

Division 25: Planning, Lands and Heritage — Services 7 and 8, Heritage, \$13 603 000 —

Ms S.E. Winton, Chair.

Mr D.A. Templeman, Minister for Heritage.

Mr G.A. Gammie, Assistant Director General.

Mr J. Deery, Chief Finance Officer.

Mr G. Hamley, Chief of Staff.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIR: This estimates committee will be reported by Hansard. The daily proof *Hansard* will be available the following day.

It is the intention of the Chair 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 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. Questions must be clearly related to a page number, item, program or amount in the current division. Members should give these details in preface to their question. If a division or service is the responsibility of more than one minister, a minister shall only be examined in relation to their portfolio responsibilities.

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. I ask the minister to clearly indicate what 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 principal clerk by Friday, 29 September 2017. 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 through the online questions system.

I give the call to the member for Moore.

[8.30 pm]

Mr R.S. LOVE: My question relates to service 7 on page 427 of budget paper No 2, and the heading "Cultural Heritage Conservation Services on Behalf of and Under the Direction of the Heritage Council of Western Australia". Initially, I was going to ask this question in the Heritage Council section but it seems that this section is just as appropriate. The paragraph immediately under the heading notes that it is the role of this service to, amongst other things, "provide financial assistance and other conservation incentives". I refer to the ongoing situation in Esperance with the recent collapse of the jetty and the stand-off that appears to have developed between the shire and the Heritage Council over what to do with the jetty. What financial assistance or other form of assistance is the department able to offer the Shire of Esperance to deal with the jetty situation?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: This is very important. The member mentioned a stand-off. It is very important to understand my role as the Minister for Heritage and the role of the Heritage Council. As the member is probably aware, in December 2016 the then Minister for Heritage placed a conservation order on the jetty, which prohibits demolition of the jetty. However, the order does not prohibit maintenance works or works required for public safety. In the intervening period, the shire applied to the Heritage Council to do some maintenance works. That included the removal of the entry ramp onto the structure so that people would not be able to access the structure because of potential safety concerns. In many respects, the unfortunate collapse of some of the spans of the jetty only two weeks ago perhaps in many ways underpin the importance of not only that order remaining but also the responsibility of the shire to ultimately make that structure safe.

I will ask Mr Gammie to comment specifically on process because I think that is what the member is coming to. Essentially, my role is to ensure that the heritage values of that structure are of primary concern, and the Heritage Council provides advice on heritage matters. We are not a funding body as such. The Heritage Council offers conservation grants and other support but the council does not fund major projects of a restoration nature, for example, which is what part of the community of Esperance is seeking with the tanker jetty. That responsibility ultimately falls with the shire. The shire has been required to present a plan for the future of the jetty. The assessment of that is through the lens of the statutory responsibilities of the Heritage Council. At a meeting only two Fridays ago—interestingly enough, the day before the collapse of the spans of the Esperance tanker jetty—the shire schematically presented a proposal. I think the member for Roe as the local member also presented to the Heritage Council in more general terms the concerns of the community, the history of the issue and how he believes we should move forward. Mr Gammie will be able to report shortly on the deliberations of that meeting, but it was interesting that there was a collapse only a day later.

Ultimately, my public comments have always been that when I am satisfied that a plan or a proposal, through advice from the Heritage Council, meets the heritage requirements of that jetty structure, I would then be able to consider the conservation order status and, indeed, a way forward. Part of that is a funding proposal. Whatever the ultimate outcome, there will be a cost. It is not my responsibility nor the responsibility of the Heritage Council to be involved in proposals of how that might be funded; it only looks very specifically at the heritage issues. The message back to the shire has been that whatever concept it brings forward, if it complies and has broad support from a heritage perspective, that will be a way forward. How it funds that is really up to the shire. How it might access funds for whatever is the ultimate proposal is the shire's decision. I will ask Mr Gammie to comment on the process because that comes to the central point of the initial part of the member's question.

Mr G. Gammie: The department's role is to support the Heritage Council, which is the statutory body established under the Heritage of Western Australia Act to review proposed actions that might affect a state-registered property. The Shire of Esperance has been working with a locally established working party over some months to develop a concept plan for the replacement structure. It is intended that it be constructed on the alignment of the current footprint of the heritage jetty. The Heritage Council received a high-level concept plan for feedback to the council two Fridays ago, as the minister mentioned. The council advised the shire at the time that it was not prepared to support that concept plan on the information provided as it did not satisfy various aspects of what we would expect a structure to represent in a heritage setting, in particular. The Heritage Council was not satisfied that the concept plan addressed the aesthetic characteristics of the current structure nor addressed the social values associated with that particular structure. On that basis, the advice to the shire was that the Heritage Council did not support the concept plan as presented. Typically, this is an iterative process. When we are dealing with heritage properties, it is normally an ongoing process. In that space, the Heritage Council has indicated to the Shire of Esperance that it is prepared to come down to Esperance to meet with the shire and provide more detailed feedback on its preliminary advice on the concept plan and to work with the shire towards addressing those issues on the heritage impacts of the proposal that it has raised. That meeting is scheduled for next week, and that will keep the process moving forward.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: The reality of this issue is that there is some division within the community about what should happen. There is one stream of thought that basically wants the structure saved in the same materials. There is another line of thought that a more interpretative-type structure replace the existing structure. There is also a view from some that it has reached the end of its life and should be demolished altogether and a small recognition aspect be included. Unfortunately, there are a variety of opinions. We have an election in Esperance on 21 October and I understand that people have put themselves forward on this issue for that as well. I am certainly looking for a funding source from the shire because central to any ultimate proposal is the funding. That will need to be negotiated and secured from a variety of sources.

[8.40 pm]

Mr R.S. LOVE: My concern is that the shire, to some extent, is left as a funding body for someone else's design in the end. Newspaper reports from 15 September indicate, as the minister highlighted, that the designs put forward have been rejected. They may not be the best designs; I do not know. I am not venturing an opinion on that. It appears that the shire will be left as a funding body to provide for whatever the Heritage Council comes up with as the desired final concept. Given that Esperance is a fairly small regional centre, it is a very large impost on that community to do anything with this jetty. I bring the minister back to the point that one stated aim is to provide financial assistance. This is a question, I suppose, or a statement. I wonder what effect a moral demand upon the state government will be when it starts, through its bodies, to determine what the final plan should be. What responsibility will the state feel towards coming forth with a reasonable funding plan for it? It is all very well to say that the local government has to demonstrate a funding stream for it, but it is a fairly isolated place and whilst tourism may bring in some tourist dollars, whether that will ever be enough to directly fund the jetty is quite an interesting and challenging concept.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I am sure the member has followed the local debate.

Mr R.S. LOVE: I am careful not to get into which design it should be, but whichever design it is, it is going to be expensive.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: The locality of Esperance, as the member is well aware, falls within a federal seat that is held by the coalition, and that is one area of funding. I am not sure how strongly that has been pursued, but that is one funding source. The member may be aware of a newspaper report about the Minister for Regional Development looking at whether the shire might consider reprioritising other commitments made within royalties for regions funding. I understand that the shire said that is not something it would like to do. Of course, the shire has put aside, within its own budget forecasts, some provision for a replacement and/or project. I come back to my earlier point. Does the Heritage Council or the department have an allocation of funding available for such projects? No, they do not. The Heritage Council has moneys, which I launched only the other day, that are specifically for smaller conservation grants available to usually individual private owners of heritage buildings predominantly but not

exclusively. Those grants are matched dollar for dollar. The money is not there from the Heritage Council nor from the department; it needs to be sourced from other sources.

The CHAIR: Members, I am conscious of the time. Very quickly, member for Moore.

Mr R.S. LOVE: If not direct financial assistance, will the department work with the shire to help it source funds and to support the shire to gain access to some of these funding streams the minister has spoken about?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: The department must respond under its statutory responsibilities. The Heritage Council and the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage have specific requirements and responsibilities. For example, as Mr Gammie has already highlighted, the Heritage Council is travelling to Esperance to meet with the shire next week. That is a clear indication of the willingness of the council to work with the shire to try to get an outcome that delivers to the heritage values and to the aspirations of the Esperance community more broadly.

The appropriation was recommended.