

PUBLIC
18/8/14



ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS COMMITTEE
QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

Wednesday, 23 July 2014

Department of Parks and Wildlife

Question No. 1: The Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations asked -

We refer to Budget Paper Two, page 663-664, "Outcomes and Key Effectiveness Indicators" – The portion of terrestrial sub-bioregions with greater than 15% reservation is 22.2% and this is the 2014-15 Budget Target. The notes state that there has not been, nor is there expected to be, any significant land reservations to change this figure, and ask –

- a) *Why is the Budget Target for 'Proportion of terrestrial sub-bioregions with greater than 15% reservation' the same as the current estimated actual, 22.2%, given that a representative conservation reserve system should include each sub-bioregion?*

Answer: Significant reservation can occur in a sub-bioregion before the proportion of a terrestrial sub-bioregion reserved is greater than 15 per cent. The Budget Target is the same as the Estimated Actual because it is not expected that there will be sufficient additional reservation in 2014-15 for any sub-bioregion to meet the 15 per cent target.

- b) *Please provide a breakdown of the percentage of terrestrial sub-bioregions with less than 15% reservation, including the percentage of reservations for each sub-bioregion.*

Answer: Sub-bioregions with less than 15 per cent reservation (as at November 2013) are listed below.

Sub-bioregion	Reservation (%)
Katanning	1.66
Merredin	1.88
Cape Range	3.44
Wooramel	3.83
Hart	0.00
Mount Eliza	7.89
Pentecost	6.01
Mann-Musgrave Block	0.00
Eastern Goldfield	3.82
Mardabilla	12.80
Fitzroy Trough	1.68
Pindanland	0.57
Ashburton	2.85

Augustus	2.53
Carnegie	0.00
Geraldton Hills	13.89
Dune Field	0.00
Lateritic Plain	14.52
Mackay	4.47
McLarty	0.14
Central	9.05
Kintore	0.00
Maralinga	9.59
Shield	7.01
Hampton	10.99
Northern Jarrah Forest	10.06
Trainor	1.42
Western Mallee	9.97
Eastern Murchison	1.37
Western Murchison	0.06
Mitchell	13.57
Nullarbor Plain	4.49
South Kimberley Interzone	1.74
Chichester	3.95
Fortescue	0.55
Hamersley	12.88
Roebourne	3.71
Dandaragan Plateau	7.34
Perth	11.88
Tanami Desert	0.00
Keep	6.12
Tallering	2.14

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ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS COMMITTEE

QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE SUPPLIMENTARY INFORMATION

Wednesday, 23 July 2014

Department of Parks and Wildlife

Question No. 2: The Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations asked -

We refer to Budget Paper Two, page 667, Employee benefits increased from \$168.7 million (derived) in 2012-13 to \$180.5 million in 2013-14, before declining to \$175.6 million in 2014-15. However, the number of full-time equivalents has declined from 1,602 in 2012-13 to 1,560 in 2014-15. Will you explain why the employee benefits increased in 2013-14, while the number of staff declined? Is this a product of using derived estimates for 2012-13?

Answer: Employee benefits increased in 2013-14 due to two factors. One factor is the increase in award rates of pay and this factor is reflected in the increase in 2012-13 actual of \$168.7 million to 2013-14 budget of \$177.0 million. The second factor is the departure of employees who accepted voluntary severance packages which is reflected in the difference between 2013-14 budget of \$177.0 million and 2013-14 estimated actual of \$180.5 million. The decline in FTE from 2012-13 actual of 1602 to 2014-15 estimate of 1560 reflects the effect of voluntary severances in 2013-14.

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ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS COMMITTEE
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Wednesday, 23 July 2014

Department of Parks and Wildlife

Question No. 3: The Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations asked -

In the Legislative Assembly Estimates Hearing the Minister stated the Department had a number of approaches to managing cane toads, including researching biological or scientific methods to control the cane toad population. Can you please state the funding allocated to researching the biological control of cane toads in 2014-15 and through the forward estimates?

Answer: Subsequent to the Legislative Assembly Estimates Hearing and following a review of the first five years of the State cane toad strategy's operation, the Minister for Environment released an updated *Cane Toad Strategy for Western Australia 2014-2019* on 26 June 2014. The new strategy recognises that the movement of cane toads across northern Western Australia cannot be stopped using any of the methods currently available and refocuses on preventing cane toads from establishing new satellite populations and managing the impacts of cane toads on native wildlife.

Potential biological controls for cane toads have been investigated previously. The Department of Parks and Wildlife supported recent research into lungworms conducted by the University of Sydney. However, it was identified that lungworms also have a negative impact on native frog species, therefore it is not appropriate for use. The department is currently exploring with the University of Sydney, future opportunities to investigate prospective biological controls through a grant proposal.

Since the cane toad strategy was released in 2009, the State Government has invested more than \$7.8 million in on-ground activities and research to help manage the impact of cane toads. Existing resources will be used to implement the revised *Cane Toad Strategy for Western Australia*, integrating efforts with the Government's \$81.5 million investment in the Kimberley through the Kimberley Science and Conservation Strategy.

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ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS COMMITTEE

QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

Wednesday, 23 July 2014

Department of Parks and Wildlife

Question No. 4: The Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations asked -

We refer to Budget Paper Two, page 668-669, the level of current cash assets is decreasing from \$7.8 million in 2012-13 (derived) to \$173,000 by 2017-18. Cash assets at the end of the reporting period average \$80.4 million over five years, which includes restricted cash assets (current and non-current). Is the Department concerned by the decreasing level of current cash assets? Does the Department have any views on what an appropriate cash buffer for the organisation may be?

Answer: The Department is not concerned by the forecast decreasing level of current cash assets.

Department of Treasury guidelines provide for agencies to have a working capital balance of up to 5% of annual expenditure. The Department of Parks and Wildlife considers these guidelines to be appropriate and aims to minimise its working capital requirements within the constraints of efficient and effective financial management.

The decrease in the forward estimates of current cash assets from \$1,073,000 in 2016-17 to \$173,000 in 2017-18 reflects a forecast transfer of \$900,000 to restricted cash in non-current assets which is shown to increase by that amount in 2017-18 relative to 2016-17. The forecast transfer relates to accounting arrangements for financial years that contain 27 pay fortnights instead of the more common 26 pay fortnights.

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ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS COMMITTEE

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Wednesday, 23 July 2014

Department of Parks and Wildlife

Question No. 5: The Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations asked -

In the Legislative Assembly Estimated Hearing on 22 May 2014 the Department discussed the Voluntary Separation Scheme and frontline staff, commenting that there were a few people in field-based areas who were generally getting older and were unable to do tasks suitable for fire fighting, for example? How is the Department planning to deal with an aging workforce and issues such as older field-based staff being unable to do tasks such as fire fighting in the future.

Answer: In the 2012-13 budget, the Government provided an additional \$32.9 million over four years for fire management. One important initiative funded by this additional allocation was the Fire Management Development Program which is designed to develop future fire managers in the Department. It will assist in fulfilling observation 16 of the 2010 Ferguson Review through the development of a fire management staff succession process to minimise the loss of core fire management skills and experience in the future and provide a planned approach to development of prospective fire management staff.

In addition, the Department's *Workforce and Diversity Plan 2014-2107* has recently been endorsed by the Public Sector Commission and contains a number of strategies to assist in the attraction, retention and development of employees with particular focus on key areas including fire service. Incorporated within this is the implementation of succession management plans in critical areas to address key workforce planning issues including the aging workforce. In relation to older field-based staff being unable to undertake firefighting in the future, consideration will be given to strategic roles that utilise their skills and experience to assist in the training and development of new and aspiring conservation employees.

