

Division 26: South West Development Commission, \$4 034 000 —

Mr A.P. O’Gorman, Chairman

Mr B.J. Grylls, Minister for Regional Development.

Mr D. Punch, Chief Executive Officer.

Ms Valma Cartwright, Chief Finance Officer.

The CHAIRMAN: Member for Collie-Preston.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: On page 326 under “Income Statement” and “Expenses” reference is made to a decrease of 80.3 per cent from the 2009–10 estimated actuals, primarily due to the refurbishment of the Busselton jetty. I refer to various election commitments and the re-cash flowing of royalties for regions allocations and ask if the minister could provide a list of those election commitments. The minister could respond now or by way of supplementary information.

Mr B.J. GRYLLS: I am happy for Don Punch to further expand on that. If the member for Collie-Preston needs more information, I will respond after Don has made some points.

Mr D. Punch: There are two election commitments in progress. One is the Collie townscape renewal strategy, which has an allocation of \$500 000, and the other is the Balingup town centre renewal, which has an allocation of \$250 000. Allocations have been made available in this budget for those projects.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: I am asking the minister if a list is available to look at so that we know where we are. And, just to make it a little easier, Lake Kepwari is something that concerns me, because it has been a carryover for some time. Where is the funding for Lake Kepwari?

Mr B.J. GRYLLS: I have some information on Lake Kepwari. An amount of \$2.73 million is held in capital works. The project delays are due to Wesfarmers Premier Coal not completing the site abandonment process until this week, 29 May 2010. Wesfarmers Premier Coal did not leave the area until then. We expect the handover to be completed midyear. Don, do you have anything to add on Lake Kepwari?

Mr D. Punch: Yes, I have, and that is indicated on page 328 of the statements under “Restricted cash”. Once the arrangements are resolved in terms of the abandonment process and liability issues, we will be able to proceed with works.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: Staffing levels are always a concern and I have a question under “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency” on page 324. What is the staffing level at the moment and what is expected to be the staffing level in the future? Are there any thoughts or action on redundancies?

Mr B.J. GRYLLS: We have just embarked on a review of development commissions, given what we believe is a substantially increased role for them in both the policy of regional development as well as the actual management of funds. That review will be completed in the coming months and will help us frame whether or not we need more FTEs or a higher level of FTEs, but that work is still to be completed. I am happy for Don to outline the agency’s current FTEs and where he sees that heading.

Mr D. Punch: We have an approved staffing level of 25 FTEs. We currently employ 23 FTEs. One of those FTEs is employed by a commonwealth grant for the trade start program. At this stage we have an operational capacity that is capable of meeting the needs of the South West. If we change the requirements of the development commission, then we should be able to adapt that within our resourcing level.

Mr M.P. MURRAY: With the commission’s closer reliance on the federal government’s allocations of funding, what pressures are there and what extra staff will be needed into the future in working with the federal government?

Mr B.J. GRYLLS: I thank the member for Collie. That is a good question. The federal government has got rid of its area consultative committees and replaced them with Regional Development Australia. Essentially, that has boundaries that are similar to the development commissions. My agency, Department of Regional Development and Lands, has signed an memorandum of understanding with Maxine McKew as the relevant parliamentary secretary responsible for RDA. That MOU involves working closely, sharing information and making sure that we have development commission representation at the board level of RDA. Therefore, the RDA boards have development commission members who sit on both boards to try and improve the synergies between the two. Essentially, with the RDAs not having any grant funding role and being an advisory-type body for the federal government looking at trends and issues I suppose, it is valuable for us to have that linkage with RDA boards and with their staff. That relationship will continue to be developed. That MOU was signed earlier this year or late last year. Maxine McKew was recently in the Pilbara and we showed her around and the RDA people were there on the day. Hopefully, we will avoid any duplication and gain what synergies we can.

Chairman; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Brendon Grylls; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Peter Watson

Mr M.P. MURRAY: While I have heard the minister speak about the review and the make up of the review committee, I may have missed when that committee is due to report.

Mr B.J. GRYLLS: I am informed that the committee is due to report in October.

Mr M. McGOWAN: In view of time, I have a very quick question because I know that the member for Albany wants to ask a question as well. It can be provided as supplementary information. What is the progress of the Busselton jetty rebuild and what is the total budget expected to be? It says here it is \$20 528 000. Is that the total budget, and when is the project expected to be completed?

Mr B.J. GRYLLS: Don would know this like the back of his hand. The Busselton jetty rebuild has been a fantastic project. The jetty is at the top of the list of most tourists who come to Western Australia and locals alike, and it has been good to get that project up and underway. Don, how are we going with time line and budget?

Mr D. Punch: Completion will be in September this year. That is subject to weather, but it is on track. The total tender cost for the jetty is in the region of \$27 million. The allocation from the state is \$24 million, which will be fully expended and the balance will be met by the shire.

Mr M. McGOWAN: The budget papers say that the estimated expenditure is \$20.5 million.

Mr D. Punch: We commenced payments in 2008–09, so it will be stretched over three financial years.

Mr B.J. GRYLLS: Don, is that \$20.7 million the final instalment?

Mr D. Punch: That will represent the completion of the payments, yes.

Mr B.J. GRYLLS: Very well done, South West Development Commission—a project on time and on budget! Let us hope the weather stays away.

The CHAIRMAN: We do not need a ministerial statement.

Mr M. McGOWAN: What is the progress, perhaps by way of supplementary information, on the reimbursements from land sales in Busselton?

Mr B.J. GRYLLS: I am happy for Don to answer that question for the member for Rockingham.

Mr D. Punch: There are no reimbursement processes by land sales. The jetty rebuild was paid for by a government grant from consolidated revenue.

Mr P.B. WATSON: I refer to the first dot point on page 324 under “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency” that states that funding associated with royalties for regions has contributed to the community. How many applications were made to the South West Development Commission for royalties for regions grants and how many were successful, please? I am willing to take it as a supplementary.

Mr B.J. GRYLLS: Don, do you have that information in front of you?

Mr D. Punch: No, I do not have that information with me.

Mr B.J. GRYLLS: This is for the current round?

Mr P.B. WATSON: And the last round too, please.

[4.30 pm]

Mr B.J. GRYLLS: That information is there but it is not in front of me at the moment, so by way of supplementary information I will provide the number of applications for round one of the regional grants scheme and how many were successful and the number of applications for round two and how many were successful, subject to the fact that round two has not actually been announced yet.

[*Supplementary Information No B19.*]

The appropriation was recommended.