

Division 67: Environment and Conservation, \$186 503 000 —

The CHAIRMAN: We are now back to division 67. I call the member for Cockburn.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: I take the minister to page 819 of the *Budget Statements* and refer to the outcomes and key effectiveness indicators. In particular, I refer to the bottom of the column and the item headed “Outcome: Emissions and discharges meet acceptable criteria”. I draw the minister’s attention to the decrease in the number of exceedences of approved environment criteria by regulated activities from the budgeted figure of 60 to the estimated actual figure of 25 in 2009–10, and the slight increase in the national environmental protection measure exceedences from 20 to 24. The notes on the following page indicate that the companies have all been good boys and industry has really performed much better in practice than it was thought it would, and that it has been a bit dusty up in Geraldton because of a large sand pile. This probably relates more to the item on environmental regulations on page 822 and the efficiency indicators, which show a decrease in the funding for each air monitoring station from the 2008–09 actual figure of \$468 000 to the current budgeted target of \$363 200, which is a drop of \$105 000. Is that really the key to the fact that fewer exceedences of emission levels in and around Western Australia have been recorded by the department? The fact is that the department is spending less money monitoring the exceedences by companies. Is it not that the companies are being much better boys and not putting out as much emissions but that the department is spending less time monitoring them and, consequently, we have fewer exceedences of accepted levels?

[4.30 pm]

I will give one example. In my electorate of Cockburn, Cockburn Cement is covering thousands and thousands of homes in the southern suburbs with lime dust and cement dust. It is eating through people’s cars, tin roofs and the tiles of their houses and windows and causing nosebleeds in children. Children have to play inside rather than outside because of the dust and the odour. When we asked DEC in Kwinana about these very things that are in this budget paper and whether it has monitored the huge increase in dust emissions in Cockburn Cement, its response was that it does not have any monitoring stations around Cockburn Cement. All three that are there belong to the company or are leased by the company. When we asked DEC whether it has taken any information from those monitoring stations and correlated it with the increase in the number of complaints, it said that it had not even looked at the data. When we asked why, it said that it has been very busy preparing the new licences for Cockburn Cement. That is an example of what we have in these budget estimates figures—a decrease in the expenditure on monitoring the emissions of companies and, consequently, a decrease in the number of breaches of emission guidelines.

Dr G.G. JACOBS: I would be very wary of looking at the figure related to the average cost per air monitoring station and saying that, because that figure has gone down, we are doing less of it or not doing it as well or ignoring it. Air monitoring is an issue that is very close to my heart, being from the town of Esperance. We had ongoing issues of monitoring when it came to lead and now we have ongoing issues of monitoring when it comes to nickel. It is very important that that monitoring continues. Fortunately in my area those nickel pollution values are going down. We are all very happy with that. I believe that there has been a concentrated effort in monitoring those air pollutants in that region.

The member makes the assumption that the number of exceedences is down because we are not looking at it as well and we have fewer machines, so that is why the cost per station is down. I would suggest that DEC might be doing it better because, as happened in my town, there were very few monitoring stations and now there are multiple monitoring stations.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: That is probably where they all are—down in the minister’s electorate.

Dr G.G. JACOBS: The lead pollution issue was a very significant environmental issue in my town affecting children with lead poisoning. That is very serious.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: I put it to the minister that it is very serious that lime is being inhaled by children in my electorate.

Dr G.G. JACOBS: I am not discounting the cement and lime issues in the area that the member is talking about. However, I will refer the question to the acting director general to provide some of the specifics. I warn the member that just assuming that the average cost of air monitoring stations is less means that we are doing less and we are turning a blind eye to it is not the case from my Esperance experience.

Mr R.P. Atkins: The member referred to the number of exceedences of approved environmental criteria by regulated activities. This refers to exceedences of licence conditions and contaminated sites criteria. As such, it is related to the issue that the member just raised in his question. The second indicator, the national environmental protection measure, is related to the item on page 822. Those indicators are taken from 13 ambient air

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monitoring stations deployed around the state and are reported against those stations in accordance with the national environmental protection measure. They are general ambient monitoring stations. They are not there specifically to target industry emissions. Industry emissions are dealt with differently under licence conditions and under a range of monitoring regimes required under conditions of licences and are funded by the licensed industries. Those exceedences are shown in those first indicators I referred to. The ambient national environmental protection measure indicators are more general indicators of air quality in urban environments. That work is carried out by the DEC air quality management branch.

Mr M.J. COWPER: I, too, have a keen interest in this question. My concern relates to not only the air but also the water in and around Alcoa, and Kemerton specifically. I am aware that a regulation 17 application has been going since 2002 at the big industry in Wagerup. I would be very keen to know where these air stations are located that may be operated by DEC. By way of supplementary information, I would be keen to know where these air monitoring stations are and, if there are any water monitoring stations, where they are also.

Dr G.G. JACOBS: There seems to be a combination of questions on air quality plus water quality monitoring from the member for Murray–Wellington. I do not want to be pedantic but is it in reference to the same question, the same page and the same point?

Mr M.J. COWPER: Yes, page 822, “Average Cost per Air Monitoring Station” under “Efficiency Indicators”. I know that there are some monitoring stations in and around Wagerup and Kemerton. As the minister would be aware, it has been an ongoing issue for many years. I am keen to know where DEC fits into the whole scheme of monitoring these big industries.

Dr G.G. JACOBS: I will provide the locations of those air monitoring stations that DEC has jurisdiction over.

The CHAIRMAN: Do we have supplementary requests for information out of that?

Dr G.G. JACOBS: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: Minister, was that the title of the supplementary information you have agreed to provide?

Dr G.G. JACOBS: Yes.

[Supplementary Information No B5.]

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Further to that question, I would ask the minister to provide that supplementary information to me as well. In addition, following on from what the member for Murray–Wellington highlighted about those air monitoring stations, I believe that the department also has mobile monitoring equipment because our government purchased it. I would like to know where that has been located over the past couple of years. Are any of those monitoring stations located in the Kwinana area, particularly around Cockburn Cement? Can I have that information by way of supplementary information along with the other information from supplementary information B5?

[4.40 pm]

Dr G.G. JACOBS: Does the member for Cockburn want information on the sites in and around the area he is talking about?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: No, I would like to know about the mobile monitoring sites. The member for Murray was referring to the stationary ambient monitoring sites, and that is what Mr Atkins referred to. I would like to know where the mobile monitoring equipment has been used.

Dr G.G. JACOBS: And the schedule thereof?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: And the schedule thereof over the past 12 months, particularly if it has been in and around the Kwinana area and Cockburn Cement.

[Supplementary Information No B6.]

The CHAIRMAN: I remind the member for Cockburn that he will be provided with the previous supplementary information as a matter of course.

Mr I.C. BLAYNEY: I refer to “Asset Investment Program” on page 824 of the *Budget Statements*. Can the minister outline some of the major projects included in the 2010–11 allocation?

Dr G.G. JACOBS: The asset investment program includes the conservation parks infrastructure and roads initiative funded through royalties for regions investing in low-cost caravan and camping sites in parks, environmentally and culturally sensitive tourist ventures through nature bank programs, improved safety and road access in parks—which in my experience is an important issue because the number of road accidents, crashes and rollovers in my region in parks, national parks and conservation parks is quite high—and upgrades

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to park infrastructure at key sites. Then there is a “Rediscovering our Parks”, development of pre-visit and onsite visitor information, visitors facility upgrades at Lesmurdie Falls, including new picnic shelters, upgrades to car parking at Woodman Point, development of a new camping area at Dryandra Woodland, development of Peak Charles National Park campsite, day-use and walk trail—an area that is close to my area—visitor facility upgrades at D’Entrecasteaux National Park and the Walpole winter wilderness, redevelopment of Sugar Loaf Rock at Leeuwin–Naturaliste National Park, the planning and development of Logue Brook Dam day use and camping facilities, which I mentioned in an answer to the member for Murray–Wellington; improvements to recreation facilities within the Gngangara and Pinjar pine plantations; conservation works to Mermaid Tree and Prince Regent Nature Reserve; and also some visitor facilities upgrades at Shell Beach, Karijini National Park, Geike Gorge and Hangover Bay in the Nambung National Park to cater for an expected increase in visitors when Indian Ocean Drive is completed.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: On the same page, 824, on the question from the member for Geraldton relating to the conservation parks infrastructure and roads line item and the \$20 million from royalties for regions, I ask: exactly what will that money be spent on and where, given that this is usually core business for the department and it seems that royalties for regions is bailing out the department in one of its core areas? I ask further to that: does funding for the Peel regional park appear in that line item, and, if not, does that mean that the Peel regional park, once again, is not funded by the department?

Dr G.G. JACOBS: Member for Mandurah, the royalties for regions list that I have just outlined refers to \$5 million over the four out years and it does not appear to include the member’s region. I am sorry.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Can the minister confirm that the establishment of the Peel regional park, once again, has not been funded in this year’s budget? I need a yes or no.

Dr G.G. JACOBS: I cannot see the area that the member is referring to in the list I have before me.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Through the minister to the acting director general, is there funding in this budget for the establishment and management of the Peel regional park?

Dr G.G. JACOBS: Not in the list that I have. I defer to Jim Sharp for detail; perhaps he will be able to shed more light on the issue. From the list in front of me, it does not appear that the member for Mandurah gets a guernsey.

Mr J. Sharp: In relation to the first question, a number of sites are being looked at in terms of the conservation parks infrastructure and roads program, and the caravan and camping site includes Gooralong Brook, which is in the Serpentine National Park. These are areas that are heavily degraded and provide an opportunity to meet that need where there is a shortfall in low-cost camping sites, which has been identified by a select committee of the Parliament. It also deals with making opportunities available for private investment to approve facilities in a number of parks, as well as specific road access issues that are included in the ongoing program at Kalbarri and Karijini. There is no budget item for the Peel regional park.

Dr G.G. JACOBS: The member for Mandurah may guide me on the geography, as this might be close to him—I refer to Yalgorup National Park and Tim’s Thicket.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: That is a national park south of Mandurah, yes.

Dr G.G. JACOBS: It is close to Peel, but it is not in Peel?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Minister, the Peel regional park comprises areas of land identified for conservation and recreation protection. Currently the park has not been established because there has been no allocation of funding. I am interested in whether an allocation has been made in this budget. I take it from the responsible officer, Mr Sharp, that the answer is no and there is no allocation of funds in this budget, once again, for the establishment of the Peel regional park.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Through the minister, I will pick up on what Mr Sharp said. With that \$20 million allocated out of the royalties for regions slush fund, did the department ask for that money and did it have a specific list of areas where it believed that \$20 million should be spent? That is, it identified \$20 million, asked for \$20 million, and the Nationals gave the department \$20 million, or was this simply, “Here is \$20 million, DEC, go and spend it in these areas”? If it is the former, I would like to know exactly where is that \$20 million going to be spent? It can be provided by supplementary information.

Dr G.G. JACOBS: I will defer to Mr Sharp, but the list I have in front of me refers to low-cost, in-park camping grounds, as well as roads and park visitor infrastructure. These are important regional initiatives.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: They may be, minister. I am trying to find out whether the department —

Dr G.G. JACOBS: This is not about, “Here is some money; go and think up some ideas to spend it on”!

Mr F.M. LOGAN: That is the question I am asking the minister: did the department identify specific needs with a total global value of \$20 million and go to the Nationals seeking that money out of the royalties for regions fund or did the Nationals, out of the goodness of their hearts, give the department \$20 million?

[4.50 pm]

Dr G.G. JACOBS: Needs were identified, and in 2010–11 —

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Which was it? Did the department seek that money?

Dr G.G. JACOBS: Specific needs had been identified, including, I should say, Cape Le Grand National Park and Wharncliffe Mill near Margaret River. They have been identified in the 2010–11 budget. The budget also provides \$800 000 for Karijini National Park, and Kalbarri National Park was also identified.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: They are all core expenditures. The point the member for Mandurah is making is that those expenditures were the normal part of the department's core business and expenditure.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: There would have been a line item for it in last year's budget.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: That is right. We could refer to previous budget papers. I am just asking the minister a question that he has not answered. Did the department bundle all that up into \$20 million worth and ask for that money through royalties for regions funding, or, as I said, did the National Party just give the department \$20 million? Just answer the question.

Dr G.G. JACOBS: I refer the member to the \$12.65 million for the road improvement program. That is there before the member. To suggest that —

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Some of it is for its core business. Where did this money come from?

Dr G.G. JACOBS: It is not true to say that we have put that money in and walked away from our other responsibilities in this area. I refer to Mr Sharp for some further comment.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: While you are doing that, can the minister clarify that the total appropriation includes the royalties for regions money?

Dr G.G. JACOBS: Where is the member referring to?

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: The total departmental appropriation for capital and recurrent expenditure. Does the \$186 million include the royalties for regions funding?

The CHAIRMAN: Can we manage one question at a time? Mr Sharp.

Mr J. Sharp: As was indicated previously, there is a base capital budget for works in parks of around \$10 million a year, which includes visitor infrastructure and roads. They are indicated as line items. These items, which are picked up under the conservation and parks infrastructure and roads initiative, would not have been funded through the core budget allocation at an average of \$10 million a year over the next four years. Those projects were identified in relation to specific issues such as the need for additional low-cost camping and caravanning sites, which has been identified, as I said, through a select committee and other processes as a need, as those sorts of low-cost camping opportunities are lost to the public.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Through the minister, Mr Sharp has explained exactly how the money is being spent. It is part of the normal core business. What we are trying to find out, through Mr Sharp, is why normal core business is now being funded out of royalties for regions funding. Did royalties for regions offer the department the money or did the department ask for it? That is all I am trying to find out.

Dr G.G. JACOBS: Again, there is enough evidence in the budget that we obviously continued doing work in and around tourism. There is plenty of evidence of that. The member's inference is that because we have received royalties for regions money, we are now pulling away from all the other things that we have done.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: This is a serious question and I hope that the minister takes this seriously. This is a budget line item —

Dr G.G. JACOBS: I take seriously everything the member says.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Good; I am glad that the minister does. He should give a serious response to my question. This line item is specifically set out in the budget and we are asking the minister a specific question about it. If the minister does not know the answer to it, he should pass it on to a member of his department. The department is telling us today that its core business is now being funded by royalties for regions. The minister can understand why we are asking this question. A commitment was given to the public of Western Australia about how that royalties for regions funding would be spent. We have clear evidence today, in these budget papers, that it is being spent in a different way. What I am seeking from the minister, and through him from his department,

is whether the department asked for that money specifically to fund what we now know is the core business of the department, or whether the Nationals and Treasury just gave a dollop of \$20 million to the department to be spent. It is a serious question. It is a line item, and we want the answer.

Dr G.G. JACOBS: The line item has been provided for the member. It is one of the functions that we are providing in the provision of tourism and tourism facilities, including parks —

Mr F.M. LOGAN: We want to know about the money in the budget papers.

Dr G.G. JACOBS: It is not the only thing the Department of Environment and Conservation does in the development of these parks.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Answer the question. How did the money get into the budget papers? We do not want the minister to tell us how the department spends it; we know how it spends it. How did the money get in the budget papers? You are the acting minister. Answer the question.

Dr G.G. JACOBS: There is an appropriation of \$5 million over the next four years for one of the many things that the Department of Environment and Conservation does for tourism and parks and for the provision of facilities. To suggest that this money was thrown at DEC and that it pulled back from all its other core responsibilities is, I believe —

Mr F.M. LOGAN: That is not the question I put to the minister. It was a very simple question. If the minister cannot answer it, let Mr Atkins answer it. Did the department seek the funding or was the money allocated through the royalties for regions funding by Treasury? It is simple. Just answer that.

Dr G.G. JACOBS: If the acting director general is prepared to answer the question, I will let him answer the question.

Mr R.P. Atkins: Clearly, I do not know the answer to the question, but I can say that that money is aimed at developing tourism facilities in regional areas and it was provided to the department specifically for enhancing tourism development rather than general park management.

The CHAIRMAN: I draw members' attention to the time, before we continue on this topic any further. The member for Armadale is on the list for the next question.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: My next question is very simple and it relates to Araluen Botanic Park. Will the minister explain the items on page 817 of the *Budget Statements* and the allocation of \$1.6 million in each of the next three years as a transitional arrangement for the Araluen Botanic Park?

Dr G.G. JACOBS: I thank the member. This was a spending change. Obviously there is now a transitional management plan in place to transfer the management of Araluen Botanic Park from the WA Planning Commission to the Department of Environment and Conservation. It is a major spending change and it is noted on page 817 at the bottom of the table. Does that answer the member's question?

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: I want to know what is happening. Is the minister saying that Araluen Botanic Park will now be managed by DEC?

Dr G.G. JACOBS: If the member will forgive me from reading from the sheet, in January this year the Minister for Environment and the Minister for Planning announced that the management of the Araluen Botanic Park near Roleystone would transfer to DEC from the WA Planning Commission. The answer is yes.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: What happens to the funding from 2013–14? What happens in the final year? Does the funding run out?

Dr G.G. JACOBS: The member will notice the dash. I cannot answer that question.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: I refer to the reference to the waste avoidance and resource recovery account on page 822 of the *Budget Statements*. It states that \$11 million will be deposited into the account. On page 826 we can see the expenditure from the account. In the 2010–11 budget estimate there is only \$9 million. Where is the other \$2 million going?

[5.00 pm]

Dr G.G. JACOBS: I had noticed that, and I thank the member for Gosnells for drawing that to my attention. There is an explanation for the \$2 million. I will ask Mr Robert Atkins to provide that.

Mr R.P. Atkins: That is found at page 826, under "Details of Controlled Grants and Subsidies". The amount of \$9 million is the expected expenditure from the fund for the strategic waste initiative and community grants programs only. The fund is also used to fund the support services for the Waste Authority. So, probably about

another \$4 million is the cost of providing the support for the Waste Authority itself, in terms of the waste management branch, for policy development and program administration.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: Can I have information on the actual balance of the waste avoidance and resource recovery account?

Mr R.P. Atkins: We expect at the end of the financial year that it will be \$15 million.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: I refer to page 820. At the top of the page it refers to the percentage of waste in the metropolitan area diverted from landfill through recycling. Can we have a percentage breakdown of the amount of inert and putrescible waste, and an indication of how the actual amounts are consistent with the anticipated reduction in waste volumes.

Dr G.G. JACOBS: Mr Atkins.

Mr R.P. Atkins: I have a graph that shows the trends in both inert and putrescible, and total waste, which I am happy to provide now. I can provide the actual numbers that the member is looking for as a supplementary.

[Mr A.P. O’Gorman took the chair.]

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: As far as the trend goes, are we on track to meet the budget projection, or have people been pulling back on their waste because of the additional levy?

Mr R.P. Atkins: There has been a decline in waste to landfill since the increase in the levy on 1 January 2010. I appreciate that there has been only one quarter of returns since 1 January, obviously, but there has been a significant downturn in waste going to landfill. So obviously the economic incentive to divert waste from landfill is having an effect.

The CHAIRMAN: Minister, was there an agreement to provide supplementary information?

Dr G.G. JACOBS: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: May I have the details of that supplementary, please?

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: It was with regard to the percentage breakdown of inert and putrescible waste, and the amount that is projected to go to both those waste streams in future years. It is on page 820, the first line item at the top of the page.

[*Supplementary Information No B7.*]

The appropriation was recommended.