

Division 71: Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority, 13 590 000 —

Mrs L.M. Harvey, Chairman.

Dr G.G. Jacobs, Minister for Water representing the Minister for Environment.

Mr M. Webb, Chief Executive Officer.

Mr I. Biddle, Manager, Accounting.

Ms A. Fergusson-Stewart, Principal Policy Adviser, Office of the Minister for Water.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIRMAN: Member for Mandurah.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: The Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority, like all other agencies, has suffered from the three per cent efficiency dividend sleight of hand, or slap in the face, perhaps. I refer to page 901 where the three per cent efficiency dividend slashes are mentioned. I am specifically concerned by and refer to the contracted night-time security services within Kings Park and also the Kings Park bushland restoration and maintenance programs and the amounts that have been cut from the budget. Given the cut to the Kings Park bushland and maintenance program and the night-time security within Kings Park, can the minister guarantee that the deplorable state of Jacob's Ladder—I am sure that it is not named after the minister—will be addressed, or will the thousands of people who use it each week continue to be reminded of the minister's budgetary neglect?

Dr G.G. JACOBS: I thank the member for Mandurah. Before I defer to the CEO, the member used the term "sleight of hand". It would be interesting to reflect on whether, if he were in government, he would have introduced the three per cent efficiency dividend. If he refers to this measure as a "sleight of hand", what would he have done if he were in government, and what would his government have done in this area?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Is the minister inviting me to answer the question?

The CHAIRMAN: I doubt it, member for Mandurah.

Dr G.G. JACOBS: With regard to the saving measure for Kings Park and the impact it will have on the service delivery—I will get Mr Webb to comment on this very shortly—my advice is that it will mean that the security patrols in Kings Park will cover one less night. However, security patrols will continue to be provided during the busiest visitation periods and during major events. I note that in his statement, the member for Mandurah said that Jacob's Ladder needs serious work. How recently did he visit and ascend and descend Jacob's Ladder?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I thank the minister. It is a very good question. My question related to safety. Jacob's Ladder is a major and very important part of the connectivity to Kings Park and is utilised by a vast number of people for physical fitness and other purposes. I have not been up the ladder for some time because I am scared now for my security and safety, given that the minister has slashed the budget!

I will ask a further question that again relates to the three per cent efficiency dividend. I refer to the impact on the Kings Park Festival because of the reduction in funding. It is the major festival in Kings Park and is held in September. When I was the minister, the festival was very successful. It attracted half a million visitors last year alone, and the park attracts six million visitors annually. I ask, through the minister, what impact that reduction in funding will have. The Kings Park Festival is usually themed. The year I was the minister, a very beautiful Japanese garden had been constructed. The CEO will remember the occasion when a huge crowd had gathered and I was talking to a Japanese dignitary, who was the governor of a province, from memory, and two ducks flew onto the artificial lake that had been created for the festival and commenced a mating ritual, which the visiting dignitary and I politely turned away from, much to the mirth of the gathering crowd! Quite a significant amount of money has been cut from the Kings Park Festival. What will that mean for the success of the festival, given the huge number of people that it attracts?

[9.40 pm]

Dr G.G. JACOBS: I will ask the CEO to comment shortly. As the member knows, the Kings Park Festival has been held for the past 44 years and attracts over half a million visitors each September. The impact of the \$110 000 reduction in 2009-10 will see savings through reduced advertising, promotion and printing and reduced sponsorship. Free community events such as a Father's Day event and the Wild Fairyland Festival for young children may cease. Kings Park is exploring alternative funding for sponsorship and reduced displays of conservation, science research and temporary outdoor exhibits. I might ask Mr Webb to comment on those issues; not only this one, but the Jacob's Ladder issue and security.

Mr M. Webb: Jacob's Ladder comes under the jurisdiction of the City of Perth. While it is an access point to Kings Park, it is not under our control. The minister has outlined some of the things that we will be looking at reducing in the festival this year. We are still seeking sponsorship for a number of events, and they may continue. We have decided to concentrate on the core event, being the display of wildflowers.

The police carry out inspections through Kings Park and they manage any antisocial behaviour. Our security mainly handles call-outs and any graffiti that may occur. We will handle that in a different way. There will still be the opportunity for call-outs. If a security officer is in the grounds, it will be on a call-out basis.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I refer to the appropriation on page 901 for the Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority. We get magnificent value for money for what is expended, given the number of people who visit that part of Perth. I would be very concerned if in future out years we see an erosion of the Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority's budget, given that it is the jewel in the crown for the state capital of Perth.

The appropriation was recommended.