

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS**

**2017–18 BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARINGS**



**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE  
TAKEN AT PERTH  
THURSDAY, 19 OCTOBER 2017**

**SESSION FIVE  
DEPARTMENT OF BIODIVERSITY, CONSERVATION AND ATTRACTIONS**

**Members**

**Hon Alanna Clohesy (Chair)  
Hon Tjorn Sibma (Deputy Chair)  
Hon Diane Evers  
Hon Aaron Stonehouse  
Hon Colin Tincknell**

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**Hearing commenced at 2.15 pm**

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON**

**Minister for Environment, examined:**

**Mr MARK WEBB**

**Director General, examined:**

**Mr PETER DANS**

**Acting Deputy Director General, examined:**

**Dr MARGARET BYRNE**

**Executive Director, Science and Conservation, examined:**

**Mr GRAHAM EDWARDS**

**Acting Executive Director, Corporate and Business Services, examined:**

**Mr MARK NEILSON**

**Manager, Strategy and Reform, examined:**

**Ms MARIA FINNIGAN**

**Acting Executive Director, Perth Zoo, examined:**

**Ms MARCELLE BRODERICK**

**Acting Executive Director, Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority, examined:**

**Ms MICHELLE REYNOLDS**

**Executive Director, Rottnest Island Authority, examined:**

**Mr DARREN FORSTER**

**Principal Policy Adviser, Minister for Environment, examined:**

**The CHAIR:** On behalf of the Legislative Council Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations, I would like to welcome you to today's hearing. Can the witnesses confirm that they have each read, understood and signed a document headed "Information for Witnesses"?

**The WITNESSES:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** 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. It is also being broadcast live on the Parliament's website. The hearing is being held in public, although there is discretion available to the committee to hear evidence in private. 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 the question. Agencies and departments have an important role and duty in assisting the committee to scrutinise the budget papers, and the committee values your assistance with this.

Would the minister like to make a brief opening statement?

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**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** It is a pleasure to be here this afternoon as part of the biodiversity, conservation and attractions team. Members would be aware that from 1 July this year, the former Department of Parks and Wildlife, the former Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority, the former Rottnest Island Authority and the former Zoological Parks Authority joined together under one agency. This team before us manages the state's terrestrial and marine conservation reserves and also our unique wildlife and a range of attractions like Kings Park, Perth Zoo and Rottnest Island. I look forward to questions this afternoon.

**Hon TJORN SIBMA:** This should be an easy first one, minister. In respect of the department and its operations, I refer to the Premier's commitment to link the pay of directors general to the achievement of key performance indicators. Has the minister, the Premier or the Public Sector Commissioner negotiated the agreement with the present director general or CEO, whichever nomenclature is appropriate?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** The new director general does have KPIs that he has signed off on. In terms of linking it to finances, I am advised that work is still being undertaken.

[2.20 pm]

**Hon TJORN SIBMA:** Will those KPIs be made public? Are all those KPIs weighted equally—are they equally important?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** I am not aware whether they will be made public. They are certainly provided to the Public Sector Commissioner, and the Public Sector Commissioner is probably the guardian of the document, although I as the responsible minister, and the director general, will ensure that the KPIs have been met, and we will work on that issue over the year ahead. I will need to take on notice whether that can be made public, because it is a Public Sector Commission document. The director general has indicated that he does not have a problem with it, but I better check what the proper process and procedure is. So I will take that on notice.

[*Supplementary Information No B1.*]

**Hon TJORN SIBMA:** Thank you, minister; I would appreciate that. Very briefly, the reason why I was inquiring whether they might be made public is because from my perspective at least, there is a measure of obscurity around how these KPIs are formulated. In an answer I received previously in this place, I was provided with the advice that all KPIs as they apply to directors general are being formulated at a whole-of-government level. Is that the case or are these discrete and de-linked from the rest of government?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** There are definitely whole-of-government KPIs in the agreement, as there are agency-specific agreements—they both appear. At this stage there is no weighting in this current document, but as we move towards meeting our election commitment, there may well be. We have not got to that stage as yet.

**Hon DIANE EVERS:** My first question refers to page 202 and the heading "Outcomes and Key Effectiveness Indicators". It states under the outcome "Sustainable use of forest resources" that the cumulative removal of jarrah and karri sawlogs for the years 2014–15 and 2015–16 was 254 000 cubic metres. In 2016–17, the total went up to 382 000 cubic metres, or just less than 130 000 per year on average. The budget states there is an expectation that 764 000 cubic metres will be cut as a cumulative total. That is assuming that more logs will cut in one year than in the past three years combined. Acknowledging that there have been no significant changes to allow FPC to harvest at three times its normal rate, why has this figure been budgeted? If this figure is seen to be highly unlikely, how would that affect the expected dividend to be received from FPC of \$1.9 million, as shown at page 510 of the budget papers?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Before I hand over to Mr Peter Dans, who is the acting deputy director general of the agency, it is my understanding that these figures relate to the total forest from which the FPC can select forest to be logged in that year. I will ask Mr Dans to provide an appropriate response.

**Mr DANS:** Honourable member, you will see the little footnote on that page. The actual target is the cumulative—three years of the allowable cut for both jarrah and karri logs times three. As you can see by the actuals for the preceding years, the actual amount of sawlogs taken is substantially less. However, the target represents the maximum allowable cut, cumulative over the first three years of the plan.

**Hon DIANE EVERS:** So that is not taken into account in working out what the profitability of FPC will be?

**Mr DANS:** That is simply the maximum allowable wood flow times three.

**Hon DIANE EVERS:** I have one other question on the FPC. I was wondering—noting that they can go up to 380 000 cubic metres this year, they are likely to need to find larger, more accessible trees to reach that. I would just like to know the specific steps they are using to identify the non-old-growth forest in the Barrabup coupe to see if they can come up with this greater number of trees, the outcomes of those steps and the rationale to use six or less stumps per two hectares, and whether any existing data was used.

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Member, thank you for the question. The Forest Products Commission does not fall under my portfolio, so I cannot answer that first question. I do not think the Forest Products Commission have been called as part of this estimates process but I do not think that precludes you from submitting that question through the process. I think you will get an answer for it. In relation to the second part of the question, there has been some work done and, in fact, there is a document called the procedure for the assessment, identification, and the demarcation of old-growth forest, which was done by the Department of Parks and Wildlife that outlines the approach and the steps applied in the assessment of the old-growth forest status in the Barrabup number 3 coupe. That assessment was undertaken by specialist staff from the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions. It is a public document so I am happy to provide that document to the committee and, therefore, to you.

An assessment was undertaken of the Barrabup coupe and found an additional 43 hectares of old growth jarrah forest. The area should have been identified by the Forest Products Commission at the planning stage. The FPC has been requested to provide advice on why these old-growth forest patches were not identified earlier and what improvements can be made to minimise the risk of a recurrence. The FPC has also been instructed to rehabilitate old-growth forest that was impacted by roadworks that were undertaken. I think that was approximately 1.2 hectares. That work is being undertaken at the moment and, hopefully, the document will be helpful.

**Hon DIANE EVERS:** On page 206, at the top of the page, is “Implementation of the Forest Management Plan”. It shows that there was a significant jump in total cost of services between 2015–16 and 2016–17. I am wondering why that was.

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** I would say that is probably an insignificant drop. However, it is a drop, so I might ask Mr Nielson if he is able to comment on that.

**Mr NEILSON:** Member, are you referring to the 2015–16 actual of \$18.493 million increasing to \$24.086 million?

**Hon DIANE EVERS:** That is right.

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**Mr NEILSON:** There is a fairly complex corporate overhead allocation methodology that is used in allocating some costs. Between 2015–16 and 2016–17 there was a review of that corporate overhead allocation mechanism. In terms of a direct underlying driver of costs, there is no single change. The change is due to the review of the corporate overhead allocation mechanism.

**Hon DIANE EVERS:** Will I pick up any more detail on that in the annual report?

**Mr NEILSON:** The annual report will reflect the 2015–16 actual figure and it will also reflect the 2016–17 actual figure rather than the estimated actual figure. There may be a difference between the estimated actual in the budget papers and the actual in the annual report, but there will be more information there on that.

[2.30 pm]

**Hon DIANE EVERS:** I refer to page 210 and the table “Income Statement, which shows a budget increase for the department of BCA in the year 2017–18. I appreciate the additional input; that is a great idea. However, it seems to be short-lived, as the figure falls back in the following years. Is there a long-term plan to adequately fund this department?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** I will see if I can begin. Obviously there is a commitment to the ongoing nature of this department and the good work it does. In relation to the financial side, I will ask Mr Neilson if he can provide a response.

**Mr NEILSON:** For service appropriations, the budget increases from \$242 million in 2016–17 to \$251.4 million in 2017–18. That difference is largely due to an increase in the budget for depreciation. That is a non-cash item, but in an accrual sense that depreciation does show as a budget increase. If you put that to one side, the underlying appropriation is fairly constant; however, there are puts and takes within that, and there are increases in funding and decreases in funding.

**Hon DIANE EVERS:** That is fine. To me it looks as though the department has been somewhat underfunded for a number of years. I am really hoping to see a turnaround and more put back into this area.

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Obviously that is a political question. The funding we get is what we get. There is certainly a commitment by this government to protect the state’s unique environment for future generations. We went to the election with a range of election commitments in the environment space, including the expansion of our marine and terrestrial reserve system, particularly in the Kimberley region, with Buccaneer Archipelago National Park, and also the expansion of Wellington National Park in the south west. We also have a significant investment in the Aboriginal ranger program. That program is an initiative that has \$20 million attached to it over the next five years, and we have started to roll that out. As with any government department, we would always love to have more money. In the current fiscal environment, we have done very well, and we have done very well to get some extra money moving forward. I take the member’s point, but I assure her that the government treats this agency very importantly and we will fund it accordingly.

**Hon COLIN TINCKNELL:** I refer to page 201 of budget paper No 2 and the table “Service Summary”. Service 9 under “Expense” is prescribed burning and fire management. Why does the funding for prescribed burning and fire management decline in 2016–17 and also in 2019–20?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Under the past government, there was a four-year funding initiative; that is, a \$20 million extra boost to bushfire prescribed burning and fire mitigation. We are in the third of the four years at the moment, so obviously next year is the fourth year. That issue was time limited. We will obviously address that issue in the next budget year moving forward. That \$20 million has been a very good initiative and it has enabled the Department of Biodiversity,

Conservation and Attractions to meet the aspirational target of 200 000 hectares that we have annually. We have certainly put it to good use, but it was time limited, so we will assess it moving forward. The budget papers simply acknowledge the time-limited nature of the commitment.

**Hon COLIN TINCKNELL:** I refer to page 210 and the table “Income Statement”. Can the minister explain the increase in the funding for the regional community services fund in 2017–18?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** It is my understanding that the increase relates to a project at Kalbarri, but I could be proved wrong, so I will ask Mr Neilson if he is able to provide a response, please.

**Mr NEILSON:** The increase is largely due to new royalties for regions-funded projects in Aboriginal joint management. Those are shown on page 197. The major projects are the Aboriginal ranger program at \$4 million in 2017–18; Murujuga joint management at \$9 million in 2017–18; and Yawuru joint management at \$650 000.

**Hon COLIN TINCKNELL:** I refer again to page 201 and the table “Service Summary”. Why does the forward estimate remain unchanged in 2020–21 from 2019–20 for visitor services and public programs provided in the Swan Canning Riverpark, for prescribed burning and fire management, and for bushfire suppression?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** I will ask Mr Neilson to answer the first part and the director general to answer the second part.

**Mr NEILSON:** The budget for visitor services and public programs provided in the Swan Canning Riverpark has been held constant at \$14.7 million as an interim measure pending a fuller review of department priorities.

**Hon COLIN TINCKNELL:** The second part was prescribed burning and fire management.

**Mr WEBB:** The minister has previously described that that is part of a four-year program of additional funding, and certainly in the out years that will be part of the discussion we will have with the government as to the additional funding available. The same applies for bushfire suppression, which is service 10. That is an annual average cost.

**Hon AARON STONEHOUSE:** I refer to page 197 and the table “Spending Changes”. Under “Election Commitments”, the Aboriginal ranger program has been allocated \$4 million a year across the forward estimates. I think this was mentioned in a press release. Can the minister inform the committee how many Aboriginal rangers will be employed through this program?

[2.40 pm]

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** I am proud that we have this initiative and I was proud to be able to announce it a few weeks ago. Having been asked the question, I am very proud to give the member an answer today. The \$20 million for the first round of the funding has been announced; it was announced last month at Yule River. The expression of interest closes at the end of this month, on 31 October. In the press release, it may well have indicated approximately 30 jobs; however, we will not know how many jobs it will create until we have applications for funding. We anticipate that we will get applications for funding from right around regional Western Australia, and it will depend on each group applying for funding. Some will work in partnership with other organisations; some may well be funded under a federal scheme or be doing some work for mining and resource companies. It really does depend, I guess, on the expressions of interest we receive, and from there we will know how many jobs will be created. It is a year-on-year scheme, so groups can apply for funding for over the next four years, but they can also just apply for one-off funding. I guess it will be a moving feast, but it certainly will create tens of jobs around regional Western Australia. Thirty was the indicative figure. I actually think it will create a lot more than that.

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**Hon AARON STONEHOUSE:** Is the full \$4 million a year allocated to the employment of Aboriginal rangers? Is there a component there that is administrative cost, equipment or capital cost?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** The full \$4 million will go towards the ranger program so there is no administration cost. The department will manage the scheme out of existing resources, but the \$4 million will go towards the ranger programs directly.

**Hon AARON STONEHOUSE:** These funds will be acquitted to departments or officers across the state so they can employ Aboriginal rangers. Have I got that right?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** No. This is not for the department to employ Aboriginal rangers; it is actually for the not-for-profit organisations to employ themselves. In terms of the acquittal process, that will be done by the agency. The agency is the funding body. After the expressions of interest are received, the agency will go through an assessment process which will prioritise the applications, and then the money will be issued next year. The people who get the funding will have to acquit the money through the department. It is fair to say that there are some Aboriginal organisations throughout the state who might not have the capacity to manage the funds themselves. We might choose to hold on to the money and do the payment for them or they may choose to work with some of the bigger Aboriginal corporations or the prescribed body corporates. They might work with them and so that bigger body may hold the money on behalf of the smaller organisation. Again, the acquittal process is undertaken by us, so they have to acquit to us.

**Hon AARON STONEHOUSE:** Just one last question. I am not sure what the salary of a ranger is. Can you give us an idea of the upwards figure of how many rangers could be employed with the \$4 million a year allocation? You suggested there may be tens of rangers, but what would be the upward figure for that?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** I think the approximate wage that we work on is about \$80 000 per ranger per year. I might ask the deputy director general to comment further.

**Mr DANS:** It is a little difficult to determine the number of people who are going to be employed because we are not aware of the duration of the projects. If we have shorter duration projects, it might go for a month or two. Then the number of individuals employed would be substantially further. For yearlong projects, the number of employees employed under the program would be substantially less. It is very difficult to say. I guess wages will be determined on the basis of the task that has been undertaken. As the minister said previously, honourable member, it is hard to be much more specific at this stage until we know the nature of the projects that come up through the expressions-of-interest process, closing on the thirty-first of this month.

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** Minister, I refer you to budget paper No 2, volume 1. Let us start at the top of page 197, and at the top of most of the pages following. The Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, DBCA—it is a horrible anachronism. Can you tell us who came up with that and can we not go back to DPaW?

**The CHAIR:** It might be an acronym as well as an anachronism. I think it is an acronym.

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** Sorry, an acronym. Yes, an anachronism as well, potentially. We hope it is, Madam Chair.

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** I thank the member for the question. The name is the name, member. The McGowan Labor government and the cabinet agreed to all the names of the new agencies. Can I say, though, and, I guess, repeat something I said earlier, we are very proud to be a part of this new agency. There are great synergies across the agencies that we came from. If you think of the science element of Kings Park and the science element of the Zoo, there are great synergies with the science that is done in what was the Department of Parks and Wildlife. There are also great opportunities

with some of the work that Rottnest Island does and some of the work that Perth Zoo and BGPA does in terms of marketing our unique assets in this state. We expect to have benefits flow from this new amalgamation.

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** I do not disagree with any of that, minister; it is just that the name is mud!

**The CHAIR:** Member, do you have a question?

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** Yes, Madam Chair. You have led us very well, minister, on to page 197, subtext (a), which talks about the amalgamation. Does the department or the government have a measure of the costs associated with amalgamation? At the other end of that, do they have a measure of potential savings to be derived from the amalgamation?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** There have been no, I guess, notifiable costs as a result of the amalgamation. All of those agencies had a logo and a name previously. Say, for example, what was the Department of Parks and Wildlife has become the Parks and Wildlife Service of this new agency. They have kept their logo, so we have not changed letterhead and we have not changed business cards. Same too for BGPA; we have kept the logo of the Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority, but they have become, I guess, a division of the new agency. There has not been a huge amount of expenditure. In terms of savings that will come out of it, the director general can provide a more fulsome response in relation to that element of the question.

**Mr WEBB:** It is an ongoing process, and that is the discussion we are having with Treasury. Treasury is identifying savings that they believe we can work toward. That is part of the process we are currently going through.

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** You count your fingers when you leave those meetings. If we can move to page 199, there is a very nice line there under “Science and Conservation”. I think it is the fifth dot point that states —

Invasive pests, weeds and diseases will continue to be managed.

I am interested to see how well we are managing them and how well, therefore, we will continue to manage them. Could you give us perhaps an indication of which invasive pests, weeds and diseases the department has managed to either reduce the incidence of or reduce the spread of or, hopefully, perhaps even has eradicated from the lands managed under their control?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** I thank the member for the question. It is quite a broad question so I will start by giving you a bit of a broad answer. Obviously, within available resources, the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions manages pest animals, plant diseases and weeds across land for which it is responsible throughout the state. That is about 29 million hectares right around the state. But also we manage, again within available resources, and try to do some work on a further 89 million hectares of unallocated crown land and unmanaged reserves across the state, excluding land within the metropolitan region, regional centres and town sites. Cane toads, foxes, feral cats, wild dogs and feral herbivores like cattle, goats, camels and rabbits are the focus for pest management. But as the member would be aware, and I know he has a strong and keen interest in relation to this area, it is a difficult space to be in. We have a number of programs such as Western Shield, so obviously Western Shield is a flagship program of the department and of the wildlife conservation program. It is one of the largest and most successful programs undertaken in Australia.

[2.50 pm]

The department continues to integrate feral cat control using a feral cat bait, Eradicat, developed by the department, along with the already broadscale fox baiting carried out on department-

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managed lands. Every year the department's baiting program targets over 3.8 million hectares of our conservation state from the Pilbara to the forests of our south west to the east of Esperance. Baiting is focused in areas of habitat where our most vulnerable native wildlife live. The program is moving towards the integration of the feral cat baiting using Eradicat with the Western Shield fox baiting trials at several locations, including in particular the Dryandra Woodland, Fitzgerald River and Cape Arid National Parks and also at Two People's Bay and Manypeaks.

I am happy to acknowledge the contribution of recreational hunting and shooting groups who participate in organised pest animal control. The department has prepared protocols and working arrangements to provide a consistent, safe and effective approach to engage these groups in managing pest control programs, and the department has a memorandum of understanding with six recreational hunting and shooting groups.

In terms of what we have eradicated or stopped, as we have spoken about previously, member, behind the Chair, it is a very difficult area. I am not sure we will; ever eradicate some of these things, but there is certainly work going on to at least manage. We are also working with local groups. I should mention the Swan and Canning Rivers community grants that we announced a couple of weeks ago that provide grants to local groups to undertake work, particularly in the Swan and Canning Rivers in trying to remove invasive species that have been introduced. I am not sure the member is going to get the answer that he wants. We are doing stuff. Are we doing enough?

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** That would be consistent with the rest of estimates, so I think that is fine.

**The CHAIR:** Member, that is entirely unfair.

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** I apologise, Madam Chair.

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** We are certainly using the resources available to us to tackle ferals and weeds. It is a difficult task.

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** I have a feeling that I may have telegraphed that particular question fairly early on. I do have some sympathy for the minister. As a new minister, the minister has effectively inherited the situation that he has, so it is very hard to hold him to account personally for any particular species.

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Member, do not feel sorry for me. I am very proud to have this role as Minister for Environment. I have got a great team behind me and throughout the agencies and I look forward to working with them in the years ahead.

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** If there is a specific species that the department can say it has reduced the spread of, and if the minister would like to provide that at some time in the future, that would be interesting. I am happy for the minister to do that. But my question —

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Actually, the director general has indicated we probably have somebody here who can respond.

**Mr WEBB:** I think that collectively between the team we can give you that information. In the case of Dirk Hartog Island, there has been a three-year program of eradication of feral pests, and just six weeks ago, I think, there was a release of two species of wallabies, if I recall correctly, onto the island. There are also the examples that the minister outlined earlier, such as Dryandra, where there are specific baiting programs. So, across the state it is not possible to give you an answer, but it is possible to give you case-by-case examples of where feral pests have been eradicated.

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** I accept that. Shark Bay is another example. A very good project is happening now south of Boyup Brook—the name eludes me off the top of my head. However, across the state, there is no current information. I now want to progress to the last section of this. The lead

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agency in the overall management of the state's biodiversity in relation to feral pests, diseases and weeds was the former Department of Agriculture and Food, which is supposed to then assess how landowners manage that process. Has the department been assessed by the department of agriculture in relation to the management of weeds, feral animals and diseases? I ask that question because the department of agriculture has the capacity to report, and private landowners face fines of up to \$30 000 for failing to control pest species on their property, and government, be it local or state, simply effectively gets named and shamed in the department's annual report. Is the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions aware of any assessment by the department of agriculture in relation to the management of pest species?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** I thank the member for that question. I will ask the acting deputy director general to make a comment.

**Mr DANS:** The department engages with the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development—the former department of agriculture is part of that—through their biosecurity senior officers group. The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development is aware of the programs that we have in place, and my understanding, member, is that we are seen to be compliant with the Biodiversity and Agriculture Management Act 2007. Through that senior officers group we exchange information with them as to nature and extent of the control programs we have in place.

**Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE:** I take the minister to page 207 of budget paper No 2. I congratulate the minister on doing what many others have not been able to do, and that is convince the Minister for Regional Development to keep spending money in the regions. I see that some \$14.2 million has been allocated in this budget year for the Kalbarri skywalk and national park tourist infrastructure, a very good project in my electorate in Kalbarri National Park. Can the minister advise what the status of that project is, because I am hearing locally that there are some challenges with the engineering associated with that project? Is the minister aware of any of those issues, and is the department still confident that the project will proceed as planned?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** I thank the member for the congratulations. I was not sure where he was going—I thought it was going to be a bit of a backhanded compliment!. I am very proud that we are continuing with the Kalbarri skywalk and national park work. The funding, as the member has pointed out, in 2017 is for the completion of road sealing works, the upgrading of tourist infrastructure at the Z Bend and Meanarra Hill, and the development of the Kalbarri skywalk and West Loop. It will also be used towards the production of displays and exhibits to interpret the park's cultural and natural heritage. It is my understanding that the contracts to construct the park infrastructure at the Z Bend and Meanarra Hill was awarded to a Geraldton-based company on 27 July, with works to be completed by the end of the year. I understand final drawings for the skywalk development and West Loop are in preparation, with the tender to be advertised late in 2017. I will ask the acting deputy director general, Mr Peter Dans, if he can elaborate. I think the member said also that he had heard that there were issues locally. I will ask Mr Dans if he can comment on that and also on whether we are on track.

**Mr DANS:** Yes, member, the roading contracts are essentially complete. The contract to develop tourist infrastructure at the Z Bend and Meanarra Hill has been let and I think a Geraldton company has been awarded that contract. That has a notional end date of around the end of this calendar year. The engineering work for the skywalk structures—the walkway that will go out over the gorges—is continuing, as the minister alluded to, with the intention that that will go out to open tender again towards the end of this current calendar year, with a completion time line for the end of the financial year, so mid-2018.

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**Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE:** It will go out to tender again? Can you explain that?

**Mr DANS:** It will go out to tender for the skywalk structures—the actual structures that will go out over the gorges—at the end of this calendar year.

**Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE:** That has not gone to tender yet?

**Mr DANS:** Not for the construction.

**Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE:** Right.

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Member, if I can give a further response, it is being done in stages. A tender is out for the road sealing works and some of the infrastructure at the Z Bend and Meanarra Hill, and there is another tender to go out, but the funding is there, so we will do that, as Mr Dans said, either later this year or early next year.

[3.00 pm]

**Hon COLIN HOLT:** I refer to “Works in Progress” on page 207 and Koombana Park facilities with an estimated cost of \$11.9 million. Can you please describe to me what those works are and what will be completed by the end of 2017–18?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Obviously, member, as a south west representative in this place, we would be aware of the project down in Koombana Bay. The project was designed to occur in two stages. Phase 1 was largely the development of park facilities and rehabilitation of the Koombana Drive site. Phase 2 was another project. Phase 1 works are significantly advanced. These works are due to be completed in January 2018. They include: a new landscaped parkland to link the Leschenault Inlet to Koombana Bay; new walking trails; a playground; artwork and interpretive material about the history and natural environment of the site; and a new lookout. There is also, as part of that phase, boardwalk restoration and a car park for visitors and tour buses. That is what we anticipate being there at the beginning of next year. It will all be finished by then.

**Hon COLIN HOLT:** I take it then that stage 2 of the Koombana Park facilities has been abandoned?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** During the election campaign, the then Labor opposition committed to creating a Bunbury development committee to guide the development of Casuarina harbour, Withers and Glen Iris. What has been announced since then is that that development committee will look at the future use of the Koombana Bay site and work out what will be used there. The previous government had made a commitment in relation to stage 2 and a centre. The government does not believe that this necessarily is the best place to house government staff in Bunbury. The Bunbury development committee will look at future uses of the site but will also look at other potential options of moving government staff to Bunbury.

**Hon COLIN HOLT:** So at this stage, no funding is attributed to shifting parts or the whole of the department to Bunbury?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** That is correct, member. As you would be aware as you have asked me a question on it and I gave you the wrong answer, and I corrected the record, the only money is the \$500 000 set aside for this committee to look into the future of that site. But there is no money in the budget at this stage for the movement of staff to Bunbury.

**Hon COLIN HOLT:** I move to government initiatives on page 198. The fifth dot point states that the department will expand Wellington National Park, near Collie. Will that impact on Forest Products Commission logging coupes when that is expanded; and how is it going to be managed? I guess, have you got any ideas about where it is going to be expanded?

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**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** This again was an election commitment, as you have pointed out, to expand Wellington National Park. We made that commitment but I guess we did not commit to maps at the time—we did not commit to boundaries. What is happening at the moment is the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions is working with other relevant state government agencies, including the Forest Products Commission, to consider a range of environmental, social and economic values associated with the expansion of the reserve system down at Wellington. Certainly, there is a group called Promote Preston that operates in and around Collie. It has been advocating for a large expansion of that park. We have been working with groups like Promote Preston so, a couple of weeks ago down in Collie, I met with the group and I was briefed by them on their suggested expansion of the park. I have also had an initial conversation with the Forest Industries Federation of Western Australia because obviously they are key stakeholders in any expansion. That was an initial conversation. We will consult with both groups moving forward. We are very conscious of the forest management plan. I guess we have to marry the commitment that was made in terms of expansion with the forest management plan and the logging coupes that have been identified by the FPC already. I think, moving forward, in terms of where we are at and when we will finish with it, the consultation will properly commence early in the new year. Some indicative drawings have been done both by Promote Preston and also, I have asked the Department of Parks and Wildlife to start looking at some indicative maps of how we could expand the park. Once they are drawn up, the proper consultation will commence in the year.

**Hon COLIN HOLT:** I wish you good luck because absolutely there was an expectation set when that commitment was made that the expansion of the national park would take in some of those logging coupes, so how you manage that is going to be a big challenge.

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** It is certainly a challenging issue. We are absolutely committed to the expansion of the park. Certainly, Promote Preston has indicated there are a range of coupes that they would like to see added to the park, which are on the logging schedule for the FPC. We are working through those issues. I have had meetings with both the Minister for Forestry and the parliamentary secretary for forestry over the past few weeks. Conversations in government are happening now and the external consultation will happen next year. It is a challenging issue but we are committed to delivering that commitment.

**Hon ADELE FARINA:** My first question is in relation to prescribed burning. You will recall the devastating Waroona and Yarloop bushfire that we had in the south west and my interest in making sure that we keep up the prescribed burning schedule. I note that the budget allocates just over \$45 million for prescribed burning and I would just like you to indicate how that money will enable the department to conduct effective prescribed burning throughout the state but, in particular, in the south west. What targets have been set?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Thank you, member, for your question. I know you, like Hon Colin Holt, as South West members, take a keen interest in our prescribed burning work. As you correctly pointed out, on page 201 of the budget there is an allocation in service summary 9 in relation to prescribed burning and fire management. We have, as I mentioned briefly earlier on, a target that we aspire to for prescribed burning on an annual basis. The target area is, of course, the south west region and we do try to meet that target every year. We continue to pursue the goal of maintaining 45 per cent of DBCA-managed lands in the south west regions with a fuel age of less than six years, so we try to do prescribed burns on 45 per cent of the south west forest area every six years. The extra funding we have had in the last couple of years and this year gives us a greater opportunity to do more community and stakeholder engagement in terms of planning and implementing. Obviously, member, you would be aware that prescribed burning is controversial for a number of factors. Can I say that I fully stand behind it. It is very important to protect lives in the south west, but there are

people and industries like the wine industry, for example, who, if their grapes are tainted, it can have an impact on their stock. The extra money allows us to properly consult and engage with stakeholders in planning and implementing our prescribed burning program. It also facilitates cooperation between us and other landowners and stakeholders like local government and traditional owners in terms of the planned fires across jurisdictional boundaries.

[3.10 pm]

As you would be aware, member, I guess we are dependent on the weather. Obviously, on certain days we cannot burn. If it is a wet day, we cannot burn. It needs to be dry for seven days, I think, before we can burn that area. We obviously have to be conscious of wind conditions and other weather factors. Thanks to the funding that we have in the budget for the south west region, to date we have prescribed burned about 33 000 hectares, which compares with about 27 500 hectares at the same time last year. We are on the way to our target. We are doing better this year than we were last year, noting the fact that the weather plays havoc with our plans. I say again that prescribed burning is very important for keeping our south west community safe, saving lives and livestock. I do not resile from the fact that we do this because it is in the best interests of the state. It is also a fact that Aboriginal groups, over tens of thousands of years, used similar methods to keep the land safe. Hopefully, that answers your question. I could talk about this all day, but hopefully I have given you the information that you required in the answer.

**Hon ADELE FARINA:** Also on page 201, under “Service Summary” is service 6, “Conserving Habitats, Species and Ecological Communities”. The Auditor General made a number of recommendations aimed at improving management of threatened species in his recent report, which was tabled on 6 September 2017. What will the government do to address the continued declines in threatened species?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Thank you for the question, member. You are correct in stating that the Auditor General did present a follow-up report to Parliament in the last two months. Since becoming minister, quite a lot of good work has been happening across government in relation to threatened species, and I only have to look at some of the work that has been done by Perth Zoo, for example. Maria Finnigan is here from Perth Zoo. We are doing great work in the threatened species space in relation to the western swan tortoise and numbats—a range of really good work. I am pleased to say that right across the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, we are doing good work in relation to threatened species. It is not only in the parks and wildlife service area.

In relation to this area, I have made progress in the development of new biodiversity conservation regulations, which were required as a result of the Biodiversity Conservation Act that was passed in this place a couple of years ago. Those regulations are a priority so that we can ensure that we use the powers of the modern act to better protect threatened species, ecological communities and critical habitat. The new legislation provides a mechanism to formally list ecological communities as threatened but also to formally protect habitat that is critical to the survival of threatened species in Western Australia. It also greatly increases the penalties for the illegal taking of native species in the state. We also continue to work hard to protect our state’s unique wildlife but also our special native plants, including those that are threatened. We are moving to work more in partnership with research institutions and also community organisations and industry in protecting our threatened species in the state. Right across the state, we are working with mining companies. In fact, not only Perth Zoo is doing great work in the threatened species space, but also the Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority, whose scientists are working in collaboration with environmental officers from some of our big resource companies to ensure that when those resource companies come into

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contact with threatened species, be it flora or fauna, some science work is done to see whether plants can be moved et cetera.

Right across government we are doing work. The Auditor General put out his report. We are doing a range of things to make sure that we are dealing with those recommendations but also ensuring that threatened species in the state are protected into the future. That is probably a fulsome answer, if the member is happy with that.

**The CHAIR:** Members, if you could just indulge me, I have not been asking questions from the chair for obvious reasons. In budget paper No 2 on page 201, there is a fairly significant increase in the forward estimates for 2019–20 and 2020–21 in this area—line item 6. Minister, what has been planned for that or why is that increase in there?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Certainly, Madam Chair. Let me get that right. That was page 201 under “Service Summary”, service 6, “Conserving Habitats, Species and Ecological Communities”. There is the \$89 million figure for the 2019–20 forward estimate. I will ask Mr Mark Neilson, who is the manager of strategy and reform, to provide an answer to that.

**Mr NEILSON:** The increase from 2018–19 to 2019–20 against service 6 reflects a focus in these budget statements for 2017–18 and 2018–19. The increase of \$5 million against service 6 actually nets off against a decrease of roughly \$5 million in service 5. Our focus has been on this year and the next year. The budgets for 2019–20 and 2020–21 are indicative at this stage. The apparent increase of \$5 million actually nets off against a reduction in another service.

**The CHAIR:** So it rounds it out.

**Mr NEILSON:** It rounds out.

**Hon MARTIN PRITCHARD:** Before I ask my question, because a few of them have been dealt with, I take you back to the ranger program on page 197 of budget paper No 2, volume 1, under “Election Commitments”. Under the “Aboriginal Ranger Program”, it has \$4 million a year into the out years, but I thought you mentioned \$20 million. I am just wondering whether I am confused.

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** In fact, you are correct, member. A \$20 million commitment was made as part of the election commitment. That was \$20 million over five years, so it was \$4 million a year. Because the next year does not appear in these budget documents, that amount does not appear before today but it has been identified and it is there.

**Hon MARTIN PRITCHARD:** Thank you, minister. That clarified it. I was just a bit confused.

With regards to page 201, getting back to the “Service Summary”, service 4, “Visitor Services and Public Programs Provided in the Swan and Canning Riverpark”, is that the line item where money has been put aside for the health of the river? Maybe it is just anecdotal but I note that there have not been any blue-green algae blooms in recent years. Is that the line item where you look after the health of the rivers; and, if so, what sort of money do you put aside for that?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Yes, I am advised that this is the line item that refers to the health of the river. The Swan and Canning River system is definitely a jewel in the crown for the Perth metropolitan area. Algal blooms are an ongoing issue; albeit, you are right—we are not experiencing the same issues now as we experienced, say, 10 years ago. But from time to time, it is the case that, thanks to the weather again, we do experience algal blooms in the river. I think earlier in the year—perhaps it was February—there was a deluge of rain in the hills and we did have an issue with an algal bloom in the Swan River.

[3.20 pm]

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From time to time, as a result of nutrients that are flushed into the Swan–Canning River system—I should not blame the wheatbelt while the Nationals are not here—particularly from the wheatbelt, we experience issues. Having said that, there has been over the past few years, and indeed continues to be, significant effort put into managing the water quality, particularly the oxygen in the river. I am not sure if the member is aware that there are two oxygenation plants on the Swan River—one at Caversham and one at Guildford—and two plants on the Canning River near the Kent Street weir. That is an investment of approximately \$1 million per year. Those oxygenation plants help the Swan River ecosystem by artificially adding oxygen to help keep the river alive. It is a constant risk, and while we have been lucky over the past few months, there was an issue in relation to algal blooms earlier in the year, and, depending on the weather moving forward, it could happen again. Work is being done, and I am very proud of the work being done by the Swan River Trust, part of the DBCA, but it is an ongoing issue, partly because of the weather, but also the nutrients that are washed into the system.

**Hon MARTIN PRITCHARD:** What money is put aside? Is it segregated? Can you give me an amount that is put aside for the welfare and health of the river, as opposed to the services on the river banks?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** I do not have that information at hand. It is probably in a few different buckets, but if you would like us to, we can do some work and provided it by way of supplementary information.

*[Supplementary Information No B2.]*

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** I refer to page 199 of budget paper No 2, and the forest management dot point. The first dot point mentions sustainable timber management. Do we have a current estimation of the volume of harvest of particularly jarrah, but perhaps also karri, that would be considered sustainable with the current reserve boundaries?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Obviously, we have a “Forest Management Plan 2014–2023” that identifies the sustainable yield moving forward, but perhaps I might ask the acting deputy director general, Mr Dans, if he can further elaborate on your question.

**Mr DANS:** The forest management plan sets out the sustainable yield for both jarrah and karri sawlogs. The jarrah yield, from memory, is in the order of 130 000 cubic metres per year. The karri yield escapes me, but I think it is a shade under 100 000 cubic metres; it might be 80 000 cubic metres per year.

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** If additional reserves are created outside the process of the 10-year forest management plan, how do you rejig the sustainable measure to take that into account?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Before I hand over to Mr Dans, again, who can provide some further answers, I guess this has been an issue over the past 10 years.

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** Twenty years plus.

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Certainly since 2014, because there have been a number of parks created in Western Australia. Governments of all persuasions continue to expand the conservation reserve system, but I will ask Mr Dans if he can comment specifically about your question.

**Mr DANS:** If there were a scenario in which additional reserves were established and removed additional areas of state forest and made them unavailable for timber harvesting under the forest management plan, there would need to be, I guess, a recalculation of the one-year and three-year rolling harvest plans, to source the wood from alternative coupes, so that the ones that were locked

up in a reserve remain off the harvest schedule. There is a fairly complex set of mathematics and yield forecasting that would need to be redone if that were indeed the case.

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** This might be one that we have to seek additional information on. Does the government have a measure of the changing average bole size, of particularly jarrah trees, over a historical period? Do we have a measure of the average bole size going back in five year increments over the last 15 to 20 years? I have usurped the adviser. The assumption is that, over a period of time, we have generally seen smaller diameter trees being harvested as the older trees are removed from the harvest process. Do we have an empirical measure of that, as opposed to merely anecdotal evidence, that we could actually rely on to see the impact of average bole size on that harvest? Bole is the thickness of the tree. Is there a measurement that we can rely on to determine future policy in this area, and, if there is, can it be provided?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Thank you for the question, member. We certainly do not have that information with us this afternoon, and we are not quite sure if it does exist. However, can I indicate that we will go back and check, and if it exists, we will provide it. I think that is possible, if you are happy with that.

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** I am happy to take supplementary information on that.

*[Supplementary Information No B3.]*

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** If it exists, we are happy to provide it, but if it does not exist, and it does not take too much work, we will work out how we might pull the information together. If it does not exist, and it is lots of work, I am not promising to get it for you, if that is okay.

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** That is a reasonable answer.

**The CHAIR:** Even though it is an important topic, can I also just remind the member that the hearings are about the budget and the financial management of the state?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** I think what the member was referring to was forest management on page 199.

**The CHAIR:** That is drawing a very long bow. The honourable member has one more question.

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** I have one very short one, and it just relates to something the minister said earlier in relation to the 89 million hectares of unallocated crown land that the department is, basically, stuck with the management of. Does the management of unallocated land have a specific budget attached to it, and, if it does, can we have an indication of what that budget might be?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** No, it does not. The line item I was referring to at the time related to invasive pests, weeds and species, but what I said at the time was that, within available resources, we manage all those lands. We do not have a specific line item, so I guess it depends on regional priorities. Regional offices may well choose to look after different parts of the land at different times, but there is no specific line item.

**Hon KYLE McGINN:** My question refers to the second dot point on page 198 of budget paper No 2, with respect to specific industries impacting the agency—government initiatives. I know the Fitzroy River national park will be created and jointly managed between the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions and traditional owners. Can the minister advise how the Fitzroy River will be protected, and what budget has been allocated for the establishment on management of the national park?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Can I start off with the second part, in relation to the establishment and management of the park? That will be funded through an ongoing investment of \$1.3 million, and that is funded through a reprioritisation—so it is existing funds that we have got that we have



chosen to move across towards this project. Being, like you, a member for Mining and Pastoral Region, I know that this is an area of interest to you. We made a similar commitment in the 2013 election, and then we made one again in the recent election. The commitment that we made was that we would create the Fitzroy River national park, extending the existing Geikie Gorge National Park along the Fitzroy River to the north, and then along the Margaret River to the east. I think you know that area quite well, member.

We are committed to working with local traditional owners in particular, but as we roll out this election commitment, we are committed to consulting. Although the commitment is not a surprise to anybody, it has been around for a little while, there has been some concern expressed by a couple of pastoralists about what the creation of this park would mean for them. I had initial conversations with the Pastoralists and Graziers Association some months ago, but we will talk to them again as we properly start our consultation in the new year.

[3.30 pm]

I am just trying to think if I missed anything in terms of your question. The other point I was going to make is that funding for the park will also deliver about six FTE jobs annually for Aboriginal rangers. They will not be rangers under their Aboriginal ranger program. I think these will be rangers who are employed by the Parks and Wildlife Service as part of the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions. Hopefully, that answered all your questions.

**Hon KYLE McGINN:** One part of it is: what budget has been allocated?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Sorry, I did say that, but I will say that again. That was \$1.3 million annual funding in relation to that project. That came from a reprioritisation of existing funds in the Kimberley science and conservation strategy that has been moved across for this initiative. It essentially fits in with the conservation strategy for the Kimberley, so we are choosing to spend the money in this area.

**Hon ADELE FARINA:** I refer to page 202, outcomes and key effectiveness indicators and the line item second from the bottom “Proportion of South West bushfires contained to less than two hectares”. The target for 2017–18 is 75 per cent but the estimated actual in 2016–17 is 83 per cent. Is it not time that we increased the target and continue to improve our game, rather than keep it at 75 per cent?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** To be honest I am not sure how that target of 75 per cent was arrived at, but as the member would be aware, the outcomes and key effectiveness indicators included in our budget are done in conjunction with the Auditor General. In relation to that 75 per cent I might ask whether the acting deputy director general, Mr Peter Dans, can give you an answer in relation to those figures—the 75 per cent and 83 per cent.

**Mr DANS:** The 83 per cent that was achieved in 2016–17 is largely as a result of the very, very mild fire season that we had during the 2016–17 summer. You will recall we had a flooding event in Perth and widespread rain right over the south west land division. I think the area of DBCA land burnt was something in the order of 7 000 hectares and that compares with about 96 000 hectares in 2015–16 largely due to the Waroona fire and 178 000 in 2014–15 largely due to the Lower Hotham and Northcliffe bushfires. A very mild season allowed that 83 per cent figure to be achieved.

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** If I can just ask, again I think this is probably part of the same question: where did the 75 per cent target come from and how was it arrived at?

**Mr DANS:** I think that has largely been developed as a repeatable performance measure. It has been in place for a number of years. It is one that the OAG likes. It has been standardised over a fairly long period of time.

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**The CHAIR:** OAG being the Office of the Auditor General.

**Mr DANS:** Yes.

**Hon COLIN TINCKNELL:** I apologise, Madam Chair, I did say I was done.

**The CHAIR:** You just wanted to trick me, I know. You just wanted to catch me out.

**Hon COLIN TINCKNELL:** I am hoping that this is the right place for this question. I refer to budget paper No 2, page 212 and footnote (b). Footnote (b) refers to the statement of cash flows. Other than the Financial Management Act 2006, which acts of Parliament permit departments to retain certain receipts? Is that best left for the Treasurer?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** I am going to ask Mr Neilson if he has a response to it. If we do not, we could take it on notice. But given our next session is with Treasury, if we have not got an answer now, we might ask it later. If we do not get an answer later, put it on notice later. I will ask Mr Neilson to attempt to answer that. Member, do you mind saying it one more time?

**Hon COLIN TINCKNELL:** I will read out the complete question. Statement of cash flows—other than the Financial Management Act 2006, which that footnote refers to, which acts of Parliament permit the department to retain certain receipts?

**Mr NEILSON:** Generally speaking, different acts that impose fees or charges or permit the imposition of fees and charges will permit agencies in some cases to directly retain the revenues. That varies on a case-by-case basis across the entire spectrum of acts in place. The FMA sits across the top and provides overall mechanism for departments to retain any revenues that are not specifically permitted to be retained under individual acts or used for particular purposes under individual acts. It could be a very large number of acts, I would think.

**Hon COLIN TINCKNELL:** Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Are you comfortable with that?

**Hon COLIN TINCKNELL:** It is just something I was not aware of, but, yes, that is great.

**The CHAIR:** It is very important—good question.

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** I will be very quick, Madam Chair.

**The CHAIR:** I know your promises.

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** That is dangerous—divide!

Minister, I refer to page 198, government initiatives and the second dot point on the establishment of the Fitzroy River national park. I simply could not find a dollar budgeted for the development of that proposal. Is it a separate line item in the budget that I have missed or is it to be absorbed?

**The CHAIR:** It is a question that Hon Kyle McGinn just asked.

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** I know it is getting late in the day and we do not always hear what everyone else is asking.

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** It might have been the one I stepped out for.

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** You may well have been away on urgent parliamentary business. I can answer that, member. The establishment and the management of the park will be funded through an ongoing investment of \$1.3 million annually. The money comes from a reprioritisation. There was money set aside under the Kimberley science and conservation strategy. In fact, the creation of this park actually fits in nicely with the ethos of the Kimberley science and conservation strategy. We have just moved money across from the strategy and put it towards the establishment and the management of the park.

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**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** That is fine. The final one refers to page 199, science and conservation and the second dot point on the Biodiversity Conservation Act and the regulations. Have you got a time frame for the regulations potentially?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** It is a bone of contention, member, between myself and my agency at times! Not really; I am just joking. This is a priority for me and a priority for government. The agency is working on those regulations at the moment. I will ask the director general to give us an update on the time line, but it is my understanding that those draft regulations will go out for consultation early in 2018. I think that is the case, but I will ask the director general to provide a more fulsome response.

[3.40 pm]

**Mr WEBB:** The minister is correct. The aim is to provide draft regulations and ministerial guidelines in the early part of 2018, with the intention to have those completed, after community consultation—as the minister has requested—by mid-2018. We are currently in the process of commencing our consultations. There are nearly 40 groups that we will be consulting with in the development of those regulations and ministerial conditions.

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** If I can add to that further, they are a priority of mine and, hence, they are a priority for the agency. We are working to make sure that we all meet those time lines because they are important.

**Hon ADELE FARINA:** My question is in relation to the proposed changes to marine parks being mooted by the federal government. I would like to get your views on those proposed changes and how those proposed changes might impact on the budget.

**The CHAIR:** That is the magic word.

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Thank you, member. The questions are getting harder as the day goes on, let me tell you.

**Hon COLIN TINCKNELL:** We are tough down in the south west.

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** I know.

The decision by the federal government to change the boundaries of their marine parks is a controversial issue and has created lots of conversation, particularly in the south west and by conservationists and some environmental non-government organisations in the state. Can I say that the matter of the boundaries is a matter for the feds. My preference is that we have more expansive commonwealth marine parks, but obviously the federal government are the masters or the mistresses of their own destiny. In terms of the impact on state marine parks and the likely costs of it, we will have to take that on notice, if you do not mind. We will provide that information—that is, the cost to the state associated with the federal government's changes to commonwealth marine park boundaries.

[*Supplementary Information No B4.*]

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Further to that, if I can just ask the director general to make a comment.

**Mr WEBB:** Just by way of clarification, minister, I was wondering whether we could just look at the impact rather than specific costs—the impacts of the federal government's decision on state government marine parks rather than just the cost of that. This is broader than just costs.

**Hon ADELE FARINA:** I want to know the impacts but also the budgetary impacts that that may cause.

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Member, we will provide as much as we can without doing a proper research project, but whatever is available, we can do. Certainly, we can look at the cost implications

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but it might just be ballpark figures, member, if you are okay with that, rather than a drill down, which will probably take quite a bit of work.

**Hon MARTIN PRITCHARD:** On page 207 under “Asset Investment Program” is the Zoological Parks Authority. I am old enough to remember looking at the lion enclosures and moving to the savannah. I notice that there are some upgrades to the lion exhibit and also some work being done on the water infrastructure management project. I was wondering if you could give me a brief outline of what is planned in that space.

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Thanks, member, for your interest. I will answer some of that and I will also ask Ms Maria Finnigan to answer part of the question. In relation to the lion exhibit upgrade, it was my pleasure on 1 October—it was my son’s third birthday—to officially open stage 1 of the upgrade to the lion enclosure. It was opened with much fanfare, particularly on behalf of Shinyanga. Shinyanga is the female lion at Perth Zoo. Shinyanga was able to come into the enclosure for the first time and perform—or eat meat—in front of delighted children at the zoo. That was stage 1. Stage 2 of the upgrade is being worked on at the moment. Again, Ms Finnigan can correct me if I am wrong, but stage 2 work will commence early in the new year. It is scheduled to finish by the end of 2018. I have probably got that right. In relation to the water treatment element of your question, I will ask Ms Finnigan if she can address that issue, please.

**Ms FINNIGAN:** The second stage of the lion exhibit replaces the existing fence and will interconnect with the stage A lion exhibit. It will increase the space twofold and enable Perth Zoo to undertake a breeding program. The significant component, coming forward, of the water project is that the wetlands and the main lake will be interconnected. The water circulation and the filtration at the Zoo will be better utilised.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Ms Finnigan.

That concludes this hearing. On behalf of the committee, I thank you for your attendance today. The committee will forward the transcript of evidence, which includes the questions you have taken on notice highlighted on the transcript, within seven days of the hearing. Responses to these questions are 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 via the new electronic lodging system on the POWAnet site by 12 noon on Monday, 23 October 2017. Once again, I thank you for your attendance today.

**Hearing concluded at 3.46 pm**

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