

Division 37: Peel Development Commission, \$1 738 000 -

Ms Guise, Chairman.

Mr McGinty, Attorney General; Minister for Justice and Legal Affairs; Electoral Affairs; Peel and the South West.

Mr K. Fisher, Acting Chief Executive Officer.

Mr OMODEI: Madam Chair. Minister, page 606, significant trends, down the bottom. The last three or four dot points there talk about the levels of adult and youth unemployment and it appears to be rising. The last dot point talks about, "The commission acknowledges the importance to continue to encourage the expansion of existing businesses and attract new businesses." I could not agree more. How do you attract more business when this budget appears to be going down from the total budget of \$1.9 million down to \$1.7 million?

[2.50 pm]

Mr MCGINTY: If I could make first a general comment on the Peel region and the issues that you have rightly alluded to there and ask Mr Fisher then to comment on the particulars of the budget. It is often said about Mandurah and the Peel region that it is the tale of two cities. For people driving through from Perth quite often it is the fairly up-market canal estates and what appears to be a thriving community economically that people see. The reality on the ground there when you meet with the various community support groups, the welfare groups, is one of a very high level of unemployment and social deprivation for a large proportion of the population in the Peel region and that is one of the great challenges for the Peel Development Commission, to reconcile those two extremes.

It is more pronounced I think in Mandurah than I have seen in any other country town or city in Western Australia, that discrepancy between the haves and the have nots. I appreciate the fact that you have picked up on that point of one of the social problems in the region. A lot of what we want to do in the Peel region is very much social policy oriented whereas, for instance, in your own area, member for Warren-Blackwood, the overriding imperative is economic development in the former timber towns. In terms of the specifics of the budget if I could ask Mr Fisher to comment on that.

Mr FISHER: Thanks, Minister. The situation with the Peel Development Commission is that the commission works in partnership with a whole range of other agencies, local government, etc, and it is a matter of focus in respect to this matter. Certainly around about 40 per cent of people that have jobs in the Peel region who have those jobs outside the Peel region. There is a lot of commuting backwards and forwards to Perth. The commission is trying to establish a large industrial park. Being one of the latest regions established, there is a lot of infrastructure not in place and we are working very hard to do that. The commission also in partnership is looking to attract other funds from federal Government and other players to help develop the region. It certainly is a very high priority for the commission and the commission is working very hard in that area.

Mr OMODEI: On page 606 again, Minister, the purchase of outputs, the severance of the former CEO John Styants, was that done in the previous financial year or does it come into this financial year and what impact has it had on PDC budgets?

Mr MCGINTY: Yes, it does come into this current financial year. I lost track of time there briefly. I thought it was in the previous one but I am assured that it was in the current financial year, and I will ask Mr Fisher to comment on the impact on the budget.

Mr FISHER: The commission has allocated an amount of money for the payout of Mr John Styants, the former director of the commission. At the present time the commission had budgeted for that severance to an extent of his payout less \$26 000 which we are negotiating with Treasury at this stage.

Mr OMODEI: Minister, does that appear in the salaries and allowances and superannuation lines on page 612? It seems to me the estimates there for salaries and allowances and superannuation go down. I would have thought that Mr Styants' payout would have impacted on that and made it a far greater amount.

Mr FISHER: John Styants was employed with the commission for six and a half years and he instructed the commission to pay that payment in the new financial year. The situation there is that the commission had allocated that through the accrued payment of allowances and, as I mentioned before, that was allowed for within the budget of the commission.

Mr MCGINTY: Does that answer the member's question? I do not know whether there was enough detail in that. We are happy to provide more if you want it.

Mr OMODEI: If some more detail could be provided, by way of supplementary information, as to what the severance pay was and the superannuation pay.

Mr FISHER: Certainly. There is no problem with that at all.

Mr McGINTY: We undertake to provide by way of supplementary information the details of the severance payment paid to Mr John Styants.

Mr OMODEI: Minister, my very good friend and colleague the member for Dawesville has asked me to put to you the question that the Peel region is the second largest population of all the regions and receives the lowest allocation of funds and asks for justification for that. The sorts of figures quoted to me were that they get something like \$5 million in capital works compared to the south west \$33 million. I am obliged to ask that question because he is a very good friend and colleague, but I must say I am a little more parochial toward the south west than the Peel.

The CHAIRMAN: The Chair will take up the point with the member for Dawesville for the sake of her electorate.

Mr FISHER: Certainly. The Peel commission virtually has always been at the bottom end of any allocations, whichever Government is in power. This is no real exception. The minister has alluded the problems facing the Peel region. I have had a meeting with the member for Dawesville and outlined exactly the situation the Peel region is in, not just with the south west region, but with all other regions. The commission is trying to focus on attracting further funding to help us with a number of infrastructure projects within the region. I can only restate this has been a situation since I have been involved with the commission, nearly 10 years, and it always has been the poor cousin, particularly to the south west, and that is a benchmark for the commission to aim for. It certainly has the lion's share of the funds this particular year and we are trying to set about having a more even-handed approach so that there are more funds coming to the Peel region and locality.

Mr OMODEI: Thank you. I think you have done that very well, considering you are a former south wester. Could I also ask, minister, on page 609 under "Major Achievements for 2000-01", I note halfway down there that the development commission secured geographical indication for the Peel Wine Region from the Australian Wine and Brandy Corporation. Is it intended under the major initiatives a line could be added seeking to make submissions to the Commonwealth Government on a wine equalisation tax? I think the minister would certainly ingratiate himself with the Peel Wine Region and also the other regions of the State. Is that an option, Minister, for the regions to take up?

Mr FISHER: It certainly is. We would endorse that option.

Mr OMODEI: The last one I had and again it would be remiss of me not to raise the question and it appears on page 611 was under "Major Initiatives for 2001-02", the second-last dot point there at the top of page 611, talking about assistance for the retention of the Peel Thunder within the Western Australian Football League for 2002. Again my colleague would, I am sure, have raised that issue. What are the inhibitions as far as keeping Peel in the WAFL is concerned and what can the development commission do to assist in keeping it in the WAFL?

Mr McGINTY: If I can make a preliminary comment, the last time I went to Mandurah I visited the Peel Thunder Football Club and offered them every support that I could, notwithstanding the view of my own club's president that they ought be expelled from the competition.

Mrs EDWARDES: It would be an absolute tragedy.

Mr McGINTY: The football commission clubs, other than Peel, are very backward looking. They cannot see the enormous benefit that flows from locating a football team in one of the fastest growing areas of the State which has produced some very good footballers out of that region. When I was there I met a number of the younger footballers who were playing for Peel Thunder and what they had there was something which they most probably would not have pursued if they had to travel up to Fremantle at the end of work each or something like that. They are now developing this real local football talent.

I then presented to the House a petition containing just under 7 000 signatures from people primarily living in the Peel region in support of the retention of Peel Thunder and my understanding that it is a decision for the presidents of the clubs, in other words, for the WA Football Commission club presidents to decide. The matter is being legally challenged in the courts. I have not been in a position to make any assessment of the likely successor otherwise of their legal action, but I think it would be a very backward step to exclude Peel Thunder, particularly given they did so well this year. They seem to be hitting their straps now, but Mr Fisher might be able to add some further information to that.

[3.00 pm]

Mr FISHER: The commission initiated the establishment of Peel Thunder in the Peel region and it was done for two reasons - one for the junior footballers in the area and one to establish a recognition of the Peel region itself - and it has effectively done both those things. The commission is a strong supporter. The region is growing at a

phenomenal growth rate and I share the minister's comments. It is such a wonderful acquisition for the Peel region and we will do everything we can to help its retention in the Peel region.

Mr OMODEI: I think, Minister, you hit on it very clearly. I think maybe Peel Thunder were winning too many games this year, but certainly I thank you for that.

The CHAIRMAN (Mr McRae): Is that part of the appropriation debate?

Mr OMODEI: Yes. It is actually on page 611. I have already referred to that, but I think it is a worthwhile question and I am sure the member for Dawesville will be happy about that. The last question, Mr Chairman, is again on page 611, the next dot point, assisting in the establishment of a wide network between local government authorities in the sharing of IT resources. What kinds of IT resources are you sharing?

Mr FISHER: The commission has been very active in the IT area in respect of collaborating with the five local government authorities in the area. Some of them had no IT services several years ago. The commission has actually been able to pull those local government authorities together and link them so you can have on-payments as far as rates or concerned or whatever it might be, fees for errant dogs of the like, so that network is in place and there is a whole other number of strategies in community facilities, recreation facilities within each of those communities, so the commission is working very actively in that area with those five local government authorities.

Mr OMODEI: Mr Chairman, it appears you are doing a very good job. It looks like you just need some more money.

Mr FISHER: I would agree with that.

The CHAIRMAN: The question is that in respect of division 37, appropriation be recommended. The question is resolved in the affirmative. Thank you very much to the advisers for this division.