

Division 63: National Trust of Australia (WA), \$3 055 000 —

Mr M.W. Sutherland, Chairman.

Mr G.M. Castrilli, Minister for Heritage.

Mr E. Sirna, Acting 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: The member for Nollamara.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: I defer to the shadow Minister for Heritage.

Mr J.N. HYDE: I refer to the third dot point on page 761 of the *Budget Statements* about the Old Farm, Strawberry Hill, and to the second dot point that states that maintenance of places remains a major challenge for the trust. I recently visited the Old Farm at Strawberry Hill in Albany and saw the excellent work that the National Trust of Australia (WA) does in preserving and making our local WA heritage available to the public. Why will the Barnett government not fund the trust directly for maintenance works on its heritage buildings?

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: An increase in the allocation for maintenance was put up and the government did not support it.

Mr J.N. HYDE: May I ask how much the request for the allocation was?

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: No, that information is cabinet-in-confidence.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: I refer to the details of income from the state government statement on page 766 of the *Budget Statements*. I assume that that refers only to income from the minister's department, therefore, essential revenue funding. It was recently announced that the National Trust of Australia (WA) property Wanslea received a \$6 million Lotterywest grant. Can the minister please clarify, why the National Trust of Australia (WA), as a government agency, is entitled to Lotterywest funding?

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: Yes, the National Trust of Australia (WA) is eligible for Lotterywest funding and has applied for Lotterywest funding in the past.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: Can the minister say why that is, given that other agencies would like Lotterywest funding? How is it that a government agency such as the National Trust of Australia (WA) is eligible for Lotterywest funding?

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: It is not a government agency; it is a statutory authority and is therefore eligible for Lotterywest funding, as I understand it.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: So it is a statutory authority; that is interesting. Looking at the National Trust of Australia (WA) annual report and the income and business planning —

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: Is the member asking about the National Trust of Australia (WA) annual report or the *Budget Statements* for the National Trust of Australia (WA)?

[9.40 pm]

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: I am talking about the income that goes to—

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: Which line is the member talking about now?

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: I am on page 766, "Income Statement". I am still on the same question. It is a further question.

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: Is the member talking about the three streams of income that are mentioned there?

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: I am talking about the total income. I am asking —

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: I want to clarify exactly what the member is asking and what point she is referring to.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: I am talking about the income and I am talking about the management of the income of an agency that the minister has oversight of.

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: Does the member mean the three figures that make up the figure of \$2.2720 million?

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: Yes, I am talking about an agency that the minister has oversight of and that he manages as minister—that is, income from central revenue funding. That is why I am asking this question. The National Trust annual report recorded that 49 per cent of properties owned by the trust had a business plan. The 2010 National Trust of Australia (WA) report omits this statistic completely. Can the minister advise how many

National Trust of Australia (WA) properties now have a business plan? I understand that is important to the minister, because he talked about that in local government. I wonder whether the minister can advise how many National Trust of Australia (WA) properties have a business plan, given the minister's oversight of this area?

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: I will answer the member in this way—Enzo will correct me if I am wrong—I have no jurisdiction over the National Trust. The National Trust, which was established in the 1960s, reports to Parliament through me. That is why I have asked the Public Service Commissioner to give me advice on exactly what my authority is—the roles, responsibility, governance and other matters that I have over the National Trust. As I understand it, the National Trust reports through me to the Parliament.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: Given the minister's commitment to business plans in sectors for which he obviously does not have direct responsibility and which act as autonomous agencies—we have heard tonight the importance the minister sees in business planning—how is the minister ensuring that the National Trust of Australia (WA) properties have business plans? How is the minister doing that in terms of the funding that comes from the consolidated fund and which the minister has management over?

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: Member, I do not have management over it.

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: There is funding allocated to it, minister.

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: I know, but I do not have management over it. It reports to Parliament through me. And through me it asks for allocations. Business planning is absolutely important to me. I have asked questions of the National Trust on previous occasions. I have asked for it to provide me with business case scenarios. That is why I have asked the Public Sector Commissioner to give me advice on what my role and responsibilities are and what is my authority in terms of the National Trust. While the member asks some very good questions, they are the questions I have asked for clarification and advice on. I agree with the member that business planning is vitally important.

Mr A.J. WADDELL: I refer to item 96 on page 760, "Delivery of Service", and the \$2.6 million that is listed there. I also refer to the second dot point on page 761, which states the trust will continue its role as a key provider of heritage and the provision of services at a government level. In the minister's statement—I think he has clarified it somewhat—that was published in *The West Australian* of 23 May, he said that he had requested advice from the Public Sector Commissioner concerning "governance and related matters" at the trust. I ask how it is that the minister has allocated \$2.6 million in this budget to the National Trust, despite the fact that he has not defined in his one-page state heritage policy what its role is. Clearly, the minister does not understand or has sought advice as to what influence he can have over the trust. The minister is just an instrument for reporting now. The question I ask is: why has not the minister reported to the Parliament what his concerns are about the trust, which requires him to seek this advice as to his influence into the trust?

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: Traditionally, the trust comes to the minister of the day. As I am the minister at the moment, they come to me and I advocate for moneys for them. I have no management responsibility or control over the National Trust. The National Trust of Australia (W.A.) Act does not give me the authority over the trust. I have this basic belief, member for Forrestfield, that if I am going to be responsible for something, I need to have the authority over that something. If I do not have the authority, I should not have the responsibility.

Mr J.N. HYDE: The minister has been there three years. It is a bit late to be —

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: It is a lot more than the member did or the previous government did in terms of the National Trust, which was established in the 1960s. At least I am clarifying the role. I am trying to clarify my role, because I think it would be a better relationship if I understand fully what I can and cannot do in terms of the trust, because it is a very important part of the heritage of Western Australia, as is the Heritage Council. I think I have mentioned before that the National Trust of Australia (WA) and the Heritage Council came together for the first time to deliver that heritage policy for Western Australia.

Mr A.J. WADDELL: What oversight do citizens of Western Australia get for the \$2.6 million that they put in the trust? Is it a blank cheque which we write and which we never see or have any control over? Exactly whom does the buck stop with?

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: The National Trust has a board, made up of very prominent community members, and they are the trustees. I think there are about 25 or 26 members on that board, and they are charged with the responsibility of running the affairs of the trust. Would you like to add further to that, Enzo?

Mr E. Sirna: If I may, through the minister, we have a council of 25 people. We are a trust for government and for the community. The reason that we are eligible for funding such as that from Lotterywest is that we have a charitable status and we also have a community base. There is a membership base that is through election, so we have consideration in the make-up of the actual council, which includes community and professional organisations and particularly those heritage aspects that are very important to us.

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: I will add further to that. The Auditor General has oversight of the affairs of the National Trust.

Mr A.J. WADDELL: How do we exercise that if we cannot direct them to do anything? We can write a report, but what effect does it have?

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: I am assuming that—my advisers will correct me if I am wrong—the National Trust is accountable to the Auditor General. The Auditor General can table reports on the annual reports and the functions of the National Trust. That is that oversight. In the last three years I think the National Trust was rated by the Auditor General in the top 50 overall government agencies with regard to its annual report.

[9.50 pm]

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: I have a further question. Is the minister saying that this is like a non-government organisation that we give a grant to? Because it is such an old organisation that comes before us in the budget papers, we have a role in scrutinising how that money is spent. Effectively, it is a non-government organisation that has an autonomous role. The minister does not appoint anyone to the board or the trust yet it is part of CRF funding.

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: It is a statutory authority. That is why I have asked for clarification about governance and other matters. It reports through me. I do not appoint members to its board. I do not have day-to-day control or authority over the running of the National Trust. The fact that the National Trust was established under the act is quite unique.

Mr P.T. MILES: On page 761, under “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency”, I note that the trust has a continuing lead role in coordinating heritage education. Can the minister explain some of the learning programs that the trust has developed to promote heritage education?

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: The National Trust develops heritage education programs for delivery to formal and informal groups at the metropolitan and non-metropolitan properties that it owns. They include schools with students from kindergarten to year 12, children attending holiday programs, scouts and Girl Guides, tertiary education courses, including universities and TAFE, English as a second language students, lifelong learning groups such as Probus and other seniors groups, and individuals visiting properties attending courses and lectures. The National Trust develops and coordinates programs to engage the schools because it wants children to value and appreciate heritage at a local and state level. All the programs are linked to the Western Australian heritage framework and the Australian curriculum. The National Trust courses are approved by the Curriculum Council of Western Australia and the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority. Some of the courses it has developed include “Swan River Colony: 1827 to 1903”, for year 5 students; “Ancient World: Investigating the Ancient Past, the Burrup and Beyond”, for year 7 students; and “Burrup Peninsula: 40 000 years of Australian History”, for year 11 students. The National Trust offers support for teachers, professional development, school visits and properties led by a National Trust education officer, print and informational technology resources, web-based support and resources, curriculum courses, National Trust education officer school visits and statewide heritage history competitions. The National Trust’s education and learning program works with partners to deliver heritage and commemoration education programs for Anzac Day, for example. They include the Art Gallery of Western Australia, the State Library of Western Australia and the Department of Environment and Conservation. The list goes on.

Mr J.N. HYDE: I refer to page 761 and the third point, “Conservation of National Heritage”, under “Service Summary”. One of the great things about the trust—in many ways, it is a unique thing—is its dedication to natural heritage. It is something it has done well and it is incredibly important in a state as vast and as diverse as WA. There seems to be a large drop from the 2010–11 budget to the 2011–12 budget from \$1 114 000 to \$786 000. Does the minister have further information on that? I assume it might be connected with cabinet’s failure to stump up money for maintenance and the other very good things that the trust is doing.

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: The member is quite wrong; it has nothing to do with us.

Mr J.N. HYDE: It is in the minister’s budget.

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: The National Trust has a program called the BushBank revolving fund. It was established in August 2001 by the federal environment minister, Robert Hill, a good Liberal minister at the time, and the Western Australian environment and heritage minister, Dr Judy Edwards.

Mr J.N. HYDE: An excellent minister too.

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: I thought the member might say that.

Mr J.N. HYDE: I will trade the minister a Hill for an Edwards.

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: The fund was jointly funded by the federal and state governments and managed by the National Trust of Australia (WA). Funding of \$1 million was provided by the federal government and \$1 million was provided by the state government. The BushBank operates as a consortium for WWF-Australia, the Department of Environment and Conservation and the National Trust of Australia. The National Trust coordinates the day-to-day administration of that program. The BushBank is a revolving fund. It purchases and on-sells bush property to a conservation-oriented buyer. The proceeds of the sales return as capital to purchase other projects to protect more natural habitat. All BushBank properties sold are sold with a conservation covenant on them and registered on all land titles. That is negotiated as a condition of sale. It provides for legal protection in perpetuity, I presume. As a not-for-profit organisation, the National Trust is able to receive tax deductible donations of money or land. Donations of property for inclusion in the BushBank program not only ensures the protection of the land but also contributes to the conservation of the land. All donated properties are on-sold. That program was to run for a limited time only and it is coming to an end. With the changing times, the global financial crisis and all those other influences, the National Trust holds only two properties in BushBank. One of them is Talgomine at Nungarin, which is 1 000 hectares and the other is Badjeling at Quairading, which is 160 acres. That program ran for a specific time. No more money will be allocated to it.

Mr J.N. HYDE: Would the minister consider allocating more money? It is an excellent model, something that we were on the verge of committing to with built heritage.

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: I have also had discussions about this. It is a good model. As I said, that program is winding down because it has come to an end. It was in place for a certain period. As I said, there are only two properties left in that program. When the time is right, I presume the National Trust will sell them.

Mr J.N. HYDE: Are there any proposals to enhance that project again? It is seed capital that gets it going.

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: Nothing has been discussed in line with the BushBank revolving fund at this point.

Mr J.N. HYDE: Is that something that perhaps the minister thinks should be featured in the state heritage policy and the review of the act?

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: We are talking about built heritage in the review of the act.

Mr J.N. HYDE: So it is not a real state heritage policy.

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: That is not part of the Heritage of Western Australia Act 1990 but is something that is obviously in the domain of the National Trust, which has that broader scope for protection of heritage places.

The appropriation was recommended.

Committee adjourned at 10.00 pm
