

Division 67: Peel Development Commission, \$2 817 000 -

Mrs D.J. Guise, Chairman.

Mr D.A. Templeman, Minister for Peel.

Ms M.K. De Lacey, Chief Executive Officer.

Ms C. Abbott, Acting Manager, Corporate Services.

Mr S. Dawson, Chief of Staff, Office of the Minister for Peel.

Mr M.J. COWPER: I refer to the last dot point on page 1161, which states that the health of the Peel waterways and estuary is a major priority for the community. From memory, I recall that about \$2.2 million was allocated two years ago to the Peel waterways. I think that consisted of federal funding of about \$1.8 million or \$1.9 million, plus state funding of some \$300 000. I have looked desperately to see whether there has been any support from our federal friends. What was supplemented by the state for the health of our waterways?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I thank the member for the question and for his ongoing concern for the Peel waterways and estuarine system, which are critically important to the health and wellbeing of the region. Unfortunately, because this is the Peel Development Commission division, there are no figures in the budget papers because they relate to either federally funded projects and/or federally and state-funded projects that are, for example, funded through natural resource management funding programs. They are related quite often to the Department of Water appropriations. Some come within the Department of Environment and Conservation's appropriations. Unfortunately, they do not appear here and I cannot answer the member's question about what federal funding has been added to it. However, it is important to highlight one of the initiatives that saw the establishment of the Peel Waterways Centre in 2005. The Peel Waterways Centre is a focal point for across-agency and community engagement in the health and wellbeing of the Peel waterways. Indeed, the partnerships and the capacity of, for example, the Peel-Harvey Catchment Council to have a presence there also mean that for the first time, in my view, we have a focal point in the Peel region that is a centre that focuses on the work that is currently being done, whether it is rehabilitation work, whether it is water quality work or whether it is work done by community organisations. That is an important initiative that has been established.

[9.50 pm]

There is also a very important water quality improvement plan that will be released by the Environmental Protection Authority very soon. I think the member will find that this water quality plan, when it is released, will be an important focus for the ongoing health and wellbeing of the Peel waterways. The release of that report is imminent.

The other important work being done is the eastern estuary environmental assessment. This is the assessment of the eastern foreshore area of the estuary, particularly the area of land that lies between the proposed Perth-Bunbury highway and the eastern shoreline of the Peel-Harvey estuary. A whole range of issues are addressed in that environmental assessment, including potential nutrient issues, developmental impacts that may occur along that stretch and the impact they may have on the Peel-Harvey estuary, and, of course, water quality. I am absolutely committed, as Minister for Peel, to ensuring the health and wellbeing of the Peel-Harvey estuary in all of its various important elements, whether it be fisheries, water quality or the health and wellbeing of the Murray River, the Serpentine River and the Harvey River. They are all absolute concerns and priorities of mine. The Peel Development Commission will continue to work closely with the various agencies, as it has been doing for a number of years, to assist in the coordination of an effective water management approach to many of these issues. I can assure the member that it is a priority.

Mr M.J. COWPER: I have a further question. I am sure the minister shares my sentiments inasmuch as we seem to have a lot of government departments that have some dominion over the Peel waterway, whether it be local government authorities, the Department for Planning and Infrastructure, the Water and Rivers Commission or even right down to the police, who have some jurisdiction. There is quite a number of them. One of the things that concerns me is that there does not seem to be a holistic approach across those agencies. I think we need a focal point. I want to have the minister's comments on this. I know that the Peel Inlet Management Authority was tried and not continued. However, I note that the second last dot point on page 1164 states -

Completed the business case for the Peel Waterways Institute . . .

I am very curious to know what to make of the Peel Waterways Institute as opposed to what the minister was referring to before, because I am excited about the concept of that.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I thank the member. I will deal with the first part of the question. We need a strong governance model for the broad coordination of activities, be they agency, community or individual activities, for the waterways. Currently, work is being done on the best governance model to put in place to ensure that the Peel-Harvey estuary is managed in an appropriate way and managed effectively, so that that asset is protected

now and into the future. The second part of the member's question relates to the proposal that was first mooted a number of years ago; that is, the institute. This is also being progressed by the Peel Development Commission. I think the first step was the creation of the Peel Waterways Centre. I see that as a first step towards a much more comprehensive model, which is an institute model. We have to ensure that we garner the research potential and create an opportunity whereby the Peel-Harvey estuary system and the associated catchment are looked at in a holistic way, and their health and wellbeing are coordinated in a holistic way. An important element of that will be ongoing research. Therefore, I see the institute as being a goal for the future. The first step has been the establishment of the Peel Waterways Centre. I think that over the coming period the commission will continue to be involved in progressing the institute and what that model will look like. I think exciting things are planned.

Mr M.J. COWPER: Just on that, I understand that there may be some synergies with, for instance, the Swan River Trust, because many of the ailments that we are experiencing in our part of the world are duplications of what has happened to the Swan and Canning Rivers. The other aspect that I will move on to, if the minister does not mind, is the issue of that particular authority or the Peel Waterways Institute, or whatever it might be called, having some sort of statutory power to be more than just a toothless tiger.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I thank the member for the question. It is something that I am also pursuing. Basically, it comes down again to governance. As I said, the governance model is being worked on now. Certainly, government may consider that the ultimate goal would be a statutory body formed to oversee the health and wellbeing of the Peel-Harvey estuary system.

Mr M.J. COWPER: I will comment on that and then move on.

The CHAIRMAN: No, there will be no comments. I am tired. Try a question.

Mr M.J. COWPER: I am very concerned about the impact that urbanisation will have, particularly on that eastern foreshore, now that the Perth-Bunbury highway is going through. I draw the minister's attention to that.

The CHAIRMAN: Nice try, member for Murray. The member should not test my patience. Would the member like to ask a question?

Mr M.J. COWPER: Yes, please. I refer to the fourth dot point on page 1164, which relates to the land use planning and environmental assessments for stage 1 of the Nambeelup industrial area. I know that the Peel Development Commission, the Mandurah City Council and the Shire of Murray are very keen that the Nambeelup issue be addressed. I know that some environmental issues need to be attended to. However, it seems to be one of those projects that has been hanging in abeyance for some time. I am currently aware of a number of projects that may be lost to the Peel region if we do not make available some land. Subsequently, this will have an impact on our ability to provide jobs for our young people, and all the infrastructure that goes along with that.

The CHAIRMAN: And the question is? Does the minister have the question?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Yes. The member is highlighting his concern about the lack of industrial land in the Peel region. As the member would be aware, the commission has been working very closely with key stakeholders, including local government, on this issue. The member would be aware that, in the short term, the Pinjarra light industrial area stage 1 will be commissioned. The commission has been working very closely over a number of years with the people involved with the Nambeelup industrial estate. A number of issues impact on the site that has been identified, particularly environmental concerns and also issues regarding potential fill that will be required to ensure that that land is appropriate for that land use. I can assure the member that the development of Nambeelup as a potential industrial estate remains a priority of the commission. The commission is working on it very closely, and I am also monitoring it, as minister, with the chief executive officer, to ensure that we do everything possible to get it up and running as soon as possible.

Mr M.J. COWPER: I have one further question. I refer to page 1167 of the *Budget Statements*. I see that under the works in progress is the Pinjarra to Etmynlin reconstruction. In light of the fires and the pending visit by cabinet on Monday, will the Treasurer bring a chequebook so that we might see some light on the horizon when it comes to the reconstruction of that railway line that was devastated by the fire?

The CHAIRMAN: That it is stretching it a bit, member. I cannot see the funding line for that.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: The concern about that project and the need for it are recognised. I advise the member to watch this space.

The appropriation was recommended.

Committee adjourned at 10.00 pm

