

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND
FINANCIAL OPERATIONS**

2014–15 BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARINGS

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE
TAKEN AT PERTH
WEDNESDAY, 23 JULY 2014**

**SESSION TWO
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND WILDLIFE**

Members

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

Hearing commenced at 1.03 pm

Mr JAMES SHARP

Director General, examined:

Mr PETER DANS

Director, Regional and Fire Management Services, examined:

Dr MARGARET BYRNE

Director, examined:

Dr JOHN BYRNE

Director, Corporate Services, examined:

Mr PETER SHARP

Director, Parks and Visitor Services, examined:

Mr PAUL BRENNAN

Acting Director, Forest and Ecosystem Management Division, 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. Firstly, if I can ask the witnesses if they have read, understood and signed a document headed "Information for Witnesses"?

The Witnesses: Yes.

The CHAIR: Thank you.

Witnesses need to be aware of the severe penalties that 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 the 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.

Hon RICK MAZZA: I refer to page 662 of budget paper No 2 and the line item "Forest Management", under the heading "Service Summary" for which there is a sum of some \$50-odd million per year. I do not know whether I am looking in the right place, but is that where the costs for prescribed fire burning are allocated?

Mr J. Sharp: The costs for fire management are actually apportioned across the three services—forest management, the wildlife service program and parks and visitor services. It is according to priority in terms of the expenditure. In the case of forest management, either protecting forests or dealing with silvicultural burns, and in wildlife, whether it is being used as a management tool in terms of managing regeneration biodiversity threats. In parks and visitor services, it is allocated within that service area to deal with park infrastructure or protecting infrastructure, so it does not appear as a line item, although the entire output as far as the two parts of fire are concerned includes

both suppressing wildfire and prescribed burning to mitigate against the impact of fire, managed by the director of regional services and fire.

Hon RICK MAZZA: With the prescribed burning quota, if you like, for the year, how many hectares are targeted for burning?

Mr J. Sharp: There is a target for the south west of 200 000 hectares per annum.

Hon RICK MAZZA: How many hectares were burnt last season?

Mr J. Sharp: We do it by financial year. I will ask the director of regional fire management services. It was in the order of 76 000, but I will stand corrected.

Mr P. Dans: The final figure to 30 June 2014 was 78 234.

Hon RICK MAZZA: All right, so way under —

Mr P. Dans: Significantly under that notional target, yes.

Hon RICK MAZZA: What are some of the things that are prohibiting reaching the 200 000 hectare target?

Mr P. Dans: There are a couple of long-term trends. The drying climate in the south west has substantially narrowed our window of opportunity. What we want is a slow wetting down of forest fuels in our wet period, in the middle of winter, and then a gradual drying of forest fuels, so we have some predictable, gradual drying rates of fuels, so we can pick certain areas that have the correct fuel and soil moisture to undertake burns safely. When we have extremely dry winters, we do not get that opportunity—that extended window of soil and fuel drying—so that has limited us a little bit over the past decade; that is a longer term trend. In the shorter term, as the member is probably aware, after the Margaret River bushfire, Mick Keelty's recommendations included a complete overhaul of our prescribed burn planning and implementation system to bring it into compliance with the international standard for risk management. That was a substantial overhaul and it has resulted in a little bit of re-learning systems and processes, and there is a lot more emphasis on the identification and development of contingencies for the various risks that might be presented in a prescribed burn. It has taken our staff a little while to become familiar with that new system. It is a change from the way they have been doing it for the past two or three decades, but that has bedded in well, and the 78 000 hectares that we did in 2013–14 was substantially better than the achievement in 2012–13.

[1.10 pm]

Hon RICK MAZZA: Would it be fair to say, with the drying climate, that the risk of wildfire is probably greater than it has been in past years?

Mr P. Dans: It would be fair to say that, with the drying climate, the proportion of fuel in the south west that is, I suppose, above seven years of age—that is, the litter in the leaves, twigs and branches that is older than seven years since the last fire—is higher than it has been for the past decade.

Hon RICK MAZZA: Does the department have a program for trying to achieve its 200 000 hectare limit per year? As I understand it, it has fallen short of the 200 000 hectares for a number of years now. Are there moves afoot to bring that up to a situation where it can reach those targets?

Mr J. Sharp: Before Mr Dans responds to that, I understand that we achieved that target three seasons ago—perhaps four seasons ago.

Mr P. Dans: It was achieved in 2010–11—212 000 hectares.

Mr J. Sharp: So it has been achieved within the last four years, but we have a distinct program that has two elements. It is about reaching the overall target and about reaching the highest risks within the target as well. Mr Dans can elaborate on that.

Mr P. Dans: We will take every opportunity to safely undertake prescribed burns, and that includes right through winter. Traditionally, it has just been autumn and spring, but we will now take every opportunity right through winter. We have burns in July already at the back of Dwellingup. We are increasingly required to move away from just broadacre hectares. That is a performance measure that was put in place in the mid-1980s by the then Department of Conservation and Land Management submission to a ministerial review of prescribed burning that was done back at that time. What we are finding now with the fragmentation, rural subdivision and the like is that it is not just about hectares; it is about the location of the burns. They might only be small burns—20, 50, 100 hectares—but their strategic importance in providing protection to infrastructure and communities is extremely high. We are in a process at the moment of developing some alternative performance indicators—we will not completely abandon raw hectares—but will provide a little more context as to the value of the burns in minimising risks to communities and valuable infrastructure and the like.

Hon RICK MAZZA: I refer to the program to do with caravan and camping initiatives that the department is undertaking, which is a good thing. It is the first dot point on page 662 of budget paper No 2, under the heading “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency”. What sort of program do you have in place for more caravan and camping locations in this next financial year?

Mr J. Sharp: The program itself runs out over the next four years and the commitment is to 450 extra sites across the south west and midwest. Mr Sharp might be able to outline in more detail what this program might be.

Mr P. Sharp: The Parks for People caravan and camping action plan that is funded through the royalties for regions program is a four-year program. We are undertaking some developments at several parks as we speak. We are doing planning at several other parks as well. Work is currently underway in Lane Poole, at Nanga. You are probably familiar with that destination; it is a very popular camping area. We will be developing for large-scale caravans at that particular place, and we are anticipating finalising that development this financial year. It has been underway for a year or two. We are undertaking work at Conto Field in Leeuwin–Naturaliste National Park. We also have work underway at Logue Brook, or Lake Brockman, and we have other works in train at Black Point, down on the south coast, and at Shannon. We are also undertaking planning work at Credo, and Cape Range also has some works underway this financial year.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: That dot point states that \$2.6 million was allocated 2013–14 for this initiative. Are you able, by way of supplementary, to provide an outline of where that money was spent?

Mr P. Sharp: We spent some money at Dwellingup, in Lane Poole, and we expended some money in Cape Range National Park. That was the bulk of that money, plus planning money for the front-end works for the other locations I was talking about.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Can I get a breakdown, by way of supplementary, of where that \$2.6 million was spent?

[Supplementary Information No B1.]

The CHAIR: Will these facilities for large caravans be on a booking basis or on a first-come first-served basis? How will they be allocated, and will there be maximum lengths of stay? How are you going to stop people basically parking their caravan and spending three months there? How does that work?

Mr J. Sharp: In terms of larger caravans—Peter Sharp can elaborate—we generally have not provided that sort of facility, unless it has been done through a leasehold property. We are accepting that, amongst the increasing demand that came out of the parliamentary committee that looked at caravanning and camping and recommended that something be done to provide further opportunities because they were shrinking, we also needed to include, in the provisions that came

out of that, provisions for caravans as well. This is one of our newer ventures into providing, outside of leasehold caravan parks, that sort of facility. Our regulations provide for moving people on after a limited period of stay. In terms of online booking, and Peter will be able to elaborate, we have moved into online booking. It is not comprehensive across all parks and all areas where we have campgrounds, but it is being expanded as we speak. Peter can outline that. We have online booking but not for all sites. We have provisions in regulations for moving people on; there is a limited time of stay.

Mr P. Sharp: The caravan and camping review that was undertaken showed that we needed to address the issue of a shortage, and we indicated to that committee that we would endeavour to do that, and identify land that we could develop. One of the concerns was that people with larger rigs were being squeezed out. Also, there has been a trend over time for people to buy bigger and bigger caravans or mobile homes. Traditionally, a lot of our parks have not been designed for large-scale rigs. That is what we are addressing in Lane-Poole. With regard to the booking arrangements, it is a part of the Parks for People caravan and camping action plan that we are rolling out an online booking system. That currently applies at six of our parks, and we are bedding it down and trialling it. There are some glitches, but we are bedding it down, and we will be rolling it out across all the parks where we are doing the development, so that people will be able to get online, make a secure booking and be confident in the knowledge that when they turn up to somewhere like Cape Range National Park they have a site allocated for them, instead of having to line up at the gate.

With regard to ensuring that people do not lob in and occupy a place for three months, under our regulations people are allowed to camp in a place for a maximum of 28 days, and then they have to move on, or during school holidays there is a maximum period of 14 days, and then they have to move on. We have campground hosts who are present in many of our national parks. We have approximately 400 campground hosts who act as our meet-and-greet people on the ground, and they will advise all the people who are staying in the various campsites of the rule sets around them, including the duration of their stay, and they will be hooked into our online booking system, which will also be able to be accessed by way of mobile phones. We are developing that and rolling it out.

The CHAIR: Traditionally, your costs have been quite low in terms of camping costs and the like. Is there any intention to review the cost of these facilities, so that if you used some of these new larger facilities would you be paying a higher rate or would it be the same rate?

[1.20 pm]

Mr P. Sharp: The intention is to keep the price as low as possible. Our current prices for camping, where we have facilities available, are \$10 per adult per night. However, we are aware that where we are expending significant moneys, we may have to review that and do a modest adjustment, but that will be a decision in the future as we see how these campgrounds —

The CHAIR: My concern is, is that going to be an across-the-board increase or is it going to be that where you have put in new facilities for large caravans, they will pay the cost of that and you will keep the camping fees low so that the families who want to just go and put up a tent and are not requiring the same level of infrastructure are not going to end up having to pay higher fees to subsidise these new facilities?

Mr P. Sharp: No, they will not be paying higher fees to subsidise high-end development. Our prices are set by regulation, so the minister actually controls the prices that are set. But if we determine that these large caravan sites are very, very popular and the demand is overwhelming, then use of pricing policy is one way of adjusting demand. So we have to see how that evolves, but we are committed to keeping a low-cost camping experience, because that is the essence of the whole program.

The CHAIR: I get that. I am not encouraging you to increase fees for the top end, but I do not want to see, if there is an additional cost because of this, that then get shared equally across everybody

who is camping there, rather than keeping the fees low for the traditional users and those who are getting the new facilities pay their own way. I think that is where I am coming at.

Mr J. Sharp: The way the fees are currently structured, it really depends on the level of amenity, not the size. So if there is a level of water availability and showers and ablutions there is a differential charge. It really will only ever be on the level of facility that is provided, and that is already provided by the way in which we set those fees.

The CHAIR: But could that then not have an adverse impact of traditional camping grounds suddenly becoming more expensive because you increase the amenity to service these sorts of caravans, and that then forces those fees up compared with what the traditional person going camping would pay?

Mr J. Sharp: The way it is structured and the way it is intended, that will not be the case. Where your tent camping was a low level of facility, that will stay.

Hon RICK MAZZA: I did not quite catch the fees. I heard about a \$10 increase, was it? What are the actual fees for a camper?

Mr P. Sharp: It is \$10 per adult per night where there are facilities, so where there is provision of toilets, showers, camp kitchens et cetera; or \$7.50 per adult where there are no facilities.

Hon RICK MAZZA: What about the caravans? Has there been a price set on that yet for a caravan site?

Mr P. Sharp: There is no discrimination between caravan and tent sites.

Hon RICK MAZZA: Thank you for that.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: I just wanted to know where the new sites were in this financial year. I will take it as supplementary, particularly because we are worried about the time. I would like a brief description about the project and how much each cost, and the time line from when they begin to end.

Mr J. Sharp: Did you want that as a supplementary?

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Yes.

[Supplementary Information No B2.]

Hon RICK MAZZA: The second bullet point talks about volunteer input for the management of terrestrial and marine parks. What qualifies someone to be a volunteer? Is there any sort of, I suppose, education given to them to be a volunteer? And the private conservation organisations, who are they?

Mr J. Sharp: I will start with the volunteers. We have an extensive volunteer program; there is something like over 10 000 people who are registered to volunteer, and then they are allocated tasks or opportunities as they become available. I think the figure last year was in the order—I will stand corrected by Peter Sharp—of 2 700 volunteers who were active throughout the year. They are highly varied across all the businesses that we conduct in the agency. Peter Sharp mentioned there was something like 400 volunteer campground hosts so they would camp at a campground, greet people and just make them feel secure and safe. They would be linked to a ranger, so that if issues emerge they are also a safety conduit, but they are about making people feel comfortable, safe and welcomed. We have an abundance of people who volunteer for that. The herbarium, for instance, is supported by something like 100 volunteers; they are either retired people or people who have time and have botanical skills who actually work in cataloguing plants. But each of those groups receives their own training, and they get specific training related to their tasks. So campground hosts do, herbarium volunteers do, and there is a wildlife carer program where they get trained. What is consistent across that is we do provide them, as volunteers should have, with rights as well as some responsibilities. They are treated as employees for all intents and purpose in terms of codes of

conduct and behaviour and all those sorts of things but, importantly, they are also covered by insurance. In all their activities we would provide insurance coverage for them across all their activities. There was a second part to the question?

Hon RICK MAZZA: The second part of the question was: you have there “private conservation organisations”. Who are they?

Mr J. Sharp: We work with groups such as Australian Wildlife Conservancy, which we have a program of jointly managing with in the Kimberley; that is, we work with them both at a formal and informal level. There is a whole wide range of groups with interests, such as the Friends of the Western Ground Parrot, which is a conservation group we are doing a specific program with on the recovery of the western ground parrot. There is a wide range of them. They are either at local level or a state level, or AWC is at a national level, and we have programs or activities where people join in in either recovery, research or other activities.

Hon RICK MAZZA: Would it be possible to get a list of the different tasks that volunteers undertake with the department?

Mr J. Sharp: Yes.

[Supplementary Information No B3.]

Hon RICK MAZZA: Has the department calculated what cost savings there would be in using volunteers over paid staff?

Mr J. Sharp: Peter might be able to answer that in a second in terms of we attach a value every year and we report that annually in an annual report because we have to record, for insurance purposes, the level of activity undertaken and have it registered. We calculate, on an annual base, the hours worked. The principle we have is that it is not replacing work that is being done; the volunteering is done to expand and extend the reach of the organisation. In other words, volunteers do things we could not do and we do not have the staffing for beyond.

Hon RICK MAZZA: I understand that. It would just nice to know what the value is of those volunteers to the community.

Mr J. Sharp: Peter might be able to give you a value.

Mr P. Sharp: Yes. The total number of hours volunteers contributed last year was 560 000, so we have put an estimated value of the order of \$20 million against that contribution.

Hon RICK MAZZA: Excellent. You have to love volunteers.

Mr P. Sharp: We do, yes.

Hon RICK MAZZA: The fourth bullet point was the new marine reserves that are being established. Has any modelling been done on the estimated cost of creating those reserves and managing them?

Mr J. Sharp: There are two new marine reserves: one in the north Kimberley, north of Camden Sound, and Horizontal Falls Marine Park. There is a budget allocation across the next four years of \$15 million to manage those reserves. They are both in the planning phase, and that will involve the ongoing management of those marine parks. It is important to note that the marine parks will be jointly managed with the traditional owners, and so some of those resources are part of reaching joint management agreements and engaging the traditional owners in management roles and responsibilities. But there is an allocation over the four years of \$15 million.

[1.30 pm]

Hon RICK MAZZA: In that modelling, are you able to assess the environmental benefits of actually creating these marine parks over them not being created?

Mr J. Sharp: Across all our marine parks, once they are reserved, part of that ongoing management cost is scientific monitoring. So there is a monitoring program across all the marine parks to actually look at the condition of those parks and what is being achieved by management. So the answer is yes, there is a monitoring program which was part of the funding to see that the KPIs that are set for the parks in the management plans are being met.

Hon RICK MAZZA: There are a couple of line items on page 670. Fauna royalties are approximately \$60 000 a year. What would that be in relation to?

Mr J. Sharp: Dr Byrne might be able to clarify that. As I understand it, that is for the fees attached to the kangaroo harvesting industry.

Hon RICK MAZZA: The next line item is \$30 000-odd a year for fines. What type of infringements are being issued for the collection of those fines?

Mr J. Sharp: Across a full range of activity, I cannot specify, but it could relate to any of the fines relating to our regulation under either the CALM act or the Wildlife Conservation Act. But I can provide you a listing of the areas for the fines. It would be in terms of failure to be in compliance. I do not think we receive fines generally from a range of activities, but I would need to check that.

[Supplementary Information No B4.]

Hon RICK MAZZA: Could you tell me how many prosecutions there have been in the last two years for illegal clearing?

Mr J. Sharp: Clearing is not managed by the Department of Parks and Wildlife; the clearing regulations under the Environmental Protection Act are now managed by the Department of Environment Regulation.

Hon RICK MAZZA: So the old DEC has obviously split, so this is not something that comes under your portfolio.

Mr J. Sharp: No.

Hon RICK MAZZA: I will leave that line of questioning for another time.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Is the merger with the Swan River Trust complete?

Mr J. Sharp: That is still a proposed merger. The legislation, as I understand, has passed through the lower house, so that has still got to go through and be completed.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: So the questions I have for the Swan River Trust should be addressed to them.

Mr J. Sharp: Yes. I cannot speak for the Swan River Trust.

The CHAIR: Has there been any work done internally on merging the two organisations or are you working closer together now as a result of the proposed merger or is it still operating as completely separate?

Mr J. Sharp: We have always worked fairly closely with the Swan River Trust, but in particular the Department of Parks and Wildlife and its predecessor have provided the services for the Swan River Trust. We would provide the human resource management, financial services and a whole range of other services so we work closely in that regard. In terms of their budget, it is a separate agency and it remains under the control of the trust board, but we have been working with the staff around a whole range of issues.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: On the same issue, Mr Sharp, obviously the merger is subject to the passage of the bill. However, if everything goes well and the bill passes this place soon, when would you anticipate the new agency beginning? Would it be immediate or would it be next year?

Mr J. Sharp: I have not been given a time line as such, but I understand if the bill passes, we would need to move through the machinery-of-government arrangements to put arrangements in place.

Obviously, there has been some thought to that. I think it is anticipated it would start somewhere at the start of next year.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Can I just confirm that there will not be any job losses as a result of the merger?

Mr J. Sharp: My understanding is that there will not be job losses as a result of the merger. That was not any of the intent for it, but I can only speak from my agency's perspective.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: At this stage, the Swan River Trust gets some money basically from the Burswood Casino, so some gaming dollars go from the park board across to the Swan River Trust. Are you aware if there are any issues in relation to that money going from the Burswood Park Board directly to your agency as opposed to going to the Swan River Trust as it has previously?

Mr J. Sharp: No, I am not aware of any issues in that regard. I cannot comment on that because I have no awareness of it specifically, but our agency receives, in terms of the budget before you, something like \$80 million or \$90 million out of about a \$290 million budget from external and other sources, so we source nearly a third of the income of the agency from other places.

The CHAIR: Just to clarify, I think you said your target date for the amalgamation was the start of next year; are you talking next calendar or next financial year?

Mr J. Sharp: I was thinking next calendar year.

The CHAIR: So 1 January 2015 is the target date.

Mr J. Sharp: That is my understanding, and that is reflecting my position as a public servant in thinking that halfway through a financial year would make sense in terms of many of the reporting mechanisms.

The CHAIR: Normally with these things, you would try to do them at a logical cut-off point financially as well as the other way.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: The Peel–Harvey estuary is on page 661. The spending changes show \$100 000 less a year being spent on the Peel–Harvey estuary for three years from this financial year. Why is that?

Mr J. Sharp: There was an election commitment for funding for the Peel–Harvey estuary. Treasury initially allocated those funds to the Department of Parks and Wildlife. They have actually been reallocated, as I understand it, to another body, but Dr Byrne might be able to help us with that.

Dr J. Byrne: I think you said funding of \$100 000 that came across on page 666. I am not quite clear on the question; sorry.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: It is page 661.

Mr J. Sharp: The funds were then transferred to another agency. Initially, the \$400 000 over four years was allocated by Treasury but the commitment was to the Peel–Harvey catchment group, as I understand it, so that is where the funds have been now transferred.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: So those funds have been transferred to the Peel–Harvey catchment group?

Mr J. Sharp: Yes. I will stand corrected —

Dr J. Byrne: To confirm what the director general said, the funds have been transferred from our budget into another agency's budget, yes.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: So the money is still being used on the estuary?

Mr J. Sharp: Absolutely, yes.

The CHAIR: Do we know which agency they have been transferred to?

Mr P. Dans: I think it was Water.

Mr J. Sharp: It may be the Department of Water that is administering those funds, but I can correct that.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: I have a couple of questions. My first one is on the first item, “Delivery of Services”, on page 661. I notice in 2013–14, the budget was around \$201 million.

Dr J. Byrne: The money has been transferred to the Department of Regional Development.

[1.40 pm]

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: We had a budget of around about \$201 million and an estimated actual of \$209 million. What is the reason for the increase of around \$8 million in delivery of services for the financial year that just ended?

Mr J. Sharp: In the budget it is stated that there is an allocated budget of \$201 million, which is the anticipated budget. With the actual spend for the year there are one-off funds allocated that result in an increase in the budget for that year, and so that becomes what we estimate will be our actual spend that year. Dr Byrne might be able to elaborate, but there are a series of one-off allocations made throughout the year that actually increase above the budget allocation what is spent. There are a number of items in that space.

Dr J. Byrne: I am sorry to have interrupted your question earlier!

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: That is all right.

Dr J. Byrne: We have a two-tier list that classifies use. It is not really easy to read it out. One of the major increases was funding for the voluntary severance scheme—half the increase was that alone.

The CHAIR: If there is a document there that you said you could provide, maybe we could get one of the staff to grab that document and we will table it, if that is alright. Is that what you are suggesting?

Mr J. Sharp: We would make it available by supplementary, I think.

The CHAIR: I thought you were suggesting there was something available now.

Mr J. Sharp: It would be a long list of bits and pieces, but essentially the largest component was the voluntary severance payments.

[*Supplementary Information No B5.*]

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: In the 2014–15 budget it looks like there is quite a reduction of around about \$10 million or \$11 million in the budget; will that impact on service delivery?

Mr J. Sharp: This current year the actual reduction, if you look at the budget allocation in the budget estimate for this year, is something in the order of a \$2 million reduction over a financial year. So, we do not see that there would be a reduction in services as such; we will manage within those budget reductions that we have and, in fact, as I said, it only represents—“only”—but it is around \$2 million reduction over a \$300 million budget. A number of those reductions have been scheduled over a period of time and so we will be following that program we have to deal with those reductions.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: I am glad to hear that; I am very happy to see departments spending less and being able to manage with less!

The CHAIR: But doing more!

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: Always!

On page 662 there are significant issues impacting the agency and my colleague Hon Rick Mazza touched on a few of those. The last dot point on that page talks about the work being done to replace the Wildlife Conservation Act 1950 with the new biodiversity conservation act. Most people would agree that the existing act is well outdated and everyone is looking forward to seeing what

we get in the new act. I also notice in the significant issues impacting the agency that there is no mention at all of illegal sandalwood harvesting. Given that we have had a greater number of issues around that recently, with a report and other things highlighting this problem, is anything going to be done either through the new act or more generally to address this issue?

Mr J. Sharp: The government made an election commitment that there would be a new biodiversity conservation act and we are working on that. There has been a need for that for some time; it is a 1950 act and we are continuing to work on that act. The parliamentary committee has reported on sandalwood and the government response has been prepared and is, I think, being forwarded to the committee to outline a response. The issue around the management of illegal activity will be picked up by the improved biodiversity and conservation act. The commitment has been made that there will be a significant increase in that act for penalties, because they are currently across the whole ride range of activities that impact on biodiversity, and, yes, it is intended that the biodiversity act will specifically deal with issues such as illegal sandalwood taking and put in place measures that make it much more effective to police.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: So the primary mechanism for dealing with it would be to increase the severity of the penalties that are available for this activity?

Mr J. Sharp: There are two elements to it, in fact. Yes, with the increase in penalties, the view of our staff, particularly our wildlife officers involved in apprehension who have been working with the FPC and recently with Western Australian police in that area, is that it will significantly act as a deterrent, but we also need much more effective mechanisms in terms of both investigation and apprehension—we need those procedures to be strengthened through legislation and regulation as well.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: So in the current act you do not have any of those investigatory powers or apprehension powers?

Mr J. Sharp: Yes, we do, but they need strengthening.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: Obviously you are not able to intervene in things like cabinet processes and government scheduling in of legislation, but from your perspective where is the drafting of the act at? Has the drafting been completed or is it continuing?

Mr J. Sharp: It is still continuing and it is under consideration within government.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: When is it likely that the —

Mr J. Sharp: I cannot give a timetable on process, but I can indicate that the Premier himself has given it priority in an election commitment and it was a major commitment that there be new biodiversity legislation.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: Can I rephrase the question then and ask whether pending any further instructions from cabinet has the department's own work on the act concluded or is it still continuing?

Mr J. Sharp: We will continue to work in response to questions on issues that might arise.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: That does not really answer my question.

Mr J. Sharp: We are continuing to work on it. We have restructured the organisation; in fact, we have a director responsible for strategic and legislative reform who is driving the legislative change. There are two lots of legislation that we are working on as an agency. A number of improvements and amendments need to be made to the Conservation and Land Management Act, but certainly the biodiversity act is being worked on vigorously within the agency.

The CHAIR: Is there a target date that is publicly known as to when you expect to have it in the Parliament?

Mr J. Sharp: No, there is not a target date that is set.

The CHAIR: Correct me if I am wrong, but I have appeared at a number of estimates hearings where we have talked about for a number of years a new biodiversity act, probably going back more years than I would care to remember I have been here. Is this the same review?

Mr J. Sharp: No, this is the process arising out of a government commitment that there will be a new act—a specific commitment. Obviously, past work and considerations help inform us going forward with a new act, but it is up to government to indicate a timetable.

[1.50 pm]

The CHAIR: Even going back to the previous government, work was done on a new conservation act to replace it, was it not?

Mr J. Sharp: I am not sure whether it was several decades ago, but it is getting close to at least two decades of considerations.

The CHAIR: That is just what I was trying to clarify. My recollection is that it has been around. In terms of public consultation—I accept that if it is not an announced decision, you cannot answer it—is it intended that there be a public consultation phase on the bill or will it be introduced into the Parliament and you have already done the public consultation?

Mr J. Sharp: My understanding is, because the minister responded to a question in the other place, that he will be taking it forward into Parliament.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I am very pleased to hear that progress has been made with the biodiversity conservation act, Mr Sharp, because I have asked you questions previously and Hon Ken Travers is correct —

The CHAIR: In fact, I want to know how many new species have been discovered while the act has been developed.

Mr J. Sharp: We are as equally worried about how many may have become extinct.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I have a number of questions. My first one relates to the heading on page 661, “Appropriations, Expenses and Cash Assets”. Mr Sharp, can you identify the projects or the programs run by your department that are funded through royalties for regions?

Mr J. Sharp: Do you want me to outline the actual programs that are funded?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Yes, please. Have you got the names and how much?

Mr J. Sharp: I do not have the complete list—we could provide that to you—but the significant ones would be the caravan and camping initiative that Mr Sharp outlined. A number of marine park proposals are funded out of royalties for regions including, as I said, the extension of the great northern marine park and the Horizontal Falls marine park. They are the two major areas in which there is some funding.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Could you perhaps by way of supplementary information provide a list outlining all of the projects or programs funded and also the amounts, please?

Mr J. Sharp: Yes.

[*Supplementary Information No B6.*]

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Prior to royalties for regions, would these things have been funded out of consolidated revenue or some other money in your department?

Mr J. Sharp: These are all new initiatives. Certainly, the caravan and camping initiative is new and beyond what our normal program is, and the marine parks are new parks and the creation of new reserves. Because they are outside the metropolitan region, that is the funding source.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I refer to the heading “Parks Management” on page 664. My question relates to Kalbarri National Park and the proposal floating around for a long time to expand the park

or extend the park to take in Galena town site and the associated mining works. A study was done a number of years ago on that and I think the Shire of Northampton has been very supportive of it. What is the status of that work? Is it still a live issue? Is the project still being considered; and, if yes, have you got any figures on what it would cost to extend the park to include Galena?

Mr J. Sharp: We have just released a draft Kalbarri National Park management plan that has been out for public comment, and I stand corrected by Mr Peter Sharp or someone else. As I understand it, the extension of the park to include Galena has not been contemplated in relation to the draft management plan. It would be my understanding that there is no current proposal in relation to adding that area to the national park. My understanding again, and I stand corrected on this, is that there are still a number of remediation issues related to previous mining activities including lead mining in that area that creates an issue in relation to adding it to the park and also providing public access to it.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: So it is not on the agenda at the moment but it would be considered if those remediation issues were fixed?

Mr J. Sharp: Those issues would need to be dealt with before further consideration of its addition into the national park.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: By way of a supplementary question, I am sure the department has done some work previously on what it would cost to extend the park in this area. Could you provide that information?

Mr J. Sharp: Yes.

[Supplementary Information No B7.]

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: On the same dot point, the next question I have is about Karijini National Park. Can you provide me with some figures on the number of deaths and injuries that have occurred in the park over the past number of years?

Mr J. Sharp: Mr Dans might be able to provide some information. We can provide information on it. We have a very elaborate and relatively sophisticated visitor risk management program across all of our reserves and we have a very strong reporting arrangement in terms of accidents and certainly relating back to risk management in our parks. I do not know whether we have that information on hand but we can certainly provide it.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I am keen to get a sense of perhaps what has happened over the past five years, so from 2009–10 onwards.

[Supplementary Information No B8.]

Mr J. Sharp: As I understand it, the question relates to both death and injury?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Yes. Obviously, we have not got the figures in front of us but there have been a number of fatalities in that park. I am keen to hear from the department what you are doing specifically in relation to reducing the number of fatalities, particularly in Karijini, so perhaps you could consider this when answering my question, Mr Dans. Could you also let me know how many anchor points are currently available in the park to assist with gorge rescues and whether there are any plans to install further anchor points in the park?

Mr J. Sharp: I will pass on to Mr Dans who can elaborate on what we are doing in relation to risk management generally and also specifically in Karijini. The issue of anchor points is under review all the time as we redevelop lookouts. I was there with the minister two weeks ago when the issue was raised. When new lookouts are replaced, consideration will always be given to improving or increasing the access points. I cannot give the member a number but Mr Dans will be able to answer on the risk mitigation.

Mr P. Dans: We have a comprehensive risk management program in place around the state. We manage over 1 250 formal visitor sites, which are all subject to routine, periodic inspections. Reports are prepared after each inspection detailing what follow-up works might be required to address any hazards detected. A clear and repeatable system and process is in place for visitor risk management at all locations around the state across all regions. With respect to Karijini, works are ongoing at the moment, particularly on the pathway down into Fortescue Falls, which, as the member would be aware, is where the most recent fatality took place. A number of areas have been replaced with a fabricated steel stairway and in a number of areas where the natural earth surface has been retained, handrails have been installed on the open side of the pathway. That work is ongoing and I understand it will be completed towards the end of October this year for the Fortescue Falls trail.

Mr P. Sharp: If I could also add to that answer, at the top end of that trail is a staircase going down that has a number of bends in it. We are redesigning that work to assist with any rescue services that might need access to that place.

[2.00 pm]

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Can you, by way of supplementary information, provide a figure on the number of anchor points in the park?

Mr J. Sharp: Yes.

[*Supplementary Information No B9.*]

The CHAIR: In that regard, do you have sufficient rescue equipment within Karijini National Park—and located in appropriate parts of it—to manage rescue operations when required?

Mr J. Sharp: Again, Mr Dans can answer with the specifics. We operate with a number of agencies, including local emergency rescue organisations that are formed up under the Department of Fire and Emergency Services. We also have the benefit that those groups are strongly supported by adjacent mining companies. Peter might be able to elaborate.

The CHAIR: I imagine that as part of your risk assessment you go through what equipment you need and where it should be placed. Do you have all the equipment that you have identified as being required in different locations to service the park or do you need to get some equipment to provide the coverage that would meet your risk management plans?

Mr P. Dans: We have sufficient numbers of all the occupational safety and health first aid equipment and communications equipment and those types of things and we have what we require within the park. All of the rescues that require a person to be lifted or carried out are generally undertaken by the Tom Price SES. They are particularly skilled and highly trained in rope rescues and retrievals out of the gorge areas. Generally, the police will coordinate them, as the primary emergency response organisation in the state. The heavy lifting, so to speak, is almost exclusively done by the SES. We assist and coordinate, but our staff are not trained or qualified in rope techniques for descending into gorges or having the necessary qualifications to undertake a rope rescue of an injured person be they on a stretcher or otherwise assisted.

The CHAIR: What you are saying is that it is not your job to have the rescue equipment; rather, it is the job of the SES.

Mr P. Dans: The SES is well resourced, trained and qualified to undertake that type of rescue in that terrain.

The CHAIR: One thing that seems to come up more and more is people's expectations of mobile coverage. When they get into difficulty they now expect that their mobile phone will be their method of communicating that they need assistance. In the areas of Karijini that are coming under increasing tourism pressure, and with people having expectations of those facilities for emergencies, has any work been done to provide mobile coverage through some of the key areas? Obviously, you

cannot do it across the whole park, but has work been done on the key points in which there is a large number of tourists?

Mr J. Sharp: There is in some parks. For instance, work is being undertaken at the moment to look at extending mobile coverage in Kalbarri at specific request of the community. It may be possible to do it there. There is an incredibly large cost involved in putting in a tower just for a remote area. In the case of Karijini, we have put in place specific radio contacting and emergency systems to contact the ranger. Those systems emergency connecting points are in place as a substitute.

Mr P. Sharp: One of the other things we try to do is to encourage people to carry portable EPIRBs, one of which was activated recently in the Stirlings. We encourage people to use that system when they go into remote locations.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I refer to “Kimberley Tourism Initiatives” under “Asset Investment Program” on page 666. What are those initiatives? What will the funds be spent on?

Mr J. Sharp: About \$800 000 will be spent on the Munurru campground at King Edward River and about \$279 000 will be spent on facilities along the Kalumburu Road. There is some signage and interpretative work to the value of about \$14 000 on the Gibb River Road and Kalumburu Road. There is further design work of about \$12 000 on the Carson River Station and also in the parks in the Miriuwung–Gajerrong determination area. There is \$43 000 being spent to upgrade the car park at Bell Gorge on the Gibb River Road. That is about \$1.147 million.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Mr Sharp, I am very pleased to hear that that money is being spent in my electorate!

I refer to WA’s World Heritage listed areas. What funding does the department spend on World Heritage listed areas? Am I correct in saying that the Department of Parks and Wildlife is the lead government agency in this area?

Mr J. Sharp: The Department of Parks and Wildlife is the lead agency in relation to the three areas of Ningaloo, Shark Bay and Purnululu; the three natural properties listed under World Heritage. Part of the requirement to be listed for World Heritage is that it has to be demonstrated that there is an adequate program of management in place. It is one of the criteria that need to be met and, obviously, we met that in relation to those three properties. We would spend no additional funds nor would we allocate the funds as World Heritage, but manage the components of the properties for which we have responsibility according to our budget as such. In terms of Purnululu, it would be our Purnululu park budget which would be the funds that would be spent. We do get some small allocation from the commonwealth in relation to those properties, but otherwise in Shark Bay, it is what we spend on our Shark Bay properties that we would manage under state legislation regardless, and the same relating to Ningaloo, which is Cape Range National Park and Ningaloo Marine Park.

Mr P. Sharp: The funding that comes from the commonwealth assists us in operating World Heritage advisory committees. It is quite modest funding in the order of between \$500 000 and \$600 000 per annum. The rest of the money is through normal appropriations. In the case of Purnululu, our normal appropriations for that park rest in the order of a couple of million dollars per annum. Ningaloo is quite large and involves several million dollars. Shark Bay is also quite large. We can provide you with the details of our specific spend on each of those areas, if you like.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: That would be great, Mr Sharp, if that is possible.

[Supplementary Information No B10.]

The CHAIR: I assume that you are the lead agency for World Heritage areas.

Mr J. Sharp: Yes, we are.

The CHAIR: Do you have a budget for marketing those areas and their World Heritage qualities internationally?

[2.10 pm]

Mr J. Sharp: Mr Chair, there is no specific allocation because they are World Heritage properties and they are marketed as such. As I said, we manage the elements of those properties that are managed under state funds as parks and reserves within those properties. There have been on occasions funding from the commonwealth for development of marketing opportunities. There was for a couple of years some funding from the commonwealth in terms of the World Heritage properties. The fact is that because they have attained that status that is assigned to them, we ensure that that is recognised in any material that we would promote about those parks that they are part of, and that is a World Heritage area. We know that that attaches—there has been research that indicates that—significant value in terms of attracting tourists and understanding that they are important places to see, but we do not specifically market it or have a marketing budget in that areas.

Mr P. Sharp: The WA Tourism Commission have their Experience Extraordinary program, which is tourism marketing, and of course they focus on these iconic locations including Purnululu, Shark Bay and Ningaloo. So they are advertised by way of the regional tourism associations and their marketing efforts and by the state tourism organisation and its marketing efforts.

The CHAIR: Are you ever involved on an international basis as an agency in helping promote those or being involved with any of the international organisations around World Heritage that would give an opportunity to promote them?

Mr J. Sharp: The responsibility for World Heritage internationally rests with the commonwealth government, so they would play that role in terms of promoting all Western Australian World Heritage properties, and they would do that in association with the properties across the year.

The CHAIR: They never bring you into getting involved or you never get involved in any of that promotional presentation of those sites internationally?

Mr J. Sharp: They have asked us recently. There was a publication made under the auspices of the International Union for Conservation of Nature. We contributed significantly in terms of our properties into that publication, yes, so we contribute material.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Can I just confirm whether climate change issues now fall under the Department of Environment Regulation?

Mr J. Sharp: Yes, they do.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I will leave that issue alone. I refer to the “Income Statement” under “Financial Statements” on page 667 and the line under “Income” about the projected surplus of \$5.4 million. It is very good to see agencies having projected surpluses. Maybe the health department could learn off the Department of Parks and Wildlife! Could you just explain to me that line? What does it mean?

Mr J. Sharp: I will ask Dr Byrne to explain the line.

Dr J. Byrne: It is not so much a cash surplus; it is an accrual account of things like depreciation and so forth. Accrual accounting does not coincide with the cash. Cash is really the king; we have cash to spend. Accrual statements take account of the non-cash items like depreciation. You could end up with a reported accrual surplus that is not cash available to spend.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Okay, so I should not get too excited, Dr Byrne.

The CHAIR: It means they have to revalue the parks every year and they become more and more valuable but I hope we never sell them!

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Mr Chair, I am happy to hand over to someone else for a while.

The CHAIR: All right. I have a couple of questions that I might just go through. I am going to refer to Indian Ocean Drive, but there are probably other roads around the state that have come to my attention and that run through a number of your national parks and conservation reserves and the like. In fact when you look at it, probably the majority of the length is running through some form of conservation estate in one form or another. What I am interested in is who ultimately is responsible for the management of the layover bays along Indian Ocean Drive? Is it you or is it Main Roads that looks after those layover bays? There is the specific bay and then there is the area that surrounds the bay. I will explain to you why I am asking it. One of the complaints that I am receiving continually is the human rubbish and other rubbish left around those sites, partly driven by a lack of toilet facilities along the roads but also people camping there and the like. So, whose job is it to police it, manage it, clean it up, and are there any plans to try to identify sites where we can put in ablution facilities to reduce this impact, and is it something that you would agree with, that it is becoming an increasing problem on Indian Ocean Drive? Then maybe we can move to these other sites across the state where we are having the same problem.

Mr J. Sharp: The first part of the answer is that major roads, even though they go through parks, are invariably part of a road reserve, which is much wider than the road surface. They would be the responsibility of Main Roads WA including the reserve width itself. They vary from 80 to 100-metre wide road reserves and the responsibility for providing facilities in that would rest with them in relation to those opportunities that are provided for people to stay over. We have assisted with requests that have been made, including along Indian Ocean Drive and other places, in the design and the provision of some of either lookouts or stopover points, but generally they are provided by Main Roads department; and obviously there is an issue of where we would source funds for those types of facilities. There has been a recent change in relation to, as I understand it, caravan and camping-type regulations and a desire to provide these sorts of opportunities; it has been recognised there is a need. Again, I understand that has been driven by an understanding of safety requirements, for people having somewhere to stop because of tiredness. It has arisen in that space as a major issue as well as the environmental issue, but the need to provide —

The CHAIR: The road reserves may be 100, but I would imagine where you pull off it then you are getting very close to your reserve, your land again. Is it a problem that people are soiling the areas and going into even your reserves and soiling the land as well?

Mr J. Sharp: We are not having a major issue on our reserves of which I am aware, but I am aware that it is a broader issue across roads across the state.

Mr P. Sharp: There is an issue from time to time. We work cooperatively with Main Roads so if their road reserve is 100 metres wide but there are outstanding landscape values for visitors to have a look at, we will work with them. We might contribute some money and they will contribute some money in putting lookouts and facilities there. In the specific case of the Indian Ocean Drive, we actually did not want to see toilets going along there because there was a proposal to put in a service station along that route. For various reasons I think the council did not approve a development application.

The CHAIR: I think it was the WA Planning Commission. I could not ask you about that, but part of my reasoning for asking this is I realise the service station is part of the solution, and I will probably have to pursue why that is not going ahead. But the service station is the solution, as you see it?

Mr P. Sharp: As we see it, yes.

The CHAIR: And the service station is on freehold land, as far as you are aware.

Mr P. Sharp: That is right.

The CHAIR: It does not require any approvals or excision from Parks and Wildlife land to allow that to proceed?

Mr P. Sharp: It is on private land to the best of my knowledge.

Mr J. Sharp: There has been no proposal put to us in relation to access to reserve land.

The CHAIR: So if we get that service station, you would see that as being the primary solution for Indian Ocean Drive.

Mr P. Sharp: The solution.

The CHAIR: Are there other roads where we have similar problems that you are aware of? Is it becoming an increasing problem?

Mr J. Sharp: I think that with regard to Main Roads and their development of pull-over bays, as Mr Sharp said, there have been some changes to the caravan and camping rules and the requirements for safety. The incidence of littering et cetera does arise where you get hot points where people pull over. Main Roads have got a program in place to handle management and cleaning of those facilities; plus under the caravan and camping action plan they have also received some funding of the order of \$1 million or \$2 million, I think, for putting in dump points and other facilities. So, there has been a recognition that there can be problems arising from time to time in certain locations, and, as I understand it, there are some strategies and actions being undertaken under that program.

[2.20 pm]

The CHAIR: I want to return to an issue that we discussed when you were last here, about the Gngangara regional park and the clearing of the land up there. From the supplementary information that you provided, it is about \$4 000 per hectare to revegetate it and you get about \$400 000 per annum. That does not seem to be changing over the forward estimates at all. I am trying to find the other answer that you gave us. The cost of rubbish removal takes up probably \$30 000 of that on average. My sense is that that Gngangara pine plantation is getting cut down. In fact, you may have given us answers that about 80 per cent of it was cleared last year, but it is not getting revegetated. What are we doing about that land? What is the impact of not revegetating that land in terms of weeds and other species establishing themselves in that area?

Mr J. Sharp: I think as indicated—Mr Dans might be able to amplify this—the \$400 000 is for the management of that area, particularly providing for activities that take place, the off-road vehicle site and managing access to that site and dealing with it. Largely, the major issue has been rubbish removal. That is all part of the management for that. The future planning for the Gngangara area is obviously something that received wider consideration than —

The CHAIR: Are you the lead agency for future planning?

Mr J. Sharp: It would be considered as part of the broader strategic assessment for Perth and Peel where there is a process being undertaken. It is a whole-of-government process looking at getting approval and accreditation under the environment protection and biodiversity conservation —

The CHAIR: That is about using the revegetation to be an offset for the clearing of other land for urban purposes?

Mr J. Sharp: Yes. It is part of that much broader consideration across the Perth and Peel regions.

The CHAIR: Until that strategic assessment is decided with the commonwealth, there will be no work done on revegetating the Gngangara mound?

Mr J. Sharp: As I understand it, there is only limited revegetation being undertaken by us in terms of that \$400 000. I do not have the exact effort and spend.

The CHAIR: The impression I got from the answers you gave us after the last hearing when I asked similar questions was that effectively there is not any real revegetation going on. If there is anything, it is mainly managing the reserve. You are spending money on managing the motorcycle area, you are spending money on rubbish collection, you are spending money on managing the area,

but in terms of actual revegetation of the pine plantation I do not even get the sense that there is a lot of money being spent on trialling and what impacts you get on revegetation.

Mr J. Sharp: Again, I do not have all the details, but there has been considerable effort put into trialling and different methods of rehabilitation. I think that is where we arrived at the costings in relation to the cost per hectare of that revegetation. That has been over a period of time. We have an understanding of those costs, but there is not a specific investment in the revegetation, I guess, until the much broader picture is seen of the role it would provide in meeting offset and other requirements.

The CHAIR: Instead of people going and buying land, they actually put money into paying for the revegetation?

Mr J. Sharp: That is one of the possibilities and prospects.

The CHAIR: I am happy for it to be taken as supplementary, but I am keen to know what work has been done in terms of research on the revegetation of that area and how much has been spent on it. How much has actually been spent on the revegetation of any of that area? Have you done any work on what would be the cost to revegetate that area?

Mr J. Sharp: Yes, we can provide that.

[Supplementary Information No B11.]

The CHAIR: The other thing I want to check: does Parks and Wildlife have any concerns about the excision of part of that reserve for the dualling of Gngangara Road? Is there any reason from an environmental viewpoint that the land that is required to dual it be excised and that process be got on with as a matter of priority?

Mr J. Sharp: Not explicitly. I think there is a process underway by which we would comment on any proposal that comes forward in terms of both alignment and the way in which the road is constructed. We would comment on that in the environmental approval process.

The CHAIR: The Coalfields highway is another one where there seems to have been significant delays in getting the excision motion into Parliament. I know that down in Collie there was some negotiations about the final design to minimise the impact on the environment. What I cannot understand is why it takes so long for these processes to occur. Is it that you do not have the resources to provide responses? Is it the legislative time frame that they have to go through that is the cause of the delays? Why are we not able to get these matters resolved quickly, particularly where there is an existing road and it is about upgrading the road? I understand minimising the environmental impacts, but is it at your end or is it in Main Roads? Where is the delay? Why do they take so long? Collie has been a couple of years. No-one seems to be able to give the City of Swan or the local community out there any idea about how long it will take to get the excision into Parliament for Gngangara, and in the meantime that road is a danger, in my view, in its current format. Are you able to give us any idea as to why it takes so long?

Mr J. Sharp: No. I guess it would be conjecture on my behalf what delays decision-making processes. Our role, though, is to provide advice about what the impacts are. We do not make decisions in and around roads and their alignment.

The CHAIR: Who makes the decision about the excision? Is that you or the Conservation Commission?

Mr J. Sharp: It depends on the status of the land. If it was an excision in that case from state forest, we would need to introduce the excision to Parliament. It requires consideration by Parliament if it is an excision from A-class reserve and/or from state forest. We would need to bring that forward.

The CHAIR: For both coalfields and Gngangara, it is your agency that is responsible for getting those brought into the Parliament?

Mr J. Sharp: Bringing those forward, yes.

The CHAIR: Why has Collie taken so long and how long will Gngangara take?

Mr J. Sharp: I cannot answer specifically on Collie. Could you answer that, Pete?

Mr P. Sharp: On average, in terms of a road development that will require an excision from the state forest or national park or conservation park, we would see that it would require about a two to three-year lead time. Partly that is because we need to have Main Roads give full and proper attention to all the engineering details and come back with all the planning approvals et cetera. In the case of Gngangara, we have to liaise with the Forest Products Commission and get approvals from the Minister for Forestry for doing things. There are impacts on various state agreements for providing wood supply into timber harvesting and timber-milling operations. These things take time. I think with regard to Collie and Gngangara, those matters should be before Parliament in the next session of Parliament.

The CHAIR: I think we have now got Collie. That has now been tabled.

Mr P. Sharp: I am pretty sure that Gngangara will be coming forward in the next session of Parliament.

The CHAIR: That is very good to hear. I am sure people will be out in that area. People in Ellenbrook will be particularly very pleased to hear that. I still do not understand why it takes two to three years. The reason I ask this is when I ask questions of Main Roads, they say, "It's because we've got to get the excision." In fact at one point I asked them why it was taking so long and they said, "Consultation with stakeholders." When I asked who the stakeholders were, they said the Department of Parks and Wildlife. They were implying that it was somehow your fault as an agency that these things were taking so long to get into Parliament. You are telling me that it is not your fault, it is Main Roads? At the end of the day, the public's view is the government is not getting it done quickly. I am trying to understand why it needs to be two to three years if the design is done on the road. I completely understand minimising the impacts on the environment, but where there is an existing road reserve, you have to do something where it is a road safety issue.

Mr J. Sharp: There are two levels of process —

The CHAIR: Do you have the resources to do the job?

Mr J. Sharp: Yes, and I have a process of meeting with the director of Main Roads. We regularly meet to see what needs to be expedited and to see if there are any issues that we can deal with to move these processes along. There are two levels, I guess, of process; there is the environmental approval process, which may be outside the excision process, but to get an excision into Parliament is simply, once all the approvals are in place, the documentation to get there.

The CHAIR: Is there ever a problem with getting that done through Parliamentary Counsel, or is it given priority by them?

Mr J. Sharp: Not in my experience.

Mr P. Sharp: No, Parliamentary Counsel is very helpful.

The CHAIR: Okay.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: They will be after this!

The CHAIR: No, it is not a political issue; it is just frustration from the community. When one tries to find out what is causing that delay, everyone seems to blame everyone else and the end result is that roads that need to be upgraded are not getting done in a timely way. I have probably extended my latitude as the Chair.

Proceedings suspended from 2.32 to 2.40 pm

The CHAIR: We will start again with Hon Rick Mazza, and then I suspect Hon Stephen Dawson will follow up if you do not ask the right question about toads!

Hon RICK MAZZA: I just wanted to ask about cane toads. I see that funding for Kimberley Toad Busters has been withdrawn and that the department is instead looking for a biological solution. Firstly, I wonder how far the department has progressed with research into a biological solution; and, secondly, why we are not continuing with funding for groups like Toad Busters in the meantime until such a solution is found.

Mr J. Sharp: The member is correct that the cane toad issue is being treated somewhat differently. The government recently released a new cane toad strategy, within the last month, and its focus is now on acknowledging that it is not really possible to actually stop the toads; we may marginally inhibit them, but we cannot stop them and they are continuing to spread. The strategy recognises that we need to change our focus, and the focus has moved towards protecting the islands as refugia for native animals, and we have been doing a fair bit of work in that space in terms of identifying the potential for the islands to maintain the biota that we want to keep. Secondly, we are trying to stop toads hitchhiking into the south of the state, so some efforts have been put into that space. The third strand is about scientific research to look at the range of alternatives for dealing with the cane toad problem. There is continuing funding into cane toads and managing cane toads; it is not identified as an item in the budget as such because it is now incorporated into the Kimberley science and conservation strategy. The island work is being done as part of the Kimberley science and conservation strategy and there are elements of the strategy that deal with ferals, and that deals with cane toads as well, and we have specific money that we spend in terms of the sniffer dogs and trying to stop cane toad transport out of Kununurra. The community groups have done a great job in galvanising the community and creating awareness, but there has been an acceptance that cane toads have moved beyond the boundaries at which it was thought they might be stopped or slowed, and we are now moving to a different point in the strategy. As far as the science is concerned, I will ask Dr Byrne to perhaps outline some of the science that is being undertaken.

Dr M. Byrne: We have been in collaboration with Professor Rick Shine at the University of Sydney in a number of projects. He has been able to attract Australian Research Council linkage funding towards that. The main area that we have looked at is teaching goannas and quolls, which are the main species affected by the toads, taste aversion—actually teaching them to avoid eating the toads. The goannas now will actually flip the toads over and eat the insides out and avoid the toxin glands on the top of the head. There has been quite a bit of success in that, but it is somewhat limited, and not a really large landscape-scale solution to the problem. There has been some work on biological control, but that has impacts on native frogs as well, so that is not an avenue that we can pursue. There is some more recent work looking at watering points, and looking at the passage of the toads from the Kimberley to the Pilbara, and looking at where the corridors are that they may use to be able to move further south. There is a proposal from the University of Melbourne about whether you can actually look at the artificial watering points and get them either turned off or raised so that the cane toads cannot get to them. If you restrict their access to water, you are going to restrict their movement. However, there is quite a bit of work to do in that space, given the flooding and the cyclones that occur across that land. You get large-scale water bodies forming after cyclones and heavy rains.

Hon RICK MAZZA: It sounds like we are a long way from dealing with cane toads at this point in time. Even teaching native animals to flip them over is a pretty big job. I would suggest the Toad Busters probably have more effect than training natives at this point in time. We spoke earlier about approximately \$20 million being saved by volunteers doing work for Parks and Wildlife, and I would have seen the Toad Busters as part of that volunteer work. I know they might not be having the impact we want, but I would have thought that some dead toads were better than no dead toads in the work that they do.

Dr M. Byrne: The other area that we are looking at is the climate projection models for the Kimberley. The suitability of habitat for cane toads actually contracts, so whilst they have been expanding over time now, as we move forward it may well contract back again. There may be some hope in that context.

Hon RICK MAZZA: So there is no time frame on how long it would take to get a biological resolution to it?

Mr J. Sharp: What we are endeavouring to do is to, where possible, encourage research in all sorts of directions to try to get a solution. Of course there has been research done over a long period of time in other jurisdictions in relation to the toad, and specialities are being developed, but we will continue to encourage research and make sure that we have some refuges that we can keep free of toads and also stop the movements out.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: There has been some criticism from the Kimberley Toad Busters in relation to the updated five-year strategy. They feel that there has been little or no contact with the department, and they do not feel that they have been consulted on the strategy. Can you comment on that?

Mr J. Sharp: That is not my understanding. The coordinator of the state strategy has consulted in relation to that. If that is a perception, that may well be, but that is not my understanding.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Was there broad consultation on this new strategy, and are you in a position to provide a list of who was consulted in developing the strategy?

Mr J. Sharp: I do not think there was a consultation process per se, because it was a refinement of an existing strategy, which set the new direction on the way forward. I can inquire about what level of consultation took place and what form the consultation took.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I am happy to take that as supplementary.

[Supplementary Information No B12.]

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I know that you have said there is no line item in the budget papers for cane toads, but I am still interested to get a sense of how much the department is spending on this area, so are you able, by way of supplementary, to provide an estimation of what has actually been spent by the department in combating toads? You might not be able to help me with this one, but was there an amount of money attached to the updated strategy, or not?

Mr J. Sharp: We can provide you with an indication of the spend. There is a very direct spend on, if you like, inhibiting the spread out of Kununurra, and that is in the order of \$700 000, but also in the Kimberley science and conservation strategy—we do not cost it as cane toad activity—significant work has been done on island research in terms of what is still intact there, what exists there and its capacity to meet future requirements. We can give you an indication of what that is worth in that response.

[Supplementary Information No B13.]

[2.50 pm]

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I do echo Hon Rick Mazza's concerns in relation to the department ceasing funding, or lowering funding, to the Kimberley Toad Busters. My view is the same: more dead toads killed in the Kimberley is better than them not being killed. Can you just confirm, Mr Sharp, whether the department has totally ceased funding to the Kimberley Toad Busters?

Mr J. Sharp: Yes.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I think that is disappointing.

The CHAIR: I might just follow on. One of the questions I had off that is that back, I think, two years ago you stopped your environmental community grants program, so not just Toad Busters

but other community grants. Are we now starting to see a drop-off in the number of people involved in community environmental activities because they are not getting funding, or are the groups you were previously funding sustainable and continuing to be active and engaged in protecting our environment?

Mr J. Sharp: It is our understanding that community environmental grants was a four-year program; it was only committed to by government as a four-year program, so it ran to its end. There are additional or alternative sources of funding, but I do not know what the level of take-up of those alternatives is. It is our experience, though, that community groups continue to be engaged in conservation activities and park-related activities. We have seen no diminution in our volunteer program; in fact, we have seen a very significant increase over the last 12 months in people coming forward.

The CHAIR: That is in the national parks, but what about some of those regional parks?

Mr J. Sharp: It is across the state, in terms of volunteering for a whole wide range of activities that we cater for. As to the impact on the groups themselves, I think whereas funding gives some certainty in terms of specific programs, funding is usually tied to a given activity. I think that group still attracts volunteers and still provides the services to the community that they have always provided.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I will move on to crocodiles rather than cane toads. Mr Sharp, it seems that the number of crocodiles in the state is up; the number being seen or the number frequenting the beaches and lakes in my electorate seems to be on the rise. I understand that crocodiles are protected under the Wildlife Conservation Act. Is it time for a cull? Anecdotally, I am hearing that the numbers are on the increase, and certainly it is a concern when you have surfing crocodiles on Cable Beach in Broome. What are the facts? How many crocodiles have we at the moment, and what is being done?

Mr J. Sharp: If I could start, and then I will ask Dr Margaret Byrne to respond further. We recently looked at our policy in relation to crocodiles, and that policy was released a few weeks ago. We acknowledge that, firstly, they are protected, and, secondly, there has been an increase in their population and they are extending their range. But our policy position has been, and remains, that we do not think it is necessary to have a cull as such, but we do think it is necessary to manage their presence in certain areas. We will manage their presence in areas where they represent a danger to the public either by way of trapping and removing, if necessary.

Hon RICK MAZZA: Safari hunting!

Mr J. Sharp: Dr Byrne can outline some more detail around the crocodile itself.

Dr M. Byrne: Under the policy we have identified crocodile risk mitigation areas, where we will make every attempt to remove a dangerous crocodile from those areas. The two areas we have at the moment are along the Kimberley coast and in Lake Kununurra; there is actually a crocodile in Lake Kununurra at the moment that we are trying to find and remove—is a fairly large one. The main response in a crocodile risk mitigation area is to, if there is a problem crocodile there, remove it and to ensure public safety. The main focus of the revised and updated policy is to make people aware of it, to really increase that public awareness of crocodiles to encourage sightings where we can actually respond to and deal with it, and to enable, I guess, people to know what they can and cannot do in particular areas and what is dangerous behaviour in an area where there may be crocodiles and what is okay.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Have any extra financial resources been put into the area, or is it being done out of existing resources?

Dr M. Byrne: Existing resources in the Kimberley area and into the Pilbara are being used; it is part of the normal business and practice of the regional staff in the area. The wildlife officers that are there call on extra resources when required. At the moment when there is a crocodile there, they

are drawing in extra resources to deal with it at the time, but it is part of their normal business. It is part of their risk-management strategy within their business.

The CHAIR: Did I hear that right? There is a saltwater crocodile in Lake Kununurra?

Mr J. Sharp: Yes, at the moment.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Thank you for that. I will have a look for the new strategy. I would encourage you to let local MPs know if you have new strategies and stuff like that, because we can certainly help let our constituents in our electorates know.

Mr J. Sharp: Yes, I think it is important. If I could just amplify that point: there needs to be strong community awareness of the risks and what behaviours place people at risk.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: My final question relates to the Minister for Environment recently announcing that entry fees to national parks will be waived over the weekend of the WA Day long weekend. Can you provide me with some figures of what the estimated revenue loss would have been as a result of that policy decision?

Mr J. Sharp: Yes, we might be able to provide that to you now. That was part of the Parks for People program. There have been a number of announcements around free entry, and I think that one was in association with Nature Play, which is the organisation which is trying to encourage young people—children particularly—to get out and enjoy nature.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Was it the same policy as in the school holidays, because I know that during the school holidays there was the Nature Play initiative where schoolkids have a card and the card would give them free entry into the parks? Was this the same initiative?

Mr J. Sharp: That is part of that initiative, yes. We did do an estimate of revenue that was forgone as a result of that. I think we also did an estimate of what the higher level of visitation was for the day—how many people took up the offer. Peter Sharp may be able to respond to that.

Mr P. Sharp: I cannot give you a precise figure for the state's parks; I can give you an anecdotal case. Yanchep National Park had a revenue loss of the order of \$30 000 for that weekend. The lessee had a 40 per cent increase in business in that weekend, and our attendance figures in the park rose about 50 per cent during that time.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: So it is great that more people are using the park and great for the business in the park, but I guess what does it mean in real terms for the department? If you are losing \$30 000 of your income for that park, does it put in jeopardy staff positions or anything like that? Does the money come back to the agency or does it go to consolidated revenue?

Mr J. Sharp: Leases are set on the basis of a proportion of turnover, so rental fees are worked that way. I think we also would take the longer term view that people who actually visit the park are more likely to be, then, repeat visitors. We have reintroduced people to the significance of the parks in their area, so that will have a long-term benefit in terms of increased revenue and in terms of people revisiting and reconnecting with parks. I think part of the whole Parks for People strategy is getting people reconnected, particularly with the changes in lifestyle and other pressures on time, because there has been a loss. I think the research that has driven the creation of Nature Play has discovered that there is a need for people to be reconnected, and that there is a disconnect, particularly from young people, from natural areas and the results of that. So this actually has a longer term benefit in terms of connecting people, and we would expect that we would have increased visitation per se as a result of a weekend's loss in revenue, and that may well be made up over the longer term.

[3.00 pm]

Mr P. Sharp: If I can just add to that, member, we had a short-term loss but we had a high level of inquiry in terms of annual park passes; we are aiming to increase our market penetration for annual

all-parks passes and particularly one-park passes. It is part of an overall marketing program to raise the awareness of our national parks and the importance they can play, particularly for young people, and it ties into the government's agenda to encourage people to get into our parks and enjoy them and connect with nature. So it is a multifaceted program. We have developed a new website and we are working with Nature Play and other service providers to promote our parks as destinations of choice.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I think it is great to get more people in the parks, but I am concerned that you have lost 30 grand in Yanchep park. What does it mean? Over the year, does it mean you will not be able to fund as many FTEs in the park, or have you gone to Treasury and asked for top-up funding to make up that loss?

Mr P. Sharp: We actually anticipate that it will result in a net increase in total revenue over the financial year, so for that particular weekend we take a cost. It would be associated with the normal cost of business if you advertise and you have costs there, but then you get more revenues coming in by way of business. We are anticipating that we are going to have an increase in visitation to the park, so there will not be a net adverse impact in terms of employment or other activities in the park.

The CHAIR: Is there a business case that outlines that these concessions will lead to X, and do you have targets of what you expect to actually achieve in increased annual visitation as a result of these measures?

Mr J. Sharp: There is not a specific business case, but there is an understanding that that is part of the cost of promoting and marketing parks. It is a way of making the public more aware but, much more importantly than just being aware, actually experience, which is a much stronger attachment to them. But we do do an analysis of what the impact of that is.

The CHAIR: I understand all of that, but it would strike me that if you are doing these measures, you would do it as part of a framework where you actually have a business case or a plan of some form. I do not disagree with the general statements that you are making that that might be the result, but I would have thought you would actually want to have a detailed plan with some targets of what you expect. Looking at your budget papers, I cannot see, in terms of your projected income or anything over the forward estimates, that you are projecting any dramatic growth in income. I might be wrong and I am just not picking it up.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: It is the opposite, in fact.

Mr J. Sharp: Our expectation is we will continue and we have been able to demonstrate an increase in park revenue over the last 10 years, and it is a relatively significant increase in park revenue each year. It is part of awareness and the marketing of the parks to do that. But that is not a single line item in terms of park revenue; it is revenue per se.

The CHAIR: Where does the income from national parks visitation get shown in your income statement on page 667; is it in "Sale of goods and services" or "Other revenue"?

Mr J. Sharp: I will need to ask Dr Byrne that.

Dr J. Byrne: The services of parks are in the sale of goods and services, yes, but that is just a base estimate model into the future as such. It will increase in future years with CPI. When CPI does not increase, generally we have a conservative estimate. We do not want to pay a big increase at this stage unless we are sure we are going to get it. When we are talking about \$30 000, it is almost insignificant in terms of the total revenue of \$16 million. If you have got another \$30 000, will that show up in that? We are talking about something at a much higher level of detail and a lower level of summary than what is in the *Budget Statements*.

The CHAIR: Are we able to get as supplementary information—I think you just made the claim that there has been an increase over the last 10 years—what that has been over the last 10 years, if

you have got it for the last 10 years, and what you are projected to grow over the forward estimates in both dollar terms and the number of visitations? I assume you would have it in both dollars and bodies.

Mr J. Sharp: Yes, we can provide that.

[Supplementary Information No B14.]

The CHAIR: Whilst we are doing that—we raised the issue earlier about the caravan parks and the issues there—what you expect to be the increase in visitation and revenue from that caravan parks strategy will all be part of supplementary information B14.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Just confirming, Mr Sharp did say that \$30 000 figure was simply for Yanchep alone, was it not? It was not across the state. If you can, by way of supplementary, provide me a list of the estimated amount forgone for the weekend for all the parks, that would be great.

Mr J. Sharp: Certainly.

[Supplementary Information No B15.]

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Can I check that what you have requested is projected income for —

The CHAIR: The history of income and visitation at national parks in the past 10 years and going forward over the forward estimates, and also what the projected increase in income is as a result of the caravan and camping strategy and visitation in both dollar and number terms. Then Hon Stephen Dawson sought some further information, which is B15.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: In terms of the total cost of services in your income statement on page 667—no let me come back to that.

The CHAIR: I was going to ask one around page 667. In the out years, your total cost of services declined, but it would appear that it is declining mainly in the area of supplies and services. Are you able to give us any idea as to what causes that decline in supplies and services over the forward estimates—what it is that is declining?

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: I could not have put it better myself.

The CHAIR: Is that what you were going to ask? Great minds think alike!

Mr J. Sharp: I will ask Dr Byrne if he can answer that.

Dr J. Byrne: This year there is a procurement reduction of \$4.5 million. Treasury has the view that procurement can be done more efficiently and it is specifically built in there. However, the total cost of service does not really show a significant decline over that time. But you are correct that there is some decline in the procurement component.

The CHAIR: So that is not specifically for any individual program or procurement; it is just you are expected to generally make savings across your procurement, so you have got to find ways of meeting that saving.

[3.10 pm]

Dr J. Byrne: Yes, as I said, Chair, it is really across the entire department, including externally funded works where we expect the procurement costs to decline.

The CHAIR: So my comments earlier about doing more with less!

Dr J. Byrne: That is true!

The CHAIR: I was going to look at two different areas. One is in your science area where you had a number of redundancies in terms of senior research scientists, science support officers, apiary coordinators, conservation employees, principal marine planners, research scientists, ecologists and sustainable resource managers. It strikes me that that is a fair chunk of your science knowledge that you have lost through redundancy. I might be wrong and you might be able to correct me and say

no, it is insignificant. How are you managing without those resources? Are there programs and plans or research that you are now no longer doing, or are you just asking those that are still in the agency to achieve greater efficiencies; and, if so, what are you doing to ensure that they are able to achieve those efficiencies?

Mr J. Sharp: The voluntary severance scheme was applied across the entire agency, so it was not just in one area.

The CHAIR: I was focused on the science; I am happy to come to your promotions and public relations in a minute, Mr Sharp!

Mr J. Sharp: It was across the board and obviously we set criteria in relation to that, where it would have the lowest impact on productivity and would give us the best returns in relation to our front-line services. It was not applied to any one specific program or activity; therefore, it is not one area of business as such or one specific scientific endeavour that was impacted. I think we have worked at making sure that we continue to deliver in the science area those specific programs; we have not diminished any programs or any activities of any significance in that space, but Dr Byrne might be able to answer that as the director of science.

Dr M. Byrne: Science was an area that we looked at to say that we need to really make sure that our science is targeted at our highest priority areas. We identified the lowest priority areas or areas where we had a number of staff where if we reduced one of them, we could still deliver on the same kind of areas. There has been a shift in science and technology, obviously, over the last 10 to 20 years, so, again, we focused on areas that were at lower priority in the current environment and maybe where technology has overtaken—those kinds of things—so those roles are not required. So we very much did it on a prioritisation process and we have not reduced any of the explicit science programs in terms of the types of areas that we are doing.

The CHAIR: I find it hard to believe, to be quite honest, without some change in what you are delivering and producing at the end of it that you are telling me that there were 10 people in there who were effectively redundant. So, unless you have bought new technology that allows the one that remains to be more efficient or you have cut back on what they are able to produce, there must be some impact as a result of the loss of 10 people. There must be some impact or you have done something else rather than just saying to the person who is there, “I now want you to do the work of two people, and really you didn’t need two of you.” I cannot believe an organisation like yours would have allowed it to go for a long time where there were two people doing the work of one person. I mean, I know the pressures you have been under!

Dr M. Byrne: No, we have not had two people! As things evolve and as new technology and things come on board, you can actually reduce your field component of things. Camera traps have come on board in terms of being a more effective way of monitoring populations compared to extensive field surveys, so, you know, there is new technology that is coming on that means your field component is to be less.

The CHAIR: That would then suggest that you have bought extra camera traps.

Dr M. Byrne: We have had a program of looking at how we can actually undertake monitoring much more effectively with cameras, and remote-sensing cameras are very effective in picking up monitoring, compared to very laborious time frames of having people in the field actually trapping and things. So that is one area, definitely, where technology has changed how we do things.

The CHAIR: So how much have you spent on new technology to replace that—using that as the example—and allow you to be more efficient in that area in the last couple of years and going forward?

Dr M. Byrne: I do not have those details at my fingertips.

The CHAIR: I think the other Dr Byrne —

Dr J. Byrne: Putting this in the context, there were 45 voluntary severances of whom three were research scientists, all Perth-based. They were not disproportionate to the size of the function.

The CHAIR: I understand that, but the nature of science too, the research functions—most people have areas of specialty and the like, that is why I find it hard to believe how you can even take out three and not have some impact on what you are actually producing, and you are saying to us that is not going to have an impact on what you produce.

Mr J. Sharp: Just putting that again in context, in terms of just our annual turnover of staff, there are people who are moving all the time in relation to that. I think Dr John Byrne can correct me, but I think we have a turnover of something like eight per cent of our staff, which is low by, I think, general standards, but there is still that significant proportion of people moving through the system and a proportion of those in science and other areas. It is a matter of how you replace them and sometimes we are continually replacing people with a different set of skills and a different set of priorities and capacities. So it is a dynamic process. A reduction of a very small proportion around that means you reappportion work and you actually direct skills to different areas, so that is the way in which it is managed in a dynamic way within that context.

The CHAIR: Dr Byrne, were you trying to add something then?

Dr J. Byrne: Again, putting it in context, when the Premier announced this, he said this is an opportunity not simply to abolish the people by position, but people who are not as productive as they should be. I do not want to talk about scientists, but the 45 people were selected from a much larger number of people and we did not let the exceptionally good performers go, I assure you!

The CHAIR: I see you are still here, Dr Byrne!

Mr J. Sharp: He was refused!

The CHAIR: Is the other thing not, though, that your total employee budget is reduced as a result of those redundancies, because you are trying to suggest that natural attrition would see people leave? What was the total salary value of the people who were made redundant and what was your annual salary component reduced by?

Mr J. Sharp: It was the same figure, so in other words, it was a non-replacement scheme and it was in the order of \$4.5 million. Again, Dr John Byrne can correct it.

Dr J. Byrne: The cost was \$4.5 million for the government, but our budget was not reduced by that amount.

The CHAIR: So how much was your budget reduced by?

Dr J. Byrne: It was not reduced by that amount. There was no one-to-one connection between the budget and the severance scheme. What the severance scheme intended to do was help the agency cope with the budget reductions that were applied across government at this time—for example, the efficiency dividend, specific program reductions that we had or the salary cap. If we had all of those various things, it would reduce the amount of expenditure available to us. Then we had the voluntary severance scheme to allow us to meet those budget targets, but our budget was not reduced by voluntary severances.

The CHAIR: Is there a figure of how much your budget was reduced by as a result or is it simply that salary cap that is the reduction in your budget?

Dr J. Byrne: In our case the salary cap reduction is not the significant factor, it is more the efficiency dividends that are disclosed in this and previous budget statements.

The CHAIR: Before I move off, something like the apiary coordinator that was made redundant, what did that person do previously?

Mr J. Sharp: We administer licences for apiarists and that was the responsibility of that officer who handled that program with another officer—and Mr Peter Sharp can answer that—so that work gets picked up by other people and is maintained.

[3.20 pm]

Mr P. Sharp: Yes, I have rearranged workloads within existing staff so the apiary licensing functions that we undertake are picked up through our licensing and leasing unit. The work is still being undertaken.

The CHAIR: As the shadow minister for agriculture and food I have a particular interest in that area. In the public relations visitor servicing area, has it led to any reduction in the publications that you will be doing?

Mr J. Sharp: No, it has not. We have actually maintained the level of publications and we have significantly improved the quality of the publications that we are producing at the moment.

The CHAIR: Are there any other questions from members?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I have one more question that relates to joint management. Obviously, the department has had a policy of implementing joint management of national parks for the past few years. Can you provide me with some figures on what money has been spent on joint management? I know there is some happening in the Kimberley but is it happening elsewhere, or is any of the money being spent elsewhere?

Mr J. Sharp: I will ask Mr Peter Sharp to talk about specifics in a moment. Joint management is being pursued in relation to parks, and we had one major joint management agreement coming out of the marine park process with the Dambimangari people at Camden Sound. We do not specifically allocate funds to joint management. When we enter into management arrangements for a park as such, we enter into negotiations using our existing staff and resources, but when we strike an Indigenous land use agreement we make sure those components are being reflected in terms of outcomes. It is not specifically budgeted for in that sense, but it is the way we go about doing business. In terms of the additional budget though, a significant proportion of the Kimberley science and conservation strategy and the implementation of both marine and terrestrial outcomes will be invested in joint management.

Mr P. Sharp: Joint management has arisen through the amendments to the Conservation and Land Management Act, which was a requirement as a result of the state entering into agreements for the Miriuwung-Gajerrong Ord final agreement, the Yawuru and, in the first instance, the Burrup and Maitland Industrial Estates Agreement with the Murujuga. The amendments to the act then put in a framework so we can formalise joint management arrangements. So we have formal agreements with the MG, the Yawuru, and the Murujuga Aboriginal Corporation to manage the parks within their native title areas and, as Mr Sharp said, we are negotiating other arrangements, and we have also finalised an agreement with Dambimangari in the Camden Sound area. We are in the process of negotiations in relation to the proposed marine parks and the greater Kimberley national park, which are on the agenda. As well as that, there are negotiations on foot in the south west through the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council and the six claim groups such as the Yued et cetera. There are likely to be joint management outcomes arising from the settlement of those native title claims and, from time to time, we enter into negotiations on a case-by-case basis with Aboriginal groups to engage in joint management over particular areas. An example is with the Malgana people around Shark Bay. When we added Dirk Hartog Island and created a national park there was an undertaking that we would start engaging in joint management arrangements over the bulk of the World Heritage area. These things take time but they are gradually rolling out. It is quite an exciting initiative for us and it will be very beneficial for Aboriginal economic and community engagement into the future.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: It is a very important policy so congratulations, and I am pleased to hear that it is not just the Kimberley that is benefitting but other areas also.

The CHAIR: Any further questions members? If not, I will read the closing statement. The committee will forward any additional questions it has to you via the minister in writing in the next couple of days together with the transcript of evidence, which includes the questions 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 email them to the committee as soon as possible after the hearing. On behalf of the committee, thank you all very much for your attendance.

Hearing concluded at 3.25 pm
