

**Division 65: Swan River Trust, \$12 072 00 -**

Mrs D.J. Guise, Chairman.

Mr D.A. Templeman, Minister for the Environment.

Mr R. Hughes, General Manager.

Mr A. Sutton, Environmental Program Manager.

Mr S.F. Gray, Business Manager.

**Dr S.C. THOMAS:** I refer to “Significant Issues and Trends”. The last dot point on page 1136 states -

The community continues to place a high value on the Swan and Canning rivers and demand for information about the rivers and opportunities for community involvement in their protection remains high.

I commend the minister for that. On page 1142, service 4 is “Communication of Environmental Information” which relates very closely to the first point. The minister has decreased the budget. If the community continues to place a high value on it and the demand for information remains high, can the minister explain the budget for communication of environmental information, which was \$1.152 million in 2005-06 and was budgeted at \$1.167 million in 2006-07. A bit more than that, \$1.298 million, was spent in 2006-07, which is good, but the budgeted amount for this year has dropped to under \$1 million, which is a significant drop in funding in net terms. There might be a significant reason for that, but I remain concerned that, given that there is a statement in the front about it being a particularly important aspect, in budgetary terms it appears that it has been cut.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I thank the member for the question. Cabinet approved a proposal to amend the agreement scheduled to the Casino (Burswood Island) Agreement Act. That amendment will increase the levy on gaming machine revenue paid to the Burswood Park Board from one per cent to 1.5 per cent, and to two per cent effective from 1 January. These amendments will allow the board to direct a proportion of the increased funding to projects approved by the minister responsible for administering the Swan and Canning Rivers Management Act 2006 - which is me - to protect and enhance the Swan and Canning Rivers. It is expected that the levy system from gaming machines will provide more than \$15 million over the next five years towards river projects. The amount calculated to be received in the coming financial year is approximately \$3 million, so the appropriation that the member has highlighted is compensated for by the levy that will be introduced, and those moneys will come to the Swan River Trust to be used for various activities of the trust, including, but not primarily or solely, communication.

**Dr S.C. THOMAS:** I appreciate that. Can the minister explain where in the budget the expected additional income from Burswood is listed and where it is tied? We do not want that money necessarily floating around without being allocated. I would like to know where it has been tied down so that it cannot escape.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** It does not appear in the budget papers because that would be pre-empting a decision by Parliament. As soon as the act has been amended, those dollars are expected to flow to the trust as per the recommended amendment. That is the reason it does not appear as a line item in the budget.

**Dr S.C. THOMAS:** If that legislation does not get through Parliament for some strange reason, the additional funding will not be available and potentially the system might break down. Although it is probable, there is no guarantee that there will be an increase in this aspect.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I am sure that, with the member’s support and the support of his party room, we will ensure that, when that amendment comes forth to Parliament, it will be passed post haste so that the member’s fears will not be realised.

**Mr A.J. SIMPSON:** Further to that question, the minister made a statement about money coming from the Burswood island agreement to go to the Swan River Trust, and he mentioned gaming machines. Is the trust getting a share of only gaming machines in Burswood, or is it across the board of all gambling?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** It is a levy on electronic gaming machines.

**Mr A.J. SIMPSON:** It is only on that?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** That is correct.

**Mr A.J. SIMPSON:** Is that in the Burswood island agreement? Is that the act we have to change?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** It is in the Casino (Burswood Island) Agreement Act.

**Mr A.J. SIMPSON:** We have to amend it to get that money.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** That is the case to create that levy, I understand. I will ask the chief executive officer to clarify it for the member.

**Mr R. Hughes:** There are several stages of change that need to be made to the agreement act. This is done through the Department of Racing, Gaming and Liquor and the Burswood Park Board. The levy, as it already exists, flows through the Burswood Park Board but it is constrained by the terms of the act to spend that money only on lands in the control of the Burswood Park Board. The cabinet decision last year was to amend the act to allow the board to go broader than that, but specifically to projects approved by the Minister for the Environment and agreed to by the Burswood Park Board. The other amendment will allow the Minister for the Environment to nominate a member to the Burswood Park Board.

**Mr A.J. SIMPSON:** When the amendment is passed by Parliament, will it enable the minister to take the money and spend it on the Swan River, or wherever the minister wants? Will it be an amending bill in Parliament?

**Mr R. Hughes:** It is an amendment to the agreement act. I understand that the part that will increase the levy in two tranches is actually a disallowance process, but the work to get the change to the act to allow the minister to put up river-based projects and to make the nomination is subject to a parliamentary process.

**Dr S.C. THOMAS:** On page 1136, under “Significant Issues and Trends”, the second and third dot points refer to the nutrient level in the river system. I understand that the minister has gone through the process of a fertiliser consultative process. What level of representation does the Swan River Trust have on that process?

[9.40 pm]

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I thank the member for the question. He will be aware that that process was chaired by the former Chairman of the Environmental Protection Authority, Dr Wally Cox. The chief executive officer of the Swan River Trust sits on the working party that has established that plan.

**Dr S.C. THOMAS:** Representatives from government departments and the fertiliser industry were on that committee. What representation was there from landholders, the farming community, golf clubs and those people involved in growing turf and using those fertilisers?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** The working party was established to draw up the options. Key stakeholders, including landowners and some of the interest groups that the member has mentioned, have been part of the consultation process. Of course, the symposium that I have established to be held on 3 July will bring together a cross-section of the community, a cross-section of interest groups and a cross-section of stakeholders and other interested people to progress the work of the fertiliser project. There has been very broad consultation with all sectors. It has been a very effective process. Certainly, under the chairmanship of the former chair of the EPA, it has been a very worthwhile process and will go a long way towards achieving the goal of reducing the amount of soluble fertiliser or phosphates that enter our river system.

**Dr S.C. THOMAS:** The minister has not said whether there were any landholders on the original committee.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** The committee’s purpose was to draw up the original plans for the project. I do not have a complete list with me, so I cannot answer the member’s question directly. However, I am happy to provide a list of who was on that committee and also the cross-section of stakeholder representatives who were involved in this process.

**Dr S.C. THOMAS:** Can the minister break that down into the representative groups?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I will provide through supplementary information a list of people on the working party, as well as a list of participants in various forums that fed into that working party’s work.

[*Supplementary Information No B23.*]

**Mr B.S. WYATT:** I have one quick question. I refer to the third dot point under “Major Achievements For 2006-07” on page 1141 of the *Budget Statements*. It states that an oxygenation plant was trialled in the Swan River. I was particularly interested in this issue due to a very interesting tour I had with the Swan River Trust. How did that trial go and are there any plans for rolling the plant out on a much more established basis? Can the minister provide me with some information on how it could be used in the Canning River?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** The member will be aware that in 2006 a four-year initiative of \$4.9 million was appropriated to maintain critical river oxygen levels. Included in that appropriation was a program to implement an oxygenation program in the Canning River. I have visited the site of the oxygenation facility in the reaches of the river. Clearly, the monitoring and evaluation of this project are ongoing. However, I will ask Mr Sutton to give the member a bit of background about the sorts of results that the trust has been receiving in this trial.

**Mr A. Sutton:** To give some background, the oxygenation plant is located at Guildford Bridge on the Swan River. The first trial ran from September through to February. What we have seen to date is that the trial has

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been successful in a very localised area. It has provided a refuge for fish and other fauna in the river that may be stressed. Through this project, we are also monitoring a large length of the river. We have found that further upstream there are also large areas of deoxygenated water. What we will be looking to do over the next three years is build a large-scale plant, probably along three or four kilometres of the river, to ensure that the extent of deoxygenated water is addressed.

**Dr S.C. THOMAS:** In the interests of moving forward, we propose to put the rest of our questions on notice.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Excellent.

**The appropriation was recommended.**