the evidence be taken in closed session before answering any question. Government agencies and departments have an important role and duty in assisting Parliament to scrutinise the budget papers on behalf of the people of Western Australia. The committee values your assistance with this process.

For the benefit of members and Hansard, I would like each witness to state their full name and capacity in which they appear before the committee. Perhaps, minister, we will start with you introducing the director general and then the rest of the witnesses.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Do any of the witnesses or the minister have an opening statement or any comment they want to make before we start with questions?

Hon KEN BASTON: No, Mr Chair. I believe we can go straight into questions.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Thank you.

Hon KEN BASTON: I believe we have only got three hours!

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Yes, we have got a lot of members who are keen to ask questions. What I will do is, I will start with some of the committee members and then go on to the other interested members of the Legislative Council, and in three hours, I am sure we will get an opportunity for all of you to ask question and perhaps even get a second round of questions in. I will start with Hon Rick Mazza.

Hon RICK MAZZA: Thank you, Mr Chair. The first question I have is in relation to page 570 of the *Budget Statements*. In last year's budget, royalties for regions provided \$254 million for the department's involvement in the Seizing the Opportunity agriculture program. I note on page 570, the second bullet point states "through its \$300 million Seizing the Opportunity initiative". Has that figure changed?

Hon KEN BASTON: Can you just pick that up again, please?

Hon RICK MAZZA: In last year's budget, you had \$254 million and in this year's budget, you have \$300 million. I am just wondering if it has been changed.

Hon KEN BASTON: It is Seizing the Opportunity, the second bullet, did you say?

Hon RICK MAZZA: Yes, page 570.

Hon KEN BASTON: And last year was \$297 million; is that what you are saying?

Hon RICK MAZZA: Some \$254 million last year, and in this budget paper No 2, it states \$300 million. So I just wonder where the other \$46 million is coming from.

Hon KEN BASTON: Just while someone is trying to find that, but what I think it is, is there was—so \$250 million and the other \$46 million. The \$46 million was a Liberal Party promise; so I believe that was joining those two together and the other was the National Party. That is how I understand it. There are two the same —

Mr Delane: I think the figure is, actually it is very close to \$300 million. I think it is —

Hon KEN BASTON: \$297 million, I think.

Mr Delane: Some \$297 million. The reason why it was only \$254 million last year, without having been able to check that—I am unclear, but the commitment since the election, rolled Liberal and National Parties policy commitments into government policy commitments has always been referred to as either the specific figure of \$297.4 million I think it is or broadly, \$300 million.

Hon RICK MAZZA: Are you able to provide a list of all those programs that are under the initiative?

Mr Delane: Yes.

Hon KEN BASTON: Yes, we can, if you could just be patient.

Hon RICK MAZZA: Yes. It can be on notice.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Do you have that information with you?

Mr Delane: Chair, just to help, I will give a brief introduction. Note these are provisional budgets, because this is a royalties for regions program, and all business cases under royalties for regions need to go through the assessment via the Department of Regional Development and the

Department of Treasury, they are then taken to cabinet by ministers; that is the case with all of these programs. It has been a decision of ministers that each of them will go forward as separate cabinet submissions at this stage. So I would ask the house to note that these are indicative budgets. The business cases or programs of which there are 14, 10 of which are the responsibility of the Minister for Agriculture and Food and the department. There is an agricultural science R&D fund, indicative \$20 million; boosting biosecurity defence is indicative \$20 million; and food industry innovation, \$5.75 million.

[9.40 am]

There is an Asian market development initiative, including the development of the Western Australian brand in Asia, \$13 million; building a positive profile for the agriculture and food sector is approximately \$19 million indicative budget; boosting business skills for agrifood businesses, \$20 million indicative budget; northern beef futures, \$15 million; sheep industry business innovation, \$10 million; boosting grains research and development, \$20 million; and helping grain growers better manage risk, \$10 million. They are the 10 programs that are the responsibility of the agriculture and food portfolio, and they are the indicative budgets over the four years of the program. There are also programs for infrastructure audit and infrastructure investment, which is Regional Development; WA: Open For Business, which is also Regional Development; funding for Muresk Institute, which is the Department of Training and Workforce Development; and a water for food initiative, which is the responsibility of the Department of Water.

Hon RICK MAZZA: Have any of these opportunities been started yet? Are any of those initiatives underway?

Hon KEN BASTON: The business cases have been done. As was said, agriculture has got 10, and there are another four. Each one of those business cases has to go up to cabinet individually. None of them have actually gone to cabinet yet.

Hon RICK MAZZA: Okay. So we have not got any export trade contracts or anything like that signed under that initiative as yet?

Hon KEN BASTON: No, not from those business cases.

Hon RICK MAZZA: I have got other questions, Deputy Chair. I do not know if anybody else has questions on this issue.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: I think everyone has got questions. Perhaps you could ask one more set of questions and then we will move on to the next member.

Hon RICK MAZZA: One set of questions I do have is in relation to the RSPCA. I could not see anything in the budget that specifies the amount that would be granted to the RSPCA in this budget.

Hon KEN BASTON: I refer to Mr Delane.

Mr Delane: If I can make some opening comments, Mr Ruprecht may also comment. A decision was made several years ago—two budgets ago, I think—that the RSPCA would receive a grant of \$500 000 per annum, and that remains the amount. That is administered by us as part of our broader responsibility for animal welfare, given that we now have full responsibility for administration of the Animal Welfare Act on behalf of the minister.

Hon RICK MAZZA: Is the department aware that there were changes to the constitution of the RSPCA at the end of last year and what those changes may be?

Hon KEN BASTON: I will refer that to the director general.

Mr Delane: We are aware—but we are not a member of the RSPCA and we do not sit on the RSPCA board—that there have been some changes in the constitution, and certainly some public changes in the policy of the RSPCA. We are not directly concerned with that. Our principal role and relationship with the RSPCA is around the regulation of animal welfare. So there are two elements

of the relationship: the \$500 000 grant, which was a government decision, which is not tied to their regulatory role. So it supports the RSPCA in their broad range of roles of education awareness, of support for domestic animals for animal havens and those sorts of things. That is a choice for the RSPCA and the government to change that if they see fit. Our principal interaction with the RSPCA is around the implementation of their regulatory function, but even there, when you distil it down, the principal relationship is with the individual general inspectors that are gazetted under the act, and I, as director general, have specific responsibilities to ensure that general inspectors are carrying out their functions appropriately.

Hon RICK MAZZA: So, the removal of the requirement of the director general of the Department of Agriculture and Food, a representative from WA Police and a veterinary surgeon being required to be on that board is of no concern to the agriculture department?

Hon KEN BASTON: I will just call on John Ruprecht to make some comments, but just before I do, I would just like to add to your question just back one, and that is that DAFWA is basically monitoring the commercial livestock—in other words, saleyards, abattoirs et cetera—but the RSPCA's prime responsibility—and I think the point you are getting to—of course is for non-commercial livestock and companion animals, which are the puppy dogs and pussycats type of thing. I think what you are alluding to is: have they overstepped their mark? Of course, DAFWA is preparing a draft cabinet submission at present, and we will review the animal welfare outcomes and the administration of that act.

Hon RICK MAZZA: That was leading to my next question, in fact, and that is whether the department was looking at having its own enforcement officers for commercial livestock management.

Hon KEN BASTON: I refer to John Ruprecht.

Mr Ruprecht: DAFWA does take the responsibility for monitoring commercial sort of points of aggregation such as saleyards, abattoirs and the like, so that is our key role and, as the minister has said, have the RSPCA responsible for domestic animals and the like. We do have that separation of roles. As the director general has said, we do fund the RSPCA the \$500 000 a year, which is primarily about public education promotion, but also for them to have a 24-hour public complaint and assessment service so that people can ring in at any time to provide a concern or complaint. We do work at having both the Department of Agriculture and Food and RSPCA improving our compliance and enforcement approaches through training and awareness.

Hon RICK MAZZA: I have got one last question on this issue, which is: is there any view to review the Animal Welfare Act 2002 in the near future?

Mr Delane: Chair, perhaps if I can comment? As the minister has indicated, he has sought our advice on reviewing the administration of animal welfare generally in Western Australia. He and we are aware that there are concerns about the RSPCA's role specifically, but there are broader issues. The sector has changed a lot; community attitudes have changed a lot. There are demands for increased regulation or increased presence in some communities. There are changes in behaviour in some communities in relation to animal welfare. There is certainly a much heightened awareness in urban communities about animal welfare regulation. The critical issue when you step back from this is to say, "Well, is the act, which was developed some time ago now, still relevant and is an act developed in 2002, in a little bit of haste, just what we need right now, and is the resourcing of animal welfare and the way that we deliver it appropriate?" The minister has asked us to bring forward some detailed advice around a review, which we will be bringing to him soon, and which will go to cabinet; and, subject to cabinet, there will be a review of the administration of animal welfare regulation in Western Australia, which, no doubt, will address issues around the RSPCA.

Hon RICK MAZZA: I will take that as a yes. Thank you.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Hon Ken Travers, I was actually going to give you the call anyway, so you can follow up.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Hon Darren West is going to take the lead position today, but I just had some follow-up questions on the RSPCA issue and the Animal Welfare Act, if that is all right. From what I understood in terms of the answer, you do not currently fund the RSPCA for any of the activities they undertake under the Animal Welfare Act in terms of their inspector services and the like. Has the department done any analysis of what it would cost for them to undertake those services if the RSPCA was to vacate that space—in terms of the inspectors that they have operating under the Animal Welfare Act that they pay for out of their own budget? From what I understood, the answer was that you do not fund them for any of those activities. What would be the cost for the department to take over those activities?

[9.50 am]

Hon KEN BASTON: You mean take over the total role?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Yes; to replace the function that the RSPCA undertakes in terms of inspectors, effectively policing the Animal Welfare Act for those companion animals and the like.

Mr Delane: Perhaps I can provide some preliminary information, but we would need to do some work on that to provide a specific answer. In broad terms, we can only work with figures that the RSPCA provide to us and they indicate that they are expending approximately \$1.5 million in animal welfare regulation and associated activities currently. If we were to pick up that based on their advice, that is what it would cost.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: If you could run it as leanly as they could.

Mr Delane: Yes. If I remember accurately the number of inspectors they have, we could do that role. The \$500 000 is quite separate from that. I do not know whether they contribute any of that funding to the cost of the administration of the act or not.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I think you indicated you are looking to do a review of the Animal Welfare Act. Will that include a broader review about developing an animal welfare strategy for Western Australia or will it just be around the act, or will it be a broader issue? There is a lot of demand for a broader animal welfare strategy for Western Australia. Is that review going to be very narrowly focused on that act or that broader issue of an animal welfare strategy?

dela: Certainly our advice to the minister will be that it should be a review of the administration of animal welfare in Western Australia, which could go to a recommendation that there should be a broader strategy. The minister has put in place an animal welfare advisory committee. I think our recommendations will be that that group plays a role. But at the moment we think we need to look at the broad landscape particularly with the situation where we have the department with responsibility for administering the act principally and having a regulatory responsibility to the RSPCA. It is in a very unusual situation in relation to regulation generally and that is a not-for-profit organisation that has staff who have the full powers of the act. Of course local government and police officers also have powers under the act. This will be a broader look at it. I expect there will be comments made, if not a recommendation, that this should be underpinned by a broad strategy.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Minister, did you have something to add to that?

Hon KEN BASTON: Is Hon Ken Travers happy with that answer, otherwise I was going to ask John Ruprecht to comment?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Unless he has something to add.

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: I just wanted to follow up on some of the questions that Hon Rick Mazza asked regarding the arrangement that you have with the RSPCA. Would you please table the MOU?

Mr Delane: Yes.

Hon KEN BASTON: Yes.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: I assume you do not have that with you?

Mr Delane: No, we do not.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: We will need to take as supplementary information.

[Supplementary Information No A1.]

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: I understand that the MOU between the RSPCA and DAFWA devised those responsibilities for inspections of livestock versus companion animals; is that correct? DAFWA takes responsibility for animals in agriculture and the RSPCA takes responsibility for companion animals under that MOU; is that correct?

Mr Delane: In working out the best way to allocate the resources of all involved here, we have certainly sought to have a complementary relationship with the RSPCA. That is best worked out by us focussing on the commercial sector and RSPCA focussing on the companion animal sector, but you cannot draw a hard line. Every general inspector has powers and responsibilities relating to animal welfare of all animals. It is an attempt to get some complementarity with the act. Only the act could divide a line as to one organisation dealing with commercial animals and one dealing with the other. That is not the case.

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: When you say “commercial animals”, would DAFWA be responsible for pet stores, for example?

Mr Delane: All of our inspectors have responsibilities and they cannot avoid those but we tend to work so that the Department of Agriculture and Food focuses on pretty much agricultural animals. The RSPCA, because of the part of the community, if you like, in the economy it operates, is more likely to be involved in the pet store sector and the like, and so are more likely to be involved in awareness and regulation in that area. We are not precluded from operating in that area, neither are they precluded from operating in relation to farm animals.

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: It has been difficult to find in your budget any details about your responsibilities for the Animal Welfare Act—why is that? Why is it omitted as a line item in the budget and we have only just heard about the \$500 000 recurrent grant to the RSPCA?

Mr Delane: It would be very unusual for us to have a specific line item in the budget tabled in this house for a matter such as the administration of animal welfare. We would have a very detailed spreadsheet tabled in the house covering the enormous diversity of work that the department does. The \$500 000 to the RSPCA is not news —

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: No, I realise it but it is also not reported in your budget.

Mr Delane: It is recorded now, clearly, in our internal budgets and in our financial system. We have not highlighted it; it is not a new matter. If it was a new matter or a ceasing matter, then it may appear in the table on page 569. Because it is not changing, it does not appear in that table. We would not expect it to be reported to the house in the budget papers.

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: I am trying to find out not so much about the RSPCA, because that is a matter of public record, but how much budget the animal welfare unit has and how many inspectors are currently employed there?

Mr Delane: Our estimated budget for 2014–15—we have not finalised that yet—is \$1.6 million for animal welfare regulation involving about 12.5 FTEs.

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: That includes your policy staff and the manager? How many of those are actual inspectors?

Mr Delane: I will need to ask Mr Ruprecht if he can comment, otherwise we would need to provide supplementary information. But it certainly does not include the director general's or the executive director's time, for example.

Mr Ruprecht: The 12.5 FTEs, although some of them may be focused on policy, they will be designated as either general inspectors or scientific inspectors. They may still actually operate those roles. Within that, we have more people—what we would call a head count—greater than the 12.5 because our stock inspectors would also be general inspectors, where we get the synergy with the animal welfare role being part of the Department of Agriculture and Food. Notwithstanding, we have undertaken a significant number of inspections over the last financial year of the order of over 400—423. Our general inspectors have undertaken a significant number of inspections to be proactive in the way that they deal with Animal Welfare Act points of aggregation such as abattoirs or saleyards.

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: How many prosecutions have eventuated from those inspections?

Mr Ruprecht: We have had one successful prosecution and three are currently with the State Solicitor's Office with a view to prosecution. Our main role is to have a compliance and enforcement policy where enforcement or prosecution is the last resort, but that still does not mean we will still do prosecutions. That is where we have a number of inspections and engage with the industry up-front to ensure that they are doing proper animal welfare outcomes rather than wait until a prosecution for that to occur.

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: Can I get a list of the 12 FTEs, please—a list of the positions?

Mr Delane: We can provide that as supplementary information; we will not provide names, clearly, but we can provide details of those 12.5 FTEs.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: I assume you want the designated position and the level of the officer who fills that position?

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: Who fills that \$1.6 million expenditure, yes, thank you. Can we also have where they are located in that list?

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Location, okay.

[Supplementary Information No A2.]

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Can I just add something else to that supplementary information: the actual number of hours that they spend on inspections. You said 423, but for 12 people that is just over one day. I would love to know how many actual hours are spent conducting investigations. I am sure you keep those sorts of records.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: I think that might be a separate question for supplementary information. I think that is probably the best way that we can deal with that. It would probably be handier to get it separate from the list of people and their titles and designations.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: If they cannot provide that, how many of those 12 FTEs have as their primary function the undertaking of inspections, because 423 for 12 people does not seem an awful lot to me.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Depending on the nature of the inspections!

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Well, unless they are spending four days at Muchea on one inspection.

Mr Delane: We will provide as full an answer as we can on that; we will have the Hansard record so we will know what members are seeking. Clearly there are people involved here in scientific approvals, and we approve all the scientific institutions involved in animal welfare, and there are

policy and legal people et cetera. We will give as detailed an explanation as we can, which will address the questions raised.

[*Supplementary Information No A3.*]

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: Just a final question. There is a lack of detail in the budget regarding your work under the Animal Welfare Act, so I want to get as much information as possible about that. I note that the RSPCA publishes an annual report that lists all its inspections and prosecutions. Do you have such a list, and will you provide it to us?

Mr Delane: I repeat my comment that it would be very unusual for the sort of information the member refers to to be included in our budget papers. There is additional information provided in our annual report and we will provide detailed briefings to any member of the house who contacts the minister's office about our operations, so there is nothing to hide here. I am not sure that we have a specific document, if you like, that matches what the RSPCA provides, but I am more than happy to provide similar information.

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: That will be information regarding the inspections and prosecutions that DAFWA has had under the Animal Welfare Act, to be specific.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Well, the question is on the *Hansard* record, and we will see what we get back. If you are not satisfied with that, we can pursue it with further questions.

Hon LYNN MacLAREN: Thank you; as long as we are clear about what is being asked.

[*Supplementary Information No A4.*]

Hon PAUL BROWN: I have a few more questions on this point. Given that the RSPCA is not an authorised body under the Animal Welfare Act—it is the gazetted general inspectors—what authority does the RSPCA have to initiate prosecutions? There is some conjecture in the public and in the commercial sector that the RSPCA is initiating prosecutions that they actually do not have any authority to do. That is my understanding.

Mr Delane: General inspectors are employed by the RSPCA and have authority under the act, as opposed to the RSPCA. To further illustrate the point, it is open to me, under my responsibilities for the administration of the act, to restrict, suspend or revoke the authority of an inspector appointed under the act, including employees of the RSPCA. I could not take any action against the RSPCA as an organisation, so we need to make that distinction. What management, leadership and direction the RSPCA management applies to individual general inspectors is up to them, but the responsibility ultimately is with the officer gazetted under the act. I do not know if Mr Ruprecht wants to add anything to that.

Mr Ruprecht: The main point I would like to add is that since DAFWA has taken on the role of administering the Animal Welfare Act, we have provided a number of training opportunities with the RSPCA general inspectors and other general inspectors and lawyers acting on their behalf, particularly pro bono lawyers, to really improve the approach to prosecutions. We are actually undertaking improving, through training, the approach of general inspectors across the board, and also with lawyers who may act on behalf of the general inspectors or the RSPCA. That is what we have initiated since DAFWA took on the role of administering the act.

Hon PAUL BROWN: Just following on from that, does the general inspector or the director general initiate the prosecution?

Mr Ruprecht: It is the general inspector who initiates the prosecution. They may be supported by their organisation. If it is a prosecution within the Department of Agriculture and Food, we have quite a detailed process where the director general will endorse that, based on the recommendation of the inspector, but that is a process that the department has. The general inspectors had been appointed under the Animal Welfare Act separately, it depends on what their process is, either them as individuals or as an organisation. Our training is trying to develop better processes so that

evidence is collected appropriately and the prosecution is followed through appropriately as well, so it really is about training for both the general inspector, but also any lawyers who may act on behalf the general inspector or the organisation that they are employed by.

Hon PAUL BROWN: Is there a conflict in the fact that the general inspectors are gazetted and approved by the director general, and the fact that they are being paid by another organisation that may not be acting in the department's best interests, or the best interests of the industry?

Mr Ruprecht: There are very clear guidelines within the Animal Welfare Act with regard to the roles and powers of a general inspector. They are very clear and provide very clear direction to how a general inspector should undertake their work. That is really supplied through the administration of the act.

Hon PAUL BROWN: Thank you for that. You commented earlier, Mr Ruprecht, that RSPCA inspectors do not involve themselves in the commercial aspects of livestock. Can you, the director general or the minister elaborate on where the delineation is between what is and is not commercial livestock? We had an issue very recently in Dongara that involved what I would consider to be commercial livestock in an equine centre, which the RSPCA has been quite involved with, as has the Department of Agriculture and Food and the director general, trying to seek remediation of the issue. Can you elaborate on where the delineation is between commercial livestock and non-commercial livestock?

[10.10 am]

Mr Delane: As I tried to indicate earlier, there is no demarcation or firm line, and in fact a general inspector has powers and responsibilities for animal welfare generally. We tend to focus on the commercial sector as the production sector, and the RSPCA tends to focus on the domestic sector. There is always going to be some overlap, and sometimes there are situations involving their officers and our officers, and they will make the call on whether they are involved or not.

When it comes to the administration of the act, the RSPCA has no direct responsibility for that; individual inspectors do. The Minister for Agriculture and Food does it, and I do as director general. If we go back to 2002 when the act was passed, there was some discussion in the house about how the issue that you raised would be dealt with and that the director general had some specific responsibilities to ensure that inspectors employed under the powers of the house for a non-public sector organisation would need some particular handling. That is where we get to the situation in which I may need to write to, take action against, an inspector employed by the RSPCA, but I will not be taking any action against the RSPCA.

Where a matter such as the one you referred to has some issues associated with it, the animal welfare group of DAFWA will be involved in that. They will be involved with the inspector and the RSPCA because of the management role but, ultimately, on their advice, I will need to make some judgement as to whether I need to intervene or not.

Hon PAUL BROWN: If the inspector refuses to change a direction that you have asked him or her to change, where does that leave the DG and the department in that role if the gazetted animal welfare inspector who, once again, has been paid by the RSPCA and taken their directions from the RSPCA, which is not an authorised body but is directly refusing to change its direction, given that you have asked them to—where does that put that inspector and where does that put you as a DG?

Mr Delane: I will not comment too much. This is a live matter so we are still working through it. I expect I will get significant further advice on the handling of it. In the extreme, if our conclusion is a general inspector under the act is behaving inappropriately, I will need to consider suspending or restricting the activities of that inspector, whether it is someone who works for me or someone who works for the RSPCA.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Hon Mark Lewis has one question on this topic and then, given the amount of time we have spent on it, we will move from this topic to some other topics.

Hon MARK LEWIS: I would like to return to the budget issue rather than police and an operational matter. It goes to the \$500 000 effectively untied grant. I assume from what I am hearing that the department really does not know what that \$500 000 is spent on, whether it is inspectors or admin or vehicles or marketing the RSPCA or training or membership drive or prosecutions or lawyers. I was wondering whether there is a report back from the RSPCA to the department and then into the financial reporting arrangements for that \$500 000.

Mr Delane: Mr Ruprecht may be able to add something. The direction that we were given at the time that that funding decision was made was that the funds were to be provided to the RSPCA in support of its activities generally and there were no strings attached to that. We have sought to negotiate with the RSPCA them playing particular roles but there are no terms of reference for a contract, if you like, which would turn it into a performance-based contract. Mr Ruprecht may be aware but I am not aware that we get an acquittal for the \$500 000 and exactly what the RSPCA spends on it.

Mr Ruprecht: In the general MOU, we have discussions regarding how they deliver on the MOU, which includes the 24-hour complaints hotline, education promotion and their work with the companion animals. There is no link back to the dollars they spend on each component of that. We look at their performance and how they are progressing with those key components of the MOU, but it is not a contract.

Hon MARK LEWIS: I am thinking that there should be an acquittal back, signed off by their CFO or an auditor. I am wondering whether that might necessarily be part of the review that is coming.

Hon KEN BASTON: I think that very much could be. From memory, it was a \$250 000 grant to the RSPCA and it has grown to \$500 000 in only the last couple of years, I think. Therefore, being a grant, it did not have those strings tied to it to what it was going to be spent on, other than what everyone's vision of the RSPCA was. Everyone kind of thinks of them as looking after the smaller companion animals.

Hon DARREN WEST: I refer to the spending changes on page 569 and the amount of \$1.2 million allocated in the 2014–15 financial year for the eradication of the European house borer program. The same line item shows that nothing was spent on this initiative in the previous year. Was there no funding in the last budget or was the funding allocated and moved to another place?

Hon KEN BASTON: I will refer that to John Ruprecht. I launched the European house borer program of \$4.9 million over the four years, which is extremely important because over 300 000 houses built with untreated pine are possibly at risk.

Mr Ruprecht: This is the new initiative regarding the ongoing management of European house borer. Previously we were transitioning out of an eradication program. This is a new initiative from that point of view. Yes, funds were being spent on European house borer but we were transitioning out of a nationally agreed eradication program. We had one year's funding from the state government as part of looking at the best way to undertake that management. This is the recommendation that came through—for us to continue with a management program. We are doing some local eradication. We have movement zones and we are also helping industry with their movement of timber products across into eastern Australia.

Hon DARREN WEST: I really do not have the answer to the question I asked, which was: Given that you were transitioning out of the previous program, was money allocated for that program last year and then spent in other areas? Was it an internal decision to move that funding or was there no funding from government for that program last year?

Mr Delane: There has been a long-running program. Prior to this new allocation—the reason it appears on page 569 is because it is a new allocation—we have been using some carry-forward funds and some general departmental resources to support a basic EHB program. Under a new budget initiative beginning in 2014–15, that is what appears in the budget. The program has been

continuing. I cannot remember the dates exactly, but approximately 10 years ago it was initiated as a nationally funded program. There was a decision made by the national management group, not supported by us, to terminate the national funding. Since then it has been the responsibility of my department to either fund it internally or to seek additional funding for that. We have continued to do it and are pleased that the government has decided to allocate this funding for four years.

Hon DARREN WEST: Given that the program was set up and, to use the officer's words, there was a transitioning out of the program, I would presume, given that the program has appeared back in the budget and that money has been allocated, there have been recent outbreaks of European house borers.

[10.20 am]

Mr Ruprecht: We continually find the European house borer, the beetle, in trees in our management zones, so we are destroying or eradicating those sites. But we are mainly looking ensuring that do not get the spread of European house borer out of the infested areas into where we have large urban communities with untreated pine roofs. So, it is as much about preventing it moving from the key management zones that we have, which are Gngara, up in the hills, and further south, Jarrahdale way. So, we are really ensuring that there is restricted movement from those, and we have about 3 500 trees that we do surveillance on as indicators of European house borer. Also, by having this management program, it allows freer movement of pine softwood materials to the eastern states. If we did not have the program, there would potentially be greater restrictions on the movement of timber materials and materials that require pine pallets; so it is also helping industry.

Hon DARREN WEST: It is an excellent program, and I am pleased to see that it is still funded because it is very important. But I guess my question was: are you aware of any recent outbreaks or presence of European house borer in new areas in the last year?

Mr Ruprecht: As I mentioned, there are a number of trees in which we have found European house borer. I cannot recall the exact number but it is of the order of three to five trees over the last 12 months where we have found new presence of EHB—European house borer; not within timber roofs but within trees in urban areas; so, where there is a risk of spread if they were not managed. So we are still finding EHB within the already declared management zones, but we are finding presence and destroying those trees when we find them.

Hon DARREN WEST: That is excellent. I could then deduce that the fact that the program had been transitioning out, we might have perhaps done that a little bit soon and we now realise that it is a good idea to go back and be as vigilant as ever with European house borer. Would that be a fair statement?

Hon KEN BASTON: I will just comment on this, Mr Chair. One of the things that has not been mentioned here is this house borer is very, very slow-moving.

Hon DARREN WEST: It is.

Hon KEN BASTON: It is not like a white ant, which is something in the backyard and then it is in your roof. So, we really have to cover that time frame, making sure that every item possible is covered in an area around the house because it is slow-moving.

Mr Delane: Perhaps I can comment as well. The minister's point is very important: it is a very slow-moving pest. We can provide some more detail on this, but I am not aware of any detection outside of already infested zones. So, we do not have any outlying infestation which would require us to establish a new containment and then eradication zone. So, the quantum of resources you have available to you really dictates whether you are carrying out a holding pattern, a containment strategy, and that is what we have been doing for the last few years; so we have not been able to, if you like, push back the frontier of the infestation in the northern suburbs and the pine plantations. But we have been able to carry out surveillance, and anywhere there is a new detection take action.

We do require any pine trees leaving the forest in the north to be appropriately treated during the recent period and that sort of thing so it has been a containment zone. The additional funding will enable us to carry out more surveillance and more action, which hopefully will determine areas to be free, and therefore for free movement of pine to be able to occur in those areas and carry out additional surveillance so that we can be confident that we know where the pest is; and the rest of the community can get on with life normally.

Hon KEN BASTON: I will just add to that in the sense, of course, that all our crates are pine and so that is always a risk in that sense as well in being carried interstate and moving goods et cetera.

Hon DARREN WEST: Thank you. Moving along, I refer to the last dot point under “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency” on page 570, which deals with biosecurity. I would like to know how much has been allocated for the enforcement of the other breaches of the BAM act 2007. If a breach is reported, does the department have the appropriate resources to address that breach; and, under what circumstances would a caution be issued instead of a fine?

Mr Ruprecht: The BAM act regulations have been in place now for just over 12 months. So, we are working at improving our regulatory and enforcement framework. We have a process of where there is an inspection and if there is noncompliance in that inspection, then we look at what regulatory instrument we should use, and that may in many cases with the acts and the regulations that relate to them, which came in in May 2013, is apply a pest control notice. If there is noncompliance with the pest control notice, then you may well then go to a prosecution. We have recently engaged with a senior compliance officer, who is providing best practice for how we undertake compliance and seeing that as an area where we do need to improve. And it certainly is part of our response to the Office of the Auditor General’s report into weeds and pest animals where we are looking at improving our approach to regulation and enforcement.

Hon DARREN WEST: Okay, so perhaps I can give an example. If I noticed the dumping of a load of raw chicken manure in a paddock just to the north of Perth and I reported that to the local government for instance, which would then I presume pass that information on to the department inspectors, would that be an example of where a caution might be issued or would stronger action be taken over such a breach?

Mr Ruprecht: Certainly our regulatory and enforcement framework would mean that there should be a rapid inspection to undertake. So, you actually need to follow due process because you do not want to get to the end of the point where there is an appeal and your compliance process or prosecution is dismissed. And you need to be looking at what you are doing across the region, rather than indicating; so the first aspect is to have a very good inspection service, and that is where your example would be the good work of a local government to have a broader inspection service. But in the case where there is an urgent inspection, which may then require a control notice to be put in place, and that control notice could be with a very short turnaround. If it is a very urgent issue, it might be 24 hours or two days, and then if there is noncompliance with that pest control notice, you would then go in with the use of enforcement—where you have had noncompliance with that control notice. That is the approach we are taking. That can be quite rapid, or it can be something depending on the issue. So, by having a good regulatory and enforcement framework and with the Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act regulations only being in place for 11 or 12 months, we are now looking at improving our compliance framework.

Hon DARREN WEST: Okay, thanks. The next question is: how much has been allocated in the 2014–15 to the enforcement of declared pests? And I guess on that, the question that goes with it is: will this enforcement be conducted by the department staff or will it be delegated to somebody else?

Mr Delane: I think we will need to take that on notice because of the specific nature of the question. But perhaps while just sorting that out, I will emphasise that our objective is to achieve compliance with appropriate practice where it is defined in the law. And so, it is an awareness and education and potentially regulation and prosecution role.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Director General, if you are taking it on notice, I will allocated that as A5, because there are so many members with lots of questions to ask and we can receive it back as supplementary information.

Mr Delane: Certainly.

[*Supplementary Information No A5.*]

Hon DARREN WEST: To move away from the specifics of how much is in the budget, I have some general questions on how the process may work because it is a relatively new piece of legislation that has been enacted. Are you sort of envisaging that the enforcement of declared pests or breaches of the BAM act will be done in-house by the department or will there be, for instance, contractors or local governments or third parties involved in that enforcement, and not so much prosecution but inspection and enforcement of the BAM act, or do you envisage that all of that will be done internally by the department?

[10.30 am]

Mr Delane: Chair, if I can comment, certainly all of that regulatory action I expect we would take within the department, unless a weed is regulated through local processes under local government—and Mr Ruprecht might want to comment on some of the work that is being done in that area. But, normally, where it is a regulatory function we would take that on within the department. There may be some contracting works, some education awareness work, such as the nature that has been done through natural resource management groups and biosecurity groups et cetera, but the compliance action would normally be done by an officer of the department.

Hon DARREN WEST: How do you go out and manage and ensure the protection of agricultural products and watching out for breaches of the BAM act when you have got a few less people on the ground every year; how is all that going to work, director?

Mr Delane: It is a pretty broad topic. Products going to market are increasingly covered by quality assurance schemes and measures taken by suppliers, and by supermarkets and the like, and for products going to export there are national residue monitoring schemes and response arrangements in place for major commodities; so, for grain and for beef and the like there are systems in place nationally. Where there are particular responsibilities, whether they are weeds or animal diseases, interstate quarantine, we allocate our resources. There is more than \$30 million of resources allocated to biosecurity and we allocate those resources on a risk-priority basis, which will include prevention—interstate quarantine, for example—preparedness, emergency response, which is a particularly critical area, particularly for serious exotic deceases such as foot and mouth disease and livestock. Clearly, we have got significant preparedness activity there that does not translate into on-the-ground operations of people inspecting livestock et cetera, and then surveillance activities which could involve field surveillance and could involve sample submission, could involve laboratory diagnostic work, and then, of could, the compliance activity; so it is a broad church of responsibilities. No director general responsible for biosecurity could say we could not do better with more resources—of course we could, but we do not have more resources and no agency around Australia, such as mine, has more resources, so increasingly we are all working very closely together so we have full complementary.

Hon DARREN WEST: Which segues beautifully — I am sorry.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Have you finished with that line of questioning?

Hon DARREN WEST: No, there is one more.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Because Hon Rick Mazza also had a supplementary on this issue, so you ask yours.

Hon DARREN WEST: Sure, I will do this one and then I will be happy to hand over for that.

So, on that, you talked about cross-border and other states. Given that the cancellation of the SCOPI meetings, how are you, minister, and the department now going to formalise the sharing of information with other states, especially in relation to declared species and pests?

Mr Delane: If I can comment for the information of the house, COAG made a decision that the agriculture–fisheries–forestry sector would no longer be covered by a formal standing council, but there is an agriculture ministers forum in place known as AGMIN. The Primary Industries Standing Committee of CEOs is in place in a different form as the agricultural senior officers committee, and I sit on that. We have some subsidiary committees, and one of the ongoing committees is the National Biosecurity Committee, which includes the very wide range of activity that sits under biosecurity, including declared pests or invasive species in different states. That work continues. We also have in place a COAG-signed intergovernmental agreement on biosecurity, which puts particular responsibilities on all governments and ministers and departments. The Western Australian government is also a signatory to the National Environmental Biosecurity Response Agreement, which provides the rules as to how we would respond to a major pest or disease outbreak particularly affecting the environment. The Western Australian government has for many years been a signatory to the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed, which covers all major plant industries, and the Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement, which covers all major animal industries and/or major animal diseases. All of those obligations are in place. We are members of Plant Health Australia and Animal Health Australia, so there is a whole layering of activity there. I do not see any diminishing of the ability of ministers to oversight that. They are still currently meeting twice a year, and we have great systems in place now for out-of-session consideration of papers relating to any aspect of biosecurity.

Hon RICK MAZZA: I refer to the Auditor General’s report “Managing the Impact of Plant and Animal Pests: A State-wide Challenge”. Does DAFWA have a framework for collaborative management of pests across the state, particularly with community groups?

Mr Ruprecht: DAFWA does; particularly looking at cottonbush at the moment. We are doing community engagement where we are working very closely with local government, and in particular in the Peel-Harvey area, in what I think is called the Peel Biosecurity Group, which has got the Shire of Murray leading, so we are working closely with that group of shires—and there are about three or four shires in that area—also in Bridgetown–Greenbushes and also looking at the Leschenault area as well; three key areas with regards engagement with community through local government. We are looking at using local government rangers to be part of the surveillance, and then, with the Department of Agriculture and Food, to take more of the regulatory role as required. We are also working with the Central Wheatbelt Declared Species Group and the Eastern Wheatbelt Declared Species Group and also the northern Mallee with regards to wild dogs. There it is with the farming community, the farming industry, with regards to wild dogs and about using the new legislation to form into recognised biosecurity groups, where it is a landscape approach to biosecurity. So there are a number of initiatives that the department is working across the south west in particular. There are the groups that have been established in the rangelands for many years, from previous legislation, that have evolved into recognised biosecurity groups in the rangelands, so it is across Western Australia.

Hon RICK MAZZA: With the wild dogs, there has been a bounty system in place for a little while now. I wonder how many dogs have actually been taken; what locations they may have been taken in?

Hon KEN BASTON: Thank you, member. In the first three months, we took 109 dogs. They will not be reporting back to us again until September. However, they do expect to actually catch more in that period of time, bearing in mind that that is the pupping time and the bitches start actually wandering the rangelands in search of feed for their pups, so that is the time that we can expect to actually get more from trapping, poisoning and shooting, et cetera. That is in the southern

rangelands, and it covers an area stretching from Yalgoo to Mount Magnet and up to Meekatharra—basically, in that range there—and that has 51 pastoral leases in that area. So far it has been very successful.

Hon RICK MAZZA: Are there plans to expand that program beyond its current location?

Hon KEN BASTON: We will review that at the end and certainly my intention is to be looking in that direction if it is successful.

Hon RICK MAZZA: What about other species, like foxes?

Hon KEN BASTON: We are not including foxes in that. Foxes are quite easy to bait, and I speak from experience on that, having taken a trial, when I had my own property, with aerial baiting. In fact, we put radio collars on some 11 foxes to be able to track them to see. When we did the baiting program, unfortunately the collars were really not useful because we killed every one of the 11 foxes; so it was very, very successful.

[10.40 am]

Hon RICK MAZZA: I have one last question on this. Has the department read or reviewed, or even is it aware of, a CSIRO report titled “Expenditure and motivation of Australian recreational hunters” in relation to biosecurity?

Hon KEN BASTON: I have not read it, but other members may have.

Mr Delane: I have not, Deputy Chair. I do not know if Mr Ruprecht or our officers have. I am sure our officers will be aware of it.

Hon RICK MAZZA: I will send you one!

The DEPUTY CHAIR: I might just hand over to Hon Nigel Hallett for a moment. I intend, at about quarter to 11, to call a short break for everyone, because it is a very long session.

Hon NIGEL HALLETT: Mine probably goes back to pages 570 and 571 on the key effectiveness indicators. I think they are pretty alarming when you see them sitting around 30 per cent. As a department, I would be pretty concerned at those low figures. When you look at those, we have seen lots of good headlines come out recently of growers managing better risk and seizing the opportunity, but I suppose, in football terms, the agriculture sector is saying that the department has dropped the ball. If you look at \$300 million for seizing the opportunity, I think, from a departmental point of view, you seem to have failed in being able to deliver new initiatives to agriculture, such as risk management and the Doppler radar. We have not been able to get the federal funding through; a lot of that money has gone. I would just like an overview if you can defend the accusation that you have dropped the ball?

Hon KEN BASTON: Honourable member, no, I do not believe we have dropped the ball. I know what you are alluding to, and I assure you that any of that type of technology is very much sought after; I am certainly pushing it. As we said earlier, none of the business cases has actually gone through to cabinet yet, but we do not have any technology such as Doppler radars in Western Australia; they are a very important part of technology for the future. Certainly I, as the minister, am pushing that. In the 12 months plus that I have been minister, we have been actually looking at every avenue that can increase productivity and obviously not rely on handouts at the last minute. I think if we can put any instrument in that actually aids in that and allows for multi-peril or multi-crop insurance for private enterprise businesses to take part in agriculture, it is very important. I would just like to hand over to my DG to comment on the actual percentages which are in there.

Mr Delane: I also reject the assertion. I guess there are a number of areas here, and radars is one of them, although it is more from ordinary radars to Doppler radars. I think we first assisted the previous minister as long ago as at least five years, because letters were written to Minister Burke, the federal minister for agriculture at the time, seeking federal government assistance with increased

radar populations and other technology. We are primarily responsible for the application of the department's budget as appropriated by the house, and we have been very effective in that, given that we have been under a lot of pressure at both getting smaller and needing to shift the functions of the department and not just addressing the rapid change in the operating environment for the sector, but also, for example, responding to the worst season in living memory in 2010. I think an objective assessment of the department is that it has performed extremely well.

If we go to the key performance indicators, there are some in this chamber who have got some history with our KPIs and we openly admit that the previous set was very unhelpful and not very helpful to us either. What we chose to do three years ago was to go to a very simple set of KPIs and to be bold—some say foolhardy—and go straight to our client base and ask them were we delivering value to their business and to their industry sector in their view. So we have chosen a very simple set of KPIs—in the main, whether our client base considers that we are having a positive impact on the profitability of their business and their sector more broadly; whether we are fostering innovation in their business and sector; and whether we are influencing the sustainability of their business and sector. We also have a fourth one which really looks at our partnering function and whether we have a strengthening co-investment by others—R&D corporations and the like—in the priority activities we have assigned. The figures on that on the face of it—percentages in the 30s—appear quite low, but if anyone can find an organisation, public or private, that is bold enough to ask the same questions and has got a much more impressive set of numbers, I would be very pleased to see them.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: The Public Transport Authority has about an 80 per cent success rate with their customers.

Mr Delane: It has slightly simpler indicators.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: The parliamentary secretary was telling us about it all last night!

Mr Delane: Great; we will have a look at those!

The DEPUTY CHAIR: I think we are diverging well beyond the bounds of the hearings that are scheduled for today in Agriculture and Food. Hon Nigel Hallett has a follow-up question and then we will go to a break.

Hon NIGEL HALLETT: I would just like to come back to the Doppler radar situation. Every other state in Australia has it, and the Northern Territory has it. The simple question is: why have we not got it? America, Canada and Europe have it. Going one more step on from that, with the use of Doppler and risk mitigation schemes, there is a good collection of revenue out of Western Australia's 10 per cent stamp duty on policies. Has the department considered rebating stamp duties to encourage people into mitigation?

Hon KEN BASTON: First of all, I will just start with the stamp duties and then refer to Peter. I have written to the Treasurer on the stamp duties and the answer back was very simple. The answer was no, so that is the stamp duty. But Mr Metcalfe might like to comment on the Doppler radars.

Mr Metcalfe: It is a similar vein for Doppler radar stations in Western Australia. We have also written to the Bureau of Meteorology and the federal government requesting the infrastructure to be upgraded, particularly the one at Serpentine, just as a starting point to move simply to high resolution as opposed to full Doppler. Our response again was no. So, the way forward on that is putting together a business case across the wheatbelt to have a look at the cost-benefit analysis of having a network of Doppler radar stations and then using that to leverage both commonwealth and state funds going forward to ensure that is in place.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Given the time, I think it is an opportune time to take a break and we will reconvene at a few minutes past 11.

Proceedings suspended from 10.48 to 11.04 am

The DEPUTY CHAIR: I am trying to give all members an opportunity to ask questions. The next member is Hon Stephen Dawson.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: My questions relate to the \$300 million Seizing the Opportunity question which Hon Rick Mazza asked earlier. The minister said he would provide supplementary information. My question specifically relates to my electorate. If you are looking for a page, it is page 570, the second dot point, which refers to the \$300 million Seizing the Opportunity initiative. I know when this was announced in the budget recently, in each region in my electorate—the Gascoyne, the Pilbara and the Kimberley—there was an amount attached already, so it must be a pre-approved amount for those electorates. In the case of the Pilbara there was \$10.3 million; for the Gascoyne, \$15.4 million; and for the Kimberley, \$15.45 million. I am interested to know which specific projects will be funded and the towns that will be affected. If you have not predetermined which projects will be funded, can you let me know how you came to the amounts? How did the Kimberley get \$15.45 million? What was the process around deciding who would get what? I guess I am after which projects will be funded and do you have time lines for those projects?

Hon KEN BASTON: I think that is segmented into what was needed, but that was over a four-year period, from memory. The \$15.4 million in the Kimberley was for the cattle industry up there and to centralise that. To actually have down which towns are benefiting from it, I think, we would probably have to go back, but I will refer to my DG on that because there is a group of towns, particularly in the Kimberley. It is a great electorate you have as well, I might add. If you take the Kimberley, that obviously covers from Kununurra to Broome and down into the Pilbara—touching on that as well—because it is referring to that whole cattle industry.

Mr Delane: I am not aware of the figures the member referred to, although I suspect that they were estimates of where the funds may flow, and no more than estimates. They could not be more than estimates because until the business cases are approved through the process, including getting approved by cabinet, we have to assume there are no funds allocated. From memory, when I looked through all the individual business cases that we are working on, the only one that specifically refers to regions or locations is the smallest; that is, the food industry innovation program, which specifically, in the policy commitment made, referred to Moora, I think Bunbury, Manjimup and Katanning as specific focal points for food industry hubs. All the others are more broadly or generally distributed. Clearly, the northern beef futures refers to the Pilbara and the Kimberley in the main and the sheep industry refers largely to the south of the state, but none of them were specifically in the policy commitments made originally linked to particular regions. In the development of the business cases, clearly we are going to where we believe application of state funding for the royalties for regions stream can achieve the best business economy and state benefit.

Hon PAUL BROWN: In each of those 10 funding streams that the ag department has carriage of in the R for R Seizing the Opportunity, can you give us an indication of how much money in each business case is being forwarded at the moment and how much will be indicated in each program for this year rather than just the total end budget? How much money has been allocated, or is intended, in each business case for this year?

Hon KEN BASTON: Of the total \$51 million at this stage for this year, \$27.5 million is to ag. For the actual breakdown of that \$27.5 million to each one of those business cases, I will refer to my DG. Is that what you were referring to?

Hon PAUL BROWN: Yes. You have got your 10 lines there in the R for R, as Hon Stephen Dawson alluded to. How much is indicated to be spent in each one of those programs for this year, and the business cases being developed for those programs? I am happy to take it on notice.

Mr Delane: Deputy Chair, I think we will need to take it on notice. The indicative budget for all the programs is \$27.57 million for 2014–15. That figure is still not approved by cabinet. We have five business cases that are in the close-to-cabinet process—I think they will be covered by cabinet-in-

confidence in any case—and the others that are further back from that have only got an indicative budget. We will provide whatever information we can.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: We will take that as supplementary information and we will see what you get back. Again, if the member is not satisfied, he can pursue it through other forums.

[*Supplementary Information No A6.*]

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I want to go back to something the director general said. These press releases that I have went out in the Treasurer's name and Hon Terry Redman was the cosignatory or co-issuer. In each of these statements, it says for the Gascoyne that funding includes \$15.4 million for "Seizing the Opportunity Agriculture". In the Pilbara one it does say \$10.3 million for "Seizing the Opportunity Agriculture" and then again for the Kimberley. How did somebody come up with these figures? I would have thought that Treasury would have spoken to your agency to say what will you spend in each region, or have they just plucked this out of thin air? How did we get these figures and why were they issued? How can I have any confidence this money will be spent in my electorate? It certainly figured in the media. It has been in the papers and, indeed, on the radio in the electorate that this money was going to come. Now I am hearing that is not the case—that it might have been plucked out of somewhere else.

[11.10 am]

Mr Delane: Chair, we might need to do some further work on that. Certainly, we have not been involved in developing those figures, which I expect are a matter for the regional development portfolio, because that is currently where all of the seasonal opportunity funds sit. You do not see them in my budget because until the MOUs are signed et cetera, the funds will not come across, and so we expect them to start to be reflected in the midyear review numbers. I expect what the member is seeing is a historic practice for as long as I can remember of the budget indicative figures being noted against regional development commission regions or some other region. For many years we used to break down our budget in terms of indicative numbers to say, you know, \$14 million of our effort was notionally targeted towards the Kimberley, because that is where we thought the benefit was going to be applied. But we have not been party to that media statement in any way to my knowledge.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: But the \$300 million for the Seizing the Opportunity initiative does actually figure in these budget papers in your area, does it not? So I would be very keen, given you will be spending this money, if you can, by way of supplementary information find out actually what that \$15.4 million that this press release says you are getting from Treasury that will be spent on Gascoyne, the Kimberley and the Pilbara is to be spent on.

Mr Delane: Just for clarity, we will provide the explanation we can for that. I expect that when we have settled the business cases and they have been approved, each of the executive directors in their teams will be able to go through each of these initiatives and make an assessment of where funds are likely to be expanded, but also where the benefits are likely to be accrued on a regional basis and we could provide that the house, but I suspect we would not be able to complete that task until close to the end of the year, because we are going to finalise the business cases and the operational plans.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: End of financial or calendar year?

Mr Delane: No, sorry, end of calendar year. Given that we have five business cases ready to go or near cabinet, and we are still some way through that, to go through that operational plans need to be fine. The R for R process involves a business case and basically the funding approval, and then there is an MOU to be agreed between the Department of Regional Development and the delivery agency based on operational plan. So I think it would be very unlikely, Chair, that we can provide a full picture of the likely regional expenditure of the 10 R for R projects and the likely regional impact of the work of the 10 R for R projects until August–September at the earliest.

[*Supplementary Information No A7.*]

Hon DARREN WEST: Mr Chair, can we include other regions because I have got the same questions for areas in my electorate, so we generally did them by electorate. So could you include in that supplementary information all regions, please, Director, if you can.

Mr Delane: We can do that.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: I assume the same explanation about the time frame of getting this information and having useful information would apply to all of the regions, so we will incorporate all of the regions in the supplementary information A7 and see what information you get back.

Mr Delane: We will be as informative as we can, but even if it is to the extent I simply indicate which of the regions are likely to have a dominant or minor or no impact to the various programs that might not have percentages or numbers, it will indicate to members where we think, on the basis of the proposed business cases and operational programs, that work will most occur and most impact.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Sure, if you are able to find out as well the basis for those figures, including those press releases and provide that by way of supplementary information. I was going to say though, minister, that given that this is in print and has gone out to my electorate, your electorate—the electorate we share—I will certainly be ensuring that the money that these press releases say will be spent in our electorate will actually happen.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: That is a statement, so we will move on to Hon Ken Travers who had something.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I just wanted to follow up on a couple of comments that were made. You suggested that the business cases will not be completed until the end of the calendar year. Can you explain to us why that is taking so long? I will put into the context of a hearing of this committee on 2 December 2013 when a Mr Rowe from the Department of Regional Development talked about how the individual business cases for each of the programs to be funded through Seizing the Opportunity in Agriculture were getting worked out and they were well advanced with the approvals for those business cases due probably in the first quarter of next year. So, by March of this year was the indication that the Department of Regional Development was telling this committee that those business cases would be completed. What has caused it to now be delayed, with you suggesting it will not be until the end of this year?

Mr Delane: Perhaps if I could just correct the member's hearing or my misstatement. What I indicated was that we complete the business cases, and there are five of the 10 business cases we are responsible for already through the Department of Regional Development and, I think, the Department of Treasury assessments, so they are close to cabinet consideration. The others are at various stages from that, but the process is that there is a business case, which is the funding approval, and that needs to go through and be signed off by cabinet. Then there is an MOU that needs to be agreed between the Department of Regional Development and the delivery agency, which means that we have an operational plan to implement the business case. To be able to answer the other member's question in adequate detail, we would need to be able to get to the end of that process to be able to say that this amount of money will be spent on Gascoyne, this in the south west et cetera, and the impact will be there. We think, we will have all, or nearly all, of our business cases completed in the next month, so that will be I think certainly eight, maybe nine or maybe 10 that will be completed and in the assessment process and on the way to cabinet in June or July. But that does not mean that the funds will be available and being applied.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: How will you then be held to spend the money that you have got this year within this financial year? With those sorts of time lines, it strikes me that it is going to be very hard to spend the money in this financial year that is allocated for this program and that we are going to see a re-cashflowing into outer years. We have already seen the Seizing the Opportunity pushed

back one year in the forward estimates, are we then going to see further pushing back over the forward estimates of the Seizing the Opportunity program?

[11.20 am]

Mr Delane: I am not concerned about that. We have five business cases that we hope cabinet will consider by the end of June, but we are clearly not in control of that process. We have done a lot of work in preparation for implementation of these programs, including engagement with industry. So for those business cases, we are confident that we can implement them. Do I think we will have carry forward from 2014–15 and 2015–16? I am reasonably confident that we will not, but it does mean that we need to be pushing on at every opportunity to implement these programs. Our teams have already made significant preparation for implementation of these programs—getting the necessary staffing arrangements prepared and necessary contracting arrangement prepared—so that as soon as funds are available, we can move on these programs. I do expect that we will be able to expend the allocated funds in 2014–15.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: My final question in this area is: one of the packages, as I understand it, is an infrastructure package. I assume you are not the lead agency on that, but what role are you playing in terms of the business case for the infrastructure package?

Hon KEN BASTON: That is the \$77 million infrastructure package? Yes, it does not come under the Department of Agriculture and Food; however, we are putting up business cases—we are not the lead agency on it is what I really meant—for that, but that does not stop us from putting forward a case that would come under that infrastructure.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I acknowledge that, and that is why I am asking: What role is the Department of Agriculture and Food playing in the development of that business case? Are you putting forward proposals; and, if so, what sort of proposals have you put forward?

Mr Delane: The Department of Regional Development is responsible for that business case, including the two components proposed, and I think they are still current, which is the order of a \$2 million infrastructure audit ahead of the \$75 million infrastructure fund. We have had input at a departmental level to the draft business case for this initiative. We also had the opportunity to comment through the director general's royalties for regions fund reference group, so there is a broad consultation on all significant R for R projects; we have had the opportunity to have input there. We will have further opportunity, I expect, during the audit, which I expect will be contracted out to the relevant organisation, and we will be able to have input to that. If my minister wishes, we will also make submissions through the process as to the high priority infrastructure items as my department recommends and my minister supports. So there are a number of opportunities.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I guess my concern is that as to that money. I think the National Party policy said it could be used to keep the tier 3 rail line open, and the Liberal Party promised at the election that it would have an investigation into the viable tier 3 lines and then invest in those that were determined to be viable. Those lines are now going to close within 14 days, or we are down to 18 days and counting, and it is going to have a dramatic impact. I think this week's rural and agricultural media have highlighted the real potential dangers for the agricultural industry with the closure of those rail lines. Is the department not doing anything to try to bring forward a decision by government on the maintenance of them; and, if you are not, how do you expect that key stakeholders are going to get their crop to port in an efficient and costly manner if those lines are closed and no action is taken before that deadline?

Hon KEN BASTON: Basically, I share your concerns. I discussed it with this transport minister—obviously, there has been a new transport minister this year—and I discussed it with the previous transport minister as well, and it is important. Farmers have said to me, “What are you doing about tier 3 rail?” If you follow it through, if the Department of Agriculture and Food is doing tier 3 rail,

the next step is that we would be doing the ports as well. But all that infrastructure of delivery is important.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Maybe you should be the Minister for Transport and we can shadow each other on a daily basis, minister, and we would get it fixed!

The DEPUTY CHAIR: We are verging on speculation—that, again, is not part of the process of these hearings. Perhaps if we have finished on that topic, I might —

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I interrupted the minister; I think he has a few more words to say to the industry.

Hon KEN BASTON: Thank you. I cannot get involved in it all the way down; another minister is actually covering that. But I appreciate the importance of it, and I use that example as what I have actually said to people out there. But what you are alluding to is why would we not be using the \$77 million for fixing whatever needs to be done on the rail. I believe there is a parliamentary inquiry going on at present that is looking at this; I look forward to that report. I will be guesstimating when it reports, but I think it will be some time in August. I presume that they will actually be able to see what agreements were made for that lease when it was —

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Is there any way we can get an extension until at least that committee reports? It strikes me that actually one of the biggest issues facing agriculture at the moment is the supply chain to port. I accept that the Minister for Transport has to fix it, but you are probably going to wear it if your stakeholders cannot get their crop to port and therefore lose money.

Hon KEN BASTON: Absolutely. The other thing is that foreign investors that are looking at grain out of this state certainly raise that issue with me, and not so much rail but the whole infrastructure of delivery from town or silo to the port, because it is very important to them to have that access and freedom and how can they deliver it and what —

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I think the government needs to give a clear indication to people that “our priority is to use the rail system because it is the most efficient to get it to port”, rather than this sort of higgledy-piggledy mess of road, rail and no-one knowing what the government’s strategic goals are.

Hon KEN BASTON: I would agree with the honourable member; you do not cart iron ore in trains for nothing.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: I will return to Hon Stephen Dawson for another question, because it was his call, and then after that I will move on to Hon Brian Ellis, Hon Martin Aldridge, Hon Alanna Clohesy, Hon Mark Lewis, and then we will keep going after that.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I beg your indulgence: two quick questions, if you do not mind.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Make them quick!

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Thank you, I will—hopefully the department can answer them quickly, too. Pages 571, 572 and 573 cover the service areas in the budget, and each of those has a full-time equivalent figure. Can you let me know whether the department still has a discrete research unit; and, if so, which of these service areas houses that research unit? I am interested to get some figures, so by way of supplementary information can you give me the figures for how many staff in the agency have been working on research or are classed as researchers or work in the research area? Can you give me figures from 2008 up to now for each year: how many staff did research in all those years, and in the out years how many will be doing research then as well, please?

Mr Delane: Deputy Chair, we do not have that detail at our disposal. We can take that as a supplementary and we can provide it.

[*Supplementary Information No A8.*]

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Page 569 covers spending changes; I guess this is something that is not in the spending changes, however I will ask it anyway. Minister, has an allocation been made in this year's budget for the Gascoyne food bowl initiative; and, if so, how much has been set aside for that initiative over the next four years? I think in last year's budget there was a \$9.8 million figure for this initiative, so I want to make sure that there is continuing money in the budget in the next few years for this initiative. If the money is still there, how does the department propose to spend it over the next few years? How much in each year, please?

Hon KEN BASTON: I would like to refer to Mr Hill for those comments.

[11.30 am]

Mr Hill: Thanks, member, for the question. The Gascoyne food bowl project is another royalties for regions project, so it was funded in a previous tranche of royalties for regions projects. I think the title for that was the Water and NRM Initiative. So it was funded in that; so there is funding to deliver that project. As Mr Delaine commented earlier, all our R for R projects are under an MOU, so we have an MOU with the Department of Regional Development for the funding. We have funding that is being expended this financial year and rolling into next financial year. We can give the member more details about the specifics and exactly where the funding will go, but the key activities that will roll forward in the next financial year will be electrification of the northern bore field and some contracts around supervising the drilling program on the north side of the river. We will be doing that drilling on the north side of the river and also preparatory work around future land resources for growth in the Gascoyne. They will be the three key areas, but if the member would like more detail we can provide this.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: The money is still there; it is set aside and you have to apply for it every year. If you can give me more information, I would appreciate that.

[*Supplementary Information No A9.*]

Hon BRIAN ELLIS: My questions revolve around the line item for the agriculture headquarters redevelopment under the asset investment program on page 574 of the *Budget Statements*. Like others in the industry, I am wondering when and where the new headquarters will be built. The line item for the headquarters redevelopment shows total estimated expenditure for 2016–17 and 2017–18 of around \$18 million. What is that for?

Hon KEN BASTON: The planned expenditure of \$234 million for the department's headquarters was shifted back by two years, and nobody is more disappointed than I am. That building certainly needs an upgrade, and it is extremely important for not only the face of agriculture but also the staff in that workplace that we have something that every person involved in agriculture can be proud of. We have not totally ruled this out, and we are looking at other avenues that may enable us to start that sooner—certainly, I am looking at that—because this has been pushed out now for some 18 years, which is a very long time. There are all types of avenues for that. We could look at splitting the science area—the laboratories, and research and development—from the office, but it is fairly broad. I will hand over to the director general to comment on that because he has been around there a lot longer than I have.

Mr Delane: Some members in this house will probably remember that the history of this began in 1996 and we had firm plans to develop this as early as 1998. Quite a number of sites have been considered, and South Perth is a recurring theme, but we have also looked at Murdoch, Midland, Armadale and Cannington. At one stage we had cabinet approval to move to the campus of Murdoch University, but a subsequent cabinet decision located the development at South Perth and the current approval is for \$234 million of funding. Currently, funding is approved for South Perth; it is simply cashflowed and re-cashflowed and currently we would not occupy the buildings until 2020–21. It is our proposal that we consolidate development on a much smaller footprint on approximately five hectares of 15 hectares. For those members who know our site, it will occur on

Kent Street where we currently have field plots. To go back to the member's question around cash flow, there are long lead times for these projects, but in 2016–17 a lot of the work will be done for the planning and the detailed design, then working through site works. The majority of the expenditure is not scheduled currently to occur until 2018–19, \$74 million; 2019–20, \$47 million; and 2020–21, \$88 million, which will be the major construction phase. In simple terms, our advice from specialists is that it is a two-year design and two-year build process for a complex of this size and complexity. It is not yet clear exactly what the arrangements for this will be. There have been recent examples of public–private partnerships in which the building could be developed by the private sector with long-term lease by the government and therefore accounted on the balance sheet. That decision has not been made by the government. We will need to go back to cabinet, including working with the building and design experts on re-costing the proposal, given that it is now several years—I think three years—since the costings on this project were done, and I believe there have been significant changes in building costs et cetera, so the likely figure could be different. We continue to work very strongly on this project. By way of example, we are revisiting the scale and complexity of laboratory requirements. We currently have a significant initiative that is bringing together the operations of our various laboratories, which we think will lead to further efficiencies. We have a program of regional relocation of functions, which over the coming few years will lead to more than 50 staff positions being relocated to major regional centres, which will reduce the size of the necessary footprint at South Perth. We have just initiated some detailed work that will see us boost our grains activity, particularly research and development, substantially at Northam. There is quite a lot of work going on in parallel to this, but at this stage building work will not begin until at least 2016–17 and we would not be occupying the facilities until about the end of 2020, which will be 25 years after this project was first proposed.

Hon BRIAN ELLIS: I know that other members wish to ask questions, but I have one more question that relates a little to the satisfaction approval ratings of the department. I refer to savings shown for procurement and the voluntary separation scheme on page 569 of the *Budget Statements*. How many staff were lost? How many staff does the department expect to lose over the next four years and will that have an impact on the department's capacity?

Mr Delane: I stated previously in this committee that the department's staffing was reduced by approximately 28 per cent over the last four or five years, and clearly that has a significant impact on what we are able to do and what some of our clients think of the department. Under the voluntary separation program that is shown in the budget, 71 staff departed in the 2013 calendar year. We have no plans and the government has no policy position articulated on severance programs going forward, but the member can see from the budget papers that we have a procurement saving in 2014–15 of \$3.648 million, and clearly that will have some impact. I expect that we will need to make some further staff position reductions in 2014–15, but we have not yet made any plans for a severance program or other initiatives. It may be possible for us to achieve the necessary reduction to keep us within our salary cap in our overall budget through attrition and not filling positions, but we have not yet reached a conclusion on that.

[11.40 am]

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Just on that issue, if the member has finished, I have a supplementary question on staffing levels. I draw your attention to page 575 of budget paper No 2. It says there that the revised FTE base will be 1 170, including 52 vacancies. Is it the intention that those vacancies are filled during 2014–15 or will they simply remain unfilled?

Mr Delane: Thank you, Chair. Those positions will be filled. It is the normal functioning of the department; we do have some turnover, so at any point in time, there will be a number of vacancies. Clearly, we have a few additional ones currently with the staffing freeze that is currently in force, but it is always our intention to fill vacant positions. Our process for managing staffing numbers is

to make the decision at the time of the vacancy as to whether it should be progressed for filling or not, but those 52 refer to positions which are in varied stages of filling.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: When we look at all the figures there on page 575, when you remove the 70 voluntary separation scheme staff that voluntarily departed in 2013–14, it would indicate to me that the levels of staffing there show that between 2012–13 and 2014–15, staff will actually increase rather than decrease once you remove the 70 who voluntarily departed. Would that be the case?

Mr Delane: Chair, I might get Mr Paust to add some information here perhaps, for greater clarity; we often get tripped up by positions or staff numbers and FTEs.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: I am looking at the FTE figure.

Mr Delane: Yes, so that is the FTE figure. The voluntary severance package in 2013–14 was 71 staff but, in fact, it represented 46 FTEs; so that will change the calculation.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: That answers my query, then.

Hon NIGEL HALLETT: It concerns me a little bit the way we are talking about Agriculture still reducing staff. The rest of the world is seeing agriculture as the next boom industry, and I think in Western Australia we have seen significant investment from private individuals. The market is heating up. Now, as the department, you appear to be withdrawing. I think it is time that the department started to get on the front foot if we are going to have the expertise required to lead this industry into the next period of some very good times. It appears that you are actually retracting.

Mr Delane: Two comments might answer the member's question. Firstly, we are not alone here. In all jurisdictions of Australia, to my knowledge, there have been substantial reductions in staffing in agriculture or primary industry organisations. Whilst it is difficult to get an accurate picture in percentage terms, the reduction of staffing in the Department of Agriculture and Food Western Australia is similar to that that has occurred in all other jurisdictions. In fact, I am aware of at least one jurisdiction where the staff reduction has been substantially greater, and some staff reductions continue in some other jurisdictions including the national one, so we are not out of step with that. The department is on the front foot to the extent of the resources that are available to us. We do not determine the budget; we have some influence on that by advice. We have some influence on the external funding and the partnership arrangements that we have. But I can assure the member and the members of this house that the department is absolutely on the front foot in doing what we think is necessary and appropriate within our resources to capture the opportunity from the rapid change in the global demand for food and feed. We are doing a lot of different things now from what we did historically, and we are doing it in strong support of the minister's priorities. His first priority is growing markets. I myself was in China last week as part of our initiative to seek to develop live cattle trade into China. Dr Chennell has just been in Indonesia this week as part of that development. We continue to evolve and focus the department's role to best deliver on the future opportunity for the sector.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: I only have a couple of short questions. I go to page 576 of budget paper No 2, "Details of Controlled Grants and Subsidies" and the line "Research Grant Allocations". Now, I understand you answered some questions on notice in response to another member, I think it might have been Hon Lynn MacLaren, in relation to this, and you provided us with an attachment, attachment 1, to your questions on notice. There are a number of organisations listed in there under different categories. Do all of those grant recipients fall under that line item or is it that line item plus subsidies and other grants?

Hon KEN BASTON: Which line item was that again?

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: "Research Grant Allocations" on page 576 under "Details of Controlled Grants and Subsidies".

Mr Delane: Chair, I might ask the chief finance officer Mr Joe Murgia to comment on the accounting treatment and then we will perhaps come back with some further information, if necessary.

Mr Murgia: Yes, the make-up of the response to that previous question was in relationship to the research grants line.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: So what research would the Kelmscott Agricultural Society be doing for the department?

Mr Delane: Mr Chair, I will see if the CFO can help with this, but it will be determined on the accounting treatment of grants. I am not sure if the CFO is referring to the specific document. Chair, I think I can explain this. Attachment 1 that we provided, which has listed agencies, businesses and research centres to receive funding, I think in the accounting treatment, it will appear under that item. The ones which are listed on that supplementary information—community services groups—I think are all groups which received a grant funding under the government's subsidy for agricultural societies for free or discounted entry of young people last year, so they are not research grants as such. If you go to some of the other items listed there, third party grants, we have research grant allocations to universities and some other organisations. The CFO might want to provide some more information on the accounting treatment, but the majority of that list—for example, the Beverley Agricultural Society—received financial assistance for the entry of young people to their agricultural show.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: So perhaps based on that advice, you might be able to take this on notice. Of that list that was provided on notice in attachment 1, how many of those grants related to research and development, and the total cost of those grants? I would have thought if we are subsidising students or young people to go to our agricultural shows, it would have been more fitting under subsidies and other grants rather than a research grant allocation. It somewhat skews the amount that is in the research grant category.

Mr Delane: Chair, if I can just ask the chief finance officer to provide some further explanation.

Mr Murgia: The accounts of the department, which are consistent with the whole-of-government approach, all grant payments—whether they be research or community service obligations paid under a particular account—are captured under that line item. Within the response that was provided, it was broken down into community service components, those to primary industry, third party grants and the direct grants to other organisations. What component of those is in respect to research being carried out by those bodies would have to be taken on as a separate inquiry if that was required.

[11.50 am]

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: Could we allocate a number to that?

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Yes, we will.

[*Supplementary Information No A10.*]

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: Just continuing on that line item, I notice in 2013–14 is estimated expenditure of almost \$18 million; in 2014–15, it is estimated expenditure of nearly \$21 million. Then we have a pretty sharp drop of almost \$10 million into the 2015–16, 2016–17 and 2017–18 out years. Could you perhaps explain to me the reduction in research grant allocations in those forward estimates?

Mr Delane: We will provide some supplementary information here which will clearly explain this. But that first line—what was included in research grants because of the accounting treatment of it—is some natural resource management grant funding, and so the forward provision for NRM funding does drop away, but there are plans in place to fund that program from royalties for regions, subject to the RFR processes. We will provide a detailed explanation of this as a supplementary.

[*Supplementary Information No A11.*]

Hon RICK MAZZA: I have a question.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: On this issue?

Hon RICK MAZZA: On grants.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: But not on this particular issue?

Hon RICK MAZZA: Not specifically.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: We will add you to the list, Hon Rick Mazza, because some members have not asked any questions, but in particular Hon Alanna Clohesy. So if Hon Martin Aldridge has finished, I will pass on to Hon Alanna Clohesy.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Can I get an indication of what reduction there has been in federal grants, specific-purpose payments or national partnership arrangements, if there are any, across the department in this financial year?

Hon KEN BASTON: Are you referring —

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: From the federal budget.

Hon KEN BASTON: From the federal budget?

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Yes.

Hon KEN BASTON: So what has been cut?

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: What cuts have been made?

Hon KEN BASTON: Like Caring for our Country; is that what you are referring to?

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: That is one example, but I know that there are probably a number of others that have been reduced as a result of the most recent federal budget.

Mr Delane: Apart from earlier decisions made, I think not as part of this budget—the major change is in the Caring for our Country program, which Mr Ruprecht might comment on further—I am not aware of any significant reductions in special-purpose programs or grants that would come to the department as a result of the current budget.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: So no reduction in grants that then are administered by the department for community purposes?

Mr Delane: I might just ask each of the executive directors if they are aware of anything in their particular portfolio. I am not aware of any major programs that we would partner with the federal government in administering that have been terminated or substantially reduced as part of the federal budget.

Mr Ruprecht: With respect to Caring for our Country, which, with the new commonwealth government, will be a national Landcare program, it is really a change in the way the program is being administered. The commonwealth government will now directly fund—the funds will be administered to the regional NRM groups. In the previous budget, it was via the Department of Agriculture and Food's state NRM office. The commonwealth government may well make budget decisions—and some of those are still coming through—with regard to grants to community groups, but it is not something that we are aware of.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Okay. Could I get that taken on notice? When those decisions are made, can that information be provided as supplementary information to this committee?

The DEPUTY CHAIR: We will take that as supplementary information A12 and see what the department provides back. They have 10 working days to provide the information, so if it is not available in that period, then —

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Perhaps, as a courtesy, we might ask them to notify us when it does become available.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: We will not be able to incorporate that as supplementary information. Out of courtesy, I think they should advise the public of Western Australia —

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: And the estimates and financial operations committee.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: — but we will leave it up to the department and the minister. But we will allocate that as supplementary information A12, because there seemed to be a little bit of—I would not say lack of information, but there was a bit of the questioning of what there might be out there that is still unknown. We will see what we get back.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: That is the point. Thank you, Deputy Chair.

[Supplementary Information No A12.]

Mr Delane: We will respond to that question. I have just checked with the executive directors. None of them are aware of any significant programs that we know are reduced or expect may be reduced, but we will provide an explanation in response to that question.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: There is no harm in double-checking.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: The citrus gall wasp: what resources have been allocated to identify and manage the recent outbreak of the citrus gall wasp and to examine, in particular, and to consider treatment in relation to the recent outbreak in the East Metropolitan Region?

Mr Delane: We will need to take that question on notice, and we will provide a detailed explanation of the status of that insect outbreak and whether we consider that any response will be fruitful—excuse the pun—and that will be provided in response.

[Supplementary Information No A13.]

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Can I add to that, and that is: what consultation has been undertaken with citrus growers and what strategies are there to advise home citrus growers about the potential for this —

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Non-commercial citrus growers—like our backyards.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: The problem is that it will only get worse if it gets into non-commercial —

Hon KEN TRAVERS: It needs area-wide management.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Thank you, shadow Minister for Agriculture and Food.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: I think that is pretty clear. If that could all be incorporated into A13, it would be appreciated. I am sure there would be lots of home, non-commercial and commercial citrus growers who would like to know as well.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: I should add that there are lots of good imports from the eastern states, but not the citrus gall wasp.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: I had indicated that the call would go to Hon Mark Lewis, who is one of those who have been waiting very, very patiently for his turn.

Hon MARK LEWIS: Minister, on page 574, “Asset Investment Program”: am I right in saying that in 2013–14 the cost of rolling back the Office of Shared Services has doubled from estimates; and, if so, why?

Mr Delane: Can we get some further clarity of the question?

Hon MARK LEWIS: Sorry; I will say it again.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: I will ask the member to rephrase and restate the question.

Hon MARK LEWIS: Am I right in saying that in 2013–14, the cost of rolling back the Office of Shared Services has doubled from the estimated expenditure? If you go to “The Decommissioning of the Office of Shared Services”, the estimated expenditure in 2013–14 was \$2.474 million and the estimated expenditure up to the end of 2013–14 was \$5.471 million. So it has more than doubled. Was it more difficult than you previously thought?

[12 noon]

Mr Delane: Chief finance officer, Joe Murgia, will comment.

Mr Murgia: The reference to the decommissioning of the office estimate of \$5.9 million, the total in the third column of \$6.471 million represents the progressive total. The amount shown there for 2013–14 only represents the 12-month amount, so it is a collective. It is not that it is doubled-up. One is a progressive total including the prior year costs associated to the decommissioning. It is not a double-up.

Hon MARK LEWIS: Supplementary to that, there is a figure out there of \$500 000 in 2015–16 but nothing in 2014–15—why is that?

Mr Murgia: I can answer that question as well. The \$500 000 represents further upgrades which are scheduled in relationship to licences with the Oracle product, which is estimated to occur in 2015–16.

Hon MARK LEWIS: The total amount to roll back Shared Services is about \$6 million just in your organisation?

Mr Murgia: That is right. To 30 June 2013 it is \$6.471 million. By the time we complete this exercise it will be around about \$6.9 million.

Hon MARK LEWIS: That probably would have prevented all the redundancies.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Is that just a comment?

Hon MARK LEWIS: Probably.

My next question relates to page 584. I assume the minister is responsible in this session for the Rural Business Development Corporation. I refer to “Western Australian Pilot of Drought Reform” measures 1 and 2. Is the minister in a position to fill the dots, so to speak, for 2014–15 and any out years? I can assure any member who might think so, these are not dorothy dixers!

Hon KEN BASTON: No, or I would have found it quicker!

Hon KEN TRAVERS: You have a long way to go before you show us what a dorothy dixer is, like Hon Nigel Hallett, who has been doing it all morning!

Mr Delane: Can I just get some clarity: are we dealing with the “Details of Controlled Grants and Subsidies” table?

Hon MARK LEWIS: Yes; those last two line items “Western Australian Pilot of Drought Reform Measures” and “Western Australian Pilot of Drought Reform Measures Phase 2”. I wonder whether we can fill the dots in for 2014–15 and any out years.

Mr Delane: Mr Metcalfe may be able to provide additional information on this. Perhaps to inform the house, this refers to the partnership between the Western Australian and federal governments in 2010 and 2011 around what was known as the drought pilot, which was the pilot of drought reform measures which was a precursor to the national drought policy reform which is only just being implemented now. These were grants programs which will by now have been completed, which is why there are no grant allocations to any individuals and why they are not appearing in 2014–15 onwards.

Hon DARREN WEST: I refer to the Rural Business Development Corporation part of the budget papers starting at page 580. I refer to dot point 2 while we are on the Rural Business Development

Corporation papers. I refer to dot point 2 regarding the commonwealth Farm Finance Concessional Loans Scheme. What is happening with the unallocated funds from round 1 and the inevitable unallocated funds from round 2? Have you reached any agreement with the federal minister that these funds can remain in WA to support the Western Australian agricultural industry?

Hon KEN BASTON: Are you talking about the \$25 million plus \$25 million?

Hon DARREN WEST: The two lots of \$25 million. With the greatest of respect, I think you have made a bit of a meal of this scheme. I see that Barnaby Joyce somewhat agrees with me on that assessment. Given that there will be unallocated funds from round 1 and I would suggest there will inevitably be unallocated funds from round 2 as well because the criteria are unlikely to change, what is the fate of this federal money that has been available? Have you had any discussions with the federal agriculture minister to try to attempt to keep this money in Western Australia rather than have it returned back to Canberra and not used in the manner that it was intended—for Western Australian farmers?

Hon KEN BASTON: The simple answer is yes. It is federal funding and obviously what we do not use goes back. In the first round I think there were 44 applicants. I will get Mr Metcalfe to indicate where it is at. Not all the money was used up, as you are aware, in the first instance. The second round opens on 1 July and goes through until 30 April next year, which is open. The decision on that funding was for productivity. In the early stages I could see it was not getting taken up so what I did was take the \$421 500 off-farm assets and the \$400 000 liquid assets, which were allowed, and amalgamated those together so it actually gave \$821 500 off-farm assets including up to \$400 000 on the liquid assets. The liquid assets included farm-managed deposits, the cash in bank et cetera, and it did not include superannuation. It increased the amount that, in the first round, was \$200 000. All the businesses that put in for that—44—are eligible. We increased that from \$200 000 to \$400 000 in that loan. For the next round, that is what the guidelines are. To answer your question simply: that money will go back. Once it goes back, it is never given out. It is federal money and that is the way it is. That is a 4.5 per cent interest rate.

In discussion about the next tranche, which was the drought loans, interestingly enough we were not the only state to be in the situation where what we thought was a drought area was going to miss out. New South Wales and Queensland were both in that category. In speaking to the federal minister Barnaby Joyce, he had a dilemma in that. It was probably to our advantage that those two states were in a similar situation to what the Southern Cross area is in. It has all been based on BOM map. Of course it included in the first instance summer rainfall, which of course is not a growing season here where you are looking at April to September. The approval has been for the next tranche of funding in the drought loan.

Hon DARREN WEST: Thank you, minister. I understand the answer. However, I point out to you that other states have fully utilised this funding stream that was made available from the federal government in 2012–13. The federal agriculture minister has been critical of Western Australia's administration of the scheme. He thinks that the poor take-up is a result of the restrictive guidelines that are not applicable in other states. Would you agree that his assessment is accurate?

Hon KEN BASTON: Western Australia has always had a case for some time now that we are not a lender of last resort unless there is federal funding. However, we can put that funding into productivity. I would have thought many farmers would have been able to work that very well. As one farmer did, he bought the farm next door. I think that is a pretty good way to be productive. It applies to stock, it applies to machinery, it applies to many of the implements that I believe that anyone would use if you are going to increase your productivity as a farm business.

[12.10 pm]

Hon DARREN WEST: So do you think the federal minister has it wrong and that he should not be critical of the way that we have administered the scheme?

Hon KEN BASTON: I think the federal minister was using some licence to say “I’m right.” That loan was announced in February in Broome and we did a joint press release, and it has taken all that time to get it underway—the drought loan. That is how long it has taken us to get to where we are. He admitted to me on the phone that he was surprised at how long it had actually taken to administer these loans, or get them set up with all the criteria. The criteria is with the federal government; the first loan that you are referring to, each state can have their input into that funding, so how they used it in Queensland was probably going to be taken up a lot quicker —

Hon DARREN WEST: It was a much looser set of application criteria, which clearly suited a lot more farmers, and could be used to debt restructure in other states, but was not able to be used for debt restructure in Western Australia. The federal minister has been critical of the way the scheme has been rolled out in Western Australia, and I just really want to know whether you think that is a fair assessment, an unfair assessment or an incorrect assessment.

Hon KEN BASTON: I think it is an unfair assessment.

Hon DARREN WEST: An unfair assessment.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Again, I think we are verging beyond the budget estimates.

Hon KEN BASTON: I will just ask Mr Metcalfe to comment on that last point.

Mr Metcalfe: Just on the comments with regard to the federal minister’s judgement, I guess, around the Western Australian scheme, particularly the concessional loan scheme. South Australia has a scheme in place and they had 48 applications. Out of that, only three were approved. In Western Australia we had 44 applications, and I believe something in the order of 25 were approved. The reason that the successful application rate is higher in WA is that we put the criteria upfront and made it quite clear and transparent. The South Australians did not do that, and they did a lot more work as a result of having to go through that process, and they did not meet the criteria that was built into the back end of the program. In Tasmania, there were 26 approved and 13 declined, which is very similar to ours. I think the federal minister is being unreasonable in his judgement; the circumstances changed significantly from the time that the scheme was put in place. We are in the middle of drought conditions, and as the growing season proceeded into 2013, we saw a record harvest for many areas, and that changed their financial situation and the eligibility criteria was more difficult for them. But, equally, it also provided some downward pressure on interest rates amongst the banks, and provided a much better outcome for those growers who wanted to refinance and also provide a competitive argument for what interest rates would be charged going forward. I do not agree with his judgement at all.

Hon RICK MAZZA: With the \$80 000 of new funding for the national fruit fly strategy, was any of that money used to send the four million sterile fruit flies to South Australia for the outbreak they have over there?

Hon KEN BASTON: As I understand it, the fruit flies were sold to South Australia at \$5 000 per 10 million. We actually sell sterile fruit flies there.

Hon RICK MAZZA: That is a good thing—very good. With that funding, has there been any more research done on the genetically modified male fruit fly you alluded to earlier?

Hon KEN BASTON: I will refer that to Mr Hill.

Mr Hill: I think members will be aware that fruit fly is a significant pest for Australia; in Western Australia we have medfly and the rest of the country has Q-fly, but periodically has medfly outbreaks. Part of our tranche of strategies around Mediterranean fruit fly and its control moving forward has been to ask how we do something different, because if we look at the history of medfly, research agencies like ours have been doing the same thing for a long time, and we still have the medfly and Q-fly problem. One of DAFWA’s directors has been looking at what might be called “transformational” technologies: “What can we do that is different in terms of a research

environment and in terms of new technologies that would enable us to significantly reduce the impact of fruit fly and, in our case medfly and in the eastern states, Q-fly?” So we as an organisation have been scoping that project out and talking to industry and talking to Horticulture Australia Ltd, which is the national funding body. Growers in particular and industry sectors in Western Australia pay a national levy which goes into this organisation called Horticulture Australia Ltd, and it is matched and used to invest in research, development and extension programs. We have a project with HAL for consideration on that at the moment, and there will be a range of projects to deliver that. We will obviously have to ensure that we meet the federal legislative requirements around using those kinds of insects, if you like. Obviously we will need to work through gene technology regulation et cetera, and we will need to then work with the company. The one we are working with at the moment on doing that is Oxitec Ltd from the UK. It is progressing, we have plans, and we have funding submissions with HAL at the moment.

Hon RICK MAZZA: That is very good. Just going back to the sterile fruit fly, which is the technology you are using at the moment, does sending those four million to South Australia in any way deplete the stocks we have in Western Australia for our own problem here?

Mr Hill: The facility has the capacity to produce sterile flies at relatively short notice. It is a bit bizarre really, if you go down and have a look, and you are welcome to at any time—we can show it to you. They maintain a breeding population and they can ramp up that population quite quickly. Previously we have had contracts with South Australia and we have prepared those flies for those contracts, and recently we were able to up our production quickly to meet the issue that they had, so it has the capacity to ramp up quite quickly.

Hon RICK MAZZA: My last question—I think the minister might have mentioned it—was: how much are we actually selling those sterile fruit flies to South Australia for? Do you sell them by the thousand or the million? How do you sell them?

Mr Hill: Can I take that question on notice? I could not give you the exact number of what we charged per fly for the last flies.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Perhaps we could get a total as well of the income earned from this little enterprise.

[Supplementary Information No A14.]

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Could I just follow up on that? Minister, you met with the industry a couple of months ago after we had the debate in the chamber. What actions have you actually taken since that meeting to address the concerns of the fruit growing industry in Western Australia about fruit fly, with the phasing out of Fenthion? What are we going to do next growing season?

Hon KEN BASTON: I thank the honourable member for the question; I was hoping he would ask that!

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I hope you have a proper answer!

Hon KEN BASTON: I have! I and my department have met with growers in the hills and I have personally travelled up there. There is a realisation that Fenthion will eventually be phased out, and it is open until mid-August, but the indications are that it will phase out. They have accepted that now and they are looking at management. One of the members, Brett DelSimone, was very pleased to show me how they are dealing with it; in other words, if any fruit on their trees has been bitten by fruit fly or shows the marks of fruit fly, they carry buckets on their squirrel pickers, or whatever you call them, and they dip that into a solution and then put it in the bucket —

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I know what they are doing; I have been up there, too. I want to know what you are doing to assist them, because the farmers are doing a good job on their own farms, but it is the neighbouring farms that are often abandoned and all the rest of it. Does the government have a

budget? Are you going to spend any money? Are you going to release sterile fruit flies this season for them?

Hon KEN BASTON: We have encouraged them to form a biosecurity group to look at that. That has been put to them before and that was explained to them this week. They had meetings on how they can manage it. You are right; one of the big problems is very much that it is the orchards that are not being managed. In other words, someone just has a holiday block with some fruit trees on it. The department is certainly helping growers up there in every endeavour to actually bring it under control.

[12.20 pm]

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Is there a budget to build capacity to establish a regional biosecurity group, because that is one of the things that I think is clear? It is great to see you are starting a biosecurity group, but even for horsefly where there has been a long-established process, they are struggling to have the capacity to establish those sorts of groups. Is there a budget to get those groups established?

Mr Delane: Perhaps I can make some quick comments and then Mr Hill might want to add to those. There have been various options available and producers in the hills and elsewhere are progressing some of them. Some have been reliant on fenthion; others have moved some time ago to a technique known as area-wide management. Western Australia has benefited from the South Australian program of utilising sterile flies and we have been manufacturing them for South Australia for probably a decade or more under a sort of take-or-pay arrangement; and when they have not been required in South Australia, we have been able to utilise them locally. Generally, communities or industry areas in Western Australia have chosen not to fund the provision of flies to suppress Med fly in their particular area.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: And in South Australia it is funded by the state government.

Mr Delane: In terms of response to outbreaks, not as an endemic pest. We are applying resources to assist the groups; if they want to establish a recognised biosecurity group or in fact if they wanted to utilise different legislation to have a producer group, they have available all the technical assistance that we have. But Mr Hill might want to add to that.

Hon KEN BASTON: I will defer to John Ruprecht.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Mr Ruprecht, briefly please, given the time. There are many members who want to ask other questions.

Mr Ruprecht: Very quickly, the Department of Agriculture and Food staff have met and have discussed the range of options available for a recognised biosecurity group, as we have done with other local governments and community groups, and looked at matching funds as part of seed funding. So, we expect through the local government or an association to be contributing funds but we would match those as part of seed funding to actually get them established as a biosecurity group.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Have you worked out how you are going to collect the contribution from the membership side of biosecurity groups? Have you actually established that yet?

Mr Ruprecht: We have got a funding mechanism that works very well in the rangelands, and we are working on how we would apply that in the agricultural areas. So, the mechanisms are in place, but it does need public consultation and support for a rating base to be put in place, which is what is in the actual Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act.

Hon NIGEL HALLETT: I have a quick question on the proportion of co-investment in the department-led initiatives on page 571. The first part is: basically, how much is in GRDC funds? The second part is: how much does WA provide to the GRDC? The third part is: how much is returned to Western Australia?

Hon KEN BASTON: I will defer to the DG.

Mr Delane: I think we will need to take quite a bit of that question on notice. Clearly, we have quite a number of contracts with the Grains Research and Development Corporation, or GRDC, which Dr Sweetingham will be able to outline in some more detail. As to how much does WA provide, my department provides nothing to GRDC but clearly growers through a levy contribute to GRDC.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: That is how I understood the question, that it was a contribution from Western Australia, not a question relating to the contribution from the department. So, that may or may not be information you collate—I would hope that you do—but I will allocate that as A15. Is there anything that any of the officers can add?

[*Supplementary Information No A15.*]

Dr Sweetingham: I can quickly add a few examples. The Department of Agriculture and Food currently has a range of major grains R&D projects that are co-funded with the Grains Research and Development Corporation, and the figures I can provide you relate to the expected budgets between now until the end of 2016–17. DAFWA leads the following six major grains R&D projects: crop agronomy in wheat and barley, \$12.2 million; drought and frost protection of cereal crops, \$6.6 million; lupin breeding, \$6 million; soil acidity, water repellence, compaction alleviation, \$2.15 million; pest and crop disease management in integrated forms, \$4.4 million; and pasture and break crop research, \$6.2 million. So, you can see that we receive significant funds just through the Department of Agriculture and Food. And, of course, other Western Australian research entities such as the local CSIRO and universities receive significant funding from GRDC as well.

Mr Delane: If I may comment on the second and third components to the question, my department has no role in collecting levies under federal legislation that flow to GRDC, so we will need to rely on GRDC or the federal government agency for that information to the second part; and we have no way of directly knowing how much funding is returned to Western Australia by GRDC, except by looking through their annual report like anyone else could. We will also need to rely on GRDC for that information. So, just so that members understand, we may not be able to fully answer that question.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Okay, but it is on notice as supplementary information and we will see what information comes back. Hon Darren West—and noting the time, quick questions and quick answers.

Hon DARREN WEST: Mr Deputy Chair, I am mindful of the time and that Hon Paul Brown has a question after me, so I will be brief. Just to cheer the department people up, I do have a lot more questions on biosecurity, climate change and lack of reference and a few other things, which I will either forward on notice or ask in question time, so standby for those. I have three very brief things that I will roll into one question, and you might just give us a quick heads up on where they are at. I cannot find any funding allocated to the rural financial counselling support scheme in this financial year. If that is the case, then what will happen to those farmers and rural people who need those services? The second part is around the regional men's health initiative. I cannot seem to find any funding through Ag, even though previous budgets have that in the forward estimates. Those are my two key areas of concern. And the Royal Show admission, that seems to be gone as well.

Hon KEN BASTON: I ask Mr Metcalfe to comment.

Mr Metcalfe: Thanks very much for the opportunity. The RFCS has put up a submission via the rural men's health to royalties for regions for funding, and it is now being funded separately under royalties for regions.

Hon DARREN WEST: They have cost-shifted over to royalties for regions.

Mr Metcalfe: It moved across into DRD under royalties for regions.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: It was always funded by royalties for regions.

Hon DARREN WEST: It was in the budget.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: I think it is more beneficial if we have a question and an answer, rather than a discussion around the chamber.

Mr Metcalfe: In terms of regional men's health, I am happy to take that on notice. I am not exactly sure where that is set up. That is the easiest way. We will provide the details through to you; there is not much involved.

Hon DARREN WEST: That would be fine; thank you. I know there are more questions.

Mr Metcalfe: The Royal ag society is listed. Have you found it?

Hon DARREN WEST: It is listed for this year but that is it, so I just wondered whether this would be the last show where children could get in for free or whether there is another plan.

Hon KEN BASTON: I would rather refer to it, Mr Chair, as the first show, because it is not normally in the budget. Normally it is a decision by cabinet, so this has actually got in the budget; but, yes, while I am around.

Hon DARREN WEST: It is a new initiative, minister.

Hon KEN BASTON: Absolutely!

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Do you intend to have it as an ongoing program year in, year out beyond this year?

Hon KEN BASTON: I would. I think it is a magnificent forum to actually have our youth of today connecting with agriculture for the future.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: The biggest complaint from local agricultural societies is that it is that lack of ability to do long-term planning around this funding that actually causes them the greatest heartache. The Wanneroo ag society did not even take the money one year because of that.

[12.30 pm]

Hon KEN BASTON: It is available to all regional shows, as you are aware.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Mr Metcalfe indicated that he would provide some supplementary information.

[*Supplementary Information No A16.*]

Hon PAUL BROWN: Given that we have just signed, both federally and statewide, a range of MOUs with other countries for exports, is there any allocation through the budget or through the forward estimates to encourage our state farmers, both cattle and sheep, to take up higher breeding rates to fill the impending gap between what we are supplying here and the demand from overseas?

Dr Chennell: The department has an ongoing program of research development and extension in sheep and cattle. For the last four years, a major focus has been on transformation of those industries to take up the opportunities overseas. That includes introduction of Australian sheep breeding values and other technologies to increase production and productivity, and in the cattle sector in particular, a suite of programs working with producers to meet market specification, including perhaps the reorientation of the north to other markets from Indonesia. That has been quite successful. There has been an increase in diversification of markets in the north. The two programs for sheep and beef in royalties for regions are very clearly focused on both introducing new supply chain approaches, business models to take advantage of the markets, and the technological change required to increase production and alignment to those markets, so very much a focus.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Thank you, everybody. We are going to have to conclude here. The committee, noting the desire of members to ask questions last year at estimates hearings, extended the time for this hearing by an extra hour, yet we still ran out of time before all the members could ask all their questions. That just goes to show the interest that members of this place have in agriculture in WA and also, it goes almost without saying, the importance of agriculture to our state.

Hon DARREN WEST: Four hours next year!

The DEPUTY CHAIR: We might go for four hours, or possibly a whole day, Hon Darren West.

The committee will forward any additional questions it has to you via the minister in writing in the next couple of days, together with a transcript of the evidence, which includes the very many questions that you have taken on notice. Responses to these questions will be requested within 10 working days of receipt of the questions. Should you be unable to meet this due date, please advise the committee in writing as soon as possible before the due date. The advice is to include specific reasons as to why the due date cannot be met. If members have any unasked questions, I ask them to submit these to the committee clerk at the close of the hearing. Once again, on behalf of the committee, thank you for your attendance today.

Hearing concluded at 12.34 pm
