

Division 43: Swan River Trust, \$5 257 000 -

Mr Dean, Chairman.

Dr Edwards, Minister for the Environment and Heritage.

Mr G.S. Ticehurst, Manager Finance and Administration, Department of Environmental Protection.

Mr R.F. Payne, Chief Executive Officer, Water and Rivers Commission: Acting Chief Executive Officer, Department of Environmental Protection.

Mr D. Miller, Acting Manager, Swan River Trust.

Mrs EDWARDES: I refer the minister to the output management plans on page 703 of the *Budget Statements*. The 2001-02 budget is less than the appropriation for 2000-01; there is an adjustment of \$66 000. Will the minister outline whether there is a major reduction in funding for management plans, particularly as there will be a growth in population - as the minister has recognised elsewhere - and a need to look after particular catchments?

Dr EDWARDS: I will take advice on that question; however, I understand that money is coming from other agencies, so it is not quite as it appears.

Mr MILLER: We are entering into the precinct policy planning with the Department for Planning and Infrastructure, which has provided 50 per cent of the funding. There is no reduction in our budget; however, the total project cost is split between the Swan River Trust and the Department for Planning and Infrastructure.

Mrs EDWARDES: Will your department hand over \$66 000 to the Department for Planning and Infrastructure?

Mr MILLER: Yes.

Mr EDWARDS: I refer to significant issues and trends on page 689 of the *Budget Statements*. The Swan River Trust has admitted that the growth of population and associated developments is a cause of more pressure being placed on the Swan River. In that case, why has funding for the Swan River Trust decreased for the current year?

Dr EDWARDS: The reduction in funding is due to the number of research and development projects that have been completed; for example, trials of oxygenation in the Swan River and a trial of Phoslock, which is a secret recipe substance that binds phosphorus and helps to stop algal blooms.

Mr MILLER: The first phase of the Swan-Canning clean-up program action plan was to confirm the usefulness or otherwise of a number of techniques for maintaining the health of the waterway. The projects were scheduled to be short-term projects and their continuation was subject to their outcomes. The technique of oxygenation works; however, for it to be operational in the Swan River, the scale would need to be increased 10 times the amount of the pilot program, and the health of the Swan River is not such that that is necessary. That project is in our toolbox, and we can develop and expand it further if and when it becomes necessary to oxygenate the Swan River. However, at the moment, we do not think it is necessary to do that in the Swan River, as distinct from the Canning River, where we are continuing to use oxygenation and, this year, we will continue to use Phoslock.

Mr McRAE: I refer to the major initiatives for 2001-02 on page 705 of the *Budget Statements*. The first dot point refers to the commencement of a four-year program of shoreline restoration and repair and maintenance of shoreline protection works. Will the minister identify and explain the resources that will be allocated to this new program and what that program aims to implement over this year and the out-years?

Dr EDWARDS: The shoreline restoration project is an election commitment to provide \$500 000 over four years. The Government intends to have that funding matched by local governments and other groups so that we get the best value from the dollar. The project will cost \$125 000 per year for four years. The Government intends that the Swan River Trust will work with local governments to get them to put in capital works money at the same time so that we get better projects at each site. The sites for 2001-02 are the John Tonkin and W.W. Wayman Reserves at East Fremantle, Bayview Park in Mosman Park, the Lilac Hill Reserve in the City of Swan, the Canning and Mt Henry Bridges and Ashfield Parade in Bassendean. The sites have been chosen from a priority list compiled by the Swan River Trust over a long time. The trust will want to demonstrate successful results with the first five projects to try to encourage not only local governments but also community and school groups to be actively involved. Everybody likes the Swan and Canning Rivers. Much work has been done in the Swan-Canning clean-up program; however, the clean-up of the foreshore lagged behind. Some of the vegetation, behind the vegetation on the river banks that naturally falls into the river, must be replaced.

[5.30 pm]

Mrs Cheryl Edwardes; Dr Judy Edwards; Mr Tony McRae; Mr John Hyde; Mr Paul Omodei; Dr Janet Woollard

Mr HYDE: I refer to output 3 on page 703. There is a substantial increase in the amount allocated to management plans compared with last year's budget. The reason for that significant variation, on my reading of the budget papers, is the development and piloting of the precinct policy plan. Can the minister provide more details of what that plan will entail and how the extra money will be spent?

Dr EDWARDS: I will give some brief information and get others to fill in the detail. Precinct policy plans are a very good idea. Their aim is to examine a precinct and establish what can and should be undertaken there. The Swan River Trust, the relevant local government authority and the Department for Planning and Infrastructure have examined what should be included in precinct plans and where they should be developed. I believe that two are almost ready for launch. Mr Miller will elaborate on them.

Mr MILLER: This work arises out of a landscape plan for the management area that was prepared by the Swan River Trust a few years ago. The landscape plan documented the character of 24 existing precincts in the management area. It is now the intention to prepare precinct policy plans so that the character determined for each of those precincts can be maintained in the future. The plans will operate both in the Swan River Trust management area and in a visual amenity envelope that extends beyond it. The plans will be implemented through a combination of decision making by the Swan River Trust and the incorporation of some of the planning into local town planning schemes. We have completed two pilot programs, one at Fremantle and one at the City of Swan, which are now being finalised. We are also in the process of finalising a guideline manual for the preparation of precinct policy plans. We will be approaching local governments to ask them to put up their hands to collaborate with us on the production of other precinct policy plans. It is proposed that the community has input in the preparation of those plans through workshops and when a draft plan is prepared the community will again have a shot at them at the draft stage.

Mr HYDE: I appreciate what the minister is saying through her adviser. However, how exactly will the local government and community have a chance to be involved in the ongoing development of the plans? Obviously, the Claisebrook catchment group in my electorate is a good group, because the catchment goes straight into the Swan River there. Rather than duplicate plans, does the Government plan to incorporate those groups in the system?

Dr EDWARDS: I will ask Mr Miller to answer that.

Mr MILLER: The nature of this planning is somewhat different from catchment management. Precinct policy plans are intended to deal with the visual envelope along the river, not with the broader catchment issues, which are nutrient and catchment function based. Precinct policy plans deal with the close river environment, recreational amenity opportunities and the visual envelope of the river. Participation of the community in the preparation of those plans will be through the development of focus groups, and catchment groups that have a close association with the river are likely to be invited to join. Precinct policy plans will not duplicate the catchment management planning referred to by the member.

Mr OMODEI: My question relates to output 2 regarding the regulation of riverside development. I noticed that the Water Corporation budget for infill sewerage has been cut by \$25 million. How will that cut impact on the quality of water in the Swan and Canning Rivers, bearing in mind obviously that significant ongoing ground water pollution will flow from septic tanks in that catchment?

Dr EDWARDS: The Water Corporation has a hierarchy for what happens first in its infill sewerage program, which I guess the member for Warren-Blackwood designed. From memory, environmental considerations were either first or second on that hierarchy. The Water Corporation has more than broken the back of that first need and believes that it has managed all those environmental issues. I understand that there will be very little impact on the environment from the cut in the Water Corporation's budget, although I will get more information on that as it is a cut from the Water Corporation's budget, not the Swan River Trust's budget. The cut will not show up immediately, because a lot of planned work is already in progress. Plans and drawings are completed a number of years before physical work occurs. I ask the CEO to add to that.

Mr PAYNE: One of the big issues of long-term water quality improvement in the Swan River is managing urban drainage, both nutrient run off from lawns, etc. Infill sewerage is important, but urban drainage control is equally important. Currently the Water and Rivers Commission is attempting to revitalise the management of arterial drainage and the issues of nutrient control and run off. In the longer term, along with natural resource management in the catchment, these will be the two main thrusts that control the quality of water in the Swan River. We are, therefore, winding up our efforts on arterial drainage and retreating a little on the speed of infill sewerage.

Mr OMODEI: Is the minister saying that there will be no significant impact on the Swan and Canning Rivers as a result of the cut in the infill sewerage budget?

Dr EDWARDS: That is my understanding.

Mrs Cheryl Edwardes; Dr Judy Edwards; Mr Tony McRae; Mr John Hyde; Mr Paul Omodei; Dr Janet Woollard

Mr OMODEI: I suggest that the budgetary cut will impact on the environment in country towns that may not have been on the Water Corporation's hierarchy list, such as - I am being parochial - Nannup and Northcliffe in my electorate that have significant ground water pollution issues. This is a short-sighted policy.

Dr EDWARDS: I can explain that; however, again, this does not relate to this set of budget papers. First, it is not so much a cut as a deferral. The total amount will be spent, but over a longer period, and there is a good reason for doing that. A number of small business people, who have built up their businesses, rely on this type of work. Many of the big entities that came in at the beginning of infill sewerage work do not exist any more. However, a number of medium and smaller businesses do a lot of infill sewerage work. I was worried when I was the minister responsible for the Water Corporation that the program went until 2004 and then stopped. Although there is a cut now at this end of the budget, it is better that it taper down.

The member's comment on Nannup is interesting. When I visited Nannup, people complained to me about having to connect to infill sewerage and the consequent rise in rates. I agree with the member for Warren-Blackwood that it is an environmental issue. However, it is also a vexed issue for the people who live in those communities. A number of people in country communities complain that they do not want it and are happy to have their septic tanks pumped out.

Mr OMODEI: There is no doubt that a problem exists with the gross rental value system of allocating rates in small towns with small businesses and low incomes. However, the truth is that the main street and commercial areas of those towns must be sewered to clean up the bulk of the problem. The people at the top of the hill in Nannup will probably never be connected to infill sewerage. Some of their fears were stirred up during the election campaign. However, these important issues must be addressed. Someone living in a small country town should not be treated differently from someone living in a major regional centre or the city.

[5.40 pm]

Dr WOOLLARD: I am very pleased to hear that the erosion between the Canning and Mt Henry Bridges will be dealt with because it is a serious problem with the footpath one foot from the embankment along some parts of the foreshore. I may be looking in the wrong section, but I cannot find any reference to funding of the project to return the black swans to the Swan River. My second question is one that I have brought to the attention of the minister before, and relates to the proposed golf driving range, which the City of Melville plans to support. The end of the driving range would go into the marine park at Attadale, which is attached to the area in which the bring back the black swans project is meant to be located. Thousands of migratory birds also visit that area, especially in the months of October and November. Has the Swan River Trust been approached on this issue and if so, how is it dealing with this issue?

Dr EDWARDS: The project to bring back the black swans is listed under the budget of the Water and Rivers Commission. I will ask the chief executive officer to make a brief comment on that project and then I will ask Darryl Miller to comment about the driving range to which the member referred.

Mr PAYNE: Thank you, minister. I am not sure how much money has been spent on that project, but money is being spent and the Water and Rivers Commission is trawling for potential sponsors to make it a long-term endeavour. The reason the Water and Rivers Commission is doing it is that it wants to link this project to the long-term indication of how the city is being fitted around the river and the environment. The swans will provide an indicator of environmental health. The money is in the Water and Rivers Commission budget. We are pursuing it. No major sponsor has been signed up at this time. However, some good irons are in the fire.

Dr EDWARDS: Darryl Miller will comment on the marine park in Attadale.

Mr MILLER: We have not been formally approached about the golf driving range. The development will come under the Swan River Trust Act 1988 and will require approval from the Swan River Trust. We cannot really comment on it until we receive a formal proposal.