

Mrs Cheryl Edwardes; Dr Judy Edwards; Mr Tony McRae; Mr Jeremy Edwards; Chairman; Mr John Hyde; Mr Martin Whitely

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**Division 40: Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority, \$7 816 000 -**

Mr Dean, Chairman.

Dr Edwards, Minister for the Environment and Heritage.

Dr S. Hopper, Chief Executive Officer, Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority.

Mr R. Romeo, Principal Accounting Officer, Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority.

Mrs EDWARDES: I refer to page 659 of the *Budget Statements*, which deals with the works in progress, completed works and new works. I have three questions about those items.

The new entry statement at the entrance of Fraser Avenue was listed under the works in progress last year and now it is nowhere to be seen. Will this project no longer be proceeded with, how much money has been expended to date on the process of getting that entry statement, and what stage has it reached? In regard to the Fraser Avenue upgrade - this issue does not require an answer - the roundabout near the Flame of Remembrance does not appear to be in accordance with Australian Standards because limousines and the like are having difficulty getting over the hump, which is quite steep. Could that issue be taken on board? The third issue is, what are the additional works under Bold Regional Park and what is the breakdown of them?

Dr HOPPER: First, the entry statement project proceeded to the point of design development and was then the subject of a review by the board with regard to the capital works program for the next four years. The board has submitted a revised program to the minister and at this point the project has been deferred.

Dr EDWARDS: The board, in its consideration, went through a decision-making process to come up with the preferred order of projects. Therefore, it was very much a board decision.

Mrs EDWARDES: Could I have a breakdown of the additional works under Bold Regional Park? I can take that as supplementary information.

Dr HOPPER: We are considering the program for the authority overall, and the specific details of the additional works are being worked up as we speak.

Mrs EDWARDES: Therefore, the entry statement has not been dropped and it is still a matter that is for the board's consideration on priorities of additional works?

Dr HOPPER: Yes, it is a matter for consideration with regard to priorities. Main Roads has considered the issue of the roundabout and its latest advice is that it will be addressed shortly.

Mrs EDWARDES: Will a breakdown of the additional works for Bold Regional Park under works in progress on page 659 be provided as supplementary information?

Dr EDWARDS: Yes, it will.

Mr McRAE: I refer to page 658 and major initiatives for 2001-02. The second dot point under that heading refers to the authority's first year program of seed collection as being part of a 10-year agreement between the Millennium Seed Bank, the Royal Botanic Gardens in Kew, the Department of Conservation and Land Management and the Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority. What is the Millennium Seed Bank?

Dr EDWARDS: The Millennium Seed Bank has been set up from money provided to this Government by the British Government. The British Government had a millennium commission and as part of that it set aside a sum of around \$200 million to set up a seed bank that collects seeds from plants that may become extinct. On the weekend, the director of the Royal Botanic Gardens in Kew was in Perth and handed over the first instalment of money for programs in both CALM and the Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority to collect seeds from plants that are at risk. A number of batches have already gone to Kew, where they are stored in perpetuity. It is an extremely beneficial program, if not for the fact that international money is coming into the State to assist us in our efforts. As part of that project, scientists from both CALM and the Botanic Gardens and Parks and Authority get the opportunity to go to Kew to further their studies.

[2.10 pm]

Dr HOPPER: The Millennium Seed Bank is a £30 million institution run in an annexe by the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. It was established to provide 500-year-long storage in an underground system of vaults. It is shooting for 10 per cent of the world's semiarid zone floras that are judged to be most at risk. Our agency and the Department of Conservation and Land Management have been very fortunate to negotiate what is basically a joint project with capacity building for Western Australia. We get funds from the Royal Botanic Gardens, and we contribute in-kind support and cash, which amplifies existing programs already happening in this State.

Mrs Cheryl Edwardes; Dr Judy Edwards; Mr Tony McRae; Mr Jeremy Edwards; Chairman; Mr John Hyde; Mr Martin Whitely

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Mr McRAE: Is there an agreement on the intellectual property rights of the seeds that are collected from the semiarid zones throughout the world, or does the Millennium Seed Bank assume all proprietary rights?

Dr HOPPER: The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew has been mindful of its obligations under the convention on biological diversity, and has shown leadership in developing an agreement because it has to establish cooperation with countries around the world to achieve its objectives. It is not seeking propriety rights over the flora that is being banked, and it will not make them available for any other organisation or country that wants to develop them commercially without the approval of the donor country.

Mr McRAE: Terrific.

Dr HOPPER: That is the spirit of the agreement.

Dr EDWARDS: The director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, was taken to Badgingarra and Jurien on the weekend and spent the night in the Jurien Bay Hotel and Motel and said that he had seen deckies play up!

Mr EDWARDS: Under significant issues and trends on page 652 of the *Budget Statements*, we are told that the Government's Machinery of Government Taskforce recommended that the management of the Araluen Botanic Park and Whiteman Park will be transferred to the Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority. Over what period will the Kings Park Board take over the control of the Araluen and Whiteman parks?

Dr EDWARDS: The time frame for the Araluen Botanic Park is shorter than that for Whiteman Park, but the exact time frames have yet to be negotiated. The foundation associated with the Araluen Botanic Park has done a number of works that it wishes to see through. I recently appointed Mrs Pat Hart - who comes from that area of the city - to the board of the Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority to help with that transition. The Department for Planning and Infrastructure has a number of undertakings for Whiteman Park that it wants to see completed. The completion of those projects suits the board of the Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority, because the board is interested in the botanical gardens and parks aspect rather than some of the other initiatives that the department has. That involves a longer time frame over a number of years.

Mrs EDWARDES: Will the minister's department be taking over the management of Whiteman Park before the transfer so that the Department for Planning and Infrastructure will still be able to expend its money while it is under the management of the minister's department?

Dr EDWARDS: The detail of these issues is being negotiated.

Dr HOPPER: At this time, I have had a preliminary discussion with the Acting Chief Executive Officer of the Department for Planning and Infrastructure about Araluen, and in November a meeting has been organised in which we will talk about Whiteman Park. The CEO's comment was that Whiteman Park is far more complicated; Araluen is complicated enough. We will attempt to progress negotiations.

Mrs EDWARDES: I refer the minister to the heading on page 653 of major policy decisions taken since the state election. What do the figures under parity and wages policy represent? I know they indicate changes to agreements, but what change do these figures represent? What services or programs under the priority and assurance dividend will be cut in an endeavour to meet that dividend?

Dr HOPPER: I will deal with the savings question and pass the wages question to the manager of finance. With regard to the savings measures, the authority has negotiated with the Cabinet Expenditure and Review Committee to have a 50-50 split between recurrent funding and capital works funding. With regard to the recurrent figures, we had to pay out a capital loan, which will save the authority \$92 000 per annum in repayments, and we have identified three positions. The first relates to business management, and the other two relate to horticultural positions. In the recurrent budget, that will have a minor impact on the operations of the agency.

With regard to capital works, there are minor programs both in Bold Park and Kings Park. It is the minor works program of the authority combined with small cuts in the Bold Park irrigation program.

Mrs EDWARDES: There was also the question relating to parity and wages policy.

Dr HOPPER: Could we take that question on notice?

Mrs EDWARDES: Will that be by way of supplementary information?

Dr EDWARDS: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: Will the minister give a commitment to provide the supplementary information on the parity and wages policy?

Mrs Cheryl Edwardes; Dr Judy Edwards; Mr Tony McRae; Mr Jeremy Edwards; Chairman; Mr John Hyde; Mr Martin Whitely

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Dr EDWARDS: Yes.

Mr HYDE: On pages 658 and 659 of the *Budget Statements*, there are references to a fairly substantial amount of funding that has been allocated to the major redevelopment of Western Power parkland. I imagine that relates to the lakeside area and the playground. What does the Government propose to do with that \$1.9 million?

Mrs EDWARDES: I hope the concept plan is an improvement on the one I saw last year.

Mr HYDE: Is that a criticism of the former Government?

Mrs EDWARDES: No, it is a criticism of the former proposal.

Dr EDWARDS: This is a good and timely proposal, and one that some might say is overdue. It is one with which we are happy to proceed.

Dr HOPPER: The proposal for Western Power parkland is to upgrade the much-loved but worn-out lakeside area of Kings Park, which is at the western end of the park. The project will deliver three key elements. One is an upgrade of basic services and infrastructure, which will mainly occur below the ground. That will improve the water quality of the lake and deliver proper electrical support for the precinct. The second area, the old kiosk, will be refurbished and rebuilt as a modern, environmentally designed kiosk facility. The third area focuses on the playground elements. The partnership with Western Power is a 50-50 split on the total cost, and the theme is intended to be a celebration of the relationship between energy and the State's fauna and flora, with special emphasis on the fossil flora and fauna of Western Australia. We have thrown to the design group a challenge to come up with exciting and imaginative ways to deliver a playground that uses the essential elements of the existing one, of wooden and natural elements, but incorporating elements of fossil animals and plants from Western Australia.

[2.20 pm]

Mr HYDE: You said it was a 50-50 agreement. Does that mean in perpetuity it will be called "Western Power Playground" or is there a deal regarding the longevity of the agreement on signage?

Dr HOPPER: There is a formal agreement with Western Power for five years with two five-year options, which places obligations on both parties to ensure that the quality of the playground is maintained and that upgrades will be provided when required. The naming rights are bound up in that agreement.

Mr EDWARDS: My question relates to the annual visitor numbers for 2000-01 and 2001-02 under the output measures on page 655. Why are visitor numbers for 2000-01 not projected to increase in 2001-02?

Dr HOPPER: These estimates relate to Australian Bureau of Statistics' surveys that we conducted. We are in the process of establishing a new system and have therefore conservatively estimated visitor numbers. We expect at least the same number of visitors in 2001-02 as the present year. We hope to have a better handle this time next year on the exact number of visitors, when there may be some revision upwards.

Mr WHITELY: I refer to page 652. There is a major anomaly between the grand totals of last year and this year, although the net amount appropriated at item 67 has increased. What is behind that anomaly?

Dr EDWARDS: Basically, there was a cash surplus that led to its being carried forward. In addition, there were delays in some capital works, which again meant that the money had been carried forward. I ask the chief executive officer to expand on that.

Dr HOPPER: The minister's summary is correct. The primary reason for the cash carryover relates to Bold Park. First, it took a considerable amount of time to negotiate an agreement with the Town of Cambridge to transfer the land to the management of the authority; and, secondly, the legislation requires us to develop a publicly reviewed management plan to determine the future of Bold Park and to set a capital works program. I am pleased to advise that the management plan for Bold Park was launched by the minister in April this year. It is therefore only in the present financial year that we will start to expend considerable funds on capital works in Bold Park.

Mrs EDWARDES: I refer the minister to outputs 1 and 2 of the purchase of outputs on page 653. Will the minister provide, by way of supplementation, a breakdown of each of these outputs in the 2001-02 budget?

Dr EDWARDS: I am happy to provide that as supplementary information.

Mrs EDWARDES: In closing, I congratulate Kings Park for its wonderful opening of the wildflower festival last week. It is always a pleasure to visit the park. I also acknowledge that it is nice to see the scientific conservation centre proceeding. Well done!