

Division 69: Office of the Environmental Protection Authority, \$14 293 000 —

Mr A.P. O’Gorman, Chairman.

Mr W.R. Marmion, Minister for Environment.

Mr K. Taylor, General Manager.

Mr S. Beilby, Director, Business Operations.

Mr A. Sutton, Director, Assessment and Compliance Division.

[Witnesses introduced.]

[8.10 pm]

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

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: I refer to “Outcomes and Key Effectiveness Indicators” on page 825 and the percentage of approved projects with actual impacts not exceeding those —

Mr W.R. MARMION: Could the member slow down. I am just getting to the page.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: It is on page 825 and I am reading from that page under the heading “Outcomes and Key Effectiveness Indicators, where the first line item states —

Percentage of approved projects with actual impacts not exceeding those predicted during the assessment ...

There is a string of 100 per cent figures in each column. Does that mean that we have a 100 per cent success in not exceeding the predicted impacts for all the projects that have been assessed?

Mr W.R. MARMION: My understanding is that no change is anticipated over that period and this reflects the fact that there have been no significant cases of projects with unintended environmental impacts.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: Is the minister saying that for as long as we have been doing environmental impact assessments in Western Australia, we have a 100 per cent record of projects not exceeding the predicted impacts?

Mr W.R. MARMION: I will ask the general manager to provide more detail. I have been the minister for only a bit over 12 months and he might be able to elaborate on that.

Mr K. Taylor: The 100 per cent figure relates to whether there have been any new incidences of significant impacts exceeding what was predicted from the assessment of projects. In those particular years, no new projects had significant impacts. Since the act came into place in 1986, something like 1 000 projects have been assessed, and in that time less than a handful have had a significant impact beyond what was predicted through the assessment process.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: I thank the minister for that response. I am still concerned because I think this is a misleading statistic. I am not clear whether the figure of 100 per cent refers to all those 1 000-odd assessments or from that response it refers only to more recent assessments. Therefore, I challenge the validity of the statistic because if a project has been in existence for only a matter of months, the sort of auditing that would give an indication of whether the predicted impacts had been exceeded could not have been done.

Mr K. Taylor: Our KPIs are reviewed by the Office of the Auditor General, which has accepted this as a legitimate effectiveness indicator. It is a hard matter to measure in terms of the extent of the impacts that would exceed the predicted impacts during assessment. However, as I said, during those years no new projects occurred in which there were significant impacts exceeding those that had been predicted throughout the assessment process. That is over an extended period of time, not just the last few years.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: I have a final point on this. If 100 per cent of projects are meeting their predicted impacts, does that mean we are setting the bar too low?

Mr W.R. MARMION: I will let Mr Taylor comment in a minute but it sounds to me as though we are setting the bar just about right. The managing director might like to comment.

Mr K. Taylor: The environmental assessment process in Western Australia is one of the strongest in Australia. It has been recognised in reviews, both nationally and internationally. A recent review was undertaken by the Victorian Parliament that recognised that the Western Australian process was probably the strongest process in Australia. International reviews have acknowledged that the Western Australian process is one of the best. Although we recognise that we need to be very diligent to ensure that the assessments are very thorough, the Western Australian process is a strong process.

Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Murray Cowper; Mrs Liza Harvey; Mr Bill Marmion; Mr David Templeman

Mr W.R. MARMION: I will add to that. I think that the 100 per cent success rate shows that we have got it right. We do not want it to be below 100 per cent. We want that to be a rare occasion and we must set strong conditions that are not exceeded.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: That is the point. The conditions are too weak if we are meeting all of them.

Mr W.R. MARMION: I think it shows that we have got it just about right.

Mr M.J. COWPER: I refer to the government's goals and its social and environmental responsibility outlined on page 824 of the *Budget Statements*. I note that recently the minister increased the level of noise emissions from the Wagerup refinery in my electorate and that Alcoa will have to purchase some noise-affected properties. Can the minister detail how many properties Alcoa will need to purchase to satisfy the requirements of the licence that the minister just issued?

Mr W.R. MARMION: I am seeking clarification that the member is after the number of properties around Alcoa —

Mr M.J. COWPER: The minister indicated in his press release that the noise licence was extended at the Wagerup refinery—and I think dust as well, but certainly noise. The minister indicated that Alcoa would have to satisfy the requirements of the licence by purchasing the affected properties. How many properties will Alcoa need to purchase to satisfy the licence?

Mr W.R. MARMION: The member is correct. I have just approved an extension of Alcoa's expansion program. I will ask the general manager or maybe Mr Sutton to discuss the detail of the specific requirements regarding how it was worded and how many properties.

Mr M.J. COWPER: The minister approved two things. One was the extension of the current licence, which is not a problem. However, the additional part of that was the regulation 17 application, which has been around since 2002—way before my colleague the member for Mandurah was the responsible minister. It has been sitting in abeyance since then, and I note that the minister has given his approval for that to occur and that Alcoa must meet certain requirements to satisfy the licence and that Alcoa must purchase some additional properties in proximity to its refinery. I just want to know how many properties need to be purchased and if Alcoa does not purchase them from the landowners, what will happen to the licence?

Mr W.R. MARMION: We do not have the detail of that here so we will have to provide that information later as supplementary information. Can the member clarify exactly what data he requires?

Mr M.J. COWPER: I will put the question on notice.

The CHAIRMAN: When a question is put on notice, it is the member's responsibility to do that.

Mr M.J. COWPER: In all fairness and truthfulness, I have put the question on notice but I have not got an answer to it.

The CHAIRMAN: It is probably a question for your party room.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: My question relates to the Browse Basin LNG precinct agreement outlined on page 823. Can the minister advise when the EPA will release its report into the Browse LNG precinct at James Price Point?

Mr W.R. MARMION: The Department of State Development, acting as the proponent for the Browse LNG project, has asked the EPA to extend its reporting deadline to take into account new information about the impact of dredging before it finalises its report. The EPA's assessment of the Browse LNG precinct has been extensive and thorough. The assessment was released for public comment for 15 weeks and we expect that the report will come out midyear. I expected it would come out in April, but, because of extra information, it will now be about midyear.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I move —
That the division be put.

Mr M.J. COWPER: Oh, come on!

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Government members are asking dorothy dixers. This is absolutely inappropriate.

The CHAIRMAN: Member for Mandurah! The motion is that the question be put, and I will put that motion.

Question put and passed.

The CHAIRMAN: I am going to put that the appropriation for division 69 be recommended.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Hold on! Wait a second! I moved the motion to put the division, and the government members have voted against that.

The CHAIRMAN: I ruled in your favour —

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: They want to vote on the division. The member for Murray–Wellington’s two colleagues are asking dorothy dixers and the minister has prepared answers and he is reading them word for word.

The CHAIRMAN: Member for Mandurah!

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: It is the worst example of estimates I have seen in my 12 years in Parliament!

The CHAIRMAN: Member for Mandurah!

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: He is reading them word for word. He is reading every single one word for word and you let him do it!

[8.20 pm]

The CHAIRMAN: Member!

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: It is outrageous!

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you, members. I have made a ruling that the division is going to be put. I am putting the recommendation that the appropriation be recommended.

The appropriation was recommended.