

Division 18: Wheatbelt Development Commission, \$1 297 000 -

Mr Andrews, Chairman.

Mr Logan, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Midwest, Wheatbelt and Great Southern.

Mr D.J. Singe, Chief Executive Officer.

Mr McNEE: I refer to dot point three on page 320. The Wheatbelt Development Commission administered the inaugural round of the wheatbelt regional development scheme, which involves funding for regional development projects. Can the parliamentary secretary throw some light on who applied for funds? Were they private individuals or community groups? How many were successful and what level of funding did the successful applicants receive? I am not complaining about it; I would just like some information on it.

Mr SINGE: From memory, the total number of applications was 53; it was certainly in excess of 50. The applicants consisted of a wide mixture of organisations. The total amount of applications was valued at \$1.6 million for the available \$400 000. We were oversubscribed by a ratio of four to one for the funds that were available. Given that our region has 44 local governments and a very large number of small communities, the number of applications was to be expected. They were very diverse.

Mr McNEE: Will a list of the successful people be published? Is that list available?

Mr SINGE: Yes; it is available. All the successful applicants have been notified, and those who were unsuccessful also have been notified. The information is well and truly available and can be provided.

Mr McNEE: Can the parliamentary secretary provide that information?

Mr LOGAN: I will provide the information requested by the member on the wheatbelt regional development scheme.

[Supplementary Information No B52]

Mr GRYLLS: I refer to the total amount allocated to the Wheatbelt Development Commission on page 317. How much of the total will be allocated to grant funding this year? If the grant funding is not in that total, what amount is available for that funding?

Mr LOGAN: Items 46 and 135 at page 317 do not include the grants. The grants were announced last year by the minister and are for \$400 000 a year over a four-year period. They are to regional development commissions as part of the regional development strategy of the Labor Government. They are not highlighted in the figures before us.

Mr SWEETMAN: Each development commission is getting an additional \$400 000 a year in discretionary income that it can allocate to various projects. Is there any expectation in the commission that it may derive additional funds through the regional investment fund? The legislation that covers the fund gives encouragement to regional development commissions to further facilitate other development projects.

Mr LOGAN: There is a significant increase in the income of the Great Southern Development Commission as a result of capital contributions through the out years. There has been a 4.7 per cent increase in appropriations for the Wheatbelt Development Commission in 2001-02. In addition to that, \$400 000 a year is available as part of the regional development strategy. Whether it is by way of appropriation or additional grants, the regional development commissions have had significant increases in their funding.

Mr SWEETMAN: As with so many projects in the Gascoyne region, the money is warehoused with the commission. From there, it goes to a project even though the commission has little to do with facilitating a project. It simply looks after an account for the money and reports back to the minister. I can see that in the future the commission will have to do much more work on behalf of local government or industry to make applications to secure funds from the regional investment fund. It will have a greater role in facilitating and overseeing the development of various initiatives in the area. I think that is a positive thing for the commission because the commission will then go beyond being an agency that does a lot of lobbying and consulting. It will make the transition to becoming an agency that undertakes significant work as a consequence of the regional investment fund.

Mr LOGAN: I am not too sure about the Gascoyne, but I can say that the investment in the foreshore development in Geraldton is not coming through a regional development commission. It is provided by separate capital funding through the Department for Planning and Infrastructure. The member will hear about capital investments in Albany that will come through a regional development commission. The Wheatbelt Development Commission is very excited about its information technology project. It is a significant project for the wheatbelt.

Mr SINGE: The project uses a mobile trailer to take current information technology opportunities around the wheatbelt for people to experience. The commission has been given approval under an Act of Parliament to obtain appropriate sponsorship. The project has a significant impact in our budget for 2002-03. The project is so big that it affects our figures a little. To the best of our knowledge the project is unique in Australia and is transferable to other regions in Western Australia and to other commissions. In the context of the commission's involvement in funded projects and projects for which funding is sought, we are always a partner organisation. We are usually aware of an applicant's interest in a project and we are often involved in developing the concept in first place.

The appropriation was recommended.

Committee adjourned at 10.01 pm
