

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE D

Ms L. R. Warwick (Chair) Hon. T. M. Mackenroth
 Mr L. A. Ardill Mr R. A. Mitchell
 Mrs J. M. Gamin Mr R. J. Welford

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT**IN ATTENDANCE**

Hon. B. G. Littleproud, Minister for Environment
 Mr T. Tolhurst, Director-General
 Mr D. Boyland, Acting Deputy Director-General
 Mr J. Gilmour, Executive Director (Environment)
 Dr P. Nimmo, Director (Pollution Management)
 Mr D. Miles, Director (Waste Management)
 Mr G. Wellard, Acting Executive Director
 (Conservation)
 Mr C. Pattearson, Director (Coastal
 Management)
 Ms H. Gregory, Acting Director (Cultural
 Heritage)
 Mr I. Garven, Acting Director (National Parks
 and Wildlife)
 Mr R. Arnott, Director (Corporate Services)
 Mr T. Dacey, Acting Executive Director (Wet
 Tropics Management Authority)

The Committee resumed at 9.02 a.m. from 13 June (see p. 286).

The CHAIRMAN: I would like to declare this meeting of Estimates Committee D now open. This meeting resumes the Committee's examination of the proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 1997 for the areas set out in the Sessional Orders. Last Friday, 13 June 1997, the Committee examined the proposed expenditure for the Minister for Tourism, Small Business and Industry and Minister for Local Government and Planning. Today, the Committee will examine the proposed expenditure for the organisational units within the portfolio of the Minister for Environment.

In accordance with the Sessional Orders dated 4 June 1997, the Leader of Government Business has appointed Mrs Judy Gamin, MLA, to replace Committee member Mr Rowell who is unable to attend today's hearings. The Leader of the Opposition has appointed Mr Len Ardill, MLA, to replace Committee member Mr Gibbs for the same reasons. For the purposes of today's proceedings, Mrs Gamin and Mr Ardill have all the rights of the Committee members that they have replaced. Also in accordance with the Sessional Orders, a member who is not a Committee member may, with the Committee's leave, ask a Minister questions. In this regard, the Committee has agreed that it will automatically grant leave to any non-Committee member who wishes to question the Minister unless an objection is raised at the time by a member of the Committee.

I remind members of the Committee and the Minister that the time limit for questions is one minute and answers are to be no longer than three minutes. A single chime will give a 15-second warning and a double chime will sound at the end of these time limits. An extension of time may be given with the consent of the questioner. A double chime will also sound two minutes after an extension of time has been given. The Sessional Orders require that at least half of the time available for questions and answers in respect to each organisational unit is to be allotted to non-Government members and that any time expended when the Committee deliberates in private is to be equally apportioned between Government and non-Government members. I ask departmental witnesses to identify themselves when they first come forward to answer any questions so that Hansard can record that information.

In relation to media coverage of the Estimates Committee D hearing, the Committee has resolved that television film coverage be allowed for the Chairman's opening statement and for the Minister's opening statement and that at other times audio coverage be allowed. I now declare the proposed expenditure for the Minister for Environment to be open for examination. The time allotted is three hours. The question before the Committee is—

"That the proposed expenditure be agreed to."

Minister, would you like to make a brief introductory statement or would you like to proceed direct to questioning?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: No, I would like to make a statement, thank you. Madam Chair and honourable members, I thank you for the opportunity of examining the Estimates of the Department of Environment for the 1997-98 financial year. As requested by the Committee, I have assembled to address your questions on this important budget the Director-General of my department and all other senior departmental officers and the acting Executive Director of the Wet Tropics Management Authority.

The 1997-98 Budget allocation for the Department of Environment is \$167.6m, including over \$5m expected as retained revenue. This is the second highest allocation in the history of the department and provides a sound and stable basis for the department to achieve the Government's objective of the protection of Queensland's environment. It is a balanced budget in more than just dollars. It strikes a balance between new initiatives and maintaining existing activities. I am confident that it will help achieve the departmental vision of clean air, clean water, clean land, sustainable and responsible use of our natural resources and protection of our heritage.

Now that the national park estate is 4% of the State, there is urgent need to direct resources into the management of this estate. A three-year program will commence to enhance the management of selected high-profile national parks with an initial allocation of \$3.355m. These funds will be used to provide improved visitor services in protected areas as well as assist with the implementation of effective and efficient natural resource management strategies,

including fire management and pest, plant and animal control.

The capital works program for national parks has been increased to \$2.338m. Together with an additional \$1.5m for the Caring for Parks Program, there is approximately \$4m to improve facilities and services provided to our national parks. Capital works projects include the upgrade of ranger accommodation, the ongoing program of providing effective fencing and fire trails, the redevelopment of visitor facilities and the provision of other buildings and services to improve the management of our national parks. The Caring for Parks Program will provide a substantial upgrade of visitor facilities in a number of national parks throughout Queensland, including the Carnarvon Gorge National Park, Noosa and Lawn Hill.

While the focus of this budget is on managing the protected areas of the State, funds will be set aside to purchase areas of critical conservation significance. In the 1997-98 year, over \$1.5m will be available for the acquisition of more national parks. That is in addition to any acquisitions proposed under special programs such as the Sugar Coast Environmental Rescue Package. The Sugar Coast Environmental Rescue Package was jointly funded by the Queensland and Commonwealth Governments for a total of \$16m over three years. Queensland's contribution for this year is \$500,000. This follows Queensland Government input into this program in 1996-97 of over \$4m with a further \$1.5m planned for 1998-99, the final year of the program. As part of this package, \$2.05m will be spent on the purchase of 1,000 hectares of additional habitat for the endangered mahogany glider and 600 hectares for other rare and threatened species.

National parks will benefit from work done by the Youth Working for Queensland Program, which is worth \$300,000 a year over the next three years, and which will create employment and training places for unemployed and disadvantaged young people. New initiative funding of \$395,000 for the Coastcare Program provides opportunities and resources for direct community involvement in the management of the coast by providing funds to community groups to undertake coastal management projects.

An amount of \$3.3m will be spent to develop and implement the Queensland Waste Management Strategy, which is a scheme to manage commercial, industrial and domestic waste and to encourage local governments to develop and implement regional waste management strategies. Financial incentives will also be provided to industry to promote cleaner production methods and to community groups to foster recycling programs. \$3.2m will be spent on continuing the implementation of the Environmental Protection Act, with an extra \$300,000 to fund the production of a state of the environment report. This important report will, of course, provide a snapshot of the state of the natural resources of Queensland. It is, therefore, a valuable tool to assist in steering the community onto a path of development which is ecologically sustainable. \$300,000 has been allocated for additional staff in the planning and environmental assessment area, with the aim of

improving the coordination of statutory and environmental planning process and cut response times for preparing terms of reference for the impact assessment of new developments. Approximately \$1m has been allocated towards monitoring the improvement of air quality in south-east Queensland. This includes \$500,000 towards the completion of a draft south-east Queensland regional air quality strategy by December 1997. May I finish?

The CHAIRMAN: Yes.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: That strategy is aimed at providing acceptable air quality in this region of the State. The funding will also support ongoing air quality monitoring and will incorporate the strategy into the planning process for development projects, transport infrastructure, education programs, economic incentives and the implementation of emission standards.

The Queensland Herbarium has been allocated an additional \$2.235m for the completion of the \$6m project at the Mount Coot-tha Botanical Gardens. The new building will hold an irreplaceable collection of about 600,000 dried plant specimens, including 150 plants collected by Sir Joseph Banks and Daniel Solander during Captain Cook's voyage up the east coast in 1770.

Indigenous heritage benefits from the Queensland Community History (Indigenous Heritage) Grants Program. This program, introduced last year by the coalition Government, will be continued with funding of \$350,000 a year for three years. Many more initiatives will be achieved because of this budget. I am confident that it will greatly assist in the attainment of the department's mission of working for a better environment.

The CHAIRMAN: The first period of questions will commence with non-Government members.

Mr WELFORD: Minister, I refer you to the 1996-97 Ministerial Program Statements in which you identified your planned performance targets for the current year just ending. It has not been a good year for you, because a number of the targeted performance measures in that document have not been reached. For a start, how many of the management plans for the coastal zone according to the Coastal Protection and Management Act have actually been finalised and published?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: You are referring to——

Mr WELFORD: Page 6 of the MPS. Approximately how many of the 1996-97 planned performance development management plans have been finalised?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I can say none has been finalised, but we are working on four.

Mr WELFORD: Page 7 of the 1996-97 states, "Finalise Moreton Bay Marine Park Zoning Plan"; that has not hit the deck yet, has it?

Mr BOYLAND: It is awaiting the revocation and change of boundaries for the amalgamation of Pumicestone Passage and the Moreton Bay Marine Park into the one Moreton Bay Marine Park.

Mr WELFORD: We are still waiting for that?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: You would be aware that there is a motion before the House to be debated in the very near future with regard to the——

Mr WELFORD: That does not relate to the zoning plan, though, does it? What about the conservation plans for the mahogany glider, whales and dolphins? That is also referred to on page 7.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: The mahogany glider conservation plan is now subject to review. The plan was brought out as a draft plan. Currently, the people involved are reviewing that. They are looking especially at the habitat to identify whether the initial findings were accurate. We have to go through the process of finalising that before the plan can be finalised. In relation to the management plan for whales and dolphins, I think you will find that——

Mr WELFORD: The draft conservation plan for the mahogany glider was available when the Labor Party left Government. You still have not finalised it, notwithstanding that planned performance?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I will go back to the plan. Obviously, these things take a long time to go through the consultation process. One of the weaknesses of the previous Government was that it tended to rush things. That would be evidenced by the regulations that came out on licensing provisions. It would also be evidenced by the public disquiet over the Koala Coast State planning policy.

Mr WELFORD: We will come to the Koala Coast.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: Let me finish. Obviously, we have to go through the process of making sure that we talk to the people who are involved. There are lots of land owners, be they freehold or leasehold owners, who needed to be consulted. We have to ensure that we look over the accuracy and the worth of what was firstly developed.

Mr WELFORD: You have not finalised them, have you?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: That is right; they are not finalised yet.

Mr WELFORD: However, this year's Ministerial Program Statements states that they were "prepared". That is just glossing over the fact that you did not meet your planned performance as set last year, is not it?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I go back to the first briefings that I had with the departmental officers when I became the Minister. I asked about what lay ahead. Referring to the protected areas of Queensland alone, there were something like 220 protected areas of Queensland. Under the Nature Conservation Act introduced by your Government, there has to be a management plan for each of those protected areas. The resources of the department I inherited were such that it allowed me to finish about four or five, maybe, of those plans per year. With 220 plans to be done, that is 40 years' work. It seems to me that the way that the previous Government organised what needed to be done was a bit grandiose in comparison with the resources available. That also applies to the management plans of endangered species and other things. The

department has not the resources to meet the grandiose plans laid down by the previous Government under the Nature Conservation Act.

We are now in the process of amending the Nature Conservation Act and preparing it for legislation, because we recognise that, although its ideals are commendable, they are not quite realistic. I am working through a process that I inherited. Although we are not finalising as many plans as we might, I would point out that there are quite a few areas that we have produced plans for: the draft Brisbane River Management Plan, the Environmental Protection Policy on Water and so on. Those sorts of things are coming through, having given due consideration to the process that I inherited and what was proposed.

Mr WELFORD: The process you inherited would have had many additional staff, which your Government cut, because the last two budgets have cut the budget of the Environment Department in real terms, taking into account inflation and wage growth. That is the problem you face.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: Just a minute——

Mr WELFORD: What about the performance target where you propose to nominate additional sites to the RAMSAR Convention?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: Madam Chair, I understand that if the member asks a question, the Minister will have the chance to answer it. It is a free-flowing thing that I would like to get under control somewhat. The assertion was made that the budget of the Department of Environment has been reduced in real terms in the last two years. Our personnel numbers have increased from 1,506 to 1,536 in real terms. We are employing more people. In terms of the amount of money coming in, last year was the biggest Environment budget ever and this year is the second biggest ever. It beats any budget that the former Government would have skited about.

Mr WELFORD: Only in actual dollar terms. You have not covered inflation.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: Is that a fact?

Mr WELFORD: The additional staff that you have employed are far less than what were planned for, because you cut the additional staffing to be allocated under the previous Government's projections.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: It is interesting that you can talk about those sorts of projections and what you were going to do. That is a pretty weak argument. You are making a generic statement about the budget being cut, but you have to break it into components. Capital expenditures that were organised and worked through have run their course. We had joint programs with the Commonwealth that are running out. However, in terms of operating expenses, the budget has grown in both years.

Mr BOYLAND: The increase to base was in excess of 7%, which I think is slightly higher than the last CPI figures that I have seen.

Mr WELFORD: Page 7 of last year's Ministerial Program Statements stated that you would nominate additional sites, including the Great Sandy Region,

for listing under the RAMSAR Convention on Wetlands of International Importance.

Mr BOYLAND: That is still progressing. Mr Welford, you would probably be aware that the process is quite a lengthy one. Queensland collects the data. That is then forwarded to the Commonwealth Government, because the Government of Australia is the entity which puts forward the nomination. It then has to be assessed overseas. The process usually takes in the vicinity of two years.

Mr WELFORD: But it has not been done?

Mr BOYLAND: It has not been done. The data has started to be collected.

Mr WELFORD: I refer to the table headed "Key Outputs—Conservation" contained on page 9 of last year's Ministerial Program Statements. This is the first of a number of errors that are patent on the face of these documents. A similar table appears on page 9 of this year's Ministerial Program Statements. According to last year's MPS, the number of Conservation Plans (Wildlife) that were supposed to be approved was 10. The figure "10" appears in the column that reads "Est. Measures/units". In this year's Ministerial Program Statements, the figure "1" appears in the corresponding column, yet you have achieved only two. How do you explain that?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I am trying to find where you are referring to.

Mr WELFORD: I am referring to page 9 of last year's MPS under the heading "Key Outputs—Conservation". In the column headed "1996-97 Est. Measures/units", the figure "10" appears. However, in this year's MPS, in order to cover up the fact that you achieved only two conservation plans this year, you have said that the estimated measures for this financial year were only one. The figure "10" was contained in last year's MPS. I am referring to page 9 of both documents. It should read "10", should it not? This year's document makes out that you have exceeded your budget by doing two instead of one, whereas in fact you have done two when, according to last year's planned performance, you were supposed to have achieved 10. Do you have any explanation for that error?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I will take that question on notice, Mr Welford. Obviously, there is a difference in the figures. I will get back to you about that.

Mr WELFORD: On my reading of your capital works spending for the 1996-97 financial year, you have underspent on capital works by just over \$7.9m. That is principally on the Tweed River bypass, the Herbarium, the Daintree Rescue Package and national park visitor infrastructure. I thought that your department was screaming out for money. Why have these underspends been allowed to occur and what is the real extent in dollar terms? What are you doing to ensure that you do not repeat that underspending in the coming financial year?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: With regard to two or three of those programs, there are circumstances which are outside of our control. I will ask the Director-General to give you some of those details. We talked about that issue this morning.

Mr TOLHURST: There are a number of reasons why the cash flows have changed. It is not so much an underspending as a change in cash flows between the financial years. The same amount of spending will occur over a number of years depending on the nature of the program. In the case of the Daintree project, that is a three or four-year program. However, in the main, the Herbarium project is a two-year program. In respect of the Herbarium, we have employed the Department of Public Works and Housing as project manager. Tenders have been called and the expenditure on that project is determined by the progress of its construction. We would anticipate completing that building for about \$6.7m by the end of this calendar year, with the transfer from our Indooroopilly premises taking place early in 1998. All staff will take up occupation of the Herbarium by the second quarter in 1998.

In a number of other cases, say, the capital works program for national parks, there have been some carryovers. Many of the projects have been completed, such as the Chillagoe Caves project and the enhanced visitor safety project at 40 Mile Scrub. However, at the Conway National Park, the base workshop and so on is only 75% complete, and the other 25%, which is our estimate at this time, will be completed early in the new financial year. Similarly, the master plan for Byfield and the Capricorn Coast has been completed—\$60,000. Similarly, the Heron Island and Inskip Point projects have been completed.

In a number of cases, a small amount of the project costs will be carried forward into the 1997-98 financial year. For example, the Tweed River bypass program is a very complex engineering project being worked on by the New South Wales Government, the Gold Coast City Council and us. There are a number of reasons why it has been delayed. The prime reason that I am aware of is that they have found a sunken trawler which needs to be removed before they can continue with the sand bypassing project. Mr Pattearson may be able to—

Mr WELFORD: I think that will do. Thank you very much for that explanation. Minister, with respect to the failed park pass idea and the cost of that ridiculous exercise, what were the all-up preparation costs sustained by the department?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: While I am waiting for those details to be found, we will talk about a ridiculous idea that you proposed. Interestingly, at its second last meeting, the ANZECC ministerial council considered the idea of a national park pass. Ministers all around Australia in charge of national parks think that the program has merit. We are the only mainland State in Australia that does not have an entry charge. As you would be aware, we have other charges for camping and so on. Your assertion that it was a ridiculous idea does not hold water. The Director-General can provide you with the details of the amount of money expended.

Mr TOLHURST: The figure in connection with the park pass was \$118,000. That was spent on pre-implementation planning, including the employment of consultants, the preparation of materials and staff

training. I must emphasise to the Committee that that \$118,000 does not include the costs incurred by the department over a number of years under the previous Government, when departmental officers were instructed to look at park entry fees.

Mr WELFORD: So \$118,000 has been spent on preparing for a park pass that never eventuated; is that right?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: Plus the money expended by the department under the direction of the previous Government, of which you were a part.

Mr WELFORD: The previous Government never had a park pass proposal.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: But it would seem, from the information given by the Director-General, that they were under instructions from previous Ministers of the Goss Government to go out and implement it. There would probably be plenty of evidence on the books to show that that was the case. Yes, money was expended. However, that information is now held by the department and, should the proposal come forward again, whether it be under this Government or another Government of any persuasion, it will be there to be referred to.

Mr WELFORD: Are you going to bring the proposal forward again to try to recoup the \$118,000 that you have wasted on it so far?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: It has not crossed my mind that I should bring the same proposal forward in the near future. I think you would understand why.

Mr WELFORD: I wonder why! Have any of your staff improperly claimed travel, accommodation or other allowances in your time as Minister?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: Are you talking about my personal staff or my—

Mr WELFORD: Your ministerial staff.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: Not to my knowledge, no.

Mr WELFORD: I draw your attention to a reply by the Premier to a question on notice about ministerial staff which shows that your senior ministerial policy adviser, Mr Gilbert, and your senior ministerial media adviser, Mr White, stayed at the Conrad International Hotel in Brisbane on 29 and 30 November last year at a total cost of \$364.15 and this was claimed as accommodation allowances. Can you explain why these allowances were paid when both staff members live in Brisbane?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: This is the dirty tricks time of the day, is it? I have a very good answer for that. That was the same time that Queensland was hosting a meeting of the National Environment Protection Council and also ANZECC, which is the Australian and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council. Those two officers were obviously assisting me and we were entertaining people from the other States and we were organising the agenda, which extended over three days, and so it was appropriate that they should be staying on the premises so that we made sure that all of those ministerial councils ran smoothly. I can assure you that they did run smoothly, and Queensland was congratulated not only on the organisation of that particular round of ministerial councils but also on the ones we held in

Cairns last weekend. I once again had my personal staff with me to make sure that everything ran smoothly.

Mr WELFORD: Both of these staff members are provided with Government cars. They do not live outside Brisbane, do they? These staff accommodation allowances surely do not extend to people who live 15 or 20 minutes away from the city.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I do not think it was unreasonable to expect them to be on call there 24 hours a day when those sorts of things were being organised.

Mr WELFORD: Did anyone stay with them? Were their spouses with them?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I do not look into the personal lives of my personal staff, but the staff behind me have signalled that no-one else stayed with them. They were on their own.

Mr WELFORD: So this money has not been paid back; is that right?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: Why should it be paid back? They were working for me to stage a ministerial council where representatives from all the States of Australia, the Commonwealth and New Zealand were present. We were the host State. This is a pretty cheap shot.

Mr WELFORD: Where does Mr Gilbert live?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: Mr Gilbert lives in Brisbane.

Mr WELFORD: Where does Mr White live?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: He lives in Brisbane, too.

Mr WELFORD: So you make no apology for the fact that they both had nights over at the Conrad International Hotel while doing work for you, even though they live only minutes away?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: Correct, yes.

Mr WELFORD: Okay.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: It is a pretty cheap sort of shot.

Mr WELFORD: How many temporary staff are on the staff of the department—temporary staff as opposed to permanent staff?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I will get the Director-General to respond to that question.

Mr TOLHURST: We have a number of temporary staff over the various programs and regions for a variety of reasons, and we always will have. The number on 15 May—and it is about the same now—was 419 in terms of actual numbers. That is not full-time equivalents but actual appointees, and some of those could be part time and some could be permanent. We have as a corporate goal the reduction of the number of temporary staff as compared with the number that we had in previous years, and we are achieving that in a variety of ways. But we will always have, I would think, 150 to 200 temporary staff, like most other departments, where some of our funding is purely on an annual basis, some of it is on a three-year Commonwealth funded program or in other cases people do not wish to come on a permanent basis but are prepared to

come on a temporary basis. In other cases, there are particular programs where we are trying to pick up decisions of the past to convert temporary positions into permanent positions. One of the most outstanding ones would be on Fraser Island, where successive Ministers have promised to convert 20 or 30 former Forestry positions to permanent DOE positions. The current Minister has instructed that that take place. I am hoping to finalise that prior to 30 June. It has been promised for six years, and we will deliver it either by 30 June or very shortly thereafter.

The other major change that has taken place over recent months was earlier this year when the new Public Service Act came into place. It does give chief executives, D-Gs and others more extensive powers in analysing their staffing arrangements. They can convert temporary appointments to permanent appointments subject to a number of strict conditions. This discretionary power was not available under the old Public Service Management and Employment Act and the preceding Public Service Act. For those sorts of reasons, we would expect to have a reduced number of temporaries during this coming financial year.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I would just add to that that you would recall, of course, that the Goss Government appointed a new Director-General to this department about two weeks before the change of Government. It was explained in the House by the Premier that the circumstances of that were far from regular. As a result, that Director-General was stood aside. Because of that there have been quite a few temporary positions in senior levels throughout the department since then, until such time as we appointed a new Director-General, and then we are subsequently filling positions below that. There were lots of people acting in positions above because of that set of circumstances put in place by the Goss Government.

Mr WELFORD: Are you aware of any of your section heads who have sought to accrue frequent flyer points personally by booking their own flights when on departmental business and then having the department reimburse them so that they could accrue personal frequent flyer points, which they have subsequently used for their own personal flights in Australia or overseas?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: No, I am not aware of that. I will ask the Director-General to comment in a minute. As you are pursuing this course, I just want to put on record a conversation I had with (name expunged) under the Goss Government. Not long after there was a change of Government, that (name expunged) came to me and requested that I give a redundancy to the person (name expunged). That person held a substantive position within the department and when there was a change of Government that person went back to his substantive position, which was well below the remuneration level he was receiving when he was (name expunged). I told (name expunged) that the position he held was not becoming redundant and so I was not prepared to make any sort of special allowances for that particular person. So if you are starting to bring up these sorts of issues and trying

to discredit people, I will just put that on the record. Now I will ask the Director-General to make his comments.

Mr TOLHURST: The question relates to frequent flyer points, as I understand it, of section heads. I am not sure what Mr Welford means by "section heads", but I will assume it to mean the more senior 10 or so people, which would be the D-G, the deputy D-G, three program directors and the SES type people. Under both national airlines, frequent flyer points seem to accumulate against the individual name of the flyer rather than the organisation, and that is fairly common knowledge. As far as I am aware, it is corporate policy that any frequent flyer points accumulated as a result of flights undertaken at Government expense on Government business should be used by those officers to lessen the cost of future flights on Government business by Government expenditure. Our personal view is that we would like in the years to come for Government organisations around Australia to step out of the frequent flyer points system and get a straight-out further discount on the price. That would be far more cost effective and it would be better for our various arrangements within the departments. But addressing your point directly—I am not aware and no external audit report or internal audit report or review of any document that has been brought to my attention over the last few years would indicate in any way that one of our section heads has used frequent flyer points which could be attributed to Government expenditure or related to that for private purposes.

Mr WELFORD: Has the Minister or his Director-General been made aware of concerns within the department that (name expunged), the head of (name expunged) recently took an overseas tour for which he substantially or wholly claimed frequent flyer points which had accrued while on other Government business?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I am aware that just recently the officer you referred to in fact was chairing or leading a (name expunged) team to America—and you may well be referring to that particular instance when he was overseas—but I will refer to the Director-General.

Mr TOLHURST: If I could just add to that. I have no direct personal knowledge of that particular transaction. I was aware that (name expunged) was travelling overseas, but if it suited you prior to the end of this hearing I could give a more detailed answer on that. But I must re-emphasise that corporate policy is that no frequent flyer points accumulated under Government business are to be used for private purposes. That is our basic decision but I will table or speak to further details if that is the wish of the Committee prior to the conclusion of the hearing.

Mr WELFORD: Yes, please. Thank you very much.

The CHAIRMAN: We will now move to Government questions. Can I just remind departmental officers to identify themselves if they are answering questions, please? I would like to talk about information technology and I wonder if you

could tell us how your department is using information technology to support your operations?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: We use it in a number of ways. It falls in two main areas. Two or three officers can probably speak for themselves here because it comes under Corporate Services and Conservation, and we are probably using information technology pretty widely also in the division of Environment. Perhaps Mr Boyland might start.

Mr BOYLAND: I think it is probably more appropriate if each of the program managers actually direct that so we could start with—

Mr ARNOTT: I would like to give an overview which would perhaps assist the Committee because my program provides the information support base for the department. Basically, we provide whole-of-department systems such as the Contaminated Sites Register; WildNet, which is an information database on flora and fauna; the Air, Water and Noise Quality Systems; and the kangaroo harvesting system. The whole-of-department solutions are only possible when you have the stable and reliable platform or infrastructure which permits consistency, accessibility and quality. We have tried to provide this through our wide area network. It has been one of the goals of the department and my program in particular to provide this stable platform. It has been proven in a number of occasions to be superior to isolated personal computer solutions to these problems.

As well as those specific purpose systems, we have departmental-wide systems such as electronic mail and an Intranet of information based right across the department to provide better communication and information delivery. This Intranet will be like a mini-Internet on which departmental information on a whole range of issues will be freely accessible to any point provided under the wide area network.

The CHAIRMAN: Does anyone else want to comment?

Mr WELLARD: I just thought I would make a comment on WildNet because it is a very professional and very innovative action by the department to consolidate information on species of flora and fauna into a major database which is readily accessible throughout the State by staff over the Intranet. It will give information to foster ecologically sustainable development and to make sure that we can care for the environment in all its forms. It will certainly enhance our protected area management to a very high level because it will give us the resource information we need to plan correctly for how we manage our protected area estate. It will assist in the development of guidelines for such activities as tree clearing, vegetation retention schemes and forest policy, and it will also assist local government with town planning initiatives which will allow us to work much more closely with local government and much more effectively.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I would like the Environment division also to give an idea of what they do and then I will give an overall figure of what is being expended, if you do not mind.

The CHAIRMAN: Yes, I am the questioner so I can grant that time extension.

Mr GILMOUR: Without information technology, we could not exist. We have very extensive databases. Our contaminated land administration depends on that. There is public access through the CITEC system whether it be in Brisbane or external to Brisbane. We also have a very well developed system for administration of our Environmental Protection Act. Currently, that system is called log-ins. It was a phase 1 system. With the experience that we have learned, we are now developing a new system called SMILE, which is Statutory Management Information on Licensing and Enforcement, so it is perhaps the correct acronym there. It enables us to have quick information for whatever region we are in on the licensing and the databases we need to undertake licensing.

As my colleague Rod Arnott, the Director of Corporate Services, said we have extensively utilised our system called Electronic Messaging Unit, which enables us to exchange data. For instance, if a person has a problem in Maryborough, that person can talk to say a person in Townsville electronically to determine how they solved that particular issue. I would repeat: without it, we would be very inefficient. At times, we have more computers than people. That relates to if computers break down, we have temporary staff and contract staff who use these facilities in addition.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: Just to finish off, this year the department is spending \$6.38m on information technology. That is in hardware, software, staff salaries, communication charges and all those sorts of things. That compares with the figure last year of \$6.03m. It is a major management tool.

The CHAIRMAN: Obviously.

Mr MITCHELL: Given that the department has a vigorous and expanding marketing program, how will any surplus funds be spent through the marketing program?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: Just in general terms before I ask the Director-General to speak, we try to give some sort of incentive to the various regions and make some returns back to those regions in proportion to the effort and the response they get. I suppose to some degree it is not completely fair because some of them happen to have the chance to raise more revenue than others. But still, it is seen as part and parcel of the overall management. I will ask the Director-General to continue.

Mr TOLHURST: If I could comment before asking Mr Arnott to comment in some detail, in the marketing section in particular, gross receipts up to 30 April 1997 were \$397,000. We would have projected receipts for the whole financial year of about \$460,000, an increase of 10% over the previous year, and that is a corporate goal—to make sure we are improving our marketing penetration in the various program areas. Various new departmental products have been produced during the year and we have invested \$100,000 up to 30 April 1997, and we would expect that to increase during the coming financial year.

The sorts of things that we have produced to improve the marketing sales and revenue include: a reprint of the Fraser Island book, Camping in Queensland book, national parks in Queensland, particular booklets on Noosa and Cooloola National Parks, a frogs poster, a bilby poster and things like that. In addition to that, we are involved in wholesaling in certain areas as well as retailing. I suppose the other side of the marketing, an increasing side, is our library services, mainly in the photographic library, where we have an extensive range of photographs taken over many years which we are making available internal to the Government and external on a cost recovery basis. But Mr Arnott's program, Corporate Services, is involved with that and he might add to those comments.

Mr ARNOTT: As has been previously said, an important part of the program is to make a regional disbursement of funds. So \$100,000 of marketing funds is disbursed each year to regions in proportion to the amount of funds they raise themselves. This provides an incentive for the region to work in with the marketing section to market a range of departmental products, to raise revenue for its own purposes and to generally become a little more self sufficient. New product development is approximately \$100,000. Members would realise that, like any business, we have to plough a certain amount of funds back into product development so that we can keep it up to date and appropriate for the market. Finally, our products are nature based. They give an educational story and they foster the goals of the department.

Mrs GAMIN: Minister, what is the department doing to ensure that the organisation and its managers are capable of integrating with, and moving forward with, current and emergent trends in public sector management?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I will refer that question directly to the Director-General, because he is in charge of staff enhancement. I am aware of comments in the newspaper following some other Estimates hearings, but that is more external. To tell you what is happening internally, I will refer to the Director-General.

Mr TOLHURST: The department and its board of management, which is comprised of the 10 most senior people in the organisation—and those 10 are responsible for all staff and resources within the department—have, as one of their main goals for the current year, improved management training and development for staff at all levels. This will occur in a variety of ways. In the more senior areas, some of our officers will be attending high-level management programs in conjunction with the Commonwealth, other States and local authorities. In other cases we will be participating in Queensland Government management development programs that are organised through the Office of the Public Service and with the cooperation of the 18 directors-general.

The department itself has moved recently, and we were briefed earlier in the week by the consultants who are running a range of management programs for departmental staff throughout the State. This will be on a staged basis at various levels.

We have tended to categorise our 1,700 staff into three or four different groups so that we have senior management, middle management and so on, because we have found from detailed questionnaires and analysis and discussions with staff around the State that the requirements differ a lot between levels of management and location—regional versus central office people. We also have a very large number of professional staff who require, and have asked for, different management training from those officers who have come up through the Government Public Service administrative scheme. So many of our scientists and engineers might be saying, "We would like training to emphasise communication, supervision and financial management, particularly with emphasis on budget development, management and so on." So we will be aiming each of those programs in the direction that management thinks they should go after doing our survey work of staff and external advisers, both in the Office of the Public Service and outside the Government.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: Mrs Gamin, I had an interesting proposition put to me just the other day. I was meeting with a group of consulting engineers, and they asked me to consider a swap of officers so that some of the people who are out there in the private sector may gain a better insight as to how a department like ours works, especially in the Division of Environment, where we are processing their applications for environmental impact statements. Similarly, they thought there might be some benefit for some of our officers being able to go out there and actually work with some of the consulting engineers who are working with the big developers. I have discussed this with the Director-General, and it is still to be developed.

The CHAIRMAN: That sounds interesting, Minister. I wonder if I could ask you about workplace health and safety related costs. Could you tell me what your department is doing throughout 1997-98 to address those costs?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: Quite obviously, we have to comply with workplace health and safety. This is having a major impact on us as a department, just as it is on business out there. While the details are coming forward from one of the officers, I can tell you that it has speeded up our expenditure on ranger housing. We have people out there who went to live on properties that we recently acquired, and we found that the houses were not safe to live in. So we have had to bring forward some of our expenditure. In each case we tend to buy national parks in remote parts of Queensland, and that makes it dear to build a house there—something like a quarter of a million dollars to \$300,000 per house. So we are complying. Mr Tolhurst will give details on that.

Mr TOLHURST: If I could start before passing over to Mr Arnott—I would just like to emphasise the point that workplace health and safety is regarded as very important within the department. We have a high-level committee chaired by the Deputy Director-General which reviews our arrangements and develops our new policies. We have staff for those particular duties in the central office and in the

regions but, more importantly, across the department as part of the management training and development to which I referred in answer to the previous question. We would like to see workplace health and safety matters as part and parcel of each day with everyone managing their operations. That is the only way we are going to maintain our improved record in accidents. I will now ask Mr Arnott to add the details to that.

Mr ARNOTT: It has been noticed recently that, over the last few years, there has been a change in the type of accidents happening. As we have provided more and better safety equipment, the number of accidents related to cutting and bruising and misuse of equipment has fallen very much, which is a satisfactory result. However, there has been an increase in muscle joint related injuries. This comes back to some of our work force getting older and also the need to do more training to prevent people from suffering these strains. Two of our injuries last year were back related and accounted for about 170 work days lost, so they can be quite serious.

In 1997-98 we will concentrate on workplace ergonomics and the reduction of muscle joint injuries. We will do this by having ergonomic awareness training for supervisors so that we can teach them what they should be looking for; giving instruction to employees on ergonomics and safe lifting and load handling; the purchase of handling aid equipment; and workplace audits involving identifying risk factors for manual handling activities. Finally, there will be advice from workplace health and safety specialists available to deal with any particular problems.

Mr MITCHELL: Minister, does the department propose to maintain its level of expenditure in the administrative buildings capital works in 1997-98? If so, could you please tell the Committee what proportion of expenditure is earmarked for areas outside Brisbane?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: We have figures to break it down from region to region. That will probably give you the detail that you want.

Mr TOLHURST: Within the State Budget, reference is made to capital outlays. Some of that refers to acquisition of property. The rest of it is to the Capital Works Program. Our capital works program is in two parts: on national parks and other capital works. The administrative capital works are those other ones, so I might refer to that part, as I understand that is where your question was directed.

Mr MITCHELL: Yes.

Mr TOLHURST: We would anticipate spending on projects directly, plus project management costs of about 10%, \$1.253m for the year. \$100,000 of that would be in central office to do a variety of work in the 10 or 12 floors that we have at 160 Ann Street, and 93% of it will be in the regions. In the south-eastern region we would expect to spend \$250,500; in the south-western region, \$256,500; in central coast, \$280,000; in the northern region, \$132,000; and in the far-northern region, \$200,000. Various small amounts of work in regions would account for the other \$34,000. The

sorts of examples within the regions would be—taking the south-eastern region: Burleigh Heads, provision of office accommodation, \$30,000; Fleay's Wildlife Park, we would upgrade various buildings for \$82,000; at Moggill, which is our central Moreton district office, \$78,000; in Maleny, where we have just purchased a new subdistrict base, the extra fit-out will cost \$20,500; and at Cleveland, with our marine parks operations, we have the fit-out of additional leased accommodation.

In other places like the south-western region, which is based in Toowoomba but goes to the border in the west and in the south and includes Winton, we would be spreading that \$256,500 that I referred to across a number of projects, including a new district office fit-out in Roma and some refurbishment of the regional office in Toowoomba, so we can bring back some offices from the old Canberra Hotel building into the main regional office building. In Springsure we intend to upgrade the subdistrict office and similarly in Taroom. In Birdsville, we are going to improve our staff facilities. In Charleville, we have various projects to upgrade, which is one of our biggest district offices. It is responsible for kangaroo management and other things. There are a fair number of staff members there. That is what we intend to do.

The CHAIRMAN: Maintenance of national parks is a fairly big issue. Could you tell the hearing what steps your department has taken to provide heavy equipment and machinery needed to maintain national parks?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: We will get some figures from the officers in a moment. There is a sad history of the department finding it very difficult over a number of years to get sufficient funding to buy the heavy equipment we need to service the parks. We use a system now whereby we transport the heavy equipment from park to park as best we can. I was a bit amazed when I travelled around the State when I initially became the Minister to see that some of the equipment that we have is second-hand equipment acquired from the Department of Transport and the Department of Main Roads. I see Mr Mitchell nodding his head. He has a few national parks in his area. He would know what sort of heavy work needs to be done. The state of the equipment is not as I would like it. Director-General, would you be able to give us some more specific details?

Mr TOLHURST: The department's Heavy Machinery Replacement Program for the year will be about \$600,000. The sorts of items that we have to purchase are very expensive. In the far northern region, the Lake Eacham tip truck will cost approximately \$250,000. In the central coast region, for a tip truck on Fraser Island we are planning to spend \$200,000. At Blackdown Tableland we are acquiring a new bulldozer at \$95,000. At Agnes Water—a four-wheel-drive tractor at \$66,000, and a similar amount will be spent in the northern region in the Burdekin district. Until the last 12 or 18 months, this department, like a lot of others, has not had a very good handle on the age and distribution of its plant and equipment. For some years now, there has been more emphasis on getting plant and equipment

registers together and depreciation schedules. With the move to the Australian Accounting Standard 29 in Government reporting, which requires accrual accounting and therefore depreciation, we are being forced into matching the private sector with our management information systems and reporting. All levels of Government and all areas of departments will have a far better understanding of just what our asset base is, the age of that and what our likely heavy machinery replacement program should be by year over the next 10 or 15 years. Whilst the trucks and other items of equipment are very expensive, we do maintain them well, and they do last a fair number of years. That will allow us as a department to go forward as part of our budget Estimates with what we believe to be reasonable amounts to ensure that our heavy machinery does satisfy not only operational requirements but also workplace health and safety requirements.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I think you would agree with me, Mr Mitchell, that there is a need for graders for firebreaks on those big properties out west. When you get around some of that gorge country, you have to have a bulldozer that has a bit of grunt about it, a bit of horsepower. The lighter ones are not a good proposition in that situation.

Mr MITCHELL: It is good to see that happening, because one of the management problems has been having the machinery and equipment to maintain our national parks. It is good news.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: The amount of money listed for a four-wheel-drive tractor is \$60,000. It is obviously a second-hand one rather than a new one.

Mrs GAMIN: What is the Government doing about claims that the Department of Environment is stalling the approval of major developments by not meeting deadlines in the approval assessment process?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I became aware soon after becoming the Minister that those people who are the developers in the State were claiming that they were finding it difficult to have their environmental impact statements processed. We have gone through a pretty lengthy process within the department to upgrade that. There needs to be a service provided by us to developers or to local government whereby we do not hinder but, in fact, provide the services that they need on a scientific basis. Firstly, there were accusations that we were not being consistent. Secondly, there were accusations that we were changing the goalposts. After developers had been along initially and thought that they had complied with all the requirements put down by the department, they would return only to find that something else was required of them. In some cases, they said that the conditions being laid down were not fair and reasonable. They also tended to make comments that papers and applications seemed to get lost within the department. We have undertaken a pretty stringent approach to that. Director-General, you might like to highlight those things that I have alluded to.

Mr TOLHURST: I think there are a number of things. There are a few major things that the

department is involved with, with the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and my fellow D-Gs, where we have a more integrated approach with other departments. The main emphasis as far as we have been concerned in the last 12 months has been within the department. We have developed a computer-based system called ProjectNet, which is a database that tracks every major development project that we are involved with. It indicates the region that it is in. It also indicates the principal contact officer, the single point of contact for anyone wanting to talk to the department about that particular project. It also nominates by name a Senior Executive Service officer who is the reviewing officer for that particular project. If the project proponent is not satisfied with the action taken by the department in terms of time or unreasonable demands for information, then the project proponent, the principal contact officer and the reviewing officer can meet and discuss those complaints. If at the end of the day the parties are still not happy, they have all been advised that they can fax to me the details of the outstanding item and I will undertake to review that personally. The Minister and I have taken the opportunity over the last few months to brief the Queensland Conservation Council, other conservation groups and development groups, such as the UDIA, about the management approach. It has nothing to do with whether we do an EIS but purely the management of projects.

The CHAIRMAN: We will now move to non-Government questions.

Mr WELFORD: I am going to ask some questions about national parks. According to page 8 of the Ministerial Program Statements, the second last paragraph, the National Parks budget includes an amount to enhance the management of selected high-profile national parks for which \$3.355m has been allocated in the coming financial year. Could you give us a full breakdown of that amount? What is the full amount of the three-year program? How much will be allocated over three years if that is the first instalment?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: The Director-General will have those figures here for us.

Mr TOLHURST: Those amounts are part of the Conservation Program and the National Parks and Wildlife Subprogram in particular. Mr Garven is the acting Director of National Parks. I would ask him, together with Mr Wellard, to comment on that amount.

Mr WELLARD: The figures referred to are related to an enhanced protected area management new initiative funding for the next three years. The \$3.355m component is the enhanced national park management component. That component will allow us to continue and enhance not only our park management but also our visitor services and natural resources—

Mr WELFORD: Could you give us the breakdown of the amount? What is the total amount over three years?

Mr WELLARD: The total amount is \$18m over three years.

Mr WELFORD: Over three years?

Mr WELLARD: And it is comprising \$4.1m in 1997-98.

Mr WELFORD: An amount of \$4.1m in 1997-1998?

Mr WELLARD: Yes.

Mr WELFORD: Where does the \$3.355m come from?

Mr WELLARD: That is the national park management component of our enhanced protected area management new initiative.

Mr WELFORD: What is the balance?

Mr WELLARD: There are two other components—\$750,000 for Fraser Island management and \$395,000 for Coastcare.

Mr WELFORD: I see.

Mr WELLARD: That is repeated in three years, but the amounts are slightly greater in the second and third year.

Mr WELFORD: Earlier I think I heard Mr Boyland mention that there was a \$2m increase to base funding; is that correct?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: A 7% increase.

Mr WELFORD: What amount to national parks?

Mr BOYLAND: The percentage of national parks—I would defer to Mr Wellard.

Mr WELFORD: I guess the point of my question is that the Minister has made much in the last year or two about increased funding for the management of national parks. I want to know what increase in funding there is for national parks management.

Mr TOLHURST: Madam Chair, maybe I could say a couple of words generally about the program. The funding this year will be increased for two prime reasons: one is on the labour side because of the benchmarking exercise concluded last year and backdated to January 1995 and which is now fully implemented. That would mean that all rangers have had their positions reassessed. Therefore, we will have to fund the increased labour cost.

Mr WELFORD: How much?

Mr TOLHURST: The extra amount for this coming year will be approximately \$3m.

Mr WELFORD: \$3m?

Mr TOLHURST: I have not got the exact figure. It will depend on the number and level of staff and also their length of service. The other important figure that I would like to mention to the Committee is in the non-labour side of park budgets. We have been able to calculate through the additional \$5.3m to that subprogram a 20% increase in the non-labour component, or operating component, for each national park. That is 20% during this year. We are going to reassess those parks during the year so that in 1998-99 we can look at each park individually and determine what the non-labour figure should be.

Mr WELFORD: What will that amount be, do you know?

Mr TOLHURST: Yes, I can give you the details if you like.

Mr WELFORD: What was the amount in 1996-97 first?

Mr TOLHURST: Under the National Parks Subprogram of the Conservation Program the figure was \$42.87m. It has now gone up to \$48.1m.

Mr WELFORD: Is that the non-labour component?

Mr TOLHURST: No. I am talking about the National Parks Subprogram of the Conservation Program.

Mr WELFORD: I want the non-labour component that you just mentioned.

Mr TOLHURST: The non-labour component—

Mr WELFORD: Non-labour operating costs that you said are going to increase by 20%.

Mr TOLHURST: Yes. I do not know whether I have it split that way here. I have it by activity level—a total costing.

Mr WELFORD: Let me refer you to your answer to question on notice No. 12 in which you gave Stated-funded program outlays for National Parks and Wildlife. The budget for 1996-97 was \$17.7m roughly. In fact, the estimated actual was \$8.7m and the estimate for 1997-98 is \$19.9m. So it will not be hard to get a 20% increase, will it, Mr Tolhurst?

Mr TOLHURST: Mr Welford, you would be aware that for some years we have tried to get an increase in non-labour in the national park business. Each year since I have been with the department—1990 and each subsequent financial year—we have attempted to get an increase because we felt that it was underfunded. For some years under the previous Government we did not get that increase, but I am pleased to say that I have an assurance from the program director and the subprogram director that the current figures for this year—this coming year—include a 20% increase in non-labour for all parks in Queensland. Based on their 1996-97 budget, they will get an extra 20%, and they will get the full funding for all benchmark flow-on effects of that exercise through the Industrial Relations Commission.

Mr WELFORD: Minister, they will have to get that full funding, will they not, because that is going to be a required cost anyhow? The reality is that if the amount of money actually spent on national parks follows the 1996-97 course, there is not going to be much money, if any additional money, for national park management that you talk about because the estimate for non-labour operating cost is going up by only \$2m. Mr Tolhurst has just told us that the labour cost is going to be \$3m roughly. So the net effect really is not going to be a substantial improvement in national park management. All your talk about national park management will just not be fulfilled, will it?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: The Director-General will respond to that in a minute. I want to talk about the labour component of our overall budget. When I

came in, it was pointed out to me that about 80% of all the money that we spent on national parks was actually going on labour. That meant that we had 20% of the budget for inputs in terms of materials. That meant that lots of the personnel in fact were underemployed. They were on the job but they were underemployed. Since then we have attempted to get back the balance so that we have more money in terms of inputs while retaining the same number of staff. The Director-General has the figures to explain the position that has been put by Mr Welford.

Mr TOLHURST: As I mentioned before, the National Parks Subprogram is up by \$5m. The approximate estimate of that, based on my own figures here, is about \$3m for labour and \$2m or two point something million for non-labour costs.

I do not agree with your comment, Mr Welford, that we are obliged to pay all of that money in labour costs. What could have happened—and has happened in other areas in past years—is that we could have reduced the number of rangers at a higher salary level to equate to last year's allocation. The Government has opted not to do that. In fact, we have a modest increase in the number of rangers and at the higher rate. That is why the labour component of the budget is going up. That is part of that \$48m.

The remainder of the increase will be used primarily to fund the 20% across-the-board increase in non-labour costs of national park management throughout the State. I believe that 20% will make a major difference and will give us time during 1997-98 in the Conservation Program and in the National Parks Subprogram to analyse the particular requirements of our parks on the coast, in the west and on the cape. They all have different requirements. We will have a far better handle on what the future funding requirements are for both labour and non-labour across all of our parks for this coming financial year and thereafter.

Mr WELFORD: What is the total capital works budget for national parks in this 1997-98 financial year?

Mr TOLHURST: The capital works program?

Mr WELFORD: I refer you to page 12 of the Ministerial Program Statements.

Mr TOLHURST: Yes, capital works there shows \$2.338. That is the base funding for capital works.

Mr WELFORD: Right.

Mr TOLHURST: As indicated, they are major capital works, totalling \$2.338m. I can provide—

Mr WELFORD: What about the one at the bottom—National Park Visitor Infrastructure? Is that part of national park capital works?

Mr TOLHURST: It is, but not part of base, because it has been allocated. If you go through the details of the funding allocation within the National Parks Subprogram of the Conservation Program, it really boils down to the fact that under the capital works base we get about \$2.5m. Other capital works programs such as the Cardwell Information Centre, in addition to the \$2.5m, would be \$151,000. Caring for

Parks would be an extra \$1.7m on top of the base figure of \$2.5m.

Mr WELFORD: So is the reference to Caring for Parks on page 8 of the MPS incorrect? On page 8 it does not say that it is \$1.7m; it says that it is \$1.5m.

Mr TOLHURST: I believe that \$1.5m is incorrect. It was presumed to be a correct figure at the time that this statement was prepared, but I believe that the figure that I was given yesterday and that I have used in my working papers of \$1.7m is the correct figure for the coming financial year. \$1.5m is a more appropriate figure for this current financial year.

Mr WELFORD: What about the explanation for the error in relation to the Coastal Management Subprogram where you have admitted in your answer to a question on notice that part of the funding for cultural heritage has been allocated to coastal management? How did that occur?

Mr TOLHURST: Unfortunately, a figure of \$740,000 was included in calculations done when preparing the original information for the Ministerial Program Statements. That was purely an arithmetical error; \$740,000 was put in the wrong column. We have deducted that from the coastal subprogram in our own workings. At page 11 of the Ministerial Program Statements, the figure of \$32.938m, should have been shown as \$32.193m. The difference is \$745,000, a figure that relates directly to the National Estate Grants Program but was included in the coastal subprogram. It has been transferred to the Cultural Heritage Subprogram and—

Mr WELFORD: So the Ministerial Program Statements is incorrect in both those references?

Mr TOLHURST: Yes, I made a mistake. It was one of thousands of figures that my colleagues and I dealt with in preparing the Ministerial Program Statements and it is my mistake. That \$745,000 shown as part of the \$32.938m is purely an arithmetical error. It relates to the National Estate Grants. We have taken it out of our workings. In questions on notice, in our working papers and in our answers to the Estimate Committee here today, we say that the Coastal Management Subprogram should be down by \$745,000 to \$32.193m.

Mr WELFORD: You have made that clear, thank you. In respect of the—

Mr TOLHURST: Could I finish answering the question, please, Madam Chair?

The CHAIRMAN: Go ahead.

Mr WELFORD: He is repeating himself. We do not need information provided twice to the Committee.

Mr TOLHURST: I do not think my three minutes should be interrupted. I should be entitled to that. The point that I was going to make before I was interrupted is that the \$740,000 has been added to the Cultural Heritage Subprogram to cover that amount. I accept that as my mistake.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr Tolhurst.

Mr WELFORD: Do you also accept as your mistake the reference in the Ministerial Program Statements that the reason for the decline in cultural heritage funding was due to the cessation of the national grants project when, in fact, in your answer to a question on notice you now say that that \$750,000, roughly, is National Estates Grant money? I thought that that program had ceased. How come that money is there?

Mr TOLHURST: The Cultural Heritage Subprogram is managed by Helen Gregory, who is the subprogram director. With your permission, I ask Mrs Gregory to come forward and answer questions in relation to cultural heritage.

Mrs GREGORY: Mr Welford, the National Estate Grants Program was cancelled in the 1996-97 Commonwealth Budget. Previously, it had supplied between \$660,000 and \$700,000 for grant-funded projects in Queensland annually. Unlike the State grants programs, that program was designed to run over three years. The \$745,000 represents one year's allocation to that program, but, of course, it is now running down. As the grants in the first and second years of the three-year cycle are fully expended, the figure is coming down. It is anticipated that the last grants will be spent by the end of the 1998-99 financial year.

Mr WELFORD: So the last \$745,000 is the third instalment of a three-year grant? It is triennial funding?

Mrs GREGORY: That is right.

Mr WELFORD: I point out that the Ministerial Program Statements states that the reduction in cultural heritage funding is due to a cessation of the national estates project. In fact, the reduction is not due to that. It must be due to something else, because \$750,000 is still coming in this next financial year which has now been added to the incorrect figures. We will leave it at that. We cannot really take it any further.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I think that Mrs Gregory wants to make a correction.

Mrs GREGORY: Mr Welford, I might not have been sufficiently clear in my response. The \$745,000 was approximately the allocation for 1995-96 in the National Estate Grants Program. They are always carried over because of that three-year funding cycle. In fact, the Cultural Heritage Branch budget is down by that amount, plus the allocation which would normally be expected for this year. It is an adjustment due to the National Estate Grants Program.

Mr WELFORD: Minister, you have said that you do not give priority to land acquisitions, and that is certainly borne out in the figures. Despite Labor spending \$44m on acquisitions for national parks, you have reduced the amount allocated in 1997-98 to, by the looks of it, about \$576,000. That is a pretty pathetic commitment. Is it any wonder that the Federal Government is furious with you for not providing dollar-for-dollar funding for the national reserve system? New South Wales is the only Government that has put up money. You have done

nothing to contribute to the national reserve system that the Federal Government has proposed.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: You use the word "furious" rather loosely. Last week, I spent three days at ministerial councils with Senator Hill, the Federal Minister for the Environment. I did not detect——

Mr WELFORD: I am sure he was courteous.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: We had some discussions about acquisitions, and I will go back a little further. When Mr Comben was the Minister for the Environment under the Goss Government, it was part of his policy to increase the percentage of Queensland land area that is national parks. He was hell-bent on getting it up to almost 4%, where it is now. That sounds like a pretty commendable achievement. However, since becoming the Minister, it has come to my notice that he was so bent on achieving that outcome that he did not care too much about how he went about it. He even took conservation areas and other protected areas, which were given such classifications for very good reason, and he made them national parks. The upside was that he got closer to his 4% target; the downside is that he made it very difficult to manage those parks.

In addition, when Mr Comben acquired those large areas of land in far-west Queensland where he could buy lots of acres very cheaply, he got the percentage up quickly. However, he also locked up large areas of land, only part of which was of high conservation value that needed to be protected. Lark Quarry, Riversleigh, and Bucasia Point spring to mind. Obviously, I inherited a situation where we had to do more about management. We have not altogether abandoned the idea of acquisition, but certainly——

Mr WELFORD: You have done the next best thing.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: We have reduced it.

Mr WELFORD: You have almost abolished it.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: No, we have not. I spoke with the senator about a property called Cudmore in the desert uplands of central Queensland. It contains quite a number of different biosystems.

Mr WELFORD: Is that the \$576,000 that is allocated?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: That is not all of it, but it is a project on which there is no animosity between the Federal Government and ourselves. We have agreed to dollar-for-dollar funding. As a result of my weekend discussions with the ministerial council, I can tell the Committee that there is support for the stance that Queensland has taken on acquisition. The Federal Government has Telstra to sell and that will give it a bag full of money, but it cannot expect us to find an equal amount of new money. It is not that easy. We pointed out to the Federal Minister that we want some other consideration in terms of acquisition.

I make no apology for the fact that we have slowed down acquisitions. We are still identifying the pieces of property that are worthy of acquisition, but we have slowed down the rate of acquisition

because we have to catch up on the management of our parks.

Mr BOYLAND: Furthermore, under the Natural Heritage Trust, \$80m has been made available Australiawide for the national reserve system. We anticipate that we will get a share of that. When we see the colour of the Commonwealth's money, we will look at how we can match it either in kind or through a cash contribution. That is still under negotiation.

While I have the floor, I would clarify an earlier comment. The \$1.7m that Mr Welford referred to as part of the national park visitor infrastructure is made up of an additional \$1.5m this year, plus a carryover of \$200,000 from last year.

Mr WELFORD: So Mr Tolhurst was wrong about that? He said that the figure of \$1.7m was right and that the figure of \$1.5m was wrong?

Mr BOYLAND: If you read it in its context, you will see that the \$1.5m is referred to as new money for this year. This funding reflects the estimated expenditure for this year. Far be it from the department to mislead this Committee; we have included the carryover from last year.

Mr WELFORD: Indeed, that has been done amply already.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: Madam Chair, a question was asked previously by Mr Welford in relation to one of my officers (name expunged). The Director-General has undertaken to have that matter investigated. I seek the permission of the Chair for the Director-General to make a statement about that matter.

The CHAIRMAN: Go ahead, Mr Tolhurst.

Mr TOLHURST: At the outset, I would like to say how very disappointed I am to have to appear before this Committee to respond to a question that has absolutely no basis. My personal view is that it is most unfortunate that public servants can be dealt with in this way and have no real right of redress.

Moving to the particular question—I am able to inform the Committee that (name expunged) left Australia on 26 April and arrived back on 12 June. (name expunged) was the leader of a (name expunged) team. The team comprised five people and all airfares of all members of the team of five were paid for totally by the (name expunged). I repeat that all airfares of all five members of the team were paid for by the (name expunged). All travel arrangements were made by (name expunged) and American Express. I am advised that (name expunged) travelled on United Airlines with other team members. (name expunged) did not use any frequent flier points in any way on any part of any trip around the world.

I have the full details here in front of me, if the Committee needs to know, of the flights, flight numbers, dates and times, if that information is required. But I do not think that information is relevant. I would stake my reputation on the accuracy of this answer and the fact that not once that I can recall in the last seven years have any of my senior officers or other officers used a single

frequent flyer point accrued as part of a Government trip funded by a State appropriation for any private purpose. Again, I would like to place on the record my concern that my colleagues are asked questions of a personal nature or an incorrect nature which have absolutely no foundation. Thank you, Madam Chair, for the opportunity to respond.

The CHAIRMAN: At this point, I will suspend the hearing for morning tea.

Sitting suspended from 10.33 a.m. to 10.48 a.m.

The CHAIRMAN: The hearings of Estimates Committee D are now resumed.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: Madam Chair, I refer to the issue raised earlier in relation to the allegation against one of my departmental officers and the statement made by the Director-General just prior to the break for morning tea. I would like Mr Welford to indicate whether it was that (name expunged) trip that he was referring to in respect of those allegations.

Mr WELFORD: Madam Chair, the issue was raised with me in the context of the relevant person having made a number of overseas trips over a period of time. I do not know whether specifically it was the (name expunged) trip that was believed to have been partially paid for out of frequent flyer points. However, the point that needs to be investigated is what process there is for arranging departmental air flights and whether anyone has been making personal bookings and then obtaining departmental reimbursement as a way of accumulating the points that purport to be personal points, as distinct from business accumulated points.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: Bearing that answer in mind and taking into account the statement and the assurance given by the Director-General, I point out that I have some concern about the way in which this could impact on the reputation of (name expunged). If Mr Welford is prepared to accept the statement of the Director-General, I would ask that that question be erased from the record. As it stands now, the question was asked by Mr Welford quite early in the proceedings. It was not until just before we broke for morning tea that the response came back denying the allegation, both from the Director-General in terms of the administration of the department and certainly with regard to the way it impacts on (name expunged). Given that the question and the response are so far apart in the record, there is a possibility that people will get the wrong impression if they do not read all of it. There are two options. I would like to see it erased, if Mr Welford will agree that it has no substance. The second option is that the record show that the statement given by the Director-General came straight after the question asked by Mr Welford.

Mr WELFORD: I have no objection to the reference to (name expunged)—something which the Minister raised, not me—being erased. But the question is a valid one in the context of assessing whether departmental funds have been properly expended and whether there has been any improper use of entitlements accumulated using departmental funds. So the question is valid. So far as the

Director-General's answer is concerned, I accept it at face value, although I do so with the reservation that I have not looked at the documents personally. In the context of the numerous other misrepresentations in the Ministerial Program Statements, for which the Director-General has taken responsibility, I do not give an unqualified acceptance of the explanation. However, to the extent that the Minister is concerned about a particular organisation being adversely affected, I am happy for the reference to that organisation to be removed from the record.

Mr TOLHURST: Madam Chair, do I get an opportunity to respond to some of those statements, or do public servants have to sit here and take that sort of thing during these hearings?

The CHAIRMAN: Go ahead.

Mr TOLHURST: I have been coming here for many years. This morning has been the low point in my experience before Estimates committees in terms of an officer being named and there being indications that I might preside over a department that misuses public funds or which uses public funds to increase private arrangements and benefits. Even worse, in the last few minutes, a member of Parliament has indicated that he might be prepared to take my statements at face value even though I have personally put on the record my view, the results of my interview with the officer concerned and also read directly from papers that were relevant to that particular trip.

Madam Chairman, I think there is a limit as to how much public servants should have to put up with in these sorts of circumstances. It does not worry me personally; I am raising this point because I believe it is totally unfair for the Parliament of Queensland, or a Committee of that Parliament, to identify a particular officer—in this case one named earlier this morning—when the concerned member of the Parliament and of this Committee does not appear to have any grounds whatsoever for raising that question or even an inference that that question should be raised.

Madam Chair, I would seek a ruling from you as follows. If a member of your Committee has a concern about a misappropriation of funds and/or consequential-type arrangements that might relate to public expenditure, I think Standing Orders should state—and if they do not, I would like, with respect, to recommend that they be amended to state—that members of your Committee and other Estimates committees should put that question to the Minister or the Director-General as far as the department is concerned. If a member of your Committee believes that we have misused public funds or misused frequent flyer points, or anything else that might be dreamt up, that question should go to the Minister of the portfolio or his Director-General.

I believe it is totally against what our understanding of public administration in this country is that a parliamentary committee takes an opportunity to identify a particular officer without any facts whatsoever—and I am not aware of any facts that have been tabled here this morning or anywhere else—and that officer now appears on the

public record with a question from the Opposition spokesman on Environment, which is the portfolio in which that officer works, and for the next 10, 15 or 20 years of that officer's career anyone can point to that particular paragraph of Hansard where it will show clearly that his integrity was impugned. It has not been withdrawn at this point in time. A member of this House and of this Committee has indicated that one of my officers has misused frequent flyer points, and at this point no-one on the Committee or the member asking the question has moved to table any document whatsoever to support what I believe to be a most unreasonable question both in terms of content and unreasonable in terms of my colleague (name expunged). I would like to think the Committee on reflection might move, as the Minister has suggested, to erase those parts from the record. I would not be very satisfied if the second option was taken where we put my answer next to the question. In fact, I would like to be distanced as far as is physically possible from the question, because I do not like the question.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr Tolhurst. Mr Welford, would you like to respond to what Mr Tolhurst has just said?

Mr WELFORD: Not particularly. The fact that the Director-General does not like the question is not a justification for the question not being asked. The question related to the use of public expenditure. The question, if you look at the record, will show that I asked the Minister whether he was aware of concerns within his department of certain conduct occurring, and a response has been given by the Minister and his Director-General. That is the appropriate course for the Minister and his Director-General to take. The Director-General has given an explanation in respect of a certain trip. That is entirely appropriate. It is on the record. The explanation has been given, and it should stand as part of the record. We cannot go on with this debate all day.

Mr TOLHURST: Madam Chair, I realise that we cannot go on with this debate. The point I have made is that an officer of my department has been named without any facts whatsoever. I think that is terribly wrong in public administration and in the Westminster system, and I would earnestly encourage the Committee to address that particular problem. I do not mind what questions Mr Welford asks me about any matter privately or publicly, but I do not like questions being put about particular officers when there are no facts available to the Committee to support the question. I think it is most unfair and improper, it should not be tolerated and the Standing Orders should be reviewed.

The CHAIRMAN: Mr Tolhurst, I would like to adjourn this hearing for a couple of minutes so that the Committee can deliberate in private.

Sitting suspended from 10.58 a.m. to 11.08 a.m.

The CHAIRMAN: This hearing is now resumed. In relation to the Minister's and the Director-General's concerns just expressed, the Committee has resolved to direct Hansard to expunge the name of the departmental officer and the name of the related organisation and also that

any reference to the name of the former departmental officer mentioned in relation to a proposed redundancy package be removed from the record as well.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: On a point of order, the reference I made regarding a redundancy offer was not anything to do with the question raised here. It looks as though Mr Welford is looking for a quid pro quo. Mr Welford was asking some rather pointed questions about expenditures of my personal staff with regard to an ANZECC and NEPC conference. I do not see that that request is related whatsoever to the issue of (name expunged). It was a different answer and a different point altogether. I do not agree with the ruling. I object to the ruling.

The CHAIRMAN: I do note your concerns. However, the Committee has made a ruling on this, so if the Minister does not mind we will continue with Government questions. I would like to now talk about small business, and I ask: what is the Government doing to reduce the burden on small business in relation to the environment?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: The question relates to the regulations under the Environmental Protection Act on licensing and compliance. Those regulations were to be enforced I think on 1 March 1996, and you will recall that the coalition Government came to power in the last few days of February 1996. There was enormous angst already in the community about the proposed level of licence fees and the cost of compliance. I immediately chose to establish a ministerial advisory committee to look into those licensing and compliance provisions. That committee reported in seven weeks with 103 recommendations which highlighted the lack of consultation that had gone on between the previous Government and the people in the industry, especially people in small business.

While the people in the larger businesses area were more worried about compliance, they had the capacity to undertake the licensing provisions and work through them, whereas the people in small business were finding that it was inequitable. Ever since then we have been trying to implement those recommendations coming from the ministerial advisory committee, and about 40 of those 103 recommendations have been fully implemented. Others are in the process of being implemented at the present time. We are trying to make the fees better reflect the size of the operation. We are trying to make the fees reflect the quality of the workplace in terms of environmental outputs.

I am currently negotiating with the business sector and the Local Government Association, which has a devolved power to licence on our behalf for many of the small-business people, so that in fact we can introduce incentive licensing whereby the better the performance, the lower the fee. That is widely supported by the small-business people. Local government has shown some resistance because they have had their own budgetary problems and budgetary expectations. They have taken some convincing, but I think some of the things that we have done already have given them quite a deal of relief. I would hope that in the next week or two we

will be able to put in place the new policy on incentive licensing, which will give great relief to those people out there in small business.

To the credit of lots of local authorities across Queensland, they recognise the financial difficulties faced by small-business people and they are exercising a right under the Act to waive fees either on environmental performance or financial hardship, and they are setting their fee levels at what they believe is a bearable rate. There are other instances across the State where the local government has not been prepared to do that. That is generally the case in places where we are getting adverse publicity about the Act. The blame shoots back to the previous Government, which was going to force this on the people without proper consultation—without really working it through.

Mr MITCHELL: You mentioned local government issues. I see that the Government has reduced rebates for the implementation of the Environmental Protection Act. Can you give us anything further on that?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I will ask Mr John Gilmour, who is in charge of the Environment Division, to give you the full details. We were assisting local government to establish this licensing system across the State.

Mr MITCHELL: Because they are one of the main parties in it as far as environmental protection is concerned.

Mr GILMOUR: In 1996-97 approximately \$2.65m will have been paid to local government for fee relief grants for new businesses licensed for the first time under the Environmental Protection Act. Those rebates apply where applications for new licences were received by local government before 1 July 1996 or, in the case of existing licences, where the annual fee payable was received by local government before 1 July 1996. They do not apply after 1 July 1996.

The assistance that we have given to local government since 1994-95 has been over \$8.3m and it has comprised financial assistance to purchase equipment, a very significant training support to local government, our regional support and technical administrative materials. We also have a range of kits and a range of information to assist local governments. We have what I call "devolution working groups" that operate across the State. Devolution is a process whereby responsibility under the Environmental Protection Act is devolved to local government. These groups provide a link between our regions, our central office, the Local Government Association of Queensland and local government. It is interesting to note where these groups are. They are in south-east Queensland, the south-west Queensland region, the Emerald region, the central region, the northern region and out as far as Mount Isa, and in Maryborough and Mackay.

Since this Government has come in, we have revised and amended the protocol between State and local government which clearly establishes the role of both parties. I believe it would be quite proper to say that there is a robust relationship

between local government and the Department of Environment. We work very closely together, whether it be on environmental licensing, waste management or dealing with, in particular, local governments applying for their own licences for the range of activities that they undertake because they undertake many activities that potentially have a significant environmental nature, that is, sewage treatment plants, waste water treatment plants, landfill facilities and operations of their workshops. There has been very significant—and it is ongoing—assistance to local governments. The Minister just spoke about incentive licensing. We are continuing to work very closely with local government. We are about to send teams around the State to work out how our incentive licensing can be applied, and to ensure that it is workable and that the officers who implement it can understand how it is going to work.

Mrs GAMIN: Following on from that topic—Minister, as you are aware, there has been concern from small businesses about the environmental protection fee. Numerous concerns have been expressed to your office. Those businesses have been provided with the guidelines as put out by your department and an application form to the local authority to claim for the fee to be waived or greatly reduced on the grounds of severe financial hardship. I just wondered whether you are aware that one of the major councils in south-east Queensland does not seem to believe that it has the power to waive or lower fees on the grounds of financial hardship. Do you think it would be worth while if that were followed up and local authorities were given a clear instruction as to how those guidelines that your department puts out should be followed in respect of small businesses?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: My understanding is that the power was devolved to local government, not delegated to local government. That makes a difference. That was the way the Act was structured under the previous Government. So I do not have the power of direction, because we have already devolved those powers, and they have a certain amount of independence. So we are restricted to the process of coercion and negotiation.

When I appeal to the Local Government Association of Queensland, I appeal to a peak body that has a very varied membership. I suppose that about 85% of all the businesses of Queensland are conducted within the south-east corner of Queensland with only half a dozen big councils, and their circumstances are very different from all those far-flung rural councils across inland Queensland. So they have some problems themselves in terms of trying to come up with a policy of what is best right across the State.

I think we have a good working relationship between myself, the department and the Local Government Association of Queensland. In the main, our relationship with individual councils is very good, too. But it boils down to the fact that the small-business people have, as you say, the opportunity under the Act to make an application to the council for a waiver of the fee. I think there will be some increasing pressure on those councils who are

refusing to give some consideration to their business houses, because they can see that across the State other councils have already done it or are going to audit that way. When we introduce and make public this new policy on incentive licensing, which achieves what many small businesses are looking to achieve, I think you will find that there will be increasing pressure and those people will find it hard to resist moving. But I do not have the direct power. Would you agree with that, John, on devolution and delegation?

Mr GILMOUR: The responsibility is with the administering authority which, for a devolved activity, would be the local government. Any person who has applied for a licence has the right, under the regulation which has implemented the fee waiver system, to apply for a waiver or reduction in the amount of fees. That waiver can apply under four situations: if it would cause the person financial hardship; if the person holds another authority for that activity, that is, that it might be a similar type of activity; if the risk of material or serious environmental harm is significantly smaller than the risk associated with most activities of that type, that is, that it is a very good performer in respect to other operations; and if the risk of environmental harm or environmental nuisance from that particular activity is insignificant.

As to the one that I just referred to about taking teams around the State—I think we do have to continue, and we certainly recognise the need to continue, an education program. One of the things that we will be doing when going around the State is reminding local authorities of their ability to provide that, and that the mechanism, the protocols and the guidelines are in place and that they do not have to reinvent the wheel.

Mrs GAMIN: I note that the Budget papers indicate special funding of \$0.5m to be allocated towards the development of the South East Queensland Regional Air Quality Strategy. How is this money to be expended, and will the strategy be completed on schedule?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I am pleased that you have asked that question, because it is obvious that one of the things that is going to occupy a lot of time with the media in the next year or so is air quality in the south-east corner of Queensland. The present Government is carrying on the work started by the previous Government. We have a Scientific Assessment Unit based in Mary Street which has monitors out there. They have been out there monitoring the quality of the air in south-east Queensland for quite some time.

There is a strategy out there now—the South East Queensland Regional Air Quality Strategy. We are part of it, along with the Minister for Local Government and Planning, the Minister for Transport and others. We are currently finalising this strategy. It will be finished by the end of the year. However, it needs to be said—and it has been said in the media in recent days—that, in the main, the air quality of south-east Queensland in almost all instances throughout the year is not a matter of concern, but we cannot be complacent. There are instances—

especially at this time of the year—when, climatic conditions being what they are, we have the danger of some sort of smog. Madam Chair, I ask that we spend a bit of time on this, because it is a major issue. I am lucky today to have Dr Peter Nimmo, who heads that scientific part of my department, to address it. I ask you to bear with him with his detailed answer, because it is something that needs to be said and put on the record.

Dr NIMMO: If I can refer specifically to the South East Queensland Regional Air Quality Strategy and the development of that—following on from the Minister's comments, the additional funding that has been provided this year of half a million dollars will allow the department to employ additional temporary staff with the relevant policy and stakeholder consultation experience to ensure the completion of the tasks that need to be completed within the deadline that has been set, that is, the end of this year. That deadline was agreed to at the beginning of this program some five years ago.

The tasks to be completed include the preparation of an issues and options paper and the first draft strategy for public consultation. The revision of that initial draft will then be in a form suitable for submission to Cabinet by the end of this current calendar year. There will be no additional scientific tasks to be undertaken, but the findings from the completed tasks will be summarised into public information documents and widely circulated to facilitate informed consultation.

Madam Chair, if I could just perhaps give some particular time frames to this important program—the key outcomes and deadlines for the coming financial year for the development of the Regional Air Quality Strategy will be as follows: by 18 August, publication of an issues and options discussion paper, including a broad outline of the strategy format and the expected content of the strategy; by 20 October, the first draft of the Regional Air Quality Strategy will be issued to internal and external key stakeholders to get their initial comment and feedback; and by 22 December there will be a revised draft of the strategy completed and ready for submission to Cabinet for approval for release for public consultation.

The CHAIRMAN: I would like to talk about hazardous waste. I would like you to tell us what has been done to monitor the movement of hazardous waste, particularly following the Cabinet decision to accept the ministerial advisory council recommendations for a tracking regulation to be introduced after the EPP (Waste Management).

Mr LITTLEPROUD: At the present time we are operating under a set of interim regulations while we are developing an EPP (Waste Management). I have given an undertaking to the Local Government Association of Queensland and to business people that we will have a tracking system to go with the EPP (Waste Management) when that comes on stream later this year. That will probably be operational by 1 January. I think it is best that I refer to Mr David Miles of my department to talk about the three different levels that we have for tracking hazardous waste.

Mr MILES: There are two pilot programs that the department is currently undertaking to have a look at alternatives to a paper manifest for waste tracking. One of those is currently with the Gold Coast City Council, which involves the Wastesafe proposal, which was developed by Australian Water Technologies of Sydney. That program entails our looking at modifying our computer system, which we have already developed on the paper manifest so that it can accept electronic data transfer from the system of Wastesafe. Wastesafe is a bar coding system. It was predominantly developed to deal with grease trap type waste.

A second string to the bow is a program initiated some two and a half years ago, when there was an opportunity to monitor waste movement in real time using global positioning technology. Work is being done by Hamilhaven, the R & D company, to explore the opportunities for using global positioning as a means to track the waste movements from generation through transportation to the point of receipt and treatment. That project, which will probably go now for about three months, I am told by Hamilhaven, as a final proving on between five and 10 vehicles in real time, will give us the information necessary to look at the waste-tracking regulation and how it may need to be worded or phrased to ensure that we can capture electronic data coming from that source. To put the three together—hopefully by the end of this year, we will be in a position to have waste-tracking regulations to accept electronic data and paper data available to coincide with the waste EPP.

Other issues on tracking—there is a national environment protection measure being developed for the trans-boundary movement of hazardous waste. We are party to that, although not on the steering committee. We are complying with the general agreement for movement of waste across borders. We are exchanging consignment numbers and other information as waste currently moves across borders.

Mr MITCHELL: What is being done to assist the farmers and other residents in urban areas who are holding unwarranted chemicals that could become harmful to the environment if not managed properly?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: Some years ago, the DPI organised a collection of unused farm chemicals because it recognised the dangers they posed. Just recently I was approached by the Boulia Shire Council and I have also been approached by the UGA in the Maranoa area. They are aware that, if they are to be out there selling clean and green—in the case of red meat, that sounds a bit strange, doesn't it?

Mr MITCHELL: Yes, it does.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: They want to have organically clean product. They have determined in the Channel Country to make sure that they get all the chemicals off their properties by using the council. The council has made an approach to us. I have referred that matter to my departmental officer to see what we can do. Perhaps Mr Miles could give the details. It is a pertinent question.

Mr MILES: Yes, it is. It is one that has been raised several times over the past few years. I suppose the initial answers were given that the infrastructure is not in place to deal with that in an appropriate, responsible way. In particular, technologies are not available at this point in time to treat some of the wastes that are out there. There has been a degree of emphasis currently on basically leaving them where they are and managing them well in a disbursed way, rather than in a concentrated way by being collected and stored somewhere. The actual risks are less, as might be evidenced by the fire at Zillmere some years ago.

At the moment there is an ANZECC-approved committee looking at the development of management plans for the so-called Schedule X wastes, the so-called intractables. That body, called the Schedule X Management Group, works with a national advisory body of non-Government people to put the forward the plans and advice to ANZECC Ministers on measures and means to deal with those chemicals. The management plan being developed currently by those bodies is for organochlorine pesticides, OCPs. That group also recommended to ANZECC that the OCP management plan would probably have little acceptance if there was not some collection program being considered to try to capture those unwanted wastes that you referred to. ANZECC has accepted the formation of that committee. It is called the National Collection Storage and Destruction Scheme Committee, NCSDS. The NCSDS has now met several times. It is looking to put forward a proposal later this year for consideration by ANZECC of what options and costs might be incurred in running such a comprehensive Australia-wide program. The one major benefit of doing it on a national basis is that, through the national advisory body being party to it, that is the best opportunity to get a really shared responsibility for the treatment of those wastes. That sharing would be across all levels of Government, industry, the community generally, conservation groups and so on.

The CHAIRMAN: We will now move to non-Government questions.

Mr WELFORD: I would like to move on to the Environment Division in a moment, but I have a couple of remaining questions in relation to the Conservation Division. I refer firstly to the Sugar Coast Environmental Rescue Package and the Minister's previous statements regarding the allocation of State Government funding to that package, which I understand is supposed to be \$500,000. I refer the Minister to page 12 of the Ministerial Program Statements, where reference is made to the Sugar Coast Environmental Rescue Package, and also to page 4 of the Ministerial Program Statements, where it shows that the Commonwealth's contribution is \$2m. That means that the State Government's contribution is not \$500,000, as you indicated, but only \$50,000.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I will ask the Director-General to quote his figures.

Mr TOLHURST: It is a total of \$16m over the four years, the final payment being made in 1998-99.

The figures for 1997-98, as I am advised, are \$2m for the Commonwealth and half a million dollars for the State.

Mr WELFORD: So this is another error, is it not?

Mr TOLHURST: No.

Mr WELFORD: What is it if it is not an error? It should be \$2.5m, not \$2.05m, on page 12.

Mr TOLHURST: These documents have been prepared at different times. Some of those are estimates in here. The latest figure that I have—and I was trying to provide the Committee with the latest figure; I can go back to previous figures if you like—is \$2m for the Commonwealth and half a million for the State for 1997-98. That will add to the 1995-96 shared funding of \$4m and the 1996-97 funding of \$6m, with the remainder being paid in 1998-99.

Mr WELFORD: Minister, I understand that you have established a mahogany glider habitat review team to review the boundaries of the habitat to be acquired. Who is on this review team? What is its budget? Why are you having this thing reviewed by outside consultants? Is it because you do not trust the department's assessment of the habitat areas?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I inherited a draft management plan. There was always a need to go out and have another round of consultation. I think that you look for competent people.

Mr BOYLAND: When the draft document was circulated for public comment, there were a number of concerns expressed by a range of land-holders about the accuracy of the mapping. It was felt in the best interests of all concerned that we invite independent people to come in and check the accuracy of the mapping. A team comprising Dr George Mackay, who is a specialist in that type of fauna; a Mr Les Hawkes, who has experience in forestry and vegetation, particularly in that area; and a local naturalist, who enjoys an excellent reputation, Mr John Young, were put together to review that work. As a result of their findings—their final report is still yet to come to the department but preliminary reports have been made available to the department—we have extended the range of the mahogany glider considerably. Obviously, our staff mapped it on the best available information at that point in time but, with their detailed examination and taking note from the land-holders who lived in the area for a long time, they actually extended the range so that the mahogany glider was, in fact, recorded at heights considerably above the level that was considered originally. We do not believe—

Mr LITTLEPROUD: That is altitude.

Mr BOYLAND: Yes.

Mr WELFORD: What was the budget of that group? Was a consultancy fee paid and to whom?

Mr BOYLAND: There was a consultancy fee paid.

Mr WELFORD: Totalling?

Mr BOYLAND: Totalling—

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I think that was listed in the questions on notice.

Mr WELFORD: Consultancies were listed, but I do not know whether this was covered.

Mr BOYLAND: The total cost for the consultancy was \$25,000.

Mr WELFORD: To whom was that paid?

Mr BOYLAND: It was paid to that group of three people.

Mr WELFORD: So each of them received payment?

Mr BOYLAND: They formed a consortium and we paid \$25,000 to that group. How they split it up among themselves is their business; it is certainly not the department's. By the way, it was tendered for. The normal due process was carried out.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: Mr Welford, in relation to the point that you raised before about funding for the Sugar Coast Environmental Rescue Package, the Director-General would just like to make some more comment there.

Mr TOLHURST: Briefly, I will just clarify that \$2.050m is the capital component at page 12. The \$0.45m is recurrent and would appear under the Conservation Strategy Subprogram. So it is made up of capital and recurrent. So the \$2.050m is correct on page 12 for capital. The rest is recurrent.

Mr WELFORD: Right. You had better correct the planned performance on page 7, too, because it refers only to the capital.

Mr TOLHURST: The capital is correct there, Mr Welford, because the capital component will always relate to the acquisition. The recurrent component will always relate to non-capital acquisition-type things, including nature conservation agreements, planning, consultants and all of that. So we do keep our capital and recurrent in accordance with the accounting standards.

Mr WELFORD: What is the State Government's contribution to the Wet Tropics Management Authority budget for 1997-98?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I will get Mr Dacey to come forward. While he is coming forward, I should say that we give contributions in cash or in kind. I take this opportunity to put on record the fact that last weekend the Wet Tropics Ministerial Council was able to accept in principle the management plan that has taken quite a long time to put together. We seemed to be able to focus it more sharply in the last 10 or 11 months. Of course, there is a review going on now with regard to the Daintree Rescue Package. In terms of the overall funding, you are quite correct: there is shared funding between the State and the Commonwealth. I will ask Mr Dacey to make a comment.

Mr DACEY: The direct cash contribution by the State for 1997-98 will be \$1.676m. There is also incline funding which, based on previous years, is in excess of \$2.5m.

Mr WELFORD: It is \$1.676m, you say. What is the Commonwealth's contribution?

Mr DACEY: At this point in time, I have not got confirmation from the Commonwealth Government of an exact figure. They have indicated to me in writing

that it will be no less than this year. Based on that fact, this year's contribution was \$2.825m plus a special purpose grant. I am anticipating that at this stage the total Commonwealth contribution will be a \$2.965m cash contribution.

Mr WELFORD: Which will bring the total to what?

Mr DACEY: \$4.641m.

Mr WELFORD: I see. Minister, in answer to the question on notice regarding the allocations between capital and operating costs, the capital cost is identified as \$5.836m. That seems to tally directly with the amount for the Daintree Rescue Package.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: What question number are you talking about there?

Mr WELFORD: Question No. 1. I refer you to the chart for conservation. Wet Tropics capital funding is \$5.836m, operating \$5.281m, total \$11.117m. Have you got that point there?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: Yes, I am with you now.

Mr WELFORD: But if you look at page 12 of the MPS, the \$5.836m is, in fact, the Daintree Rescue Package, is it not?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I will get that confirmed.

Mr TOLHURST: I think that the capital component of the Daintree Rescue Package for 1997-98 is less than that figure. That would incorporate some capital funding of other Wet Tropics operations. My estimate would be about \$4.5m for the Daintree program.

Mr WELFORD: Why is it \$5.836m on page 12 of the MPS?

Mr TOLHURST: That would be the total capital for Wet Tropics but not for the Daintree. That is Wet Tropics, is it not?

Mr WELFORD: No, it is the Daintree Rescue Package.

Mr TOLHURST: That would include carryovers, I understand. I will have to reconcile those figures.

Mr DACEY: If I can clarify that? The figure of \$5.836m is the total capital for the Daintree Rescue Package, including the carryover from the current financial year.

Mr WELFORD: The \$5.836m—

Mr DACEY: That is all the Daintree Rescue Package.

Mr WELFORD: It is all the Daintree Rescue Package. Minister, how do we reconcile Mr Dacey's calculation that the total funding will be \$4.641m with your departmental advice that it is \$5.281m for operating costs? It just does not tally, does it? Mr Dacey's advice is that we have a State contribution of \$1.676m and an expected Commonwealth contribution of \$2.965m, totalling \$4.641m. It does not even come close to \$5.281m. Where does that figure come from?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: Just bear with us.

Mr WELFORD: Perhaps you can take it on notice.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I think that we will take it on notice.

Mr WELFORD: It seems like another error to me. Are there any payments made to State Government departments out of the budget for Wet Tropics?

Mr DACEY: Out of the total funding that the Wet Tropics Management Authority receives, funds are allocated to the Department of Natural Resources to carry out land management activities in State forests that occur within the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. It is anticipated that they will be in the order of \$850,000 for 1997-98, which is very similar to the figure that they had this year.

Mr WELFORD: And?

Mr DACEY: In terms of the Department of Environment and the national parks area, funds are allocated from the Wet Tropics funding through the department's budget to be utilised on agreed projects. We do not actually pay cheques; we are all part of the one department and we operate off the one good ledger.

Mr WELFORD: What do you anticipate that would be, approximately?

Mr DACEY: The figure I anticipate at this point in time is slightly in excess of \$1.2m.

Mr WELFORD: So \$1.2m plus \$850,000 is over \$2m. The State Government's contribution is \$1.6m in cash. The State Government is making a profit out of this! The State Government is getting more money back than it is putting in; is that right, Minister?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I will seek advice from my departmental officers.

Mr WELFORD: It is an interesting concept that the State Government makes a profit. You are doing well; you are making a profit out of your involvement in the Wet Tropics!

Mr TOLHURST: Before Mr Dacey comments, the main difference between the two, on my workings, is based on changes in carryovers between the financial years and other miscellaneous items. Mr Dacey would have more details than I have available to me.

Mr DACEY: We have been talking about cash contributions by the State and the payments made back to the Department of Environment. In addition to that, as I mentioned earlier, the department contributes a further \$2.5m directly from its own coffers for the management of the Wet Tropics World Heritage area by the Natural Parks Branch of the Department of the Environment.

Mr WELFORD: The staffing has declined in the Wet Tropics Authority, has it not?

Mr DACEY: That is correct.

Mr WELFORD: What was the original staffing figure a couple of years ago and what is it now?

Mr TOLHURST: I might answer the first part of that and Mr Dacey can give the more recent staffing arrangements. If we go back five or six years to the Commonwealth/State agreement, at that stage the staffing was anticipated to be about 10 or 12. It

did get up to 20 and then it rose to about 28 when the Commonwealth and State Governments appointed the then Director-General, myself and a senior Commonwealth officer to review the staffing. At that stage it had crept up to about 38. It did get to the mid 40s. Depending on how you analyse contractors, consultants and others, I think it may have peaked at 45 or 48 including temporary staff. We always anticipated that, after the big planning exercise was completed, the figure would come back. It is now back to something like 30. I would expect a decrease over the next year or two. Mr Dacey would have more detailed current figures. That is the background to it.

Mr DACEY: I can confirm the figures just given by the Director-General, Tom Tolhurst. At the commencement of the 1996-97 financial year, total staffing, which at that stage included contractors and consultants, was 47. Following the budget allocated in 1996-97, we reduced the total staffing, including contractors, to 32. At the commencement of this year, we have a total of 28 permanent staff plus two full-time contractors and three part-time contractors on Aboriginal projects.

Mr WELFORD: The funding for Fraser Island is said to be up by \$750,000. What are the sources of those funds? Is it the case that they are simply a reinstatement of growth funding provided by the previous Government?

Mr TOLHURST: We would anticipate funding for the Great Sandy National Park to be about \$6.392m, including revenue retention as well as allocations and so on. That is based on a number of funding sources which I can come back to if members of the Committee need to know what they are. We would expect the expenditure to be over a number of topics. My colleagues in conservation can speak in more detail to that. Labour and related costs I would expect to be about \$2.25m; non-labour costs, including general administration, infrastructure, maintenance, running costs, interest and redemption, committee costs and some demolition work would be \$2.5m; and capital works including works at Moon Point Road, Inskip Point and Woody Point, a generator shed, some architectural work, a boardwalk and the Tewantin information centre would be about \$750,000. We have a number of special projects, some of which will carry over from this year—

Mr WELFORD: Would it be convenient for you to give a breakdown of the figures that you are reciting on notice?

Mr TOLHURST: We could, from our capital works program and other things.

Mr WELFORD: Thank you.

Mr TOLHURST: My colleagues in the program might have additional information that they may want to table.

Mr WELFORD: I think that will do for the moment. Minister, you are proposing to revoke part of the national park on Fraser Island for the Premier's airstrip. What area are you proposing to excise and are there any purposes other than the airport for which you will be excising national park land?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I take exception to the use of the term "Premier's airport".

Mr WELFORD: Do you support it?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: Yes. It was a Government decision to provide an airport for public use. The decision was made by the Government for the people of Fraser Island. It will become a reality.

Mr TOLHURST: I understand that the area to be covered is about six hectares. The proposal to the Minister will be that we should revoke about eight and a half hectares. That will cover the Orchid Beach grass runway and adjacent workshops on Fraser Island, which were acquired after the Orchid Beach Resort was closed down following detailed negotiations. The airstrip will be used frequently by local residents and commercial and tourist operators.

Mr WELFORD: Are any new facilities to be developed there?

Mr TOLHURST: I understand that a further 0.468 hectares will cover an aircraft workshop facility, a fuel shed, a generator shed and a concrete batch plant.

Mr WELFORD: A concrete batch plant?

Mr TOLHURST: That is an existing batch plant, as I understand it.

Mr WELFORD: I do not know of an existing concrete batching plant.

Mr TOLHURST: I think it was bought by the previous Government, Mr Welford.

Mr WELFORD: Is it the intention of the Government to rescind or revoke part of a national park within a wilderness area on Fraser Island for concrete batch plants? Is that the attitude of the Government?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I would imagine that that is part and parcel of the overall provision of the airport that the Government has promised to provide for the people who own private real estate on the northern end of Fraser Island. We can get some more details later, but I would imagine that it is all part and parcel of that facility.

Mr WELFORD: How much funding has been set aside by the department to facilitate this, including funding from the Premier's Department?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: About \$190,000, of our funds, I understand.

Mr WELFORD: How many land-holders, residents or householders are there on the island?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I do not have the number of people who live on private land. You have to remember that tourists access that part of Fraser Island as well. That is part of the jurisdiction of the Hervey Bay City Council.

Mr WELFORD: But you are revoking national park land from a wilderness area on Fraser Island that has been designated a World Heritage area with at least \$190,000 of public money, for a handful of residents, the number of whom you do not know, and to build a concrete batching plant. That is not a bad effort!

Mr LITTLEPROUD: Let us go back a bit. You also went in there and bought out an airstrip.

Mr WELFORD: Precisely. We closed it down; we closed down Orchid Beach.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: That was done without regard for the people who lived on that part of Fraser Island.

Mr WELFORD: It is a wilderness zone.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: You showed no regard for them whatsoever.

Mr WELFORD: You have rolled over under pressure from the Premier.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: That is pretty typical of the sort of thing we saw under your previous Government. As long as you had a big picture program, you did not care too much at all about the people affected.

Mr WELFORD: You have rolled over under pressure from the Premier, have you not?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: No. It was always a Government decision that an airport would be put in there, but I was not going to allow that to come from my portfolio. It was not my responsibility to run an airport. The Government has arranged for that to be run by someone else, not by us. We are prepared to revoke part of the national park to restore to some of those people on the northern part of Fraser Island the service they used to have and which they require.

Mr WELFORD: Thank you, Minister. You have made your position very clear.

The CHAIRMAN: Minister, I wish to speak about WildNet. You consider it a priority initiative. Can you tell us what progress has been made with its development?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: WildNet was introduced under another name. Last year's budget changed the name of the initiative to WildNet.

Mr WELLARD: Currently, WildNet is being developed in modules. Phase 1 has been completed. We now have the ability to have a database of standardised names of flora and fauna and to have some records of species sightings. Staff will also be able to inquire about the scientific names of species and the taxon in which they are lodged. That information is now on the wide area network. The next stage will bring in some of the larger databases in existence elsewhere. In particular, we will start to tap into the information which our officers have collected over many years. It is extremely valuable information which until now has not been available to a broad range of staff, because it has been kept on computer databases or even on hard copy records without any access mechanism. That will go into Stage 2. Currently, there is a consideration to amalgamate and shuffle some of the process to better meet the needs of the department, and that is under consideration at the moment. But the project is on time and on target.

Mr BOYLAND: I wish to stress that WildNet is right at the cutting edge of technology. It is being developed in conjunction with Dialog. It is so

advanced that tourists from China are over here looking at it. There is nothing like it elsewhere in Australia. We believe it will be nominated for an award. We are yet to find out whether it will be successful. It is at the cutting edge. There has been a commitment by the Government of just under \$1m over three years. As my colleague Mr Wellard indicated, we are on time and on target. It will be spread throughout Queensland. We are also working closely with the Queensland Museum. It is an excellent example of cooperation among various Government agencies. Obviously, we will also be working with tertiary institutions in the foreseeable future.

The CHAIRMAN: That sounds very good.

Mr MITCHELL: This is a tremendous concept. Minister, what is the department doing to help meet Queensland's obligations with respect to the conduct of projects, studies, analyses and processes necessary to enable the Queensland and Commonwealth Governments to negotiate regional forest agreements and thereby give certainty to the State's timber industry?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: That has been an ongoing program. Obviously, the subject is of great interest to you and also to people in my part of Queensland. We have hired some more staff. Mr Boyland represents the department on that committee.

Mr BOYLAND: The Regional Forest Agreement, which has been signed in principle by the Premier and the Commonwealth, is the subject of joint cooperation between staff of the Department of Natural Resources and our staff. Our staff have taken over the running in respect of two principal areas—the cultural heritage component of our forests and, obviously, the vegetation side of the mapping exercise. To achieve this, an additional 27 staff have been employed on a temporary basis for varying lengths of time.

Our initial thrust is in an area described as south-eastern region. However, we are anticipating, in anticipating support from the Commonwealth, that we will also look at the Brigalow Belt, which encompasses the cypress forests in the western part of the State. We are working to a target to have the vegetation mapping of the regional ecosystems completed by the end of this July. Some further work will have to be done to align the various adjoining maps. The finished product probably will not be available until about September, but that is well ahead of the anticipated deadline of December this year.

The idea is to have the agreement with the Commonwealth in place for south-eastern Queensland by June 1998. The funding has been made available. I do not have the figures with me, but in the vicinity of about \$1.6m has been made available for that. As I said, the preliminary work has been started in the Brigalow Belt to the west of the area. The south-eastern area is a major concern because of the number of small towns, sawmills and so on that depend on the timber. We have to establish resource security for the industry into the future.

Mrs GAMIN: Minister, what initiatives will the Government be taking to promote conservation outside the protected area estate during 1997-98?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: Our park conservation programs will be ongoing. I will ask Mr Wellard to give some more details in a moment. Over the past few months, I have been pleased to sign some of the voluntary conservation agreements that the department has organised with private landowners. We have an ongoing program in that regard.

Mr WELLARD: There is a commitment to a wide-ranging program of initiatives aimed at promoting nature conservation across the 96% of Queensland which is not in the National Park Estate. A wide range of avenues is available to achieve that, ranging from vegetation management on private land in consultation with the owners of the land through to education/information packages and some sort of incentives through rate relief and other avenues.

The actions that are currently planned are as follows: to continue forest assessments in Queensland, which will lead to regional forest assessments; to continue to provide, and explore the provision of, financial incentives to land-holders; and to continue the Sugar Coast environmental rescue package, which also provides financial incentives to landowners, particularly the cane farmers. As the Minister has said, quite a number of nature refuges are now being developed and there is a lot of interest developing in the community about nature refuges on private property.

In addition, the Threatened Species and Ecosystems Unit has been established, which is working on recovery plans for threatened species. The work of the Herbarium in Brisbane is also providing a basic resource to landowners. Quite a package of avenues is available. It is worth commenting that the interest developing in nature refuges among private landowners is exciting and is certainly something that we are interested in fostering. That is a very important way to get the landowner involved in conservation.

Mr BOYLAND: If I could just add briefly to what Mr Wellard said. We are also working very closely with Stanbroke, one of the leading pastoral companies, in developing nature refuges on their properties. Stanbroke have extensive holdings throughout Queensland. Their holdings have a great diversity of biodiversity on them. Obviously the department does have a strong interest in some of their holdings. But we believe that we can work jointly to provide for the cattle industry and look after conservation at the same time.

The CHAIRMAN: Minister, I would like to talk about Queensland's endangered species and ask you what funding strategy your department has put in place to promote the protection and the conservation of endangered species.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I will get the financial details in a moment, but Mrs Gamin would be aware that just recently we opened the Threatened Species and Ecosystems Unit at Fleay's on the Gold Coast. That is part and parcel of that thrust. Of course, it also helps us overcome the problems we have

inherited with regard the management of Fleay's and the debts it was incurring. But there is a need for us to, first of all, identify those threatened plants and animals and then put in place a strategy. Mr Wellard, you have the detail, do you?

Mr WELLARD: Yes. The Threatened Species and Ecosystems Unit is our primary strategy to deal with the endangered species in Queensland. It was established in 1997 and has been allocated a total budget of slightly in excess of \$620,000 in the forthcoming year, which will cover the cost of 11 specialist staff and the work they do in establishing species recovery plans. The unit has three major programs. It is working on terrestrial recovery planning and marine species conservation and it also is developing the WildNet program which we spoke about earlier. Recovery work in this year will concentrate on a range of species, including the bilby, the threatened and declining frogs, marine turtles, the bridled nailtail wallaby, the northern hairy-nosed wombat, the mahogany glider, the Proserpine rock wallaby and the golden-shouldered parrot. The unit will also administer the endangered species component of the Natural Heritage Trust. It is currently negotiating a partnership agreement with Environment Australia to that end. We are expecting substantial Commonwealth funding to support recovery planning projects in this forthcoming year.

Mr BOYLAND: In addition to that, I could add that Stanbroke have committed up to half a million dollars for research conjointly with our department and other researchers on the bilby in far south-western Queensland. A Dr Limpus, who is renowned throughout the world for his knowledge of turtles, was successful in negotiating the year before last with the Bekko Industry in Japan a grant approximating \$80,000 a year for the hawksbill turtle.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: You might like to mention that modelling that was developed by one of our officers.

Mr BOYLAND: What, with regard to the impact on turtles of—

Mr LITTLEPROUD: Could we have a bit more time, if you do not mind?

The CHAIRMAN: Mrs Gamin has the next question.

Mrs GAMIN: Yes.

Mr BOYLAND: I will be very brief. One of our senior staff has been working on models to determine the impact of netting on turtles. Coming out of that, what we find is that for the protection of the turtles in the long term we have to do a lot more actually on the land. If we can overcome predation by foxes of eggs, etc., it will have a lot more effect on the long-term survival of the turtles than the use of TEDs—turtle exclusion devices—on the actual netting.

Mrs GAMIN: Minister, what resources are involved in dealing with an issue like the nomination to the Queensland Heritage Register of the Infant Saviour Catholic Church at Burleigh Heads?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I note a parochial interest there, Mrs Gamin!

Mrs GAMIN: I am noted as a parochial member.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: The retention of our heritage buildings is important. Those sorts of issues are always referred to me. I have the good luck of having Mrs Gregory there to handle this part of the department. I will ask her to give the details.

Mrs GREGORY: The Infant Saviour Catholic Church was nominated to the Heritage Register a couple of months ago. The total cost in dealing with the nomination of the church has been \$3,800. This includes the cost of staff resources. What we have done in compiling that figure is include figures that would take that nomination right through the process of Heritage Council consideration. That nomination has not actually gone as far as that because the parish has asked for considerable consultation because they also have some other plans for that particular site. So the figure of \$3,800 is an indication of dealing with an issue right through to Heritage Council consideration, although the Infant Saviour Catholic Church has not gone this far because the parish asked us for considerable consultation and advice, and it may well be that in the future if some or all of that land is sold a future owner might regard the land tax relief that he might obtain through the registration of the church as part of a total package for the future development of the site. So at this stage the total cost would be \$3,800. It used to be about \$700 more than that to deal with a nomination, but we have since improved our processes by requiring nominators to provide us with more information so that less administrative work is required. But the same high standard of scrutiny still applies.

Mrs GAMIN: The other purely local question I was going to ask, although I know that Mr Tolhurst did touch on it before, was the Tweed River entrance sand bypassing project.

Mr TOLHURST: If I could just mention in passing that that is a massive project for the New South Wales Government, the Queensland Government and the Gold Coast City Council. I think the State funds about 25% of it. It is slightly behind schedule, but it does require the development of very complex legislation in both the New South Wales House and here. There has been a tremendous amount of cooperation between New South Wales officers, council officers and our own. I invite Mr Pattearson to speak to that as Director of Coastal Management.

Mr PATTEARSON: As Mr Tolhurst said, the project is one that is being carried out jointly by the Queensland Government and the New South Wales Government. It also involves the Gold Coast City Council. The fund-sharing arrangement is that New South Wales for the capital works pay 75% and Queensland combined—Gold Coast City and the State Government—pay 25%. It becomes a fifty-fifty cost sharing arrangement for the ongoing maintenance of the bypass project. It is being carried out in stages. Stage 1 is the movement of sand from the Tweed bar onto the Gold Coast beaches to

provide some immediate benefit to those beaches to make good the damage that has been done over the years through sand trapped in New South Wales. Stage 1 is being carried out in two parts. The first stage has already been completed and resulted in 2.24 million cubic metres of sand being pumped to Rainbow Bay and North Kirra at a total cost of \$10m. There were some delays in that project, but we did get an extremely good price on the project because we used the world's biggest dredge. It was one of its first jobs. It was a very efficient operation and extremely cheap for the work that was done. Tenders have been called for Stage 1B. They have just closed. That is for a further half a million to perhaps 0.8 of a million, depending on price. The estimated cost is \$6m.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: Is that cubic metres you are talking about there?

Mr PATTEARSON: That is cubic metres. Again that will be sand into those same beaches to finish part of the job. The ultimate part of the project will remove the entire Tweed bar and place it on the Queensland beaches. Concurrent with that, we started work on Stage 2, which is the permanent bypass system and that has involved an impact assessment process which has been under way for some time. The report for that is largely finalised as being assessed. Depending on what comes out of that report, tenders will be let for the design of the second part of the project, which is the construction of the ongoing bypass later in the financial year.

Mrs GAMIN: It is just a pity that I cannot get you to dredge Tallebudgera Creek, is it not?

The CHAIRMAN: Coastal protection is a very sensitive issue, especially in my area—I suppose it is everywhere. I would like you to tell us what you are doing to implement the Coastal Protection and Management Act 1995.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: There are two sides to that. First of all, there was extensive damage along a great length of the Queensland coast this year because of that cyclone. You will recall that I wrote to all members of Parliament who have electorates fronting the coast to advise them that this department serves to give advice and that any works that have to be carried out have to either be carried out by the private landowner, by local authorities who have the capacity to apply for a subsidy from the Local Government Department, or the Department of Transport if public roads are involved. I commend the officers of this section because, though we are few on the ground, there was enormous demand out there for advice. I understand that they met that advice pretty well. There was always a matter of concern to many of those local authorities and private land-holders as to what they were going to do about it, but they have to understand what we are doing. In terms of meeting the short-term needs, yes, we responded pretty quickly and we keep on doing that.

Of course we have got the Act, and we have given an undertaking that we will review that piece of legislation. There is a need to make sure that we properly protect the beaches and the coastline of Queensland. To that end, we have now appointed an

advisory committee which is charged with the responsibility of coming back to us with advice. I think it is going to take probably another year and a half. There are going to be some regional advisory committees as well which are going to be giving advice to those people. When that advice comes in, we will then look at amending the piece of legislation. But in the short term, we will continue with the sort of advice we get, and there is some funding that has come through. Mr Pattearson, you might tell us about the funding that has come through. We just recently got some funding from the Federal Government for some of the special programs that committee groups use.

Mr PATTEARSON: That is under the Coastcare program. We have got ongoing funding for the implementation of the coastal management plans. There is approximately \$1m allocated and that has been applied to placing planners in each of the regions. That will allow the development of the Regional Coastal Management Plans that the Minister referred to. The other major activity that we are carrying out is the development of a State coastal management plan which sets the broad framework for managing the coast or gives guidance to the preparation of the Regional Coastal Management Plans, and that is well advanced at the moment and will be presented to the Coastal Protection Advisory Council later this year.

Mr MITCHELL: While we are on dredging, dredging is being carried on in many coastal rivers, except apparently for Tallebudgera Creek. Can the Minister please explain what is being done to better manage the extraction of aggregate from these tidal waters?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: First of all I will make mention of the Brisbane River, because we have a Brisbane River Management Group which has been addressing this problem within the Brisbane metropolitan areas of the river itself. This year we are allocating \$5.1m for dredging. Dredging permits are obviously administered by the department under the Marine Land Dredging By-laws of 1987. We receive royalties for any dredging that goes on. In 1996-97 we got about \$950,000 in royalties. Of course, that helps us to go out there and administer what we have to. All royalty payments, though, are made to Treasury, and Treasury has allocated \$850,000 back to us. Of this budget, \$100,000 has been allocated for the purchase of a vessel. That has been represented in the budget as part of the capital expenditure.

Staff have been appointed at two of the department's four coastal regions to allow regional permit administration. It is expected that the staff will be appointed to the two remaining regions in the near future. It is intended that all dredging permits will be administered regionally by the end of 1997-98. Studies have been commissioned in the 1996-97 financial year in Moreton Bay, \$49,000 expended; the Pioneer River at Mackay, \$100,000 up there; and the Mary River, \$80,000. In addition, arrangements are in hand to provide \$40,000 to the Cairns River Improvement Trust by way of a study grant to allow studies to be undertaken by the trust and to be

completed on the effect of sand and gravel on the Russell River. The Russell River would be of interest to you, Madam Chair.

The CHAIRMAN: Yes, it is.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: Further studies of river systems are planned this year, and the estimated cost of the value of these studies is about \$300,000. In addition to this funding, the Brisbane River Management Group has been established to recommend policies of the future on the Brisbane River. We recently released a draft management plan on the Brisbane River, and we have some pretty vigorous discussions at the group when they meet with regard to what should happen to the Brisbane River. The Lord Mayor of Brisbane is keen to get gravel extractors out of the urban reaches of the Brisbane River. I think that will be achieved in the very near future. Of course, you have to be responsible. If you are going to take away one source of that material, you have to find another and understand what impact that has on the wider community.

All in all, I think you will find that it has been pretty well planned. We are out there organising what should go on. We are permitting what happens so we have due regard for what needs to be taken into account with regard to the environmental flows in the rivers and the state of the rivers. Probably the highlight at the present time is the studies that have been going on in the Brisbane River and the way that we are being responsible for long-term sustainable use of that.

The CHAIRMAN: Now we will go back to non-Government questions.

Mr WELFORD: Can you tell us the all-up cost, including departmental salaries and wages for staff, the total amount that was expended on the preparation of the failed oil and tyre tax scheme? Perhaps on notice you might like to give us a breakdown of all those costs.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I think we will be able to give you those figures. Just while that is going on, a minute ago you were asking about that concrete batching plant on Fraser Island. I just had some advice given to me. Yes, the batching plant was there at least five years ago, so it was already in existence when you chose to put it in a World Heritage listed area. It has been the considered opinion of the department that if we were going to revoke some land for an airport we should also revoke a batching plant out of a World Heritage listed area, which probably makes more sense. So the plant was there for five years. For the integrity of the park, we have taken it out as part of the revocation.

Mr WELFORD: We were closing it down.

Mr TOLHURST: If I could speak firstly and then Mr Gilmour will speak also. In relation to the oil and tyre management scheme, the estimated expenditure to date has been \$134,000 on staff costs, \$29,187 on administration, and contractors, \$185,000. Those are the main costs to 31 May.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: Could I just make a point? I would not count all that money as being wasted,

because there is an ongoing committee of people tied up in those industries plus user industries who are continuing to work towards coming up with a scheme, and I am sure that they will be drawing upon a lot of that information.

Mr WELFORD: So there is still a plan going on in the background to introduce a tyre tax, is there?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I convened a meeting. It was chaired by Mr Bruce Flemming, who was Chairman of the Queensland Environmental Protection Council. At that meeting were the tyre retailers, the tyre retreaders, QFF, QCI and local government. Those people agreed to go away and keep working towards what they might develop and then come back to me when we have some sort of plan that is more acceptable across the full breadth of the State.

Mr WELFORD: I thought the Government had decided not to proceed with it.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: We are not proceeding with the tyre levy; we are proceeding with studies into how we can overcome the environmental problems posed by waste tyres.

Mr WELFORD: Under the Local Government (Planning and Environment) Act there is provision for a project proponent to apply to their chief executive for advice on whether an environmental impact statement is required for designated developments. I understand that the Department of Environment is a referral agency, in effect, for requests of that kind. I am now moving to the Environment Division. How many such requests has the Environment Department given advice on as to whether an EIS should be required? Do we know?

Mr GILMOUR: I do not have that information before me.

Mr WELFORD: Would you take that on notice?

Mr GILMOUR: Yes.

Mr WELFORD: I would also like you to supply this on notice: of those requests on which you advised, on how many did you advise that an EIS was required and on how many did you advise that an EIS—in the department's opinion—was not required? Also, to the department's knowledge, how many of the requests on which you advised that an EIS should be required were subsequently overruled by the Department of Local Government and Planning? Could you take that on notice?

Mr GILMOUR: I would just like to comment on the possible theme in that question. We are a referral agency, as are many other bodies within the State Government. We give advice on a range of issues to the Department of Local Government and Planning and to local governments. There is no mandatory need to consider such advice by the Department of Local Government and Planning under that Act. We do give advice. It is up to them to make their decisions. I am not quite sure of the numbers, but there may well be situations where we recommend that no environmental impact assessment be done, for example, a management plan may be prepared, or the licensing is sufficient for that particular project

and an environmental impact statement is still required. There is a range of ways that the department can respond to that.

Mr WELFORD: It would be extraordinary, however, if the Department of Environment were to advise that an EIS was required and then the Department of Local Government and Planning did not act on that advice, would it not?

Mr GILMOUR: That is the Department of Local Government and Planning's decision to be able to make that decision.

Mr WELFORD: I raise this, Minister, in the context of—as you would be aware—recent publicity regarding a marina development on the Coomera River. I do not need you or your departmental officers to go into detail about that particular development. I am aware that the Gold Coast has, within its town planning scheme, an expectation that a marina development on the Coomera River might be required. However, it is my understanding that it went to Cabinet, and Cabinet specifically exempted that development from both the Moreton Bay Strategic Plan and the requirements of the Beach Protection Act. This seems to be an extraordinary way of overriding Department of Environment planning input precisely when the town planning schemes of local government ought to be subservient to those strategic plans and legal requirements of the Environment Department.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: That was a decision taken by State Cabinet having due regard for all those factors you talk about: the needs of the local area, the wishes of what was the Albert Shire Council, and the overall regional needs. Cabinet took a decision, and we are quite prepared to go ahead with the terms and conditions that we set on the developer.

Mr WELFORD: The terms and conditions were that you basically exempted the developer from proper environmental planning.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I would not say that is the case. There is a real need on that part of the coast to have ship repair facilities. There was a request that they should be taken out of the Broadwater. Having due regard for all the options available, we then agreed that that was a place where the facility could go, and we set certain conditions in terms of looking after the banks of the river.

Mr WELFORD: So subject to those conditions, you exempted them from the strategic plan for Moreton Bay and the Beach Protection Act; is that right?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: On those two conditions, I just cannot tell you off the top of my head. Government made a decision. We are there to govern. We made a decision that there was a regional need.

Mr WELFORD: You certainly are there to govern, Minister. There seems to be a pattern developing where your department is either rolled over or acquiesces to this Government's decisions which ignore proper environmental planning that your department has established.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: It is interesting that you should come up with that sort of proposition, bearing in mind that the Queensland Conservation Council accused you people of implementing less than 30% of all your policies. You are now trying to take a stance as the paragon of environmental responsibility.

Mr WELFORD: You know that was not true, Minister.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I do not know that that is not true at all. You are trying to be the paragon of environmental responsibility.

Mr WELFORD: The Queensland Conservation Council never said that.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: It was also stated in the House not long ago—either you or another speaker in the House was talking about the right of veto that the Department of Environment had over everything. One of the things where you came unstuck as a Government was that you did not have due regard for economic and social impact; you were just focusing on environmental impact. We like to think that we take into consideration all those things. We are into sustainable development. Development has to be with us, and there are some needs that are required. You might sound pretty good just on an environmental hobbyhorse—sounding very responsible—but, in the end, if you do not take the social and economic ramifications into consideration as well, you come unstuck. I will stick with the Government I am with, thank you very much, and take those sorts of hard decisions that we have to take from time to time.

Mr WELFORD: Good luck to you. Minister, I refer you to Key Outputs in the Environment Program on page 17 of the MPS. One of the Key Outputs proposed for 1996-97 was to put in place five environmental protection policies. How many have you put in place?

Mr LITTLEPROUD: To date we have released the water policy, as you would be aware. There are others in the state of finalisation, but I will preface my remarks by saying that I refer you to what I inherited in terms of the regulations to do with licensing and compliance. We found out that what had been prepared, and what you as a Government were prepared to put out needed amendment to the extent that 153 recommendations were made to amend them. So it was understandable that I was a bit nervous about the sorts of things that I was being asked to accept and finalise.

Mr WELFORD: This was your budget Estimate.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: Righto. I used the processes put in place in terms of two rounds of public consultation. We have also put in place the Environment Protection Council of Queensland, which is proving to be a very worthwhile body. That group of people also want to have that input, because I have asked them to review all sorts of legislation and policies coming from my department. No, we have not completed them all yet, but I think that what is being completed is being well accepted. There has been no adverse comment with regard to

the environmental protection policy on water. I hope that the air and noise ones coming out in the near future will also receive the same amount of acceptance, because we have consulted widely. It is a lengthy process, and I would rather take a little more time to get something out there that has the capacity to be accepted by the public rather than be rejected.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Minister. The time allotted for the consideration of the Estimates of expenditure for the Minister for Environment has now expired. On behalf of Committee members, I would like to thank the Minister and his portfolio officers for their attendance. That also concludes Estimates Committee D's consideration of the matters referred to it by the Parliament on 4 June 1997. I declare this public meeting now closed.

The Committee adjourned at 12.32 p.m.