

Chairman; Mr Fran Logan; Mr Paul Omodei; Mr John Bowler; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Terry Waldron; Mr Shane Hill; Mr Bill McNee; Mr Rod Sweetman

Division 14: Fisheries, \$30 769 000 -

Mr D.A. Templeman, Chairman.

Mr F.M. Logan, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.

Mr P.J. Millington, Executive Director.

Mr B. Mezzatesta, Manager, Financial and Administrative Services.

Dr J. Penn, Director, Fisheries Research.

Dr W.J. Fletcher, Acting Director, Fisheries Management.

Ms H.G. Brayford, Manager, Strategic Planning and Policy.

The CHAIRMAN (Mr D.A. Templeman): 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 the 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. For example, members are free to pursue performance indicators that are included in the *Budget Statements* when there remains a clear link between the questions and the estimates.

It is the intention of the Chairman 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 parliamentary secretary 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 parliamentary secretary to clearly indicate to the committee which supplementary information he agrees to provide and I will then allocate a reference number. If supplementary information is to be provided, I seek the parliamentary secretary's cooperation in ensuring that it is delivered to the committee clerk by 11 June 2004, so that 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 and accordingly I ask the parliamentary secretary to cooperate with those requirements.

I caution members that if the parliamentary secretary 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 parliamentary secretary agrees to provide will be sought by 11 June 2004.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Will members opposite agree to allow the fisheries division to be the first cab off the rank tonight, to be followed by agriculture and the regional development commissions?

Mr P.D. OMODEI: Why does the parliamentary secretary want fisheries to be first?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: There is a good reason. The acting executive director of the Department of Agriculture is coming back from Adelaide as we speak, and is not yet here. We would like the fisheries division to go first to give him an opportunity to come from the airport with the minister to attend the estimates for agriculture.

Mr P.D. OMODEI: There is a bit of a problem, because I do not think we have a lot of questions on fisheries. That could create another problem. The acting executive director of the Department of Agriculture should know that estimates are on now, and he should be here.

The CHAIRMAN: The order of business as suggested by the parliamentary secretary is that fisheries be the first division discussed, followed by agriculture and then the regional development commissions.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: If members do not have many questions on fisheries, we will go straight through to agriculture anyway. All I am saying is that I want to give that person some time to get here. It was unavoidable. It was not done deliberately. I ask that this be the order of business, simply to give that person some time to get here. We will then go straight on to agriculture anyway.

Mr P.D. OMODEI: The shadow spokesman on fisheries is in the upper House, so I would expect that he -

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: This is the upper House.

Mr P.D. OMODEI: Good try! I would not mind being in the upper House. It would be a great improvement. I do not have a lot of questions on fisheries and I apologise for that. If that means we will get through fisheries very quickly, I daresay we will go on to agriculture soon.

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The CHAIRMAN: We need a formal motion on the order of business, which is proposed to be fisheries, agriculture and then the regional development commissions. All members are happy with that proposal so we will continue.

Mr P.D. OMODEI: I note that this year's budget is an increase on last year's budget. Will the parliamentary secretary explain to the committee the reasons for the increase in the budget? I refer to page 270 and the delivery of outputs.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: The total expenditure for 2004-05 is estimated to be \$30.769 million, as opposed to the estimated actual of 2003-04 of \$27.438 million. That is accounted for by the increase in expenditure of \$250 000 on compliance issues for the Jurien Bay Marine Park and increased funding of \$700 000 for the proposed aquaculture development group. Those are two of the major items.

Mr P.D. OMODEI: It appears to be a little more than that. It is an increase of about \$3 million. The aquaculture development group is certainly welcome. Could we have some further explanation of the increase in the budget?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: There has been an increase in revenues to the Department of Fisheries from government of \$1.485 million when one compares the budget estimate for 2004-05 with the budget for 2003-04 on page 281. That has resulted from an increase in liabilities assumed by the Treasurer and in the resources received free of charge. The \$1.485 million increase includes two components - liabilities of \$402 000 assumed by the Treasurer and resources worth \$408 000 received free of charge. There has also been an increase in external grant funding of \$500 000. Fees and charges were increased and accrued an additional \$950 000.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I refer to the final bullet point under the significant issues and trends on page 270, which relates to indigenous fishing issues and the need to develop an Aboriginal fishing strategy. I would like an update on the development of that strategy.

[7.10 pm]

Mr F.M. LOGAN: I might pass that question to the acting executive director, Mr Millington, who knows a significant amount about the Aboriginal fishing strategy.

Mr MILLINGTON: I will give a general overview and then, if the member does not mind, I will pass over to one of my colleagues who is the manager directly responsible for that area. It is evident that to get development in the Aboriginal community, we need to engage in a broad strategy that allows it a position in the commercial fishing industry through a variety of methods. We also need to recognise customary fishing rights. The current state of play in broad terms is that we are participating at the national level through a process facilitated by the National Native Title Tribunal to get a national statement and position on indigenous fishing rights and an Aboriginal fishing strategy. With the member's permission, I will hand over to the Manager, Strategic Planning and Policy, Heather Brayford, who can give more detail.

Ms BRAYFORD: The draft report of the Aboriginal fishing strategy was released by the chairman, Justice Franklyn, in May last year for a six-month public comment period that has now closed. Two important things arose during that process. A national indigenous fisheries conference was held in Perth in September last year, and from that arose the development of a national working group to particularly look at a national approach to customary fishing, how that might be defined and what it might comprise. With those outcomes, the chairman of the working group has now reconvened the group to look at the submissions and take on board those outcomes. It hopes to be in a position to issue its final report very shortly.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: Are there any matters that appear to be impediments to an expeditious resolution of these issues?

Ms BRAYFORD: The strategy covers three issues; economic development, the involvement of Aboriginal people in fisheries management, and customary fishing. The latter is probably the area of most contention. It is proposed that whilst the strategy will set some key principles, the detail and the operational matters around customary fishing will need to be picked up by the department in further consultation with the Aboriginal community and other key stakeholders.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: Is the federal Government fully cooperative in this process or is it perceived that there might be some issues arising at the federal level?

Ms BRAYFORD: No. From our perspective there has been good cooperation through those channels.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: I refer to page 277 of the *Budget Statements* and major achievements listed for 2003-04. The third dot point refers to a completed review of aquaculture development in Western Australia. The fourth dot point under major initiatives for 2004-05 states -

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Commence implementation of the relevant findings of the Aquaculture Development Review, including the establishment of an Aquaculture Development Group.

When will the implementation of those findings commence; when will the aquaculture development group be established; and will people who are currently involved in the aquaculture projects in regional Western Australia be considered to be part of that group?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: They have been already. Included in the figures on page 270 of the *Budget Statements* and on page 271, under major policy decisions and the first of the three line items in the table, is the establishment of an aquaculture development group with an allocation of \$700 000 in 2004-05, and the same amount in 2005-06 and 2006-07. The creation of the aquaculture development group has been funded for the forthcoming year as well as the out years. Minister Kim Chance will be announcing a series of structural reforms for the aquaculture sector. He acknowledges, as the member probably also does, that aquaculture is one of Australia's fastest growing primary industries in terms of capacity and finding new markets. The aquaculture development group will primarily take responsibility for all aquaculture development activities and will operate independently of the Department of Fisheries. It will have a staff of two, who will have substantial expertise in the financial and investment sector. Primarily, it will try to attract investment into aquaculture. Rather than simply continue to rely on government to assist in the creation and the development of aquaculture, this group will take a more independent role from the Department of Fisheries and be seen as a group that can help aquaculture find its own way and attract private investment into aquaculture, which is the key to development in aquaculture, as the member probably knows.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Will that group be looking to utilise the expertise of people such as Mary Nenke, who has been very successful in that field?

Mr MILLINGTON: There are two parts to the aquaculture development group; first, the team that the parliamentary secretary mentioned and, second, a steering group above that which will include people with a range of expertise, including direct experience in the aquaculture industry, and hopefully people with reciprocal skills in their knowledge of business practices. We are looking for a steering group with a balance of people who will then direct the activities of the ADG.

Mr P.D. OMODEI: I cannot leave the parliamentary secretary unchallenged, and what I have to say is not a reflection on Mr Millington, the Executive Director. Tonight we are discussing the budget for the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Fisheries and we have in attendance an executive director and, hopefully, the acting director of the Department of Agriculture who will turn up later. I think they do a good job as directors, but it is a slight on the Parliament that the head people from these departments are not before the committee.

I refer to the capital works budget. It has been interesting to note in the process we have been through over the last day or so that every time a budget has been cut, the reason given is that a project is now no longer in place but that the budget apparently has not changed. Every time we note an increase because of a capital works arrangement, it is an increase in the budget. The Government cannot have it both ways. I notice with interest that the Hillarys research facility, which is an estimated total cost of \$16 million -

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: What dot point is the member referring to?

Mr P.D. OMODEI: I refer to the table on page 279 and works in progress. The total cost for the Hillarys research facility is \$16 million. It is estimated that \$7.385 million will be expended in 2003-04 and a further \$7.7 million in 2004-05. Will that be the total cost of the Hillarys project? Based on my earlier rationale, if these capital works projects were taken out of the fisheries budget, has there been a real increase in the budget, bearing in mind that the inflation rate is 2.5 per cent, or are we short-changing the Department of Fisheries?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: I will answer the first point the member raised about the directors being here as opposed to the heads of the departments. I point out to the member that in the Department of Agriculture, the executive director has retired -

Mr P.D. OMODEI: Yes, he shot through.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: He has retired after many years of service.

Mr P.D. OMODEI: Of good service.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Yes and, as a result, there is an acting executive director until one is appointed.

[7.20 pm]

Mr P.D. OMODEI: When will we have a new director?

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Mr F.M. LOGAN: You would have to put that question to the minister. Peter Millington is here because the current executive director is on long service leave. No slight against Parliament is intended, because estimates have come up. In the other case the executive director has retired.

Mr P.D. OMODEI: Long service leave is three months.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: He is having a long overdue break from his job.

Mr P.D. OMODEI: I am sure he is good at his job, but he knows there is a budget, and it is a very important part of the year.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: I think the member is fishing for issues here. There are two components of the question the member asked about capital works. The first is whether the Hillarys research facility will cost any more. The Hillarys research facility is up to the first level. So far, the pad has been put down and the first level has been constructed. The time frame for full completion is hopefully by the end of this year. There is no budget overrun.

Mr P.D. OMODEI: I understand that, but the figure for 2005-06 actually goes up. Are there any new capital works project? The figure has gone from \$23 -

Mr F.M. LOGAN: The member is looking at the out years.

Mr P.D. OMODEI: I apologise.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: It does not go into the out years from there, because there is no out year at present.

Mr P.D. OMODEI: I am sorry, parliamentary secretary, I was looking at the out years.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: To answer the member's question about the Hillarys research facility, the figure given is the estimate for full completion by the end of the year. It is not expected to overrun at all. The second component of the member's question is whether that and other capital items detract from the budget and the overall appropriation. The first line item under delivery of outputs on page 270 of the *Budget Statements* shows that from 2002-03 to 2004-05, the net amount appropriated to deliver outputs has been increasing.

Mr P.D. OMODEI: The amount is \$1.2 million, but does that equate to 2.5 percent inflation? Is the budget static or has it gone up?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: It is increasing, as the member can see from the first line item.

Mr P.D. OMODEI: With 2.5 per cent inflation, an increase from \$22.438 million in 2003-04 to \$23.619 million in 2004-05, may even mean that we have gone backwards.

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: What school did the member for Warren-Blackwood go to?

Mr P.D. OMODEI: St Joseph's Convent, Pemberton; I was taught by the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart.

The CHAIRMAN: Members, the mathematics can be discussed later.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: A figure of approximately \$200 000 a year is about two per cent.

Mr S.R. HILL: I refer the parliamentary secretary to the first dot point of the major initiatives for 2004-05 on page 274. This dot point refers to the commencement of a review of strategic options for future management arrangements for the west coast rock lobster fishery. Could the parliamentary secretary advise who is conducting the review and what issues will be considered?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: I will refer that question to Mr Millington.

Mr MILLINGTON: As part of the review of management arrangements for the rock lobster fishery we have commenced this process for a number of reasons. The first is always to keep our eye on the ball in terms of sustainability. Another reason is to answer some issues that have arisen under national competition policy requirements. The review process is going through a tender at the moment to find somebody to undertake some of the nuts and bolts of the review, but it is under the leadership of the Rock Lobster Industry Advisory Committee. It is hoped that we will get some preliminary results back in 2005 for discussion in the coastal tour of 2005, which will take place some time during the off-season between June and September, with a view to then instituting the management arrangements in 2006. That, in broad terms, is where we are trying to go. There is considerable pressure from the National Competition Council, asking us why we are not moving from what is called an input control system, in which the number of pots is managed, to an output management system, in which the catch is managed and divided up with individual quotas. That has considerable financial and social implications for the industry, and the minister is committed to making sure that it is thoroughly aired and discussed. That is what the process is all about.

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Mr W.J. McNEE: I refer the parliamentary secretary to the third and fourth dot points on page 270. I will not read the whole thing but the third dot point begins with "The direct involvement of the Australian Government" and the fourth dot point begins with "Development and incorporation of Ecologically Sustainable Development". "Ecologically" is a difficult word they all use these days! What is the cost of the federal involvement and what are the benefits of those two points?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Yes, "ecologically" is a bit of a tongue-twister! I will pass that question over to Mr Millington for further advice.

Mr MILLINGTON: I cannot give the member a direct dollar estimate, but if the member refers to page 278, which deals with the output for the management and conservation of fish and fish habitat, I can give an indication of the number of hours it has taken. The second table on that page shows output performance measures and contains a line item for the estimated hours for research. It is a good indication. We had budgeted only 2 177 hours for research, and that went up to 6 423 as an estimated output. That is fair indication that about four full-time equivalents - if I can use that jargon term - or four people-years have been diverted in research alone for all the advice we have had to provide to the managers who then put the reports together and give them to the Commonwealth Government for clearance. That figures track back into the previous financial year as well, so they give an indication. It is expected to go back down, so we expect to have the process finished by December. The member asked what the benefits were. Although it has been painful - I hate to admit this - it is always good to be audited by a third party, because then ecological sustainability can be rightly claimed. "Ecologically sustainable development" is our term; we use "ESD" because it is easier. Hopefully by December we will have the third party certifications, which means firstly that they will show the community we are doing the job right. Secondly, one of the strategies we are trying to look at is whether we can get an international marketing advantage in a range of other fisheries - we are already doing this with the certification process for rock lobster - for selling our product into European markets. It also helps to smarten up our own management practices internally, which is always a good thing.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: I will just add to that. I do not know whether members are aware, but the Commonwealth required Governments around Australia, if they seek to export fish, to be audited to meet a particular standard so that the quality of Australian fish can be guaranteed. Six fish stocks in Western Australia were audited by the Commonwealth, rock lobster being the key one. They included rock lobster, abalone, pearling and the prawn and scallop fisheries. As Mr Millington pointed out, it is not a bad thing to have them audited, particularly rock lobster, as it ensures an international benchmark is met for exports so clearance is granted to export to all countries around the world. Of course, other research and environmental requirements are coming to bear from the commonwealth Department of the Environment and Heritage as well.

[7.30 pm]

Mr MILLINGTON: There are essentially three legs to the audit process. First, is the fish stock being taken sustainably? Second, what is the impact on other fish as a by-product of that fish being taken? Third, what is the impact on the environment that the fish are being taken from? Trawl fishing by definition has some effect on the ocean bottom. Is that sustainable? I mentioned three within that component. The fourth one we must deal with is whether the activity impacts on protected and endangered species, which must be considered regardless of whether the fish stock in question will be exported.

Mr R.N. SWEETMAN: I was glad to hear that elaborate description of where we are with the environmentally sustainable development studies. A question asked three or four budgets ago concerned the monitoring and research work done within existing and developmental fisheries. We were told then that most resources were directed to preparing ESD requirements for the federal Government to ensure export licences were not jeopardised. My question relates to the management of the State's commercial fisheries output on page 273 of the *Budget Statements*. I also refer to the second and fourth dot points under major achievements on page 274. The budget indicates, concerning the department -

Submitted Ecological Sustainability reports to the Department of Environment and Heritage for 19 remaining minor fisheries.

Does that mean that interim management plans will cease to apply to those fisheries? I move next to the 40 per cent allowable total catch reduction, which I link to earlier comments about resources and capital tied up with ESD requirements. I refer to not having the human resources in the field to monitor the fisheries. As happened in the Shark Bay snapper fishery, problems can creep up on the fishery and the Department of Fisheries. The fishery was near collapse when the fishery quota was cut back by 40 per cent. It was a massive decrease. It could be assumed that, with research, the problem would have been picked up at least two years earlier if people had been in the field. It is a long, drawn out question; however, was money for the ESD requirements provided by the federal Government? In that case, can it be assumed that this budget will cease to exist, but that human

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resources will still be in place to be redeployed within the recurrent budget in fisheries? If state money was used for that ESD purpose, can it be assumed that extra resources will be available to monitor the existing fishery stocks in the various fisheries in Western Australia?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: To begin answering the member for Ningaloo's fairly long and complex question -

Mr R.N. SWEETMAN: It was about 15 questions, but I was only ever going to get one question.

The CHAIRMAN: Very cleverly done, member for Ningaloo.

Mr R.N. SWEETMAN: It is called the Hydra question.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: As the member is aware, a significant amount of money is put into research into particular fisheries, whether they be rock lobster, abalone or other aquaculture. Research is conducted into the rejuvenation of the fish stock and the protection of inshore Shark Bay snapper. Money is now being put into research of offshore snapper and the protection of offshore snapper stocks. I will pass onto Mr Millington to outline where the funds came from, apart from those granted through CF. He can outline how much of that CF source is gained from federal money as well.

Mr MILLINGTON: There has been virtually no federal money to address this exercise. The money came from two sources. If it involved one of our six cost-recovered fisheries, the money came from the cost-recovery process. These cost-recovery fisheries are rock lobster, abalone, pearling, Shark Bay prawn, Shark Bay scallop and Exmouth Gulf prawn. The exercise for the other fisheries had to be funded from the consolidated fund. The member is correct; we have had to divert some forward research to undertake these activities, but it has been a risk management issue about which fisheries we could afford to defer while undertaking this exercise. I will hand over to my colleague Dr Penn, who is the director of research, to give some further explanation.

Dr PENN: In relation to the snapper matter - the remaining question - the reduction in quota came about as a result of reviewing the data we had collected for the fishery over time. As the executive director noted, the timing was somewhat delayed because of the commonwealth ESD commitments.

Mr R.N. SWEETMAN: Is that regarding catch data?

Dr PENN: Yes. The catch data is collected. The technical issues with the snapper fishery are complex because it is particularly difficult to detect changes in that fishery because of the schooling nature of the stock. The fishery appears to be in good shape until some fairly technical assessments are made. We recently did an assessment that indicated a lack of recruitment to the fishery had occurred over a number of years, which led to the precautionary move to shift the quota down by 40 per cent. That does not mean the quota will not go up again following a good recruitment to the fishery. The management reduction was part of the normal management process, although the magnitude of the reduction was more than we would normally expect.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I refer to page 275 and the major achievements under the recreational fisheries output. Dot point six refers to the management and compliance strategies for a number of fisheries, including marron. I understand an anomaly has arisen in the regulatory regime for marron, and that there was limited opportunity to take action against offenders under the Fish Resources Management Act when marron is taken out of season. I understand some compliance strategies have been reviewed. I ask about the outcome of that review.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: I was expecting this question from somebody like the member for Collie, as opposed to the member for Girrawheen. I thought she would not be that interested in marron.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I am interested in eating them, parliamentary secretary.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: The Government seeks an amendment to the Criminal Code to redefine wild stock to include stock that is commercially developed in the aquaculture industry, particularly the freshwater aquaculture industry. The way in which marron is defined at the moment means it could still be classed as wild stock. If it is wild stock, it means that it cannot be stolen. That has been an anomaly that has let off a number of people and through the loop because, even if marron are grown in dams or blocked-off streams, the dams are robbed of the marron stock. Because they are wild animals, it is difficult to secure a conviction against people who take the marron, because how can people steal wild stock? The Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries is seeking an amendment to the Criminal Code that will redefine freshwater aquaculture and the stock of freshwater aquaculture. If stock is then stolen, people will be charged with stealing that property. Taking away the definition of wild stock and redefining it as a property right will allow charges to be brought against someone who steals marron, in particular. It can apply to other forms of wild stock such as yabbies, which is another example of aquaculture. A number of management strategies have been put in place to try to bring about convictions. In fact, the police have been working much more closely with the Department of Fisheries to police and secure convictions in this area. It is already successful; the word has already gone out that the definition will change to allow criminal actions to be brought against people who steal marron and yabbies from freshwater

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aquaculture areas. The activities of the police in conjunction with the Department of Fisheries has already seen a significant decline in the number of complaints from people who are in the freshwater aquaculture industry and who are vulnerable to having their stock and livelihoods stolen.

[7.40 pm]

The CHAIRMAN: I will pull rank and ask a question. I refer to the last dot point listed under the major achievements for 2003-04 at page 275. It concerns the completed surveys of catch and effort for a number of estuaries. My question concerns the Peel-Harvey estuary. The parliamentary secretary may need to provide the answer through supplementary information. Has there been or will there be a survey conducted on the crab fishery in the Peel-Harvey estuary?

Dr PENN: The estuary was surveyed several years ago. It was one of a series of surveys on crab fisheries around the coast including the Swan River, Geographe Bay and Cockburn Sound. Having produced the data, it indicated that the bulk of the catch in the estuary was approximately 270 tonnes taken recreationally and approximately 50 tonnes taken commercially. We now have the data on which to base the management plans. In the normal course of events, we would resurvey those areas at intervals of about five years to see what has changed in that period. There is no plan at the moment to resurvey the area in the next year or so.

The CHAIRMAN: When was the last survey of the estuary completed? I will take that as supplementary information so that I do not hold up the committee.

[*Supplementary Information No B24.*]

Mr T.K. WALDRON: I refer to the Abrolhos Islands airstrip maintenance program at page 280. An estimated total cost of \$60 000 is shown in addition to estimated expenditure for 2004-05 of \$20 000. What works will be undertaken? Will it be sufficient to maintain the airstrip? There were some issues on the islands some years ago. Will the crayfishermen have to contribute to the maintenance of the airstrip?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: There are in fact three airstrips on the Abrolhos Islands. As the member knows, they are fairly basic. They are not graded airstrips; they are even more basic than that.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: Although it is not my part of the world, there was apparently an issue some time ago about who was responsible for the airstrips. That is why I asked the question. Is the \$20 000 part of ongoing funding?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: It is a question that comes up from time to time. I will pass to Mr Millington in a moment. The airstrips are maintained by the Department of Fisheries. The only contribution the fishermen are asked to make is an in-kind contribution towards maintenance. The capital and infrastructure costs remain with the Department of Fisheries. As the member is aware, the airstrips do not have lights.

Mr T.K. WALDRON: It is important they are safe.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: It is critically important, as it is for the helipads. The capital equipment is no more than the windsock and the shed in which people wait for the plane. That is about it. Whether \$20 000 of the \$60 000 estimated cost will cover all the maintenance budget, I am not sure. I ask Mr Millington to comment.

Mr MILLINGTON: The amount is sufficient for next year's work program. We work on a five-year cycle. For the out year expenditure there is an amount that we have put forward for some major work in three to four years. I am not sure whether it is approved. It is part of an ongoing cycle. Between cycles all the airstrips need is grading and pothole filling and things like that. We are satisfied that that amount of money is sufficient for next year.

Mr J.J.M. BOWLER: Although people may not realise it, I have more coastline in my goldfields electorate than probably any other member of the Chamber. I also have a lot of recreational fishers in my electorate. I refer to the third dot point under major achievements for 2003-04 at page 275. It states that reviews have commenced of the management of recreational fisheries on the south coast and the Pilbara-Kimberley. That is of interest to me and the member for Kimberley. Will the parliamentary secretary advise how the reviews are progressing?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Reviews of the management of the recreational fisheries of both regions have been undertaken. They are currently on the minister's desk. He is reviewing them now and will release them in the near future.

Mr P.D. OMODEI: I defer my right to ask questions on this to the member for Ningaloo. I have a number of questions to ask but we need to move first to the agriculture budget. I thank the officers of the Department of Fisheries for the excellent work they have done over a number of years.

[7.50 pm]

Chairman; Mr Fran Logan; Mr Paul Omodei; Mr John Bowler; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Terry Waldron; Mr Shane Hill; Mr Bill McNee; Mr Rod Sweetman

Mr R.N. SWEETMAN: I have a question about item 42 on page 270. The net amount appropriated to deliver outputs is basically \$23.5 million. I then go to output 1 on page 273, and I want to drill down a bit further into the amount of money that is likely to be reappropriated within the department for all the items listed relating to the management of the State's commercial fisheries. I can feel a press release coming on, and I want to be accurate; that is all. If extra capital and resources are to be freed up as a consequence of bedding down all the ecologically sustainable developments, can the parliamentary secretary estimate a figure? On page 273 the figure is \$27.5 million; on page 270 it is \$23.5 million. Where did that money come from previously when those sustainability strategies were developed to lodge with the federal Government? Where did the appropriation come from in those instances? Am I right in assuming that now that that has been done, that money will shift back from that global amount into the \$7.8 million appropriation to deliver up everything in output 1?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: There are a number of parts to that question, and they primarily go to the finances for output 1; that is, management of the State's commercial fisheries. I presume that is what the member for Ningaloo is asking. I will pass that over to Mr Mezzatesta, who is the finance officer, and he will probably give the member a bit more detail.

Mr MEZZATESTA: I will address the question, but I am not absolutely certain that I understood it. The appropriation of \$23 million is the sum of all the amounts that are attributed to each of the four outputs. The \$7 million and all the other net amounts add up to \$23 million. The \$7 million is allocated to priorities on an annual basis within the department. When we sat down and did the budget in the year that we had to do the ESD reporting, that would have been high on our list of priorities and would have taken precedence over other projects. Obviously, as the ESD issues have settled and we have put them behind us - even though they are not permanently behind us because ongoing reviews are required - we will again put our priority list together and then fund out of that \$7.8 million in the commercial output those commercial projects that rank in the highest priority. There certainly will be a different suite of projects funded than were funded in the earlier years.

Mr R.N. SWEETMAN: I will re-couch the question. We were told about three years ago that some of the things under the management of the State's commercial fisheries had to be curtailed simply because additional resources had to be applied to ensure that the ESDs were complied with, completed and lodged, so that export licences were not at risk. I am simply asking whether I am safe to assume that now that that has been done, more money will come back to research; developing, implementing and managing strategies; policies; plans; enforcing regulations; and management plans related to legislation for commercial fisheries. I am just trying to get an idea of how much more money will come back to that area, if the department was so stretched two or three years ago in that area.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Mr Millington would like to add more to that answer.

Mr MILLINGTON: I hope that I will not be too longwinded on this, but I will try to illustrate. The member will see that our business is actually across three areas; that is, compliance, management and research. I will put compliance to one side, because that has largely been unaffected by this process. We then look at management and research. I have already alluded to the fact that we have had to stop doing some areas of forward research. That is not to do with the high-risk areas, but with the things we would like to do. We had to defer some of that research to finish the ESD reports. Similarly - the member put his finger on it - we have had to defer some of the management development we would have liked to do, which is moving some of our smaller fisheries into interim plans and moving some of our interim plans into final plans. I think the member is quite correct. When we finish these reports, we will be able to divert some of that management attention back to those matters. As Mr Mezzatesta said, it was a matter of prioritisation. The amount of money against each of the four outputs has not varied all that much in real terms, other than the cost recovery components. However, the priorities within those outputs have changed, and we will hopefully get back to doing those things that the member mentioned.

The CHAIRMAN: The question is that the appropriation for division 14 be recommended.

The appropriation was recommended.