

**Division 17: Peel Development Commission, \$219 000 —**

Ms L.L. Baker, Chairman.

Mr D.T. Redman, Minister for Regional Development.

Mr P. Rosair, Director General, Department of Regional Development.

Mrs F. Antonio, Chief Financial Officer, Department of Regional Development.

Mr A. Mann, Acting Executive Director, Regional Investment, Department of Regional Development.

Mrs J. Collard, Executive Director, Business and Social Development, Department of Regional Development.

Mr P. Gregson, Manager, Budget Services, Department of Regional Development.

Mr M. Rowe, Executive Director, Policy and Planning, Department of Regional Development.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I would like to ask the minister a question about full-time equivalent positions at the Peel Development Commission. The commission's FTE in this current financial year was nine positions, but it declined to six positions and went back to eight positions. Can the minister give an explanation about FTE positions in this and other development commissions and whether or not there is an issue of staff retention.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** I thank the member for Mandurah. I am not aware of any specific issues of staff retention in any development commission other than those that would normally occur, particularly in the northern part of the state. Some of that staff retention is driven by remoteness, whether it is getting the skill set that is needed for the Kimberley or the Pilbara. It may be driven by the lack of a local skill set and the fact that some people might not want to move to an area, but that is a normal practice with all government agencies. The only other pressure that comes from that is what has happened in the past, to a significant extent, in the resources sector. The fact is that the resources sector has attracted a lot of people away from the development commissions. We endeavour to employ competent people in these areas, but those people are attracted by employment elsewhere, which presents a challenge in replacing them. I am not aware of any staff retention challenges in specific development commissions. I will ask the director general to make a comment about whether he is aware of staff retention issues.

**Mr P. Rosair:** As the minister said, traditionally staff retention in remote areas of the state has been a problem. Over time, however, retaining staff in places such as Mandurah has become just as difficult, because people can drive from Perth to take up the opportunity of a position there. I think we are seeing some of that in the question the member asked.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Thank you. I have two questions for the minister, one of which relates to the third dot point on page 219. I alluded to this matter in a previous question about the blueprints. As is highlighted in this dot point, the Peel region has above average rates of unemployment—only recently, the youth unemployment rate for Mandurah was 17.5 per cent, the highest in Australia—and low rates of education attainment, and there is a need to strengthen the education and training system. I note the minister was previously responsible for training and workforce development and de-funded the Peel regional workforce development centre. If a project that the minister previously got rid of were put up through the blueprint, how much genuine attention would the minister give to that project? This comes to the central part of where the funding for royalties for regions crosses over into other departments. The minister de-funded the project when he was Minister for Training and Workforce Development; we believe it is an area that needs to be strengthened. I would like his response to that question.

[12 noon]

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** There are always complexities when trying to answer this type of question; I will give the member some very good reasons why. First of all, we are engaging the development commissions to come up with blueprints for growth to capitalise on the opportunities in their particular regions. One opportunity in the Peel region is the Nambeelup industrial site. Is the member familiar with that?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Absolutely.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** It is in the very early stages of development. There has been private sector investment in one of the lots, with LandCorp owning another part. As the minister responsible for LandCorp, I have some interest in this. When we take a global look at the Peel region, we see that the member for Mandurah is absolutely right; there is an unemployment challenge and a reasonably high level of, arguably, disadvantaged people, and an educational pathway would assist them in getting employment. Part of the challenge is building on the employment base of a particular region. One could make a sound argument that job creation is one of the best pathways to support some of the issues in the Peel region to which the member for Mandurah referred. When I was the Minister for Training and Workforce Development, I decided that not-for-profit groups should

be involved in providing services to help people get jobs. One of the consequences of that—I am going from memory—was the shutting down of four sites, one of which was in the Peel region. The reactive approach was to have a facility to help people get jobs. A proactive approach involves looking at opportunities rather than taking the disadvantaged approach, which I have talked about, and it is about growing and developing the economic opportunities, which provides jobs. I cannot think of a better way to assist with the disadvantages and challenges to which the member referred, which are at the fore in some of those regions, than having a pathway for industrial development. With industrial development comes jobs and training; an employer can take up training initiatives, and state training providers support the training that is necessary to provide the skills. There is complexity in the question. I expect the blueprints to provide guidance in that challenge. Do we vigorously pursue employment-based projects that support industrial development in a region, which is a foundation for jobs and all the other things that flow from having jobs; or do we support a facility that helps people who struggle to get on the jobs pathway? The blueprint and decision-making process will tackle those challenges. The member's question was not targeted at that; rather, it was targeted at whether a decision has been made to reinvest in one of the facilities that was shut down by a previous decision of government and seeing that as a substitution of royalties for regions back into consolidated fund-funded projects. That is where the member is headed. I suggest to the member for Mandurah and others that we lift ourselves out of that and invest in the growth and development of job opportunities in regional areas, which is where our core business should be.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** The point I was making is that there is the problem in my region of people not being job ready, particularly young people, so we have to focus on training and education. The minister cut off one of those.

I refer to the fourth dot point on the same page, which refers to the Peel–Harvey estuary and the establishment of the Peel–Harvey Management Committee. Does the development commission directly fund this committee or is it listed as coming from other royalties for regions funds? Is the committee funded by royalties for regions?

**The CHAIRMAN:** That is a new question, but I will allow it.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** I will read a response that relates to the questions that the member has previously raised with the Peel Development Commission. It reads —

The governance of the Peel Harvey estuary and waterways was the subject of election commitments by both major parties in the recent state election. Minister Hames made an election commitment to establish a Peel Harvey Estuary Management Committee including a commitment to financially fund \$400,000 over 4 years for scientific resources to support the estuary.

The first meeting of that particular committee, chaired by Peter Conran, was held on Thursday, 13 March 2014, with a further meeting in June. The Department of Regional Development has entered into a service-level agreement with the Peel–Harvey Catchment Council for \$400 000 to fund scientific resources to support the estuary.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Where is the funding coming from?

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** The \$400 000 is from consolidated funds.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** What role will the development commission have in overseeing the work of the committee? Does a person on the committee represent the Peel Development Commission?

**Mr P. Rosair:** There are three major players under the governance model. The first is the development commission, which makes sure that there are economic development outcomes. As the member would well know, the Peel–Harvey estuary inlet is probably the major economic driver of the Peel region. The second component involves the Department of Planning making sure that the land-use plans and structure plans and the nutrient management plans for all developments maintain the integrity of the system and the estuary, which is part of a strategic assessment of the Peel region. The third player is the Peel–Harvey Catchment Council, which forms the basis of the science and studies that underpin the research necessary to ensure good outcomes for the estuary itself.

**The appropriation was recommended.**