

Chairman; Ms Alannah MacTiernan; Mrs Cheryl Edwardes; Mr John Hyde; Mr Max Trenorden; Ms Katie Hodson-Thomas; Mr John D'Orazio; Mr Norm Marlborough

Division 46: Planning and Infrastructure, \$152 264 000 -

Mr A.D. McRae, Chairman.

Ms A.J. MacTiernan, Minister for Planning and Infrastructure.

Mr G.S. Martin, Director General.

Mr P. Frewer, Executive Director, Integrated Planning.

Mr A. Jamieson, Executive Director, Commercial and Asset Services.

Mr P.J. McNally, Director, Asset Management.

Mr W. Ielati, Director, Financial Planning.

Mr D.R. Forte, Executive Director, Regulatory and Regional Services.

Mr R.D. Farrell, Principal Policy Officer, Office of the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure.

Mr K. White, Policy Officer, Office of the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure.

The CHAIRMAN (Mr A.D. McRae): This estimates committee will be reported by Hansard staff. The daily proof *Hansard* will be published at 9.00 am tomorrow. The estimates committee's consideration of the estimates will be restricted to discussion of those items for which a vote of money is proposed in the consolidated fund. This is the prime focus of this committee. Although there is scope for members to examine many matters, questions need to be clearly related to a page number, item, program or amount within the volumes in preface to their question. For example, members are free to pursue performance indicators that are included in the budget statements while there remains a clear link between the questions and the estimates. It is my intention to ensure that as many questions as possible are asked and answered and that both questions and answers are short and to the point.

The minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee, rather than asking that the question be put on notice for the next sitting week. For the purpose of following up the provision of this information, I ask the minister, when this occurs, to clearly indicate to the committee what supplementary information she agrees to provide. I will then allocate a reference number. If supplementary information is to be provided, I seek the minister's cooperation in ensuring that it is delivered to the committee clerk by 11 June 2004, so members may read it before the report and third reading stages. If the supplementary information cannot be provided within that time, written advice is required of the day by which the information will be made available. Details in relation to supplementary information have been provided to both members and advisers. Accordingly, I ask the minister to cooperate with those requirements.

I caution members that if a minister asks that a matter be put on notice, it is up to the member to lodge the question on notice with the Clerk's office. Only supplementary information that the minister agrees to provide and that is registered according to the allocation of a reference number will be sought by 11 June 2004.

Just so that we get the nomenclature right, if members are seeking to pursue a matter with a follow-up inquiry, it will be called a further question, not a supplementary question, as is normally the case in question time. We will use the words "further question" or "supplementary information".

I propose, as is normal, to take a call list. If members would indicate when they are ready and want to seek the call, they will be accommodated.

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: I wonder whether I might make a very few preliminary remarks to set the budget in context.

The CHAIRMAN: I do not think it is possible at this stage.

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: It normally occurs.

The CHAIRMAN: With the concurrence of the committee, that is certainly available to the minister.

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: It is important to understand with the Department for Planning and Infrastructure budget that there have now been structural changes. Public transport services have now been taken from the DPI budget and appear in the budget of the Public Transport Authority. Since the last budget, crown land functions have been transferred from the former Department of Land Administration into the DPI and have become the land administrative services division of the DPI. We have lost much of our navy. We have transferred the on-water compliance functions and staff from the DPI to the Department of Fisheries, pursuant to machinery of government recommendations. We have done a lot to overcome some pretty systemic administrative and financial shortcomings that were in the old budgets. An independent functional review of the department is

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currently under way. We believe that this will ensure that as we move forward we get even more efficiencies and streamlining of the administration of the now mighty DPI.

The CHAIRMAN: I advise members that in this session we will be running through to 3.00 pm, including a lunch break from 1.00 to 2.00 pm. The committee is dealing with divisions 46, 47, 48 and 49. The management of time for each of those is in the hands of the committee.

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: Just on that point, to save us having vast squads of people here at one time, we have present all the people from the DPI, which is division 46. By 10.00 am the people from Main Roads will be here, which is division 47. By 11.00 am the Public Transport Authority will be here. We have asked the WA Planning Commission people to come after lunch. If members wish the attendance of any of those people to be brought forward, we can do it. However, I presume that is probably about the right time span that members would wish to spend on those divisions.

Mrs C.L. EDWARDES: As I understand it, that does not restrict or limit us in any way.

The CHAIRMAN: No, unless members wish to proceed to one of the latter divisions before the hourly allocations.

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: I am happy for them to go over. I am merely saying that the relevant personnel will be here at those times.

[9.10 am]

The CHAIRMAN: If members believe that they will move quickly to a later division, and the relevant advisers are not yet here, they should perhaps give an indication of that to the minister and the Chair.

Mr J.N. HYDE: Excuse me, Mr Chairman, can you turn on your microphone? We cannot hear you.

The CHAIRMAN: It is on.

Mr J.N. HYDE: Then speak up man!

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: Mr Chairman, seeing that we have the numbers, we could vote the committee down, if you like.

The CHAIRMAN: The point I make is that it is really in members' hands to time manage the schedule. The minister has indicated that the advisers for each of the four divisions will be here on an hourly basis. Members, the question is that division 46 be recommended.

Ms K. HODSON-THOMAS: I refer to the significant issues and trends on page 745. The minister will not be surprised that I will ask her something about boating. The second dot point on page 745 states -

Increased use of the State's waterways by commercial and recreational boaters requires a robust arrangement for ensuring improved safety and social and environmental outcomes.

I know that the minister intends to licence recreational boat users. I suspect that this should happen around 1 July this year. I know that the minister has embarked on discussions with the State Boating Council and that the Speaker chaired that consultation. I am also aware that many people who sit on the State Boating Council are unhappy with the way that has been developed. I know that the minister undertook a survey of all recreational boat users and received a significant response from them. I wonder whether the minister could outline the number of recreational boat users who replied to that survey, and how the minister intends to implement that system of licensing.

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: I hate to say this, but the member's first statement is incorrect; we have no intention of proceeding down the path of licensing. Our commitment is to honour the undertaking made by the coalition when it was in government. In 2000 the coalition Government signed off on a national agreement to have mandatory standards for competency training. Our approach is to honour that agreement and to put in place a scheme of mandatory competency standards for all recreational boat users. It is not licensing. We have to make sure that everyone understands that. Sixteen thousand people responded to the survey. That would certainly be the most representative sample that anyone has done of what recreational boat users in this State believe and support. The survey went out to around 75 000 recreational boat owners. As I said, 16 000 responded. That is a far better indication of what recreational boat users in this State believe than the vested interest of the Boating Industry Association of WA or Boating Western Australia. The support was very strong. More than 70 per cent of the 16 000 respondents indicated that they supported mandatory training or competency standards. That is basically our approach. We will move forward with that. We are trying to work out some of the details of how to implement it, the sorts of thresholds it will involve, the level of horsepower motors at which this will kick in,

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and the provisions we can provide, for example, for the recognition of prior learning. One thing that we have proposed is that people who have been registered boat owners for five years or more could sit a computerised aptitude test in order to get a certificate. I want to make it clear that this is certainly not licensing. It is about a person having a minimum standard of knowledge of what he is doing on the waterways. I note that when the member for Carine had responsibility for delivering the emergency position indicating radio beacon system she was very focused on boating and boating safety, and made many strong comments on that issue in Parliament. Those same safety messages apply, even more strongly, to the actual competence and knowledge of the people who operate boats. I am sure the member would know from her extensive contact with the boating industry that there is very strong feeling in the boating industry. Many recreational boat users are worried about the irresponsible behaviour and lack of knowledge of many other boat users, which put at risk the lives of not only those people but also those of all people who use the waterways.

Ms K. HODSON-THOMAS: Will it be a one-off fee?

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: This is what I say is most regrettable about the irresponsible -

Ms K. HODSON-THOMAS: I am just trying to clarify it.

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: I am talking about the irresponsible behaviour of the State Boating Council. We told the council that we had made a policy decision to move forward on this issue and to introduce minimum standards of competency. However, we told it that we would leave it absolutely open to the council to design the system. There would be maximum consultation. We said that we did not have a view about how this should be done and asked its members to tell us. Instead of getting anything sensible, two of the groups behaved in a way that betrayed their responsibilities. We have had to look at how we might do this ourselves. The idea is that if there is a BoatSmart course or -

Ms K. HODSON-THOMAS: TL3

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: Yes, TL3. We will prescribe certain courses that people are required to undertake, such as a BoatSmart or TL3 course. We are also considering giving those people who have been registered boat owners for an extended period the alternative of undertaking a computerised aptitude test similar to the test that is in place in some eastern States. We do not think the test itself is necessarily the most desirable way to go; however, we recognise that quite a number of people have been out there for a long time and may not want to go through -

Ms K. HODSON-THOMAS: What about the time lines, minister? Are you proposing that this will start on 1 July?

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: Absolutely not. We need to get legislation through. We are looking at this being implemented over a two to three-year period. The training regimes would not be in place to get everyone through those programs at the same time.

Ms K. HODSON-THOMAS: Will the fees collected from that fund the training?

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: There will be no fees. We will not be collecting fees. It will be the responsibility of people to undertake their own training. We will not be running BoatSmart or TL3 courses.

Ms K. HODSON-THOMAS: I have one final question. Will the Government be collecting a fee?

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: No, because it will not be a system of licensing. If a person is out on the water operating a boat that is above a certain capacity, that person will be required by law to have undertaken one of three things: a BoatSmart course, a TL3 course or a recognised interstate equivalent. That can be done by way of regulation. Various certificates can be added or, alternatively, a person will need to have done a certificate of competency to be given recognition of prior learning.

[9.20 am]

Ms K. HODSON-THOMAS: There must be an administration fee for that.

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: For which?

Ms K. HODSON-THOMAS: For doing that.

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: For doing what?

Ms K. HODSON-THOMAS: What I am trying to say is that if I own a boat and I want to go to the Department for Planning and Infrastructure and advise it that I have completed a certificate -

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Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: The member would not have to advise the DPI of that. However, people who operate a boat on the water need one of those certificates I just mentioned. It will be the operator's obligation to get a certificate.

Ms K. HODSON-THOMAS: Surely the operator would need to advise DPI that he had done one of those courses.

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: Not at all. The reason we are not going down that path is it would be far too easy for the Opposition or vested interests, such as the Boating Industry Association of Western Australia, to say that it is about revenue raising. It is not about revenue raising; it is about applying a minimum standard. The Government will take the least interventionist role. Boat operators will be obliged to have one of those certificates. If a person does not have a certificate, he would not get insurance. Various pressures will be put on boat operators. I imagine it would be most unlikely that an insurer would be prepared to insure a boat operator unless he undertook to demonstrate and make a commitment that the boat would be operated by people who were operating within the law.

Mr J.N. HYDE: The ninth dot point on page 744 of the *Budget Statements* refers to an increased emphasis being placed on community and industry involvement in planning and decision-making processes, especially by rural and regional stakeholders, and employing innovative involvement techniques that are designed to engage a wide cross-section of community to meet community expectations. Could the minister explain some of the new ways in which the community has been engaged in the Government's planning process?

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: I thank the member for that question. The Government is trying to develop a more participatory role for the public in decision making, particularly, but not exclusively, on planning issues. This is a very important approach to take for a number of reasons. More weight must be given to the notion of democracy. Democracy must be about more than ticking a ballot paper every four years. Also, from a practical point of view, with issues such as planning, unless there is broad community support, it is very difficult to put in place and deliver planning strategies that are necessary to ensure that we have a sustainable economy. Society has fractured - it has become more pluralistic - and our political institutions are underpinned by an adversarial culture. The media's focus is on conflict. The way the media operates is that unless a person takes an extreme position, the media is unlikely to give the oxygen of publicity to that person's concerns. People who want to rationally discuss a matter and raise issues will hardly get a guernsey on Sunday night television or on a talkback radio show. All these forces are moving towards the polarisation of the community, whereas we must get people to come together and listen to the concerns and viewpoints of others and to work through those issues to see to what extent they can find common ground. A huge mind-set change is needed. That can be an expensive and time-consuming process; it is on the fringe of many people's thinking at the moment. The Government's experience has been that whenever these processes have been in place, whether it was a road train summit in Katanning, a citizens jury in Albany or the big "Dialogue with the city" process that the Government undertook in Perth, the enthusiasm of the community involved in them has been extraordinary. One of the very pleasing outcomes of these processes is that people see that there is another way of looking at the world other than from their particular perspective. We have seen people's understanding of these issues grow and there is a preparedness to try to accommodate the legitimate interests and views of others. In some of these forums truckies, greenies and people from the Livestock Transporters Association of WA have sat together and gained a much better understanding of each other's perspectives. That is the way of the future. We must do more of it. All politicians are locked into an adversarial culture by virtue of the political structure in which they find themselves. That is why I never criticise my friend and colleague the member for Carine for her unrelenting attacks on me, because I know that is her job description, and I had to do that when I was in her position.

Mrs C.L. EDWARDES: We just got that down in writing!

Ms K. HODSON-THOMAS: You were much more aggressive than me.

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: If we are to progress and solve those problems, somewhere among that mix we must move beyond that and towards putting something into our democracy that is more consensus oriented.

Mr J.N. HYDE: As a follow-up, local governments also adopted many of these processes - perhaps even before the State Government. With regard to the minister's planning process and the successful dialogues through the road transport forums in the bush, I think that this week some funding or grants has been provided to some groups that want to get involved with the process. Sometimes members receive criticism from local government about cost shifting. Even though consultation must surely be a core activity of local government, am I correct that the Government is providing money for some consultation?

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: Absolutely. The Government has always said that to get the planning for Perth right, there must be a partnership between the State Government and local government. It is not something that the

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State Government can do by itself. The Government wants to work in partnership with local governments. During the "Dialogue with the city" process every local authority in the Perth-Peel region was invited to participate. From the dialogue emerged an overall steering group with two local government representatives and also a group of 14 local government people, half of whom were elected and half of whom were appointed officers. That group is working out how to translate the principles of dialogue into the local government setting. They are considering how we can move from the big picture down to the local level. This week, the Government has made up to \$500 000 available to the municipalities in the metropolitan area. They want to tackle some of the problems in their areas by undertaking a mini-dialogue. We think of the big picture and then let the local community know what must be done for Perth as a whole and ask how the community can implement those principles at a local level. Some local governments will want to focus on a particular town centre area and some will want to do something across their whole municipality. Others may wish to come together in a cluster, saying that they have a corridor that transverses three or four local authorities and that they wish to come together and work on that corridor. We will be very open and flexible, but we require the key principles enshrined in the community deliberative democracy process to be observed. It must involve a broad cross-section of the community, not just the usual suspects. There must be a focus on getting an exchange of views so that people do not just come in and argue from their own perspectives, but talk to each other and try to learn from each other. There must be a complete sharing and openness of information. We believe these key principles are necessary to give deliberative democracy substance. It has been well received by local government and we will see a lot of enthusiasm come out of it.

[9.30 am]

Mrs C.L. EDWARDES: Following on from that, referring to the same dot point on the same page about increased community consultation, I would like to refer to the process undertaken in the case of the greater Bunbury regional scheme. There is a lot of concern. I know that members of the community have met with the minister at my suggestion to go through some of the concerns they had raised with me. The concerns included that some of them never received the plans, and others only had 10 minutes to raise their issues. There are serious anomalies from the conservation viewpoint, whereby some of the property owners are doing an outstanding job in looking after their properties while the next-door neighbour is not doing such a good job. The person doing the right thing from an environmental perspective will be disadvantaged. He will lose his property, while the person who cleared his property will not.

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: Those anomalies are exactly the same as those that arose when the metropolitan region scheme or the Peel region scheme were implemented. People will always raise those concerns.

Mrs C.L. EDWARDES: The greater Bunbury region scheme is a huge undertaking.

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: So was the Peel region scheme.

Mrs C.L. EDWARDES: The greater Bunbury scheme covers a larger area. Some of the environmental assessments were done by desktop and others by looking over the fence. Can the Minister give me her timetable for what is to happen now, particularly following on from the very strong views she has just re-emphasised about community consultation? Without broad community support, it is very difficult to proceed with any plans.

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: Absolutely; I agree totally with the member. The region schemes are the work of the Western Australian Planning Commission; they are foursquare within the province of that body. The personnel from the WA Planning Commission are not here at the present time. If the member would like to raise this issue after the lunch break I will be more than happy to provide all that information at that time.

Mrs C.L. EDWARDES: I will raise that one again. I refer the minister to the second dot point on page 749, under the heading "Major Initiatives For 2004-05", and also to the second last dot point under the heading "Major Achievements For 2003-04", dealing with the affordable housing policy. In this month's edition of the *WA Property News* an article headed "Urban growth boundary spells disaster" refers to a survey of a considerable number of developers. Although it is said that the urban growth boundary arose out of the "Dialogue with the city" that I attended in Fremantle, the state sustainability strategy that came out several days after that meeting already incorporated an urban growth boundary. It was clearly part of the Government's policy.

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: That was a draft sustainability strategy, I believe.

Mrs C.L. EDWARDES: The article reads -

Affordability has been a key plank in the successful growth of Western Australia's economy. Affordability coupled with good employment prospects has largely driven one of the fundamental growth factors for population in the Perth Metropolitan Area.

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An urban growth boundary, a line drawn on a plan that is most likely outdated from the very moment any such plan is published, would be an enormous mistake. Experience shows that when in urban growth boundary was implemented in Melbourne, broadacre prices rose by 30% in a 6 month period and those price increases immediately flowed to the retail value of individual lots, significantly disenfranchising younger people and growing families from establishing their first home.

What would the minister do that is different from what is done in Melbourne, where the introduction of urban growth boundary has been found wanting in the affordability stakes?

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: Firstly, it is important to understand that the Government has made no commitment to introducing an urban growth boundary. Secondly, introduction of an urban growth boundary would have to be accompanied by very detailed policies about what is to be done inside that boundary. I have always said that an urban growth boundary in itself is a meaningless concept if there are no strategies to deal with growth inside the boundary. History has shown that those boundaries become politically unsustainable if there is no capacity to provide affordable accommodation inside the urban growth boundary. The focus on an urban growth boundary itself is not all that profitable; what is done to provide opportunities within the existing urban footprint will actually make a difference.

Mrs C.L. EDWARDES: Where did Melbourne go wrong?

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: I do not know the situation in Melbourne in detail, but I do know that if the boundary is just imposed it is an attempt to resolve the problem without really dealing with it. The focus must be on what can be done to stimulate growth within the existing urban framework. The local government, industry and community working groups are engaged in examining these processes at the moment. At the moment 60 per cent of the growth takes place on the urban fringe, and about 40 per cent within the existing urban footprint. Coming out of the dialogue, we believe that to move towards more sustainable outcomes we need to reverse those processes: to have 40 per cent of the growth on the urban fringe and 60 per cent on the network. I will also point out that, unlike other States, Perth has a metropolitan region scheme that, through its delineation of urban areas, operate as a de facto urban growth boundary. We certainly do not believe that the urban growth boundary is the solution to the problem. The solution is actually getting more sustainable levels of growth within the existing urban footprint.

Mrs C.L. EDWARDES: In the light of the minister's comments about the Western Australian Planning Commission, we will probably need staff from the commission in here by about 12 o'clock. I suggest that is convenient.

The CHAIRMAN: The member is suggesting that this committee will probably need to get to the Western Australian Planning Commission before the indicated time of 2.00 pm.

[9.40 am]

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: We will organise for them to come in at 12.30 pm.

Mrs C.L. EDWARDES: Possibly at 12 noon, if that is at all possible.

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: Can I ask that we have the agreement of the other committee members. That means that we will have Department for Planning and Infrastructure -

Mrs C.L. EDWARDES: We got agreement with the other members while the minister was talking earlier.

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: The DPI, Main Roads Western Australia and the Public Transport Authority of Western Australia will all be finished by 12 o'clock.

Mrs C.L. EDWARDES: Or thereabouts.

The CHAIRMAN: The request has been made and the minister has indicated that she can accommodate that. However, I draw the attention of members to the fact that it is their business and they are the managers of their time. It is now 9.40 am and only three members have asked a question in 40 minutes.

Ms K. HODSON-THOMAS: The minister should keep her answers short.

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: If members keep the questions short, I will keep the answers short.

The CHAIRMAN: My advice is that the questions need to be more succinct. They have been examining the much broader principles of policy rather than pursuing information.

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: We want a bit of intellectual dialogue, and I can see the members opposite are hankering for it.

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Mr J.B. D'ORAZIO: I refer to page 743 of the *Budget Statements* and the third dot point of significant issues and trends. The indication is that with the low interest rates and the relative ease of availability of finance there has been an enormous increase in the number of planning approvals required. What steps has the department taken to address this? This is always a contentious issue with councils and developers who want planning approvals. Can the minister explain what we have done to speed up that process, if we have done anything?

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: We have put in place a raft of measures. I may get Greg Martin to talk in a bit more detail about this. However, I will make some general observations. Obviously, many of the complaints are directed towards local government as well as to planning. I think this problem has been experienced around Australia. There has been a massive increase in the amount of work to be done because of the sheer growth of the economy. At the same time, there has been a shortage of planners - the private sector has been poaching at a rate of knots many of our best and brightest planners. We have been restructuring, and in this calendar year alone we have put in an extra \$1 million to deal with a lot of the backlog. We have taken on a panel of planners on a short-term basis, some as consultants and some as part-time employees, to help us clear that backlog. We have put in place a much more rigorous process of management of workloads. We have also put a business manager into that section so that we have greater clarity of what is going on and a better spread of workloads across the various planning offices. With the director general, we have set up a group with representatives from local government, the Urban Development Institute of Australia and the Property Council of Australia to take this forward in a collaborative way, which I think has been well received by the industry. Greg may want to talk a little more about what they have been doing.

Mr MARTIN: Thank you very much, minister; you have given a good summary. There are two aspects. I started an initiative because there was disquiet in the industry about the backlog of particularly subdivision applications. We have discovered that that was quite substantial and growing. In fact, in much of the past six to 12 months, the rate of applications coming in has exceeded our capacity to deal with them. I am pleased to say that in most recent times the number of applications handled has exceeded the number coming in. We have not only addressed the backlog but we are also covering the number of applications coming in. Our production rate is about 15 per cent more than it was at this time last year, and we are continuing to work on advancing that. We are also looking at how we can make system and productivity improvements beyond just the number of man-hours that are operated in a day.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: I refer to page 743 and capital item 144 under the table for appropriation and forward estimates. There is a very substantial jump in the capital contribution in this year's budget. Can the minister explain that to me?

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: A substantial increase?

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: About a 50 per cent increase.

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: The major component of that is funding for the hydrogen fuel cell bus project. Interestingly, that was a project that the previous Government promoted but for which it made no funding allocation. Some \$7.9 million of that figure that the member is looking at is for the hydrogen fuel cell bus project. There is also an increase in the small craft facilities fund because of some of the carryover from previous years because some of those projects hit environmental snags etc. However, the lion's share of the increase is really the fabulous zero-emission hydrogen fuel cell bus.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: Can I have that information in detail? Can I ask for supplementary information?

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: I am happy to give that to the member. However, I can tell the member now that it is made up of the following components: \$7.9 million for the hydrogen fuel cell bus -

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: How many buses is that?

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: It is three buses plus the fuelling -

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: That is really what I want to know. I also want to know about the fuelling of the depots. I am interested to track all that back item by item. I would like the information in detail if I can get it.

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: Would the member like detail of the expenditure of the hydrogen fuel cell project?

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: I can ask only for the capital component because of the rules.

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: We will give the member an analysis of the \$7.9 million spent on the zero-emission hydrogen fuel cell bus. We know that there is no limit to cant and hypocrisy in this place, but this was a project that was touted by the previous Government when it was under attack for committing to buy 840 diesel buses.

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Although the previous Government did not fund the project and merely put out press releases about it, we have picked up the ball and funded it, and that is what we are seeing in this allocation.

Mrs C.L. EDWARDES: The minister should not be so defensive about it then.

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: No, forward defence is all important.

The CHAIRMAN: I need to allocate a supplementary information reference number. The minister has agreed to provide -

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: Details of the \$7.9 million that is associated with the zero-emission hydrogen fuel cell bus project.

The CHAIRMAN: As referenced on page 743 of the *Budget Statements* under division 46 -

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: And on page 755, where that actual figure is listed.

[*Supplementary Information No B1.*]

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: The previous budget allocated \$5.6 million. What are the components of that expenditure?

[9.50 am]

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: Which page is the member referring to?

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: The same item; item 144. It is the capital contribution in the previous budget.

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: The previous budget being 2003-04?

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: No, 2002-03.

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: The major item of expenditure was again TRELIS. It is the information technology system that is being developed to drive the licensing system. When we achieved government it was realised that it needed further developmental work; it was not ready to implement. There is an additional allocation of \$5 million to get the system operational.

Mr N.R. MARLBOROUGH: I refer to the second dot point at page 743 of the *Budget Statements*. The Peel area is given some prominence concerning future land requirements. It is a very important issue facing the Government of the day. It will become more so over the next four to five years when an additional 69 000 residential lots will be required in the Perth and Peel regions. That figure equates to a minimum of 16 000 lots being created additional to that which have been created over the past five years. Where are we in providing residential lots? Do we have enough lots available? Is there a shortage of lots? If so, is that shortage putting pressure on lot prices? I am particularly concerned about the problems we have in obtaining urban land approvals. It seems that wherever people turn Bush Forever plans are in place or other people are seeking to put some form of caveat on urban development. Are we on top of the situation? Are we ahead of land requirements? If we are behind, what processes are in place to ensure we can meet the needs of significant growth?

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: We can meet those targets and the estimated growth. However, it is a challenge. Approximately 23 600 lots are available for development. An additional 13 920 have approvals pending. We have estimations of indicative lot yields over the next year. We anticipate that approximately 13 500 lots will be available in the next financial year. The same amount will be necessary for the following year, with 12 000 the year after and 10 000 the year after that. We believe that we can accommodate that need but it is a question of working constantly to achieve it and to identify opportunities for infill. We must take advantage of the new opportunities created by the southern suburbs rail line. As the member knows, there are fantastic opportunities around Wellard. The joint development in that suburb will provide almost 2 700 residential lots. In central Cockburn the figure is even greater.

We are also looking at doing some work near the new Murdoch railway station to see what we can do to provide special student accommodation. As the member would know, the Government is doing a lot of work in Rockingham to create a corridor development from the Rockingham railway station to the city that picks up the university campus and includes the magnificent seafront. I know that is an area of particular passion for the member for Peel. We are working on all those things together. It is an interesting occasion to raise this issue. It is only by having the integration of land use and transport planning that we are able to have a creative approach in Rockingham. As we speak, two luminaries, Richard Lewis, the former Minister for Planning, and Eric Charlton, the former Minister for Transport, are drafting the conservative policy to reverse the trend, go back to the 1960s and tear apart the integration of land use and transport planning.

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Ms K. HODSON-THOMAS: I will keep my question very short. I refer to the taxi users subsidy scheme at page 762 of the *Budget Statements*. I know the department was looking at changing the scheme, and that it has done a reversal on the policy. Has any analysis been done of why the department went down that path?

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: The area had been classically underfunded in the forward estimates under the previous Government. There has been a very strong growth in demand in this area. The member may recall that, to some extent, the higher rate of the taxi users subsidy scheme for people in wheelchairs was put in place as part of a settlement under the previous Government because standards were not being met for wheelchair accessibility in public transport. The Government has progressed with the purchase of the new wheelchair-accessible buses and 93 new railcars and the new rail system, all of which will be accessible by wheelchairs. Obviously, the alternatives for people in wheelchairs are increasing. The reason the subsidy for people in wheelchairs was higher than for other disabled people was, according to the argument, that to get a wheelchair strapped into a multipurpose taxi is a time-consuming exercise. Some taxi drivers have their meter running while that is occurring. It is understandable that the 75 per cent subsidy was given in the context of an overall settlement because no new buses had been bought and the train line had not been extended. Anyone in a wheelchair, even if he was not using a multipurpose taxi, was claiming 75 per cent. Such people were not suffering any greater disadvantage than any other disabled person. They did not need the time to be strapped in but were receiving the 75 per cent subsidy. There was no equity. It is the case that we did reverse our policy.

Ms K. HODSON-THOMAS: Has any analysis been done?

[10.00 am]

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: An analysis was done on why the costs were escalating. As I said, there were instances of fraud. A number of drivers contacted me advising that some passengers would tell them they had a wheelchair inside their house but did not want to take it with them on the day. However, they still asked for the 75 per cent subsidy. In some instances the scheme was being rorted. Quite often people would bring their wheelchairs, but not require them, and just chuck them in the boot so that they would get the 75 per cent subsidy rather than the 50 per cent subsidy. That was not a terribly rational system. However, we recognised that part of the problem was that some people who use a wheelchair can get out of their wheelchair and into the taxi but then require the wheelchair when they get out at the other end. The very persuasive thing that caused us to change the policy was when people pointed out to us that if they could use it only in multipurpose taxis, their waiting times would be unacceptably high. That was the crucial point. When that point was made, I looked at the figures again and said that that was correct and that this will apply to new people coming on. It is really only if people need to be strapped into the vehicle. At the same time, we are trying to get some more multipurpose taxis, and we need to review the whole system of multipurpose taxis to make sure that we have enough available.

Mr J.N. HYDE: I refer to the ninth dot point on page 744, which relates to the increased emphasis being placed on community and industry involvement in planning and decision-making processes. One of my great concerns in Western Australia is about indigenous communities. Often in the past they have been left out of the process. What action has the Government taken to advance planning for indigenous communities in Western Australia?

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: I thank the member for the question. First, we had special participation sessions prior to the "Dialogue with the city" to give capacity building to Aboriginal members of the community who wanted to participate, and to give them the confidence and knowledge that what they had to contribute was valuable. I think that was very important and we saw a full-bodied involvement in the "Dialogue with the city" by indigenous people who had been empowered by the special capacity building that we had delivered for them. In addition to that, we have a project called town planning for Aboriginal communities. It is a joint program being undertaken with Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders and, more recently, with the Aboriginal Housing and Infrastructure Council. The Department of Indigenous Affairs also has been involved in the project. We are focusing on improving the living standards and environmental health of Aboriginal communities, and therefore bring to Aboriginal communities some of the planning skills. The project focuses on the large and permanent communities that have populations of 50 or more. It sets out to provide some coordinated land use planning; that is, getting the roads right and putting in place policies such as where the rubbish dumps will be located etc. We have had a full-time officer in Broome who has worked on these projects for the Kimberley.

We have done a lot of work in Fitzroy Crossing, and in particular with the Bunuba community, to incorporate those areas north and south of the town that were previously reserves into an integrated plan with the town of Fitzroy Crossing. It is no longer acceptable to have a planning apartheid in which there is a white town centre and two reserves at either end. As an example, there has been very active involvement with the Bunuba and Mowanjum communities of Fitzroy Crossing.

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Mrs C.L. EDWARDES: I refer the minister to the cost of grants and subsidies listed under cost efficiencies on page 752. The estimated expenditure for 2003-04 is an enormous jump over the amount spent in 2002-03. The reason noted is that the 2003-04 estimated actual provides for the payment of amounts carried over from 2002-03. However, there does not seem to be any logic to it, particularly when I look at the 2004-05 target, which is some \$19-odd million. Can I have a breakdown of the 2003-04 actuals and the 2004-05 target program by program? I am happy for that information to be provided by way of supplementary information.

[Mr A.J. Dean took the Chair.]

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: We are trying to correlate the items. I will provide that information to the member by way of supplementary information.

[*Supplementary Information No B2.*]

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: I refer to the significant issues and trends and the ninth dot point listed on page 744, which states that increased emphasis is being placed on planning and decision-making processes. Has any work been done on the Muchea site for the saleyards, because there is a range of issues, including transport and water?

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: Yes. We have looked at the transport study to see what would be the impact on a variety of areas of locating the yard at that site. My recollection is that we found that this was an acceptable site in terms of the transport consequences and that the traffic projections could be managed for Muchea. I understand that that has been the limit of our involvement. This was in the lead-up to the decision to be made by Cabinet about the site. As the member will be aware, there was a range of competing sites. Our job was to do the transport study. We did it a couple of times to make sure that we got it right. Cabinet then signed off on Muchea. I am not sure whether we have done any further work on the other needs for the site. I do not think we have. What was the member thinking of in particular?

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: I was particularly keen on land use, because it is very close to the water mound. I am very interested in whether any work has been done on questions of land use.

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: Does the member mean the environmental impact of the Muchea site? Is the member holding out a candle for Northam?

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: The saleyards should never be built at Muchea. It is simple. I was happy to let the Department of Environmental Protection and Environmental Protection Authority processes happen. However, I thought there would have been a planning process for water use and land use on that site.

[10.10 am]

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: The relevance of the land use would be the transport impacts of the site.

Mr FREWER: There has been a good look at the future land use in that area. The committee has not reported as yet. The report is yet to be finalised, but it does take into account the future use of the land as well as the transport requirements.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: Has any additional funding been recommended for roads for that site?

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: Not at this point. My understanding of the move to Muchea is that we are a few years down the track. Obviously a proper business case is being developed on the moneys that are capable of being retrieved from the sale of the Midland site and the move to Muchea. I think that the transport study we did identified the additional road requirements. I am happy to check to see whether any requirement for additional roads was identified in the transport study. I will provide that by way of supplementary information.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: The question the minister is now heavily involved in is based on the same argument with Toodyay that the minister had concern about three years ago.

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: We will certainly get the member that transport study.

The CHAIRMAN: What is the supplementary information?

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: The supplementary information is the impacts on the road network of the relocation of the saleyards from Midland to Muchea.

[*Supplementary Information No B3.*]

Mr J.B. D'ORAZIO: On page 749 the first dot point of the major initiatives for 2004-05 relates to pastoral leases. Will the minister explain what commitment the Government has made to addressing the controversial issue of the pastoral industry's access to land? More importantly, some of the pastoral leases have received

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exceptional circumstances payments as a result of the drought. I believe that leases are revalued every five years. What has the Government done about reviewing lease periods?

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: The issue of pastoral leases is very engaging.

Mr J.B. D'ORAZIO: I am.

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: I suggest that we not be cavalier about this, because 36 per cent of the land area of this State is under pastoral lease. It is therefore an issue of very considerable significance. We have been working with the pastoral industry to get a better engagement with it on issues such as Aboriginal access and native title, and to get an accommodation or consensus between the pastoral industry and the environmentalists, while recognising some of the very good work that some pastoralists are doing. Some pastoralists are doing an enormous amount of work on environmental rehabilitation and quality rangelands management.

The issue of pastoral lease tenure occupies the minds of pastoral lessees. I am not sure there is much empirical evidence for it, but in their view the tenure arrangements, whereby leases expire and they are then available for renewal but there is no automatic right of renewal, put them in a very precarious situation. Of course, the practical reality is that the leases have always been rolled over. We have given undertakings to look at giving some sort of more continuous tenure. We were certainly not prepared to move to perpetual tenure. We do not think that there would be support in the community for that. However, we have certainly said that we are prepared to look at some more consistent arrangement for those people, some of whom have been there for over 100 years.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: They must be pretty old.

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: The families. There are probably a few. Certainly a few Aboriginal people have been in the Kimberley for around 100 years. It has been of concern to us that the cost of the basic administration of pastoral leases is not covered by the rents. It is unfortunate that for many years the capacity to review rents was very limited. When the previous Government introduced legislation in 1997 to extend lease periods, it also put in place a five-year annual rent review. We have just completed that five-year rent review. There will be some rent increases, and in some places they will be quite considerable rent increases but still very modest when one considers the value of the leases. The interests associated with Kerry Packer currently own Carlton Hill and Ivanhoe stations. Between those two stations Kerry Packer has control of 659 000 hectares. The total rent that is paid on that land, even with the rent increase, is still only \$23 000 a year. The Holmes a Court Heytesbury interests own a total of 824 000 hectares. The total rent, even with rent increases, is \$32 000 a year. This land in the Kimberley is very valuable. Many of the pastoral leases are selling for around \$18 million to \$20 million. Certainly when compared with other industries, I do not think anyone could say the rent is expensive. The fishing industry is an industry that pays its own way. It must lease premises from government. Although the pastoral industry in the Kimberley is paying in some instances around 35c per hectare, the fishing industry, which leases property from government, is paying in some instances \$160 000 per hectare for sites needed to run the industry.

Mrs C.L. EDWARDES: Your answer is already 12 minutes long.

Mr J.B. D'ORAZIO: What an important issue.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: Just very quickly, our total cost for administering the pastoral industry is \$2 million. Even with the rent increase, we will be able to recover only \$1.6 million. That does not even represent cost recovery. However, I do add that we are very concerned that a number of pastoralists in the more marginal areas have been suffering. All those pastoralists in drought-affected areas will get a waiver of rent this year; they will not be required to pay any rent at all.

The appropriation was recommended.

[10.20 am]