

ENERGY, ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Questions on Notice

Question 1

Mr NEWBURY: Thank you. If I can take you to page 168 of BP3 and the 'Climate Change' line item—the revised funding reduction from \$46 million to \$27.6 million—what is that cut all about?

Ms D'AMBROSIO: What number did you say, sorry?

Mr NEWBURY: One hundred and sixty-eight.

Ms D'AMBROSIO: One hundred and sixty-eight.

Mr NEWBURY: The departmental output table. It is at the top of that table.

Ms D'AMBROSIO: What have we got there? Okay, let me just find that for you.

Mr BRADLEY interjected.

Ms D'AMBROSIO: There has certainly been a funding profile change in terms of the climate change community action and volunteering protecting coastal initiatives. So that goes to that very question that you have asked. That is attributable to phasing out programs, and that includes some of those that I have already mentioned.

Mr NEWBURY: Would you mind just taking on notice any further detail around that?

Ms D'AMBROSIO: Sure, happy to do that.

Answer:

The higher 2021-22 revised budget of \$46.0 million compared to the 2022-23 budget of \$27.6 million is mainly attributable to funding rephased from 2020-21 into 2021-22. This has the effect of increasing the 2021-22 Revised Budget.

It is to be noted that the Climate Change output cost should not be looked at in isolation as it does not capture all of the department's climate change related funding. For example, the funding for the Government's \$1.6 billion clean energy package is captured under the Energy output cost, funding for the \$1.3 billion Solar Homes program is captured under the Solar Homes output cost and the Government's \$515 million investment in Recycling Victoria is captured under the Waste and Recycling output cost.

Question 2

Mr NEWBURY: That would be great. And if you could also take on notice, because we are going to run out of time, I am interested in the tree planting. I know that there have been a number of commitments, like in the west, to tree planting. If you would not mind taking on notice where that is up to in terms of the number of trees, because it is something that we are all very passionate about. So if you would not mind taking that notice.

Ms D'AMBROSIO: We certainly are happy to take it on notice, and it is going exceptionally well. The communities absolutely embrace this. Local governments have. And people are just loving getting out there and knowing that the tree they plant today will be a beautiful thing to look at and help green their environment and cool it down.

Answer:

The Victorian Government will build green canopies by planting 500,000 trees through the 'More Trees for a Cooler, Greener West' initiative, to create more green space for families in the western suburbs to enjoy for generations.

I announced the planting of more than 30,000 trees¹ in the first phase of delivering the on 3 October 2021.

My department commenced the tree planting in September last year, with the first phase tree planting projects focussing on advanced trees in local streets and around Schools.

My department is working with local nurseries in Melbourne's west to grow the tree stock to more than 175,000 that will be planted as part of phase two delivery.

This includes a partnership with the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation² which are growing thousands of native trees to be planted on Country in phase two.

On 23 April 2022 I announced the package of tree planting projects to be delivered throughout 2022 which will include the planting of more than 180,000 trees³.

Approximately 30,000 trees have been planted since commencing the program and my department expects more than 200,000 trees will have been planted by the end of 2022.

Question 3

Mr D O'BRIEN: Thank you, Chair. And good afternoon, Minister. Secretary, can I start with you? Just a quick question: how many job reductions across the department through redundancies, early retirement schemes or any other programs were there in 2021–22 and projected for next year?

Mr BRADLEY: Thank you. In terms of early retirement schemes, the department is conducting an early retirement scheme program at the moment which is currently on foot. We have recently provided offers to staff. There are approximately 122 staff—

¹ <https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/tree-planting-underway-cooler-greener-west>

² <https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/more-native-trees-wadawurrung-country>

³ <https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/over-200000-trees-west>

Mr D O'BRIEN: 122?

Mr BRADLEY: 122 staff that would be voluntary participants if they wish to take up those offers. The scheme had something of an oversubscription, in terms of there was more interest than offers available, but it would be limited to about 122 staff.

Mr D O'BRIEN: And that is the only job reduction across the department?

Mr BRADLEY: That is the only job reduction in terms of an early retirement scheme. We have, as with all—

Mr D O'BRIEN: What about redundancies?

Mr BRADLEY: No, in terms of redundancies I would have to take that question on notice in terms of any precise figures around particular separations, but there has not been a specific program of redundancies and certainly no targeted separation payments during the years in question. What we do know, and we talked about this in previous hearings, is that the department tends to flex with temporary surge numbers coming on for project firefighters, and so—

Mr D O'BRIEN: Yes, I get that. I am just looking for the figures on permanent redundancies and job losses, so if you could take that—

Mr BRADLEY: Yes. So it is focused on the early retirement scheme, but I am happy to take it on notice to make sure there is not anything I have missed in terms of other matters.

Answer:

DELWP Early Retirement Scheme

In line with the government's Workforce Transition Policy, the Department is using Early Retirement Packages, as provided for in the Victorian Public Service Agreement Best Practice Employment Commitment, to offer staff in some functions impacted by Base and Efficiency Review decisions the opportunity of voluntary departure.

A total of 122 packages were made available to staff through an Expression of Interest process that opened on 28 February 2022 and closed on 13 March 2022.

Redundancies in 2021-22 and forecast for 2022-23

During the 2021-22 financial year there were a total of 2 redundancies across the department. A forecast is unavailable for 2022-23.