

Division 14: Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation — Services 1 to 7, State Development; Jobs and Trade; Tourism; Science; Hydrogen Industry, \$508 912 000 —

Ms M.M. Quirk, Chair.

Mr R.H. Cook, Minister for State Development, Jobs and Trade; Tourism; Science.

Ms R. Brown, Director General.

Dr P. Gorey, Deputy Director General, Resources and Project Facilitation.

Mr R. Sansalone, Chief Financial Officer.

Mr J. O'Hare, Executive Director, Industry Development.

Mr A. Sutton, Executive Director, Hydrogen and New Energies.

Mr C. Cottam, Executive Director, Strategic Projects.

Ms J. Kirk, Acting Executive Director, Strategic Policy.

Mr G. Marinucci, Director, Health and Medical Life Sciences.

Ms K. Cook, Director, Renewable Hydrogen Unit.

Ms M. Forbes, Acting Executive Director, Marketing, Tourism WA.

Ms A. Last, Acting Executive Director, Events, Tourism WA.

Ms R. Lowe, Acting Executive Director, Destination Development, Tourism WA.

Ms R. O'Toole, Principal Policy Adviser.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIR: This estimates committee will be reported by Hansard. The daily proof *Hansard* will be available online as soon as possible within two business days. I will allow as many questions as possible. Questions and answers should be short and to the point. Consideration is restricted to items for which a vote of money is proposed in the consolidated account. Questions must relate to a page number, item or amount related to the current division, and members should preface their questions with these details. Some divisions are the responsibility of more than one minister. Ministers shall only be examined in relation to their portfolio responsibilities.

A minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee. I will ask the minister to clearly indicate what information they agree to provide and will then allocate a reference number. Supplementary information should be provided to the principal clerk by close of business Friday, 3 June 2022. If a minister suggests that a matter be put on notice, members should use the online questions on notice system.

Mr R.H. COOK: Madam Chair, for the information of the chamber, Dr Kirsty Moynihan from the Animal Resources Authority was going to be with us. She has become positive overnight, so unfortunately cannot be with us. The managing director of Tourism WA, Carolyn Turnbull, is also positive, so she cannot join us. We have other people here to assist in that area.

The CHAIR: Aren't you pleased you haven't got a health minister!

Before I give the call to the member for North West Central, the member for Cottesloe has indicated that he does not want to ask any questions of ChemCentre.

I give the call to the member for North West Central.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Minister, I refer to division 14, Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation, on page 197 of budget paper No 2, specifically "COVID-19 Response" and the first line item under "Reconnect WA", which is "Aviation Recovery Fund Boost". Is the minister able to provide a breakdown of this expense? What is the allocation for Reconnect WA and the safe transition industry support package? For example, how many seats apply to resident fares as part of the state fares?

Mr R.H. COOK: I thank the member very much for the question. The \$65 million aviation recovery fund was announced in December last year. It is part of the \$195 million Reconnect WA package, set up to re-establish international and interstate flight routes and develop new routes. The package was originally worth \$185 million and was then boosted to \$195 million. That extra \$10 million for aviation recovery was provided through the government's safe transition industry support package. Predominantly, the funds are dedicated towards re-establishing our aviation links.

Essentially, there are three main goals in tourism. One of them is to build demand through destination marketing. The other is to make sure that we have good tourism product, but unless we have the aviation links, we do not get the supply of tourists coming into WA. This is a really important part of making sure that we put those flights back on. I think we have about a 30 per cent capacity for international flights. We have around 33 flights between Perth and Singapore, so that is coming back quite nicely. We will continue to ensure that we work with the airlines, particularly around direct aviation links. As part of that package, we have \$4.6 million for regional affordable fares, which provides opportunities for predominantly Western Australian residents flying to Perth from regional centres, which enables them to afford the airfares associated with the normal activities they undertake. I invite the director general or the appropriate officer to make further comments.

[9.10 am]

Ms R. Brown: Obviously, the intrastate affordable airfares program across the regions was a big part of that, with 8 000 seats in July 2020 and 50 000 seats in 2020–21. The program has been successful in helping people travel intrastate. Most notably, on 6 April 2022, the long-awaited Jetstar Busselton to Melbourne direct link commenced. The successful affordable airfares program continued into 2021–22, and in partnership with Qantas and Virgin Australia delivered over 40 000 discounted tickets from Perth to Exmouth, Broome and Kununurra.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: How many seats are available on the \$199 arc, including Exmouth, Carnarvon, Geraldton, Kalgoorlie, Albany and Esperance—I think that is all of them—for residents in those towns? I am happy to take as supplementary information how many seats are available per flight or per week—however the minister wants to describe it.

Mr R.H. COOK: I might take guidance from the director general. That may be an initiative of the Department of Transport rather than Tourism Western Australia, so let me confer, if I may. It is not in my wheelhouse.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: The \$65 million in funding the minister just announced —

Mr R.H. COOK: It is not associated with that program.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: It is separate to that program?

Mr R.H. COOK: That is correct.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Can the minister provide a breakdown of where that \$4.6 million for regional WA is going?

Mr R.H. COOK: As the director general detailed, that was for the 40 000 discounted seats from Perth to Exmouth, Broome and Kununurra.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Has that \$4.6 million been spent already?

Ms R. Brown: It is allocated for 2022–23.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: How many seats is that allocation for?

Mr R.H. COOK: It is 40 000.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Can the minister provide a breakdown of how much of the remaining \$65 million is going to marketing to lift that 30 per cent for international travel and advise what is the target?

Mr R.H. COOK: I will invite the director general to make some comments.

Ms R. Brown: The remainder of the \$65 million and how it will be allocated to interstate and international travel is subject to a large number of commercial negotiations with our airline partners. At this stage, that breakdown will not be fully bedded down until, obviously, we know the outcome of some of those negotiations. The aim is to as much as possible recover capacity back to pre-COVID levels ideally by the middle of the year and then seek to negotiate for additional routes and capacity beyond that.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: If the negotiations with airline companies had not started, was modelling done for how the agency came up with that figure?

Ms R. Brown: Prior to the pandemic, Tourism WA, with funding from the state government, worked to negotiate a number of new direct routes and other opportunities, including the direct route from Perth to Tokyo. Quite a significant amount of work had been done, particularly in the lead-up to some of those negotiations around the requirements from airline partners and we were working closely with Perth Airport. We had information and work that had been done previously to inform what might be required to return to some of those direct routes and to work towards new routes. It is based on historical information that we used in previous negotiations. Obviously, it is quite different across routes and very different across airlines. It depends upon the competitive nature of other markets seeking to negotiate airline deals.

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Mr V.A. CATANIA: What percentage increase in overseas or interstate visitation does the agency aspire to achieve with that \$65 million? Will it lift traffic between Perth and regional WA? Can the minister provide the goal that the agency is trying to achieve with that \$65 million in each of those zones?

Mr R.H. COOK: I cannot provide that specifically for international visitation to regional WA. We are trying to continue to work with the airlines to make sure that we have add-on packages. For instance, we are working closely with a number of travel agents in the United Kingdom at the moment on Western Australia as a holiday destination. As part of that, we continue to work with them on creating add-ons. That is an important part of the discussions with the international aviation industry as well. In one instance, we want people to be able to fly to Perth, and that is a great outcome, but if we can add on an extra leg to their journey—such as a flight to Broome and back or something like that—as a part of their international itinerary, that gives us bigger bang for our buck. All those opportunities are being worked on.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Are there key performance indicators attached to this \$65 million to determine whether spending \$65 million will lift international travel from 30 per cent to, say, 55 per cent; or modelling that suggests that if we spend \$65 million, we will get 55 per cent, but if we spend \$75 million, we will get 65 per cent?

Mr R.H. COOK: No. Unfortunately, there would not be that level of direct relationship. A combination of destination marketing and continuing to improve our overall tourism products give us the opportunity to sell into those industry partners the opportunities for people to move on as part of their overall itinerary. If the member is asking what the KPIs are, obviously we are trying to bring the industry back to 2019 levels as quickly as possible, and we are meeting with a lot of success around that at the moment, particularly with some of those international aviation links. But there is not necessarily —

Mr V.A. CATANIA: A goal in mind.

Mr R.H. COOK: There is no direct equation, I guess. I invite the director general to make further comments.

Mr R.S. LOVE: With respect, we have Dr Honey online until 10.00 am.

The CHAIR: I can see that. It is actually more efficient to totally pursue one theme. I was just about to say to the member for North West Central that he has one further question and then we go on to a new topic. I can see that the member for Cottesloe is about to expire, so I am very anxious to get to him. Thank you, member for Moore; I have a handle on this.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Sorry; chair. I have one more question on this issue.

The CHAIR: The member for North West Central and I have an understanding.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: How much of that \$65 million for marketing will be spent locally with local businesses —

The CHAIR: That is a new question and the director general had not finished answering the previous question.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Sorry; I was just trying to hasten things.

Mr R.H. COOK: I might invite the director general to provide further information on my previous answer.

[9.20 am]

Ms R. Brown: In relation to the aviation recovery fund, as I think the minister said, there is no direct target, other than the key performance indicator that has been set around restoring overall visitation in 2023 back to pre-pandemic levels. The KPI more generally is 11.3 million overnight visitors. With regard to each aviation negotiation, obviously, each of the commercial negotiations and business cases have modelling behind them and they are only progressed on the basis of there being a positive return in respect of capacity and contribution to the overall visitation target.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I refer to budget paper No 2, volume 1, and the top of page 205, “International Engagement, Trade and Investment”. Part of the activity is attracting international students. In April last year, the Premier described India as the epicentre of death and destruction and called for a ban on flights from India. That caused, I guess, a lot of concern amongst Indian nationals in Western Australia and overseas. Given that India is historically our single largest source of overseas students, what particular efforts are being made to re-attract students from India? What number of students do we expect to see from India this year?

Mr R.H. COOK: Can I, first of all, just say that the member for Cottesloe is looking remarkably fresh for someone who is going through COVID. I am jealous; I wish I had looked half that good during my period in home isolation! It kicks around; it hangs around for a bit. I will make general comments on investment and trade as they relate to international students, but Minister Templeman is obviously the individual who is directly responsible for international students, so I will direct the member’s question to him. I am not quite sure when Minister Templeman will be appearing, but I direct the member’s question to him.

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An important part of what we are doing at the moment is moving as quickly as possible to ensure that we can rebuild our economic and trade partnerships with our Asian friends. We are going back out to let the rest of the world know that Western Australia is open for business, tourists and international students. We have an extensive program around that, which includes international students. I will be undertaking a range of missions over the next few months, particularly between 12 and 19 July, when I will lead a major delegation to India to explore and refresh the opportunities around our existing relationships, and also to look at new relationships. Ministers Templeman and Dawson will be joining me as part of that delegation, and we will put out an expression of interest to members of industry who might be interested in joining us on that journey. There has been a significant level of interest from the business community to join us on that delegation to India. That runs hot on the heels of the Australia–India free trade agreement. Members will recall that Minister Goyal, the Indian trade minister, was in Western Australia very recently. He invited us to India and will host us as part of that mission. That will provide a significant opportunity to continue to stimulate the market for international students, and Minister Templeman will be particularly focused on that market.

I make the observation that, as part of Reconnect WA, we have a coordinated approach to different sectors from which we are trying to attract international students back. There are incentives to bring back existing students and attract new students, including a \$1 500 accommodation subsidy for up to 5 000 student arrivals, and a \$1 500 bursary for up to 2 000 international students enrolled in intensive English language courses. The member may be interested to know that as of 17 May, more than 2 300 students have applied for financial support through the international education initiatives associated with the Reconnect WA package.

I will also observe that we have a new Trade and Investment Commissioner for India–Gulf Region, Nashid Chowdhury. She commenced in that role on 1 March and will be deployed on 2 June. In the meantime, she has been working assiduously to rebuild our links with the Indian business community, and will play a key role in putting together the trade mission for 12 to 19 July.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Has the minister thought of expanding the program to international apprentices, given that we have a shortage of tradespeople? The hospitality sector is also suffering from not having workers. Has the minister thought about expanding the program to attract international apprentices or students doing TAFE courses in hospitality, to try to plug the massive gaps we have throughout Western Australia?

Mr R.H. COOK: That is a great question, member. It does not strictly sit in my area —

Mr V.A. CATANIA: But it affects the minister’s area.

Mr R.H. COOK: That is right. It is a great partnership between Ministers Ellery and Templeman. Minister Templeman is responsible for international education and Minister Ellery is responsible for the Department of Training and Workforce Development. I know that international students play an important role in respect of TAFE. I am quickly looking through my notes to see whether I can provide the member with extra information that might be pertinent. The member referenced in his question our current workforce challenges. That is an important part of what we are attempting to overcome through partnerships with industry. The Premier will soon be travelling to the UK and Europe as part of an effort to continue to attract international workers, particularly in the health and education spheres. I will be following that up with an attempt to attract construction and hospitality workers to Western Australia. We have recently launched a new website, in conjunction with the Australian Hotels Association. That is about continuing to attract people to the hospitality sector. I think I am launching that tomorrow, actually, to continue to connect people in Western Australia with the hospitality sector. We also want to make people from overseas aware, through that digital promotion program, of the opportunities in hospitality.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Is the minister talking about the Paid Escape?

Mr R.H. COOK: No, that is not the Paid Escape, but that is obviously an important part of it.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: We can talk about that afterwards.

Mr R.H. COOK: Okay.

[9.30 am]

Dr D.J. HONEY: Thank you for your kind words, minister. It is a pleasure to my ears, because I have had people telling me I look absolutely dreadful, so you have cheered me up. It is a rollercoaster, for sure.

Getting on to the exciting topic of Oakajee, there is money allocated in the budget for the Oakajee entrance road.

The CHAIR: Do you have a page number or reference, member?

Dr D.J. HONEY: Yes, I do. It is page 205 of budget paper No 2, volume 1, the table under service 2. I refer to the moneys allocated for that access road. I have spoken with a number of major investors who wish to locate renewable

hydrogen projects at Oakajee. The reasons are obvious. It is not only one of the premium renewable energy precincts in the world, but also an extremely liveable climate, so investors feel they will be able to attract employees there who will live in the local community. I have spoken to companies that are looking at multibillion-dollar investments that say they cannot proceed with their projects because of the lack of enabling infrastructure. There is no port and no other common-user infrastructure. I appreciate that there has to be an entrance road to the estate, but are there any proposals for other common-user infrastructure that the state government will support in the estate?

Mr R.H. COOK: I thank the member. He is right—the level of interest in our industrial estates right across Western Australia is huge at the moment. We are almost overwhelmed by the level of interest from companies wanting to take advantage of the opportunity to establish key industries here in Western Australia. The member is absolutely right that Oakajee should and will play an important role in our energy transition into the future hydrogen and, particularly, green hydrogen area. In fact, we listed Oakajee or the midwest as part of the federal government’s hydrogen hubs proposal. It acknowledged the Pilbara estate, but we believe that Oakajee and the midwest region will play a key role in green hydrogen and as a hydrogen hub of the future.

The member is absolutely right: in 2021, we made a commitment of \$7.5 million to develop the Oakajee access road and junction with the North West Coastal Highway. I think it is fair to say that that is an important initiative, but, as the member observes, ultimately it will not be enough to make sure that the Oakajee estate is fit for purpose and ready for businesses to establish there. That is why we have established the industrial lands fund, which is about developing our industrial estates so that they are more shovel-ready for proponents looking to come in. That fund has been topped up by \$50 million and is now worth \$100 million. It will provide the department with important resources to make sure that we can continue to develop these estates so that they are ready for proponents when they come in. It is fair to say that we will be even more overwhelmed by the need to continue to make strategic investments in these industrial lands to make them proponent ready.

The Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation is currently finalising a business case to support the next steps in the Oakajee activation program. As I said, JTSI also submitted an application for matched funding from the Australian government’s \$464 million clean hydrogen industrial hubs program in 2021. The state government initiated the Oakajee hydrogen activation expression of interest process in September 2020, seeking submissions from corporations with the capacity, experience and vision to be part of the green hydrogen supply chain in Oakajee. This global EOI process closed in December 2020 with 65 submissions from across the hydrogen supply chain. There are companies interested in establishing a base at Oakajee. Submissions or associated joint ventures were received from Australia, Japan, Korea, India, Germany, Spain, the United Kingdom, France, the United States, Canada, the United Arab Emirates and South Africa. That gives the member an indication of just how much global interest there is in Western Australia at the moment. As economies look to decarbonise, companies look to invest heavily in that future hydrogen space, and I think we are really on the cusp of a very exciting period. But the member is right; it will continue to see further investment, and the top-up of the industrial lands fund is an important part of that process.

I might ask the director general to provide any supplementary comments.

Ms R. Brown: Thank you, minister. The only additional aspect I would add is that as part of developing that business case for the clean hydrogen industrial hubs program, there has been work across government agencies and with industry in developing that midwest potential hydrogen hub. That project includes the potential for addressing the road, as outlined by the minister and as part of the election commitment, and water connections; a microgrid; a hydrogen refuelling station; hydrogen fuel cell vehicles; and market initiatives to stimulate demand. That included key discussions with industry around what some of those early initiatives to activate Oakajee would be to stimulate demand in the region.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Has the government a model in mind for funding the common-user infrastructure in that estate? At the moment, as the minister will be well aware, it is literally just an overgrown paddock with a dirt road into it. The government is putting a road into it, but all the infrastructure such as power, water, gas and, particularly, a port needs to go in. Does the government have a model for that common-user infrastructure?

Mr R.H. COOK: As the member will be aware, a lot of work has been done over the last 10 to 20 years on what a deepwater port might look like in that midwest region in addition to Geraldton port. A lot of work has been done both during the previous government and perhaps the government before that, too, if my memory serves me correctly. It would not be true to say there has not been modelling done; it has been modelled within an inch of its life. Ultimately, I think it is really just waiting for that point when the investments stack up from a not only commercial, but also government point of view. I am not aware of any recent modelling, although, as the director general said, a business case is being worked up on the next steps for the Oakajee activation program. Ultimately, as that activity builds, further and further investments will be made.

I will ask the director general to make some comments on whether specific modelling has been done lately.

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Ms R. Brown: In response to the minister's comment, really the work that has been done is around that early stage activation and, in particular, responding to industry's interest through the EOI process and working with those commercial operators that have an initial interest in operating at that site. It is really about those early stages and what can be achieved to stimulate local demand in the first instance.

Mr M. HUGHES: Can I turn the minister's mind back to tourism. I refer to page 198 of budget paper No 2, volume 1, and the \$17.7 million allocated over four years to the national park tourism experiences development. I am interested in this because, as the minister is aware, John Forrest National Park is in my electorate. It is a new line item. I would like the minister to give me some further information on this initiative, please.

Mr R.H. COOK: I thank the member. It is a really important initiative. As the member knows, our national parks by definition are part of our best natural environment; therefore, they lend weight to our overall tourism product. It makes sense to look at our national park estate and see to what extent it can play a role in developing our overall tourism product. We have provided \$17.7 million over four years for national park tourism experiences development to leverage private sector investment across the state in national parks, in partnership, obviously, with the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions.

There are essentially four priorities. The first is to establish shovel-ready sites within national parks for private investment to develop new signature tourism accommodation; the second is to facilitate new regional tourism experiences identified in tourism destination management plans that will activate national park visitation; the third is to create density and diversity of tourism products within the regions by engaging and building capability within the tourism industry; and the fourth is to place an experienced development officer in each of the five tourism regions to support the delivery of the national parks tourism experiences development. Some fantastic national parks are being developed right around the state. One thing that immediately comes to mind is the opportunity to develop glamping and ecotourism opportunities and those sorts of facilities. Some recent investments that have been really successful include the Kalbarri National Park skywalk.

[9.40 am]

Mr V.A. CATANIA: That was a fantastic initiative of the previous government, funded under royalties for regions.

Mr R.S. LOVE: When I was the local member.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: The previous local member and the current local member are here. Perfect! I thank the minister for highlighting how wonderful —

Mr P.C. TINLEY: It got you a long way, did it not?

Mr R.H. COOK: That is a great example of how we can utilise national park assets to build tourism visitation opportunities. When I was in Kalbarri recently, I spoke with tourism operators in the area and all of them referenced that particular initiative as an example of how we can continue to activate our national parks for the benefit of our overall tourism product. I might ask Ms Renata Lowe to make further comments about that.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Come on! These questions could be put on notice. It is a Dorothy Dixier. We have limited time.

Mr M. HUGHES: I have John Forrest National Park in my electorate.

Mr P.C. TINLEY: He got re-elected, too, so he has a right.

The CHAIR: We have a question from the member for North West Central.

Mr M. HUGHES: I did have a further question.

The CHAIR: With respect, member for Kalamunda, all the chairs are under strict instruction to give the opposition as much opportunity to ask questions as possible. Frankly, the minister's answer was extensive, so I do not think you need to ask a further question. I give the call to the member for North West Central.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Thank you, Madam Chair. I refer to the new initiatives on page 198 of the *Budget statements* and specifically to the 2023 total solar eclipse. I note this is a one-in-100-year event, with significant visitation expected to impact locations north of Perth, with the resources and environment of Exmouth and surrounds to be particularly impacted. They will be under a lot of pressure. The minister announced \$19.3 million to support the preparations in Exmouth. Can the minister provide a breakdown of that \$19.3 million and where it is going around Exmouth?

Mr R.H. COOK: The \$20 million commitment around the total solar eclipse is about dealing with the logistical challenges and securing the tourism opportunities that will come from this important initiative. It is being oversighted by the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation, but it is quintessentially a cross-government response to manage what I am advised will be anywhere between 10 000 and, as I have heard reference to, 50 000 visitors who

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will descend upon that small pocket of planet Earth that will have the 100 per cent total solar eclipse experience. The member will know, as much as anyone, the logistical challenges that will come with that. It is about accommodation. It is about providing people with food and other opportunities. It is also simply about making sure that we have the amenities for people and that we can protect their safety. Quite frankly, we will need to make sure that we continue to remind them to drive on the left-hand side of the road and not the right-hand side of the road. This will be a major challenge that we will confront in April next year. The state government's commitment includes \$8.2 million in road infrastructure upgrades and traffic management in line with Main Roads' previous experience in managing large volumes of event traffic. That includes \$2.2 million for vehicle control points and signage.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Is this for Exmouth?

Mr R.H. COOK: I will invite the director general to provide more specific commentary. The member asked for a breakdown of the \$20 million, so I am going to provide that in the first instance. There is \$1.9 million for rest area upgrades along Minilya–Exmouth Road, \$1.7 million for temporary turnaround areas, \$1.2 million for rest area upgrades on the North West Coastal Highway, \$920 000 for four intersection improvements, and \$250 000 for harbour landscaping and lighting. It also includes \$5.4 million to increase the capacity of the region's telecommunications infrastructure. Obviously, if the tens of thousands of people who will go there all want to use their mobile phones and have operability around that, there are going to be challenges associated with the telecommunications infrastructure. The funding includes \$3 million to temporarily boost Exmouth's telecommunications network during the event and \$2.4 million to upgrade the range and capacity of the telecommunications infrastructure in the Exmouth region. There is also \$5 million to JTSI for event management and support, and \$1.1 million to the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions for event and waste management costs.

This is going to be an international event. All the eyes of the world will be on Exmouth during this period, so it represents not only an exciting opportunity, but also a challenge. We want to make sure that people come away from the event on 20 April with both an appreciation for the incredible beauty of Western Australia and a growing demand to come and visit all that Western Australia has to offer. But the impact will not be just on Exmouth. Carnarvon will have about a 97 per cent experience of the total solar eclipse. That will be fairly much the case in Onslow as well. The Shires of Ashburton and Carnarvon will play important roles. The member would know better than me, but it is a smidge over 300 kilometres between Carnarvon and Exmouth, so it would not surprise me if Carnarvon accommodation is already booked up. Certainly, Exmouth accommodation bookings have been consumed for some time now. We are looking at other opportunities to provide extra camping sites in and around Exmouth to absorb the large number of people who will be coming in.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Before the director general comments, perhaps I can home in on that. The majority of the funds will go towards catering in Exmouth, which will have the 100 per cent experience, but it is one road up basically from Geraldton, which, along with Carnarvon, will have 97 per cent, and I think Shark Bay will have 96 per cent. A huge number of people will go to those areas simply because they will not be able to get into Exmouth, as well as travelling from Karratha down to Onslow. That will put pressure on those town sites, where no money has been allocated, for example, for waste or traffic control. It will not just be Exmouth; it will be basically all the way up from Geraldton. There will be people on the roads, people parking everywhere and people camping everywhere. There will be a huge amount of pressure on local governments that cannot afford to deal with just the management of that, let alone the clean-up. Will any funds be available for Coral Bay, Carnarvon, Shark Bay, Kalbarri and Geraldton in terms of people being on the road, as well as Onslow in the Shire of Ashburton?

[9.50 am]

Mr R.H. COOK: The intensity of the funding becomes less as we move further away from the epicentre of the total solar eclipse. We have a senior officers working group in government that is chaired by the director general that brings in all areas of government to understand the demands on, as the member said, not just Exmouth, but also other parts of Western Australia with people making their way there. I will ask the director general to comment.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Because everyone has to go through those towns to get to Exmouth.

Mr R.H. COOK: Of course.

Ms R. Brown: That senior officers working group has engaged Jim Sharp, an ex-public servant of many years, to assist in that process. That group has been working over the last nine to 12 months to look at all the impacts across the regions, including some of the key agencies such as Transport, Main Roads, and Fire and Emergency Services. It is doing some quite detailed modelling and work with Riskwest around understanding the likely number of visitors and how they will be managed.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Is that only in the Exmouth area?

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Ms R. Brown: That group has looked more broadly at the impact on the region and what the requirements will be, including the workforce requirements around that period, which is quite critical. Certainly, there is work around emergency services preparation and having available resources across the region. The next phase is to get into some of that more detailed planning as we lock down some of the key sites within Exmouth and understand the numbers that will be visiting; of course, that also includes a potentially large number of cruise ships and others. That senior officers group will work through the requirements across the regions.

To the minister's earlier response around tourism experience development, in addition to that funding, we will have Tourism WA officers—we have one currently in Geraldton and one planned further up the region in Exmouth—so that we can work closely with all shires on their requirements. With the funding provided, we will ensure that, as the minister said, the entirety of the event across those locations is managed well and safely. We will also utilise the other work that Tourism WA does to ensure that it is a positive experience and we get really strong global awareness about just how spectacular that entire region is.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: The minister may not be aware that the Shire of Carnarvon, for example, is not participating in any way with the committee that is overseeing this event. That is a concern. No funding has been made available to the Shire of Carnarvon, the Shire of Ashburton or shires further south that will be hugely impacted by traffic and people who will not be able to get into Exmouth. It is sold out, so they will be looking at other places, and people are starting to book now in places like Carnarvon. That announcement contains no funding for any of those other towns that will be majorly impacted by this event. It is not just in the lead-up to but also after the event.

The other question I will ask —

The CHAIR: No, he is going to answer that question first. All right, minister.

Mr R.H. COOK: I am not quite sure what the question was.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Will you provide funding for the Shire of Carnarvon?

The CHAIR: I think the headline is now in the “Carnarvon Bugle”, so it has probably served the purpose!

Mr R.H. COOK: It is a \$20 million commitment to support the staging of the total solar eclipse.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: So there will be no other funding?

Mr R.H. COOK: Money is not necessarily being handed out in the way of grants to different agencies; it is a cross-government effort to manage that both on behalf of and with the shires that are in the area.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: In that \$20 million is there any workers' accommodation being allocated to places like Exmouth that do not have the workers, let alone accommodation?

Mr R.H. COOK: Yes, member. There is \$350 000 for accommodation and services for essential workers and contractors, as well as another \$550 000 for site works and land preparation for visitor groups.

The CHAIR: Member for Cottesloe, you have been patient.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Thank you very much, chair, and sorry I missed your message earlier.

I refer to industrial estates on page 205 of budget paper No 2, under service 2, “Project Facilitation”. This is about the minister's part of the world—it is his seat—and the availability of industrial estates. I was speaking to a senior manager from a company that is looking to make electrode material for batteries, which I know is one of the government's stated objectives for downstream manufacturing. That person told me they were putting their project on hold because they could not find suitable industrial land in the Kwinana industrial area. For all the reasons that both the minister and I understand, that is an extremely attractive industrial estate for people who want to do more sophisticated downstream manufacturing. Are there any plans to make more industrial land available? I note in particular the Latitude 32 area that, as the minister well knows, has been almost completely cleared now of housing. Electrodes is probably more of a medium-density industry, but I also know that heavy industries cannot find land in that area. Is there any proposal to develop more heavy and general industrial land in that Kwinana–Rockingham area, in particular in Latitude 32, potentially redesignating that as an extension of the heavy industrial area?

Mr R.H. COOK: I thank the member very much and I acknowledge his long-term commitment to that area through his previous work. As the member will be aware, we had an election commitment to establish a global advanced manufacturing hub study for the Western Trade Coast. It is an incredibly important piece of real estate for Western Australia. It includes the Kwinana industrial area, the Rockingham industry zone, the Australian Marine Complex and, as the member just mentioned, Latitude 32, all of which make up a particularly unique ecosystem of heavy industry, service industries and light industries. It is about making sure that we have not only the right mix of tenants and we are maximising the use of those strategic industrial areas, but also the right supports to ensure that we can bring further land onstream.

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The member mentioned Latitude 32, which has been a very long process. It is pleasing that at the northern end of Latitude 32 we are starting to see land cleared as it is relinquished by a lot of quarry miners in that area. That will establish good industrial opportunities there. The international advanced manufacturing hub study has begun. We are working with government departments and stakeholders in the area to make sure that we have the best strategic development of that land. I am just thinking at the moment about the Australian Marine Complex and how constrained that now is. The member is absolutely right; we need to identify other parts of the overall estate that we can continue to develop. That is important. Whether we move to locate heavy industry into Latitude 32 is something that the study will be able to tease out. More importantly, what we want to identify in that study is the right governance and the right strategic development of that area.

The member will be aware, of course, of H2Perth, the big hydrogen project that has been launched by Woodside. That points to the future of that hub. The member will also be aware that it is just across the road from the Nickel West battery materials refinery. I am aware of a number of proponents who are interested in this future energy, battery and critical minerals space and are looking to develop all the precursors for energy storage products and opportunities. In fact, just last week I was down at the Tianqi Lithium hydroxide plant where Tianqi celebrated its first shipment of lithium hydroxide monohydrate. Is that correct?

[10.00 am]

Dr D.J. HONEY: Yes, it was monohydrate.

Mr R.H. COOK: That is an incredibly important next step as we start to realise the opportunities that come from continuing to drive ourselves up the value chain and ensure that we are not just miners and initial processors but also the developers of precursor minerals and products that go into these higher level products. I hold ambitions for having a niche manufacturing base there that will see the final manufacturing of batteries developed in that area.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I will go back to the 2023 total solar eclipse referred to on page 198 under “New Initiatives”. The minister mentioned there was \$350 000 or so for workers’ accommodation. The minister will be aware that the Minister for Lands made a joint media statement calling for expressions of interest for workers’ accommodation to be built in Exmouth. My understanding is that quite a bit of headworks is needed to make the site viable for a private developer, which could cost in the order of \$3 million or \$5 million. Given that the government has a surplus of \$5.7 billion and this major international tourism event will struggle to get the workforce required to cater for the influx of tourists, will the minister commit to providing \$3 million or \$5 million, or whatever it takes, to do the earthworks—power, water and landfill—to build workers’ accommodation with at least 200 beds to cater for the needs of Exmouth today? That is what is required even without the April 2023 event.

Mr R.H. COOK: I recently visited Exmouth and met with industry, local government and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia to discuss the challenges of attracting workers to continue to provide services and economic opportunities to the people in the region. It is a challenge. I do not have working knowledge of the specific sites that have been identified, member, so I will ask the director general to comment on that.

Ms R. Brown: As the minister noted, there is a lot of work around preparing for the total solar eclipse. With regard to workforce support, there are a combination of factors, including working with the local shire on what land is available. In addition, we are working with other government agencies, particularly across the event period, about how we can support the workers who will be required, including state government workers, particularly those supporting the event and the emergency response workers. We are also working with the Department of Education, for example, on what it will be possible to do there. The team is very much focused on what will be required to support that event around that period.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I gather that is a no.

Mr R.H. COOK: That question was primarily about the area of land. If the member directs the question to Minister Carey, I am sure he will make a better go at it than I, although, like the member for Cottesloe, he is enjoying the internal confines of his house.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I understand that the lands minister is responsible, but it is also a tourism problem. This is what is missing: the problem for tourism is finding and housing workers, particularly in areas like Exmouth, Coral Bay and Kalbarri where Tourism WA has been absent—you, as the minister, have been absent—in providing the support that is needed for those hospitality businesses that service the tourism industry. That is why I brought it up with the minister—to advocate on behalf of the tourism businesses.

The CHAIR: That and Facebook, member.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I have a new question.

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The CHAIR: No, before we get on to that, can I get some guidance from members? We have been on this division for an hour. There will not be any questions on division 32, Chemistry Centre. We have the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, and also the service for commerce to go. Do members want to proceed on this?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: We will continue this discussion for the next five minutes.

The CHAIR: All right, so I will give the call to the member for Kalamunda and then the member for North West Central.

Mr M. HUGHES: I think this is probably the largest section.

The CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr R.H. COOK: My sense is that we will probably finish this division at about 11.15 or 11.30 am then move on to the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety and the service that deals with commerce. Is that your sense of it?

Mr M. HUGHES: I would like to spend a little bit more time on commerce.

Mr R.H. COOK: Sure. Should we smash on until about 11.00 am and then go on to commerce?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: We do not have a problem with government members asking questions if we could actually get through it more quickly.

The CHAIR: I will give the member for Kalamunda the indulgence of asking a question so that he does not feel deprived and then the member for North West Central will have the call. The member for Kalamunda.

Mr M. HUGHES: This is actually directly related to my electorate. I refer to the Perth Observatory outlined on page 203 of the *Budget statements*.

Mr R.H. COOK: Is this science and innovation, member?

Mr M. HUGHES: Yes. There is a line item on page 203 for the Perth Observatory. Could the minister update us on the level of support that has been provided for the observatory and outline that government initiative?

Mr R.H. COOK: I thank the member and appreciate him asking the question, because it is something he is passionate about and has advocated very strongly for. It is an important part of the member's electorate. The government has committed \$1.6 million in partnership with the Perth Observatory Volunteer Group primarily because of the member's advocacy. That funding is essentially to support the general operations but also to expand the science, technology, engineering and maths programs for school students in the broader community.

When the member and I went there recently, I was struck by the energy and the real commitment from the volunteers at the Perth Observatory. They have great vision for the facility. It is a really exciting place to visit. I attended with the member for Kalamunda and, at that point, the candidate for Hasluck and now member for Hasluck, Tania Lawrence. It was great advocacy on the member's part, because we now have a member for Hasluck who is tuned into the issues of that community. That is really exciting as well. That funding is essentially a \$400 000 per annum commitment to the Perth Observatory Volunteer Group to assist it with those programs. I understand that the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation has done great work in partnership with that group on visualising and putting in place that program. These are incredibly important facilities. They provide inspiration and education. One thing that struck me about it was how in tune people are with how our science comes off the back of 60 000 years of scientifically observing, understanding and interpreting the skies and telling stories through them. We have that great facility. Forgive me, but I cannot remember the actual title it was given, but it incorporates Indigenous values so people can soak them up when looking up at the sky and appreciate the relationship that Aboriginal people have with the dark skies and how they tell their stories through that. That also provides a great link. Perth Observatory is an exciting facility that has been there for 100 years. I see a bright future for it.

Mr V.A. CATANIA interjected.

[10.10 am]

Mr R.H. COOK: I was just about to bring the member into the conversation, because it is part of that Carnarvon network of things that really provides that outreach of science to the community. I went to the Carnarvon Space and Technology Museum recently and, again, it is a fantastic —

Mr V.A. CATANIA: All run by volunteers.

Mr R.H. COOK: Yes, that is right. It was clearly a volunteer-driven effort, just like the Perth Observatory Volunteer Group, but also the Gravity Discovery Centre. If I was cleverer, I would remember whose electorate that is in as well. They are all great facilities and it is wonderful for the government to be able to support them. It is in Gingin. Is that in the member's electorate?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: No, the member for Moore’s electorate.

Mr R.H. COOK: The Gravity Discovery Centre is another example of those sorts of facilities.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I refer to the bottom of page 197 of budget paper No 2 and the tourism and travel agent support fund. No amount is shown for 2022–23. Can the minister provide some information on the number of businesses—tourism and travel agents—that have received assistance and the amount in the budget that has been spent?

Mr R.H. COOK: I can provide the member with a general breakdown of that. As the member will recall, in August 2021, the Premier and the then Minister for Tourism announced a \$16.8 million Western Australian tourism and travel agent support fund that was developed by the state and the Australian government. This was a joint initiative to assist tourism operators and travel agencies through some of the financial impact resulting from much of the country being under significant COVID restrictions. Funding was available to eligible tourism and travel agent businesses that could show at least a 30 per cent reduction in turnover by comparing the following two periods: a six-week period from May to June 2021 and a six-week period from July to August 2021. Applications opened on 6 September and closed on 30 September. Since the commencement of this program, the McGowan government has implemented the \$77 million safe transition industry package, which includes three programs dedicated to tourism operators and travel agents that totals \$38 million. The Australian government provided 50 per cent of the funding for the tourism and travel agent support fund.

Applications were lower than expected. This was likely due to the specific pre and post–Sydney lockdown dates used to meet the 30 per cent reduction in turnover. These dates were chosen by the Department of Treasury to provide support for expected booking calculations and were similar to the dates initially chosen by Tasmania. Although it is possible that some businesses have been able to fill their lost interstate bookings with intrastate travellers, there are known sectors of the industry that are unable to fill the “30 per cent decline” criterion due to seasonality or ongoing hardships through the pandemic. A total of 435 applications were received and a total of \$1.7 million was provided to the 358 eligible businesses.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Are those general businesses, not just travel agents?

Mr R.H. COOK: Yes. Since March 2020, we have disbursed \$28.2 million directly to some 1 400 unique tourism and hospitality operators plus travel agents through 19 different financial support and voucher programs. That includes four programs and campaigns in 2020 to the value of \$16.2 million, nine programs in 2021 to the tune of \$3.9 million, and six programs and campaigns in 2022 to the tune of \$8.1 million.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Out of that \$77 million, \$20 million was spent, \$16 million of which was on tourism businesses and travel agent support and \$3.9 million on marketing assistance. Has the other \$57 million not been spent?

Mr R.H. COOK: The safe transition industry support package totalled \$77 million, \$38 million of which was spent on three programs dedicated to tour operators and travel agents.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: How much money out of that \$38 million has been spent to date?

Mr R.H. COOK: I might get the director general to provide some further information.

Ms R. Brown: As the minister outlined, the take-up for the program was lower than the state and the commonwealth governments anticipated. We understand that approximately \$10 million will be spent out of that fund to support operators.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Sorry; is that \$10 million out of the \$38 million?

Ms R. Brown: Yes. I might suggest, minister, that Renata Lowe will have more details on the specifics.

Mr R.H. COOK: I will ask Ms Renata Lowe to provide some more detail.

Ms R. Lowe: Can the member please reframe that question?

Mr V.A. CATANIA: How much of the \$38 million has actually been spent on tourism businesses, including travel agents?

Ms R. Lowe: From the \$38 million from the recent funding program, about \$8 million has been spent within those three programs involving travel agents and the refund deposit and tourism support program. About a week and a half after these programs were announced, it was announced that the borders would reopen. The operators that would have applied for that funding saw their cancellations starting to refill with inbound visitation. The main reason why they could not secure that funding was that they could no longer demonstrate that 30 per cent decline in bookings.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Only \$8 million out of the \$38 million has been spent. Businesses and travel agents have been extremely busy refunding customers and small businesses have been extremely busy trying to keep afloat and keep abreast of matters to do with COVID and staffing—you name it. Has any thought been given to changing some of the application criteria, given that businesses perhaps have not had the opportunity to apply? Can the

department supply a list of the criteria? From my understanding, it has been very difficult for a lot of businesses to apply simply because they are not a member of a particular tourism association. This has limited who can apply for this assistance. Has that been a major factor in why only \$8 million has been spent out of \$38 million?

Mr R.H. COOK: I think the major factor is that many businesses basically got back up and running because the borders reopened and customers came back. In terms of the details of what the member has referred to, I will invite the director general or Ms Lowe to make a further comment.

Ms R. Brown: It is exactly as the minister said. With the announcement of the border reopening soon after the programs were announced, many businesses saw bookings return. Quite significant discussions with industry have been held to make it as easy as possible for those businesses to access the assistance. In some examples, we worked actively with those businesses to ensure that they were able to receive funds in a timely manner. The \$8 million that was sought by businesses has been distributed and we actively marketed the support program as much as possible prior to the border reopening and shortly after. The reality was that businesses saw those bookings return and did not require that support intended by the program.

[10.20 am]

Mr V.A. CATANIA: As I think the minister said, there is seasonality in every region. It is different from the Kimberley, Pilbara, Gascoyne and the south west to Perth. He is right that with the border being open, businesses are trying to gear up as quickly as possible to get as many people to go through their business. They had a false start. In taking all that into the equation, how many complaints have there been about the criteria and the inability to access the \$30 million left to assist those small businesses because of those factors? They include seasonality, being able to gear up to cater for the borders to be brought down after that false start, and, once open, being able to operate as a business while having a shortfall in the workforce meaning that a lot of the business operators have to do everything in the business simply because they cannot attract any staff. If they have staff, the effect of COVID has also played a major role in the ability for businesses to apply. Will this also be extended so that businesses can sit back and look and see how business has been affected?

Mr R.H. COOK: We are always working closely with industry to understand its needs and aspirations. We continue to use the resources of Tourism WA, and, more broadly, government when appropriate, to make sure that we can continue to stimulate their businesses and support them. Those conversations continue. Any opportunities will continue to be looked at.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: But only \$8 million out of the \$38 million has been taken up. Surely we should be concerned that the criteria may be too tough. It really shows, in my mind and in conversations with businesses around the state, that they simply do not have the time. We heard the announcement, the criteria took a month to be put out, and they did not reflect how this state is very different when it comes to tourism. Like I said, from the Kimberley, Pilbara, Gascoyne and midwest down to the south west it is extremely different. It is a three or four-speed economy when it comes to tourism. It is very different. We heard the constant rhetoric from the Premier about how tourism never had it so good. That is not the case in a lot of areas. It is quite concerning that \$30 million has not been accessed that could have helped those small businesses and tourism operators, particularly those who rely on the international and interstate markets to survive. We have seen businesses go broke, particularly in the Kimberley, because they have not had that trade.

The CHAIR: I think the minister gets the gist of your question. Editorial comment is probably superfluous.

Mr R.H. COOK: The Premier has never said that the industry never had it so good. The Premier rightly observed that sectors of the tourism industry have done very well, particularly accommodation, and to a lesser extent hospitality, because they are more impacted by the constraints around workforce. I make that observation from the get-go. I think the member underestimates the nimbleness and resilience of the industry in dealing with these shocks, but it is true to say that COVID-19 represented the most significant shock the industry would have experienced in a very long time. That is why, since March 2020, we have distributed over \$28 million to 1 400 tourism and hospitality operators and travel agents over 19 different programs. There has been an extensive set of programs and initiatives over the life of the COVID-19 pandemic to make sure that we can continue to work well with the industry. That includes six financial support programs, two disaster recovery programs and 11 voucher programs. There is one dealing with, firstly, the shock of lack of visitation; secondly, continuing to make sure that we can support them during difficult times; and, thirdly, making sure that we can stimulate the market once the borders are open and get people out there taking up the opportunities around tour operators. The Premier is quite right. There are some accommodation services that have had bumper years because they have benefited from those intrastate travellers, but as we all would know and suspect, intrastate travellers tend not to take up the tour initiatives, particularly the multiday tour products. It has been really important to make sure that we could support them. From that perspective, the programs have been welcome and they continue to play an important role in supporting industry. We continue to work closely with industry and are in a process of embedding Tourism WA facilitators in each of our tourism

regions to continue to build that relationship with local operators to understand how we can continue to support them. It is not true to say that we have not been supporting them throughout the COVID-19 experience. Over \$28 million since March 2020 is a substantial effort to make sure that we support the people who are doing it tough.

Mr R.S. LOVE: I refer to page 199 of budget paper No 2, volume 1, “Supporting Energy Transition”. Paragraph 3.1 discusses growing the hydrogen industry. Funding has been announced and there has been talk of progress at places such as Kwinana. What support or facilitation is the department giving towards other hydrogen projects? I can think of a few in my electorate—Infinite Blue Energy being one, for instance—that are looking to establish in other areas. Generally, how supportive is the department for these other players, and what will it do to assist?

Mr R.H. COOK: I thank the member for the question. He rightly identifies energy transition as being a crucial aspect of our industry going forward, and the renewable hydrogen strategy is about outlining a vision for how WA can be a significant producer, user and exporter of renewable hydrogen. The four strategic focus areas are around export, remote applications, hydrogen blending in natural gas networks and transport. In line with these strategic focus areas and the strategies 2022 and 2030 goals, the state government has invested over \$160 million to date in initiatives to progress WA’s hydrogen industry.

In the 2022–23 budget, over \$7 million has been allocated to continue to support renewable hydrogen initiatives. This includes facilitating investment in electrolyser manufacturing, hydrogen storage in remote microgrid, hydrogen vehicles on a mine site and a hydrogen blending project in Jandakot. The initiatives to support the renewable hydrogen industry and progress under the strategy include \$117 million for hydrogen hubs in the Pilbara and midwest, which are our primary focus in that context; \$10 million in funding to stimulate demand in uptake in the transport sector; \$3 million to undertake a legal framework review that will make recommendations to government on the regulation of the hydrogen industry; \$1 million for a hydrogen value chain model, which will identify bottlenecks and support development of government policy; \$1 million to identify underground hydrogen storage; and \$15 million across two rounds of the renewable hydrogen fund, with five capital works and 10 feasibility studies. Five knowledge sharing reports detail results from completed feasibility studies. As I said, \$7 million in the 2022–23 budget has been allocated to continuing these initiatives and new projects such as investment in electrolyser manufacturing.

[10.30 am]

Mr R.S. LOVE: I refer to the recent announcement of a potential major hydrogen project that will be established in Queensland by an operator from Western Australia. How does something like that fall through the cracks? Is the department not able to push through the necessary changes to enable an industry such as that to be established in this state? How does it happen, when the minister has acknowledged the need, that a potentially major project has left the state?

Mr R.H. COOK: I think the member is talking about the electrolyser manufacturing proposal at Gladstone. That is by a predominantly Western Australian proponent. We are working closely with that proponent around the plethora of different projects that the proponent has at any particular time. That particular proponent is a good example of the plethora of initiatives that are taking place in the industry. I do not think the member should take a deficit model when it comes to analysing the opportunities around hydrogen; it will be more, more and more again, pardon the pun. There will be a lot of opportunities, not just in electrolyser manufacture, but clearly also in renewable energy and energy storage, and in the manufacture and export of green hydrogen. Whether it is that particular project, or whether in the future there will be other opportunities to develop that part of the value chain, who knows? We do know that there will be massive demand for this. We only need to look at energy-rich countries to see that they will have an opportunity to transition to decarbonising their economies, and potentially also around export. The Middle East is a classic example of that. Countries nearby, whether that is Indonesia, Singapore, Vietnam and Malaysia, and also Japan in particular, will be hungry for renewable energy as part of their own commitment to decarbonise their economies, particularly given the need for energy security. I make that observation to say that the opportunities here are almost infinite. But the member is right. We need to be awake to individual initiatives as they come along, and, to the extent that we can meet the needs of that particular proponent, do so. Member, I do not think we should be under any illusions about the extent to which this will impact both our lives and the economy.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Hydrogen is the way of the future. It is good to see that the state is investing in those areas that are needed in order to establish hydrogen hubs. How did the state of Western Australia allow a project by a Western Australian company, Fortescue Future Industries, to be lost to Queensland, and how do we allow other projects to be lost to Queensland, New South Wales or Tasmania, when we have an abundance of land, we have this investment that the minister has just spoken about, we have a net zero emissions plan, and we are a heavy industry state and emit a lot of carbon? What is the reason that we lost that particular project to Gladstone in Queensland?

Mr R.H. COOK: The member would have to ask FFI about the specific components of the proposal that it was looking at. There is a combination of elements or features throughout the McGowan government’s policies, whether it is about supporting the emerging hydrogen industry, as I have just outlined to the member for Moore, or about

continuing to ensure that we develop our strategic industrial land assets. That is why we have established the industrial land development fund, with \$100 million as of this budget, to ensure that we have project-ready patches of land for proponents when they come in with particular challenges. Those challenges might be around investment, around timing, or around location near other proponents, such as, in this case, electrolyser manufacturers. This is a complex area. That is why we need to make sure that we have a complementarity of programs. One of the issues that ultimately we have to resolve is the land use framework. The member would be aware as much as anyone, given his electorate, of the vast scale of pastoral leases in this state. We need to understand the role that pastoral leases can play in our renewable energy future and how we can best utilise that estate to ensure that it is involved. It is a complex program. That is why we have established the industrial land development fund and the renewable energy and hydrogen initiatives that I have just outlined. We are also looking at a study into an advanced global manufacturing hub in Kwinana to make sure that all those components are in place and everything is lined up. We will not meet every proponent's needs at any particular point in time. From memory of some of the media at the time, the Queensland government provided a \$140 million sweetener for that project. From time to time, governments will have strategic outcomes that they want to pursue. In that case, the Queensland government saw the electrolyser component of this part of the industry as something that it wanted to pursue in that particular manner.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Has there been any discussion about potentially applying a royalty rate on hydrogen exports, or a percentage that will go back to the state? Given the fact that there will probably need to be a large investment by the state in establishing industrial areas, and in changing land use and so forth, has the state had any discussions about that? The hydrogen industry is basically where the iron ore industry was back in the 1960s, and look at where it is today. I personally see hydrogen as the new iron ore industry for Western Australia into the future. Has the government discussed any potential state taxes? Obviously, there may be federal government taxes as well, not that I am advocating for that!

Mr R.H. COOK: I will ask the director general to make some comments.

Ms R. Brown: I will make two comments. One is around the cost of supporting large-scale projects in this state. As the member pointed out, this state has a long history of doing that. As the minister has mentioned, the ability to provide project-ready industrial land is certainly a key focus of the state government, and the department is working closely with DevelopmentWA on that. That includes the state government industrial land development fund of \$100 million. That is an important contribution to being able to facilitate such projects. Obviously, we work very closely with proponents on their projects and in facilitating their access to industrial land. In many circumstances, proponents will meet certain costs themselves. In terms of broader infrastructure requirements, as the minister has alluded to, there has been significant state investment over many years in common-user infrastructure, which is certainly the focus with proponents, but also ensuring the establishment of the appropriate charging regimes on those requirements.

With regard to the member's comment about exploring royalty arrangements or a tax for hydrogen, this is a new and emerging industry. The commonwealth government clearly also has a role in the taxing regime for energy projects more generally. The piece of work of looking at what that regulatory framework might look like is at an early stage, given that the hydrogen industry is in its infancy, but obviously growing very, very rapidly. We are looking at some of the feedback globally—from Europe and other countries—about the cost arrangements and what will be the right level of support to the industry to make it viable.

[10.40 am]

The CHAIR: On my list, in the order in which they asked to be heard, I have the members for North West Central, Kalamunda and then Vasse.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I will pass it on to the member for Vasse.

The CHAIR: The member for Kalamunda is next on the list.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: The member for Kalamunda has had a chance. This is not government question time.

Mr M. HUGHES: I have a question on the same area. On page 199 of budget paper No 2, under "Supporting Energy Transition", I note that paragraph 3.5 refers to the \$5 million grant to the Centre of Decommissioning Australia to develop the state's offshore oil and gas decommissioning industry. Could the minister outline how this will benefit the state overall?

Mr R.H. COOK: The decommissioning industry has not received a lot of attention, but it should. It is an extraordinarily important part of the overall industry cycle. A lot of oil and gas facilities, particularly those offshore, are being wound up. There is an obligation not to leave them as stranded assets but to find a way to account for them. A lot of those assets are now coming to the end of their life. We think that provides a huge opportunity for Western Australia. It is estimated that between 2030 and 2050, over \$20 billion of decommissioning work will be required in north west Australia alone. That is before we get to Bass Strait and all those oilfields in South-East Asia.

This is an enormous opportunity for Western Australia. We have invested in the Centre of Decommissioning Australia to bring together industry and government to understand how we can get local businesses to undertake this important work. One head of industry said that it is like shipbuilding in reverse. It is more complicated than that because some facilities deal with waste and, in some respects, radioactive waste, although at low levels. It is a particularly complex and technical process. We have that capacity in this region. There is capability in the United Kingdom. We want to ensure that we do not simply look to the United Kingdom and offshore companies to meet this important obligation. We have committed \$5 million to CODA over the forward estimates. This is aligned with our Diversify WA strategy. It is about how we leverage out of our strengths in oil and gas to discover new opportunities and new industries. CODA was originally set up by the previous commonwealth government as part of National Energy Resources Australia, one of the policy areas with a finite life. NERA is winding up. We are now taking over CODA. Its office is located in Perth. We want to ensure that it continues to be an important part of the Western Australian industrial ecosystem.

As I was saying, our expertise and experience in oil and gas places us in the box seat to take over this industry. We obviously have an obligation and an opportunity with the facilities in the north west but imagine if we could go beyond that. It is a \$20 billion industry over 20 years from 2030. We can imagine how many more billions of dollars are available out there with the big pieces of kit, which all need unpacking. Essentially, they have to be unpacked, brought to shore, chopped up and managed. Then there is another opportunity to carry out further downstream processing of those materials as the projects are pulled apart. It is a huge opportunity for the future. I am really excited about it. It has sort of flown under the radar to date. I do not think Western Australia should underestimate what an important role it will play. It is a good news story; this is about cleaning up our oceans.

Mr M. HUGHES: The opposition should be interested in that.

Mr R.H. COOK: I thought it would be interested in it, but not to worry.

Ms L. METTAM: I refer to page 198 of budget paper No 2 and the spending changes table. Under the heading “Other” is the line item “Major Events—Deferral of Spending”. I also refer to note (c), which states —

Deferral of spending to beyond the forward estimates to meet the cost of a major event in 2027–28.

I have a couple of questions about that. I want to ask about a major event and also how many major events fell over in that 2021–22 period? Does the minister acknowledge that a cost was still borne as a result of preparing for some events that did not eventuate? I received some feedback about that relating to the cost of employing staff, going through the protocols and then the event falling over. What support was acknowledged?

Mr R.H. COOK: I will struggle to answer all parts of the member’s question because a lot of the events were managed by the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries. There is no doubt that Tourism WA is responsible for big events and bringing them to Western Australia because it has a visitation and activation role. For instance, dance festivals, concerts and things of that nature were managed by Minister Templeman, who had responsibility for those events. I had some involvement as the then Minister for Health, ironically, more so than in my current role.

Ms L. METTAM: Will the minister be able to at least provide information on how many events were part of that spending for 2021–22? What number of events fell over that were anticipated to receive funding?

Mr R.H. COOK: The events that we have oversight of or that we had a funding relationship with in 2021–22 included the Western Australia Gourmet Escape, the ATP Cup, the opening event of the Perth Festival, the Mandurah Crab Fest, the Ord Valley Muster, the Australian Masters Rowing Championships and the Truffle Kerfuffle.

Ms L. METTAM: I thank the minister for that answer. I understand that Gourmet Escape will not proceed. What was the government’s position around that? There is a concern that perhaps the changes to the make-up of that event, when it became a more diluted event and not as focused on one particular region but spread throughout, might have had an impact. What is the government’s position on that? I understand that the contract was not extended and the event will not continue.

Mr R.H. COOK: I can certainly assure the member that there will be an event in the spirit of Gourmet Escape, but the Tourism WA board made the decision to discontinue funding Gourmet Escape in 2022 and beyond with the event holder, a company called IMG Events. Given the ongoing impacts of COVID-19 on events, as demonstrated by the cancellation of the WA Gourmet Escape in 2020 and 2021, Tourism WA is reassessing the delivery model of a WA culinary event. I share the member’s passion for showcasing the culinary and cultural features of Margaret River and the south west, and it is important that we do not miss this opportunity.

With the member’s indulgence, I will set aside her remarks that Gourmet Escape was diluted; I think the member was referring to the extension to include the Swan Valley and so on. That decision predates me as minister, so if the member forgives me, I will not wander into that space ill-informed. We are committed to making sure that we

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have a culinary showcase event in Margaret River and Tourism Western Australia is already working with industry, local government and other stakeholders in the area to envisage what that might look like. I was pretty new to the game when this decision was made. I thought it sounded like one of those decisions that has hooks in it, but I am delighted with the work that Tourism WA had done with stakeholders in the area. I think it was accepted that Gourmet Escape had run its course and that it was not delivering on all the aspirations that people in the area had for it. From that point of view, there is a great opportunity to now recast that particular event in our own making. There has been a great maturing of the market and the industry in that area since Gourmet Escape began and I sense that people feel that we should now reflect that mature and vibrant industry more than we have done before. I really look forward to seeing what Tourism WA and the stakeholders in the south west come up with. It should be pretty exciting.

[10.50 am]

Ms L. METTAM: I take from the minister's comments that it might be a region-specific event. I certainly support the notion that every region should be celebrated and have its own events in its own right, such as the Swan Valley as our oldest wine region and Rottneest with its seafood and other aspects. I assume from the minister's comments that there could well be an event dedicated to showcasing the culinary experience of that corner of the south west region or the south west region?

Mr R.H. COOK: Yes. It will be a south west culinary festival. The member is right; we should take the opportunity to celebrate all our regions and what they have to offer. I was recently at Shore Leave in Geraldton. The festival was a great opportunity to talk about the seafood, particularly, that is on offer in that region and the other culinary opportunities and products. We want to make sure that these events better leverage trade opportunities and connect our providers, hospitality industry and agrifood industry with buyers to ensure that we get more out of them than just a great party; we get strategic outcomes as well.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I refer to page 197 of budget paper No 2, volume 1, and the Reconnect WA package. The minister's media statement titled "WA welcomes back working holiday makers" announced \$850 000 to encourage people to stay and play in Western Australia under the \$195 million Reconnect WA package to promote WA as an ideal location to live, work and travel. How many workers does the minister expect to attract with this scheme? I notice that the Paid Escape website advertises Albany, Bunbury and the south west, Broome, Esperance, Exmouth, Geraldton, Kalgoorlie, Karratha, Kununurra, Mandurah and Peel, Margaret River, Merredin, Northam, and Port Hedland, but I do not see Kalbarri, Denham—being Shark Bay—Carnarvon, Coral Bay or Jurien Bay on this list.

Mr R.H. COOK: As the member would appreciate, with a 2.9 per cent unemployment rate, which is the lowest in the country, we need as many workers as we can get and we are undertaking a range of initiatives. I have talked before about the trade missions that we will be undertaking, particularly to India. We will target skilled workers in strategic areas, making sure that they appreciate that we are looking for as many people as possible in these areas.

The "stay and play" campaign is an \$850 000 Tourism WA initiative in addition to the state government's \$195 million Reconnect WA package to promote WA as the ideal location to live, work and travel. We rely upon international travellers to make up the hospitality and primary industry workforces in the regions such as in the member's electorate.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: So why are those towns not mentioned in the media statement or on the website?

Mr R.H. COOK: It is not town-limited. We are providing a \$2 100 incentive for eligible working holiday-makers to work in regional areas. As the member observed, this is part of the \$195 million Reconnect WA campaign. There will be promotional campaigns in the United Kingdom, Europe, Japan and South Korea that will feature flight offers, incentives and working holiday-maker packages. The national Paid Escape campaign encourages working holiday-makers who are interstate to visit WA for a unique west coast experience. The campaign will be promoted over the coming months. As I said, it will feature the Premier's work abroad and my work as well. We will utilise these opportunities to highlight where the majority of jobs are, but it is not limited to specific areas.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: So the towns of Carnarvon, Shark Bay, Jurien Bay and Kalbarri can access this scheme?

Mr R.H. COOK: The Paid Escape website advertises jobs across WA in a wide range of regional areas including—the member mentioned many of these—Albany, Bunbury and the south west, Broome, Esperance, Exmouth —

Mr V.A. CATANIA: I am more concerned about the towns that are not mentioned. Are they included in it—yes or no?

Mr R.H. COOK: All of regional Western Australia is included in all our commentary and in all our work to attract people to Western Australia.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: Except the minister's media statement.

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Mr R.H. COOK: The media statement provides people with a flavour of what we are doing, but, as the member knows, we are committed to getting as many workers as possible to all parts of Western Australia.

Ms L. METTAM: I appreciate we want to wrap up this division. I refer to page 198 of budget paper No 2, volume 1, the heading “Ongoing Initiatives” and the line item “Destination Marketing”. What is the funding commitment to promote the Busselton Margaret River Airport and that new route? Is the minister aware of the challenges we are having with the terminal and, given the destination, is there an opportunity for much-needed support? We are getting a lot of negative feedback about turnaround times within the limited scope of the terminal.

[11.00 am]

Mr R.H. COOK: As the member would be aware, we have recently celebrated the Melbourne–Busselton Margaret River Airport route, and it has been terrifically successful, so much so that Jetstar is immensely pleased with the forward bookings and is now openly talking about the potential for a route from Sydney to Busselton Margaret River Airport. This really brings that whole region alive and provides people with an opportunity to explore directly without having to come through Perth. I also make the observation that there were quite a few people I met at the airport that day who were actually from Perth. Jetstar is offering a \$199 fare, so some people—I assume from the southern suburbs of Perth—were driving to Busselton, enjoying the free parking at the Busselton airport car park, and flying to Melbourne for the footy that weekend! I thought that was particularly innovative.

I was made aware that there were some struggles in terms of both terminal capacity and workforce capacity—baggage handlers, security and so on. I do not know specifically how those problems are continuing to manifest or if they have actually been addressed. I might just ask the department to provide us with a bit more background on that specific issue.

Ms R. Brown: The main comment I would make is that Tourism WA works very closely with the regional tourism organisation down in the south west, particularly if there are any issues that can be addressed as quickly as possible around that. As the minister said, there has been significant support for marketing of the direct route, including funding provided to the regional tourism organisation of close to \$800 000. I might ask whether anyone has any further comments around addressing some of the issues at the airport.

Mr R.H. COOK: I will just say that we are aware of that, and we want to make sure that we continue to both appreciate the opportunities that come from this great success story, but also address the problems that come with it. I also understand, from talking to the local government, that there are challenges in relation to taxi services and things of that nature, but I understand that those things have been addressed primarily by the City of Busselton. This is the biggest tourism budget in the state’s history, and we will invest almost half a billion dollars in tourism over the next four years to continue to grow the industry and make sure that we realise the potential benefits from a world that really now has a huge hunger for our tourism product. They want to come and experience our environment and experience everything that Western Australia has to offer—the culture, the food and the lifestyle. The member for Vasse’s area of the south west is a classic example of where all those things come together. We will continue to see great benefits, particularly from the \$20 million that we will be investing in destination marketing and destination development. There is \$76.5 million for marketing and aviation and \$71 million invested in events. This is an exciting time for Western Australia as far as the tourism industry is concerned. We want to continue to be great partners for the leaders in that industry, and I very much look forward to seeing the successes that come with this.

The appropriation was recommended.