

VERIFIED TRANSCRIPT

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

Inquiry into budget estimates 2010–11

Melbourne — 13 May 2010

Members

Mr R. Dalla-Riva

Ms J. Graley

Ms J. Huppert

Mr W. Noonan

Ms S. Pennicuik

Mr G. Rich-Phillips

Mr R. Scott

Mr B. Stensholt

Dr W. Sykes

Mr K. Wells

Chair: Mr B. Stensholt

Deputy Chair: Mr K. Wells

Staff

Executive Officer: Ms V. Cheong

Witnesses

Mr G. Jennings, Minister for Environment and Climate Change,

Mr G. Wilson, Secretary, and

Mr M. Clancy, Acting Chief Finance Officer, Department of Sustainability and Environment.

The CHAIR — I declare open the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearing on the 2010–11 budget estimates for the portfolio of environment and climate change. On behalf of the committee I welcome Mr Gavin Jennings, MLC, Minister for Environment and Climate Change; Mr Greg Wilson, Secretary of the Department of Sustainability and Environment; and Mr Matthew Clancy, acting chief finance officer, Department of Sustainability and Environment. Departmental officers, members of the public and the media are also welcome.

According to the guidelines for public hearings, I remind members of the public that they cannot participate in the committee proceedings. Only officers of the PAEC secretariat are to approach PAEC members. Departmental officers, as requested by the minister or his chief of staff, can approach the table during the hearing. Members of the media also requested to observe the guidelines for filming or recording proceedings in the Legislative Council committee room.

All evidence taken by this committee is taken under the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act and protected from judicial review. However, any comments made outside the precincts of the hearing are not protected by parliamentary privilege. There is no need for evidence to be sworn and all evidence being given today is being recorded. Witnesses will be provided with proof versions of the transcript to be verified and returned within two working days. In accordance with past practice, the transcripts and PowerPoint presentations and other materials circulated will then be placed on the committee's website.

Following a presentation by the minister, committee members will ask questions related to the budget estimates. Generally the procedure followed will be that relating to questions in the Legislative Assembly. I ask that all mobile telephones be turned off. We had an instance this morning of one ringing, so I hope they will all be turned off.

I now call on the minister to give a brief presentation of no more than 10 minutes on the more complex financial performance information that relates to the budget estimates for the portfolio of environment and climate change.

Overheads shown.

Mr JENNINGS — I thank the Chair and the committee for the opportunity to run through my responsibilities in environment and climate change as they relate to the 2010–11 budget. It is my intention to run through this presentation fairly quickly.

The first question I was asked last year was where the photo on the front of my presentation was taken. This one was taken in Colac in the Corangamite CMA.

Mr WELLS — Thank you, and there are no weeds.

Mr NOONAN — That looks like some rain coming.

Mr JENNINGS — Yes, indeed, we are optimistic in relation to rain and the weather. In fact you will notice that since the last time we met in this forum there has been significant rain, which is a nice change to what have been the prevailing conditions for the last decade or so.

In terms of the structure of the Department of Sustainability and Environment budget, this pie graph indicates the distribution of financial resources across the responsibilities I share with the Minister for Water in the administration of DSE. I highlight the \$327 million of healthy, productive water systems which is the administrative responsibility of my colleague the Minister for Water.

The remaining items of the pie chart in relation to programs are my responsibility, the biggest component being healthy and productive land; healthy, productive and accessible marine, coastal and estuarine systems; and flourishing biodiversity in healthy ecosystems — \$695 million in this year's budget; programs designed to achieve less waste, less pollution, clean air and a livable climate — \$190 million in this year's budget; and the administration of land and property information — \$132 million in this year's budget.

Obviously, as members of this committee would be aware and certainly the community is aware, the last year has seen significant investments and undertakings on behalf of our department, other government agencies and community organisations to rebuild community life after the bushfires of 2008. I would like to highlight a

number of commitments that have been made from the last budget to this budget to indicate the momentum of the bushfire reconstruction.

They include more than \$18 million to rebuild key Crown-owned community assets, \$17 million to rehabilitate the environment more broadly, \$9.2 million specifically to support the redevelopment of the Lake Mountain alpine resort, and an additional \$5.4 million to enhance tourist facilities and to enable us to reopen national parks.

Our fire mitigation and rehabilitation effort has been important to us, particularly in terms of rehabilitating land. More than 3400 kilometres of control lines have been rehabilitated and a significant replanting program has occurred in those locations throughout Victoria. More than 4500 hectares of forests have been reseeded and we have restored over 30 facilities across Victoria in parks and forests. That is a significant effort in its own right.

Beyond this, we have indicated that we understand we need to prepare for the risk of bushfires in an ongoing fashion. An additional \$35 million has been allocated up until between the last budget and this one in terms of assisting our fire preparedness. This has seen the appointment of additional firefighters, additional equipment and community engagement programs.

There is \$31 million allocated for incident control centres, incident management teams and the state control centre. We have allocated \$21 million over four years for outer urban fire protection, \$6 million for strategic fuel breaks and additional support for the bushfire information line of \$3.7 million.

This committee will realise that the royal commission, which has been undertaking a thorough evaluation of the circumstances that led to the 2008 fires — the emergency itself and the response — is due to make substantial recommendations in July this year. We would anticipate that further budgetary support will be allocated when the government responds to those recommendations. That is a fairly important point. I might predict that some of the questioning that may come to me today may be by its nature pre-emptive of the consideration of the commission, but I am happy to take questions, come what may.

In relation to very important undertakings of our department in relation to Securing Our Natural Future, we have allocated significant resources in the last financial year to supporting our biodiversity white paper. We have also provided funding for, in particular, additional resources for the natural resources investment program, land health programs, supporting the enhancements and changes in natural resource institutions, and ecosystems. Very significantly this year we have committed to establishing a major grassland reserve on the western edge of the Melbourne metropolitan area with \$20 million allocated over four years; \$200 million in total has been allocated in the budget to address that matter.

One of the major initiatives of the government in the days leading up to the budget was the \$175 million program over five years to support 18 priority actions in a package that was described as Jobs for Your Future. Many of those are within my portfolio. About \$75 million worth of those programs are directly within my portfolio to drive waste reduction, greater resource recovery, to assist councils in addressing that endeavour, to try to remove and reduce litter that may end up in the waste stream and to deal with contaminated legacy sites.

Some other highlights of the package include providing some support for solar hubs to be generated in Victorian communities. Hopefully through our actions to assist, planning-wise, planning decisions and the locations of such facilities, the community may be responsive and receptive to those ideas. We believe that will be the case. We have certainly supported innovation through related activities in my innovation portfolio in relation to research and development programs in climate change.

The last couple of matters that I will identify for the committee before handing back to the chair relate to the emphasis on supporting communities to adjust and adapt to climate change pressures and for them to support communities taking initiative: \$23 million has been identified for a program to support committee action on that front. We understand the importance of our community getting access to the natural environment so through the Go for Your Life programs and investments in parks we are trying to add to the infrastructure, access and availability of programs for a broader cross-section of our community to be engaged in our national parks and parks across Victoria. We understand the importance of dealing with the wellbeing of all of the states. Look out for further initiatives that will be announced in the blueprint for regional Victoria that will be announced subsequent to the budget. I know that you have already had a conversation with my colleague the Minister for Regional and Rural Development about that matter.

The last programs that I will indicate are ones that support community engagement with parks and tourism attractions, and try to deal with the conservation management of our parks regime through \$11 million to upgrade facilities, and funding for removing entry fees for access to national parks, providing support for pest and weed eradication in the parks network, and supporting the rehabilitation of the Summerlands estate to support the very vibrant penguin colony and tourism attraction on Phillip Island. We have a well-rounded portfolio of initiatives in this year's budget.

The CHAIR — Thank you very much, Minister. The budget aims to allocate funds for the next financial year and the subsequent out years for the stated priorities of the government and outcomes to be achieved. Could you advise the committee of your plans on which the budget for your portfolio are based? What are the medium and long-term strategies that you have, and have they changed from last year?

Mr JENNINGS — The plans that we have in place are cumulatively adding to the framework that has been outlined in the budget paper as it is developed across the whole of government. Growing Victoria Together is an essential building block of the strategic structure of this budget and we are mindful of the role which we play in that direction. In particular our priorities are to protect the environment and to make sure that we have efficient use of natural resources.

As the policy development continues across the whole of government in the form of Action for Victoria's Future, we believe that we will continue to support that further policy development. We do understand that there needs to be some strategic direction and focus of our programs and how we relate to other parts of the Victorian government. That can be through the living with bushfire strategy that was developed in 2008 and which still continues to be the basis on which we deal with the cumulative interaction of agencies that deal with our fire mitigation and community engagement effort and will need to be revised in the context of the royal commission's considerations. That is a very important framing of not only our decision making but our investment strategy. As I indicated, between the last budget and this one, more than \$35 million has been allocated to support meeting our bushfire firefighting effort.

Another strategic direction as outlined in the white paper for biodiversity was securing our natural future. That white paper had been subjected to a couple of years consultation with the community. We have invested accordingly in relation to implementing the recommendations and the directions of new programs in biodiversity protection, and of course the initiative in grasslands is consistent with that.

In the future, the last strategic direction that I will indicate is that we are contributing to the consideration of a whole-of-government Victorian climate change white paper, again being subjected to lengthy consultation — it came off the back of a green paper — and lengthy community engagement. The budget paper acknowledges that the climate change white paper will be a major policy, setting direction for the government in the coming months. We would anticipate that there will be a number of initiatives announced at that point in time that relate to my portfolio.

The CHAIR — Thank you very much for that.

Mr WELLS — Can I seek clarification on the handout before I ask my question? Minister, just to clarify a point, on this slide here you have \$2 million in 2010–11 for free entry to Victoria's national and metropolitan parks. Is that statement correct?

Mr JENNINGS — Yes.

Mr WELLS — It is just that the Premier on Monday said it was for four years. You are saying it is for one year.

Mr JENNINGS — No. In fact I noticed your interaction with the Premier. I have actually read the transcript. What you will find is that the Premier and I are actually saying the same —

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — I did not know the transcript was publicly available yet.

Mr WELLS — If it is not publicly available, why are you reading it?

Mr JENNINGS — Isn't it?

Mr WELLS — No. So why are you reading it? Why have you got access?

Dr SYKES — ‘A little birdie told me’?

Mr JENNINGS — I have not got it.

Mr WELLS — You have read it.

Mr JENNINGS — Was I referring to it?

Dr SYKES — Yes, you were.

Mr DALLA-RIVA — I read the transcript.

Dr SYKES — You read it in the transcript. Come clean.

Mr JENNINGS — Let me go back.

The CHAIR — It should be up on the website by now.

Mr JENNINGS — Just as I am sure you have people representing your interests in the audience today —

Mr WELLS — There are not too many.

Mr JENNINGS — I have had people representing my interests, sitting in the public gallery.

Mr WELLS — Is that what happened?

Mr JENNINGS — No. Sorry, I appreciate you seeking clarity on this matter, because in fact all of us will be better off if we are clear about this. I was advised that you asked a question — —

The CHAIR — Is this your question?

Mr WELLS — No. This is a fair clarification.

Ms GRALEY — Good question.

The CHAIR — It is a good question, but I think it is more — —

Mr WELLS — No, it is not a question; it is a clarification.

Mr JENNINGS — I know that you asked the Premier that question, and I have explained how I know about it.

Dr SYKES — You read the transcript?

Mr JENNINGS — What I will reiterate is that the first year accounting of that is in this year’s budget. It is fully anticipated that in the implementation of the removal of fees there will be some swings and roundabouts about the cost structure and the number of staff that will be employed. You may be aware that down on the Mornington Peninsula there has effectively been a contracted-out arrangement down at Point Nepean in relation who collects those fees. We will actually be finding our level of what the ongoing cost to budget will be after reviewing the swings and roundabouts of the implementation of that policy. It will be accounted for. Parks Victoria will not be out of budget in relation to this matter. So we have only attributed the first year’s cost.

Mr WELLS — My question?

The CHAIR — A short question, yes, thank you.

Mr WELLS — My question: I refer you to budget paper 3, pages 216 and 217 in regard to ‘Less waste, less pollution; and clean air’, and I also draw your attention to the Labor Party’s policy in 1999 titled A Better Environment, which stated very clearly:

Labor will introduce a comprehensive industrial waste management strategy that will make toxic waste dumps obsolete.

Obviously you have broken that promise, and you also tried to build two more.

Communities which have been exposed to dangerous toxic waste in Tullamarine and Lyndhurst have reported abnormally high rates of cancer, serious health problems and birth defects. I have noticed in some of the clippings that reported cases reveal babies being born with a missing kidney or without eyes. Can you guarantee that no Victorians, and in particular children, have been or will be detrimentally affected by the hazardous fumes and contaminated groundwater resulting from these toxic waste dumps? Minister, would you yourself live near a toxic waste dump, and what were the findings and recommendations of the chief health officer's investigations into the impact of hazardous waste on the health of Victorians living in Melbourne's south-east, please?

The CHAIR — Minister, this is an estimates hearing, so insofar as those questions relate to the estimates they can be taken.

Mr WELLS — I am referring to 216 and 217.

The CHAIR — Other aspects, in terms of past events et cetera, you can take on notice.

Mr JENNINGS — There was a lot in that question, and to go straight to the chase, I think in relation to whether I or any other member of the Victorian community would be required to live in close proximity to a landfill site, in the way that you have described those landfill sites, the answer is no, none of us is either compelled, or indeed in terms of the planning regime able, to live in close proximity to a landfill site. Certainly there are significant buffers that are in place and have been in place for a number of years after the review of the planning regime that applies to landfills in Victoria after the arrival of the Bracks and Brumby governments. We did make significant adjustments to the way in which planning decisions are made. Beyond that, there are a number of concerns that have been expressed in relation to Tullamarine and indeed to Lyndhurst.

In the case of Tullamarine, there was an investigation undertaken by the health department as recently as 2006 that evaluated evidence which had been compiled by the local community, and public health data for that area. It is a lengthy report that is publicly available, and I can share it with Mr Wells or with any other member of the committee if they so desire, which indicates there is no statistical validity to say there is a correlation between living in proximity to this location and a demonstrable health outcome.

That is not to say that people who live in municipalities such as Tullamarine or Lyndhurst may not have adverse health outcomes that may derive from a variety of genetic or lifestyle or unfortunate circumstances. But the issue in terms of the reliability of statistical analysis is how it sits within epidemiological or morbidity patterns that apply across the community, and the evidence from the professionals suggests that in fact it is not statistically valid.

At Lyndhurst there is a community engagement panel that works in cooperation with the landfill operator, the local municipality and the EPA, which has engaged with the community. They have recently reviewed the methodology for a prospective health survey in the Lyndhurst municipality, and I will be as keen as anybody in the community to see what that analysis is.

Mr WELLS — And I suppose it will be publicly available?

Mr JENNINGS — Yes, there would be the intention for it to be.

The CHAIR — Obviously a copy of that will be useful for the secretariat.

Ms GRALEY — Minister, I am going to continue with my green-themed questions today, and I am going to ask you a question about Jobs for the Future Economy. I refer you to page 282 of budget paper 3 where it describes the initiatives included in the Jobs for the Future Economy. I would like you to explain to the committee how these initiatives might better position Victoria not only to reduce its impact on climate change but also drive new jobs and, of course, investment for all of us in Victoria.

Mr JENNINGS — Thank you for the opportunity. As I quickly raced through in my presentation one of the important commitments of our government that we announced in the days leading up to the budget was a

\$175 million commitment to what we describe as a Jobs for the Future Economy: Green Jobs Action Plan, which outlines a number of key opportunities for Victorian businesses and communities to respond to the climate change agenda and sustainability generally to lead to job creation.

The major emphasis of that program is in construction and the built form, so there are a number of commitments the government has made to retrofit and renovate our existing buildings across government which includes some major public institutions such as the Royal Talbot Hospital, the Heidelberg Repatriation and the museum at one end of the scale in terms of large consumers of energy, right down to relatively small consumers of energy being some of our schools, and 60 schools across Victoria have been earmarked to start that program, to retrofit them to be more efficient.

We understand that not only plays an important leadership role but it does a bit for reducing energy demand. It leads to great employment opportunities in terms of the construction and renovation industries, which is very important to us. We also understand that it is consistent to roll it out through ongoing reforms to domestic buildings, so as part of the package we confirmed that Victoria will be moving to 6 star new homes and renovations in the next 12 months, which is a very important undertaking that Victoria has consistently led the way on.

We understand that in terms of access to this investment, we should have easier access for developers who want to develop sustainable buildings, to have quicker and easier planning approval processes. That is something we have identified as part of the package.

We also understand that whether it be in waste management or resource recovery there is a significant investment that is required to try to make sure we reduce the amount of material going into landfill, and I am pleased that in fact our friends in the opposition are interested in these matters; that we are trying to get out of landfills. That is something we are very supportive of. We have a great track record of shifting large volumes out of — a lot of business as usual would have ended up in landfill but leading to greater recycling and resource recovery efforts. Certainly the announcement of landfill levies and the use of that material to drive investment in resorts recovery is an essential part of our story. We think that is a big opportunity for job creation in the future.

We also think in terms of the diversification of our energy sources — whether it be through community-based solar hubs or small-scale initiatives such as a pilot to see whether ceramic fuel cells might be viable in public housing, we think with some steering and some support from the package — that we may stimulate economic opportunities for manufacturers and distributors of such equipment in Victoria.

Certainly the Jobs for the Future Economy lays out a number of opportunities, far beyond what was initially funded in terms of the programs but facilitating private sector investment. Skill development is a very important part of our story. We have committed to green plumbing initiatives and to further initiatives to try to make sure we have the skill base to undertake this work. We do not want the implementation of programs that do not have correlation, accreditation and skill development. This is a feature of our programs in this area. We want to make sure there are skills that rise up to meet the expectations of quality assurance in the delivery of those outcomes.

Dr SYKES — Minister, my question is — as you anticipated — in relation to area targets and fuel reduction burns. I am mindful of your comment about not pre-empting the royal commission. However, I should say the government has acted ahead of royal commission recommendations on other matters, so that in itself is not a reason to not be on the front foot. Is there a budget allocation for fuel reduction burning in the forthcoming year through to 2013-14?

Mr JENNINGS — I thank the member for the cautious way in which he asked the question and acknowledging that I might be a bit cautious too, there has been — —

Dr SYKES — I am just warming up. Keep going.

Mr JENNINGS — The thing about it is that I do appreciate that implied in the question is a recognition of the importance of this program, so there is no doubt about that; and I think if that is something we share, I can be grateful for that.

As to our fire mitigation effort, which is probably colloquially known as just being limited to fuel reduction burning, we have a specific program in the budget which is dedicated to this program, and page 213 of budget

paper 3 is the place where you will find it; \$216 million is the amount that has been allocated to the program in which fuel reduction burning is undertaken.

It relates to our broader responsibilities in terms of the mitigation, the strategic fuel break responsibility and our response. So that should be understood to be a base number. If you plot the outgoing over the last few years, you will see that that number has risen and fallen dependent upon the actual expenditure that was involved in fighting fires and responding to emergencies, so that number within that program has ebbed and flowed, but consistently that number has actually grown. So over the life of the government the expenditure in that budget item has shifted from in the order of \$75 million when we came to government to be now \$216 million.

Over the life of the government in terms of fuel reduction burning, which I know is a matter that the commission has received a lot of evidence about and a lot of submissions about, there are a lot of people who believe that they are experts in this field and probably a fewer number who actually are, but nonetheless I think the general consensus of everybody who makes a submission is that by and large the program should be bigger.

Certainly this is something that has been a feature of my time in the portfolio. I have been in the portfolio for three years. If you have a look at what the average over that period of time is, the average of the outcome is 146 000 hectares, even though the budget paper requires us to report back and say we have acquitted 130 000 hectares. So each year that I have been in this job we have exceeded not only in absolute terms but on average that 130 000 hectares.

We certainly understand that there is a need to grow the program. Our evidence that was brought before the commission indicates that we need to try to make sure that we take the community with us, so in terms of community engagement, we also understand that we have to be strategic about it in relation to the scale of burning, the intensity of burns that deal with the ecology values that we seek to maintain and enhance, and the strategic nature of how it relates to not only assets or things such as catchments or townships, but how it is strategically placed in the landscape to stop the spread of fire.

There is a lot of science that is involved in this. We are trying to bring all that science together to use the evidence which is about best science and to grow the program. Having said all that, we have committed resources; we have grown the program; we intend to continue to grow the program. We are waiting for some specific recommendations that may come out of the commission's recommendations before we make any further commitment, but I indicate to you that for the last three reporting years we have exceeded the target that is in the budget paper.

Dr SYKES — But my question, Minister, was: what of that \$216 million is allocated to fuel reduction burns?

Mr JENNINGS — One of the reasons why this is a difficult thing to answer in the terms that you want — and it is fair enough that you ask the question — is that we have a number of people who are specifically employed throughout this program, and the \$216 million accounts for all people who are specifically employed through that program.

In terms of our firefighting effort and in terms of our fuel reduction burning effort, we call on resources from outside that program, and we also call on people from outside that program to help us with our emergency response, so that this program in question is the formal location, where we would be formally obliged to equip the expectation of us delivering on that target.

In terms of the resources that we bring to bear, I indicate to you that we add resources effectively in kind by our staff and at various points of time we call on more than 2000 — well, 3000 staff during the course of an emergency, but a much larger pool of staff beyond that program to assist us with the fuel reduction program.

Dr SYKES — I understand all of that, but in arriving at the figure of \$216 million, it would be reasonable to presume a proportion of that has been allocated for fuel reduction burns, for your costs — whether it is in kind or whatever. My question is what is that and what area of burn was that based on?

Mr JENNINGS — In terms of our formal obligation to the Parliament, to the government and in relation to you, our obligation is to do our best to equip the target that is in the budget paper.

Dr SYKES — So you are declining to answer?

Mr JENNINGS — No, I am just saying that is what we do. That is what we have exceeded, and we draw on additional resources internally and in partnership with other agencies to deliver.

Dr SYKES — Chair, I ask that that question be taken on notice, please — the budget allocation for fuel reduction burns for 2010-11 through to 2013-14 and the area targets for that period.

The CHAIR — The area of target is clear. In terms of the other part, I would happy for — —

Dr SYKES — No, the target is not there.

The CHAIR — One hundred and thirty thousand hectares.

Dr SYKES — No.

Mr WELLS — No, it is not there. Hang on, Bob has got some additional information!

Mr JENNINGS — That is what it has been.

The CHAIR — Sorry, we will not know until after the royal commission reports.

Mr JENNINGS — That was for 2004–05. It is to be determined after the consideration of the commission. I volunteered that, and I volunteer it again.

Dr SYKES — If you wait for the royal commission to hand down, that will be in July. If you are going to increase the area, which you are alluding to, then you may well need to factor in spring burns. To do that, given that you have explained to us that it is complex planning issue, it would be fair and reasonable as a forward planning department and minister to have some plans in mind now about what targets you are going for in anticipation because if you wait for the royal commission to hand down its recommendations, you will be way behind the game.

Mr JENNINGS — That is a fair enough proposition.

The CHAIR — It is a fair enough proposition.

Mr JENNINGS — I am not daunted by that question or that proposition, either.

Dr SYKES — What is your target for this year in anticipation?

The CHAIR — I think the minister has answered that three times.

Dr SYKES — The minister has refused to answer the most basic questions about target burns.

The CHAIR — The minister has not refused to answer anything.

Dr SYKES — Therefore we cannot judge whether the minister is protecting Victorians.

The CHAIR — The minister is able to answer questions in terms of the way the department frames them. You have the text et cetera, and the royal commission, of course, will come down later.

Mr NOONAN — Minister, page 360 of budget paper 3 outlines the landfill levy increases over the forward estimates, and it provides some details about how that landfill levy will be reinvested. Can you please explain in particular how this levy might help to create jobs in the resource recovery sector and how this investment may assist councils that do have the responsibility for managing that waste?

Mr JENNINGS — Thank you. As I had indicated in my presentation and the answer to the Jobs for the Future Economy question, our government does actually see great value in driving resource recovery. We as a community are great recyclers already, and we want take that momentum further. We think that increasing landfill levies will play a significant role in, no. 1, providing an incentive for households and businesses to

reduce the amount of material that may go into landfill in the first instance, but more importantly, using the revenues that have been derived from the increased levy to reinvest in productive capability.

What we have determined to do is to lift the landfill levy significantly in this financial year and in the next financial year and then to use those revenues in that way. Whilst we have recognised that this be an impost on business and households, we have tried to maintain a reasonable level so that in fact it is not onerous for households. If you actually apportion what is the average waste of a household that goes into landfill during the course of the year, the increase equates to about \$9 in the metropolitan area and about \$3 in rural parts of Victoria. For instance, if people take a trailer load in regional Victoria to a landfill, and that is somewhere in the order of 100 kilograms on the back of that trailer, people will be up for an additional 30 cents when they take it. The equivalent in Melbourne is about \$1.

In terms of some of the mythology that is developing around the scale of the mystic impost, it is actually relatively modest, but it does accumulate across municipal waste and across industry to quite significant revenues. We have allocated in the budget \$54 million to be used for a variety of purposes: \$28 million to actually support industry in reprocessing and changing the way in which they do business so as to reduce the amount of the waste they have in the first instance, and half of that \$28 million is to assist businesses making decisions to establish new recycling and resource recovery initiatives.

I thank you for recognising in your question that we need to give a bit of support to the local government sector to make sure that it can acquit its responsibilities. We have provided \$6 million to assist councils across Victoria dealing with litter that may end up in their municipalities and to prevent that from occurring. We understand municipalities want to participate in decision making about where resource recovery will actually be undertaken. We have provided \$5.5 million to support local government coming together to make decisions in the metropolitan area about how those investments for new facilities could be driven, and \$3 million to assist that work in regional Victoria.

We understand this is a story for all of Victoria; not just metropolitan Melbourne but for regional Victoria. In fact we can see many instances where regional employment may benefit. If you go back to first principles, for every 10 000 tonnes of waste that is out there, there are about three jobs associated with it if it ends up in landfill, and there are nine jobs associated with it if it ends up being recycled and reused. The multiplier is three; there are nine jobs per 10 000 tonnes of material. There is about 4 million tonnes out there waiting to be recycled, so it is quite a growth area for jobs.

Dr SYKES — Minister, continuing with fire preparation and again budget paper 3, page 212 and the a table there, about three up from the bottom: ‘Personnel with accreditation in a fire role’, you have a number there of 1500. That is the target for 2010–11. What percentage of DSE employees have level 2 or 3 accreditation, enabling them to serve in a senior capacity in a fire role, and what budget has been allocated to provide training for DSE employees to increase the number of level 3 accreditations in a fire role in the budget year 2010–11 and annually from the forward estimates up until 2013–14?

Mr JENNINGS — I think I am about to say to you that I do not have the number of category 2 and 3 immediately before us.

The CHAIR — If you do not have it, we can take this on notice and move on, because it is really quite specific. Have you got any information?

Mr JENNINGS — No, we will have to seek it out.

The CHAIR — All right. We will take that one on notice.

Dr SYKES — I did not hear that. So you do not know that answer, but you will take it on notice and get back to me?

Mr JENNINGS — Yes.

The CHAIR — That is correct. That is what I said.

Ms HUPPERT — Minister, in your presentation you touched on the allocation of \$23 million for Climate Communities. I note that in budget paper 3 on pages 45 and 46 you refer to Climate Communities as a means of

addressing one of the great challenges facing us, which is climate change. I am wondering if you could outline to the committee how the program will help individuals and communities to take action to reduce emissions through local projects, because obviously local action is very important in this area.

Mr JENNINGS — Yes indeed. There have been a number of programs of recent times that we have seen a great engagement by our community in taking a response to climate change challenges. The sustainability accord and greenhouse alliances have been formed across Victoria in a number of regions, and we have seen a large take-up of participation across the Victorian community in taking action.

We saw a few months ago that there was an opportunity to refresh and to revise that program and to give it an additional momentum. The Premier announced the establishment of a Climate Communities program which would bring various elements of those pre-existing programs and new resources together to support community action in this space. It is a \$23 million program, of which we have allocated the first \$10 million: \$4 million to support community knowledge information sharing and capacity building, and \$6 million for the first round of grants that are available to community organisations that may want to come together to be supportive of abatement actions or community-strengthening proposals or to drive innovation in communities about the way in which knowledge sharing, new technologies, precinct management and community organisations may come together to get better outcomes.

That could be resource recovery. It could be in the provision of energy sources. It could be knowledge sharing about ways in which people in the community have adapted to climate change pressures. We think this will be a very popular program, and clearly not only popular with metropolitan community organisations but I am pleased to say that Dr Sykes's colleague Mr Jasper sees this as a worthy program. He is actually trying to get applications through his office to keep that program ticking over, so he is with the program. I am very pleased to hear that it is a possibility for The Nationals to be with the climate change program.

The CHAIR — Thank you very much for that.

Ms PENNICUIK — Minister, I know you are aware that this is the International Year of Biodiversity, and you would be aware of the release this week of the UN report on the state of biodiversity across the world. You would also be aware that, according to the Australian Terrestrial Biodiversity Assessment, Victoria's biodiversity is the most depleted in Australia. You mentioned in your presentation about the white paper on land and biodiversity. I know that environment groups have looked at that as taking us in the right direction, but there is concern that without significant resources it is pretty unlikely that the goals will be achieved. I have been looking at page 210 of budget paper 3 where there is a \$53.2 million allocation.

Some of the performance measures include timely renewal of game and wildlife licences, and I do not know how that helps with biodiversity. In your presentation you mentioned such things as the natural resources investment program, \$19 million; land health, \$14 million; enhancements to natural resource institutions, \$4 million; and ecosystem services, \$1.2 million. That adds up to about \$43 million. Can you explain what they are and how they relate to the biodiversity white paper? Is that the sum total of this year's budget allocation towards biodiversity?

The CHAIR — There are a number of points there. Minister, you may wish to take some of them on notice, but could you try your best?

Mr JENNINGS — As a simple answer to a complex question, in the programs going forward, as you have identified, in 2010–11 there is \$32 million, in 2011–12, \$33 million, in 2012–13, \$35 million, and then in the last year only \$5 million has been allocated in the out year to 2013–14 to assist in the restructuring and alignment of programs and new investments to deliver outcomes to support the land and biodiversity white paper.

You have partially answered your question yourself in that you have identified, within this, the \$90 million expansion to the natural resource investment program, and there is an additional \$20 million allocated over three years to the ecosystems enhancement of natural resource institutions and land health program. Cumulatively they will deal with a number of elements. They would be dealing with the new alignment of catchment management responsibilities. They will be dealing with the introduction of natural resource management legislation which is on the government's agenda in the next 12 months or so. They will continue to build on market-based programs such as EcoTender and BushTender.

They will be supporting land-holders in developing environmental goods and services, costing and market-based mechanisms, and the provision of on-farm advisory services. There will be targeted investment for 13 priority flagship areas. In line with some of the consideration about the natural resource management reform, there will be a greater alignment between coastal management and catchment management in terms of the interface issues.

The last element to your question is specifically whether that is the limit of biodiversity. You must have had a blind spot to the fact that we talked about grasslands protection; that is significantly important.

Overheads shown.

Mr JENNINGS — Pests and weeds expenditure is outlined there on the slide presentation. That assists in biodiversity protection. As you would appreciate, in terms of managing the landscape there are lots of ways in which you contribute to biodiversity protection. Of course there are ongoing opportunities for us, in one or two instances, to add to that through the prism of the regional blueprint, which is a work in progress.

Ms PENNICUIK — Chair, all that information from which the minister was just reading, is that available to the committee? Could it be tabled?

The CHAIR — It is now in the Hansard transcript. But if there is any other information you could provide, Minister, that would be useful. It would be good if the department could give us a reconciliation arrangement.

Mr JENNINGS — I think Ms Pennicuik knows where to track me down.

Mr SCOTT — Following on from the answer to Ms Pennicuik's question, my question relates to the establishment of new grassland reserves to the west of Melbourne over the next 10 years, which is referred to in the presentation provided by the minister in budget paper 3, pages 347, 348 and 350. What are the likely environmental benefits of this program?

Mr JENNINGS — In fact that is a very nice segue. It is almost as if we are talking the same language here.

Ms PENNICUIK — Not entirely.

Mr JENNINGS — No, in fact you have not been terribly interested in grassland protections; I have noticed that through your action.

Ms PENNICUIK — I am very interested in it.

Mr JENNINGS — The government is certainly interested in creating significant grassland reserves.

Planning decisions that relate to the establishment of the new urban growth boundary have been made; 15 000 hectares of grassland reserves have been identified to be subjected to a public acquisition overlay to enable a large reserve to be created in the western suburbs of Melbourne. When you add that to significant conservation treatment being applied within the urban growth boundary — somewhere in the order of 7000 hectares of grassland and other remnant vegetation protection — it is a very significant government commitment. In total we estimate the acquisition of 200 properties over the next 10 years or so; 31 houses are involved, which will be somewhat disruptive for members of the community — I do understand this — but it is a significant undertaking on behalf of the government and certainly something that we see as one of our major investments in biodiversity protection.

There is not a huge reservoir of community support welling up to protect golden sun moths, striped legless lizards, spiny rice flowers, plain wanderers or growling grass frogs. Perhaps there are many people who are quite sceptical about their wellbeing and their contribution to our ecological integrity. Even though this is not important to some people, it is very important to the Victorian government — —

Ms PENNICUIK — We have been calling for it for a long time and you are finally coming to it. It has taken years for you to get on top of it.

The CHAIR — The minister, without assistance.

Ms PENNICUIK — He provokes! It is good that you have just woken up, Minister. It has taken years and years.

Mr JENNINGS — So the government has been and is committed to this outcome. In summary, at the moment in terms of what are known as natural temperate grasslands, which were once very dominant across the western plains of Victoria from Melbourne most of the way to Portland, we only have 2 per cent in reserve, and as a consequence of this action we will have 20 per cent of the remaining grasslands in reserve.

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — Minister, I would like to take you to the package you spoke about with, I think it was with Mr Noonan, concerning the waste levy package and the funding you have provided of \$54 million, and you went through the breakdown of that before. When that was announced in March you said the levy would be put in place to fund it. The service delivery budget paper shows the expected revenues from that landfill levy over the forward estimates period will total \$174 million — that is on page 360 — against which you have allocated \$54 million in particular initiatives. My question is: is the rest of those funds, \$120 million, hypothecated into other waste reduction-type initiatives implicit with the announcement and, if so, has it been allocated against initiatives?

Mr JENNINGS — That is a good question because in fact it is subject to a very prescriptive regime as outlined in legislation that indicates that, in terms of redirection or use of those funds, they are limited by what the specific allocation may be. The building blocks for how the landfill levy is ascribed are that, in the first instance, are attributed to the support of waste management groups; so that is a set amount. In the past that number has been \$4.4 million and going forward into 2010–11 it is \$5.5 million; that is a set number. The next three allocations are ascribed again in legislation on the basis that Sustainability Victoria receives 50 per cent of whatever the surplus is between the revenue intake and that \$5.5 million, so it is the net position. It then is charged with the responsibility of allocating money through the Sustainability Fund to support outcomes in waste and sustainability. Beyond what I have just described in relation to Sustainability Victoria, it provides through that 50 per cent allocation — —

Sorry, I have to make sure that I am making clear what I have just said to you.

Mr WELLS — Good.

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — So 50 per cent of the balance — —

Mr JENNINGS — It is probably important. Fifty per cent goes to programs that are administered by Sustainability Victoria. In 2010–11 that is anticipated to be \$25.7 million. Then around 90 per cent of those programs relate to waste and resource recovery and they provide incentives and advice to communities to participate in that. The EPA has an allocation of 12 per cent, which in 2010–11 would be estimated to be \$5.8 million, to again support activities that are designed to ensure that we have compliance and monitoring of appropriate landfill, and that we have an enforcement capability to make sure that things do not end up in the waste stream outside of landfill by inappropriate dumping.

The last element of the investment goes back to the Sustainability Fund, and that is the reason why I had the potential to confuse you at the beginning. That is 28 per cent of the fund, and that equates to somewhere in the order of \$25.8 million in 2010–11, as estimated. That will be distributed through community and business grants to support sustainable outcomes, and in part to support other things such as the Climate Communities program, which I already indicated in my answer. In summary, \$5.5 million is set and then the residual is distributed in accordance with the act in those three areas.

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — Within those three areas have the allocations been made? You referred to the last one being a community grants program. Within the other areas have allocations been made from proportions? Are those uncommitted funds?

Mr JENNINGS — No, they are not, because quite often they are contested grant funding that applies during the course of the year.

The CHAIR — So the grants have not been allocated because the decisions have not been made on the basis of applications?

Mr JENNINGS — No.

The CHAIR — But you are not asking that, Mr Rich-Phillips? You are asking about the other two areas?

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — About the other two areas, yes.

Mr JENNINGS — In relation to that, there are specific programs that will be ongoing — for example, through Sustainability Victoria there is Right Advice at the Right Place, and the municipal resource recovery strategy, Towards Zero Waste. These are ongoing programs so they will need to be maintained. For the EPA it is their expenditure in relation to enforcement and monitoring.

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — In summary, there is basically no allocated cash from that revenue?

The CHAIR — There cannot be, unless you are not following the legislation.

Mr JENNINGS — It is a matter of whether you actually say it is located to a spot, in terms of the Sustainability Fund — —

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — So it is all located to a spot? And within those spots — —

Mr JENNINGS — As an envelope, is it allocated?

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — Yes.

Mr JENNINGS — But beyond that, in terms of ongoing decision making about how that fund is used, they will be made in subsequent decisions during the course of the year.

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — But that basically relates only to the Sustainability Fund?

Mr JENNINGS — Exactly.

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS — The other ones have already been — —

Mr JENNINGS — That is right.

Ms GRALEY — Minister, I think it is fantastic that we are celebrating the International Year of Biodiversity with free entry into Victoria's national and metropolitan parks. We all want to make sure that more people go to parks. One way of doing that is by providing free access, but also by providing quality infrastructure. I would like to refer you to page 350 of budget paper 3 where it talks about 'Asset replacement and renewal of Victoria's parks and public land' and the committed funding of \$11.2 million over 2010–11 and 2011–12 to upgrade parks infrastructure across metropolitan Melbourne and in regional Victoria. If you could, I would like you to advise the committee about this program, and in particular how this will boost Victoria's parks and natural assets going forward?

Mr JENNINGS — From the start, what might be seen as a relatively modest commitment in terms of forgoing the entry fee, it has extracted a question from Mr Wells and it has extracted a question from you, so we are doing reasonably well. But ultimately the people of Victoria will be doing pretty well, because our modelling suggests that there may be a 25 per cent increase in access to parks in a number of those locations throughout Victoria. That one initiative — a relatively modest investment — actually may see increasing access. If that is the outcome, we would be very happy about that.

But we recognise that it is also incumbent upon us to make sure we have got infrastructure, interpretation and facilities available for people who come to our parks. With the allocation of the \$11.2 million that you have outlined we will be undertaking a number of things, which include upgrades to facilities at the Grampians, Port Campbell National Park, Jells Park, Yarra Ranges National Park, Braeside, and Cardinia Reservoir Park. As you can see there, there is a mixture of some of the large regional ones.

The CHAIR — And some for Wattle Park, I hope, too.

Mr JENNINGS — Wattle Park? I will just have to reflect on that. I will get on the tram. There are a number of specific things, in terms of investments, that will be pretty popular with Victorians, which include

redevelopment of the Gipps-Clarke streets bridge in the precinct of Yarra Bend Park that will enable greater access for bike riders in particular. There is a bit of a bottleneck that has actually required a bit of design and construction to overcome that bottleneck, and \$2.5 million is going to be allocated to that, which will also be supported by an additional \$300 000 for the Yarra Trail bridge.

We also understand that there is a requirement to spread those investments around. Unfortunately, for the last couple of years there has been a bit of a lag of the market responding to an opportunity up at Mount Buffalo. We have been hoping that there would be significant private sector investment coming to that mountain to assist in the regional recovery after the fires. That has not come, so part of this package will be to allocated \$1 million to add to the facilities at Mount Buffalo.

Wattle Park! Good news; there is something for Wattle Park! We will support a heritage trail and some walking tracks. It is going to be a feature that I add to my armoury of questions. I intended to come back and give a supplementary answer to Dr Sykes's question before, when I got the opportunity. But that is my supplementary in relation to this one.

Mr DALLA-RIVA — Minister, I refer you to the budget paper 3. It relates to 'Healthy and productive land; healthy, productive and accessible marine, coastal' et cetera.

The CHAIR — What page is this one?

Mr DALLA-RIVA — Page 209.

The CHAIR — I see. 'Flourishing biodiversity' as well.

Mr DALLA-RIVA — I was just talking about it generally. I am just going to go to the minister about what are his views in relation to the management of public land. As you know, the Minister for Planning's decision on the Bastion Point boat ramp development at Mallacoota appears to have been made against the advice of his independent panel, environment groups, and members of the local community in East Gippsland.

Ms PENNICUIK — Was made. It did not appear to be.

Mr DALLA-RIVA — I understand that more than 85 per cent of submissions to the environmental effects study public inquiry were strongly opposed to this development. I am asking in terms of the forward estimates how you best believe decisions regarding the performance measures of this particular area are best managed by the Minister for Planning under the use of his Environment Effects Act. Does the minister believe that Bastion Point boat ramp will not have a significant effect on the environment moving forward?

The CHAIR — Minister, insofar as it relates to your portfolio and also to the estimates going forward. I am not sure whether past decisions are necessarily relevant, except to inform your future actions.

Mr JENNINGS — I will do my best to answer a question that actually invites me to do a whole range of inappropriate things. First of all, can I actually say to you that I do have some reserve responsibilities under the Coastal Management Act, in terms of approvals for development proposals that relate to the coast. That is a reserve power that I continue to have and that I will continue to take advice on. Beyond that, in relation to all the subject material in your question, it is subject not only to the consideration of my colleague the Minister for Planning in relation to EESs but also to Supreme Court considerations in Victoria. I do not want to get too far ahead of what the succession of the Minister for Planning's decisions may be and the court's considerations of it. If and when it comes to me for my consideration, I will exercise my responsibility under the Coastal Management Act.

Mr DALLA-RIVA — Do you not believe the ramp development contradicts the principles of the Victorian coastal strategy?

The CHAIR — I am not sure that is necessarily — —

Mr JENNINGS — No, you have reached the limits of what I am going to say to you.

Mr NOONAN — Minister, I want to ask you about an item which you included in your presentation, the Summerland estate on Phillip Island, which is referenced on page 347 of budget paper 3. I was just wondering if

you could explain for the committee's benefit what the program will entail and how the funding will be used to assist in ensuring that the nature park continues to be one of the state's top tourist destinations?

Mr JENNINGS — Thank you for the question and recognising this. It was pointed out to me recently that I could actually go back to giving some credit where credit was due, to the Hamer administration that recognised the value of preserving parts of Phillip Island to actually protect the penguins. This has been by and large — —

Mr DALLA-RIVA — But not boat ramps.

The CHAIR — Ignoring the interjections, Minister; they are unparliamentary. Would you like to continue?

Mr JENNINGS — Some people actually do not like getting credit where credit was due. I do not know. They are upset about it.

Members interjecting.

Mr NOONAN — It serves you right for trying.

Mr JENNINGS — For most of the period of time it has been a Labor government that has actually been required to accumulate the parcels. We certainly have continued on with that, and we have only got one or two parcels to go. We have almost completed that purchase, which has involved 773 properties over a very long period of time. It has taken a long time to acquit that responsibility, but I think not only the penguin population can be grateful that that has been achieved but in fact thousands of Victorians and those who came to Phillip Island can be grateful that we have done that.

It is one of Victoria's most popular tourism attractions with more than 1 million visitors in the last reporting year, 55 per cent of whom were perhaps what can be described as 'high yield' tourists from the northern hemisphere.

Mr NOONAN — They spend money?

Mr JENNINGS — Yes, they spend quite a bit of money. As an outcome of that, 180 people are employed at the Phillip Island Nature Park, which is obviously a very large employer on Phillip Island; it is probably the largest employer. KPMG analysis indicates that \$107 million worth of annual economic activity in the state of Victoria comes through this park.

In answer to your question, with the investment of \$3.4 million we want to make sure that we continue the buyback program and that we develop the appropriate sensitive configuration of those parcels that we accumulate, whether that be through undergrounding some electricity supply — which is a bit of a challenge in itself, given that penguins like to burrow; nonetheless I am sure we will be wise in the infrastructure we bring through the \$3.4 million — and continuing to address other risks such as fire and other predator risks associated with that accumulation of parcels so that we have a vibrant penguin colony into the future.

Dr SYKES — I am going to ask a question in relation to fires. Do you want to give me the supplementary answer before I ask the next question?

Mr JENNINGS — No, away you go. See how we go; see if I can seamlessly segue.

The CHAIR — We do not have supplementaries as normal practice. One question, one answer.

Dr SYKES — If I could just get a clarification in relation to — —

The CHAIR — A question and an answer.

Dr SYKES — In relation to my earlier question regarding the planning for fuel reduction burns — and you have indicated there are no figures in the budget; you have said you will wait for the outcome of the royal commission — if the royal commission recommends an increase in area to be burnt and you adopt that recommendation, where will that additional funding come from? Will it be a Treasury advance?

Mr JENNINGS — The way in which the fire budget has worked in the past has been that it has often been subject to a Treasurer's advance. Going back to the first answer I gave you today, there is a base funding within

that program and time and again it has been supplemented during the course of the fire season through a Treasurer's advance. The ability has been there in the past and the ability is there in the future for it to be dealt with in that way, so I would be positive and optimistic that if the royal commission makes recommendations and the government sees fit to respond to those by adding to the resource allocation for that program, I am confident it will be found and I am confident that the Treasurer will support that during the course of the year. That is about as far as I would be able to go on that one.

One of reasons I did not give you a complete answer before about the number of level 2 and 3 controllers is because we were a bit flummoxed by the intricacies of the detail about it. You would notice on page 213 of budget paper 3 that there is a number for incident 2 and 3 controllers, so we were aware of that. I possibly left the space silent. We should recognise that before we go back and give you detailed answers about how much resources and allocation, whether those staff are within DSE, whether they are in our neo-partners, whether that be DPI or Parks Victoria. It was just the complexities of the detail that led me to baulk from answering with the number that is on the budget paper already.

Dr SYKES — So that 1500 on page 212 of budget paper 3 are level 2 and level 3 accredited? They are not accredited to some other — —

Mr JENNINGS — No, on the following page.

The CHAIR — You will find this on page 213; the second one there.

Mr JENNINGS — On the following page it is 230.

The CHAIR — That was a combined figure. Your question was quite specific in terms of detailing it out under each level.

Mr JENNINGS — And I just realised in retrospect that I have left it a little bit silent, so I should give you that detail.

The CHAIR — That is fine. We knew it was there.

Dr SYKES — Thank you.

Ms HUPPERT — I am a keen bushwalker and I know how much the state benefits from ecotourism and that type of thing. I note that on page 282 of budget paper 3 there is an allocation to walking trails for improving recreational opportunities in regional communities. I am wondering if you could expand on what that will provide for park networks in Victoria.

Mr JENNINGS — One of the good things about joined-up government — because sometimes joined-up government is just a phrase that is bandied about; it does not actually give life and a sense of meaning to anybody but is something that is in-house jargon — is that the government is joined up in this regard in relation to this program. We have great parks, we have great community assets and we have great waterways. What we do not in some instances have is a great connection between the diversity of the Victorian community, whether that be through ethnicity, stage of life or form of ability, and in fact there is an increasing correlation between the diversity of our community and access to our parks. This specific program is designed to do a bit outreach work to try to encourage a broader diversity in the engagement of the community within parks. Whether that be through providing access information, guidebooks, Web-based material being made available to people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds or whether it be through people with a range of abilities, those programs will be funded to assist people to get out and about in our parks through this program.

Mr DALLA-RIVA — My question is about the consolidated revenue and I refer to budget paper 4, page 253. With the notable exception of 2008–09, DSE's share in consolidated revenue has declined every year since 2003–04, an overall reduction of 18 per cent. Budget paper 3, page 205 also shows a reduction in DSE's spending in the last year on sustainable water supply and waste management. Given the ongoing threats of bushfires, the impact of drought and growing levels of waste and pollution, how do you justify spending less on the environment and what programs have been cut as a result? Why has there been a reduction in DSE's share in revenue? Is this not an indication of this government's reactive response to environmental issues?

Mr JENNINGS — No, it is not. If you are a convert to the value of environmental protection and programs to support it, then I welcome you to that space. Certainly that is something that I would welcome your ongoing interest in.

One of the things that is not accounted for in the way that you have structured your question is significant machinery-of-government changes that have actually taken place, with some changes to programs that were in DSE and have ended up in DPI in particular and in planning. In 2007, when I became Minister for Environment and Climate Change — and it is not just because I became the minister — there was a decision made by the incoming Premier to realign the planning responsibility out of DSE into Planning and Community Development. I am not quite how many, but in the hundreds of people and resources were shifted out of DSE over to planning. That is one issue.

The other issue is in relation to water projects and investments. In terms of their impact on our budget there has been significant incoming investment in relation to infrastructure and out again depending on where we are in relation to the infrastructure cycle. There was a significant number of programs that came through the ESAS package in 2006, but cumulatively we have seen through some of the programs that we have been talking about for most of today reinvestments and reconfiguring of the overall budget. As I have already foreshadowed, I would anticipate that before the next time we meet that in fact there will be some outcomes, whether they be through the regional blueprint, whether it be the climate change white paper or whether it be the implementation of recommendations of the royal commission, I would suggest to you that there would be continuing allocations to DSE between this budget and the next one.

The CHAIR — Thank you for that, Minister. That concludes questions on that portfolio. I thank Mr Wilson and Mr Clancy for their attendance.

Witnesses withdrew.