

Chairman; Dr Graham Jacobs; Mr David Templeman; Mr Terry Redman; Mr Martin Whitely; Mrs Judy Hughes;  
Dr Steve Thomas; Mr Mick Murray

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**Division 66: Environment and Conservation, \$238 549 000 —**

Mr P.B. Watson, Chairman.

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

Mr K.J. McNamara, Director General.

Ms S. Hunt, Acting Deputy Director General, Environment.

Mr R.P. Atkins, Director, Environmental Regulation.

Mr P. Sharp, Acting Director, Parks and Visitor Services.

Mr C.J. Murray, Director, Environmental Impact Assessment.

Dr J.C. Byrne, Director, Corporate Services.

**The CHAIRMAN:** This estimates committee will be reported by Hansard. The daily proof *Hansard* will be published by 9.00 am tomorrow.

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. This is the prime focus of the committee. While there is scope for members to examine many matters, questions need to be clearly related to a page number, item, program, or amount within the volumes. For example, members are free to pursue performance indicators that are included in the budget statements while there remains a clear link between the questions and the estimates. It is the intention of the Chairman to ensure that as many questions as possible are asked and answered and that both questions and answers are short, minister, and to the point.

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. For the purpose of following up the provision of this information, I ask the minister to clearly indicate to the committee which 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 committee clerk by 6 June 2008, so that members may read it before the report and third reading stages. If the supplementary information cannot be provided within that time, written advice is required of the day by which the information will be made available. Details in relation to supplementary information have been provided to both members and advisers and accordingly I ask the minister to cooperate with those requirements.

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 with the Clerk's office. Only supplementary information that the minister agrees to provide will be sought by 6 June 2008. It will also greatly assist Hansard if, when referring to the program statements volumes or the consolidated account estimates, members give the page number, item, program and amount in preface to their question.

I advise the minister that when his advisers do answer a question, they should give their name first to help Hansard.

**Dr G.G. JACOBS:** I direct the minister's attention to the appropriation and forward estimates on the first page of division 66, page 1059. There is an extra \$38 million and a little more in this proposed forward budget. I can identify an extra \$13 million for environmental regulation and an extra \$9 million to coordinate the response to climate change. Can the minister identify other areas to explain the \$38 million extra spend?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I thank the member for Roe for his question. The appropriation that is presented in these budget papers can be broken down into additional dollars. They are long but I am happy to do that. They are represented by variances for 2008-09. They are fire resources and additional fire management resources, \$4.713 million; environmental responsibilities, which include inspections and compliance monitoring, \$1.32 million; major development approvals, which are additional resources related to the impact of the resources boom, \$2.196 million; a commitment to Lake Kepwari, which is near Collie, \$467 000; Walpole-Nornalup Inlet management park, \$265 000; the LEED fund, which is part of the Premier's climate change action statement of May last year, \$8.45 million; Community and Public Sector Union-Civil Service Association of WA specified callings, which is a resource for employees, \$2.386 million; and contaminated sites, \$2.392 million.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Did the member for Roe want all these individual figures?

**Dr G.G. JACOBS:** Yes, thank you, Mr Chairman, I want them recorded in *Hansard*.

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**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** There is a line item for an appropriation for the replacement of some pieces of infrastructure on Department of Environment and Conservation controlled land that were destroyed by the wildfires last year in Dwellingup and in the member's electorate in Esperance, \$998 000; the Esperance health and ecological assessment related to the Esperance lead issue, \$680 000; top-up funding for some marine parks, including Marmion, Shoalwater Islands and Swan Estuary Marine Parks, \$200 000; Shark Bay Marine Park and Hamelin Pool Marine Nature Reserve, \$195 000; a depreciation appropriation, \$1.312 million; a salaries escalation appropriation, \$1.669 million; and a non-salaries escalation appropriation, \$793 000. That is a specific breakdown that I hope answers the member's question appropriately. Perhaps I will sum all that up. The increase in the total appropriation provided to deliver services rises this year from \$196.554 million in the 2007-08 budget to \$215.967 million in the 2008-09 budget estimates.

**Dr G.G. JACOBS:** I have an additional question, Mr Chairman.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Yes. I ask the member for Roe to bear in mind that we want to get through this division and that his first question took 10 minutes.

**Dr G.G. JACOBS:** In that spend the minister identified \$9 million to coordinate the response to climate change, which is a significant increase in funding. Can the minister tell me how he will spend \$9 million to coordinate a response to climate change, in specifics if he could?

[7.10 pm]

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Yes, I can do that for the member. The specific environment element of the climate change budget can be highlighted by the provision for stage 3 of the Indian Ocean Climate Initiative, which is \$4 million over four years, of which \$1 million is allocated in the 2008-09 budget. The Act Now for the Future public awareness campaign, which the member may be aware of, has been allocated \$600 000 in the budget for the forthcoming financial year. There is a significant spend on the low emissions energy development fund, a fund announced by the Premier as part of his climate change action statement. That is an appropriation of \$8.45 million in 2008-09. The fund is a key initiative in the government's target to cut the state's greenhouse gas emissions by 60 per cent by 2050—that is, below 2000 levels. It focuses on funding investment towards technologies where Western Australia has a distinct natural or competitive advantage. These technologies include geothermal, bioenergy and renewable energy generation, including wind and solar power.

It is also important to highlight the fact that the Office of Climate Change has been working with local government to assist in preparation for a response to the challenge. It recently administered \$300 000 in funding from the commonwealth's local adaptation pathways program to six regional councils and local government councils to develop strategies on their response to climate change.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** I refer the minister to the key efficiency indicators on page 1068, specifically contaminated sites. Figures relating to the average cost of remediating state sites are given for the 2006-07 actual through to the 2008-09 target, which is \$2 989 600. In response to the member for Roe's question, the minister just referred to \$2.39 million in the current appropriations going towards contaminated sites. What is the nature of those sites that they finish up with a cost of remediation so significantly high in the first instance? I want an appreciation of how big an issue this is for the Department of Environment and Conservation.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** The two key responses relate to the ongoing issue of the Bellevue site and the Brookdale site. There are specific appropriations in this budget for the ongoing works at those sites. I am happy to ask Mr Robert Atkins to give the member some background on that if that will be helpful.

As to the general question of contaminated sites, it is obviously a very significant issue for the department and the state. The member may be aware that the government introduced significant contaminated sites legislation in 2003. It took effect late 2006. The process of implementing the legislation included an awareness campaign for various stakeholders being responsible for reporting contaminated sites within a set period. Local government, other agencies and landowners etc, were required to report either contaminated sites or suspected contaminated sites to the department by 31 May 2007. I will ask Mr Atkins to give a quick summary of Bellevue and Brookdale.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** And the appropriations attached to that.

**Mr R.P. Atkins:** The Bellevue site has been undergoing a series of investigations. The first step is to characterise the contamination on site, identify the extent of it and produce what is called a site investigation plan, which contains all that information. The second step is to prepare a remediation plan. Part of that involves looking at the remediation options. That plan needs to go to the Environmental Protection Authority for environmental assessment before any actual remediation starts. Both Bellevue and Brookdale are at fairly similar stages; that is, they are in the advanced stages of characterising the contamination on site and considering

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remediation options. One of the reasons the figures for the average cost of the site drops away from that planned for this year is that those investigations are quite complex and have taken longer than expected. The cost will ramp up next year when we start doing works on the ground after the EPA has completed its assessment.

**Mr M.P. WHITELY:** I refer the minister to page 1059 of the *Budget Statements*. The last point under “Significant Issues and Trends” refers to the need to complete the establishment of a conservation reserve system. What additions have been made in the 2007-08 year?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** So far in 2008-09 the Department of Environment and Conservation has purchased nine freehold land parcels throughout the south west, including one pastoral lease near Yalgoo. The total cost of that was \$976 000. In addition, the WA Planning Commission paid for 17 blocks inside the Serpentine National Park, which means that they are incorporated into the national park in the Serpentine area. They were purchased at a total cost of \$1.520 million. A further six freehold properties are currently being bought at a cost of \$1.365 million. As of 30 June last year, the total area under the department’s care was 27 million hectares. That includes terrestrial marine areas and includes 10 per cent of WA’s land area.

The member may be aware that in September I announced that the government had purchased and converted just on 2.7 million hectares into conservation reserves, which is a particularly significant addition to the overall conservation estate in the state of Western Australia. Those 2.7 million hectares and the parcels that I just mentioned brings the formal system, which includes our national parks, our nature reserves and our conservation parks, to over 20.1 million hectares in the state. A reservation process is under way. Native title and other issues are part of that process for final or formal reservation. We can be proud that we are moving very well towards ensuring that significant areas that hold very particular biodiversity values are being protected into the future.

**Mrs J. HUGHES:** I refer to the first dot point under “Major Achievements For 2007-08” on page 1068. One of the issues with the cold weather we are experiencing lately relates to the air quality due to wood heating. Some of the areas in my electorate of Kingsley are quite low lying and residents suffer from some of that smoke haze. Will that continue; and, if so, will it just affect the city or will it also affect regional areas?

[7.20 pm]

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I am pleased to confirm that we will continue the very important halt the haze rebate program. Today I announced that the program will be ongoing and I have extended the program to areas of the Peel region, including Mandurah. I have also announced that other regional areas in Western Australia will benefit from the program in its second phase. When I took over this portfolio, one of the issues about the wood burning and health issue was that a number of regional centres have also made complaints about health impacts. Kalgoorlie is one of these, along with some of the areas in the south west. Until now the program has been specifically focused on the Perth metropolitan area. It was my view that we needed to extend it. Phase 2, on which I will be providing more detail in the coming weeks, will focus on extending the scheme to other regional centres. We are working with local governments in rural and regional Western Australia on rolling out the program to benefit those communities.

**Mrs J. HUGHES:** When I was looking at the halt the haze wood heater rebate program last winter, it seemed to me that the buyback would only be implemented for the most expensive form of gas heating. Will the scheme remain exactly the same, or will there be a variation in the kinds of heating systems that can be replaced?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** First of all, the rebate is \$150. It encourages people to cease using wood heaters in favour of more environmentally sensitive heating. I do not have the exact details to provide to the member now, but I am happy to provide them by way of supplementary information.

**Mrs J. HUGHES:** That would be good. That is the sort of information I would like to see get out.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I will provide detailed information further outlining the intention of the halt the haze wood heater rebate program.

[*Supplementary Information No B26.*]

**Dr S.C. THOMAS:** I refer to the table on page 1080, detailing controlled grants and subsidies. The fourth line item in the table is for cane toad grants of \$890 000, and shows only an estimated actual for 2007-08. I may be wrong, but I have run a search engine and I cannot find a mention of cane toads anywhere else in the budget papers. I am wondering why cane toads, which may be hopping across the border during the next wet season, did not rate a mention in any other parts of the chapter. Also, what other funding is available? I know the government is doing other things in relation to cane toads. Can the minister tell us why the budget papers do not mention them, and where else that funding is going?

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**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** First of all, in answer to the member's last question about the government's ongoing contribution to the threat of cane toads, it appears in the nature conservation section of the budget, and includes an item of some \$900 000.

**Dr S.C. THOMAS:** Is that part of the greater budget?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** It is part of the nature conservation budget.

**Dr S.C. THOMAS:** I presumed it would have to be there somewhere; I just could not find it.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** As I have highlighted in the house on a number of occasions, this government has committed more than \$12 million on the cane toad threat since 2004-05. This has included support for on-the-ground efforts by two key voluntary organisations—Kimberley Toad Busters and Stop The Toad Foundation. That amount also includes a commitment to ongoing work through the Department of Environment and Conservation. We have a sniffer dog program, and a cane toad coordinator position was funded as part of the government's ongoing response. Last September we added another \$1 million to this fight. No government in Australia has done more than this government to fight what we would all agree is an insidious threat. We called on the previous federal government to support us in the fight, but that support was not forthcoming. The new federal government has promised just over \$2 million, and we are actively working with it on how that additional funding will be used. The efforts by the government and the community have been substantial. The volunteers deserve our acknowledgement and congratulations for their efforts.

**Dr S.C. THOMAS:** The previous federal government actually put a fair bit of money into cane toad research, but its metamorphosis research program was not one that I necessarily supported. That is the problem with research—sometimes picking the wrong target can make things worse rather than better. How much of the \$12 million spent by the government since 2004-05 is going into the research project, which I understand involves mapping of the genome; how much has gone to Stop The Toad Foundation; and, how much has gone to Kimberley Toad Busters?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** To answer the first part of the member's question, funding for the genome program includes \$500 000, as announced by the Premier last year. Substantial work is also being done on the Kimberley islands biological survey, which involves more than \$4 million worth of works. That is part of our cane toad effort. Last September's announcement by the Premier included a grant of \$240 000 to Kimberley Toad Busters, as well as a \$100 000 grant to Stop The Toad Foundation, to complete its planned muster of 2007. In total, just short of \$500 000 has gone to Kimberley Toad Busters, including the \$240 000 amount I just mentioned and some grants the organisation has received since then. I think Stop The Toad Foundation received about the same. Does the member want the total for both groups?

**Dr S.C. THOMAS:** Just an approximation; it does not really matter. I think it was about the same amount.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I think it was more than \$500 000 in total.

**Dr S.C. THOMAS:** With the Lotterywest money, it is probably between \$500 000 and \$600 000.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** The member will recall that back in 2005-06 Stop The Toad Foundation received a grant of \$500 000. That was to commence the education programs and other things that that organisation was to be focused on. It also included the early musters. The foundation also received a Lotterywest grant of \$50 000 in 2006-07, and \$100 000 last year. The total would be about \$750 000.

[7.30 pm]

**Dr G.G. JACOBS:** I refer to the fourth dot point on page 1060, which relates to staff recruitment. How many positions down is the Department of Environment and Conservation's staffing complement, particularly for environmental officers? Unless it has happened in the past couple of weeks, when will the town of Esperance get its own resident environmental officer for the DEC?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Does the member want the number of environmental officers specifically?

**Dr G.G. JACOBS:** Yes. How many people is the department down in its staff complement and, more specifically, how many environmental officers is it down?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I will deal with the Esperance question first. With regard to the lead issue in Esperance, the department has continued to resource the office in the town. It is true that recruitment attempts for a permanent position have been unsuccessful. However, the department has been filling that position on a temporary basis since the lead issue came to our attention. Currently, a person is in place in the town on a temporary basis while we continue to seek someone who is prepared to relocate to Esperance permanently. However, I assure the member that the office will continue to be resourced effectively so that it can exercise its responsibilities. I will ask the director general, Mr McNamara, to comment on the question about the total

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number of employees and specifically on the number of environmental officers. Is the member talking about compliance?

**Dr G.G. JACOBS:** Essentially, people who are in the field.

**Mr K.J. McNamara:** The answer to that question can be somewhat fluid because we are obviously operating in a booming economy and many of our staff's skills are in high demand by industry and consultancies. We therefore have a higher rate of staff turnover than has historically been the case, and we certainly share that trait with other agencies. The turnover rate is currently in the order of 10 or 11 per cent because, as I say, some of our people, particularly those in environmental regulation, environmental approvals and a range of other specialist areas, are highly attractive to industry. Our total full-time equivalent complement last financial year was in the order of 1 900 and that will rise in this budget to 1 950 or thereabouts. With our current turnover rate, we have at any one time probably more than 100 vacancies, but we are certainly recruiting aggressively and more imaginatively than we have done in the past. We have a range of strategies in place to seek to fill positions as best we can.

**Dr G.G. JACOBS:** What about the field officers?

**Mr K.J. McNamara:** There is a variety of forms of field officers. The turnover rate for environmental officers in the environmental regulation area is higher than the average turnover rate for the department. I do not have a figure to hand on the number of vacancies at this time, but it is an area for which we are actively recruiting. In fact, we placed a major advertisement in the newspaper only a couple of weeks ago seeking about 30 positions in the environmental regulation field, which is a response to how attractive some of those skilled staff are to other employers.

**Dr G.G. JACOBS:** The department is about 30 staff down. Is that what the director general is saying?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I will ask Mr Atkins to comment.

**Mr R.P. Atkins:** People are acting in some of the 30 positions that have been advertised, so the positions need to be advertised for permanent placement. The number of actual vacancies is lower than 30. We will also run another advertisement in about three weeks for a further 20 new positions as a result of this budget.

**Dr G.G. JACOBS:** The director general talked about imaginative ideas to attract staff. What does he mean by that?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** The department has been looking at how it can focus on attracting potential employees to the department from interstate and overseas. For example, some members of the department travelled to South Africa and focused on particular skills for positions. We have recruited a number of officers from places such as South Africa. Only last week we held the International Association for Impact Assessment conference, which drew skilled people from around the world to Perth. I made an announcement about that conference in a ministerial statement in Parliament. The conference included active discussion by the department with those conference attendees from overseas who may be interested in relocating to Western Australia and working for the department. Of course, we also have the general marketing program to advertise for positions, as was mentioned by Mr McNamara. This budget provides funding for new positions in the inspection and compliance monitoring areas, as well as in the major development approvals area. A number of these positions are located across the regions, as well as centrally in Perth. I believe the department is doing everything possible to fill those positions in a very competitive environment. The Department of Environment and Conservation, like other agencies, has seen a flow of officers from the department to industry. Our officers, particularly those in the environmental compliance and development approvals areas, are very sought after by industry as environmental consultants or environmental officers. We are very mindful of that, and we are working hard to ensure that we maintain an effective workforce.

**Dr G.G. JACOBS:** The reason I ask this question is that I am worried whether the minister has done any risk assessments in other regions, because there is potential for a repeat of the Esperance incident. The environmental compliance officer was coming from Albany, which is 500 kilometres away or maybe a little more. I am concerned that there is potential for a repeat of that incident because of a shortage of environmental compliance officers in regional Western Australia. I wonder whether the minister has identified any potential risk areas because of the shortage of environmental compliance officers in Western Australia.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** First of all, that is a very important and valid question. There is more than \$5 million worth of funding in this budget and the last budget, including an appropriation of \$1.3 million to specifically respond to the Esperance issue. Other actions by government and certainly by the department—I think this gets to the crux of what the member is saying—include looking at the risks in other ports throughout Western Australia.

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[7.40 pm]

That is the reason we immediately initiated a statewide port inspection. The Department of Environment and Conservation completed inspections of ports around the state that handled potentially hazardous mineral ores in bulk. They include the Geraldton, Derby, Wyndham and Bunbury ports. The department will complete the inspections of all the other ports, including Albany, Fremantle and Port Hedland, by June this year.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** Have the outcomes of those inspections been pretty good?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** The inspections have looked at the handling processes in the port and risk assessments of the way that the product is received, loaded and sent from the port, and it has been a very significant process. I might ask Mr Atkins if he can comment specifically on some of the findings, which is what the member is attesting to.

**Mr R.P. Atkins:** The response has been mixed. Geraldton is in a similar situation to Esperance in that it is a town wrapped around a port area and it is also under pressure from the resources boom. The loading facilities there need significant upgrading. We have required the port authority to produce an environmental improvement plan detailing how those loading facilities will be upgraded. We are negotiating the terms of that program with the Geraldton Port Authority. We have done testing around the port, and although there is some contamination within the port area itself, there has not been any contamination that has extended beyond the port into the town. We have worked with the Department of Health and the Department of Consumer and Employment Protection on that monitoring. The Derby port was substantially compliant, apart from some housekeeping, for the operation up there and the scale of the operation. The Derby port operation was actually quite reasonable. Wyndham is an area that has small consignments loaded by kibbles off trucks. We have required the port authority and the mining company there to upgrade the way they do that. The kibble-loading technique is acceptable for the sort of quantities that they are exporting, provided that they make some improvements to the type of kibbles they operate, the way in which they manage it and some of the prevention measures to prevent and recover spillages. If Wyndham was to undergo the sort of growth that some of the other regional ports have undergone, it would need to move from a kibble-loading system to a more enclosed bulk-loading system.

**Dr G.G. JACOBS:** What product are we talking about?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** We are talking about nickel sulfide and lead sulfide principally. Of course, one of the differences between those ports and the Esperance port is that the Esperance port was handling a lead carbonate product, which is a much more difficult product to handle and of greater risk to human health and the environment than a sulfide. Bunbury port bulk-loading operations are quite modern, but the drainage and stormwater management systems in the Bunbury port need some upgrading. We are negotiating an environmental improvement plan with the Bunbury Port Authority.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** What systemic changes has the department made, given that these things have been identified post the Esperance scenario and post a higher level of monitoring and given that the department presumably had officers in those locations before that?

**Mr R.P. Atkins:** If I might continue, Mr Chairman, we have sent in specialist investigators to conduct quite rigorous audits, learning from the Esperance situation obviously. We have also conducted scanning monitoring around those port towns and found that there has not been contamination of the towns but that some of the transport areas, like all transport areas, have needed some housekeeping and tidying up. I guess that two of the systemic changes that we have made are that we are establishing a compliance and inspection flying squad as a central squad that can assist and support regional staff in conducting these sorts of more rigorous audits, and we will also be reviewing the licences of all the ports, irrespective of the standard of compliance during these inspections. We will be requiring the ports to have more rigorous air quality monitoring systems, and those ports that are very close to residential areas to have monitoring in the residential areas and not just on the boundary of the port. That is being put in place in Esperance. That type of monitoring system will certainly follow suit in Geraldton particularly.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** I thank you, Mr Chairman, for allowing me that latitude on the member for Roe's question. I refer the minister to page 1060. The minister made reference in answer to an earlier question to a major policy decision of additional fire management resources. I am interested in what those additional fire management resources are, but in particular I am using this reference as a lead-in to the department's annual prescribed burning program. Would the minister make references to targets over the past couple of years in comparison with what has been achieved? I think a similar target is planned.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** The target is 200 000 hectares.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** I am interested in the department's capacity to achieve that target.

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**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I will get the director general to respond specifically to the target and the achievement. This budget includes an additional appropriation of some \$4.7 million ongoing of additional fire management resources. That spend includes \$1.139 million for technology and equipment that will be specifically focused on increasing safety for fire crews and others involved in wildfire. Some \$1.8 million will be spent on improving fire preparedness on unallocated crown land and unmanaged reserves from the Kimberley to the south coast.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** What is fire preparedness?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Fire preparedness includes a regime of preparing DEC-controlled land to cope with the potential for fire to break out. It might include a range of measures from firebreaking to prescribed burning of smaller scrub etc. Again, the director general may be able to elaborate if the member wants more information on that. There is \$1.76 million to fund 20 extra positions on the south coast, in the forest regions and in the mid-west. This is to boost the adequacy of the number of trained and experienced staff in those areas. The extra 20 staff will also be used in biodiversity conservation work. It is important to note that we obviously have very experienced staff and that we are training our staff in the fire season, particularly in the regions and areas where fire is a risk, but that they are engaged in other works throughout the state in the off-season or non-fire season. Quite often some of our staff will go into other parts of the state during the winter season, for example, to work on related biodiversity conservation work in national parks and nature reserves. These extra funds are on top of funds for additional capital works of \$5 million for capital expenditure on equipment that was granted in the last budget. We recognise that in a drying climate fire preparedness and fire mitigation remain major issues for the department, and, ultimately, for communities. The government is committed to the prescribed burning program of a target of some 200 000 hectares in the south west area.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** That has my full support, I might add.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Yes. Of course, this year, particularly around the metropolitan area and stretching down to the south west, we had exceptional rainfall in late January and earlier in April. That sort of unexpected substantial rainfall can and does impact on the capacity of the department to carry out its target burns. I will now ask, if that is all right, Mr Chairman, the director general to make a comment on that target and what we have currently attained this financial year.

[7.50 pm]

**Mr K.J. McNamara:** The target for the south west forest regions—the three regions that we call our south west forest regions in administrative terms—is an average of 200 000 hectares a year. That comes off a detailed risk analysis and planning. Over the past five or six years, we have had a good record of achieving that, more or less on average, significantly as a result of the extra resources that have been progressively made available to the department over the past six or seven years. This year we certainly have the capacity to achieve that target in terms of staffing and equipment; there is no doubt about that. However, as the minister has said, in this business we are, of course, heavily weather dependent. We had a record April rainfall for the Perth metropolitan area, and also some other areas of the south west. As a result of that early break of season and the extent of rain, we will be below target this financial year, but that is to be expected because of the weather. At the moment, as of today, we have burnt about 137 000 hectares in the south west regions.

**Mr M.P. WHITELY:** I refer to the major policy decisions on page 1060, and specifically the major development approvals line item, which appears in the third line of the table at the bottom of the page. Can the minister outline what the funding is for?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Yes. I will do this briefly. I touched on this in part of my answer to the questions of the member for Stirling and the member for Roe. However, to reiterate very quickly, with the development boom that the state has been experiencing—there is certainly no indication that it will drop off in any short period—we recognise that we must have in place robust environmental responses. Therefore, in this budget, in recognition of the demand as a result of the resources boom in particular, there have been specific appropriations to the major development approvals element and responsibility of the department. An amount of \$3.6 million over two years has been appropriated for inspections and compliance monitoring, and \$1.32 million per annum is ongoing funding to address the issue of the booming economy and what we need to do to respond strategically. What does this do? There is no doubt that the rate of economic growth is placing substantial strain on the functions with regard to development approvals. To ensure we can meet, in an appropriate way, time lines and also, of course, continue to provide adequate and appropriate protection of the state's environment and of the health and amenity of the communities in which people live, I think this is an important investment in this budget.

**Mrs J. HUGHES:** I refer to page 1074 of the *Budget Statements*. There are quite a few questions relating to this page that I would like to ask. However, I note with some envy the environmental education centre planned for

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Canning River Regional Park, and I congratulate the minister on having that in the budget. These centres are very important commodities in the community. However, my question relates to the herbarium, which is also an extremely important thing. I know that there has been discussion in the northern corridor for some 10 years about whether a herbarium was needed there, so I am very pleased to see funding for this herbarium in the budget. Will the minister please explain how that will come about and what it will encompass?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I thank the member for Kingsley. Herbariums are not the most sexy sorts of things that people might want to talk about. However, I must say that one of the things that I have been particularly impressed by in my time as Minister for the Environment is the quality and expertise of the people who work not only in the Department of Environment and Conservation, but also at Kings Park. I am talking about their knowledge and scientific expertise. We in Western Australia can be justly proud of the quality of the scientists and the experts in those two departments or agencies in particular. A very dedicated team is housed in a very inappropriate structure that is the current herbarium. I have visited the herbarium. It is an interesting building—I think it dates back to the 1970s—and a very interesting design, but it is totally inadequate to provide for the accommodation of not only the staff, but also, of course, the absolutely important materials that basically are the state's historical flora. The government recognised that we needed to house this very important collection in an appropriate place, and that is why we are building the new herbarium. The new herbarium will be at the Kensington site of the Department of Environment and Conservation. It will be at a total cost of some \$32 million. In this budget, \$16.45 million has been allocated under the capital works program.

This new herbarium will be capable of housing, some 1.3 million flora specimens, so it will double the capacity of the present herbarium. It does not get a lot of news. It is not a wildly exciting thing for some people. However, I can tell the committee that we have the best people I have ever seen in control of this. They need to be housed appropriately, and they will be. However, it is what is being housed there that is so important. These are specimens of the historical ecological flora of Western Australia. They are renowned worldwide and we should be very proud of them.

**Mrs J. HUGHES:** I have a further question about the herbarium. As the northern corridor continues to push out—it is pushing out very quickly—I know that in Landsdale and other places there has basically been a decimation of the banksia bushland. Of course, this is happening as we go forward. Are specimens being collected, even at this point, to be added to the collection at the herbarium as development pushes further east and north?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I thank the member for her follow-up question. The role of the herbarium is to collect specimens and maintain collections of existing species. Therefore, many of the banksias, for example, that the member mentioned in the northern suburbs are already housed in the herbarium. One of the other interesting things, though, is the new species that are discovered. When I was at the herbarium in October last year, I was shown a couple of examples of plant life which had been thought to be extinct but which had been rediscovered, I suppose. This is why the herbarium is so important. With climate change in particular posing a great threat to the potential existence of a lot of our biodiversity, both fauna and flora, it is very important that we maintain registers or specimens of this nature into the future.

**Mrs J. HUGHES:** I noticed in one of the tables in the budget papers that 60 per cent of species are now endangered, which is an increase of three per cent on the situation last year, so it is very important.

**The CHAIRMAN:** The Fremantle Docks have been added to that.

[8.00 pm]

**Dr S.C. THOMAS:** And Collingwood, apparently. Speaking of cane toads, I am sure that we all wish Queensland well in its game against the New South Wales Rugby League team tonight. Hopefully, Queensland will give New South Wales a belting.

I refer to page 1069. I want to take the minister back to the issue of contaminated sites. The twelfth dot point on that page, under the heading "Major Achievements For 2007-08", states that as at March 2008, 605 sites have been classified under the Contaminated Sites Act 2003. How many state government sites have been classified, how many local government sites have been classified and how many private sites have been classified? How many contaminated sites does the minister expect will have been classified at the end of this process?

[Mr G. Woodhams took the chair.]

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** The member has asked for a breakdown of state government and local government contaminated sites.

**Dr S.C. THOMAS:** Yes—whatever information the minister has, basically.



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**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** The total number of sites classified is 659.

**Dr S.C. THOMAS:** Does the minister have any indication of how many sites might be added to that list? The minister has a list of the sites that have been put forward by the private sector, and by state government departments and local government. Does the minister have any indication of what the number of sites may be at the end of this process?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I thank the member for the question. I will ask Mr Robert Atkins to respond to that inquiry from the member for Capel.

**Mr R.P. Atkins:** The short answer to that question is no. At the end of May last year, which is when the period of grace finished, more than 1 200 sites had been referred. About 1 000 of those sites were actually referred in the month of May, so there was a last-minute rush. We have quite a backlog of those sites still to process. In the meantime, of course, new sites are being referred. It is a bit of a rolling process. Although we had more than 1 200 sites to classify at this time last year, more sites have since been referred. We also get reclassifications as remediation takes place as part of the redevelopment of a site. Therefore, it is a bit hard to predict what the total number of sites will be. It is a bit like looking for rare species—we do not know what is out there until we find it. The reason I have mentioned that number of 1 000 sites is just to give some idea of the scale that we are talking about. We do not know the number of contaminated sites on government-controlled land, or land for which the government is responsible. We have made two calls so far to government agencies for expressions of interest for access to the contaminated sites fund to undertake investigations or remediation. We have now made a third call to agencies for a third round of funding requests. As agencies prepare their inventories, we will be able to get a better handle on that. Of course, the contamination can range from a fuelling station and a workshop on a cattle station, to a major industrial site in the Kwinana industrial strip. The type of contamination is obviously quite varied.

**Dr S.C. THOMAS:** Are DEC staff inspecting these sites, or at this stage are they just conducting a desktop study using data that is supplied by the site proponent or site manager?

**Mr R.P. Atkins:** A range of techniques is used. Anyone can nominate a site—either the owner of the site, or a third party. We do a desktop assessment of that nomination, and, depending on the result of that assessment, we may do an inspection, or we may require the owners of the site to undertake their own investigation. If any site needs to undergo a full investigation, the owners of that site also need to engage an accredited auditor from a list of auditors that we have accredited. Those auditors need to provide us with an audit report and audit certificate. Therefore, we are using a third-party audit scheme to do most of that sort of work. We then do a general check of the auditor's work. We also, on, say, a one-in-10 basis, do a detailed review of the work that is done by the auditors. That is the same system as exists in Victoria and New South Wales, where it has been used successfully for a number of years.

**Dr S.C. THOMAS:** Does the minister have any indication of what would be the average cost for the remediation of a site? Of course, the average cost will be impacted upon significantly by a number of major projects, such as Bellevue etc. If those major projects are removed from the process, what would be the average cost of remediation for a local government landfill or an industrial site? Some sites in my electorate are caught up in that process. What sorts of costs and imposts would state government departments, local governments and industry be looking at for remediation?

**Mr R.P. Atkins:** The costs will vary; there is quite a range of costs. For a local service station, it may cost between \$1 million and \$3 million to remediate the site and remove the hydrocarbon-contaminated soil. For a major industrial site, the cost may be in the order of tens of millions of dollars.

**Dr S.C. THOMAS:** What would it cost to remediate a local government landfill site?

**Mr R.P. Atkins:** A landfill would not be remediated. A landfill is a contaminated site, and it would remain a contaminated site for as long as it was a landfill site.

**Dr S.C. THOMAS:** I am talking about when that landfill is closed, of course, when suddenly something would need to be done about that site.

**Mr R.P. Atkins:** Landfills need to be encapsulated and contained so that there is no leaching of material; or, if any leaching does occur, it is minimised. Many landfills also require ongoing monitoring to record any change in the condition of the site. The reason for the Contaminated Sites Act and the classification system is to ensure not only that appropriate remediation takes place, but also that a record is kept of where contaminated land is located. The trigger for remediation is the potential risk to human health or the environment. If the contamination is contained or stable and is not a threat to human health or the environment, there is not a mandatory requirement to remediate that site.

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**Dr S.C. THOMAS:** That is fine. There are some unlined tips in my area. This is probably a grandstanding statement, to be honest, Mr Chairman, but we will take what we can, if we can get away with it! If the minister does not have a cost for the remediation of those sites, that is fine.

**Dr G.G. JACOBS:** I refer to page 1060. The fifth dot point on that page refers to the continuing strong community and industry interest in air quality management. Air quality monitoring has been a particular concern in Esperance. I will talk shortly in another question about another site—Wagerup. The town of Esperance was let down badly by an outdated deposition system and a poor reporting system. A prevention notice has now been in place for the past 14 months. However, the same system that was used to load lead in the port of Esperance is now being used to load nickel. Is the minister able to provide the results in general terms of the monitoring of nickel and nickel dust at this site, and are those results available in real time for the community to view? The odour that is emitted from the zanthate process that is used to extract the nickel sulfide is a major concern in Esperance. Is an air monitoring system in place to detect odour? I believe it is possible to do that, but the minister might be able to tell us whether that is in fact possible, and whether that monitoring is being done.

[8.10 pm]

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I will ask Mr Atkins to respond to the member for Roe's question.

**Mr R.P. Atkins:** There are a number of parts to that question, obviously. I will start with odour. We do not have any real-time odour monitoring equipment in place because of the difficulty in monitoring odour. Odour comes from a range of complex chemicals and the identity of the odour depends on the complexity of the chemicals. Since April 2007 we have directly monitored each ship loading of nickel in Esperance port by having officers there; we have deployed specialists there for each nickel loading. They use the German olfactory monitoring approach, which is a scale of one to six based on nose or personal smelling of odours. Although some people may think that is a pretty imprecise science, it is actually quite a reasonably accurate technique. Chemicals affect people in different ways and it is very difficult to come up with a piece of equipment that monitors a range of odours; so we have been monitoring it using trained staff and we have supervised each nickel loading. Essentially, nickel loading has been restricted to an offshore wind condition as a result of the surveillance that we have been undertaking. The Esperance Port Authority has generally complied with that condition. It has made some attempts at onshore wind loading and each time it has done that there have been complaints from the community, of which I am sure the member is aware. Each time that has happened, loading has stopped until there has been an offshore wind condition. In terms of nickel dust, again there is air quality monitoring equipment in place. Although there has been criticism of the depositional gauge technique, depositional gauges are actually an important monitoring technique in association with direct air concentration monitors. Depositional gauges tell us the accumulation of dust over time; whereas an air monitor measures only the concentration at that moment in time and does not give us an idea of how much dust may be falling on the ground or roofs, which then drains into rainwater tanks. We therefore actually need both measures. The issue at the time, of course, was the interpretation of that data, which is the time that the member was referring to. Because the nickel loading for most of the past 12 months has occurred in offshore wind conditions, there is very little air monitor data for nickel loading operations. However, the port authority has two reports on its website now for January and February this year, 2008. Some of the loading was undertaken during onshore wind conditions and there is data available on the website for those conditions. That loading was undertaken when one company had the odour management of its product under control, and it was able to load during onshore conditions without causing an odour problem. That has provided us with some valuable information on the performance of the loading operation from a dust point of view.

**Dr G.G. JACOBS:** Are there any specific environmental conditions for the export of nickel through the port of Esperance; and what does the minister foresee as the long-term solution to these air emission problems, other than waiting for the wind to blow offshore before a ship is loaded?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** In answer to the first part of the question, of course conditions are placed on the movement of such products. Does the member want the specifics of those conditions? If so, Mr Atkins can probably give the member some greater detail on those conditions. I will ask Mr Atkins to respond to the first and second parts of the question.

**Mr R.P. Atkins:** The conditions on the loading are the ones to which I have referred. The port authority is required to notify the department in advance of the loading operation, and we directly monitor both the dust and odour levels. We control the loading in that way. We have also requested that the port authority provide us with its plans to upgrade the loading facility. We have advised the port authority that the current loading facility is inadequate not only for lead, but also for nickel. The arrangements that are currently in place are interim arrangements until the port authority provides advice on how it can upgrade its loading facility to totally contain

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any dust emissions in the conveyor system, the unloading facility where the rail cars are unloaded and the ship-loading chute. We are still waiting for formal advice from the port authority on those matters.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** I refer the minister to page 1067. The first dot point under “Major Achievements For 2007-08” refers to finalised management plans. I particularly note that the last one mentioned is the Walpole wilderness area. Before I ask the question, I highlight that I had a briefing a couple of years ago from the Walpole branch of the Department of Environment and Conservation on its prescribed burning practices and the level of rigour it goes through in identifying the environmental values. I was most impressed with that briefing. It was well worth the exercise and I encourage other members to get a briefing. One concern that comes from the community relates to the notion of a wilderness area and the fact that a whole chunk of area is wrapped up and does not have the level of access that it may have had under previous regimes. I guess there is concern in the community about the capacity of DEC to manage such areas, in particular things such as the control of fires and feral pigs, when there is not the same level of access to the area that there may have been under a different regime. I guess the principle of a wilderness is that a big area is locked up, which means there are therefore some implications for management. Can the minister make some comment that may well allay the fears of some people in the community?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I thank the member for his question. A number of management plans have been drawn up in the past year, and indeed management plans will be finalised in the periods for these proposed appropriations. An announcement on the Walpole wilderness area and the associated marine park issue is imminent. The question about access and other issues relating to what happens and what is allowed in an area once it has been identified and classified will be addressed in and will become part of the management plan. I will ask the director general to expand a little on that element of the member’s question.

**Mr K.J. McNamara:** The management plan will address in detail the questions of fire management, feral animal management, weed management and other such things, as management plans always do. The Walpole wilderness area covers about eight national parks, and about 325 000 hectares. The Walpole wilderness area is the name for that broader area. Within the Walpole wilderness area there are several specific blocks of about 20 000 hectares that are true wilderness and that meet the definition of no-roaded access and the like. However, we are very conscious of our fire protection commitments, as was mentioned in response to earlier questions, and we do have the resources and the capacity to apply managed fire, prescribed burning and wildfire responses as required to the Walpole wilderness area in its entirety and to the specific wilderness blocks within it. As for things like feral pigs and so on, they are a growing problem in the south west. We have thrown more resources at problems such as feral pigs in recent years, and once again we will retain that commitment. It requires a mix of techniques, some that require track access and others that do not. I do not expect a couple of cells of true wilderness, devoid of roads and pretty well trackless, inside the overall bigger area to have any adverse effect on our ability to carry out those operations.

[8.20 pm]

**Mrs J. HUGHES:** I refer to service 3, “Parks and Visitor Services”, on page 1066. It refers to several ways of implementing plans and measures designed to bring visitors into our parks, which is extremely important if we want to engage people to save those parks in the future. I am very interested in involving Indigenous people in the provision of facilities and services within park management. Is that mainly occurring in the remote areas or is it occurring in regional parks close to cities and so forth?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** This is a very important issue and one that I am particularly interested in continuing to progress through the department’s ongoing work in engaging Indigenous people in joint management and also on the ground in a lot of our DEC-managed land. DEC has a very good record of working with Indigenous communities on this issue. I can give some specific examples of park councils that comprise DEC representation and representatives of the traditional owners in areas around the state. It is a statewide commitment. For example, councils are established at Purnululu National Park, Miriuwung-Gajerrong parks around Burrup Peninsula, Millstream Chichester National Park, Gibson Desert Nature Reserve, Karijini National Park, Cape Range National Park, Ningaloo Marine Park and the former Lorna Glen and Earahedy Stations. The department is committed to negotiating joint management for areas including Rudall River, Mitchell River, Cape Le Grand and Wellington National Parks. Those are some examples from around the state; I mentioned some in the north and the south. The department and the government are committed to ensuring that traditional owners have a direct input into how lands that are DEC managed or DEC controlled or owned can be managed effectively in the future and also deliver important economic opportunities for Indigenous people. In some of the parks I have mentioned Indigenous enterprises are already creating economic and social benefits for the local Indigenous people in these areas. It is an area that we are keen to expand. Obviously, throughout the state we are working with local traditional owners in these areas in effective partnerships.

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The other area I will briefly mention that is related to this is our traineeship opportunities for Indigenous people within the department. The department has a very effective program that has been running for some time called the Mentored Aboriginal Training and Employment Scheme. It offers opportunities for Indigenous people to be trained and gain a Certificate IV in Conservation and Land Management. We now have 23 trainees and cadets working out of 16 work centres. I have met a number of the cadet graduates from MATES and those who have been in MATES but who are now directly employed in various roles throughout the state. It is a very effective program. It is an award-winning program. I understand that MATES won state and national awards some time ago. It is a great example for other agencies of how we can engage local Indigenous people in caring for country. They are invaluable employees and they also add to the tourism element. There is no better person than a local traditional owner to interpret the very important natural and cultural heritage values of our national parks or nature reserves. It has been encouraged.

The department is very keen to look at how we can engage local Indigenous people within the metropolitan area, including through our regional parks system. Yanchep is one example where we can engage local Indigenous people.

**Mrs J. HUGHES:** Perhaps Yellagonga Regional Park too.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Yellagonga is a park that is of great interest to the member. She has taken me there on two occasions. She is keen to see some sort of centre there in the future. I am sure that we can continue to work with her and local governments in that aspect as well.

**Dr G.G. JACOBS:** I wish to pursue the same dot point as I did earlier on page 1060 relating to air quality management. I draw the minister's attention to the Wagerup alumina refinery. Since the installation of the liquor burner in 1996 there has been significant controversy amongst residents over air emissions from the refinery. Has DEC done independent—I mean independent from industry and independent from locals—air quality monitoring in the environments around the refinery?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I will ask Mr Atkins to give some greater detail. I understand that DEC has done its own independent field study work. Additional work has been done by Arizona State University, one of the key study partners. A public presentation on the status of the DEC-Wagerup winter 2006 study is planned for later next month. That will include the release of a report prepared by the Arizona State University. I will ask Mr Atkins to elaborate further.

**Dr G.G. JACOBS:** Was that Arizona study commissioned by the DEC?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Yes, that is correct.

**Mr R.P. Atkins:** The work that we have done has been in collaboration with the Arizona State University, which has a worldwide reputation in air quality monitoring. It has been able to provide us with air monitoring equipment that has enabled us, almost using a radar technique, to map particle clouds coming from the refinery emissions. Not only are we able to look at the chemistry but we are also able to identify using a thing called a lidar. I cannot explain how that works but it is basically a particle radar. It can detect subvisible emission clouds. One of the issues with Wagerup is periodic and very localised grounding of the odour emissions from the Wagerup refinery. They are so transient that having a fixed monitoring station means that we have to be very lucky for one to land on the monitoring station. Secondly, if a mobile monitoring team can get to the spot once it has the complaint from the resident, it is usually too late by then. We have been able to use the lidar to track the subvisible emission plume and then take samples in the plume itself by locating our people in the right place.

We have also had a community-based monitoring program in which vacuum canisters are provided to community people with a logbook. They are asked to trigger the canister, which will take an air sample, if they smell the odour that is troubling them or if they think they can smell the refinery, and then they fill out a logbook. We then collect those canisters and analyse the gas content. It is a technique we are starting to use more widely when it becomes difficult to track a response to community complaints. We are doing that on a number of fronts. Alcoa, as part of the Wagerup unit 3 commitments outlined in the ministerial statement, is undertaking similar work of its own. We will be able to bring the Alcoa work that will be submitted as part of the company's commitments to the department, together with the independent work we are doing through the Arizona State University.

[8.30 pm]

**Dr G.G. JACOBS:** The minister will probably be aware of a study done by Alcoa entitled "Air emissions from the Wagerup Alumina refinery and community symptoms: an environmental case study". It was commissioned by Alcoa and carried out by Donoghue and Cullen, and was released last year. The authors concluded that the

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refinery emissions currently present negligible risk of acute or chronic health effects, including cancer. Does the minister support those findings?

**Mr R.P. Atkins:** The work we are currently doing attempts to quantify and map the episodic plumes that come to ground level in the area around the refinery, measure the chemistry of those plumes, and then compare the constituent chemicals of those plumes with recognised world health standards for those chemicals. That work needs to be completed before we can evaluate the Donoghue and Cullen work and, along with the Department of Health, get advice on the efficacy of work undertaken by Alcoa. In short, we will be relying on Department of Health advice on potential health risks from the emissions. Our task is to characterise the emissions to the best level possible.

**Dr G.G. JACOBS:** When does the minister think that he will have some independent results on the upper limits of these volatile organic compounds in order to give the community some surety from the government's testing, not that of Donoghue and Cullen, to either corroborate or refute those findings?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** My understanding is that we would need to complete the program of testing through the coming winter to finalise the available data we have. I think that is the appropriate answer to that question, and I will ask Mr Atkins whether he has anything to add that will address the member's question further.

**Mr R.P. Atkins:** We are indulging in cutting edge science here, and that is why we have gone to the extraordinary extent of working with Arizona State University on the other side of the world. We are dealing with extraordinarily low concentrations of the irritant chemicals, and they are particularly difficult to trace. I am anticipating that it will be particularly difficult to then form a relationship with health symptoms because concentrations are so low. For that reason, it is not possible to give a definitive answer about when this work will be completed. At the end of each stage we need to review our understanding on how successful the work we have done so far has been before planning the next stage. The department is committing considerable resources to this, and will do so for as long as it takes to get as good an understanding as we think possible.

**Dr G.G. JACOBS:** Mr Atkins talked about committing considerable resources. What did he mean by considerable resources?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I am happy to ask Mr Atkins to respond to that.

**Mr R.P. Atkins:** I do not have the figures to hand, but the program we are running is costing in the order of \$2 million over a period. We would have to provide the exact figure by way of supplementary information, but it is certainly quite an expensive program.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I will provide to the committee details of the program that Mr Atkins has outlined.

[*Supplementary Information No B27.*]

**Dr S.C. THOMAS:** I refer the minister to the dot point on page 1064 that reads —

Arrangements for the new Caring for our Country program to replace the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality and the Natural Heritage Trust were negotiated with the Commonwealth Government.

That program is now to be managed by the various catchment councils. Can the minister give us an indication as to whether the funding that was being negotiated for NHT2 has now been transferred fully into the Caring for our Country program, whether any funding increases or decreases have resulted from the federal budget, and whether the current model of catchment councils will be maintained through the Caring for our Country program?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** The actual allocation of the Caring for our Country funding by the state government appears in the forward estimates under the Department of Agriculture and Food. The member may be aware that the amount is \$125 million over five years.

**Dr S.C. THOMAS:** That has not changed, as far as I am aware. My question in relation to the federal budget is whether there has been any impact from the change of funding or the change of model for the dispersion of those funds.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I am happy to get the director general to answer that specific part of the member's question, but it is important to highlight that the appropriation element of it is made through the Department of Agriculture and Food, and is under the responsibility of that minister.

**Mr K.J. McNamara:** As the minister said, funding previously approved for what would otherwise have been Natural Heritage Trust phase 3 is in the Department of Agriculture and Food budget as a whole-of-government allocation. We are in negotiations with the commonwealth. We attended the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council in Melbourne last month, at which discussions took place with the commonwealth about

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rolling out the new program. The regional chairs were all involved in those discussions at the meetings. As a group of directors general, we meet regularly with the regional chairs and we are working with the commonwealth to develop the partnership agreement for the coming years. The commonwealth has taken the position that it wants to embark on some redefined priorities and ways of doing business. It has identified six priority themes, which have a high degree of coincidence with state priorities. We are certainly very confident that we will have a very successful program in the future.

**Dr S.C. THOMAS:** Is the funding level from the commonwealth coming to the state still the same? I understand that the state funding is still the same.

**Mr K.J. McNamara:** I do not have readily to hand details on how the \$2.25 billion allocated by the commonwealth over five years under the Caring for our Country program compares with the total over the previous five years of both the Natural Heritage Trust and the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality, which are the two programs now rolled together. The figures are certainly comparable. I do not have information to hand to say whether they are precisely the same or a little more or a little less, but they are very comparable.

[8.40 pm]

**Dr S.C. THOMAS:** Will all those catchment councils run a similar regional delivery model, or is the federal government looking at a different method for the delivery of those funds?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I am happy for the director general to respond.

**Mr K.J. McNamara:** There is a commitment to continue to work with the regional groups and for delivery to involve the regional groups. In the past, delivery of various aspects of the program has variously been at a national level, a state level, a regional group level and a more localised level. The commonwealth has clearly signalled that it wishes to have more targeted and bigger projects, rather than large numbers of small projects, so there may be some implications for the balance of funding between the regional delivery model and other forms of delivery. However, there certainly is an ongoing commitment to the continuation of the regional model as a major part of delivery.

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** To carry on from a previous question, I refer to page 1067 and the draft management plans for the Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park. Who is responsible for the upkeep of roads into areas such as Cosy Corner? The road into that area is in an appallingly dangerous condition. It is an iconic road for the tourism industry. Does that fall under the responsibility of the department or the local shire?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** The member has asked a question about a specific road. I will ask the director general to respond. The member mentioned Cosy Corner.

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** Cosy Corner is on Caves Road in the Augusta-Hamelin Bay area. The question is: who has responsibility for the upkeep of those roads?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I will ask the director general to respond. I do not want the member to go away without a complete answer to this question. If we take it on notice, we may be able to give him a clearer answer. However, I will ask the director general to respond initially, and if I think we have not answered the question properly, we will take it on notice.

**Mr K.J. McNamara:** The department is responsible for the upkeep of a vast network of roads throughout the state. In fact, there are about 37 000 kilometres of trafficable roads and tracks on lands managed by our department. We spend some millions of dollars a year on the maintenance of those roads. The situation varies in national parks and on other lands that we manage as to whether individual roads are on DEC estate and are the responsibility of DEC. In many cases, they are Main Roads WA or shire roads, depending on which town or centre they service. I do not know the answer for the precise road to which the member has referred. I know that Leeuwin-Naturaliste has a mix of DEC-managed roads and local government-managed roads. We will need to check the status of that particular road.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I do not think we have given the member a definitive answer; therefore, we will seek to provide the information as requested by the member.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Does the member for Collie-Wellington want further information?

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** I would appreciate further information.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Will the minister advise what information he will provide?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** We will provide supplementary information on the ownership of the road specified by the member for Collie-Wellington.

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[*Supplementary Information No B28.*]

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** I have a further question about Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park. I understand that the Hamelin Bay Caravan Park is a DEC-run caravan park. Can someone tell me about the future of that park? There are unfounded rumours that the trees in that park have been poisoned. It looks to me as though they are dying, but I am not quite sure about that. There are suggestions that the trees have been poisoned so that people can do further works there and put in chalets.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I thank the member for Collie-Wellington for the grenades that he is dropping tonight! I understand that the department is committed to having that park continue under its current status. I will ask Mr Peter Sharp, the director of parks and visitor services, to elaborate further. The department is committed to this caravan park. Certainly, as I am minister for a region, and as the member lives in a region, I can say that the issue of ongoing availability of caravan parks, particularly for tourists, is important for the department and for the government to address strategically. DEC plays an important role in the provision of such parks. I assure the member that DEC is committed to continuing to provide those sorts of opportunities.

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** Is that the role of shutting them down or opening them up?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** It is certainly to maintain what exists. I am interested in the other options that can be explored, as long as we continue to protect our natural conservation estate. The member has asked a specific question about the Hamelin Bay Caravan Park. We are committed to having the caravan park continue in its current state. I ask Mr Peter Sharp to further elaborate.

**Mr P. Sharp:** Hamelin Bay Caravan Park is located within the Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park. It is subject to a 21 plus 21-year lease to the private sector. With regard to the member's comment about the deaths of trees, that matter has not been brought to my attention, so I was completely unaware of that.

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** The peppermint trees have been there for a long time and they add to the park. There are some problems there.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I am interested in this line of questioning, but I note that it is approaching nine o'clock and I wonder which other divisions the committee is interested in addressing tonight, given that we will close at 10.00 pm. For example, we still have the Peel Development Commission, the Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority, the Swan River Trust and the Zoological Parks Authority to discuss.

**Dr S.C. THOMAS:** Our focus is very much on the first division, so it can go on for another half an hour. We have been negotiating this point as well and we are happy to keep going on this division. We are not sure how important the Peel Development Commission is! We might ask the minister about that.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** It is very important.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** I refer to service 3, "Parks and Visitor Services", on page 1066. The 2008-09 budget estimate for the total cost of the service is \$65.7 million and the income figure is \$19.7 million. Is that income figure the total income from visitor fees at parks; and, if it is not, what is the estimated total of visitor fees that people contribute to the box at the entry to parks?

[8.50 pm]

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** The question is specifically related to park and visitor fees. I will ask the director general to give the member details of that income.

**Mr K.J. McNamara:** The estimate for the 2008-09 financial year for national park entrance fees and other park income is about \$10.2 million. There is also a range of lease and licence fees, such as the ones that the director of parks and visitor services spoke of a moment ago, in places like Hamelin Bay Caravan Park on our parks estate. The other income that we receive is in various forms of grants from the commonwealth government—for example, in respect of what was the Natural Heritage Trust and, hopefully, going forward with the Caring for Our Country program and various other forms of assistance and grants that the department receives.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** I am interested in the first breakdown there. The director general referred to fees and other park income of \$10.2 million. What does he define as other park income?

**Mr K.J. McNamara:** I do not have full details in front of me at the moment, but much of it would be park entry fees. There are also fees on tourism operators and licensees, such as those who operate the whale shark tours at Ningaloo and many hundreds of tour operators who use national parks and other conservation reserves throughout the state. There are various commercial operations on parks, such as the safari camps at Purnululu National Park and Karijini National Park, and various forms of concessions for shops and two taverns—one at Yanchep and one at John Forrest. Each pays fees or a percentage of turnover or gross income for their right to

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occupy public land and run those businesses. In total, together with the various grants and so on that the parks and visitor services attract, that makes up the \$19 million figure to which the member referred.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** In many cases there is an honesty box, and in some cases someone actually mans a site. Even if it is an estimate of the fees specifically for entry into the parks, what is the take? Has the department done any sort of assessment on the level of staffing required in some cases to obtain that money and is it worth doing it? It is one of my pet issues because I do not think we should have it, but that decision has been made. I am interested in whether the department has made some sort of assessment of whether it is worth the effort to get that money.

**Mr K.J. McNamara:** The collection of park entry fees varies from entry stations that are staffed on a full-time basis year round to other parks where it is done seasonally or during holiday periods. In each case we make an assessment of visitor numbers and the cost of collection. We clearly do not go out to collect fees where or when the cost of collection exceeds the fees or does not justify putting that collection in place. I do not have with me the precise breakdown of park fees within the \$10.2 million figure the member mentioned, nor do I have a breakdown between the staffed entries and the honesty box system. However, I can say that park fee revenue is retained in the local district of the department and is reinvested in those parks in the local district. It certainly does not go to the headquarters of the department and it certainly does not go to the government's consolidated revenue. It is used to look after those parks.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** Can the minister provide by way of further information the figure for the sums collected from those honesty boxes and the manned sites for entry into parks as a component of that \$10.2 million?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I am happy to prepare as supplementary information a breakdown of the park entry fees as requested by the member for Stirling.

[*Supplementary Information No B29.*]

**Dr G.G. JACOBS:** The last dot point on page 1068 of the *Budget Statements* refers to the Diesel National Environment Protection Measure, including completion of a major bus emissions testing program. Does that refer to Transperth buses?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** My understanding is that the member is referring to the CleanRun program. The information I have is that detailed motor vehicle emission test data to quantify fleet performance results were collected using a heavy duty dynamometer for 543 vehicles, with an additional 400 test results being collected for public transport buses.

**Dr G.G. JACOBS:** Therefore, the answer is yes.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** The answer would be yes—that it was including public transport buses.

**Dr G.G. JACOBS:** My understanding is that the Transperth fleet is essentially powered by gas. Why would the department conduct a diesel national environment protection measure study on buses that are powered by gas?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Unfortunately, I do not have any information that I can give the member in answer to that question. My understanding is that the current Transperth fleet still has a substantial component of diesel-operated buses, and that, therefore, those buses have been included in the CleanRun program. My understanding is that a significant number of buses in the Transperth fleet are also gas powered. I do not have the information of the breakdown of the current fleet, and it is not within my portfolio area.

**Dr G.G. JACOBS:** So be it, but it is in the *Budget Statements* in the division on environment and conservation. Is this major bus emission testing program one in which the study has compared gas-powered buses with diesel and the comparative emissions?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** My understanding is that this program has been a test trial process. In order to provide the member with a detailed answer, I would need to take the question on notice.

[9.00 pm]

**Dr G.G. JACOBS:** I am happy with that. However, I have another associated question. Obviously, the threat from this is to do with exhaust emissions and the effects on the environment and climate change. The minister was aware of the hydrogen-powered bus program that we had in Perth. Transperth had a number of buses that were powered by hydrogen. Can the minister tell us what the result of the study was regarding the environmental benefits of that hydrogen-powered bus program? If the environmental benefits outweighed the cost, was it the cost outlay that caused that hydrogen-powered bus program to be scotched, essentially?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I thank the member for the question. The line of questioning is very much related to the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure's portfolio area. Those sorts of decisions about the powering of our public transport fleet fall within her jurisdiction. In terms of climate change, it is important to note that it was



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this government that only recently doubled the size of the public rail transport system, which now stretches from Perth to the Peel region and into Mandurah. This government is very proud of doubling the public rail transport system from the Perth metropolitan area to the Peel region. I cannot answer the member's specific question about the analysis that was done. That comes within the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure's portfolio, and I think that would be the best avenue from which the member should seek an answer to his question.

**Dr G.G. JACOBS:** I wonder whether the minister, being the Minister for the Environment and for Climate Change, could quantify the environmental friendliness, if one likes, of the hydrogen-powered bus program. However, if the minister believes that this is the wrong forum —

**Dr S.C. THOMAS:** They could not make it pay.

**Dr G.G. JACOBS:** That is what I am getting at, member for Capel, but we do not seem to be getting information about that.

**Mr M.P. WHITELEY:** In the chart on page 1060, the first line item under "Major Policy Decisions" refers to additional fire management resources, and the amount listed is \$4.713 million in 2008-09 and in the out years. Can the minister detail what the extra \$4.7 million is for, and how much does it make in total; that is, it is \$4.7 million plus what?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** A similar question was asked about the appropriation. The \$4.713 million is an allocation that funds our response to fire management across the state. An amount of \$1.139 million is specifically for satellite technology and a range of equipment that will increase safety for crews. An amount of \$1.8 million will be spent on improving fire preparedness in crown land and unmanaged reserves, from the Kimberley to the south coast. Further appropriations as part of the total increase will go towards extra staffing positions. These funds will, of course, enable us to continue to implement our prescribed burning program to protect our communities. The director general will, through the Chair, now give the member the total figure and the total change, which I think is what the member was after.

**Mr K.J. McNamara:** The expenditure on fire management is spread across three services—parks and visitor services, sustainable forest management and nature conservation—because fire management is carried out for each of those purposes for which we hold and manage land. The level of expenditure on fire management annually is in the order of \$25 million per annum, in addition to which, of course, we respond to wildfires and expend what is necessary to control those. However, the base level of expenditure on fire preparedness, staff capacity, training, equipment and prescribed burning would be in the order of \$25 million per annum, and this \$4.7 million is additional to that.

**Dr S.C. THOMAS:** It has been mentioned before, but on page 1067, under "Major Achievements For 2007-08", the budget sets out the range of management plans for various parts of the state estate, as it were. Can the minister give us an indication of what proportion of the various conservation parks, national parks and national reserves now have finalised management plans, and how many of them are yet to have management plans finalised?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I thank the member. Obviously, there are a number of management plans. The management planning processes take some time, particularly if they have specific requirements or if specific responses are necessary. The director general will give the committee an overview of the approximate number of outstanding management plans or those that are in progress. However, I can tell the member that final management plans that are due this year include the management plan for the Burrup Peninsula—the Murujuga—the release date of which is expected to be late this year. The final management plan for Dryandra Woodland is expected late this year. The Lake McLarty Nature Reserve management plan will be released early next month. The Cape Range management plan will be released late this year. The Wellington National Park management plan is expected to come to me in June this year. The Shannon-D'Entrecasteaux National Parks management plan will be released late this year. I remind the member that these are final management plans. I released the Shark Bay World Heritage Property strategic plan last month, in April. The management plan for the St John Brook and Jarrahwood Conservation Parks is being finalised. The management plan for the Walpole Wilderness Area is with me for imminent announcement, and I released the management plan for the Kennedy Range National Park and additions last month. A number of draft management plans are expected, but of course they involve further community consultation. They include the Cape Inscription —

**Dr S.C. THOMAS:** The minister does not necessarily need to list them all. How many management plans are planned, as it were, and yet to be finalised? Does the minister have a total number of plans that are yet to be finalised?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I will ask the director general whether he can determine that for us.

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**Mr K.J. McNamara:** I do not have the precise figures with me. We publish in the annual report each year the number of final management plans that are in place and the number of draft management plans that are underway. We have more than 1 600 separate parcels of national park and nature reserve and marine park around the state. Every marine park is covered by a management plan. Most of the national parks are covered either by a specific management plan for that park or by regionally based plans that cover all the parks and reserves in a region. Therefore, we have a mix of regional approaches and a mix of grouped approaches to contiguous parks or nearby parks, and we have individual park plans. We still have many individual areas for which there is not a final management plan, but we have an active program of rolling out more management plans. The figures are in the annual report each year.

**Dr S.C. THOMAS:** If I asked the minister whether there was sufficient in the budget to develop all those management plans in a timely manner, I am sure that he would say —

[9.10 pm]

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** — that we work very hard to try to ensure that our management plans are developed in a timely manner.

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** I refer to page 1060. The second-last item under the heading “Major Policy Decisions” is the management of native vegetation clearing. In my electorate, there is a huge need to access mineral sands to assist with the current building and construction boom. What is the department doing to ensure that clearing permits are issued in a timely and environmentally friendly and sensitive manner?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I thank the member for Collie-Wellington for his question. As the member would probably be aware, an amendment to the Environmental Protection Act with regard to native vegetation clearing came into effect in July 2004. That amendment required the then Department of Environment to regulate the clearing of native vegetation across the state. A significant proportion of the funding provided to DOE in 2005-06 was for this new function. Nearly \$2 million of the \$3.03 million total funding was focused specifically on that function. That was for the start-up period of the function, and that funding will conclude at the end of this financial year. A permanent budget amount of \$1.4 million has now been allocated for that function. That will bring the overall budget for this function to around \$2.5 million annually.

Following the Auditor General’s report last year, which found that the systems and standards in place were sound, DEC has continued to focus on both improving the time lines, and increasing compliance. This includes the use of satellite imaging to detect a loss of vegetation that may represent unlawful clearing. One of the important things to note, particularly in the electorates of the members for Capel and Collie-Wellington, is the need to gain access to land to obtain materials that are used in the building industry. That is sometimes also an issue when it comes to native vegetation clearing. I am very mindful of that issue. Obviously, we have received correspondence on that issue, and concerns have been raised by local members. It is important to note that the department also needs to ensure that appropriate information is provided by a proponent so that the department can provide a timely response. That appropriate information has not always been provided, or, if it has been provided, it has not always been conclusive, and that may also affect the capacity of the department to respond in a timely manner. Since that amendment to the legislation was made, the department has worked on the bedding down of the regulations and on the early work that needs to be done to enable the department to respond appropriately and in a timely manner. I am always interested, as the minister responsible, to hear from members about specific issues in their electorate, because we want to ensure not only that timely and effective systems are in place, but also that we adhere to the spirit of the act and the amendment that was made to that act in 2004. Hopefully, that has answered the member’s question.

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** Is the minister aware that it is quite possible that an extra 90 road trains a day will be travelling on the coalfields highway just to cart sand? That is probably more of a statement than a question, but that is where it is headed.

**The CHAIRMAN:** It is a statement, member for Collie.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I am aware of the population growth in that area and the pressure that is placing on the communities in that area. That includes, of course, issues that affect local roads. I am aware also that the member for Collie-Wellington has been making the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure very much aware of the ongoing road planning and safety issues.

I just want to clarify, given that only 45 minutes is left for these divisions, that I understand the committee is happy to allow the representatives from the Zoological Parks Authority, the Peel Development Commission and the Botanic Parks and Gardens Authority to leave the chamber, because we will not be asking any questions of them.

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**Dr S.C. THOMAS:** Yes. We are happy to let those staff go, with our congratulations for the great work they have been doing.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Yes. I also want to acknowledge the tremendous work of the staff of the Zoological Parks Authority, the Peel Development Commission and the Botanic Parks and Gardens Authority. I particularly want to note that the Zoological Parks Authority and the Botanic Parks and Gardens Authority also have a very strong volunteer support structure in place. Although no questions will be asked of those three bodies tonight, that does not mean that we do not value the ongoing commitment of their staff to their work. I want to acknowledge those staff formally as part of our deliberations tonight.

**Mrs J. HUGHES:** I also want to note the wonderful collaborative arrangement that is in place between Perth Zoo and Indonesia. I heard quite a lot about that the other day as a member of one of our committees. That is a fabulous arrangement.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** We also will not need the staff of the Swan River Trust to remain in the chamber.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** I refer to page 1080 of the *Budget Statements*. One of the items listed under the heading “Details of Controlled Grants and Subsidies” is the low emissions energy development fund. That fund, which commences in this budget period, has an initial allocation of some \$8.5 million. Can the minister elaborate on what that fund is for?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I thank the member for the question. The low emissions energy development fund is the LEED fund in the initiatives that were announced in the Premier’s climate action statement, which was released in May. The aim of this fund is to support the technological development required to ultimately achieve the state’s goal of cutting greenhouse gas emissions from the energy sector. The total spend for the low emissions energy development fund is just over \$36 million.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** Is that over four years?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Yes; that is over the forward estimates period. The funding for the 2008-09 financial year is \$8.45 million. We are very close to announcing some successful applicants for moneys from that fund. I am keen to bring on the second round of that funding as soon as possible. We need to be investing in initiatives that will help us achieve that greenhouse gas emissions target, as well as in promoting and encouraging innovation in this area. That is the key focus of the fund. We have set up an expert panel, chaired by Western Australia’s Chief Scientist, Professor Lyn Beazley, to assess applications. Professor Beazley and her team have provided to me and the Minister for Energy a short list of possible projects to support. We will be making an announcement on that matter very soon.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** Is biofuels a component of that?

[9.20 pm]

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Any project which will potentially address the state’s aims and which will fit the criteria outlined by the LEED fund will be looked at seriously by the expert panel, and ultimately by me and the Minister for Energy. In answer to an earlier question, obviously we are keen to look at projects that are favourable to Western Australia’s conditions, and geothermal opportunities and wind solar opportunities are examples of such projects.

**Dr G.G. JACOBS:** I refer to the key efficiency indicators on page 1068 under service 4, “Environmental Regulation”, the first line of which mentions the average cost per air monitoring station for 2008-09 as \$454 875. That is a heck of a lot of canaries! Is that cost per station? If so, how does it compare with the cost of the older system versus the new? What research has been done in expending this money to guarantee that it is the best and a state-of-the-art, fail-safe system for air monitoring?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I will ask Mr Atkins to perhaps respond in greater detail. However, that overall cost indicates the total cost, taking into account staffing resources as well. Mr Atkins may be able to give a greater detailed breakdown of how that figure is arrived at.

**Mr R.P. Atkins:** It is generally the cost of putting a station in place; it is not just the cost of the hardware for the station. These monitoring stations cost only a few tens of thousands of dollars each, so the cost is obviously for all the staff resources and support for putting in the station, running it, interpreting the data and reporting.

**Dr G.G. JACOBS:** Are they like the TEOMS—tapered electrode oscillating microbalance system—that we have seen in recent times?

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**Mr R.P. Atkins:** Generally they are the TEOMS and HiVols. As the member knows, they cost only some tens of thousands of dollars; but it is the cost of putting them there, running them, analysing the data, reporting and the full cost of air quality management.

**Dr G.G. JACOBS:** That is a heck of a lot of money; it is nearly \$500 000 per station.

**Mr R.P. Atkins:** Yes.

**Dr G.G. JACOBS:** I refer to the third dot point on page 1069, which states —

Targeted research and investigation in Port Hedland to address chronic or dust management challenges, including using health studies, dust dispersion modelling and improved community involvement processes.

Is it not obvious that all these studies are unnecessary in that when we talk to people in Port Hedland the answer is quite simple: there is a need to move the stockpile? It is perhaps the perfect time, with a booming mining economy, to consider that we could conduct all these studies and investigations but blind Freddy can see that the stockpile should be moved out of town. Would the minister agree with that?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I thank the member for the question. It is important to note that the department is working closely with BHP Billiton's operations there, and that collaboration is ongoing. We are very mindful, as I think all of us are, of the projected outputs that are expected to go through places such as Port Hedland. It is important that research and investigations continue to be targeted, and that is the objective of the department in addressing the challenges of dust management. Mr Atkins will perhaps give the member a bit more detail on the specifics as they relate to Port Hedland. I will be in Port Hedland next week again. This issue is an important one for me to be well aware of and to be kept abreast of, but I will ask Mr Atkins whether he can add to my comments through the Chair.

**Mr R.P. Atkins:** The work that has been going on there through both the Department for Planning and Infrastructure and the Department of Health is to support the whole management of dust and town planning in Port Hedland. BHP Billiton, which owns the major stockpile there, has a commitment to reduce dust emissions from its operations by about 30 per cent, and it has a dust management plan that has been assessed by the Environmental Protection Authority. To achieve that 30 per cent dust reduction, stockpiles will be moved back to the mines, and the crushing and screening activities that currently go on at the stockyard in Port Hedland will be moved back to the mines. I understand that BHP is developing at least three major hubs in the mining areas for processing, crushing, screening and blending, with the aim of just-in-time stockpiling at Port Hedland and direct ship loading as far as possible. However, even that will not bring BHP's dust levels down to within the national environment protection measure for dust. There is also phenomenal growth going on through the port at Port Hedland with FMG Resources and other major developments. They will be spread over a different geographic location and in some of the studies that have been mentioned in this particular initiative we will be getting an understanding of how those other projects are also affecting the cumulative impacts on Port Hedland. From the department's point of view, as long as the port is operating there and the town is there, we need to continue on with this work to better inform the planning decision-makers and to provide information to the health department for assessing health impacts.

**Dr G.G. JACOBS:** There are no doubt some conditions on BHP's licence. Mr Atkins mentioned dust monitoring and so on. Is BHP actually complying with the conditions of its environmental licence in this process? Would it be fair to say that we need to face the issue that those areas of Port Hedland can be very dusty places? Inherently there is a lot of dust there, but is BHP adhering to or contravening the conditions of its environmental licence? Is there a major issue in re-jigging this whole issue, particularly where the stockpile is located?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Mr Atkins.

[9.30 pm]

**Mr R.P. Atkins:** There are major issues associated with having such a large port operation in towns so closely located. It is simply not possible for an iron ore operation of that magnitude to comply with a national environment protection measure for dust at the boundary of the premises. We simply cannot do it. We would have to shut down the port in order to comply with that. The national environment protection measure in the region generally is not complied with from natural background dust. The 50 micrograms per cubic metre limit is exceeded naturally in the area. The iron ore operation in the locality of the West End of Port Hedland is much greater than those background levels.

**Dr G.G. JACOBS:** I draw the minister's attention to the final dot point on page 1069, which states —

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Establish a new industry inspection service to support the enforcement of industry licence conditions and compliance of proposals subject to ministerial conditions.

That has been a bit of a theme of mine. Why do we need a new industry inspection service? What is wrong with the current one? What will it cost? Why do we not just correct the problems in the current one rather than having a clean sweep of it? By doing that, we may save some taxpayers' dollars as well.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I need to point out that over the past two budgets we have added \$5.3 million towards improving our processes. We should be aiming for consistent improvement. We need to set standards that will give surety to communities and industry. That is why we invested over \$5 million in the past two budgets.

**Dr G.G. JACOBS:** I would not argue with the minister.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I find it surprising that the member is suggesting that we should not be investing that money. He said that we could be saving taxpayers' dollars. One of the things that we have done additional to this investment is ensure that industry contributes, and that is why the licensing fees have been increased; namely, to provide additional funding to do the important work that has to be done.

In earlier questioning, Mr Atkins spoke about an additional resource, the flying squad concept, in which experts are able to support local units or local regional offices or people working in the field. These are absolutely critical investments by government that ensure that we not only have the best possible processes in place that are aimed at robustly responding to concerns that may be raised by the community, but also continue to build trust, which is very important. I am sure the member will agree that one of the things that we found with Esperance is that the trust issue was broken. We have to make sure that the people are confident that the processes will deliver transparent and effective measures. That is why the government listened to the bipartisan committee that investigated the Esperance issue. It is why we responded with additional resources last year and again this year. It is an important investment, particularly given that a number of increasing pressures are being placed on places such as ports that are required to respond and receive and send out important economic products to the benefit of all Western Australians. We must have those processes in place. It is very important money, and very well spent.

**Dr G.G. JACOBS:** Rather than making a clean sweep for a new inspection service, has the minister identified the deficiencies in the inspection service that exists now? What are those deficiencies in the service, and what is being done to correct them?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** One of the first things that was done, particularly in response to the Esperance inquiry, was an audit of the processes in place, and identification of what needed to be improved and what was required to assure that those improvements delivered absolute outcomes. The department did that, and the government supported it with funding and resources. Through that audit process, we were able to look at what areas of this particular compliance element needed to be improved. We recognised that there were areas that needed to be reviewed, and we did that. There were areas that needed to be resourced, and we did that. Ultimately, those resources were targeted to deliver specific important outcomes. I will ask the director general to add to what I have just said.

**Mr K.J. McNamara:** Just to give one example, the variety of premises we have to regulate around the state includes some extremely complex industrial installations, such as the Woodside plant on the Burrup Peninsula. These are extraordinarily complex engineering structures, chemical processes and so on. It is simply not possible to deliver a sufficient inspection and compliance service and expect single officers in some of those locations to have all the capacity and expertise necessary to deal with the complexity of those sorts of operations. It has been absolutely critical that we redefine some of the balance between central delivery and regional delivery, and that we have a stronger technical capacity centrally that can complement regional presence, with the flying squad concept that Mr Atkins outlined earlier. It is absolutely critical that we reshape the way we deliver that service around the state. A substantial training program is being rolled out to support that, to make sure that the officers, both regional and central, can deliver the service required. The Esperance case clearly identified deficiencies and we have rebuilt and restructured the delivery to eliminate or minimise the chances of those sorts of things happening again.

**The appropriation was recommended.**