

Division 62: National Trust of Australia (WA), \$7 871 000 —

Mr M.W. Sutherland, Chairman.

Mr G.M. Castrilli, Minister for Heritage.

Mr E. Sirna, Deputy Chief Executive Officer.

Mr P. Cirillo, Manager, Finance and Audit.

Mrs S. Siekierka, Principal Policy Adviser, Office of the Minister for Heritage.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIRMAN: I give the call to the member for Perth.

Mr J.N. HYDE: I refer to total appropriations on page 745. Has the National Trust received any money for 57 Murray Street in my electorate, and are there any conditions attached to that allocation?

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: I think the member for Perth knows the answer to that. The answer is yes.

Mr J.N. HYDE: How much?

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: The member for Perth knows that answer. I am sure he has been supplied with that. It will cost \$4.7 million to undertake conservation works at 57 Murray Street, Perth. As the member knows, it has some significant heritage and Indigenous history attached to it. The place was also the office of the department of Aborigines between 1922 and 1944–45. The funding will be used to restore and conserve the building in preparation for leasing, with a lessee to pay for fit-out costs. This will not only conserve the building but will turn it into a revenue-earning proposition for the National Trust. The \$5.7 million is an advance to be paid in the following four years from the sale of other properties. The trust will prepare a list of the properties with the valuations that can be disposed of via sale in order to meet the conditions of the funding approval.

Mr J.N. HYDE: The minister is not giving the trust anything for the building; he is telling them they have to flog off other assets.

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: We are giving the trust \$4.7 million in advance. The National Trust is going through all its property holdings—if I am not mistaken, I think there are about 57 of them—and it is determining the categories of each of those holdings, so that is supposed to be absolutely top class. There are four different categories. Eight properties have been identified as transitional, with some potential to generate revenue for resale. Some of those have little monetary value. They will be identifying those sorts of properties. They are going through and reassessing what properties they need to keep and what properties they do not want to keep.

Mr J.N. HYDE: Further to that, is it correct that they have to get the minister's permission for the sale of any heritage buildings because technically they are assets of the state government? Has the minister ever refused to allow the sale of any of those heritage buildings in the past?

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: Yes, they do have to ask my permission because it is a provision of the National Trust of Australia (W.A.) Act. I do not think I have ever refused any. I have asked for more information but I do not think I have refused at this point. There was only one property on which I asked for more information.

Mr J.N. HYDE: What was that?

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: That was Bridgedale in Bridgetown.

Mr J.N. HYDE: I refer to the same line item, total appropriations, on page 745. I noticed in the previous division that the Heritage Council pays out a number of grants to private owners to fix up and maintain their own buildings. I think the minister mentioned that the National Trust has 37 buildings.

[9.50 pm]

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: No; I think I said that there are 57 under its control.

Mr J.N. HYDE: Does the minister know exactly how many government-owned buildings the National Trust has? How much money does the government give the trust for maintenance?

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: I think I might defer to Enzo. We give an appropriation and it is up to the National Trust to determine how it spends that appropriation.

Mr J.N. HYDE: Can the minister also tell me exactly how many government buildings the trust manages?

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: It manages 57 buildings in total.

Mr E. Sirna: With reference to the moneys that we get through appropriation, it is mainly capital; there is nothing within the maintenance area. We were able to organise an appropriation accordingly, but it is purely capital and not within the maintenance area.

Mr J.N. HYDE: I meant to ask this question in the previous division, so I will have to put it on notice, but I will ask the trust as well. Has the trust provided the minister or the government with an up-to-date estimate of the backlog in capital works needed to be undertaken on heritage buildings, and can the minister itemise it for me?

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: I do not think it has. I will defer that question.

Mr E. Sirna: We have not given the minister the list of the backlog. We certainly know the work that is required, but we have not provided that to the minister.

Mr J.N. HYDE: I take it from that, then, that the minister has not sought it yet.

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: No, I have not sought it.

Mr J.N. HYDE: Will the minister seek that information, as the custodian of heritage on behalf of the Parliament of Western Australia?

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: As the minister, I have no power of direction over the National Trust.

Mr J.N. HYDE: The minister has to give it the nod on whether it can sell a property. He just said that he knocked it back.

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: I cannot direct it. The National Trust is a separate organisation. It is a different situation. It reports to Parliament through me as the minister.

Mr J.N. HYDE: So it is a charity and the minister gives it money with no strings attached.

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: Basically.

Mr J.N. HYDE: Basically? Okay. How many times has the minister met with the chairman and the CEO together?

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: I would not know off the top of my head.

Mr J.N. HYDE: Could the minister provide it by way of supplementary information?

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: First of all, what does that have to do with any item in this budget? Which line item refers to any financial implications of my meeting with the chairman and the CEO together?

Mr J.N. HYDE: I refer to total appropriations on page 745. The state government is giving \$7.87 million to the National Trust. I find it unbelievable that the minister is not meeting with the chairman and the CEO together to find out what this organisation is doing with government money. This is the minister.

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: I meet with the chairman and the president of the National Trust. Unless I am mistaken, the chairman of the National Trust suggested that I meet only with him and the president.

Mr J.N. HYDE: And the minister is responsible for \$7.87 million —

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: When the chairman of the National Trust wants to meet only with me and the president of the National Trust, I am happy to do that.

Mr J.N. HYDE: In the minister's other portfolio of local government, does the minister meet with the CEO, Ms Mathews?

The CHAIRMAN: What line item are you referring to, member for Perth?

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: I meet with the CEO of the Department of Local Government very regularly.

Mr J.N. HYDE: So the minister meets with some CEOs but not others.

The CHAIRMAN: I think you have made your point, member for Perth.

Mr J.N. HYDE: I refer to the non-seeking of advice from the National Trust —

The CHAIRMAN: Which page and line item are you referring to?

Mr J.N. HYDE: I am referring to total appropriations on page 745. The government is giving \$7.8 million to the National Trust. I refer to the dismantling and storage of the state heritage-listed Florence Hummerston house. Can the minister give any other examples of state heritage-listed buildings in Western Australia that have been put into storage; and, if they are still in storage, where are they?

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: That has nothing to do with the National Trust. That is state heritage; this is the National Trust.

Mr J.N. HYDE: The minister has already answered the question by saying that he did not seek advice from it. Have any of the 57 buildings of the National Trust been put into storage or been allowed to be dismantled?

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: Not that I am aware of, no.

Mr J.N. HYDE: Is the minister aware that according to best practice in heritage under the Burra charter, state heritage-listed buildings should not be torn down?

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: I am aware of the Burra charter. What is the member for Perth getting at? Spell it out! What is the member asking? Has any building under the control of the National Trust been torn down? The answer is no.

Mr J.N. HYDE: Or any state heritage-listed building.

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: No; this division is the National Trust.

Mr J.N. HYDE: Correct. The services and key efficiency indicators on page 747 indicate that the National Trust has responsibility for and is funded to provide advocacy. If we are talking about the advocacy of the National Trust on the heritage status of the Esplanade—which the minister has confirmed tonight will remain the Esplanade and will not be Elizabeth Quay or “Betty jetty”—I ask the minister: are there any other state heritage-listed buildings that have been dismantled and put in storage, as he intends to do with Florence Hummerston house?

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: We are on the National Trust division, not the Heritage Council division; we have dealt with that.

Mr J.N. HYDE: Does the minister accept that the National Trust, which he is responsible for, is an advocate for heritage?

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: Of course. The National Trust has no statutory authority under the Heritage of Western Australia Act.

Mr J.N. HYDE: The minister has agreed that it is an advocate, but he is not going to take its advice.

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: Of course it is.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: The National Trust controls a number of buildings. Which of those buildings are the next priorities for restoration or maintenance works? Does the trust have a list of issues that it is worried about that are not yet funded in this budget?

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: I think the National Trust has a list of the buildings that it is going to do some maintenance on. That will be subject to any unforeseen circumstance; obviously, if some emergency arises, that priority might change.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: I suppose I could better phrase the question. Is there a maintenance backlog; and, if so, what is the size of that backlog?

Mr E. Sirna: There is quite a significant requirement for maintenance and we do have a backlog internally. We have a major list. We can certainly supply that. We do have our priorities with reference to the places. In particular, at the moment we have a focus on places such as Old Farm, Strawberry Hill. We are very keen to make sure that the full program of conservation is followed through. Our costs for the conservation maintenance requirements are quite excessive. Although I do not have the full list here, I am certainly happy to provide that through the minister.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: Is the minister happy to provide that as supplementary information? I would like to know the size of the maintenance backlog and the works that contribute to that.

The appropriation was recommended.

Committee adjourned at 10.00 pm