

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON
ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS**

2012–13 BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARINGS

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE
TAKEN AT PERTH
FRIDAY, 8 JUNE 2012**

**SESSION ONE
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION**

Members

**Hon Giz Watson (Chair)
Hon Philip Gardiner (Deputy Chair)
Hon Liz Behjat
Hon Ken Travers
Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich**

Hearing commenced at 9.33 am**HON HELEN MORTON****Minister for Mental Health representing the Minister for Environment, examined:****Mr KEIRAN McNAMARA****Director General, sworn and examined:****Mr JIM SHARP****Deputy Director General, Parks and Conservation, sworn and examined:****Mr ROBERT ATKINS****Deputy Director General, Environment, sworn and examined:****Dr JOHN BYRNE****Director, Corporate Services, sworn and examined:****Mr PETER DANS****Director, Regional Services, sworn and examined:**

The CHAIR: On behalf of the Legislative Council Estimates and Financial Operations Committee, I welcome you to the hearing this morning. Before we begin, I am required to ask the public servants to take either the oath or affirmation.

[Witnesses took the oath or affirmation.]

The CHAIR: You will have all signed a document titled “Information for Witnesses”. Have you read and understood this document?

The Witnesses: Yes.

The CHAIR: The hearing is being held in public, although there is discretion available to the committee to take evidence in private either of its own motion or at the request of a witness. If for some reason you do wish to make a confidential statement during this morning’s proceedings, if you could please request that the evidence be taken in closed session before answering the question. Government agencies and departments have an important role and duty in assisting Parliament to scrutinise the budget papers on behalf of the people of Western Australia and we appreciate your cooperation this morning. These proceedings are being recorded by Hansard. A transcript of your evidence will be provided to you. It will greatly assist Hansard if when referring to the *Budget Statements* volumes or the consolidated account estimates, members, if you could please give the page number, item, program, amount and so on in preface to any questions you have. If supplementary information is to be provided, I ask for your cooperation in ensuring that it is delivered to the committee clerk within 10 working days of receipt of the questions. Should you be unable to meet that deadline, please inform the committee clerk immediately. The committee reminds agency representatives to respond to questions in a succinct manner and to limit the extent of personal observations. For the benefit of members and Hansard, minister, if you could now, please, introduce your advisers to the committee, and for each adviser, if you could please state their full name, their contact address and the capacity in which they appear before the committee.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIR: I am ready to take questions. Again, I just indicate that the committee requirement is that I give priority to committee members followed by lead speakers from the various political

parties and then anybody else. I will try to make sure everybody gets a fair go. So, I have Hon Sally Talbot. Are there any committee members who have questions?

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: Not at this stage.

The CHAIR: I will go to Hon Sally Talbot.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Let us start at the very beginning with the “Major Spending Changes” and the effect of the efficiency dividend. Minister, I know you are not the minister with responsibility for this appropriation, but I will ask you the same question we have been asking a number of agencies. When the budget was brought down in the middle of May, we had quite a few weeks before these efficiency dividends were going to hit. We now have three weeks. Are you now able to tell us where you are going to get the \$3.7 million that is going to be removed from DEC’s budget in 2012–13?

Hon HELEN MORTON: As is the case across a number of portfolios that I have been representing here, these considerations and discussions are still ongoing. Final decisions have not been made. They will be made by the minister. However, there are broad-ranging considerations that are taking place at the moment, but when those decisions are made, the minister will be available to indicate what those areas are that are going to be impacted by the efficiency dividend. The one thing that everybody has been absolutely clear on is that it will not have an impact on the front-line services.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: With respect, minister, it is only the government who claims that previous efficiency dividends have not involved cuts to front-line services. Given that that is the case, I guess that we can only project forward by looking backwards. Can I ask you, perhaps by way of supplementary information, to give us a detailed account of how efficiency dividends for the three years 2009–10, 2010–11 and 2011–12 were applied to the Department of Environment and Conservation and what services were cut as a result of those efficiency dividends?

Hon HELEN MORTON: I think in the first instance I will ask the director general to speak to that point and then decide whether we need to take it on notice or not after that.

[9.40 am]

Mr McNamara: The three per cent efficiency dividend that was applied for the 2009–10 financial year is fully itemised on a line-by-line basis in the *Budget Statements* for that year.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: In that case, are you saying that you will not take a supplementary question on a full account of the cuts over those three budget years?

Hon HELEN MORTON: Only if you feel that it is necessary, but I think what we are being told is that that information is already available in a previous budget document. However, we can reproduce that page for you if that is what you are asking for.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I would like to see that, please, yes. Given the way that budgets have been presented in the last few years, we would like to see the effects of those efficiency cuts itemised for those three years.

[*Supplementary Information No A1.*]

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Can the director general just advise us which budget outlined exactly where the three per cent efficiency cuts were implemented?

Mr McNamara: My clear recollection is that when the government brought in the three per cent efficiency dividend for the 2009–10 budget, there is a full entry in the *Budget Statements* for that year line-by-line. My recollection is that there are probably a dozen or so line items showing where the three per cent efficiency cut was to apply.

The CHAIR: Dr Byrne?

Dr Byrne: The information is certainly in the public domain, and I agree with the director general that it was published in the *Budget Statements* that year. The member also asked about subsequent years. Yes, there have been cuts in other years, but they also have been detailed in the *Budget Statements* for that year.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Let me move, if I may, to some of the areas where these cuts may well be taking place. Can I ask you first of all about dieback control? You do not need to be a rocket scientist to work out that I was probably going to ask you about the Dieback Consultative Council. Given the events of the days since estimates in the other place, I have worked out that there is no point in asking what role the Dieback Consultative Council is supposed to play in the government's dieback control plans or what advice the Dieback Consultative Council provided to the minister since January 2011, because we know that the answer to those questions is that there is no role and there has been no advice provided. Perhaps the minister can answer, or perhaps ask Mr McNamara to answer, what this quote means from the uncorrected Hansard in the other place —

Going back some years, there were several groups providing advice on dieback and that was inefficient.

Then, to paraphrase, DEC works closely with the Conservation Commission, NRM groups and Murdoch University. Then I quote —

... but we do not work through those previous structures.

Do we still work through the Dieback Consultative Council, minister?

Mr McNamara: The Dieback Consultative Council was established in the late 1990s and was quite active for a number of years up to around about 2008 and has, if I recall correctly, last met in the latter part of 2010. During the early part of the 2000s there was also a dieback response group set up, and there were some overlaps and inefficiencies in having two groups looking at dieback. And in the review of boards and committees that the government commissioned early in the current term of government, we presented to the government advice, and the government adopted the advice, that the dieback response group should be subsumed back within the Dieback Consultative Council so that we had one forum rather than two. The Dieback Consultative Council has presented a proposal over a number of years going back before the term of the current government for substantial extra investment in dieback prevention and dieback research. We are supportive of that in principle. Dieback is a major threat to the biodiversity of the south west of Western Australia. We do not understate that for one moment. It is one of the most critical issues that we deal with. But the level of investment that the Dieback Consultative Council was proposing was of an order of magnitude higher than what was available and it was not possible to take their proposal forward in any meaningful way. The council did prepare advice to the minister in the latter part of 2011, seeking to reactivate and re-energise the council and its functions. As was reported in this morning's *The West Australian*, that letter was supplied via the department to go to the minister, and it was supplied electronically; and through an administrative error and a personal error inside the department, that letter was not transmitted and we have apologised to the minister and to the Dieback Consultative Council for that.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Has the minister now received a copy of the letter?

Mr McNamara: Yes, the minister has.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Mr McNamara, when you say that the DCC provided advice to the minister, I take it you are talking about that September 2011 letter. As I understand it, that letter asks the minister to consult with the DCC rather than providing advice about dieback itself. Has the minister now received all the correspondence that the Dieback Consultative Council has sent him over the years?

Hon HELEN MORTON: The very first part of your conversation we did not catch. Could you just repeat the very first part of that?

Hon SALLY TALBOT: The director general referred to advice sent to the minister in September 2011. As I understand it, that advice was not advice about the containment of dieback; it was advice to the minister about the role of the Dieback Consultative Council—in other words, “We are here to advise you.” I am asking whether the minister now has all the correspondence and all the advice that has been prepared by the DCC in the last two years since the DCC was reconfirmed as one of the government’s or one of the minister’s chief advisory committees on dieback. Has the minister now received all that advice?

Mr McNamara: If I can just clarify, and Mr Sharp may want to add something at the end, Mr Elliott met with the then Minister for Environment in March 2009 and also met with staff of the current minister’s office in May 2011. The council has only met twice over the past four years, in May 2008 and in October 2010. Mr Elliott’s September 2011 letter to which you refer is the one that the department mistakenly did not forward to the minister at that time, and Mr Elliott has circulated a subsequent letter dated late April; and both the September letter and the April letter have been forwarded to the Minister for Environment by me yesterday.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I will just throw in as an additional question: how is the DCC serviced by DEC?

Mr Sharp: It is serviced by an officer who, as part of his time, provides a service by recording minutes and by dealing with issues of the committee itself.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: That is not a very great workload if they have only met twice in the last two or three years, is it, or five years I think he said?

Mr Sharp: By way of clarification, that is part of that officer’s workload in the dieback arena. He works full-time in relation to dieback, and that is part of the duties that are performed in that role.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Through you, minister, does DEC have a view about how often the DCC should be meeting?

Mr McNamara: We will be considering that with the minister in the light of the correspondence that I have referred to in the previous answer.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Let me just move to another area of terrestrial land management, if I can. I have a couple of different questions here relating to different areas. I go first to the Kimberley and can I ask you to provide some details about the terrestrial conservation areas that are being planned in the Kimberley? Is there anything else, apart from the conservation corridor, linking the Prince Regent National Park and the Drysdale River National Park? The documentation also refers to the creation of island conservation reserves. Is that it in the Kimberley?

[9.50 am]

Mr McNamara: That is not it; the program in the Kimberley is a very comprehensive one. The government’s Kimberley science and conservation strategy is a \$63 million investment over five years with ongoing funding for a range of initiatives beyond that \$63 million and that five years. In terms of the conservation initiatives and the terrestrial ones that were the emphasis of your question, leaving aside the marine park components for now, which are very significant part of the Kimberley strategy, the main initiative in terms of new conservation reserves is the initiative to protect the highest priority islands as conservation reserves. The department has completed a comprehensive biological survey of a sample set of those islands. There are, I think, about 2 500 islands in the Kimberley if you go right down to small rocky outcrops and so on. We have completed that biological survey, we have worked through the government processes that include consultation with the Department of Mines and Petroleum and identified 30 priority islands that should be reserved, and those will be progressed subject to also dealing with native title issues. On the mainland, the strategy has a significant emphasis on tenure-blind improvement of ecological condition. The main threats in the Kimberley are the nature of the altered fire regimes that result in big, hot, late dry-season fires that take out hundreds of thousands of hectares, if not more, at a time and can burn for

up to several months. They homogenise the landscape and damage the small rainforest patches and lots of other things, and severely affect the biodiversity of the Kimberley. So, a primary emphasis is improved fire management both on the conservation reserves we manage, but also the unallocated crown land, the Aboriginal land and on pastoral leases, particularly in partnership with Australian Wildlife Conservancy, where we have reached agreement on two investments through AWC to look after particular areas of the Kimberley. In addition, there is expanded feral animal control and weed management, and of course, in terms of actual conservation reserve outcomes there has also been the change of status of the Prince Regent Nature Reserve to a national park.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: If I can just be clear about this, some of that work that you have just outlined, Mr McNamara, would be core business of DEC. Is some of this is being funded out of DEC's consolidated revenue, and other parts from the Kimberley science and conservation strategy, of which I understand DEC's contribution is about \$40 million?

Mr McNamara: Of course it is core business. Our statutory responsibilities are to manage and protect the lands vested under the Conservation and Land Management Act and to conserve flora and fauna throughout the state, so it is all core business. The department, of course, already had a substantive presence and programs in the Kimberley region. It is one of the regions we administer and it is an important area. What the Kimberley science and conservation strategy represents is a quantum leap in investment in that area because of its special features.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: There are a couple of things I would like to follow up from what you have just told us. Are you able to indicate which part of that work, the terrestrial work, in the Kimberley is being funded out of the Kimberley science and conservation strategy, out of the \$39.5 million that is that the DEC's to spend; and which part is being funded out of consolidated revenue; or do you not budget in that way? My second question is: the 30 islands you have identified, is that list publicly available?

Mr McNamara: I will defer to Mr Sharp on the process with the 30 islands and the progress towards achieving an outcome, and the public or other nature of it at this point in time. To go to the way we budget, if you like, the department has nine administrative regions. The regional services division of the department is where most of the budget of the department is allocated because that is where we do our job, in most part. In the Kimberley region there are two services that they deliver if you go to the services in the *Budget Statements*. They deliver nature conservation and they deliver parks and visitor services. They have core budgets in both of those services that they have had for many years, and that, indeed, we have increased at different times over those years, and \$63 million or the DEC portion of that is additional to that. I do not have with me the pre-existing, pre-Kimberley strategy allocations; I cannot provide those to you at the moment, but at the end of the day, if we are already spending, for argument's sake, \$2 million on fire in the Kimberley and the Kimberley strategy has added the capacity to spend another \$2 million, we do not go around saying, "This bit has been paid for by DEC already and this bit has been paid for by the strategy", we just get a better outcome all over.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Can you take that part of the question that you could not provide the answer to as a supplementary?

Mr McNamara: We can do that.

[*Supplementary Information No A2.*]

Hon SALLY TALBOT: It is interesting, you mentioned that the Kimberley delivers on a couple of services, let us hope that it does not —

The CHAIR: Hon Sally Talbot, Mr Sharp had something to say on the island question.

Mr Sharp: In relation to the islands, as Mr McNamara indicated, there is still a process under way in terms of identification and reaching an endpoint as far as the islands are concerned. It has not entered the public domain because they are still part of being discussed in ILUA and determination

discussions with native title claimants, and some have had determinations in relation to those islands moving towards some form of reservation or some form of joint management, and so they are still internal to those discussions and negotiations.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Are you saying that there would be some degree of sensitivity in releasing that information now because it would cause some controversy in relation to the negotiation of the ILUAs?

Mr Sharp: I do not know whether it would be controversy, it is in terms of the process of what is contained within negotiations for those ILUAs.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: So, when might we see the list?

Mr Sharp: A number of those ILUAs are actually being progressed at the moment and they are at different stages. The timetables I have are in the next months.

The CHAIR: Honourable member, I will go to another member; I will put you back on the list. Just to indicate so members know, I have Hon Donna Faragher, Hon Robin Chapple and Hon Philip Gardiner. We will take a 10-minute break at 11 o'clock and then we will go through. I now have Hon Col Holt on that list. Have I missed anybody? No. Over there? It is a tricky spot that corner! And, I have Hon Matt Benson-Lidholm.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: I refer first to page 803 where we are referring to the Great Western Woodlands, which is another fantastic initiative that this government has actually implemented. Could I ask for an update about what is actually planned under this initiative for this forthcoming year?

Hon HELEN MORTON: I just did not hear the first part.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: The Great Western Woodlands.

The CHAIR: A wonderful initiative I think is what it was!

Hon KEN TRAVERS: You remember it now, though, do you not!

The CHAIR: It was a community initiative, I seem to remember.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Somewhat more than that, Madam Chair!

Mr Sharp: You would be aware that in November 2010 the Great Western Woodlands biodiversity and cultural conservation strategy was released and there was \$3.8 million funding allocated for that over the four years, but it started a year into that program. It is a very significant area. There has been a stakeholder reference group established to advise the department on the allocation of those resources according to the seven key strands of that cultural and conservation strategy, including partnerships, creating awareness, implementing fire management plans and joint management with Indigenous groups. Obviously, what we have just spoken about with the Kimberley dealing with major threats to fire, ferals and weeds and pursuing some further knowledge—all of those activities are underway and we are into the second year of expenditure in that space.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Are there some specific education and community initiatives that will be undertaken this year; and are they being done in partnership with organisations up in Kalgoorlie?

Mr Sharp: Yes; there are information packages being prepared. What is advancing in production is a field guide that deals with the values of that area, which will come out as a publication and we will be working with the Kalgoorlie–Boulder Urban Land Care Group in relation to that. But also, as part of that education program is the preparation of signage to people to identify where the woodlands are when you are in them and also some specific panels that are put on specific sites, which are interpretive panels that give you a much greater degree of information about those places.

[10.00 am]

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Could I also turn to page 802 and “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency” with respect to threats. I am particularly referring now to the work being done with respect to woylie recovery, which the department would know I have a particular interest in. Could the department give me an update as to what work is being done, particularly at Perup, as well as your partnerships with non-government organisations such as Native Animal Rescue based in Malaga and how woylie recovery is going?

Hon HELEN MORTON: I will ask the director general to speak to this.

Mr McNamara: The woylie was a highly endangered species. In the 1970s it was down to only three small populations at Perup, Dryandra and Tutanning all in Western Australia. It used to occur across much of southern Australia. After an extensive fox baiting program, it became one of our outstanding successes in bringing it back from the brink of extinction. It was taken off the state, national and indeed international IUCN threatened species list in the late 1990s. We estimated that we had about a quarter of a million woylies at that point. Since then there has been a decline of about 90 per cent. It has been really, really complex to work out what has been going on in terms of the role of feral predators. While the fox control is still largely successful, it appears that cats have increased in number as foxes have been reduced. There is also the possibility that there are disease factors at play. We have had a significant amount of research effort into trying to find out what has gone wrong. We have had partnerships with a range of groups, Warren Catchments Council, the commonwealth Caring for our Country program, Perth Zoo, Murdoch University, the South Australian equivalent department to DEC, the Australian Wildlife Conservancy, the Native Animal Rescue organisation that the member referred to and the Wildlife Disease Association, which brings in a lot of professional veterinary expertise.

As a critical insurance measure in 2010, with natural resource management program funding and departmental resources we built a 420-hectare sanctuary in the Perup reserve east of Manjimup. We released 41 woylies into that sanctuary at the end of 2010, and in April this year when we did our last monitoring work, our trapping to see how that is going, we actually counted or trapped 111 woylies, and we believe there is a little more than that. We are well on target, we believe, to achieving the population of about 400 animals that we want inside that area. That will be a valuable source not only as an insurance but for reintroductions as we solve what the problem is. We are still working on that. Also inside the Perup woylie sanctuary—Perup is a special area east of Manjimup with a range of threatened species—we have numbat breeding going on as well.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: That is very good news, director general. Could I also refer now to page 808 under “Works in Progress” and “Kimberley Conservation Strategy — Tourism Initiatives”. Obviously, the conservation strategy is, as the director general mentioned, significant. It covers a wide range of areas. Perhaps Mr Sharp might be best to answer this. Could you tell me what tourism initiatives are proposed or currently underway under that initiative?

Mr Sharp: There were funds allocated under the Kimberley science and conservation strategy to the Department of Environment and Conservation and to the Western Australia Tourism Commission, with the Department of Environment and Conservation providing assistance and services in doing on-ground activities in relation to those areas. There have been upgrades at places such as Windjana Gorge and Tunnel Creek, significant new facilities have been put in place as part of that. There are upgrades to roads taking place. There is funding for a review of what was the Ibis Aerial Highway, turning into the Kimberley Aerial Highway, looking at providing opportunities across parks and pastoral stations for people to travel by light aircraft and see the Kimberley and appreciate its value. So, a whole range of those activities are underway. Also there is the identification of travel routes that become well known and iconic, if you like, routes in the Kimberley for people to travel on.

The CHAIR: Members, particularly with this hearing, because Barbara has to pay close attention, if you could keep your side conversations a bit quieter, I think that might assist. Thank you.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: I just have one more question again on page 808 under “Tourism Road Improvement Program” and “New Works”, and perhaps this would need to be taken on notice. What roads are planned to be improved, particularly this year but if you can provide any further details for the forward estimates, that would also be appreciated?

Mr Sharp: In terms of roading, there is our ongoing roads program, plus there has been a roading initiative funded through the royalties for regions, which was a \$20 million program over four years. There are a number of activities being undertaken in relation to that, not just roading. There is upgrade of camping sites in a number of areas. The major roading upgrades that are occurring are at Karijini National Park and Kalbarri National Park. Both of those needed major upgrades because of poor quality roads with high levels of visitation.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Could I just ask a supplementary to that? You mentioned the work being done at Kalbarri? Could you just tell me where that is at? Obviously the last time I was there it was prior to funding being awarded. Has that been completed or is it underway?

Mr Sharp: No, it is still underway.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: When do we expect that to be completed?

Mr Sharp: I do not have a completion date.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: Perhaps you can take that on notice and give me an estimated date.

Mr Sharp: Yes.

[Supplementary Information No A3.]

The CHAIR: I might go to Hon Robin Chapple when he is back in his seat.

Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE: I have quite a number of questions. We will quickly go back to the Indigenous land use agreements and the Kimberley science and conservation strategy. Involved in these ILUAs, is there any other government or business —

Hon HELEN MORTON: Sorry, Hon Robin Chapple, can you just give us a page number?

Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE: Certainly; we go back to page 803. In relation to the Indigenous land use agreements, ILUAs, negotiated under the Kimberley science and conservation strategy, is there other government or industry or business involved in those ILUAs? If yes, what is the nature of other government departments and/or business and/or industry involved in those ILUAs?

Mr Sharp: The Indigenous land use agreements are being negotiated through the Department of the Premier and Cabinet native title unit. They are negotiating on behalf of government as a whole. The options are being considered in a number of those ILUA discussions to make it just conservation-related business or to make it whole-of-government business. Those are part of the sensitivities of the negotiations that are underway with the claimant groups.

Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE: So you are basically working with the Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

Mr Sharp: Yes, and providing the information relating to conservation outcomes, Indigenous employment in relation to managing marine parks and engagement in those conservation initiatives on land. They are all fed into that process.

Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE: Just further on that, is there any relationship between the creation of the jointly managed conservation areas under the KSCS and any proposed native title holders or claimant agreement to forgo rights under Native Title Act around objecting to the expenditure procedures in mining exploration?

Hon HELEN MORTON: I would assume that this question that you are asking is outside the purview of the Department of Environment and Conservation.

Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE: No worries; thank you. I have a multitude of questions, so I will quickly go to strategic assessment on page 803 of budget paper No 2 in reference to a dot point under “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency”.

[10.10 am]

What will the department be doing to progress strategic assessments of the impact of development on matters of national environmental significance under the commonwealth EPBC act?

Hon HELEN MORTON: The director general.

Mr McNamara: I take the question as relating to the second-last dot point on that page.

The CHAIR: Member, as directed, if you could just say the page and the dot point, that would be really useful.

Mr McNamara: Development in the Perth and Peel regions has been proceeding obviously over decades and under the processes of both the planning legislation and the state’s Environmental Protection Act. The Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act that was passed by the federal Parliament in 1999 identifies a number of matters of national environmental significance, including threatened species, threatened ecological communities and Ramsar wetlands in terms of the ones that are most relevant in the Perth and Peel area. The commonwealth act makes it a requirement that if a proposal is to have a significant impact on one of those matters of national environmental significance, it has to be referred to the commonwealth to see if they need to assess it and approve it or otherwise and with what conditions. There has been a history of the commonwealth in recent years calling in proposals and assessing and making decisions around proposals that have already been through the state processes. That has been inefficient and it has been costly to developers and has delayed things. Both the state and the commonwealth recognise this. An agreement was reached—I think it was last year—that we would have a joined-up strategic assessment. There are provisions in the EPBC act for strategic assessments. We are progressing an assessment that looks at the whole of the Perth and Peel regions, looks at all the matters of national environmental significance at the one time and looks at all the development footprint in the WA Planning Commission’s “Directions 2031” and other relevant documents and tries to bring it all together to stop the ad hoc individual case-by-case assessments. We are working on that currently. The Ministers for Planning and Environment have signed an agreement over that with federal Minister Burke. Officials are working full-time on that assessment and that work is underway and is aimed for completion next year.

Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE: When was that agreement signed?

Mr McNamara: I cannot give you a precise date at the moment, but there was an announcement when it was signed. That is something that we could provide.

[*Supplementary Information No A4.*]

The CHAIR: Member, can I just slip in there and ask a supplementary question on that one?

Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE: Certainly.

The CHAIR: Mr McNamara, there has been an initial engagement with stakeholders and the community in terms of scoping that strategic assessment. When is the next phase of community engagement in that process and what will that entail?

Mr McNamara: It is the case that there was consultation in terms of the scoping; indeed, as I recall, the EPBC act actually mandates a statutory availability for public comment, and that was completed not that long ago. Both governments are mindful of having further consultative procedures, and that is something that we are discussing at both the state steering group and the joint commonwealth–state assessment group, which I sit on along with other senior officials. I cannot put a timetable on that, but most of what is happening at the moment is, as I think you would

expect, the data gathering and the mapping and the overlaying of matters of national environmental significance and their locations with proposed development footprints so that we can get all our data and our map overlays together so we can inform consultation. We are not ready to go to that yet, because we are doing all the internal work—the data gathering and the mapping work—that would inform further consultation.

The CHAIR: Can you perhaps assure the committee that the call for community feedback on any assessment will not happen over the Christmas period, when most community members are not available to make comment?

Mr McNamara: I think as a matter of course we are very mindful of that for all the consultations we do. All our management plans under the CALM act have to go through statutory consultation; many other things have to go to statutory or non-statutory consultation. We are not in the habit, as far as I am concerned, of releasing those on Christmas Eve and having four weeks or whatever elapse while most people are having holidays in January.

The CHAIR: Could I just finally ask: are you concerned, as it is obviously known that this process is in train, that there will be a push to rezone land ahead of any assessment in terms of rezoning it perhaps from a conservation status to urban or urban deferred or other development land use? In effect, I have argued that there should be a moratorium on any further rezoning until the process is complete, because if people can see this coming, developers will be making sure they put in their bids early. I wonder if you have, from a conservation point of view from the position of the department and its interests in biodiversity conservation, a concern about that process happening ahead of any strategic assessment.

Mr McNamara: Firstly, the Department of Planning is fully engaged in the process, so we are very aware of what is going on. Secondly, I am not aware of any land that is currently conservation reserve or zoned for conservation in some form that is being rezoned to urban uses. We would certainly seek to comment on any particular proposal that came up in that vein. But in terms of the underlying premise of the question, I think we really cannot put ourselves in the position of sort of just stopping Perth and stopping Perth's growth and the accommodation of the increased population that we are getting on a weekly basis. We cannot just put a halt to that for a year or two while we complete a strategic assessment —

The CHAIR: It is called urban infill; that is the alternative.

Mr McNamara: Perhaps that is a question for other agencies, including the Department of Planning, rather than DEC. I might have personal comments on that, but it is not a matter for the Department of Environment and Conservation to take the lead on.

Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE: I am just going to refer quickly to page 823 and then I want to go back to page 803.

The CHAIR: There is not a page 823 in this division.

Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE: I do apologise; that is the Environmental Protection Authority. We will leave that and go back to page 803. The seventh dot point refers to industrial and land development activity. My question relates to the proposed Browse LNG development at James Price Point. The scoping document of the strategic assessment on the proposed Browse LNG development found that due to significant environmental impact and the scale and complexity of the proposal, a high level of confidence of the technical work is necessary. Consequently, it suggests that the technical work ought to be peer reviewed. Is the department aware of this advice and has it acted upon it?

Mr McNamara: Chair, the strategic assessment in relation to Browse and James Price Point is a matter for the Office of the Environmental Protection Authority, not the Department of Environment and Conservation in terms of the call for further work. It is being run as an EPA assessment.

Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE: So, basically, any further questions going down that line should be to the EPA.

Mr McNamara: In terms of the strategic assessment and the running of it, it is being handled by the EPA in concert with the federal government through the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, which looks after the EPBC act. It is those two bodies that are dealing with it. Our department is not the appropriate one to answer questions because we do not have lead carriage on it. We have had inputs, but we do not have carriage of it.

[10.20 am]

Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE: If you are really saying that strategic assessments are not the purview, to a large degree, of DEC, then why do we have the seventh dot point, if you are saying that the industrial side of it is all going to be dealt with by the EPA?

Mr McNamara: They are different projects. The proposal in relation to Browse and James Price Point is a specific proposal. The commonwealth and state have agreed to assess the impact of that specific proposal, and there is an agreement between the two governments that the state will do that through its EPA process. The Perth and Peel strategic assessment is a much broader brush in terms of the area it covers; it is much more integrated with the future design of planning and development in the Perth and Peel regions. It is much more integrated with matters that the department has the lead knowledge of, such as the matters of national environmental significance I talked about—the threatened species, Ramsar wetlands, threatened ecological communities and the like. We have a joint lead with Planning and Premiers on that. But the Office of the EPA and the EPA are also involved in that strategic assessment, the Perth and Peel one, because at an appropriate time in the process—we are not there yet—the EPA will look at that strategic assessment to form its view of its adequacy or otherwise.

Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE: Just as a follow on from that, is DEC involved in any way, shape or form under the seventh dot point with the development of the Browse Basin LNG development at James Price Point?

Mr McNamara: The department provides advice to the EPA and the Office of the EPA routinely on matters that are under assessment or on which there are public environmental reviews or whatever. So, when there is a proposal out there, when there is a proponent's document, we comment in a technical sense in areas of our expertise and provide advice into the EPA process.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: Just swinging back to this efficiency dividend and it is just in relation to evidence that we heard from earlier hearings this week. The efficiency dividend on page 39 of budget paper No 3 states —

- a general government sector efficiency dividend—a 2% efficiency dividend will be applied to general government sector appropriation agencies and the Public Transport Authority ... in 2012–13, based on cash service appropriations.

The emphasis is really on those last three words—cash service appropriations. When I do the calculation based on the numbers in the budget papers for the Department of Environment and Conservation, on page 801, we have got an amount of \$3.75 million to the efficiency dividend in that financial year. When I asked for the definition of “cash service appropriations”, we have to go to page 812. The service appropriations at the top of page 812 in that table—I am sorry; I have made a mistake. I must have gone to another page. I am sorry, it is \$192.396 million. I thought I was going to help you out because I thought you were actually being charged six per cent, but it looks like I might have—can you bear with me while I just do the calculation of 3 750 divided by 192?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I am sure if they were getting ripped off, Mr Byrne would have picked it up by now!

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: Okay. I am sorry; my mistake, that number is 1.9 per cent, so I am afraid you cannot reduce it!

Let me then come to the next question about it, though. Also in this evidence, we understand that there are FTE ceilings under which certain agencies operate. Can you give me what that FTE ceiling is for your agency, please?

Mr McNamara: One of my colleagues might help me with finding the right page. The FTE ceiling for the department is currently 1 965 and the budget through the fire preparedness allocation provides for up to an additional 28 FTEs, taking the number to 1 993.

Dr Byrne: On page 810, about two-thirds of the way down the page, is footnote (b). I will read that out if you wish. It states —

The Full Time Equivalents (FTEs) for 2010–11 Actual, 2011–12 Estimated Actual and 2012–13 Estimates are 1,910, 1,928 and 1,993 respectively.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: And that was the ceiling? So, those numbers are the ceiling FTE numbers?

Mr McNamara: The ceiling is 1 965 in the current year and it increases to 1 993 for the 2012–13 budget year.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: Okay, so in the website for the Public Sector Commissioner, I have got that your average FTE for—I do not know over what period it is actually—but at December 2011, it is 1 945. The point is that the evidence that we heard is that that efficiency dividend should not be that difficult to achieve because you have got an ongoing shortfall, which was suggested over a number of agencies—not just yours—between the actual FTE and the ceiling; therefore, there is roughly \$3 million-odd in there. Is that correct?

Mr McNamara: I think the member is trying to be helpful, but I am not sure that I quite share that analysis. The department has to —

Hon KEN TRAVERS: You have to be careful because that is the Under Treasurer's analysis of your portfolio!

Mr McNamara: The figure that you have quoted out of the Public Sector Commissioner's website is a point in time. Our FTE numbers vary through the year. We have considerable seasonal employment and the duration of seasonal employment is influenced in particular by the fire season. Also when you are setting FTE numbers in advance, as the budget papers do, we have to make projections around things like commonwealth grants, offset grants and those sort of opportunities where we put on extra staff to do research and do those sorts of things. They are not always that predictable, so there is some free board, if you like, or some headroom between the actual figure and the FTE ceiling, but it is more to do with the give and take around seasonality of employment and around external funding.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: Just on that—I actually am trying to be a little bit helpful here—in the seventh dot point on page 803 you do say that —

... a tight labour market presents a challenge in retaining a skilled workforce to respond to these demands.

I suspect that the average FTE level which you had during the last financial year is probably below where the needs are to satisfy what you have in your statement of corporate intent, for example, as a result of that tightness—the very tight market and being able to hold them.

Mr McNamara: The average level of staff is really a reflection of the factors that I have already referred to—the seasonality and external funding and those sorts of things, I think. The challenge for a department like ours all the time is that we have a budget, we have an FTE ceiling, but then we have to make operational decisions all the time about the balance between people and money to do

things. So in the fire space, for example—it is just as an example—we have to balance up how many people we employ, how long we employ the extra ones for, against whether we are extending the water bomber contracts because of our situation as well.

[10.30 am]

We constantly balance whether a dollar is best spent on a person or on equipment, materials, contracts and delivery. In a department of our size and with the need to be flexible in a field operational space in delivery, and also being able to be responsive to things that emerge during the year that are not forecast, we just need to constantly rebalance that. It is really those factors that explain the gap, if you like—a relatively small gap on the figures you have quoted—between the actual and the full-time equivalent ceiling.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: The seventh dot point on page 803 of budget paper No 2 states that there has been a challenge to retain the workforce that you require. Does that have really a very minor impact upon the difference you have in the FTE ceiling and the average actual FTEs?

Mr McNamara: I might ask Mr Atkins to add in a moment, but clearly given the strength of the resources sector in particular, the training and skills that our people have and acquire while they work with us are valued by industry to a considerable degree. Before the global financial crisis we had a very heavy raid on staff by the resources sector, and in places like Karratha and Kalgoorlie we have had total turnover of our industry regulation staff because of that. We have examples of people being offered twice the salary they can get paid in government to go into consultancies and resources companies. That slowed down for a while, and my sense is that it has picked up again somewhat. So there is also an element within the figures that you are asking me about of that churn, or turnover, in people leaving and then being replaced. But Mr Atkins might wish to add, because while it is not only in the industry regulation space that that is happening, that is probably the primary area.

Mr Atkins: That particular dot point refers to the turnover, or the difficulty in attracting skilled and experienced staff particularly in industry regulation, where we are assessing licences and works approvals for major industry, and retaining those skills and particularly retaining the experience. The churn that Mr McNamara referred to is that we tend to recruit well at graduate and recent graduate level; after two years those people tend to get snapped up by industry because we basically train them for industry, if you like. They get two years' experience as regulators, and that is highly valuable to industry to put into their compliance side of things. While the average is, sort of, 18 months, bringing in experienced people particularly at the team leader level is particularly problematic because those people are already out in industry and do not want to come back to lower levels. We have been attempting to recruit overseas and in the eastern states. Just to give you one example, we brought a regional leader in who we recruited from Queensland; he lasted one week. He did not even unpack his bags.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: What worries me about it is, really, with that deficiency, you must have some shortcomings in achieving the outcomes you are aiming for. It is not an immaterial gap between 1 963, I think the director general said, and let us say around 1 920. That is quite a big gap, I would have thought, and I would have thought that would affect some of the outcomes that you are aiming for.

Mr Atkins: If I could add, the numbers between the FTE ceiling and the FTE actual really do not impact on what I am talking about because we can fill the same positions three times in a year and it will be one full-time equivalent, but we have had people come in and out. It is about retention of skill and, particularly, experience. We are having a leakage at the five to 10-year experience, and we are recruiting well at the zero to two-year experience. So you have experience going out the door and new staff coming in, willing and able and enthusiastic, but poor knowledge. That is putting pressure on the remaining supervisory level staff and senior staff to guide, mentor and coach

those junior people to come up to speed. That is what we mean by the churn. The FTE figures overall do not give any indication of that.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: At the quality you need to have, it is really that?

Mr Atkins: Yes.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: How can we address that?

Mr Atkins: We are addressing it by looking overseas and particularly in the eastern states. The problem with the eastern states is that because of the cost of living in Perth now—particularly the cost of housing—it is no longer an attractive destination for people with government regulatory experience in the eastern states to come west. Ten years ago, 15 years ago it was; people could sell a house in Sydney, move over here, buy a big house here and still have money in the pocket and get a promotional position with a salary increase into the bargain. That has levelled out, and in fact it has probably even gone down in terms of comparison. But we have had some success in the industry regulation area. We brought in three people from the United Kingdom environment agency who are all very experienced and well credentialled; over a three-year period we have managed to keep two of them—one of them has gone into industry. So we have had some success, but we are running against the tide, I have to admit that.

Hon PHILIP GARDINER: So it is really the overseas opportunities you are trying to draw on to try to fill that quality and knowledge gap?

Mr Atkins: As we stand in Western Australia now, they are the best opportunities.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Can I ask a question?

The CHAIR: Yes; I was just going to say that I might move because I have other speakers, but I will just follow this thread. Hon Robin Chapple has indicated that he has one question in response to this, and then Hon Ken Travers and to Hon Colin Holt.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Can you put me on the list?

The CHAIR: You are definitely on the list.

Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE: Just as a supplementary to what has been asked, is the department reviewing its salary structures with a view to competing in what is now a two-speed economy?

Mr McNamara: One of my colleagues may wish to elaborate—either Dr Byrne or Mr Atkins—but there are limitations on an individual agency being able to do as you suggest. There is a whole-of-government approach to the setting of salaries. We do use, in rare occasions, and they are rare, attraction and retention bonuses for several key individuals, I think. We seek to rely much more on the department being an attractive place to work, offering a career structure within the department, and offering a variety of opportunities right across the department. You can work anywhere in the state in a variety of roles, and many people do and many people spend 40 and 45 years with us. We have scholarship and training programs and those sorts of things that we use to seek to make ourselves an attractive employer, as well as the intrinsic nature of the work itself, which is a sufficient attraction to many, and just the fact that people are committed to the objectives of the department is also a significant attractor to many. But we cannot, and we never will, compete on a straight salary basis with the opportunities available in the private sector, and we should not look to achieve an outcome solely through that; it is simply not going to happen.

Mr Atkins: I can add to that, thanks, Chair. We have invested quite robustly into a training program for industry regulation people. It is a two-week training course through the police academy that gets new people up to speed in the regulatory tools pretty quickly. We also actively facilitate the transfer of staff either to other parts of the state if they want, for lifestyle reasons, to relocate, or to move across the conservation and environmental regulation business because they want a change of scenery. We would do that rather than have them go out of the agency. We have placed a lot of

emphasis on flexible working arrangements, both family friendly flexible working arrangements in terms of flexible hours and full and part-time work. As you can appreciate, by the time people get to the age where they have good experience worth retaining, they also have young families, so that is a compatible way to go as well. And, because of modern technology, if people want to move to a country location for lifestyle reasons but we still want to retain them in the central branch or division, we facilitate that as well.

[10.40 am]

For instance, one of my senior air quality officers lives and works out of Albany, and because of internet connection and things like that he is able to operate effectively. We look, if you like, at ways of supplementing the lower incomes that we are locked into with added benefits within our operating priorities and within the rules of public servant employment. A group of our senior officers, led by Dr Byrne, recently had a meeting with the Public Sector Commission to talk about strategies for attraction and retention within the public service framework, so we have put a lot of effort into this.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Did you do an exit interview with the officer who came from Queensland and left after a week to find out the reason? Secondly, what length of contract do you offer to those people you bring from overseas locations?

Mr Atkins: I understand that the officer from Queensland had family reasons. The officer concerned was South African and for family reasons decided to go back to South Africa. We did not get much more than that. I do not know whether salary attraction was a factor in that or not. On the second part of your question, we manage to bring some people in on sponsored migration, so they get permanent residency and, therefore, permanent appointments. If they do not have that permanent residency status, we put them on contract until or unless they get their permanent residency.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: That is my point: how long are the contracts? Are they three-month rolling contracts or two-year contracts?

Mr Atkins: They are in multiples of years.

Mr McNamara: Mr Atkins has given a number of examples primarily in the environmental regulation area. We have had very good success in recruiting in southern Africa—not just South Africa—into our conservation and land management type of business. Indeed two of our regional managers now are South Africans—they are southern Africans; I should be more careful.

Hon COL HOLT: I refer to the major spending pages on page 801 of bushfire suppression and fire preparedness. Why is there no ongoing funding for the bushfire suppression line item and can you expand a little more on the fire preparedness funding and where that is going?

Mr McNamara: The first part of the question relates, I believe, to the \$8 million estimated actual figure for 2011–12 on page 801. The department has within its budget an allowance in round figures of \$21 million for bushfire suppression. The heavy bushfire season that we have had in 2011–12 has been such that we have incurred some bushfire suppression expenditure of about \$8 million above that existing amount, and therefore the \$8 million represents supplementary funding we have been provided to meet the cost of this heavy bushfire season. It represents the supplementary element of the cost of bushfire suppression, which is why there are no further figures in the out years. It is an annual adjustment depending on the severity or otherwise of the season. As to the second part of your question about the fire preparedness budget increase that is shown on the same page, the government is providing an additional \$32.9 million to DEC over the four years to enhance our fire capability. That comprises the recurrent funding shown on page 801, plus extra capital funding of \$6.275 million at page 808, and is added to the \$32.9 million. That extra investment reflects the government's commitment following the recommendations of the two Keely reports on Margaret River and the Perth hills, and the previous Ferguson review of DEC's

capability in managing large bushfires. The funding will focus on employing up to 28 more specialist fire officers, extending contracts for seasonal fire crews, weather forecasting services that the Bureau of Meteorology is introducing some charges for and an enhanced program of bridge inspection and maintenance in the south west. We own about 350 bridges in the south west and there is a concern about the level of deterioration of those bridges over time as many of them are old timber bridges. Taking our big fire trucks and bulldozers and so on across them increasingly becomes dangerous, so it is important that we have a good inspection and maintenance program. When you put that together with the extra \$40 million of funding for fire management in FESA's budget this year, those figures represent the government's response to the concerns of the community and the government around bushfires.

Hon COL HOLT: I refer to the \$6.2 million of capital expenditure, as quoted by the director general, on page 808. Is the capital expenditure mainly to do with the firefighting fleet and equipment or is any other capital expenditure planned?

Mr McNamara: I quoted a figure of \$6.275 million in capital across the four years. I am trying to locate the page on which that element is shown as distinct from the pre-existing and ongoing investment in firefighting fleet and equipment, which is also shown.

Hon COL HOLT: Even if you cannot find it, do you know what it is for?

Mr McNamara: The \$6.2 million is specifically in the space that I referred to of the bridge inspection and maintenance program.

Hon COL HOLT: I will go back to page 801. I refer to the extra resources, especially the 28 FTE. Has there been any discussion about where those FTE will be located? Do you have any ideas on where they will be?

Mr McNamara: Yes, of course. We are well progressed in our planning for that, but we have not done the absolutely final allocations for that. But Mr Dans could certainly elaborate.

Mr Dans: We have the notional allocation at this stage. We have not nailed it down completely in the south west land division, but it is approximately 15. It is something in the order of 10 in the greater metropolitan area, stretching from north of Wanneroo to Dwellingup, and three between the south coast and the midwest. But we still have some work to do over the remaining weeks to finetune those figures and the allocations.

Hon COL HOLT: Do you have specific locations for where they will be?

Mr Dans: They are in our work centres in those areas. The main nodes in the south west land division would be around our work centres in Pemberton, Manjimup, Margaret River, Kirup and Busselton; and in the greater metro area through Wanneroo, Mundaring, Jarrahdale and Dwellingup; and probably around the Albany, Geraldton or Jurien Bay areas as well.

Hon COL HOLT: Is there nothing planned for Nannup?

Mr Dans: Nannup may well be in that mix in the south west land division. We have a work centre there with something in the order of eight to 10 staff working out of there. They may be in the mix.

Hon COL HOLT: I will make a comment about Nannup. I understand that the Department of Environment and Conservation is a key component of the communities in the south west. Nannup is a specific case about how important DEC is to that community, so if there is some way of looking at locating people in Nannup, that would be good outcome for the community there. I have one final question that is probably not associated with any particular line item but relates to emergency management. Does DEC send officers over to Mt Macedon to the Australian Emergency Management Institute for emergency training?

[10.50 am]

Mr McNamara: I will make an introductory remark and then ask Mr Dans to elaborate. Training is absolutely fundamental to our bushfire capacities. There is a very, very strong network of collaboration across Australia in fire training. We are a registered training organisation and we do a lot of our own jointly with FESA, the police and others. We provide training to other organisations and are an acknowledged leader, with other people coming to us for some aspects of training, including some aerial stuff, and Victoria is better at some other aspects and we go there. I will ask Mr Dans to elaborate specifically in relation to Mount Macedon and related matters.

Mr Dans: In the past we have sent staff to incident management development courses at that facility. However, as the director general referred, in recent years DEC and FESA have collaboratively, with the assistance of WA Police, developed a major incident management course, which is being run and delivered here in Western Australia out of the police facility at Joondalup. The majority of our staff who are trained in senior incident management roles are going through that course so there is a consistent standard of training across all emergency responders in the Western Australian government sector.

Hon MATT BENSON-LIDHOLM: I refer to services and key efficiency indicators on pages 805 to 807 and in particular the fifth indicator on page 806. For the purposes of having it on the record, that simply states —

Develop and implement policies and strategies that promote environmentally sustainable practices in industry, government and the community.

With those three points in mind, I want to ask a few questions in relation to the City of Fremantle's proposal to become a plastic bag-free zone. The first question to Mr McNamara is: has DEC done any assessment of that particular proposal to become a plastic bag-free zone?

Mr McNamara: Western Australia has participated over quite a number of years through the national ministerial council structures in evaluations of plastic bag bans and the approaches to that matter and there are indeed some trials and other measures being taken in other jurisdictions that we have followed. I will ask Mr Atkins to answer the question more specifically.

Mr Atkins: At the national level through what was the Environment Protection and Heritage Council there has been considerable debate about national intervention with plastic bags and that council has decided not to go down that path. South Australia in particular has introduced legislation to trial the banning of lightweight plastic bags, which put simply are the freebies that you get at the supermarket. That trial has been running for some time now and the South Australian government is currently evaluating the success of that trial and whether or not it has worked. Minister Marmion is awaiting some feedback from his colleague in South Australia on the outcome of that review before WA looks at any level of intervention on plastic bags. One of the issues that has emerged in South Australia is that the supermarkets have taken off the lightweight plastic bags but provided a heavier weight bag as a free handout with supermarket goods.

Hon MATT BENSON-LIDHOLM: Do we have a time frame on when that information is likely to be forthcoming?

Mr Atkins: I am not aware of the time frame, and clearly that is in the hands of the South Australian government, but the last advice I had is that that review is underway, so it is in progress.

Hon MATT BENSON-LIDHOLM: Obviously the answer is that at this stage it is a waiting game and no assessment has occurred.

Mr Atkins: That is correct.

Hon MATT BENSON-LIDHOLM: That was the basis of my question. To follow along those lines, is the government intending to encourage any other local councils in Western Australia to perhaps even join Fremantle on that pathway? That is specifically a government question.

Hon HELEN MORTON: I am aware of that, so I am just conferring before I respond. I will just say that I am unaware of the government's intention of encouraging any local governments to pick up on that initiative, but that does not mean that local governments would not want to undertake that in their own right.

Hon MATT BENSON-LIDHOLM: Can I then just hark back to the introductory remark I made in relation to the explanation of these significant movements and particularly the environmental sustainability issue about the government promoting environmentally sustainable practices in industry, government and the community. Can I just ask you then, would the government be in any position to suggest anything that has been done since 2008 to specifically limit the use of plastic bags in Western Australia?

Hon HELEN MORTON: I will allow Mr Atkins to comment on that.

Mr Atkins: No, there has not. The issue that Western Australia is wrestling with, as indeed are the majority of other states, is in banning one type of bag you then move to a different type of bag. Most states are looking to see how South Australia has travelled with the legislation they currently have in place. In terms of local initiatives, companies like Bunnings have already stopped, and have done for a number of years, issuing lightweight plastic bags. They keep their cardboard boxes in one corner and you can use those or pay a dollar and buy the woven carry bags. Those sorts of initiatives are to be applauded.

Hon MATT BENSON-LIDHOLM: That, though, is obviously a private initiative. I will not call it a "marketing ploy", but I cannot think of a more appropriate word at this point in time.

The CHAIR: It is an advertisement for Bunnings is it not!

Hon MATT BENSON-LIDHOLM: It is a marketing initiative by Bunnings. Maybe if Bunnings were considering going down the pathway of biodegradable bags that would again be terrific, but I am specifically concerned about government initiatives in this area.

Mr Atkins: In terms of government initiatives, the WA government has participated in the initial debate about plastic bags. South Australia has taken an initiative and most players are watching to see what comes out of that. As I explained earlier, it is not a straightforward issue. There are unintended consequences of banning one type of product and it being replaced with another type of product.

Mr McNamara: An array of programs in the educational space are relevant here. The department, for example, supports the Keep Australia Beautiful Council, which has a range of programs around education, of litter reporting when doing the wrong thing with litter, of school education programs, such as the Waste Wise Schools program that accesses a large number of schoolchildren, school communities and teachers. The government has introduced—it is a bit away from plastic bags—a particular offence in the Environmental Protection Act around illegal dumping with significant penalties. The government is also progressing amendments to the Litter Act to increase penalties. A lot happens in the education and community leadership and school education spaces generally around appropriate behaviour and not littering and not dumping.

Hon MATT BENSON-LIDHOLM: I realise the time. I do have a particularly important question that relates specifically to my electorate, which is the Agricultural Region. Here I am referring to points made on pages 802 and 803 of the budget papers in relation to significant issues impacting the agency.

[11.00 am]

I refer particularly to the fourth dot point on page 803, which looks, basically, I suppose, at transport infrastructure and the impact that that may well have, particularly in national parks or areas of natural significance. I make the point that back in 2008, there was an intention to put a road between Bremer Bay and Ravensthorpe through the Fitzgerald River National Park. I do not believe

that went ahead and I think I am right in saying there is no intention to actually do that, but I am also reliably informed that, particularly towards the western end of that national park area around the area immediately east of Bremer Bay, numerous tracks and service roads have been put in, if not upgraded. I want the minister to tell me whether that is correct.

Mr McNamara: There was, as has been referred to in the question, a proposition for consideration of a road right through the Fitzgerald River National Park, a coastal road from Hopetoun at one end to Bremer Bay at the other, subject to environmental considerations and budget considerations and so on. That proposal was considered and is not proceeding. What has happened instead is that there is an upgrade program going on in terms of visitor access to the Fitzgerald River National Park, which has road access at each of the eastern and western ends being upgraded and some of the camping and day-use facilities being upgraded. So, at the Bremer Bay end that you refer to, the main access road out to Point Ann, which is a renowned whale-viewing spot, is being upgraded to some degree and at the eastern end of the park, the road to Hamersley Inlet is being upgraded.

In terms of earlier questions today about dieback, it is, in fact, preferential that the roads in that park that are open and used are sealed, because then we do not have vehicles on dirt roads in wet soil and an increased potential to spread dieback. The central core wilderness area of the national park, which is identified as such in the management plan for the national park, is not subject to any roadwork by us.

Hon MATT BENSON-LIDHOLM: Can I take the point with respect to unsealed roads and given the nature of the area that we are talking about—it is a very popular fishing area, camping area, and the like—to my way of thinking, that still poses significant environmental problems in terms of the biodiversity of the area and the spread of dieback. I do not believe that necessarily, of course, there is any great guarantee. My question then, stemming from all of that, is purely and simply this: what environmental impact assessment work is the department doing or planning on doing in the next year, or three or four, which will particularly focus on the unique biodiversity values of that particular national park and the capacity for there to be significant issues in the area? I continue to make the point that there are still countless numbers of tracks. I have not been through there in recent times myself

The CHAIR: Hopefully not, member.

Hon MATT BENSON-LIDHOLM: But in bygone years, Madam Chair, as you would appreciate, with my family being involved in commercial fishing, I have been along the entire south coast, being very much environmentally responsible, of course. But there are certain issues in relation to the management and the monitoring of the issues that could occur there. I want to know what sorts of monitoring programs and assessment are now occurring or likely to occur.

The CHAIR: I ask you to keep it brief, only because I am aware that we need to give Barbara a break from Hansard and we did say we would stop at eleven o'clock.

Mr McNamara: In the previous part of the question there was particular reference to Bremer Bay. There is significant land at Bremer Bay that is unallocated crown land and not part of the national park, and there is a significant network of tracks. There are also a number of tracks through the national park, including the wilderness zone and down to the coast, including the Bell Track, for example, which was created some decades ago and, if my memory serves me correctly, was put through illegally. We still have people breaching tracks and closures from time to time as well, but I can assure you that the project that is the subject of the \$20 million investment by the current government in 2008 into the Fitzgerald River National Park improvement program and improved access at the eastern and western ends, which was matched by another \$20 million from the commonwealth government, was subject to a rigorous environmental assessment. It was referred to the EPA and it was assessed by the commonwealth under the EPBC act.

The CHAIR: Members, you are welcome to ask more questions after the break but I need to stick to that time table. I propose we reconvene at quarter past to give people the chance to get a cup of tea.

Hearing suspended from 11.05 to 11.18 am

The DEPUTY CHAIR: We will re-commence.

Hon MATT BENSON-LIDHOLM: I have a number of additional questions, Mr Deputy Chair.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: I will allow one or two. Then we will come to Hon Sally Talbot, Hon Robin Chapple and Hon Giz Watson.

Hon MATT BENSON-LIDHOLM: Minister, I have a question in relation to Beeliar. Is DEC involved in any current or ongoing assessment —

Hon HELEN MORTON: Can I ask you for the page number?

Hon MATT BENSON-LIDHOLM: There is no page number simply because I cannot find information in the budget papers about this. So I need to know if there is any information there because I cannot find it. I am sorry I cannot give you any assistance there. I will pose the question and leave it up to you to try to figure it out. Hon Ken Travers has just pointed me to page 801 in terms of the appropriations.

Hon HELEN MORTON: The total appropriations.

Hon MATT BENSON-LIDHOLM: The total appropriations. So whether or not this particular issue is contained within that, I would like you to be able to inform me. The question is simply: is DEC involved in any current or ongoing assessment of the threat to the Beeliar wetlands from the Roe 8 proposal? I cannot find anything in particular in the budget papers. How much would that be costing DEC if that is the case?

Mr McNamara: DEC is responsible for the management of the Beeliar Regional Park, which would be impacted by that proposal if it were to proceed. DEC does not have carriage of any assessment of that matter. That is a matter for the proponent and the EPA. It is standard practice for DEC that when there is a proposal that affects the lands we manage or matters such as conservation matters that we have responsibility for, we provide input and advice to the EPA when they do formal assessments.

Hon MATT BENSON-LIDHOLM: Can I ask just one further question, Mr Deputy Chair? This again is an appropriations-based question. I simply make the point that it is interesting to note that DEC does not regard coal seam gas exploration and extraction as having any significant impact on the agency, because it is not included in the list of significant issues. It may well be elsewhere, but I certainly could not find that. The question then is: does DEC anticipate a call on any of its resources in relation to the environmental challenges presented by that particular technology; and, if so, what may they be and what are the costs or anticipated costs?

Mr McNamara: The answer is similar to the one in relation to Beeliar. If and when there are proposals that affect biodiversity conservation values and/or lands that we manage, and those proposals for coal seam gas activity are assessed through the Environmental Protection Authority process, we will make inputs and comments based on our expertise and our officer time without any separate funding as such, because it will just be officer time and expertise. We will provide advice that we can in terms of impacts on lands that we manage and biodiversity values to the EPA.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I just want to ask a couple of very quick follow-up questions on the great western woodlands just very briefly, if I may, following up on earlier questions. My question relates to two projects: the increased number of doggers and the state barrier fence. I have not been able to work out from the budget papers—I am talking about the third dot point on page 803—how much is

being spent on increasing the number of doggers and how much is being spent on upgrading the state barrier fence?

Hon HELEN MORTON: I will ask Mr Jim Sharp to talk about the great western woodlands area.

Mr Sharp: The great western woodlands expenditure is not expending on either of those items. The state barrier fence, dog-proof fence, is a proposal being put forward through the Department of Agriculture and Food, so that is not funded in this program.

[11.20 am]

Hon SALLY TALBOT: So none of that comes out of the pot marked “great western woodlands”?

Mr Sharp: No; that is not allocated out of the great western woodlands budget.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: And it is not a DEC project?

Mr Sharp: And it is not a DEC project.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Has DEC been involved in the scoping study for that or has it gone to the EPA for assessment?

Hon HELEN MORTON: Mr Deputy Chair, I will ask the director general to speak on this matter.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: I will allow some exchange when I have conversation though, minister.

Mr McNamara: The government announced in April 2010 the allocation of an extra \$8.82 million in royalties for region funding for wild dog control and \$5.71 million of that was for the state barrier fence upgrades and extensions. That is entirely administered through the Department of Agriculture and Food. The Department of Agriculture and Food is responsible for a consultation process and a planning process in relation to that fence, and they have been in contact with us and I expect them to consult with us as they proceed with the project.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Can I just tease out what exactly you mean by consultation? Presumably we are talking about a scoping study; is DEC going to be involved in the work on the scoping study—the design, the route and presumably referral to the EPA?

Mr McNamara: The responsibility for referral to the EPA rests with the proponent primarily. I will just repeat that it is a Department of Agriculture and Food project. We expect them to consult with us on issues of location and design, given the lands that we are interested in, given the biodiversity values of the area and given the fact that the fence is a barrier to species other than just wild dogs.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: That is why I am asking in the context of the doggers as well, because they have the same objective, have they not?

Mr McNamara: But it is a matter for the Department of Agriculture and Food to advise how they are planning the project they are administering.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: It sounds to me, Mr McNamara, that you are phrasing that in the future tense, so has this collaboration and discussion not happened to this point?

Mr McNamara: I am not particularly close to the project, but I know that the Department of Agriculture and Food still has consultative and planning processes ahead of it at this point in time. We are certainly aware of it; they have had some consultation with our officers, but they are still going through their planning and consultative processes and I cannot really add to that, it is not our department’s project.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I will just move now to —

Hon GIZ WATSON: My questions immediately follow-on on this subject, would you entertain that I ask my questions, just because it flows.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Yes.

Hon GIZ WATSON: My questions are along similar lines in relation to the Esperance barrier dog fence and I think you have answered some questions in terms of DEC's involvement in the proposal, but does DEC support the proposal?

Mr McNamara: It is not a matter of support or otherwise. The Department of Agriculture and Food, as part of a government decision, is proceeding with the project. Wild dogs are a serious threat to farmers who are raising sheep in particular, but also cattle to some extent. There is already a barrier fence extending from the Kalbarri area right across the border between the pastoral zone and the agricultural zone. What is being talked about here is an upgrade of the fence in parts, as I understand it, and in particular there are some quirky—it might be the right word!—the fence at its south eastern end has bits that do not join each other and animals can go around the fence and get in to the agricultural zone without having to go through a fence, and I think that is a significant part of what the Department of Agriculture and Food is seeking to rectify.

Hon GIZ WATSON: On what research is your assertion based that there is a huge impact of dogs, because it seems to me that the research is wholly not there, in most cases, in terms of both the impacts of wild dogs—dingoes—and also the impact of barrier fences. I guess my question is: is DEC doing any research in anticipation of the fact that this proposal is a significant barrier, particularly in the great western woodlands area? It seems to me that there is a policy conflict between the objective of maintaining biodiversity and connectivity in that region and building a barrier fence that nobody is pretending will not be a barrier not only to dogs, but also to kangaroos, emus and other animals. I guess what I am saying is: what is DEC doing to be the agency that promotes biodiversity with this proposal?

Mr McNamara: We will collaborate with the Department of Agriculture and Food in their planning and design, firstly. Secondly, I have experience of working, at one stage, on dingoes in New South Wales a long time ago. I have travelled along the dingo fence between New South Wales and Queensland, and through South Australia. There are extensive dingo or wild dog fences in Australia and there is absolutely no doubt that wild dogs wreak havoc in terms of livestock enterprises that raise sheep.

[11.30 am]

In terms of cattle, their impacts are generally far less serious. There are many pastoralists who will tell you they do not worry about wild dogs in respect of their cattle, except some of them will also tell you that if the wild dogs get too numerous and hunt in bigger packs, then there is cattle loss and there is also cattle damage—nipping at the animals and so on, which affects the live cattle trade. Those are considerations for the primary producers. Wildlife authorities all around Australia have recognised the need to control wild dogs for those reasons for a century and a half or thereabouts.

There is no fence that has ever been built that has been a 100 per cent barrier to everything moving through it. You still need doggers to operate around the margins of fences. To the vast majority of our wildlife—the small animals, birds and so on—the fence is not a significant issue or a barrier. What it does impact on is emus and kangaroos. The barrier fence that we have now is also designed to be a barrier to large build-ups of emus coming from the pastoral country into the agricultural zone and damaging crops.

Hon GIZ WATSON: Can I just indicate that from the briefing I had just the other week, I was told it also impacts on other native species and creates islands of populations as well. I am quoting your own staff—I will not say who. It is not just emus and kangaroos; is that correct?

Mr McNamara: I am aware of the briefing that you received. I have not spoken to my officer or officers subsequent to that. A fence, by design, divides things. But the impact at a wildlife population level is not regarded as significant as a general rule.

Hon GIZ WATSON: Has there been any research into that?

Mr McNamara: I think it is just experience and evidence. I have looked at areas that are fenced in other parts of Australia and also here. There is no difference that I am aware of in the conservation status of native fauna either side of the existing barrier fence that is attributable to the fence.

Hon GIZ WATSON: Can you quote me some research that would back that up?

Mr McNamara: No, I just said there was none that I am aware of.

Hon GIZ WATSON: So is there any research being done?

Mr McNamara: DEC is not conducting any research into the impact and effect of barrier fences as such.

Hon GIZ WATSON: It might be fairer to say that the evidence is not there one way or the other because it has not been collected.

Mr McNamara: The observation I am making is that I have been involved in nature conservation for my entire career, and I am not aware of evidence of wildlife populations on one side of the fence being adversely affected compared to the other side of the existing fence by virtue of the fence.

Hon GIZ WATSON: Have any DEC staff been instructed not to comment on the ecological impact of the proposed barrier fence, and, if so, why?

Mr McNamara: I have given no such instruction to staff, I can assure you. The department has a standing policy that when we as a department are providing advice on projects, we provide it through official channels, and in this case it would be to the Department of Agriculture and Food, to the EPA—if the EPA chose to assess it—and it would be advice that is channelled through the appropriate communication channels in the department with senior officer sign off. That is just to ensure that the department's advice is properly informed and properly considered.

Hon GIZ WATSON: Just finally on this one, am I correct in my understanding that the department has taken a position not to oppose the fence but simply to offer advice on things like the proposed location and —

Hon SALLY TALBOT: The spending was announced in April 2010 and we still do not have any expenditure.

Hon GIZ WATSON: Which is all good.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: This is DEC's tactic of stonewalling.

Mr McNamara: It is not for me to comment on how fast or slow the project is proceeding. That is the Department of Agriculture and Food's project.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Take no notice of me.

Hon GIZ WATSON: Take no notice of Hon Sally Talbot.

Mr McNamara: I take the announcement that has been made by the government to mean that the fence will be extended and upgraded. If, through an assessment process, there were found to be fatal flaws in that either by the Department of Agriculture and Food or if someone referred it to an EPA or whatever, then an alternative decision can be made through a due process, but our job is to provide the best advice we can into what the government's proposal is.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I am going to turn now to the subject of waste management, so we can look at note 4 of page 804, which concedes that construction and demolition waste going to landfill is going up. Can I ask first of all: what does the 10 per cent shortfall of waste—because we were projecting 45 per cent diverted and rarely got to 35 per cent diverted from landfill—represent in tonnes?

Mr Atkins: Chair, I cannot give that to you in tonnes, but in terms of achieving the targets, yes, the estimated actual for 2011–12 is 35 per cent. In 2010–11, 41 per cent was the actual, which is shown in those papers, and in 2009–10 it was 34 per cent. So the figure is in the last few years moving

around at 34, 35 to 41 per cent. The figure is based on estimates and work that is done by consultants. They are not actuals; they are estimates. There have been some difficulties with some of the methodology which introduces, if you like, a degree of error. The errors around these percentages are reasonably significant. I cannot tell you what they are. The trend has been bouncing around that 40 per cent, plus or minus. The main driver for that has really been economic. When the economy is good, there is more demolition and construction and so the amount of waste generated goes up. In periods of economic downturn such as the global financial crisis, not only does the amount of waste go down but the amount of recycling goes down as well, because the recycling industry has to cut back.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: So does the fact that you are still projecting a 45 per cent diversion rate suggest that you think there is going to be a downturn?

Mr Atkins: We have had a target of 45 per cent for a number of years. We have decided to keep that target there. Rather than bring the target down because the target the previous year was not reached, what we have decided to do is keep the target up there at 45 per cent. We will not adjust the target until we get to 45 per cent and then we will adjust the target up again. It is just that—it is a target to achieve.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I do not know whether you would be prepared to take this as supplementary information, but we are looking at a 35 per cent estimated actual and you are telling me that there have been serious methodological questions. I am not sure whether you are saying that they cast doubt over that figure or they just add a degree of complexity to the projections. Can you clarify that for me by way of supplementary information if it is technical data or references to documents that DEC is using to do this calculation?

Mr Atkins: I can deal with it now. I am not saying they are serious flaws. What I am saying is that the method of calculating the diversion and the rate of recycling is based on consultants' surveys of the recycling industry. We have actuals within the metropolitan area for amount of waste that goes to landfill through the landfill levy reporting, but in terms of diversion and recycling, that is done by way of a consultant doing a survey of the recycling industry. The recycling industry does not give us returns on their figures, if you like. Because that is the method, that introduces wider errors than if we had actual returns from all of the licensed premises and all the recycling industries. Some of that fluctuation is due to economic cycling, and some of the fluctuation has got some errors in it as well.

[11.40 am]

Hon SALLY TALBOT: When DEC does the budget projections about the waste being diverted from landfill, does it include the sites that are the subject of legal challenge? Let me ask you that a slightly different way. How do you treat in your projections the waste that is going to the sites that are currently the subject of a legal dispute?

Mr Atkins: Those sites are licensed premises, so they are part of the list of premises that are included in the estimates.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: So do you include that as waste diverted from landfill?

Mr Atkins: They are licensed premises, and all material that goes into those licensed premises is treated as waste to landfill.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Waste going to landfill —

Mr Atkins: Going to landfill.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: — not diverted from landfill?

Mr Atkins: No.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: How many sites and how many companies is DEC currently in dispute with?

Mr Atkins: Three.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: The same three as last year?

Mr Atkins: The same three as last year.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Eclipse, Moltoni and Sunny Valley or Happy Valley or something?

Mr Atkins: Happy Valley, which is Moltoni.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Were any of the cases settled in the last 12 months?

Mr Atkins: No.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: How much money—in other words, how much levy income forgone—is involved here?

Mr Atkins: I cannot give you that figure because we are currently doing quantity surveys of those sites to calculate the amount of material that has gone into those sites. That is evidence that is subject to legal proceedings, so I am not at liberty to divulge that information. I do not have it at this stage, but even when we do have it, it will be part of enforcement action evidence.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: My back-of-the-envelope calculation suggests to me that it is going to be in the area of several million dollars, so my question to you is: when you calculate, for example, the revenue expected to be received presumably from the landfill levy, which for the year we are looking at is \$39 million, does that include money that you would get from those sites that are being disputed?

Mr Atkins: Not in this particular year, because we do not expect to settle. Court cases take some time.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: So not in 2012–13?

Mr Atkins: Not in 2012–13.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: What about the out years?

Mr Atkins: The out years are estimates and they are refined each year.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Let me ask you the question the other way. Which years that are involved in these budget papers include money that you will get from those three companies if you win the court case—money which you, presumably, believe that you are legally entitled to receive?

Mr Atkins: If that scenario comes to pass, there will be moneys that are accrued over a number of financial years. It will be, if you like, an additional amount of levy in whatever year that case is settled, if it is settled in the Crown's favour, because it will include a backlog of fees at whatever level the court may determine.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: But you have not included it in the 2012–13 projections.

Mr Atkins: No.

Hon HELEN MORTON: Mr Chair, can I have a follow-up comment on that?

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Yes. Director general.

Mr McNamara: The budget papers do show a forecast of the landfill levy revenue in the out years, but I think I would say that it is probably the item in our forecast that is the most subject to variability in economic circumstances and the sort of situation that you are referring to with those legal cases. Even though it is in the out years in the budget papers—a figure is shown—it really is a figure that has to be refined on an annual basis.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: One of the reasons I am asking these questions is that the contract with Main Roads is now in suspension, which was one of the government's major instruments for reducing C&D waste. When Mr Fitzpatrick made the comments about the material, about the contract and about the criticisms that were being made in relation to the asbestos contamination, in what capacity was Mr Fitzpatrick speaking?

Mr McNamara: As the chair of the Waste Authority.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: So was there money from the Waste Authority that went into Mr Fitzpatrick's legal costs?

Mr Atkins: No; there were no moneys from the waste account that went into any part of that action.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Was there money from DEC's consolidated revenue?

Mr Atkins: DEC's consolidated revenue paid for the newspaper apology that was published in *The West Australian*.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Who wrote the apology?

Mr Atkins: Mr Fitzpatrick.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Moving to page 806, service 5, "Environmental Sustainability", about two-thirds of the way down the page, the income is \$40 125 000. If you go to "Total Cost of Service", the next line item is "Less Income". The income projected for 2012–13 is \$40 125 000. Can I check that that includes the whole \$39 million projected for the landfill levy?

Mr Atkins: Yes, it does, and that figure also appears on page 814 under "Net Appropriation Determination". It is the "Landfill Levy" of \$39 million.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Yes, I saw that one. Is the figure that is in the next column down for the "Net Cost of Service" actually a net profit rather than a net cost?

Mr Atkins: The \$23 100 000?

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Yes.

Mr Atkins: They are moneys that are distributed to other services and include the landfill levy that goes to DEC.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: So that is the 75 per cent of \$39 million. I do not mind if you take it on notice, if you can understand what I am asking.

Hon HELEN MORTON: I think that we need some further explanation as to what you are actually asking.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: The amended WARR act says that 75 per cent of the moneys collected from the landfill levy go to DEC's consolidated revenue. What I am asking is: does the figure that is in brackets, indicating a surplus of \$23.1 million, represent 75 per cent of \$39 million? Mr Atkins just said that that money in brackets is money that is distributed to other services.

Hon HELEN MORTON: The director general might make some further comments on that.

Mr McNamara: The environmental sustainability service, which is the one listed on page 806, includes some activity outside of the waste functions of the department. The \$23.1 million in brackets that is the net cost of service there is clearly not 75 per cent of \$39 million. The act does not say that 75 per cent goes to other DEC services; I think it says that not less than 25 per cent must go to the waste avoidance and resource recovery account. It is written the other way around. The figures there represent the effect of the 75 per cent going to other DEC services, but the difference between \$23.1 million and the exact figure that makes up 75 per cent of \$39 million is accounted for by other puts and takes in that service, which is, in part at least, outside of the waste function.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: So what are those other services? Are you saying other services within service 5?

Mr McNamara: That is right.

Mr Atkins: The \$17.025 million comprises \$6 million of grants issued by the Waste Authority on approval of the minister from the WARR account and the remainder is for other environmental sustainability activities, including strategic policy and policy development. The figure of \$23.1 million is a function of the difference between the \$40.125 million and the \$17.025 million.

[11.50 am]

Hon SALLY TALBOT: So that \$23.1 million is not distributed to other services within service 5, it is distributed to others of DEC's core services?

Mr McNamara: That is correct, because the government's decision at the time that the landfill levy was increased by 300 per cent was that DEC's appropriation was reduced by an equivalent amount. The 75 per cent figure that we have referred to a number of times was then to be used across the rest of DEC's services; so, back into this same service and across DEC's services generally.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Is there a breakdown somewhere else in the DEC budget of that \$23.1 million so that we can see where it goes?

Mr McNamara: No, there is not. The DEC budget is made up of the total appropriation and a range of revenues, and those figures clearly are shown. I cannot quote you the page number as we look at it now, but those figures clearly are shown. Then the budget is broken up into six services, and it is not a matter of saying this particular dollar that makes up the total went into one particular service; all the money is grouped and it is divided into six services. There is not a one-to-one relationship between WARR levy income that is redistributed and any particular service.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: All right, so I will just do a summary for my own purposes and you can give me a score out of 10 for having understood what you are saying. Something like \$29.25 million represents the 75 per cent. The people who run service 5, "Environmental Sustainability", take about \$6 million of that and do other things with it, which is what Mr Atkins has just explained. Then what is left over, which is the \$23.1 million —

Hon HELEN MORTON: Can we just correct that particular point first, before you go any further?

Mr Atkins: If you go to page 810 —

The DEPUTY CHAIR: I am letting this run, because I think the issue has not been totally resolved yet, so that is why I am letting it run for a little bit longer.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Thanks, Mr Deputy Chair. Is it page 810?

Mr Atkins: No, stay where we are on page 806. The Waste Authority has an account called the WARR account and it has a grants program, which hands out money for grants. The \$6 million of grants is embedded in the \$17.025 million, so part of the Waste Authority's cash flow is embedded in the \$17.025 million. The remainder of —

Hon SALLY TALBOT: So it includes what we used to call the SWIS grants?

Mr Atkins: That is right; that is correct. The remainder of the \$17.025 million includes the running costs of the waste management branch, which provides the service support to the Waste Authority, and to the strategic policy function for the department, which is not specifically waste related.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: All that comes to about \$6 million.

Mr Atkins: No. The SWIS grant component of it is \$6 million, and then there is about \$2 million which contributes to the running of the waste branch, so add that to the \$6 million, that is \$8 million. Then the remainder of the \$17 million is the cost of the strategic policy function, so they are added to.

Hon HELEN MORTON: We would like Dr John Byrne to speak for a moment.

Dr Byrne: I would say the member was basically correct in saying of the \$39 million, a quarter of that goes to the WARR account. Of the remaining amount of \$29.2 million, \$6.1 million is used to sustain the environmental regulation and the other \$23.1 million is used for other services. You asked for a score out of 10, and you get 10 out of 10!

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Thank you, I will put that on my CV!

The more waste goes to landfill, the more money; the more your \$39 million goes up, the more your 25 plus 75 goes up. So, can I ask: how much waste does DEC calculate will be generated by the waterfront development and how much by the Burswood stadium? Is that factored in to your landfill levy projections?

Mr McNamara: I will ask Mr Atkins to answer the latter part of the question, but I would reject the notion that we somehow promote more waste to landfill to make more money. The fact of the matter is that Treasury each year since the increase in the levy was made has adjusted our budget so that the puts and the takes balance out exactly. We have not made one cent out of the landfill levy.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: So it is the government model to pass the waste levy—is that what you are saying?

Hon HELEN MORTON: I think the director general has answered that absolutely clearly.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: That is why I repeated back what I heard, so he was correct there.

Hon HELEN MORTON: DEC has not made any money out of this policy.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: The only part of my preamble that was wrong was that it is Treasury, not a DEC benefit.

Mr Atkins: In terms of estimating the amount of landfill levy each year, we look at a longer term model and take in a number of factors including historic trends and make some estimation in terms of Waste Authority initiatives to reduce waste to landfill and increase recycling to balance that off. We do not take into account specific projects like Burswood or the Perth Waterfront because they come and go over time and there is no specific expectation that all of the material excavated from either of those two facilities would necessarily go to landfill in any event. For sites that have contaminated material on them, for instance, from heavy metal waste and, particularly, acid sulfate soils, we encourage in situ treatment and re-use rather than dig and dump.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Has DEC done those assessments on those two sites, because I do not think that the Premier would be very happy to hear you refer to two of his strategic projects as just things that come and go. These are very, very big.

Mr Atkins: They are big, but they are not the only big projects that have happened in the last decade and they are not the only big projects that will happen in the next decade. We do not take them into specific consideration when we do our forward projections for the landfill levy. You do not necessarily know when they are going to come on stream, although, obviously, the Perth Waterfront project has commenced. But we encourage on-site treatment and re-use of material, particularly if it is acid sulfate soil material. Even material contaminated with heavy metals and those sorts of things, if they can be stabilised and meet the criteria under the Contaminated Sites Act for re-use, then we encourage re-use rather than dig and dump. Obviously, with those two projects, there will still be a proportion of that material that will go to landfill.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: This sounds as if it is all dig and dump for those two major projects.

Mr Atkins: It may be, but what I am saying to you is that we do not take them into consideration as individual projects when we do our forward projections.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Can I just follow on on that point, though, just very quickly?

The DEPUTY CHAIR: If it is only one question, then Hon Giz Watson.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: How do you do dig and dump? I understand it with acid sulfate soils, but how do you do dig and dump with respect to asbestos and other contaminants when they are intermixed with the rubbish as well, such as Burswood?

Mr Atkins: Dig and dump is dig it up, take it somewhere else and dump it.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Sorry, dig and recycle in situ.

Mr Atkins: In situ, it has to go through fairly rigorous testing under the Contaminated Sites Act. The proponent has to do a management plan, so it has to do an assessment as to what is in the material and then do a management plan to decide how that material is handled. So what material cannot be re-used on-site obviously goes to a landfill, has to satisfy the particular landfill acceptance criteria to decide whether it goes to a class 1, 2, 3 or 4 landfill.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I understand that, but I am particularly interested in how you —

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Wait a minute, I will come back to you. I promised to go to Hon Giz Watson.

Hon GIZ WATSON: Thank you. I am actually going to take us off in another direction, just to confuse matters, in relation to forest management issues. In reference to budget paper No 2, page 803, “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency”, my first question is: what further research and monitoring will be conducted prior to the preparation of the final forest management plan for 2014 to 2023?

Mr McNamara: The existing forest management plan runs out at the end of next year and a new 10-year plan has to be in place for the start of 2014. That is being prepared and the environmental scoping document has been released by the EPA for public comment. We expect that the draft plan will be released in about the third quarter of this year. An extra \$4.49 million rounded has been allocated to DEC, as shown on page 801.

[12.00 noon]

The extra work that has been done with that money is, in particular, a review by an expert panel of silvicultural practices in the south west forests; a lot of work on inventory and modelling of wood availability and wood flow scheduling; and an estimation of forest carbon stocks. There will be an independent panel to review the calculation for sustained yield, and there will be a social and economic impact assessment of the draft plan. Just in terms of research, research and monitoring are ongoing. I will take this opportunity to mention that in the latter part of last year there were 10 research papers based on the long-running Forestcheck program that were published in the peer reviewed journal *Australian Forestry Journal* that showed that, in broad terms, there are no long-lasting significant impacts on biodiversity as a result of the forest management practices that are in place.

Hon GIZ WATSON: I was interested in the item on carbon. Could you elaborate a little further on that?

Hon HELEN MORTON: It is on the same page.

Hon GIZ WATSON: In the response to that question I just picked up that the director general said something about assessment of carbon storage, I guess—storage capture?

Mr McNamara: Within the \$4.9 million I referred to there is an allowance of about \$200 000 for a project to undertake an estimation of forest carbon stocks, so that is the standing stock of carbon in our forests. I do not have more detail at hand than that, but this will all come out in the draft forest management plan when it is released in the third quarter of this year.

Hon GIZ WATSON: I might just pursue that a little further. So that would be a research component that would be done within that process? I am just wondering about who would do that, or would the Department of Environment and Conservation be doing that assessment?

Mr McNamara: I do not have that information to hand as to precisely how it would be. Whether it is a research project in a scientific experiment sense, I do not think so; it is an estimation process.

Hon GIZ WATSON: Rehabilitated bauxite mines also have significant stand densities that may be susceptible to future large-scale canopy collapses. What measures is the department going to be taking to manage significant event aged stand densities or on those rehabilitated bauxite mining sites?

Mr McNamara: If I can generalise firstly, each 10 years we set a new forest management plan. That plan is the framework for delivering on the CALM act requirement for ecologically sustainable forest management. Silvicultural regimes are assessed in that vein, and changes to silvicultural prescriptions are being considered in the formulation of the plan. It is not possible to be too specific in advance of the draft plan being released in the third quarter of this year; that will be the opportunity for public comment. It will be assessed through the public comment processes of the CALM act, and also by the Environmental Protection Authority through the Environmental Protection Act. But what I can say is that the intention is to test a number of scenarios in the draft plan to facilitate people commenting on it on more than one scenario. Increased thinning, in terms of the bauxite rehabilitation areas, is likely to be an option tested in the scenarios that are presented.

Hon GIZ WATSON: In terms of policies and guidance documents to do with the director general advising mining companies on how to rehabilitate their mine sites, particularly to deal with a future drying climate, is that something that is happening, or will that only occur during the process of the development of the new forest management plan?

Mr McNamara: There is some detail in that question because the standards imposed on mining companies are imposed, I think, through a combination of the agreement acts or mining licences. We are heavily involved in the annual assessment of those and the satisfactory completion of rehabilitation against state criteria.

Hon GIZ WATSON: Do you have an input into the criteria against which that is assessed?

Mr McNamara: We have had in the past; I am not sure how frequently they are reset. The point I would make is that if a forest management plan proposes some new settings in relation to that matter in terms of stand densities and thinnings and so on, then the logical modus operandi for implementing those on bauxite rehabilitation would be then to give effect to them through the instruments under which bauxite rehabilitation is mandated, which would be through either state development or the mines department. I say either/or because these are agreement act companies and I am not quite sure what the vehicle would necessarily be.

Hon GIZ WATSON: In the same area, has the department applied for funding under the commonwealth's biodiversity fund or the carbon farming initiatives for funding to assist forest management in areas subject to the cessation of native forest logging, which is one of the target areas for resources under these funds; and, if not, why not?

Mr McNamara: I do not have with me the details of the applications that we have made under the biodiversity fund; I have with me the successful outcomes, which do not include projects of the sort you referred to, so we would have to take that on notice, I think.

[Supplementary Information No A5.]

Hon GIZ WATSON: My next question is in regards to timber contracts and investment security guarantees. Is the minister aware that the Forest Products Commission and the Minister for Forestry have recently been engaging in negotiations for new contracts for timber supplies to sawmillers and investment security guarantees associated with these contracts?

Mr McNamara: As far as I am aware personally, I am not aware that we are aware of that in any detail, but that is a matter for the Minister for Forestry and the Forest Products Commission. Regardless of what the discussions and the guarantees might or might not say, the mandatory document at the end of the day is the forest management plan. The sustained yields in that forest management plan will be mandated, and the investment security guarantees and the like are really around the issue of dealing with industry if there are impacts on industry as a consequence of a change in the sustained yield. That is an industry matter that is a matter for the Minister for Forestry, not for the Department of Environment and Conservation or the Minister for Environment. Our job is to get the settings right in the forest management plan.

Hon GIZ WATSON: Then my question would be: did the Minister for Forestry or the Forest Products Commission consult with the Minister for Environment before negotiating those contracts? That may be something that perhaps the minister needs to take on notice, but the Minister for Environment would know one way or the other whether there has been any consultation.

Hon HELEN MORTON: That will have to be taken on notice.

[*Supplementary Information No A6.*]

Hon GIZ WATSON: I think the rest of those questions are not going to flow from there.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: We can come back to you if you wish.

Hon GIZ WATSON: Yes, sure; thank you.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I want to go back to the Kimberley, and again something that is missing in 2012-13 budget papers. Last year's budget papers stated —

Planning for new marine parks in the north Kimberley and Roebuck Bay will be a priority.

The words “north Kimberley” and “Roebuck Bay” do not appear in these budget papers. When I asked a question in the house—Mr McNamara, I know you will be familiar with that question—about where those references were, the answer was that the money is coming from the Kimberley science and conservation strategy, as well as from the Yawuru, for the planning of Roebuck Bay. What I want to know is, specifically, how much this year—in 2012-13—is going to be spent by DEC on the two new marine parks? I am not asking about Camden Sound and Eighty Mile Beach; I am asking about north Kimberley and Roebuck Bay. How much is DEC going to spend in 2012-13 on each of those parks?

Mr McNamara: I think the precise figures would have to be given by way of supplementary information, but Mr Sharp may be able to elaborate. But very good progress has been made against Camden Sound, as the Premier and Minister for Environment have announced.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: No, I am not interested in Camden Sound or Eighty Mile Beach; I am interested in the two that are not mentioned in these budget papers.

Mr McNamara: As to the Roebuck Bay proposed marine park, we are working very closely with the Yawuru people, and it is really dependent on the timing of reaching agreement with the Yawuru people as to when the marine park will be created. That will dictate when the funding starts to flow. The north Kimberley marine park will be the fourth of the Kimberley marine parks that is created. We are gathering information at the moment, which is a matter of officer time and collation of information. Substantive work on the creation of the north Kimberley marine park will be more a matter for the 2013-14 financial year.

[12.10 pm]

Hon SALLY TALBOT: My question is about the out years as well. Will you take that as a supplementary question—this is, on the north Kimberley marine park?

Mr Sharp: On the planning for those two marine parks, as Mr McNamara has indicated, the planning process for the Roebuck Bay marine park is well advanced and funds were made available

through the Yawuru agreement as part of that, plus we have expended funds in our marine planning capacity. Embedded in the Kimberley strategy is \$300 000 for planning across those parks of the Kimberley.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: All four?

Mr Sharp: Yes, all four. A majority of those funds remain because of the fact that the other parks were progressed within existing resources. That will allow the funds to be available to progress primarily the north Kimberley marine park, which will be a much more expensive exercise. The funds for planning those two parks are part of and embedded in the Kimberley science and conservation strategy.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I have to say that I think there is still scope here for a request for substantial supplementary information: how much is being spent this year and how much next year and the out years on the north Kimberley and the Roebuck bay marine parks? I would be happy to roll that into what I suspect will be a second supplementary question—if Mr Chairman will let me go for a minute and then we can come back and finalise whether this is two questions or one.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: I will take that as one question, and then we will add to it.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: The next part of the question is: how much in total has DEC spent to date in establishing—the ones that you do want to talk about—the marine parks at Camden Sound, Eighty Mile Beach; and in the south west, capes and Dampier? I know you are going to say that it was in last year's budget, but that just does not wash because the money that was identified in last year's budget line item for capes and Dampier was from royalties for regions and it had not even been through the business case process let alone cabinet. I am asking now: can you give me how much for each year there has been expenditure on those four marine parks and this 2012–13 year and the out years in this budget for Camden Sound, Eighty Mile Beach, capes and Dampier?

The DEPUTY CHAIR: We can include that in the A7 supplementary information.

Mr McNamara: We would have to give that by way of supplementary information. This will involve significant officer and liaison time and information-gathering time. For example, the information on the capes dates back to 2001.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Would Hon Sally Talbot like to put a time frame on that?

Hon SALLY TALBOT: From the 2009–10 budget.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: The supplementary information will commence from 2009–10.

[Supplementary Information No A7.]

Mr McNamara: That is fine.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I am not sure whether you will be able to answer this question, but let me try. The Marine Parks and Reserves Authority has made it clear to DEC from its annual audit that with the emergence of new parks, notably in the Kimberley, the audit and reporting responsibilities of the authority will clearly substantially increase. Has there been an increase in government support and resourcing for the MPRA in line with its requests? I cannot see a line item in the budget that relates to that.

Mr McNamara: The MPRA does not have a line item in the budget; it is supported through the department. Each of those new marine parks that has been created has an allocated budget and the extra costs associated with those marine parks in all facets will be dealt with through those budgets. That will cater for the necessary level of audit. We are in discussions with the new chair of the Marine Parks and Reserves Authority about the approach that is taken to the audit to make sure it is efficient, helpful and also cost effective.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Are you really saying that the MPRA was being a bit cheeky when they said that?

Mr McNamara: No, I have not said that at all.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Your answer is, “Don’t worry about it; your service basket will take care of it.” I read the MPRA’s statement to say, “We need more money to do the work you are asking us to do.”

Mr McNamara: We are focussed on the appropriate balance between on-ground delivery, associated research and monitoring and support for the MPRA and its audit function. Each new marine park has a budget for its management. That budget will also cater for an appropriate level of monitoring and audit, and we will certainly seek to ensure, in discussion with the MPRA, that it is satisfactory to meet its statutory audit function.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: The member can have one more question; she will be aware we are running out of time.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Absolutely. You will be aware that there was a supplementary question from the other place, so I will not create a supplementary question out of that. However, it became a supplementary question because you said you could not readily distinguish, for example, expenditure on compliance from other general funding pots. That is not my question.

Mr McNamara: That was not the answer in the other place. Marine parks are managed under five programs from administrative framework, education and interpretation, research, and monitoring and compliance. We did not have available at that time the precise breakup for each of those programs for each park.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Thank you, Mr McNamara, you have given me a perfect segue into my last question. I refer to each of DEC’s six service area—I know this may not apply to all six: nature conservation; parks and business services; sustainable forest management; environmental regulation; environmental sustainability; and coordinating a response to climate change. I would like the FTE numbers for each of those services, essentially, in the provisions you have just outlined, that is, marine policy and planning; management of marine fauna; marine science; marine park planning; establishment and management; marine mapping and monitoring; and providing services to the MPRA. Is it possible to go through those FTEs and tell me that?

Mr McNamara: Not here and now, but that information is extractible from our chart of accounts. There might be some slight redescription of some of those categories.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Can you add to that where these positions are based and the titles of each position—that is, if you are taking it as a supplementary?

[Supplementary Information No A8.]

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: I refer to the asset investment program on page 808 under “Works in Progress”. The final line item on “Pathways Regional Parks” has been allocated \$1 million, finishing in 2012–13, and then nothing happening in the out years. Could you talk me through what that program has delivered to date with pathways and regional parks? What parts have been completed and what is in the forward works program for that? Then, what will happen after this 2012–13 financial year with the sorts of works that have been undertaken in that program?

Mr McNamara: I may ask Mr Sharp to elaborate if he wishes. We have a general capital budget for parks, and capital works in regional parks have been delivered through that general parks capital budget for many years. Over a two-year period the government has injected an extra million dollars into some specific initiatives—I think it is \$1 million; I might stand corrected—in the regional parks. What happens to that additional investment in the out years is a matter for future budgets. It was a one-off initiative to improve facilities. I have seen work in Lesmurdie Falls National Park in particular, and there is also work in Yellagonga Regional Park. Mr Sharp may have something to add to that.

[12.20 pm]

Mr Sharp: That is correct. Supporting those additional funds has supplemented existing capital funds that are spent in and around parks, but in addition to the work at Lesmurdie, I am led to understand that the Woodman Point Regional Park pathways will be completed in this financial year as well.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: So Lesmurdie and Woodman Point, and the director general mentioned Yellagonga.

Mr Sharp: That is ongoing.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: Is it just those three regional parks that have had money spent on them under that program?

Mr Sharp: No, it is more than that, but I do not have the information on the other pathways, but I can make that available.

Mr McNamara: Money was spent on all nine regional parks. This was a specific injection of some extra money in last year's budget to improve the capacity to deliver that ongoing program. The extra capacity has been delivered primarily, but I am not sure if entirely, in the three parks that we have named.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: How was it determined that it was those parks? Did they just need the extra money?

Mr McNamara: If I can speak to Lesmurdie, for example, there is a lookout at the top of the falls that needed to be made safe and it has been made wheelchair accessible. The walking trail down to the bottom of the falls has degraded in parts, so it is a matter of making access points like that safe and enjoyable for people and also having interpretive material. We have a risk-assessment program across the state. We have good visitor statistics on visitation to our sites and an ongoing works program that balances need against visitor safety and those sorts of things.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Are you requesting details on each of the national parks? That is a fair bit of work.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: No, that is fine. I thought it was limited to just a small number but the director general says it has gone across all parks.

Mr Sharp: If I can add to that comment, the pathways that were selected were those that were already on the works program to meet the requirements, as Mr McNamara outlined, of safety and high levels of visitor access where there was a need. So they were already in our works program —

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: So it just was a speeding-up process.

Mr Sharp: These pathway funds enable us to progress those more rapidly than they would have under the normal capital works program.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: So at the end of the program you will have another look, and if there is a bit more money —

Mr Sharp: Yes.

Hon LIZ BEHJAT: Okay. Thanks.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: Hon Giz Watson. And you can go through to the end, I think.

Hon GIZ WATSON: Thank you very much, Deputy Chair. If I could just go back to the new marine parks area, in relation to the capes marine park, when will the required statutory steps to reserve the park be completed?

Mr McNamara: The Minister for Environment and the Premier were in Yallingup in March to make the announcement that the park was close to being created. I think we have said that both the Ngari capes marine park and the Camden Sound marine park will be created before the end of this financial year. We are on schedule —

Hon GIZ WATSON: As in the end of June this year?

Mr McNamara: The current financial year, and we are on track to achieve that.

Hon GIZ WATSON: So by the end of this month?

Mr McNamara: We are on track to achieve that.

Hon GIZ WATSON: I am just checking that you are not talking about the next financial year.

Mr McNamara: I mean this month.

Hon GIZ WATSON: So “imminent” might accurately reflect —

Mr McNamara: “Imminent” is a good term.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: You are going down there on the weekend and we will see the press release on Monday.

Mr McNamara: It is imminent.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: So you are going on the weekend!

Hon HELEN MORTON: “Imminent” is the word!

Hon GIZ WATSON: And the time line for the establishment of the Dampier Archipelago marine park?

Mr McNamara: There is not a firm time line at this stage. We are in discussions with the Marine Parks and Reserves Authority about that. Clearly there is the issue of the capacity to progress marine park initiatives. We made great progress with Ngari capes and Camden Sound and we are making good progress with Eighty Mile Beach and Roebuck and I have already mentioned the north Kimberley in terms of its timing. Given that we have broken the back, if you like, of capes and Camden, we have dusted off Dampier Archipelago in recent times and I have had discussions with the Marine Parks and Reserves Authority and we are now reviewing that and looking to progress it.

Hon GIZ WATSON: Sorry to skip between the two, but the Ngari capes marine park—given that an announcement is imminent—what is in the budget for the implementation and management of that marine park, which I assume will be announced shortly?

Mr McNamara: The capes’ budget, which was in last year’s budget statements, includes \$5.3 million over four years for the Department of Environment and Conservation and \$3.26 million over the same number of years for the Department of Fisheries.

Hon GIZ WATSON: I am referring to page 803 on the budget, which is obviously that the new marine parks that will be established. The budget commitment in the 2011–12 year to start expenditure on both parks is there. Can you explain why the 2012–13 budget indicates a similar commitment? It seems to me that it is duplicated.

Hon HELEN MORTON: Can you tell us what dot point you are referring to?

Hon GIZ WATSON: It is the second dot point on page 803.

Mr McNamara: Is the question: why does it say it will be established in this budget statement?

Hon GIZ WATSON: As I see it, there was a budget commitment in the 2011–12 year to start expenditure on both those parks, and it basically says the same thing for 2012–13. Does that mean that that was just rolled over?

Mr McNamara: Effectively, because they have not been created as yet. The heading is “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency” and it is a generalised dot point in the sense that the new marine parks will be established, and certainly in 2012–13 we will have to look after them. I do not think that the dot point is meant as a marker in time as to whether they will have been established this financial year or the next.

Hon GIZ WATSON: If I could refer to—there are too many choices!—the outcomes and key effectiveness indicators on page 804. The total number of listed threatened taxa and ecological communities is projected to go from 739 to 750. What are the additional 11 taxa and/or ecological communities that are expected to be listed in 2013?

Mr McNamara: I do have a complete answer available to that, but it involves listing a number of fauna species that are expected to go on the list, others that are expected to come off the list because of reviews of their status, and the same for flora. I wonder whether, because of the length of the answer and the time, we can provide that as supplementary information.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: That will be fine.

[*Supplementary Information No A9.*]

Hon GIZ WATSON: Perhaps this also might be included on notice: what threatened taxa or ecological communities are expected to have declined in their conservation status in 2012–13?

The DEPUTY CHAIR: That will all be part of A9.

Hon GIZ WATSON: In the same section, the outcomes and key effectiveness indicators show that less than 70 per cent of the critically endangered and endangered taxa and ecological communities currently have recovery plans. This is for either the minister or Mr McNamara: could you list those critically endangered and endangered taxa and ecological communities that currently do not have a recovery plan?

Mr McNamara: Certainly not off the top of my head. There are 600 species on our threatened list. Not all of those are critically endangered or endangered, but the list is quite long and would have to be provided as supplementary information.

[*Supplementary Information No A10.*]

Hon GIZ WATSON: I will put all these on notice because they are in the same line, but I will just go through them: all the critically endangered and endangered taxa and ecological communities that have a recovery plan that requires updating or has reached the end of the period for the recovery plan.

[*Supplementary Information No A11.*]

Hon GIZ WATSON: The commonwealth government has recently released new referral guidelines and assessment criteria for Carnaby's cockatoos. When will DEC update its recovery plan for this particular species?

[12.30 pm]

Mr McNamara: I think we would have to include that in the supplementary information as well. We are certainly working on that now. The plan expires—I may stand corrected—at the end of this year and we are certainly working on the revision of it.

[*Supplementary Information No A12.*]

Hon GIZ WATSON: This question is in relation to staffing. I refer to “Employee benefits” on page 810 of the *Budget Statements* and to “Appreciating the Risk: Report of the Special Inquiry into the November 2011 Margaret River Bushfire”, which was tabled in Parliament in February 2011. There are two things referred to there. Recommendation 5 of that report advised —

The Department of Environment and Conservation explore human resourcing models that:

- make succession planning a priority;
 - look at options for the attraction and retention of staff; and
 - review how the salary levels of staff matches the decision making required in major activities such as prescribed
-

Has the department taken any steps to implement these recommendations?

Mr McNamara: We have taken steps across the totality of the Keely report and the government's response to it. We are doing that in some priority order, of course. We are addressing the risk management issues as the highest priority, but Mr Dans can elaborate.

Mr Dans: We have already done some preliminary work comparing the benefits and remuneration to staff in similar fire management roles in other jurisdictions and then other Western Australian government departments. When we have compiled all that information, we will engage with the Department of Commerce and the Public Sector Commission, and perhaps develop a strategy by which we may address those recommendations in Mr Keely's report.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: That is almost the end. Would you bear with me for two quick questions—one, Hon Matt Benson and one Hon Col Holt, who has had very hardly any exposure here.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Matt deserves one.

Hon MATT BENSON-LIDHOLM: Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Hon Ken Travers. Very quickly, I note on page 801 under "Major Spending Changes" a budgetary item of note to me is the allocation of some \$300 000 for the Kimberley Toad Busters and also another allocation to saving the western ground parrot. I want to know why those allocations have been made, particularly given there does not seem to be any particular follow up to that. I suppose to follow on then from those allocations, what sort of current work is DEC doing in relation to, if you like, the strategies surrounding the spread, if you like, of the cane toad?

Mr McNamara: I will try to be very brief. There is a state cane toad strategy, which is endorsed by the government and has been released, and that has got a range of actions in it. Secondly, on toads, the government made an election commitment to fund \$1.2 million over four years to the Kimberley Toad Busters for their community-based on-ground efforts against toads. That \$1.2 million was activated immediately after the government was elected and, therefore, all four instalments have been paid. The government has decided to add a fifth instalment by this new funding of \$300 000 for the current financial year. Funding beyond that is a matter for future budget consideration. The western ground parrot has been drawn to particular attention of the government as a critically endangered species. There are only about 110 individuals left in the Cape Arid and Fitzgerald River National Parks. We have serious cat predation problems and we have a small captive group that we are trying to get to breed. It was recognised that that bird needs some extra input of funding as well.

Hon COL HOLT: Page 808, "New Works", "Park Improvement Program". As you would be aware, the Walpole community has a very particular asset that they are very keen on restoring, which is the yacht club at Walpole. Is there any good news in this budget for them about helping them restore the yacht club?

Mr McNamara: The Walpole Yacht Club is, if you like, DEC's business because it is located under a CALM act lease on the Walpole–Nornalup National Park, although my staff told me yesterday it is sometimes located on the Walpole and Nornalup Inlets Marine Park as well. That is why there is a problem; it is suffering from tidal and wave action and has deteriorated. The yacht club wants to do something about that and we agree with them. They are exploring options of relocation and we have suggested some other sites. They are also looking at some options of restoration and reconstruction, although, frankly, I do not know how that would sit against the ongoing threat of tidal action. We certainly offered to them that if they find a new location, we would offset some of their costs by just using our crews to do away with the old structure and help them move. I am not aware that they have found the solution for themselves yet, but we will certainly assist them in whatever solution that is.

Hon COL HOLT: There is no budget allocation. It is just an in-kind cost.

Mr McNamara: There would be an in-kind contribution from us and cooperation and assistance. It is not really our capital budget responsibility to build a yacht club.

Hon GIZ WATSON: You could help them demolish it.

Mr McNamara: They would have to look at their options to achieve a new yacht club or a restoration, but we will assist them in that.

The DEPUTY CHAIR: That brings us to the end. The committee will forward any additional questions it has to you via the minister in writing in the next couple of days, together with the transcript of evidence, which includes the questions you have taken on notice, of which there are 12.

If members have any unasked questions, I ask you to submit those to the committee clerk at the close of this hearing. Responses to the questions will be requested within 10 working days of the receipt of the questions, as is normal. Should you be unable to reach this due date, please advise the committee in writing as soon as possible before the due date. This advice would include specific reasons as to why the due date cannot be met.

On behalf of the committee and the members here, thank you for your attendance here today.

Hearing concluded at 12.36 pm
