

Deputy Chairman; Hon Ken Travers; Hon George Cash; Hon Adele Farina; Hon Jim Scott; Hon Sue Ellery; Hon Simon O'Brien; Hon Peter Foss; Hon Louise Pratt

Division 49: Western Australian Planning Commission, \$55 291 000 -

Hon Jon Ford, Deputy Chairman.

Hon Ken Travers, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure.

Mr G. Martin, Director General, Department for Planning and Infrastructure.

Mr J. Dawkins, Chairman, Department for Planning and Infrastructure.

Mr R. Farrell, Principal Policy Officer.

Mr T. Hillyard, Manager, Land Asset Management, Department for Planning and Infrastructure.

Mr P. McNally, Acting Director, Asset Management, Department for Planning and Infrastructure.

Mr P. Frewer, Executive Director, Integrated Planning, Department for Planning and Infrastructure.

Mr I. Patterson, Secretary, Department for Planning and Infrastructure.

Mr W. Ielati, Director, Financial Planning, Department for Planning and Infrastructure.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: On behalf of the Legislative Council Estimates Committee, I welcome you to today's hearing.

Government agencies and departments have an important role and duty in assisting Parliament to scrutinise the budget papers on behalf of the people of Western Australia. The committee values that assistance.

It will greatly assist Hansard if when referring to the *Budget Statements* volumes or the consolidated fund estimates, members give the page number, item, program, amount, and so on in preface to their questions.

If supplementary information is to be provided, it is to be delivered to the committee's clerk within five working days of receipt of the questions. An example of the required Hansard style for the documents has been provided to the parliamentary secretary's advisers.

The committee reminds agency representatives to respond to questions in a succinct manner and to limit the extent of personal observations.

For the benefit of members and Hansard, I ask the parliamentary secretary to introduce his advisers to the committee, and for each adviser to please state their full name, contact address and the capacity in which they appear before the committee.

At this time, I would ask each of the witnesses whether they have read, understood and completed the "Information for Witnesses" form.

Do all the witnesses fully understand the meaning and effect of the provisions of that document?

THE WITNESSES: Yes.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Would the parliamentary secretary like to make an opening statement?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I think it is worth highlighting a couple of the significant changes that have occurred and that are reflected in the budget papers for this year. Obviously, the most significant change has been the transfer of public transport services from the Department for Planning and Infrastructure to the Public Transport Authority. That has also seen a significant shift in funding, with moneys now flowing from Treasury directly to the Public Transport Authority. This has seen a halving of the DPI budget. We have seen the successful transfer of crown land functions from the former Department of Land Administration to the DPI. This has seen the management of the Crown's land assets being housed in one agency; that is, the DPI. We have also seen the transfer of the on-water compliance functions and staff from the DPI to the Department of Fisheries. All these transfers have occurred in the past 12 months without a hitch. It is a testament to the new team of professionals who are managing the department. We should acknowledge their contribution today.

The DPI has also made some substantial progress in solving the financial and accounting issues that it inherited from past regimes. It has resolved the bank reconciliation mess that existed for the past five years, which resulted in a qualification from the Auditor General. It has developed a service level agreement with the Western Australian Planning Commission to cement a stronger relationship between the two organisations. It has developed and implemented a new framework in the agency and strengthened its corporate governance framework to improve accountability and transparency. These reforms have seen the department make significant progress in overcoming the previous administrative and financial shortcomings of both itself and the departments that went before it. The department is now focused on building its capabilities to support the minister and the WA Planning Commission and thus improve the service to the community.

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The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Before we continue, I will table the answers and some documents that go with them that have been provided to a number of questions on notice.

Hon GEORGE CASH: My questions relate to page 826 of volume 2 and to the major initiatives for 2004-05. The majority of my questions are directed to the proposed planning and development Bill, which is the Green Bill. I am interested in finding out a little more background on this Bill. Is the draft Green Bill essentially a consolidation of existing Acts facilitating the streamlining of existing processes or processes in general; which stakeholders widely support the Green Bill; and what is the local government position?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Hon Jim Scott put a question on notice. If the member has not received it, it is probably worth his making sure that he gets a copy of it. I will ask Mr Frewer to answer.

MR FREWER: The consolidated planning legislation has been on the books for a number of years. It does represent the amalgamation of the Metropolitan Region Town Planning Scheme Act, the Town Planning and Development Act and the Western Australian Planning Commission Act. It is a consolidation, but some other issues are also being addressed, including the way in which the powers in statements of planning policy will be applied.

[10.50 am]

The Bill has recently been released for public comment, and there has been some input to that from a range of stakeholders, and there have also been some workshops, particularly with local government. Those inputs and submissions have been assessed, and a further draft of the paper will be produced.

Hon GEORGE CASH: Perhaps in answer to the next question Mr Frewer might also comment on the position of local government. Is it correct that if the draft Bill were enacted in its present form, the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, through the use of state planning policies and the Western Australian Planning Commission, could override any town planning scheme and effectively determine any local planning issue either specifically, by geographical area, or by classes of development? Following on from that, is it not reasonable to say that the proposed use of state planning policies goes considerably further than the call-in power that was proposed in the 2002 discussion paper?

Mr FREWER: The application of state planning policies is pretty much as the member has described. The reason is that under section 5AA of the Town Planning and Development Act, local authorities need to have due regard for statements of planning policy. It was felt that there was a need to strengthen some of those provisions in order to give the State, on issues of state and regional significance, the ability to provide greater leverage through local authorities for the way in which they need to contemplate those issues. That is currently being contemplated and is part of the discussion paper on the Green Bill.

Hon GEORGE CASH: What about the breadth or scope of the old call-in power versus the current proposal?

Mr FREWER: They are quite similar in terms of their extent.

Hon GEORGE CASH: You do not think they are any wider?

Mr FREWER: I would need to go back to the details to ascertain that, but my recollection is that they are actually quite similar.

Hon GEORGE CASH: What is the possible extent of ministerial control over the local planning process and town planning schemes? Are there any opportunities for public input other than a period within which people may comment on the draft planning policies, which people may not become aware of in time? What are the limitations on the extent or nature of the state planning policies that may be prepared under the proposed Bill? How does that differ from the present arrangements? What are the limitations on the matters that may be dealt with under the state planning control areas?

Mr FREWER: I request that, given the detailed nature of the question, it be put on notice.

Hon GEORGE CASH: Sure. I also have some other questions that I have indicated to the parliamentary secretary I will put on notice if we do not have time to deal with them today.

[*Supplementary Information No 35.*]

Hon GEORGE CASH: Is the minister required to adopt the views received during the stage when draft state planning policies are finalised following public consultations? How much consultation was there outside the State Government on what some would consider to be a radical expression of state planning policies?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I will ask Mr Frewer to answer those parts of the question that are in order.

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Mr FREWER: Again, given the detailed nature of the question, it would be best to put it on notice, and we will be happy to answer that as part of the previous question.

Hon GEORGE CASH: I will put that question on notice also.

[Supplementary Information No 36.]

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I just make the point that in terms of the consultation process, the answer that was provided to Hon Jim Scott certainly outlines the groups that have been invited and directly notified about the release of the Green Bill.

Hon ADELE FARINA: I refer to page 828, major achievements for 2003-04, the second item under the second dot point, which states that the coastal statement of planning policy has been completed and the coastal planning council has been implemented to oversee implementation. Can the parliamentary secretary explain the function and priorities of the new Coastal Planning and Coordination Council, and also advise how much funding has been given for coastal grants and which areas have benefited from those grants?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: The principal aim of the Coastal Planning and Coordination Council is to promote an integrated approach to coastal planning and management. Its key activities are providing advice to the WAPC on coastal priorities, resources and development proposals on the coast; reviewing and providing advice to the WAPC on major coastal plans, policies and strategies; promoting involvement and an understanding of coastal zone planning and management by the broader community; and reporting on its activities on an annual basis. The chair, from my recollection, is a member of the WAPC, so it works very closely with the WAPC. It was part of the report of the ministerial task force. Its priority task will be the Perth coastal planning strategy, and that will certainly guide decision making on possible future land use and development on the Perth metropolitan coastline. I am sure members would be well aware of the issues that are being faced in respect of high-rise development, the provision of boat-launching facilities and the placement of infrastructure. The member also asked about coastal grants. The Coastwest grants are for on-ground environmental works aimed at building and maintaining partnerships between local coastal managers and community groups. The Coastwest grants program is designed to improve the condition and amenity of the coastal zone. An amount of \$500 000 has been allocated for this purpose. I should note that the Commonwealth ceased funding coastal grants following the 2001-02 round. Was there another part to the member's question?

Hon ADELE FARINA: Yes - which areas have benefited from the coastal grants.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: If the member is happy for me to do so, I will take that on notice. The majority of the funding has gone to regional Western Australia. I am sure the member would be very pleased about that. However, rather than going through all that, I will provide supplementary information with the specific details of which local government authorities and which regions have benefited.

[Supplementary Information No 37.]

[11.00 am]

Hon ADELE FARINA: Is it intended that the Coastal Planning and Coordination Council will consider individual planning applications?

Mr FREWER: It is anticipated that the Coastal Planning and Coordination Council will have an advisory role on matters referred to it but it will not have a statutory decision-making role. That role will be preserved within the statutory planning committee of the Planning Commission.

Hon ADELE FARINA: I refer to page 751 and the maritime infrastructure development management program. What has the department done to support recreational boat users who need to launch their dinghies to go crabbing or fishing? How much has the Government spent on launching facilities?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: The department has established a recreational boating facilities scheme. That provides funding on a one-for-one basis between state and local authorities for improvements and upgrades to recreational boating facilities around the State, including boat ramps. The scheme provides approximately \$650 000 per annum to these projects. Since the scheme's establishment in 1998 it has provided more than \$2.2 million to 90 projects across the State in both regional and metropolitan areas.

Hon ADELE FARINA: I refer to the third major initiative from the bottom of page 750. Will the parliamentary secretary please advise what progress has been made on the hydrogen fuel cell bus trial, and what benefits will flow from it?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: This is a very exciting program for Western Australia. The trial will be launched in Perth in September this year. It is part of an international trial in 11 cities around the world. Hydrogen fuel cell technology is emerging as a viable sustainable alternative to fossil fuels. It is something we all need to get our

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heads around for future sustainability. The trial will allow Western Australia to be part of the global development of that exciting technology. The department will be involved in a conference to be held later in the year at a time close to the launch. That will bring the world's leading hydrogen fuel cell specialists, as well as policy makers, to Western Australia and has the potential to give WA a unique window of opportunity into the future of this transport energy. The hydrogen will be supplied from BP's refinery at Kwinana. The production equipment is in place and the purification plant is nearing completion.

Hon ADELE FARINA: How many buses will be involved in the trial and over what period will the trial run?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I think three trial buses are due to arrive in Perth.

Mr MARTIN: Three hydrogen fuel cell buses will run for a trial period of two years.

Hon JIM SCOTT: The first significant issue and trend on page 743 refers to Western Australia's economic and population growth continuing to be one of the highest in Australia and that the population of Perth is forecast to increase by 137 000 to 1.57 million. I noted today that the Department of Environment has warned about the unsustainability of the water supply from the Gnangara water mound. In the past, the Department for Planning and Infrastructure has allowed the continuation of development along the border of the Jandakot mound and along the Gnangara mound. Will the department continue to allow this type of development in light of the water issues? Given the demands on water from economic growth, what level of population and economic growth will it allow? Has the department examined the estimated levels of population and consequent water usage that can be maintained in that metropolitan area? What other plans does the department have?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Protection of the water mounds has been an ongoing process. The first big involvement of the Parliament in this issue occurred with the establishment of the 1994 Select Committee on Metropolitan Development and Groundwater Supplies in the other place, which examined that issue. As a result of that select committee, a number of programs, studies and statements of planning policies and the like were established to identify those mounds and to ensure their future protection.

Hon JIM SCOTT: Development is still occurring on them.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Those original studies identified conflicts in some areas. However, significant parts of those mounds have been protected for future use. Parts of the water supply come from under urban areas, and a risk-management approach is taken to development of those areas. The important parts of the recharge areas of both the Jandakot and the Gnangara mounds have not been designated priority 3; they have been designated priority 1 or 2. Some historical issues arose through that committee and one of the issues addressed was how to reach a balance between the competing interests in that area.

The department is very heavily focused on broader issues of sustainability. The department has developed a directorate for sustainability specifically to examine the issues associated with managing the State's growth. The state sustainability strategy is another area through which we are working to incorporate a range of issues into planning.

Mr FREWER: In the past 10 years quite a lot of work has been done in relation to the Gnangara and Jandakot mounds. Specific statutory mechanisms have been established to protect them both from residential development. Jandakot is a priority 2 area, which allows for special rural uses. It is controlled through a statement of planning policy as well as through a reservation and region scheme that specifically protects it from further development. Gnangara has been subject to a lot of study and has been proposed as priority 1. In that respect, an amendment to the region scheme protects all the major priority 1 area. As a result of studies of the mound undertaken in the early to mid 1990s, the Planning Commission has spent nearly \$35 million buying private land there and is moving to consolidate that and to provide protection from further incursions of residential uses. The protection of mounds is a very high priority in planning. They have been protected through statutory instruments for some time.

Regarding the growth of Perth, the Planning Commission is projecting that the population of Perth will grow by about another 750 000 people by 2030. We are examining how we can best accommodate that growth and manage the resources that support the city. A report is due out fairly soon as a continuation of the processes started in September 2003 relating to the "Dialogue with the city". I think the member participated in that event. We are considering how we can accommodate the increasing population of Perth and at the same time protect the resources upon which it relies. That report is due out later this year.

[11.10 am]

Hon JIM SCOTT: Will the Department for Planning and Infrastructure continue to allow mining on those water mounds? Significant sand mining is occurring at Jandakot and I believe it is also happening at Gnangara. I believe very large areas of sand are being taken out for urban infill; for instance, from the wetland areas south of

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Atwell. The deep watering that is going on to allow that to happen appears also to be having a significant impact on water quality. Will the department continue to allow both those practices; that is, the urban infill requiring built-up land and deep watering, which will be pumped out to sea in very large quantities, and the mining of sand for part of that infill?

Mr FREWER: The second aspect of the question on the grant of permits to undertake mining is obviously not an issue in which this department or the WA Planning Commission is directly involved. The quarrying of sand in those areas is done under works permits granted by the Environmental Protection Authority. The Department of Industry and Resources becomes involved in granting quarrying licences. Those events are carried out under licence and conditions are set for residual ground levels and water management issues during the mining process.

In answer to the first part of the question on fill versus drainage, it is fair to say that in the past 30 to 40-odd years a lot of drainage occurred in the metropolitan region that led to some consequences that proved quite adverse to the environment, as the member would be aware. Drainage is generally regarded as not an appropriate practice. If there are problems with the watertable - most of the eastern part of the Swan coastal plain has a high watertable - it is generally regarded that fill is much better than drainage. Areas that are subject to development are subject to fill, as that is regarded as a better option than drainage, which was used in the past.

Hon SUE ELLERY: My question is about the output performance measures for the taxi program on page 751. Will the parliamentary secretary advise the progress on the government initiative of the release of taxi plates by lease?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Yes, absolutely! The Government has now released 48 additional taxi plates under the legislation that passed through the House last year. In addition, the Government will implement a plate release mechanism that for the first time will result in a managed, regular release of taxi plates, which will also be granted on a lease basis. All the additional 48 taxi plates have been allocated and are operating in the Perth taxi fleet. Obviously that has provided significant savings to people who would otherwise lease a taxi plate. It means that they now basically own their cab and do not have to find \$200 000 to purchase a plate. I remind members that money raised from the leasing arrangement goes into the taxi industry development fund and is used to promote the interests of the broader taxi industry.

Hon GEORGE CASH: I refer again to the draft Green Bill. Given that the Green Bill proposes a fundamental planning change far more than just consolidation, how much time was provided for public comment on it? Given that most council agenda arrangements require a number of weeks notice, was sufficient time provided for local authorities around Western Australia to comment on the draft Bill? Will the parliamentary secretary tell me the extent of advertising in community and other newspapers that indicated to the public and others the opportunity to comment on the Bill?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Obviously the views on some of these issues would be subjective. In light of most of the issues, it is probably best that I take the question on notice for a response from the minister. This simply comes down to an opinion about what is an appropriate time for consultation. However, advertisements appeared in *The West Australian* on 24 and 28 April, a ministerial media statement was issued on 23 April, the Green Bill was released for a four-week period of public comment, and a statement was also e-mailed to key stakeholders on 22 April and placed on the department's web site. Those are some mechanisms that were used to inform various groups and I think there are other ongoing discussions. I do not know whether any officer wants to add anything, otherwise we will take that question on notice.

Hon GEORGE CASH: If the question goes on notice, I indicate that there are some additional parts to the question that I did not read out that will also go on notice with it.

[Supplementary Information No 38.]

Hon KEN TRAVERS: By the close-off date, 30 submissions had been received from a range of people, including 10 from local government.

Hon GEORGE CASH: Again this question relates to local government: is the parliamentary secretary aware of local government's response to the apparent compromise that replaces the words "is not fettered" with the words "due regard"? Will the parliamentary secretary tell me what the words "due regard" mean, especially in the context of the new WAPC membership?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I will add that to the list of questions on notice.

[Supplementary Information No 39.]

Hon GEORGE CASH: I will have to change tack, Mr Deputy Chairman. I note that under the heading "Timeliness" on page 826 the Government was shooting for an unknown goal in 2002-03, but achieved 67 per

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cent; in 2003-04 it budgeted for 80 per cent, but achieved 61 per cent; and this year it again budgeted for 80 per cent. Why has there been a significant failure to achieve the budgeted item?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: There has been a significant boom in this area in Western Australia in recent years. A lot of work has been done by the department and the WAPC to address the necessary issues and ensure timely approvals. This issue is about managing applications during a pretty fast-growing period in the State. One of the officers may be able to provide some details about the strategies and mechanisms that the department has put in place to address this issue and to ensure that it is meeting the demands placed on it.

Mr FREWER: In the past 12 to 18 months the department has been well aware of the issues relating to statutory processing times. There has been a decrease in performance in this area, which pretty much relates to a couple of issues. One is that, given the number of applications, a land boom has been going on. We have also experienced quite a bit of staff turnover in this area. In acknowledgment of that, the department established a specific team of people in mid last year to examine improvements in the statutory area that we are talking about to try to achieve process and productivity gains. We have considered a couple of issues. One is to implement a workload management strategy to provide more effective management and prioritise the commission's application workload. That would also restructure the area to provide smaller teams more focused on particular jobs at hand. We have also been dealing with a backlog management strategy, part of which has been to secure from government additional funds of \$500 000 to pay for extra planning staff in the area and to examine the way in which subdivision and related applications work. In the second half of last year, a 15 per cent increase occurred overall in the number of planning approvals when compared with those in the previous period. A number of other projects are under way in respect of project approvals, many of which relate to referrals. We are streamlining the approach taken when subdivisions come in and they are referred to various authorities. A lot of work is being done to improve that process. We are also looking at streamlining and ensuring that simple applications are dealt with in a simpler manner, and that better information sharing and approvals take place within DPI and the WAPC. Overall, we have a package of events that we anticipate will lead to improvements in the statutory performance over the next period.

[11.20 am]

Hon GEORGE CASH: The *Budget Statements* at page 751 refer to output performance measures and, under the heading of "quality" and the subheading of "education and regulation" state -

Extent to which the Western Australian Planning Commission committees are satisfied with the quality of land use planning advice for Western Australia.

The approval rate was at 95 per cent in 2002-03. The department has budgeting for a 70 per cent approval rating. What is the object of targeting that number? Why not target for a considerably higher rating given the other measures listed on that page?

Mr MARTIN: As the text states, 70 per cent is the extent to which the Planning Commission committees are satisfied with the quality of land use planning advice for Western Australia. Therefore, except for the first figure for 2002-03, the readout is a 70 per cent rating. Our ambition is to improve on that figure. I suppose the question is as follows: do we write down something we are not sure we can achieve or do we write down something we can beat? I think the intent is to write down something we will beat.

Hon GEORGE CASH: How will the department achieve a greater than 70 per cent rating measure? What will be done that is different?

Mr MARTIN: We must satisfy the planning committees to a greater extent than we are presently.

Hon GEORGE CASH: How is that to be done, Mr Martin?

Mr MARTIN: That is to be done by endeavouring to understand the expectations of the committees, and meeting those expectations.

Hon GEORGE CASH: What are their expectations to date? The commission has had a 70 per cent rating for some time now.

Mr MARTIN: Once again, this arises from responses to a questionnaire from the planning committees. They choose the ratings they give on the scale. We need to ask what they would expect to achieve a higher rating. We are asking that question. Once again, it does not stop the committees putting in a rating of three or four out of five rather than five out of five. It is a difficulty we face. I suspect that I am not satisfying the member with the answer.

Hon GEORGE CASH: The commission is able to achieve a 100 per cent rating in a lot of other areas.

Mr MARTIN: Many of those areas are more objective measures, and this is a very subjective measure.

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Hon ADELE FARINA: Page 754 outlines the major initiatives for 2004-05. The fifth dot point reads -

Increase responsiveness to, and support for, the Department's initiatives in Regional Western Australia to provide a single point of contact in each region.

Being a regional member, I am very interested in this initiative. Will the parliamentary secretary expand on it?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I will ask Mr Martin to respond.

Mr MARTIN: Two particular initiatives were undertaken in the past year. One was to upgrade the Department for Planning and Infrastructure's regional representative in each region to a higher classification. Those appointments have been made, except in one location in which we will readvertise the position to try to find somebody suitable. That process will give the point of contact a higher profile for the department on behalf of the portfolio. That is going into place. We have had regional coordinators in the past, but we have chosen to use the term "regional service managers". Their role is to represent the department and the portfolio in those regions. We expect that initiative to produce some benefits.

The second initiative adopted in the department was to identify regional allocations against each of the executive directors in the department. Therefore, each executive director has one or more regions that they represent to the department. They have a role which is across the department; also, that role does not take line responsibility from anyone else. The aim is to be familiar with what is taking place in the region, and to ensure that the coordination for which they have responsibility happens right across the department's activities. These positions, in effect, are adding to the customer service opportunities that we provide to regional stakeholders.

Hon ADELE FARINA: I place on record my congratulations to the department for having a regional focus. Well done.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Also, one-stop shops have been opened in a number of regional locations. I concur with Hon Adele Farina: having travelled around the State, I understand that officers in the regions need to be congratulated for their ability to focus across all portfolios. Travelling around on behalf of the minister, I see that they do a great job.

Hon ADELE FARINA: They certainly have a fantastic office in the south west.

Mr MARTIN: That is a good point. We have combined DPI resources that have come from previous organisations into one location in many regions. That has been achieved in a number of places, including Kalgoorlie and Broome, and we are moving to do the same in other places. Albany will shortly achieve that outcome. This process will make it easier for people to deal with DPI at one location, rather than having to go to three separate offices in each region.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Page 828 of the *Budget Statements* refers to major achievements that include regional scheme planning initiatives. The Fremantle eastern bypass has been deleted from the metropolitan region scheme. Has the Western Australian Planning Commission commenced the process to delete Roe Highway stage 8 from the MRS? To what zoning is the land to be rezoned? What are the plans for the land currently reserved in the corridor for disposal, and what is the timetable involved?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Is the member asking two questions - one about Roe Highway stage 8 and one about the Fremantle eastern bypass or is his question purely about Roe 8?

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: It is purely about Roe Highway stage 8. I mentioned that earlier point so the question followed on.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: The first part of the question needs to be answered before we reach the second and third parts. There are no plans to delete Roe Highway stage 8.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: The corollary of that is to ask: what will the Government do with Roe Highway stage 8; will it be built as a road?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Like all programs in the MRS, it is there as a future planning option. A decision will be made at some point about whether to go ahead and build it. I would like to ask the member the same question; that is, will the Opposition be building Roe Highway stage 8? At this stage, there are no plans, to my understanding, to commence the construction of Roe Highway stage 8, but Roe Highway stage 7 is well under way, which is probably the most important part of the provision for transport infrastructure.

Hon PETER FOSS: Was it in there because the Government does not intend to delete it or because it had not got around to deleting it yet?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I gave the answer to the first question. There are no plans at this stage to delete Roe Highway stage 8.

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Hon PETER FOSS: Is the parliamentary secretary saying it is a planning option? Is it in there because it is intended to be built or because it is not intended to be built?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: It is an option for the future road network of Perth. That is what planning is all about. Other potential roads sit there that may or may not be built at some point in the future. Roe stage 8 is one such option. It is not an orphan in that regard. There are other roads in the metropolitan region scheme that have not been built, and we will have to wait to see whether they will ever be built.

Hon SUE ELLERY: My question relates to page 743 of the *Budget Statements*. The third dot point of significant issues and trends refers to strong population growth and large parcels of land being released. There is a large demand for planning approvals and a large number of planning applications. What has the Government done to effectively manage and deal with the high demand for planning approvals?

[11.30 am]

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I suspect that the answer is very similar to the one given to Hon George Cash earlier. I do not know whether the member wants me to elaborate on some other areas, but that answer pretty much covers most of it, unless there is anything else other officers wish to add. There are the workload management strategy, the backlog management strategy and a number of other projects that have been undertaken.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I will take the opportunity to ask another question. On page 746 the issue of drivers' licences is listed under outcomes and key effectiveness indicators. My question relates to improving access to driver assessments and reducing waiting times.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I thank the member for this question. I suspect my nephew got his driver's licence yesterday, so people should be wary on the roads.

Hon GEORGE CASH: Does that mean the system is working?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: It does. I know members in the past have had a significant interest in drivers' licences, and we have seen some significant improvements in that area. Hon Alan Cadby has certainly followed this issue in the past. As of 12 May the waiting time to obtain a driver assessment had been reduced from a high of as much as 15 weeks in certain locations to a metropolitan average of 1.2 weeks. In cases of hardship, assessments are made available in less time, generally 48 hours, particularly if the candidate is prepared to travel to other metropolitan locations. Some of the things that have been done to achieve that since 1 July include the introduction of a waiting period of four weeks for candidates in the metropolitan area who require a retest after an unsuccessful attempt, or who failed to keep appointments or provide insufficient notice of cancellation. This measure has seen the previous no-show rate of 10 per cent drop by approximately 50 per cent. That is a very fair way of dealing with it. They include the recruiting of additional assessors in the metropolitan area; the creation of a new driver assessor management structure, which became fully staffed in February this year and which provides staff to fill short-term, unplanned absences to avoid client inconvenience; a weekly report identifying the lead times by metropolitan location to enable staff to be relocated as needs arise. There is a range of other initiatives. The assessors are now doing nine assessments per day commencing at 9.00 am; heavy vehicles take a bit longer. Saturday overtime was provided during April and May, enabling 480 additional candidates to be tested. Regional office staff in Bunbury and Geraldton have been trained to enable short-term needs to be met. Temporary assessor positions have been created at Mandurah and Boulder to alleviate current demands. That is an array of the issues which have resulted in significant reductions in waiting times.

Hon JIM SCOTT: My question is a bit of a follow-on to the water availability issue. One of the major sustainability factors that we will be dealing with is the availability of water. It is clear that the very large users of that water are coming from irrigation areas and areas of high industrial input, for example, Tiwest Pty Ltd. Does the Department for Planning and Infrastructure intend to start putting in new criteria for particular planning areas regarding the water usage in the same way that it would classify that hazardous waste needs to go to a particular place? Will the department be looking at the water use of industries, such as Tiwest, or even the expansion of such facilities in the future planning that is done in the city to enable it to have greater control over the sustainability of our water supplies?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: The member should come along to the Standing Committee on Public Administration and Finance that is inquiring into water at the moment. I will ask Mr Frewer if he wishes to make any comments about that.

Mr FREWER: The department has been actively involved in the preparation of the state water strategy, which includes a wide range of recommendations relating to future water use and sustainability. In particular, the department has been involved in the protection of the areas I mentioned earlier, but also in the state water re-use committee we are looking at ways in which waste water can be recycled for various uses. There are obviously various thresholds upon which people will accept that use. Recycling for industrial use is quite acceptable, but

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recycling waste water for higher purposes, such as drinking water, becomes more problematical. That is an issue that I know the technical people in other departments, such as the Department of Environmental Protection and the Water Corporation, are looking at. In respect of the assessment of the particular developments on a site-by-site basis, the developments will always include, for industrial use, an assessment of water use and its effect on surrounding waters, such as ground water areas. That would also be part of the works approval that would be received by the Department of Environmental Protection as part of the overall approval process. The WA Planning Commission has also set in place a committee to look at sustainability issues and its role is to identify various methodologies that can be used to assess developments and projects in the future from social, economic and environmental points of view. One of the obvious areas it will be looking at is the way in which water will be used, applied and recycled in various developments in the future. So we are looking at that in a general sense, but also in a specific sense.

Hon JIM SCOTT: Will that include irrigation approvals?

Mr FREWER: Irrigation is dealt with through another portfolio. In planning terms it is rural land, and water requirements are then dealt with through the Department of Environmental Protection and the Water Corporation.

Hon JIM SCOTT: You have no ability to put in place areas that they cannot irrigate, for instance?

Mr FREWER: There could be provisions placed in the town planning schemes, but I am not aware of any of those at the moment.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: I refer to the acquisition of land by the WA Planning Commission, which is referred to in several parts of division 49, including on pages 830 and 831. Specifically, I would like to ask about possible land acquisition around the Leach Highway-Stock Road intersection in Melville. I am aware that the former Meadow Lea site was acquired recently for \$1.9 million. I thank the parliamentary secretary for his answer to a recent question in the House about that. What other properties in that vicinity will potentially be acquired and at what cost? I appreciate that this question will probably have to be taken on notice. I specifically include the D'Orsogna property, the requirements for land currently occupied by the bus depot along Stock Road, any other businesses in any of those quadrants around that intersection or any houses particularly in the north-west quadrant - that is, in Palmyra - that may be acquired for the future roadworks for that intersection.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I will ask Mr Frewer to make some general comments and we will take the question on notice.

[Supplementary Information No 40.]

[11.40 am]

Mr FREWER: I do not have the specific details of land costs with me. However, I will speak about the general notion. The matter of grade separation at the intersection of Stock Road and Leach Highway has been around for some time. Indeed, in the late 1990s the City of Melville endorsed a proposal, which was developed in conjunction with Main Roads, to grade separate. Recently there has been some debate about a proposed concept of how the grade separation would work. That proposal would require a considerable amount of work because of the gradients along Leach Highway and Stock Road. The initial concept would have been extremely difficult to implement from an engineering point of view and a lot of community concern was voiced about it. A proposal was made because land development is occurring in the area and, therefore, development controls need to be put in place. Lines must be established along which development can be controlled. Also, the future requirements for that road and intersection must be considered. The Planning Commission is considering putting in place a planning control area in the general vicinity of the Leach Highway and Stock Road intersection. A further study will consider in more detail the requirements for that. It is obvious that the impact of any grade separation must be reduced. Recently the Planning Commission and the City of Melville have discussed conducting a study, which would involve Main Roads, the Department for Planning and Infrastructure and the City of Melville, into overcoming the grade separation requirements and, therefore, reducing the land requirements that will be needed. A planning control area must be established to make sure that people can develop their land with some degree of certainty. It is anticipated that the study will be released in the near future.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: As a supplementary question, through the Deputy Chairman to the parliamentary secretary -

Hon KEN TRAVERS: If I want to, I will refer it on to Mr Frewer.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: It is a complex arrangement.

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One or two planning control orders are already in place in the vicinity and Mr Frewer alluded to the possible requirement for more. What effect do planning control orders on land subject to that planning control have on the occupiers or owners - if they are not the occupiers? Does it mean they cannot dispose of the land or build on it? What are the restrictions and for how long are those restrictions in place?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I will hand it over to Mr Frewer.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Is Mr Frewer talking to me?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: He is talking to the Chair. It would be disorderly to talk to you, Simon!

Mr FREWER: Planning control areas are a mechanism the Planning Commission can use while it contemplates the final reservation requirements of a road. It could be used also for other reasons but generally it relates to roads. The effect it has on properties is to identify in the interim a line within which development could be controlled. The owner or occupier would not be permitted to develop within that area because the development could encroach on a future road reservation, which would include not only road carriageways but also earthworks and any required ancillary works. The basic effect is that landowners affected by planning control areas can claim compensation from the Planning Commission for the portion of the property affected or for the whole of the property, depending on the nature and the extent of the effect the development would have on the land. Essentially, planning control areas allow the Planning Commission to deal with the land in a broader sense prior to a reservation being granted that would firmly establish those lines. Planning control areas, rather than orders, remain in place for five years. As I said, they allow more detailed planning to be conducted in an area prior to setting firm reservation requirements.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: As with a reservation, people can continue to do what they are currently doing on the site under a planning control area until a final decision is made.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: Sure. However, if a redevelopment is contemplated, it imposes a planning blight.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: People affected in that way are entitled to the compensation provisions.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: The compensation is not much because the market value of the property is reduced by the planning control area.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: There is a tome in this place that one can read about those matters regarding whether planning blight occurs as a result of planning commissions, and I recommend it to the member for his bedtime reading.

Hon LOUISE PRATT: I refer to major initiatives on page 830 of the *Budget Statements*, which highlights the progress and acquisition of Bush Forever sites. I note that nothing of this nature is listed under major achievements for 2003-04. What has been achieved? What major initiatives for 2004-05 are proposed for the Bush Forever sites?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I thank the member for the question. A number of measures have been instigated and substantially progressed under Bush Forever. They include a working group report on the implementation of policy commitments on Bushplan. The group was established to review and advise on the implementation of Bush Forever in the context of the Government's pre-election commitment, which was detailed in the Labor Party's Bushplan. There has been an acquisition of land proposed for parks and recreation under Bush Forever. To date, \$24 million in new moneys has been spent acquiring 630 hectares identified in Bush Forever and/or proposed for reservation in Bush Forever metropolitan region scheme amendments. The proposed Bush Forever omnibus metropolitan region scheme amendment and draft statement of planning policy are close to finalisation. Those are the key areas of achievement.

Hon GEORGE CASH: I refer to *The West Australian* of Saturday, 22 May 2004 and, in particular, the property report that featured a special transit supplement. I have a copy of it here. Was the newspaper's focus on public transport and associated urban development issues an initiative of the minister or her office or anyone associated with an agency under her administration? What was the cost of the substantial LandCorp advertisement, which was a feature of the supplement? Apart from the LandCorp advertisement, was there any other advertising in the supplement by any other agency under the minister's administration; and, if so, what was the cost of the advertising? Did the minister or her office or any of her agencies have any input or editorial involvement in the articles in the supplement; and, if so, what was the nature of the involvement? What are the specific old suburbs and old town centres that the minister is reported at page 7 of the supplement as referring to?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I seek some advice on this. I am sure that the minister will be happy to provide answers. A number of those questions related to LandCorp, which has not been called as part of this Estimates Committee. Whether those questions can be taken on notice is something of which I am not sure.

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Hon GEORGE CASH: They can all be taken on notice, if that is what the parliamentary secretary wants.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I seek clarification on the questions that relate to LandCorp. I am not sure whether they can be taken on notice because LandCorp has not been called to the committee. As I said, I am happy to take them all on notice in the House and have them answered there. I am happy to ask for the questions on planning to be answered by the department.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The parliamentary secretary has advisers present who can advise on the planning issues. After that, perhaps the questions for LandCorp can be placed on notice.

Hon GEORGE CASH: If required, LandCorp can be asked separately.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The question has been answered. The member will ask the questions on LandCorp separately.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Obviously, the questions that relate to the minister and her office need to be taken on notice. Regarding the department or the Western Australian Planning Commission, I am happy for Mr Martin or Mr Dawkins to provide answers if they can.

[Supplementary Information No 41.]

Mr MARTIN: I am not aware of any involvement by the Department for Planning and Infrastructure. Once again, I will need to take the questions on notice to see whether there is any involvement.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: If the member is happy, we will take all questions on notice. We are more than happy to seek to answers all questions.

[11.50 am]

Hon GEORGE CASH: What was the Western Australian Planning Commission's input into the Rous Head proposed wind farm? What is the status of that proposed wind farm?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: We will have to take those questions on notice.

Hon GEORGE CASH: It was referred to during yesterday's Estimates Committee debate on energy. I am interested to learn why the proposal did not go ahead.

[Supplementary Information No 42.]

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: That draws this session to a close. If members have questions on notice that relate to this division, now is a good time to bring them to the Chair. I thank the parliamentary secretary and his advisers for their assistance.