

Mr David Templeman; Ms Alannah MacTiernan; Mr Ian Blayney; Dr Graham Jacobs; Mr Fran Logan;
Chairman; Mr Murray Cowper; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr John McGrath

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

Mr P.B. Watson, Chairman.

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

Mr R.P. Atkins, Acting Director General.

Mr J.R. Sharp, Deputy Director General, Parks and Conservation.

Mr A. Sands, Acting Deputy Director General, Environment.

Dr J.C. Byrne, Director, Chief Finance Officer.

Mr P. Dans, Director, Regional Services.

Mr G.J. Wyre, Director, Nature Conservation.

The CHAIRMAN: This estimates committee will be reported by Hansard staff, and the daily proof *Hansard* will be published at 9.00 am tomorrow.

The estimates committee's consideration of the estimates will be restricted to discussion of those items for which a vote of money is proposed in the consolidated account; this is the prime focus of the committee. Although there is scope for members to examine many matters, questions need to be clearly related to a page number, item, program or amount within the volumes. For example, members are free to pursue performance indicators that are included in the *Budget Statements* while there remains a clear link between the questions and the estimates.

It is the chairman's intention to ensure that as many questions as possible are asked and answered and that both questions and answers are short and to the point.

The minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee rather than asking that the question be put on notice for the next sitting week. For the purpose of following up the provision of this information, I ask the minister to clearly indicate to the committee which supplementary information he agrees to provide, and I will then allocate a reference number. If supplementary information is to be provided, I seek the minister's cooperation in ensuring that it is delivered to the committee clerk by Friday, 11 June 2010 so that members may read it before the report and third reading stages. If the supplementary information cannot be provided within that time, written advice is required of the day by which the information will be made available. Details in relation to supplementary information have been provided to both members and advisers, and, accordingly, I ask the minister to cooperate with those requirements. I caution members that if a minister asks that a matter be put on notice, it is up to the member to lodge the question on notice with the Clerk's office. Only supplementary information that the minister agrees to provide will be sought by Friday, 11 June 2010.

It will greatly assist Hansard if when referring to the program statement volumes or the consolidated account estimates, members give the page number, items, program and amount in preface to their question.

Would members ask their questions in a loud voice, please, as we have somebody here who is hearing impaired and Hansard is providing a real-time transcript for him.

Mr J.E. McGRATH: He was here last year.

The CHAIRMAN: I know he was, but I did not know whether the member was. I am glad that we have sorted that out.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Before we get to the guts of division 67, which I believe is the one we will deal with first, I ask the minister where the director general is? Normally the director general attends these hearings. Is this another DG the government has got rid of?

Dr G.G. JACOBS: This is not starting very well.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Answer the question. Where is he?

Dr G.G. JACOBS: I am carrying this portfolio for the Minister for Environment in the Legislative Assembly budget estimates and I believe that the director general is on leave.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Does the minister believe that or is he on leave?

Dr G.G. JACOBS: I have been informed that the director general, Keiran McNamara, is on leave.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: It is an unusual time for him to take leave.

Mr M.J. COWPER: I will open the batting with some good questions. I refer to the line item "Bushfire Suppression" at page 817 under the heading "Major Spending Changes". Given the favourable weather

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conditions, can the minister or one of his advisers give an update on whether the targets have been met this year for fuel hazard reduction?

Dr G.G. JACOBS: I thank the member for the question.

Mr M.J. COWPER: It is very dear to my electorate, as the minister would know.

Dr G.G. JACOBS: At page 817, under “Major Spending Changes” there is an allocation of \$16.36 million in the 2010–11 budget for bushfire suppression. I will come to the areas shortly. The funding for the expected full cost of bushfire suppression has been included in this budget, which is different from previous budgets. The previous practice was to have large claims, adding excess at the end of the financial year. There is a bit of planning in the bushfire suppression area. I am advised that 197 000 hectares is involved. The target is 200 000. We expect to reach the 200 000 this month.

Mr M.J. COWPER: That is commendable.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: What is the connection between the number of hectares burnt and the effectiveness of a fire safety regime?

Dr G.G. JACOBS: As that is a technical question I will refer it to Mr Dans.

Mr Dans: Research over a number of years has told us that the closer we get to our nominal target of 200 000 hectares, the hectares affected by wildfire in the subsequent four or five years is generally less. That has been shown over a number of years of data.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: What is the point in burning hectares that might be many kilometres away from human dwellings? It could be in isolated areas.

Mr P. Dans: We try to have a mosaic of fuel ages throughout the state forest areas. It is no good having low fuel buffers around town sites when fires can develop to extreme size and intensity a distance from town sites if fuel ages are too old. By having strategic low fuel areas, when a fire runs into an area of lower fuel there is generally a lesser fire intensity and it will allow safe suppression to be attempted. That is why rather than just focusing on fuel reduction around town sites we seek for that mosaic of low fuel areas throughout the whole state forest and parks landscape.

[3.10 pm]

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I refer to the section on major spending changes on page 817 of the *Budget Statements* and note that the previous budget showed that an estimated \$5.5 million would be spent on voluntary severances in 2009–10. In which areas were those severances offered, how many officers of the department took those severances, and why?

Dr G.G. JACOBS: I will refer that question to the acting director general.

Mr R.P. Atkins: The severances were across a broad range of our businesses. I do not have details of which business areas yielded which severances. I will ask Dr Byrne to go through the numbers in a moment in terms of total severances. I can say that there were a broad range of severances across the business.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Further to that question—maybe this will help Mr Atkins—what Mr Atkins has just told the committee is not borne out by the figures in the budget papers. He said that there have been severances across various divisions and areas of the department. The *Budget Statements* do not show that at all. The figures are provided in the budget papers for 2008–09 and 2009–10 and the proposed figures are given for 2010–11, so effectively there are three years’ worth of FTEs, which would clearly show where those severances were occurring. Mr Atkins just told the committee that the severances were across a wide range of DEC, but the figures for all the divisions within DEC in these budget papers do not bear out what he has just told the committee, apart from one. I refer to the item on sustainable forest management on page 821 of the *Budget Statements*, where we see a reduction of 85 employees between the 2008–09 actual figure and the 2009–10 budgeted figure, only to have 88 employees probably being re-employed and continuing on in their employment under the 2010–11 budget target figure. What are the facts of the matter? The *Budget Statements* show on page 817, under major spending changes, that the department has spent \$5.547 million on severance pay. The acting director general cannot tell the committee where those severances have taken place but he did advise that they have been across the entire department. When we go to the budget papers and look at the entire department, that does not seem to be the case. It appears that there was an intended drop-off of 85 employees under sustainable forest management between 2008–09 and 2009–10 and then a re-employment of 88 employees between the 2009–10 budgeted figure and the 2010–11 budget target, in addition to the fact that in 2009–10 there were 324 people on the books in sustainable forest management. Can the minister advise what is going on? Where has that

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money been spent? How many people have been terminated? Why is there such a disparity between the 2009–10 figures and the 2010–11 figures under the item on sustainable forest management?

Dr G.G. JACOBS: I thank the member for his very long-winded question. The advice I have is that it was a one-off allocation for the government's voluntary severance scheme. I cannot tell the member the range but I can tell him the number—52 DEC employees left under the 2009 scheme. That is the advice I have. I may refer the question to someone else if the member wants to know the spread of that, but I have no more information at my fingertips. I will refer the question to Dr Byrne.

Dr J.C. Byrne: I confirm that the number of voluntary severances was 52. The areas basically relate to the three per cent efficiency dividend. They are not in this year's *Budget Statements* but in last year's *Budget Statements*, through a number of areas where the three per cent efficiency dividend would be applied. The government's targeted voluntary severance scheme had the aim of achieving that three per cent efficiency dividend. Basically, the reduction is across those areas. With regard to the member's question about sustainable forest management, the 2008–09 actual figure was 326 FTEs, the 2009–10 estimated figure is 324, and the 2010–11 budget target is 329, which is a very small variation in numbers.

[3.20 pm]

Mr F.M. LOGAN: I have a further question. Despite the advice we have received from Dr Byrne, it still has not answered the question. Regardless of whether it was government policy on the three per cent efficiency dividend, and regardless of whether it was government policy to offer voluntary severance, the question was simple: where did the severances occur and how many people from each section of the department were offered and took voluntary severance? Despite Dr Byrne's protestations, the figures in this paper do not tally with what he has just told this committee, and neither do they tally with what Mr Atkins told the committee. Further to that question, I accept the fact that possibly only two people may well have lost their employment between 2008 and 2009. If we look under "Sustainable Forest Management" on page 821, we see that there were 326 FTEs in 2008–09 and the estimated actual of 2009–10 shows there will be 324 FTEs, which is a difference of only two jobs. Why was it planned that 85 employees would be taken out, because the budget target was for 241? In fact, in the proposed future budget target for 2010–11, why are we back to more than we had in 2008–09, with 329 employees? They are fairly straightforward questions. We know why the severances occurred—it was government policy—but where did they occur and how many FTEs were involved with respect to sustainable forest management?

The CHAIRMAN: Member for Cockburn, could you make your questions a little shorter please, because it is only encouraging the minister to give long answers.

Dr G.G. JACOBS: The member for Cockburn asked how many FTEs were involved. I said 52. If he wants a breakdown of where those severances occurred and in which areas, I am prepared to provide that information to him.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: This is quite remarkable. Given the number and the significance of the figure, that information about where these positions were cut should be available for the committee. That is the point of the question. If the minister cannot provide that information, I am quite surprised. If we are going to get them in a supplementary answer, it is a bit of a mockery of this process. Since I asked the first question, I would therefore ask that the minister provide the committee as supplementary information a breakdown of the positions of the 52 employees who were given voluntary severance and an explanation of those figures highlighted under "Sustainable Forest Management".

The CHAIRMAN: Minister, could you tell me what supplementary information you are going to provide?

Dr G.G. JACOBS: I am happy to provide the breakdown of the 52 positions to the member for Mandurah.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: The other part of that question asked for an explanation of those figures on page 821 under "Sustainable Forest Management". The minister has six advisers present. I understand he cannot answer those questions.

The CHAIRMAN: Members, we getting off the track here. I want to know what the supplementary question is and when we get that out of the way, the member can ask another question.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: The second part of the question —

The CHAIRMAN: I want to get the supplementary question done first. Could you read it out? We did not get the whole lot because he was interrupted.

Dr G.G. JACOBS: A lot of people are doing a lot of talking.

The CHAIRMAN: I just want you to talk at the moment.

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Dr G.G. JACOBS: I am prepared to provide the breakdown of the positions of the 52 employees who received a voluntary severance and the role of those people. There was another part of the member for Mandurah's question.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: The question related to the figures highlighted by the member for Cockburn regarding the numbers under "Sustainable Forest Management" on page 821.

[Supplementary Information No B1.]

Mr F.M. LOGAN: I take the minister to the second last item under "Major Spending Changes" on page 817, "Salaries and Superannuation Escalation". He will see that the figure in the 2010–11 budget is \$760 000 and then it jumps in the out years to \$3 million, \$2 million and \$5 million. Why is there such an uplift?

Dr G.G. JACOBS: These are budget increases provided by the Department of Treasury and Finance for future pay increases and superannuation. Perhaps I could refer that to Dr Byrne for a little more detail if required.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Through you, Mr Chair, it is just that the escalation is quite significant, particularly as it goes to \$5 million in the out years.

Dr J.C. BYRNE: There are two factors that relate to the increase in provision for salaries and superannuation. One factor is that salary increases are progressive: four per cent this year, four per cent the following year and four per cent the year after. We have 12 per cent after three years but the figure is four per cent. That is one reason it increases. The other factor is that this government is increasingly funding the unfunded balance of the superannuation. There is a large unfunded liability. The government is increasingly funding that and part of that funding is built in there.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: I refer to the line item on re-cashflow on page 817. I would like some details on each of the items that are listed there. What is the actual re-cashflow figure, especially for the 2010–11 budgeted estimate year if that is possible?

Dr G.G. JACOBS: I thank the member for Gosnells for the question. It relates to projects required to be cashflowed through the forward estimates. They are listed on that page. There is essentially a table. For the Burrup and Maitland Industrial Estates Agreement for 2009–10, the figure is a negative \$850 000 and for 2010–11 it is negative \$2.6 million. They have been recashflowed into 2012–13 and 2013–14, being \$1.05 million and \$2.4 million respectively. Is the member happy for me to go on?

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: I am especially interested in the Kimberley science and conservation strategy and also the low emissions energy development fund.

Dr G.G. JACOBS: The expenditure for the low emissions energy development fund for 2009–10 and 2010–11 have been recashflowed into 2011–12, totalling \$4.89 million. The amount allocated to the Kimberley science and conservation strategy in 2009–10 of \$694 000 has been recashflowed, totalling \$294 000 for this financial year coming, \$200 000 in 2011–12 and \$200 000 for 2012–13.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: Could we have the figure for the Brookdale decommissioning? What was the figure and what is it now?

Dr G.G. JACOBS: The figure for the Brookdale decommissioning was \$2.2 million. That has been recashflowed from 2009–10 to 2010–11.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: Has it been moved out one year?

Dr G.G. JACOBS: Yes, that is my reading of it.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: Is there a reason for that?

Dr G.G. JACOBS: I will have to refer that reasoning to the acting director general.

[3.30 pm]

Mr R.P. ATKINS: The reason for moving it out one year is that the site investigations and detailed site management plan that is currently under preparation is taking longer than was expected. When that plan is finished, it has to be presented to the Office of the Environmental Protection Authority. We expect to do that in the next financial year. Once it has been through the Environmental Protection Authority, then we will be able to proceed with the remediation works. Of those funds that have been cashflowed forward, \$2.2 million is for remediation works and it is proposed to do that work through the Water Corporation.

Mr J.E. McGRATH: I am interested in the level of financial support the government will provide for community organisations that are active in the many environmental and conservation programs at a local level. I

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refer to page 826, under “Details of Controlled Grants and subsidies”. I wonder whether the minister can provide some details on the line item “Environmental Community Grants Program”?

Dr G.G. JACOBS: I thank the member for South Perth, and I am sure he will be actively involved in asking questions in and around the Swan River Trust as well. One of our election commitments was to provide \$6 million in environmental community grants and I will provide a breakdown for the member. The budget allocation of \$1.53 million includes \$1.5 million from the actual grants program, plus an additional \$30 000 under statutory condition of environmental approval for the Fiona Stanley Hospital project. These activities will be funded around those community issues that the member referred to: biodiversity, sustainable catchment management, wildlife carers, nature appreciation, regional parks and Bush Forever sites, and support for major conservation and environmental organisations. Applications are assessed on their projected benefits to the environment, and priority is given to projects sponsored by the community and not-for-profit organisations; however, local government is also eligible and is encouraged to apply for the funding. Grants will range from small amounts of around \$500 up to \$30 000. To give the member for South Perth an indication of how well these have been received, 280 applications were received in 2009 and, of these, 140 projects were awarded grants. A second round closed on 8 April, and is currently being processed. There has been another strong response, with 247 applications received. We think this is a very good project that involves the community. It is about culture change and getting people onboard with projects. I think it is a very good program.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: I am trying to understand how the department brings to account its costs in restoring state forest that has been logged. First of all, I would like the minister to clarify that that comes under the “Sustainable Forest Management” area?

Dr G.G. JACOBS: Could the member give me a reference?

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: I refer the minister to page 821. We have just had quite long discussion about the sustainable forest management area. Does the work that is done by the department in restoring land that has been logged under the Regional Forest Agreement come under this item of the department’s expenditure?

Dr G.G. JACOBS: I might refer this detail to Dr Byrne.

Dr J.C. Byrne: Part of the restoration of the land is in sustainable forest management service and part is directly funded by the Forest Products Commission, which lets contracts to re-establish areas. Part is funded through sustainable forest management output in the *Budget Statements* and part by the Forest Products Commission. The Forest Products Commission makes a payment to Treasury for the value of the work that DEC provides to it, and that money is passed on by Treasury to the department as part of the appropriation for sustainable forest management.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: I need to clarify this as I do not quite understand what the adviser is saying, because we are told by the Forest Products Commission that the basic act of the burns, for example, that are done in the restoration phase are costs that accrue to DEC. What percentage is covered by this agency and what percentage is covered by the Forest Products Commission, because it is not acceptable for this to be concealed? We need to know how we can bring this to account.

Dr J.C. Byrne: Some of the activities, for example, replanting trees, are done by the Forest Products Commission at its expense, whereas regeneration burning is done entirely by DEC. We can get figures for what the Forest Products Commission pays because it is a works program that we do for the commission. It pays the cost of the work program to Treasury, which passes on the money to us. We can get a breakdown for the member of what the costs of the work program are.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: I need to clarify this. What is being said is that in work such as regeneration burns all the work that is done by DEC is paid for by the Forest Products Commission. Is this through a direct grant? I would prefer Dr Byrne not necessarily to be behaving as a minister, but behaving as a public servant because I am trying to find the truth here, not a justification. It is one thing to say that Forest Products Commission pays a generalised dividend and then Treasury gives money to the DEC. That is not what we are talking about. How do we find out how much it costs DEC to do the work that it does?

Dr G.G. JACOBS: I will refer that to Dr Byrne.

Dr J.C. Byrne: We can provide supplementary information because the member wants a fair bit of detail about the cost of the various components, and we can do that information by supplementary answer; that is, the cost of each component of the work that DEC does for the Forest Products Commission.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: I would like that as supplementary information; that is, the costing of each item of work that the Department of Environment and Conservation does for the Forest Products Commission.

Dr G.G. JACOBS: I am happy to provide that.

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[*Supplementary Information No B2.*]

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: As part of DEC outlining its work in this area, it knows that there are various blocks or coupes that are to be logged. Is a costing done? Does DEC have a schedule of work that it is going to do for the Forest Products Commission, and is there a sub item of costing held against the work for that particular block?

Dr G.G. JACOBS: I do not have that detail myself. I refer that to Mr Peter Dans.

[3.40 pm]

Mr P. Dans: Yes, there are generalised local agreements between the local DEC and FPC representatives responsible for the actual harvesting operations in the various coupes in each of the forest regions. Those agreements, generally at senior officer level, work out the arrangements for the actual services the FPC wants from DEC—mainly in respect of karri regeneration burning and the post-harvest burning of jarrah. They are the main services we provide—although we provide some other aspects of the whole, complete harvesting operation that DEC is also involved in—and generally rates are agreed and arrangements are made on a coupe-by-coupe basis for that particular work.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: I would not expect Mr Dans to have this information on hand, but could we have details of the work that has been agreed to be provided by DEC for FPC in relation to the Mundlimup forest in Jarrahdale? That is, the work that has been agreed to and the rate at which that work will be charged.

Dr G.G. JACOBS: I agree to provide that.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: Thank you, minister.

[*Supplementary Information No B3.*]

Mr I.C. BLAYNEY: The second dot point on page 818 refers to the great western woodlands as being among the agency's priorities. What progress has been made in implementing this strategy?

Dr G.G. JACOBS: This area is in fact close to my heart because the great western woodlands area is almost entirely contained in the electorate of Eyre, which I represent. Essentially, there has been significant government recognition for developing and implementing a biodiversity conservation strategy for the great western woodlands and the government has committed \$3.8 million. It is about managing and protecting. The woodlands, as I have said, represent a very large area of my electorate. It is eucalypt woodland. It faces a range of threats. It extends over 16 million hectares.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: But the government is only spending \$800 000 over four years—according to the budget papers.

Dr G.G. JACOBS: Yes; I will talk about that shortly, if I may.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Two hundred thousand this year and then \$300 000 and another \$300 000.

Dr G.G. JACOBS: Yes.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: If it were a high priority, I would have thought that the three-point-whatever million dollars the minister is referring to would appear in the budget papers as a priority; unless they appear somewhere else.

Dr G.G. JACOBS: The government has already committed to look at implementing a biodiversity conservation strategy. The reference that the member for Mandurah makes to figures in the budget is to do with the some of the development involved in looking at the development of the woodlands.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Where is the other \$3 million? In his preliminary comments, the minister mentioned a \$3.2 million government commitment, but in the budget only \$800 000 appears. Where else in the budget does this priority appear? There must be other works budgeted for but not referred to in the budget as a line item—or am I reading it wrong?

Dr G.G. JACOBS: Yes.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: The member for Geraldton is asking a question that has clearly been prepared for him. Where is the priority for the great western woodlands—as per the dot point on page 818—in the budget? Eight hundred thousand dollars, but only \$200 000 will be spent this financial year. What that money will be spent on is the question that I think the member for Geraldton should be asking! We should be getting detail about where the rest of that \$3.2 million is that the government has committed to according to the minister's comments at the beginning of his answer.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: The member for Geraldton wants to know!

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Dr G.G. JACOBS: Some capital works issues are included in the figure that the member has referred to and they are detailed on page 824 of the *Budget Statements*, and include—I will get to the \$3 million the member referred to in a minute—\$800 000 and \$200 000, \$300 000 and \$300 000 in the out years for the great western woodlands.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: That is only \$1.6 million. The member for Geraldton already has his media release ready to go on this!

Dr G.G. JACOBS: The advice I have is that the Minister for Environment is keen for there to be input into the strategy document being developed with stakeholders to ensure conservation activities. We obviously have some concerns about the interaction between conservation, pastoralism, mining, tourism, recreation, forestry and, indeed, Indigenous and local government interests.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Where is the money?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: At the beginning, the minister championed the fact that the government was committed to spending \$3.2 million. All I am saying is that in the budget papers we see only \$800 000 over this budget year and the next two years after that. Where is the other \$2.4 million highlighted by the minister as the government's wonderful contribution to the great western woodlands? As we see it, there is only a line item for \$800 000 spread over the next three years.

Mr M.J. COWPER: That is page 824 and the Kimberley conservation strategy.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: No, no; it is the great western woodlands.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: You are in the wrong place, mate! You are lost.

The CHAIRMAN: Members, if you have any queries, you come through the Chairman and not have your own opinion on the side.

Mr M.J. COWPER: I was only trying to help my colleague.

Dr G.G. JACOBS: Thank you, member.

The commitment that we have made at the start is for \$800 000—that is, the \$800 000 in the budget. However, this government has made an overall commitment to a strategy and that is the figure that has been put on developing the strategy into the future.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: And how much is that? The minister said \$3.2 million.

Dr G.G. JACOBS: It is \$3.8 million.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: It is \$3.8 million; where is the \$3 million?

Dr G.G. JACOBS: We made a start, member for Mandurah.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Yes, but the fact is that the government made a commitment. I know the Premier has said the forward estimates mean nothing; however, if the government has stated that it has made a \$3.8 million commitment, where is the other \$3 million? And what work will be done? What will the \$200 000 budgeted in this financial year buy the department in terms of its commitment to protecting the great western woodlands? The government cannot say it is the great protector of the great western woodlands and that it is investing \$3.8 million, but in the next three years spend only \$800 000.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: In the next four years, because there is nothing in the final year.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: That is right. I think the minister is misleading the committee. The member for Geraldton asked the question and the minister —

Mr F.M. LOGAN: It is a good question.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: It is an excellent question; I wish that I had asked it! However, the minister championed the government's commitment of \$3.8 million—but there is not \$3.8 million in the budget papers!

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Is it under the bed?

The CHAIRMAN: One at a time, please.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Where is the money?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: The member for Geraldton probably wishes that he had not asked the question.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: Show us the money!

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Dr G.G. JACOBS: The advice I have is that the recurrent expenditure for the great western woodlands nature conservation service—we are talking about recurrent and capital expenditure—for 2009–10 is \$400 000; for 2010–11, \$800 000 and —

[3.50 pm]

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Where are these figures?

Dr G.G. JACOBS: Under the total cost of service under “Nature Conservation”.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Can the minister tell me the page number?

Dr G.G. JACOBS: It is page 820.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: The minister is now referring to page 820. What is the line item, minister?

Dr G.G. JACOBS: It is the total cost of service. There is \$124 083 000 in 2009–10 and \$131 451 000 in 2010–11.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: The item that the minister has taken us to, which is the total cost of services, is purely the overall global amount for nature conservation. If the policy that the minister has just referred to in answer to the very fine question asked by the member for Geraldton is so great and so important to the minister, particularly as it is in the minister’s electorate, why is there not a specific line item that refers to it? The minister has just taken us to the global amount. We are being told to take the minister’s word that the \$3.8 million genuinely is in that global amount. If it were such an important issue for the government, why was it not identified in these papers?

Dr G.G. JACOBS: Essentially, the investment of \$3 million is in that figure. The member talked about a global amount. Some \$800 000 is for some of the capital works in the out years. We talk about \$800 000 being spread out over the next year or two, and the \$3 million for the plan is under the total cost of service. The total cost is \$124 083 000, which will increase to \$131 451 000.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: It is very important for the member for Geraldton, in particular, to receive supplementary information that outlines exactly the balance of the government’s commitment—we have the \$800 000 in the budget—of \$3.8 million and where that appears in the budget and a breakdown of what that will be expended on.

Dr G.G. JACOBS: I have the breakdown with me of the great western woodlands in the nature conservation service key efficiency. I am happy to provide recurrent versus capital expenditure over the years 2010 to 2013.

The CHAIRMAN: Could the minister say that again for the record?

Dr G.G. JACOBS: I have a table of the great western woodlands nature conservation service, which breaks up the spending between recurrent and capital expenditure in the out years of 2010–11, 2011–12 and 2012–13.

[*Supplementary Information No B4.*]

The CHAIRMAN: The Chair is allowed to ask one question. Try to stop me! The third dot point on page 819 of the *Budget Statements* states that the department will continue to undertake an active fire management program. Is there any increased funding to improve the prevention of fire in the budget? There was nearly a tragic incident in Little Grove, Albany. The fire did not start on Department of Environment and Conservation land but on City of Albany land. Is there any extra money in the budget for fire management burn-offs to prevent a lot of these problems from happening in places such as Little Grove, Albany?

Dr G.G. JACOBS: Sorry, Mr Chairman, I am being pedantic. Which line item is it in the budget?

The CHAIRMAN: It is the third dot point on page 819, which states that the department will continue to undertake an active fire management program with an emphasis on maximising the achievement of its annual target for prescribed burning. I am talking about prevention measures that can be taken to prevent a disaster from occurring in regional areas in particular.

Dr G.G. JACOBS: Thank you, Mr Chairman. I will give you some of the text that I have been provided with for the third dot point and I will defer to Peter Dans, the director of regional services, to provide more detail. DEC will continue to undertake an active fire management program. The department maintains an annual prescribed burning target of 200 000 hectares, as I said previously, in the south west of the state. The target has been adopted in accordance with the findings of the 1994 ministerial review on prescribed burning. The target figure represents approximately eight per cent of the lands managed by DEC in any one year. The department has approximately 240 full-time equivalents in the south west of the state. During the bushfire and prescribed burning season this figure is supplemented by 60 employees.

The CHAIRMAN: My question was whether there was any additional funding.

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Dr G.G. JACOBS: As I have said, we have burnt 192 000 hectares. We have obviously carried that through with the funding that we have already had in place. I defer to Peter for further detail about funding for the active fire management program.

Mr P. Dans: There is not a new stand-alone allocation in the budget for fire prevention. I should probably point out that our fire program is delivered across three services: nature conservation, sustainable forest management and parks and visitor services. Those three key services contribute to the total spend on fire management. With respect to the question about prescribed burning, I can tell members that last year DEC spent about \$8.7 million on prescribed burning over the whole state, not just in the south west land division where we had that 200 000-hectare target. In the year to date, about \$7.6 million has been expended on prescribed burning. Again, that is across the whole state. It varies from year to year, depending on the seasonal conditions and on when we undertake the burns. We will undertake the prescribed burns when the appropriate conditions arise. If that happens to be on a Saturday or a Sunday, we are obliged to pay the penalty rates to our people who are involved in the burn, as well as the contractors for helicopter ignitions and so forth. There is no specific growth in the budget other than the across-the-board growth for salary escalations that were referred to earlier.

Mr M.J. COWPER: I refer to parks and visitor services on page 821 of the *Budget Statements*, which is the management of land and waters dealing with public involvement, visitation and appreciation of the natural environment on lands and waters managed by the department. I note that the Department of Environment and Conservation does a very good job of managing our state forest in the south west in particular. The year before last there was a very interesting situation in my electorate. The previous Minister for Water Resources wanted to stop the general public from visiting Logue Brooke Dam. As a result, I understand that DEC has teamed up with the Department of Sport and Recreation. Can the minister please explain what initiatives DEC has undertaken in conjunction with other government departments to look at this very good issue of unlocking 60 per cent of the state's forest so that it can be accessed by the people of Western Australia?

Dr G.G. JACOBS: I thank the member for Murray–Wellington for the question. I have been quite closely involved with the issue of Logue Brook Dam. This government committed to opening Logue Brook Dam, which we have done. As the member has shared with us, there have been some issues about having done that. It is a popular recreational area but some individuals have been quite ungrateful because they have not looked after parts of the area, such as the shore banks and the surrounding region. It was the member for Murray–Wellington who told me—before I met the Friends of Logue—about the issue of littering and the need to look after that area. We have recognised that in the budget by committing some funds—I need to look up the exact amount—to provide some DEC services to look after the Logue Brook region. There are some facilities in that area, but they are not of great quality. There will be an investment of \$150 000 from the 2010–11 parks improvement program to commence an upgrade. The project includes the planning and development of formal day use and camping facilities, such as picnic facilities, toilets and camping sites.

[4.00 pm]

[Ms L.L. Baker took the chair.]

Mr M.J. COWPER: Has there not been some further investigation by a parliamentary committee?

Dr G.G. JACOBS: I will refer that question to Mr Sharp.

Mr J. Sharp: A parliamentary committee is examining the use of water catchments. That committee is looking at the whole issue of access to water catchments for recreational purposes. That committee will be reporting in the near future—I think the understanding is next month. In relation to the general spend, the member raised the issue of forests. There is an allocation of about \$10 million towards capital improvements of facilities in forests. That has been added to by an allocation of \$5 million this year. So there will be \$15 million for that purpose. The additional funds are directed towards improving camping and caravanning opportunities in forests and other natural areas managed by the department.

Mr M.J. COWPER: I look forward to that report.

Dr G.G. JACOBS: In reference to the whole question of the dual use of catchments, that issue is difficult to deal with as the Minister for Water—that is, to what degree does the recreational use of catchments used for human potable water services impact on the water body? That is a difficult question, and the Standing Committee on Public Administration, chaired by Hon Max Trenorden, an upper house member and a former member for Avon, took upon itself the task of exploring what recreational activities can take place on a water body, what potential pollutants that activity may create for that water body, and what we need to do to make that water body potable. We have, obviously, a responsibility to protect public health, but also to look at the possibility of dual use. What we have in Western Australia at the moment is all or nothing.

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Mr F.M. LOGAN: Point of order, Madam Chair. This is a response that is appropriate to the division on the Water Corporation and the Department of Water. It has nothing to do with the question that was asked.

Mr M.J. COWPER: I am referring to service 3, which deals with the management of lands and waters, and public involvement.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: The member asked about a parliamentary committee. The answer is yes, a parliamentary committee is investigating the issue. The question was answered. The minister is actually wasting time, quite frankly.

Mr M.J. COWPER: The member is actually interjecting on my point of order.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: The member knows the answer.

The CHAIRMAN: Would the minister please resume his answer, but can he wrap it up, please? I sense that we should move on.

Dr G.G. JACOBS: Sure. This is essentially involved in the discussion that we are having today, because we are talking about the management of the environment, and about how recreational activity within a water body may impact on that water body.

Mr M.J. COWPER: That is a good answer.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I refer to page 818 and the heading “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency”. The last dot point on that page relates to the government’s commitment to protect the outstanding natural values of areas including the Kimberley and the great western woodlands. In light of the international ecological tragedy that is occurring off the coast of the United States in the Gulf of Mexico with the Transocean *Deepwater Horizon* rig, what measures would the minister require the department to take, in the event that an event of a similar scale, or a smaller scale, were to occur in the Kimberley region of Western Australia, to ensure the protection of that significant area of the state? I am aware obviously that there are drilling rigs in commonwealth waters. There are also drilling rigs that are either currently operating in this state or are proposed to operate in this state. Therefore, the minister’s department would have a direct interest in the provision of all possible safety measures if a catastrophic event such as the one we have seen unfold off the coast of the United States were to occur here. I am interested in the minister’s comments about the department’s readiness for any such event, given that in the Kimberley region a significant amount of coastline is either inaccessible by land or problematic in terms of access. Is the minister confident that his department would be able to respond appropriately to any such disaster?

Dr G.G. JACOBS: I thank the member for Mandurah for the question. The short answer to the member’s question is that there is a draft Kimberley conservation strategy—it is being completed—to provide information on ecologically sustainable development and conservation initiatives. I would think that —

Mr F.M. Logan interjected.

Dr G.G. JACOBS: The member for Cockburn does a lot of talking, but he —

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: This is probably a question that the acting deputy director general can answer, but I am concerned, and want to be assured, that should there be some sort of disaster—it may be on a smaller scale than what we are seeing unfold in the gulf area of the United States—there is confidence in the department to be able, in its role and under its responsibilities, to respond to such an event. We all recognise that the Kimberley is a significant area for its biodiversity and uniqueness. It is also an area that is coming under increasing pressure for development. Firstly, I want to be assured, through this estimates committee, that the minister is asking the department to ensure that it has in place measures to respond immediately if an event of that nature were to occur, of whatever scale it might be. So, firstly, has the minister required the department to do that, given what is unfolding in the United States? Secondly, what assurances can the minister give this committee and the people of Western Australia, and ultimately the people of Australia, that this pristine area will, in fact, be protected and can be protected by the department in its responsibilities and roles? That is the crux of the question.

[4.10 pm]

Dr G.G. JACOBS: That is a very fair question, particularly with the disaster that has occurred in the gulf in the United States. The conservation strategy talks about it being ecologically sustainable. I believe that with those sorts of guidelines, it can be ecologically sustainable. By including conservation initiatives, a strong emphasis is put on looking after the area.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: The minister has missed the point. He is talking about the current process in this state. As we are seeing in the Gulf of Mexico, those values would be destroyed and potentially decimated if a major spill were to occur off the Kimberley coast. I do not want to know about the strategy pertaining to what we have and the uniqueness of it. I want to know what the department’s role is and what direction has been given to

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the department to ensure that it is ready to respond to an event, such as a major oil spill. It is no use saying that we know it is a biodiversity hot spot. What response mechanisms does the department have in place should such an event occur? Referring to strategies does not mean anything. That is what we know about what exists in terms of biodiversity in the area. If an oil spill were to occur 10 kilometres off the Kimberley coast and the oil wash up into areas that people cannot get to because there are no roads, what is the readiness of the department in its role? That is what I am interested in.

Mr M.J. COWPER: We do not have oil rigs 10 kilometres off the coast.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: We do actually. Oil could reach the coast within days. What does the department have in place, as directed by the minister of the day, to be able to respond? Every country around the world that is allowing oil rigs off its coast should be doing this. They should be asking, “What do we have in place in case it happens here?” What is happening in the United States is a disaster. We do not want it to happen in the Kimberley, but if it were to happen, are we ready to respond? That is the question I am asking. I am not asking about a strategy for a particular area.

Dr G.G. JACOBS: The member for Mandurah, as the previous Minister for Environment, would be very conscious of what I mean when I refer to ecologically sustainable development. I will ask the deputy director general to respond to the question about an emergency plan. Obviously, we would have to be very conscious of ecologically sustainable development. Having an oil well plonked in the middle of Camden Sound would not happen, because we are being ecologically responsible in its development. I will ask the deputy director general to comment about what is in place for an emergency response.

Mr R.P. Atkins: First and foremost, oil spills are handled under state legislation for which the Department of Transport is the lead agency. Waters outside state waters are handled by commonwealth legislation and are a commonwealth department responsibility. With the Montara incident, the state agency provided support to the commonwealth agency in terms of near-shore monitoring and standby readiness for oiled animal recovery response. We also provided people to assist the commonwealth in monitoring areas further out.

Within the state, there is a state emergency plan under which there is a WestPlan oil spill response plan, which, again, is led by the Department of Transport. The role of the Department of Environment and Conservation is, first and foremost, to provide environmental advice on oil spill clean-up strategies, the use of dispersants versus containment and so forth. The oil spill coordinator provides support to the incident controller.

The other part of the department’s role is oiled animal recovery response. The main role for oil spill containment and control rests with the Department of Transport. It is brought together under WestPlan. It was brought into action for the Montara incident for which the state provided support to the commonwealth. Thankfully it was not needed, because the oil did not come within state waters. Installations within state waters have to go through an Environmental Protection Authority assessment and are regulated under strict ministerial conditions applied by the Environmental Protection Authority.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Through you, minister, to the acting deputy director—I am not sure how long he has been in the position of acting director general. Has the minister specifically required the department to provide reports about this readiness issue, given what occurred last year in the seas to the north and the recent spillage problem in the US? Has the acting director general received any direction from the minister about readiness?

Mr R.P. Atkins: The department has not received any specific direction. The department did, during the Montara incident, keep the minister regularly informed on the progress of what was happening with the spill, the commonwealth’s strategy to contain it and also the department’s preparedness to respond if called upon. Post-Montara all the agencies involved in the state emergency plan, led by the Department of Transport, reviewed the state’s readiness to respond to incidents in the future in the light of the Montara experience.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: My question refers to paragraph 3 under “Explanation of Significant Movements” at page 820. It refers to the creation of the Camden Sound marine park. It is stated in the budget papers that it is proposed to be established in the 2010–11 financial year. I turn then to budget paper No 3, page 97, and ask the minister why we do not see any allocation for funds to protect the Camden Sound marine park? There are no funds for enforcement in that first year; that is, 2010–11.

Dr G.G. JACOBS: Before I ask Mr Sharp to provide some details, I advise that this government was very keen to establish the Camden Sound marine park. It is proposed to be established in 2010–11. It will take the total number of bio-regions with marine services to nine, representing 47 per cent of the marine bio-regions in Western Australia. We think that is a very important initiative. I will ask Mr Sharp to provide some of the details the member asked for.

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Mr J. Sharp: The planning for the marine park is underway and an indicative management plan, as required under the act, is being prepared. That plan will then be released for three months for public comment before the plan is finalised. At the time of finalisation of the plan, which will become the plan for the marine park, which is required for its gazettal —

The CHAIRMAN: Mr Sharp, would you speak into the microphone?

Mr J. Sharp: At that time, as has always been the case, cabinet will consider the release of the final plan, which becomes the plan for the marine park. A budget is developed at that time.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: Can the minister outline the no-take area that will be in the Camden Sound marine park?

Dr G.G. JACOBS: I ask Mr Sharp to answer that.

Mr J. Sharp: As indicated, the indicative management plan is still being prepared. That plan will indicate how the park is to be zoned, including whether there will be sanctuary zones and what they will be. It has not been released yet, because it has not reached that stage. When it is released for public comment, the plan will indicate what the zoning scheme will be, as is required for consideration by the public.

[4.20 pm]

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: I refer to page 823 of the *Budget Statements* and the very brief reference under the item headed “Coordinate the Response to Climate Change”. I note that there is not a great deal of detail. If we could just put aside the low emissions energy development scheme funding, could the minister tell us what this area of the department is actually doing? Has a plan been developed for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions? What are the actual activities of this department? Has it produced a strategy for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions yet? One was started, but we have not actually seen one. Can the minister tell us what has actually been done with the creation of strategies, where those strategies are at and when they are likely to be seen by the public?

Dr G.G. JACOBS: Before I refer the question to the acting director general I can say that, essentially, the climate change adaptation and mitigation strategy will be the major project of and principal expenditure for 2010–11.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: Is that not underway already?

Dr G.G. JACOBS: The funding for the Office of Climate Change finishes in 2011–12. No funds have been allocated to the OCC beyond this period.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: Is that because we think that climate change will be solved by then?

Dr G.G. JACOBS: Not at all; funds were only committed for five years.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: What the minister is saying is that there is no further commitment after 2011–12.

Dr G.G. JACOBS: What I said was that the climate change adaptation and mitigation strategy is the next major project of and principal expenditure for 2010–11.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: Can the minister tell us what has been the project for 2009–10? What strategies has the department worked on over the past 18 months?

Dr G.G. JACOBS: I am carrying this division on behalf of the Minister for Environment, so for the detail of that strategy I will refer the question to the acting director general.

Mr R.P. Atkins: The work that has been going on up to now has largely been around a coordinating group of a range of agencies scoping out the issues relating specifically to adaptation and mitigation for climate change in Western Australia. That work has culminated in the preparation of an adaptation and mitigation strategy, which is nearing its final drafting stages, when it will be ready to be presented to the minister. It is anticipated that the strategy will be released for public consultation later this calendar year. The plan is to have it go through a consultation phase before the end of this calendar year with a view to finalising it early in the 2011 calendar year.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: I think Mr Atkins made a similar comment last year. Has this been put back a year?

Mr R.P. Atkins: It has taken longer than planned to do. As we can all appreciate, climate change, and particularly the adaptation and mitigation strategy for Western Australia, is a particularly complex issue, and it has taken longer than expected to actually pull all those issues together.

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Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: We could not move too quickly, could we? I also referred to the greenhouse gas emissions strategy. The department is showing leadership, albeit not speedy, on a strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Where is that strategy up to?

Mr R.P. Atkins: Part of the greenhouse gas strategy, of course, is associated with greenhouse reporting and greenhouse emissions mitigation. That was largely taken over by the commonwealth's initiative to have an emissions trading scheme, which obviously has not come to pass under the commonwealth Parliament, so that is a complication for where we were going with the greenhouse strategy. Part of the emissions work is handled through the industry regulation program and will also be part of the adaptation and mitigation strategy. There will be emissions mitigation in that strategy.

Ms A.J.G. MacTIERNAN: So there is no WA greenhouse gas emissions strategy. Is there no document that we can look at that is the WA greenhouse gas emissions strategy?

Mr R.P. Atkins: Not at this stage, no.

The CHAIRMAN: Members, I just need to remind you that if we stop now and change divisions, we would have 20 minutes for each of the remaining divisions.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Can I make a suggestion, Madam Chair? I have discussed this matter with the senior member of the government in this committee hearing. The opposition will have no questions for the Zoological Parks Authority, so we would be happy to let the people who are here for that division go. However, government and opposition members do have questions for the Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority, the Swan River Trust and the Office of the Environmental Protection Authority. I suggest that we let the Zoo people go and that at 4.45 pm we stop and go on to those last three divisions.

The CHAIRMAN: Certainly. I need to put the question on the relevant division if those witnesses are to leave.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Yes. Just on that point, I again congratulate the chief executive officer and the staff of Perth Zoo. As a former minister, I follow them very closely. We should be very proud of Perth Zoo's achievements and the work done by the zoological gardens staff and the volunteers who support Perth Zoo. Whilst we do not have any questions for them, it is important that the committee acknowledges the work of the Zoological Parks Authority and that we continue to make that a very important asset for the City of Perth and Western Australia.

Mr J.E. McGRATH: As the senior member of the government for this division, I discussed this issue with the opposition. As the member for South Perth, I point out that Perth Zoo is actually in the City of South Perth and not the City of Perth, although residents from all around Western Australia and in fact the world are invited to our Zoo! We are very happy for the Perth Zoo people to be excused; we will not have any questions for them.

Consideration of division 67 suspended.

[Continued below.]