

**THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT
ADMINISTRATION B MET IN COMMITTEE ROOM 1, PARLIAMENT HOUSE,
HOBART ON TUESDAY 8 MAY 2012.**

**OPERATION AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE TASMANIAN PARKS AND
WILDLIFE SERVICE INQUIRY**

Mr PETER MOONEY, GENERAL MANAGER, PARKS AND WILDLIFE SERVICE,
AND **Mr KIM EVANS**, SECRETARY, DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY INDUSTRIES,
WATER AND ENVIRONMENT, WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY
DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.

CHAIR (Ms Rattray) - Welcome to the committee. I don't believe we need any introductions because everyone knows everyone at the table.

Mr EVANS - Just to introduce myself, I am the secretary of the Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment and Peter is one of the deputy secretaries and has overall responsibility for the Parks and Wildlife Service and other land management.

CHAIR - Quite extensive, I believe. Thank you. Obviously, you are both well aware of the committee process and how it works but I will just reiterate the fact that if there is anything that you feel that the committee should be made aware of but it could be of a sensitive nature, then we are more than prepared to go and take that evidence in camera and discuss that at that time. So please feel free to use that opportunity if you feel that there is something that you would like to share with the committee but perhaps it's not ready for the public record at this point in time. So I just remind you of that opportunity.

As there isn't a written submission from the department, the committee thought that either one of you, Kim or Peter, might like to provide the committee with a brief overview of where you see the department in relation to the terms of reference the committee has established.

Mr EVANS - What I would like to do is to get Peter to talk more about how the Parks and Wildlife Service operates as a division within the department.

Just a couple of points: the Parks and Wildlife Service, it is no secret, is under budget pressures just as every other part of the organisation is and just as every government department is. Having said that, we have very good plans and systems in place to set priorities and we are always looking at ways that we can do things differently and better. So it is a case of never having got enough money to do absolutely everything. You have to set priorities and we do that very effectively, in our view.

As well as running the Parks and Wildlife Service as a division, as an organisation we have responsibilities for a couple of really major projects, one being the Three Capes Walk, which is a \$25 million Commonwealth/State Government funded project. It is a multi-day, multi-night walk and our view is that it will be iconic product once it is complete in terms of the recreational tourism market, and we are very much looking forward to having that project completed. That is underway as we speak. We are

upgrading the Cape Hauy section of the track and we will be commencing construction once we have been through all the planning approvals through the Tasman Council.

So that is a really exciting project but the other big one that we have responsibility for is the pest eradication on Macquarie Island and that's again a jointly State/Commonwealth-funded project and that has been an enormous success. We have baited the island and we are in the clean-up stages of that and we have got very promising results in terms of ridding the island of rodents. Already we are seeing massive regrowth as a consequence of the work that we have done.

CHAIR - Did you watch the Tasmanian program on Friday evening?

Mr EVANS - I didn't see it.

CHAIR - They are down to six rabbits, I believe, if you are interested.

Mr EVANS - As I said, Peter can talk more about the detailed operations of the service itself, but one other comment I thought I should make with respect to the terms of reference specifically, and that goes to term of reference 4, which relates to forward planning with regard to the intergovernmental agreement, is that it is fair to say that we have not done detailed planning because we do not yet know the results of what is to come out of that process and, as members will know, the signatories to the agreement are as we are speaking deliberating on the IVG report, Professor West's report, and it is through that process that some clarity will come forward to Government about the way forward. Until that work has been done, we are not in a position to comment about the impacts of the IGA on the Parks and Wildlife Service because we do not know.

Having said that, it is important to recognise that we have been involved in the background, supporting the process through the Resource Management and Conservation division of the agency. We have been providing data to support the IVG on natural values and other values. Through the Parks and Wildlife Service we have been providing support and information about the practical, on-ground public land management challenges, assisting in reserve design and, of course, we have an important role in terms of mapping through the Information and Land Services division. I understand in the agreement there is a commitment that the State Government will introduce legislation by 30 June and in the absence of the detail as to what is going to emerge from those discussions, we have been working with DIER and DPAC on some potential legislative models to give effect to the agreement once there is some clarity around what is coming out of those discussions.

There is probably little more at this point that I can add in regard to the IVG and it will, as I say, depend on what comes out of the signatories process and further deliberations by the Government. Peter, do you want to add anything with respect to the broader operations of the service?

Mr MOONEY - The Parks and Wildlife Service has been around since the early 1970s and it is probably one of the few government agencies that spread right across Tasmania. We have staff on the islands in Bass Strait right down to the subantarctic island Macquarie Island. Perhaps it is a little bit unusual for government agencies these days to be dispersed so much but just out of that fact it is fair to say that we tend to deal with a lot of

different issues on the ground simply because we are one of the few government representatives in the field these days because most of them are centralised in Hobart and Launceston. But, again, we support that and we promote that simply because it is connecting with the community, which is what our main role is. Communities in regional Tasmania are very appreciative of that and that is one important feature that we want to continue and not reduce. I can talk about geographic ranges if you want me to later, to the map, but just by way of questions, if you want to.

Mr GAFFNEY - Actually my question is probably to Kim. Will you be making some comment later about the structural change and the impact it might have with the Parks and Wildlife Service and Crown Land Services?

Mr EVANS - I can comment on that straightaway, if you like. The department in its current construction is relatively new. It is an amalgamation of two former agencies and those two former agencies, in bringing them together, had a parks and wildlife service and a crown land services, one looking after the reserves of the State and the other group, the crown land services, looking after the rest of the crown lands managed by the State.

To me, it didn't make much sense that you had two different crown land management organisations sitting within the one department and so I have recently brought both of those together, Crown Land Services and the Parks and Wildlife Service, so Crown Land Services has come under the Parks and Wildlife Service under Peter's direction and leadership, to get an integrated land management capability within the agency. With that we get some efficiencies where we had dual licensing, leasing and other responsibilities. We get the capacity for better on-ground support from the Parks and Wildlife Service with regard to the broader crown land estate, and we get the opportunity to look more holistically across the public land estate and set priorities in a broader context. It is relatively early days but that amalgamation has come together really well and we think it will pay dividends in terms of efficiencies in the way we manage our crown land estate.

Mr GAFFNEY - Following on with a question from that, it would be interesting to see what effect that has had on staffing impacts or, like when you say 'efficiencies' I am not sure if this is the place to ask it but you would probably be asked at budget time how that is going to impact on your overall budget, your overall manpower or person-power and that sort of thing.

Mr EVANS - I can say we haven't undertaken that move specifically as a budget saving initiative. We have taken that move because we think we can do our business better by having an integrated service, so when I talk about efficiencies I talk about getting a more appropriate distribution of resources, but having the capacity to do the higher priority jobs and set those priorities in a broader context, and along the way hopefully we will get better service delivery for the State and for the community.

Mr GAFFNEY - For the record, in the Rubicon Estuary we have had some issues with Crown Land and Parks and Wildlife Services and we think this is a good move. On recent consultation we have had with the community about different areas, we think it will make it much more streamlined and an easier way to operate from a local government perspective with the stakeholder agencies. We think it is a sensible course of action at this stage.

CHAIR - It has been suggested that through this amalgamation process there have been no additional resources allocated to Parks and Wildlife in relation to developing plans for the additional Crown Land Assessment reserves system. Is that correct?

Mr EVANS - Well, it is not correct. Is this in regard to the CLAC reserves?

CHAIR - CLAC?

Mr EVANS - The Crown Lands Assessment Classification program. We were provided with additional funding in the financial year before last, 2010-11, specifically relating to the additional responsibilities of the CLAC reserves.

CHAIR - But the handover did not take place until when?

Mr EVANS - The handover is happening progressively.

CHAIR - Right.

Mr EVANS - We have a parcel of unallocated crown land which Cabinet has decided should be moved into the reserve estate and become mostly conservation areas. To enact that decision requires us to go through quite a tortuous process including developing plans to go into the central plan register for each of those plans and so we have been doing them in batches. Rather than look at moving the entire group across in one hit, we have been doing them in smaller batches and so it is still happening as we speak. I have not got the figures off the top of my head but we have put through -

Mr MOONEY - Forty-eight thousand three-hundred-and-seventy-one hectares.

Mr EVANS - Peter has got it off the top of his head.

CHAIR - That is under the auspice of one planner for each region? There is one planner who is progressing those in each region, is that right?

Mr EVANS - No. The process of moving them into being conservation areas is being done centrally within the department. Once they are created into conservation areas, then they will require a management plan and Peter, you might like to comment on the process for developing those because we are making some pretty good progress there.

Mr MOONEY - There is 70 000 hectares that is scheduled to come across as reserve land through the CLAC process. We have done, as I said earlier, 48 371 hectares as of yesterday. They are done by municipality batches so we are well through the 29 municipalities.

The way they occur is they get the proclamation done but it is fair to say before that there is a lot of on-ground assessment done of staff and of any issues because a lot of them do have leases and licences already attached to them through the original crown land use. We are negotiating with those people and bodies that have the leases and licences. Also, we are looking at what communities use them because there are different clubs - some of them have club houses on the foreshore, for example - and things like that. Step by step we are slowing and surely doing it.

With the planning frameworks, most of them are at the lower end of our reserve status. In other words, they are the conservation areas. None of them are becoming national parks or state reserves or historic sites.

It is fair to say that the management framework on those current parcels of land is reasonably okay, there is no urgency with it, but what we are doing across the whole of the State is doing what we call a general management plan framework. We are covering off on all those lower status reserves that are small parcels all around the countryside and it is like the code of practice we have - we are just improving on that to have a general plan of management so everyone understands clearly what is easy to be done and what might be difficult to be done in those types of reserves because, it is fair to say, to have a plan of management for every single parcel of land in Tasmania is probably over-cooking the planning framework to be honest, whereas the general management plan that we have nearly completed will encompass the conservation areas, regional reserves and natural recreation areas and will be a far easier document for people to peruse and work out what's possible to occur in those reserves.

Mr FINCH - Mr Evans, in your opening address you talked about point 4 in our terms of reference about forward planning and that it was difficult for you to refer to that, but then you went on to say that you'd already provided information on data and mapping. That sounds a bit like some sort of forward planning, or certainly advice and information that's going into the process. Can you extrapolate on what has actually been provided to the IGA process?

Mr EVANS - Just as Forestry Tasmania has done, we have cooperated fully with the independent verification group and if they have information and data requirements and make those known to us we have done our utmost to provide whatever data would help inform their deliberations. I couldn't give you chapter-and-verse detail of all those pieces of information we've provided, but we've cooperated fully in terms of data on a whole range of natural values, mapping and other data support we have related to spatial information and, generally speaking, some information about some of the challenges from a public land-management perspective because that is part of the deliberations as well, through Professor West. It's been more about the provision of information rather than any recommendations or anything like that. We have left that very much at arm's length to be undertaken by Professor West and his group.

Mr FINCH - I am just curious about how much communication has occurred - how much are they wanting information from the department and how much time is being allocated by department officers to provide that information?

Mr EVANS - I couldn't really tell you. That is done and dusted. We were very careful with the provision of information to ensure that we had a process within the agency, and within government more broadly, to ensure that we understood exactly what information Professor West and his colleagues needed and that we channelled that through a central point within the department and then into a whole-of-government process.

Mr FINCH - And that's concluded?

Mr EVANS - Absolutely.

Mr FINCH - And you have no request at this time for further information in respect of the IGA?

Mr EVANS - Not that I'm aware of.

Mr FINCH - Have any other departments or bodies had any requests of the department for information about the reserves, what they might look like and how they might be managed?

Mr EVANS - Not that I'm aware of. I can't speak for other departments in terms of what involvement they have had. We have tended to operate through a whole-of-government process to provide information but, by and large, that has concluded now with the completion of Professor West's work and the submission of his reports.

Mr DEAN - I want to go back to where Mr Gaffney was. You were talking about the Crown Land Assessment Classification process and that coming across into the two departments coming together. You said that there were efficiencies and also that there had been an increase, I think, in the 2010-11 Budget. I take it that when CLAC came across, everything in CLAC would have transferred across, all the personnel, administration staff, to your department. Were there any efficiencies there? What happened in relation to that side of things?

Mr MOONEY - There was a team set up to perform the CLAC assessment but they were only fixed-term employees; they weren't permanent employees. So when the CLAC assessment had been completed, that project had finished and they didn't continue employing those staff. So, what's actually come across -

Mr DEAN - So at the time it transferred across that staff had finished?

Mr MOONEY - Yeah. Well, not all of CLAC has transferred across; we're still going through that. Of that proposed 70 000 hectares we're only 48 000 hectares there, so we are well over halfway. That's an administrative process which Kim mentioned, as in our planning and our titles and what they call the CPR plans, that is the lodging of the plans for proclamation. Current DPIWE staff are doing that and no extra staff were put on to perform that function, so we are doing that within our department now.

Mr DEAN - I am having trouble. So at the time of the move across, you're saying that a number of CLAC personnel weren't permanent employees and -

Mr MOONEY - Sorry, it might be a mixture here; Crown Land Services, which was an independent branch of DPIWE, moved into Parks and Wildlife Services as of February this year. The CLAC process is a completely independent process of that.

Mr DEAN - Right.

Mr EVANS - Perhaps I might give a little bit of background on this project.

Mr DEAN - Yes, I need something more.

Mr EVANS - The CLAC project started - I forget how many years ago -

CHAIR - Or how many ministers ago.

Mr EVANS - Or how many ministers ago - but at the time we had about 9 000 parcels of unallocated crown land. Some of them were tiny little pieces of land and some of them were quite large tracts of unallocated land. When I say unallocated, I mean they didn't have a reserve category assigned to them and their future hadn't been decided. So we set up the CLAC project to systematically work through and assess every one of those 9 000 pieces of land and make a recommendation to the Government about what should happen with those pieces of land. We consulted along the way with local government -

Mr DEAN - So the shack sites come into this too - is that right?

Mr EVANS - That's another separate one.

Laughter.

CHAIR - I don't think the committee has time for shack sites today.

Mr DEAN - Okay, keep that aside.

Mr MULDER - And foxes aren't in there either.

Mr DEAN - Keep going, Kim.

Mr EVANS - Essentially, with each piece of land we made a decision. We put them into one of four categories. We decided that some pieces of land were of little value in terms of their reserve or conservation values but had potential in terms of being sold, so some pieces of land we decided to sell. Some pieces of land were of keen interest to local councils, and we made decisions in discussion with local government to transfer some of those parcels of land directly to local government. Some we decided should go into the reserve estate - they are the parcels that we're talking about now - and then there was a small group that we couldn't quite decide on so we just parked those.

So we've worked through and are working through to transfer or sell some land, we've worked through and transferred a whole heap of others to local government, and now we're dealing with the parcels that are to be transferred into the reserve estate. By and large, as Peter said, they are at the low conservation end that are typically being made into conservation areas and we are systematically working our way through how we create conservation areas with regard to those parcels of unallocated crown land.

Mr DEAN - Right, to get to the nitty-gritty then, prior to that happening, how many reserves or conservation areas were under the control of the department at that stage? I think there is now about a total of 530 or thereabouts with the ones that have transferred across to you, is that correct?

Mr MOONEY - Before the CLAC process, Parks had about 420 reserves, which included national parks and all the different categories. With the CLAC process, it is a mixture of additions to current reserves and new reserves, so they're not all just new reserves. We

can get that figure to you but it's in the order of about 60 to 70 new reserves that we have created.

Mr DEAN - That would be good; I'd appreciate it if you could get that.

Mr MOONEY - Put it on notice and we'll get you that information.

Mr DEAN - Was there sufficient personnel movement within the organisation to provide you with the ability to look after those 60-70 new reserves that came across as a result of that process?

Mr MOONEY - In the 2010-11 financial year, as the secretary mentioned, we got additional funding to support the Parks and Wildlife Service. Part of that was for the CLAC new lands and part of it for a recruitment drive in Parks and we employed 30 new staff in that year.

Mr DEAN - As a result of that move.

Mr MOONEY - Yes, and some those staff have gone to the duties on those new lands and some have gone to duties in other parts of the reserve system. So 2010-11 was the growth year.

Mr DEAN - How much money are we talking about was made additional? I should know that.

CHAIR - It was \$4 million from memory. There was much excitement around the State that Parks were going to be more adequately funded.

Mr DEAN - And all those staff still remain there at this present time, the additional staff you employed?

Mr MOONEY - Yes.

CHAIR - So there has not been any loss of numbers?

Mr MOONEY - No. We have had staff resign and move on, but of the 30 staff we recruited we still have those 30 staff, but as people get old they retire, obviously.

CHAIR - I understand, but there has been no replacement of those ones through natural attrition.

Mr MOONEY - No, not to date.

Mr DEAN - Were those 30 extra staff sufficient to manage and work with those additional reserves that came across into your department?

Mr MOONEY - As the secretary mentioned earlier, we never have the resources we wish to have but we certainly have resources to make do and do the best job we can.

CHAIR - A very diplomatic answer.

Mr DEAN - Whereabouts in the State are those extra 60-70 reserves or areas that came across?

Mr MOONEY - Mostly along the coastline in Tasmania and they range from the south-east, right up the east coast to along the north-west coast.

Mr DEAN - Coastal reserves.

Mr MOONEY - Mostly coastal. The Crown Lands Act had what they used to call coastal reserves and a lot of those parcels have come across to be conservation areas. Often they were adjoining present conservation areas we were managing anyway, so it was sort of a seamless join in a way.

Mr MULDER - You have mentioned a couple of times now that there is never enough money to do what needs to be done, so I ask myself: what about the low priorities? Do we ever get to them or do we just let them degrade?

Mr MOONEY - I think it is fair to say that it is the same as any government agency in that we have to prioritise regularly according to a whole range of categories and we have an order of priorities in those categories. Obviously environmental management is our number one and then community engagement and then we go down to visitor safety and OH&S requirements for staff. At the end of the day there is an amount of work which tomorrow may not get done that would have been done today because of the new prioritisation but that is just a fact of life and that is what we have to do on an ongoing basis in the industry.

Mr MULDER - What I am hearing, though, and what I am seeing - I have done a few yards through the bush in Tasmania in my time - is that we are actually shrinking the amount of infrastructure in these areas simply because we do not have the money to maintain or even to grow what is supposed to be a tourist asset.

Mr MOONEY - I think our challenge is to keep our infrastructure maintained at the standards required and it is fair to say that post-2000, when the Australian Building Code was applied in Australia, that was a serious challenge for every government agency that has infrastructure. We are no different. It is fair to say we are rearranging some of our infrastructure, especially in the remote locations, so that we do not have as much constructed items out of timber, et cetera, using a lot more natural materials and using different techniques, and that is simply so we can have a system out there that does not require that regular monitoring and update of our infrastructure to the Australian standards that have been previously required on built structures. So we are changing the techniques we are using but I do admit it is a challenge.

Mr MULDER - But I will get back to my proposition that we are actually shrinking the amount of infrastructure or shrinking things like closing tracks or not maintaining a whole heap of tracks that we have in the past, which in a sense is shrinking the access, and your focus I suspect is on your iconic walks and locations.

Mr MOONEY - Tasmania is in a unique situation in that we have an amazing number of walking tracks at a far greater level per capita than any other State in Australia, and that

is simply because the early years of pioneering and bushwalking in Tasmania were mostly done by walking clubs and they just had this amazing ability to go and tape routes wherever they went and they have become tracks or routes. We have done a huge classification process and assessment to determine the most important tracks to remain open and the best tracks that are available for people to use, because a lot of those regional tracks were built in areas where there is less vegetation and are straight up ridge lines and straight down valleys. I know a lot of you have probably done them and they are not the best tracks to walk and they cause a lot of erosion because they are not benched into the countryside. We have done a good assessment of all those tracks and have decided that we will keep a number open and others we will gradually close down and the reason for that also is there is a lot of duplication in Tasmania of tracks - you might have a track only 3 or 4 kilometres apart leaving at the same point of departure and reaching the same destination. It is a rationalisation process, I suppose, is what I am saying.

Mr MULDER - It is a good time to get on to point three. It is expensive work to take a crew into the middle of the wilderness and do the duck-boarding and create stone steps and things like that. I often marvel when I go through, say, the southern ranges, and I look at all that stonework that was probably done in the 1950s by a walking club across sensitive alpine grassland, where someone has picked up a huge big boulder and actually moved it so you can actually walk across this thing. We have used volunteers a lot in the past. What is the actual size of the crew that you have and how do you go about, for example, building a piece of infrastructure or maintaining an existing track where you have decided that you need to maintain it? Who do you use?

Mr MOONEY - We have assessments of all our popular tracks, which are the ones that would take at least 300 to 500 people more per annum, and that is a lot of tracks in Tasmania.

Mr MULDER - It is hard to become a popular track if you've taken all the signs off.

Mr MOONEY - Anyway, with the assessment you go through those categories of visitor safety, environmental impacts, et cetera, so the way it works out is you concentrate on the most needed areas first of all; you don't work from beginning to end because you would never have the resources to do that. So when you consider that you look at things like river crossings, which are probably the number-one priority, and then you go to the marshlands and the boggy areas. How we use resources is quite varied. Traditionally we have had what we call 'track workers', seasonal workers who are often university students on their holidays or someone else who is often young and has to be fit and eager to go out there and camp in the bush overnight. For Frenchmans Cap we would probably have a team of four to five working there for three months continuously every summer. The South Coast Track might have another team of a similar size. The Three Capes Track, which is a completely different process because that is building a track from beginning to end, has two full teams that are contracted and up to 30 people are employed on that one. We are not employing them as employees, it is a full tendered contract so private companies are actually doing that.

The skills in Tasmania are increasing. We have to remember that those trackwork skills haven't been that significant in Tasmania. It has only been in the last four to five years that those skills have been built up to a level where there has been some great work done

in municipalities on places like Mount Wellington with the stonework. The skills are getting there but I suppose the biggest issue in Tasmania is that it is seasonal work and we can't provide winter work, it is just not the right climate.

Mr MULDER - It seems to me when I watch what groups like Green Corps do sometimes with their things, it is a fairly basic skill-set level.

Mr MOONEY - Yes and no.

Mr MULDER - The kind that you get in a pre-apprenticeship program for the building and construction industry, perhaps?

Mr MOONEY - The complexity with this work is that when you have to camp overnight you need someone with the acumen, bush skills and sensibility of living in the bush. It's fair to say that in today's society that type of skill is decreasing, not increasing. That's not to say that we do not want to increase it ourselves internally. We have traineeship programs that we are starting, with that work discipline as part of the higher section of their training. With the private companies, they have put on traineeships and people. They now have trainee stonemasons working with them because of this initiative of the Three Capes track. So there is some commitment out there.

Mr MULDER - It seems to me there is a shortage of skills but a surplus of people in the community who can pick up these skills. For example, Green Corps is basically a skilled training program with practical outcomes. You have the capacity. We have community service orders where young offenders, and even older ones, go out and paint rocks or paint out graffiti on a wall that hasn't had graffiti painted on it for 20 years, simply because that is the only project. I don't know how many coats of paint are on the back of the Risdon Vale hall, for example, but I can assure you that there are more coats of paint than there are coats of graffiti. It seems to me that as a society we may not be doing appropriate matching there. Prisoners are now being taken out of Hayes jail farm to be sat staring at four walls. Surely here is an opportunity to not only gainfully employ them but also to pay them to do the work?

Mr MOONEY - We have had discussions with Correctional Services and we are working on some trial programs. It's fair to say that day work is very much an ability and can happen but it's the overnight issue that makes a big difference. We can with start small steps on the day work and I'm sure we can increase the ability to do that.

Mr MULDER - I think you'll find that a lot of people will take that up if you pushed into one of these programs.

Other than the Three Capes walk, which we will get to in a minute, what significant infrastructure issues are there, apart from those you are working on at the moment?

Mr MOONEY - We have quite a large assessment management system which covers everything from roads right through to our big multimillion dollar visitor centres. There's a range of high-risk areas. The high-risk areas are the ones where people's lives are in danger if something collapses or goes wrong. For example, viewing platforms that have big drop-offs, roads such as Jacobs Ladder on Ben Lomond. That is a bit of a

challenge for us every year to maintain it. They're the ones that we are putting in all our priority energy to keep them open and in a fit and proper condition.

Mr MULDER - With the Three Capes walk, what is the business model for this? We hear stories of private enterprise basically controlling the Three Capes walk with accommodation et cetera.

Mr MOONEY - We have done a lot of homework here. We have done several feasibility studies, and they're on our website. What they are basically saying is that with for the overnight bushwalking market the demand is there for another iconic walk in Tasmania, similar to the Overland Track but with some different experiences and with a higher level of comfort. The comfort level is what a lot of people are concentrating on, but it's certainly not five star hotels; it's just good, clean, dry accommodation in huts with gas for cooking.

Mr MULDER - Something like the Pelion Hut.

Mr MOONEY - Yes. The Pelion Hut is our second-newest hut that we have built in parks for bushwalking. The newest hut is the Windy Ridge Hut on the south end of that reserve. They are very similar to the huts that we will be building at Three Capes. The private partnership is similar to the Cradle Walks partnership we have at the moment. They will build their own huts next to the public huts but they'll be a lot smaller; they will be taking approximately 10 clients. Their injection of funding is to build those huts and then run the guided walks. They will then take up to a maximum of 10 clients per day on their walks and we'll have the free and independent public use, which can be up to 48 walkers, so there is a big difference in numbers.

Mr MULDER - Forty-eight at any time in the park?

Mr MOONEY - That can leave each day through the park. The Overland Track at the moment can have up to 60 walkers and in the summer that is fully booked out, and a lot of nights consecutively. It is fair to say the Three Capes track business model will have a build-up period. It certainly will not do that in the first year but over a period of six to eight years we will get to that maximum peak level.

Mr MULDER - Are there also things like camping platforms at the various camp sites?

Mr MOONEY - There are two areas where camping can happen. One of the biggest feedbacks we have had from users of the Overland Track is that they would like more accommodation as opposed to camping. I suppose that is simply because of inclement weather on the Overland Track. Whereas on the Overland Track there is camping and hut use at every overnight node, on the Three Capes track there will be overnight hut use at every node but camping will only be at two nodes out of the five nodes.

Mrs TAYLOR - Did you just say that the Three Capes track will be free?

Mr MOONEY - No. We refer to the users; they are called free and independent. They are not people going on the commercial trip.

Mrs TAYLOR - Right. They pay to use it.

Mr MOONEY - Yes, they will pay. We are not quite sure on the amount yet but it will be around \$200 to do the whole walk. The Overland Track is \$180.

Mrs TAYLOR - You meant free and independent as opposed to free from cost.

Mr MOONEY - Free and independent, yes.

Mrs TAYLOR - I just wanted to check that because otherwise we are providing from the public purse for infrastructure.

CHAIR - There are no free lunches.

Mrs TAYLOR - The private companies that build their infrastructure, are they going to contribute at all?

Mr MOONEY - No, the private companies will have their own system. They will charge a lot more than what the public -

Mrs TAYLOR - Agreed, but will they contribute to the maintenance?

Mr MOONEY - Yes. They will pay a service fee, such as Cradle walks, which pays quite a high service fee now to the Parks service and that money must be put back into maintenance of the track.

Mrs TAYLOR - Thank you. When Tony was talking about volunteers and trainees - how many trainees have you actually got?

CHAIR - He will know them all by name.

Mr MOONEY - There are eleven on our books at the moment.

Mrs TAYLOR - Okay because you were saying you are looking at increasing the number of trainees.

Mr MOONEY - Yes. We have different training programs. It all depends on the vocational education system they have available for opportunities. We have two different programs at the moment. We have trainees on for two-year periods and trainees on for four-year periods. The trainees on for four-year periods will remain part of our permanent staff and the two-year periods are just a two-year fixed term where they will achieve a qualification and a lot of work experience. Then they will go to the competitive world of obtaining jobs. It is fair to say that we have had a very good strike rate.

We have had a trainee program now for eight years of one form or another and we have had about a 95 per cent uptake rate of those trainees into our permanent workforce.

Mrs TAYLOR - Do they get Certificate III or IV?

Mr MOONEY - Certificate III and Certificate IV and now you can get a diploma, so there are three levels they go for.

Mrs TAYLOR - In your two year -

Mr MOONEY - No, the two years is just Certificate III and if you go on to the four-year program you can get the diploma.

Mrs TAYLOR - Thank you. Tony also talked about volunteers. We all know, and you have said too, that for the last 200 years people have just carved tracks, and there have been a lot of bushwalking clubs and so forth who have not only set up the tracks but also marked them and maintained them and whatever. Am I to understand that you do not use those volunteers?

Mr MOONEY - We certainly do. We have 5 000 volunteers on our books.

Mrs TAYLOR - Okay, good.

Mr MOONEY - We have an awful lot. They do all sorts of different things for us. We have one part of that volunteer workforce that do what we call low-key track maintenance. That is track maintenance without having to use machinery so they can take secateurs, machetes, shovels and picks and things. That is quite regular. We have is Adopt a Track so often bushwalking clubs will adopt one track each year and they will just maintain that track and get it up to a certain standard. When it comes to using machinery or heavy work we have to use our staff as a mixture with the volunteers because there is basically a duty of care for the volunteers as well.

Mrs TAYLOR - So, you've got a section of the department that actually runs a volunteer program.

Mr MOONEY - Oh, well, we have volunteers everywhere. We've got a community partnerships program which is centrally managed in Hobart and then each of our regions have what we call volunteer facilitators and then all the rangers obviously work with volunteers as well.

Mrs TAYLOR - Okay, thank you.

CHAIR - Can I take you to some information that we've been provided with about the approval for plans for national parks? Our information tells us that seven of the 19 are overdue for the review following the 10-year plan period. Is that of concern or is that a fact? Is that how you understand it?

Mr MOONEY -Yes, some of them have only just come due but it is fair to say that under the legislation, all the prescriptions and all the processes agreed to in those plans are still current. So there still is legislation that is current. The review period has lapsed but that doesn't mean that the world has changed because of that. What we are doing is going through a priority process of those plans that are up for review and working out the most important ones to do first to the last. The way we do that is basically going to the community to find out what are the concerns of the community with those plans. Some of them have no concerns at all and some do have quite large concerns.

CHAIR - So, out of those seven, there may well only be one or two that have got concerns from the department and yourself; is that right?

Mr MOONEY - Well, the concerns are mainly from the community. Our big template and feedback process is the community. As far as the integrity of the reserve goes, obviously that's our role and our duty of care and we will maintain that but there may be issues or uses that the community would like to introduce to a reserve that the current plan doesn't allow and they are the ones that we're interested in discovering and trying to work with the community on in the plan review to make sure that the new capacity is properly available at the end of the day.

I suppose the whole world of recreation is changing, such as extreme sports. Who would have thought of that term ten years ago and now we have adventurism out there at a scale that we would never, ever have pre-guessed. We have situations where people walk two or three days to face-jump cliff lines and issues like that. These are in locations where people would never normally have gone to before so we have to, I suppose, be fit and ready and respond to the new requirements we have and new demands from the community. They are the sorts of issues that we're dealing with every day to try to sort out - are our current management plans adequate and what do we have to do to change them to make them adequate, to meet those needs?

CHAIR - So there'll be community consultation events around the State then, looking at those seven -

Mr MOONEY - Yes. What you have is your known stakeholder groups that you're regularly communicating with and then you have a public process that you usually advertise in the paper or on the radio or calling for expressions of interest or it's often through a public meeting or a communication forum to try to get the net spread wider of people who we may not have a current relationship with. That's certainly the case with these new types of activities and sports that are out there because some of them are so new to us that we just don't know the scale of use. We hear about it and get some evidence but we don't have that connection yet.

CHAIR - It's been suggested that the department is not necessarily a good neighbour - because you are neighbour to so many properties and so many land aspects around the State - in that you're not necessarily a good neighbour in relation to feral pests and weeds and the like. Is that something that the department is concerned about? Do you work with organisations in relation to that?

Mr MOONEY - Yes, I think it's always on our mind and we're always conscious of that but I think it's a two-way street. I think it's fair to say that most feral pests don't know where the boundaries are and they don't respect the fence line, for example, so they do go across the border. The mechanisms of how we deal with that are quite reasonably complex. I suppose the reason for that is simply that there are other regulatory processes which are changing the way we do business, such as the use of 1080, the use of firearms. All those types of mechanisms have changed the way that even a farmer, for example, can manage their land compared to the way we can manage the land. We are both in similar situations of having to change the way we do business simply to meet the new regulatory framework, but that doesn't mean we can't be cooperative and do more work.

I suppose you will get the individual case come up and that comes across my desk but I

must admit it is not a regular occurrence. Most of the comments I get are from visitors to our iconic reserves. When it comes to the neighbour relationships I don't get a lot of comment from the individual landowners but that doesn't mean to say they are not working every day with the rangers in the field.

CHAIR - I think I might have started a line that Mr Finch would like to follow.

Mr FINCH - No, I want to change.

CHAIR - Does anyone else want to talk about good neighbours?

Mr DEAN - I am still on the Three Capes but I will come back to that.

CHAIR - We have moved around. Mr Dean, why don't we finish the Three Capes because I think we could take a lot of time talking about the benefits or otherwise, and the support or otherwise, of the Three Capes.

Mr DEAN - The Three Capes, the construction and so on will be resource-intensive for you. There will be a lot of your resources involved in this project?

Mr MOONEY - During construction for sure but when it is completed the intention is to have it managed sustainably, and what I mean by that is, the money that we earn from the use of the track will pay for the resources we need to expend to maintain it. The reason we are pretty confident about that is that the Overland Track is what we call about 95 per cent sustainable, in other words, the money we collect on the Overland Track is paying for the maintenance of the track so to us that is an extremely good model. It is not heavily reliant upon normal recurrent resources.

Mr DEAN - It is the initial stages that I am concerned about. When does the project start?

Mr MOONEY - Sorry - it will be fit and ready for operation in the 2014 year.

Mr DEAN - In 2014 it will be completed?

Mr MOONEY - It will be ready for operation.

Mr EVANS - The first section is under construction now with the upgrade of the Cape Hauy and that is virtually complete.

Mr DEAN - How many personnel - and this is in our terms of reference - we are concerned about whether you have the resources and the money to do the things that you are required to do, so how many resources have you got tied up on that first part of this Three Capes walk at this time?

Mr MOONEY - We have a mixture of resources. We have five full-time staff that are employed now to work on the Three Capes Track and that takes in environmental planning, the project management, the on-ground logistical management and the trackwork assessment and contract management of the trackwork team, so that is the Parks staff and then in addition to that you will have peaks and troughs of the contract work. At the moment we are reaching the end of the Cape Hauy section so the track

workers, the two companies, that are working there will scale down and then hopefully they will go for the tenders for the next round and then they will be uplifted again in their employment in about September or November this year to take on the next phase.

Mr DEAN - And you have been budgeted, I think it is about \$25 million or thereabouts, is that right?

Mr MOONEY - Yes, it is shared funding between the State and the Federal Government of -

Mr EVANS - \$25.3 million, I think.

Mr MOONEY - Yes, \$12.8 million and \$12.5 million each.

Mr DEAN - And that is proceeding pretty well at the present time?

Mr MOONEY - Yes.

Mr DEAN - The personnel that you have working, I take it that you were never given or never employed extra staff to take on that activity, the Three Capes walk, so those personnel that you have working there obviously are not now working in the other areas that they would have been otherwise -

Mr MOONEY - But those five or six positions are new positions. They are out of the \$25 million.

Mr DEAN - So they were employed under the \$25 million and so they are additional staff.

Mr MOONEY - But some of the staff taking up those positions are part of our normal staff complement because they went for the opportunity to get that experience of intensive project management.

Mr DEAN - What you did is you downsized in one area, is that what you are saying? Are you saying that some of your staff crossed over into that program?

Mr MOONEY - Yes.

Mr DEAN - So there was a downsizing of your other staff, is that it?

Mr MOONEY - Not all the positions that DPIPWE staff came from where replaced.

Mr DEAN - Or were replaced in your department as well.

CHAIR - So there has been downsizing. Is it on budget?

Mr DEAN - There hasn't been a downsizing because you are saying they were re-employed again in your other area. Is that right?

Mr MOONEY - No. Some of the five or six positions that are employed directly, permanently and full-time with the Three Capes - it is about three of those positions were

taken up by normal Parks staff. The other two positions were externally recruited and those three positions that came from the normal Parks staff have not all been replaced.

Mrs TAYLOR - So how many out of the three, Peter, come on. It is not many. If they have not all been replaced, if the three haven't all been replaced?

Mr MOONEY - The positions? Maybe two have not been replaced. I am not sure.

Mrs TAYLOR - I think that is what Ivan was asking.

Mr DEAN - Yes, you are right, it was. I want to get on to the bushfires but I will leave that until we go to another area.

CHAIR - Okay. We will get to bushfires. Is the Three Capes walk on budget?

Mr MOONEY - Yes. It is going to plan.

Mr GAFFNEY - Through you, Madam Chair, one of the great things about that is that those staff that have had the opportunity to experience the Three Capes management will come back into the organisation with such a wealth of knowledge and it will just upskill everything so I think it is fantastic. Terrific.

CHAIR - I would like to move now to Mr Finch.

Mr FINCH - Mr Evans, I realise that point 4 of our terms of reference is somewhat hypothetical because you have told us that you have already done your work in respect of what has been requested of you, the information about the forward planning and those sorts of things and information that you have provided. I am just wondering whether you have the luxury of looking into your crystal ball a little bit further down the track as to when we get to a situation where the process of the IGA comes to its conclusion during June, wherever that ends up, and then we look to this division of the 572 000 hectares. Then we get the area that is going to be put into informal reserves, 142 000 hectares may go into informal reserves. Does that come under the PWS process? Do you look after that?

Mr EVANS - No decisions have been taken about who the land manager will be as yet. If some parts of those were to be made into national parks then it would be logical that it would be the Parks and Wildlife Service that would be the land manager. But those decisions aren't taken. Hypothetically, if those decisions result in national parks then inevitably, I think, they would be managed by the Parks Service.

Mr FINCH - How do you feel, just in respect of that, about the \$7 million that is going to come to Tasmania to help to manage those parks and reserves and whatever they are called? How do you feel about your department being able to garner some of that money, or all of that money, to manage that opportunity?

Mr EVANS - Again, no decision have been taken but my expectation is that if we are given additional responsibilities for additional reserves then we would be resourced to manage those reserves. As you well know, the IGA does provide a funding stream for the ongoing land management associated with the creation of any new reserves and that is a

discussion we have still got to have, but I would expect and would be confident that we would get some of those funds if we are given additional responsibilities in reserve management.

Mr FINCH - What do you understand about the opportunities for expanded boundaries of current national parks? Do you have a finger on the pulse of what might occur there to expand those national parks that might then garner some extra dollars for the department?

Mr EVANS - It is a bit of a mosaic at the moment and I think there is a fair job to be done to work through and make some sensible decisions about the future of each of those parcels of land under discussion. Some of them may result in adherences to existing national parks. Some of them may result in totally different decisions. I really cannot comment about what is going to happen until we get some advice back from the signatories on their discussions that are happening at the moment.

Mr FINCH - So this goes to this point that we have made about forward planning in our terms of reference, that in fact you are not doing much of that forward planning because you don't know what the results are going to be so it's hard to plan on something that's not been decided yet.

Mr EVANS - We are doing some thinking about it, obviously, and anticipating what might happen under certain eventualities but we have a lot of responsibilities with the existing estate and we don't want to divert ourselves onto a series of hypotheticals that may or may not happen. We really need to wait for the existing process to come to its completion in order to make some informed decisions about what the future looks like.

Mr FINCH - As a general principle Forestry Tasmania believes it should continue to manage the areas, with the exception of those that go into the national parks. Is it equipped to do that work and look after those reserves? I suppose if it is putting its hand up to look after them that it will be able to take that job on?

Mr EVANS - I can't speak for Forestry Tasmania, but it has a good track record already in terms of managing the forest reserves so I would imagine it would be equipped to do the job, just as we would be.

Mr FINCH - Do you think it would be a good opportunity for the Parks and Wildlife Service if you did get the gig to take that work on?

Mr EVANS - I think what we have to do is make sensible decisions about who is the best land manager given the circumstances relating to each reserve. It doesn't make sense for some parcels to be managed by one manager or another; you have to make those decisions in an informed way based on the circumstances relating to each parcel.

Mr FINCH - Something I'd like to explore is - somewhere in the notes I've been reading - we manage our land in Tasmania at about \$20 a hectare. Is that a figure that the department uses or think about?

Mr MOONEY - No, we have 2.54 million hectares that's allocated to reserve management in Tasmania under the Nature Conservation Act. The Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service gets a budget - at the moment it is \$23.5 million recurrent - and then we get other

project funding - for example, the Macquarie Island or the Three Capes projects, or the Arthur Pieman project that we are achieving at the moment. There is a mixture of that project funding that will go into the reserve management, so it's a very complex exercise to say you have a set quota per hectare. For example, for the last several years we've been managing on average at about \$11 per hectare of our reserve estate. That will vary up and down slightly each year.

Mr FINCH - Do you think about your budgeting in those sorts of terms? You just mentioned that figure and I have mentioned \$20 a hectare, do you think of your budget in those terms?

Mr MOONEY - No. I think the differences of opinion happen when people read budget papers and it has a mixture of project funding and recurrent funding and they just work out a dollar per hectare. That's very unfair because project funding is project funding. The Three Capes Track is just the Three Capes work; the Macquarie Island work is just for Macquarie Island, but accumulatively it gets to a larger figure. For example, the Parks and Wildlife Service budget is \$49 million at the moment but a majority of that is project funding. When it comes down to the basic recurrent funding, it is about \$23.5 million per year that we are provided and we manage within that at the moment. That gives an equation to approximately \$11 a hectare.

Mr FINCH - The comparison I wanted to draw was that, with some of the figures I have met, we are quite conservative in the use of our money in reference to allocation per hectare to places such as Victoria and other States.

Mr MOONEY - I think you need to compare apples and apples. I think if you dig into the quotes and figures you are given from other States you would have that dilemma that I've just described, that they have major project funding thrown in as well. For example, Parks Victoria had a massive major project funding on Albert Park recently, which is in the middle of Melbourne, but that is part of their recurrent funding, but obviously in Albert Park they do all sort of things like Formula 1 racing and things like that. It is special funding but some people may read that as general funding to Parks Victoria and therefore they mix it into the dollar figure per hectare, which I think is a bit unfair. I think you need to compare apples and apples.

Mr MULDER - So have you looked at Victoria's dollar figure per hectare?

CHAIR - It is \$29, isn't it?

Mr FINCH - I thought it was \$36.

Mr MOONEY - I am not sure what their dollar per hectare is compared directly to ours.

Mr FINCH - I was just trying to give you an opportunity to say we are more conservative and do a better job in keeping our dollar per hectare price down.

Mr MOONEY - We are an extremely efficient and productive organisation.

Mr FINCH - That's what I was searching for.

Laughter.

CHAIR - It has been suggested that if the 572 000 hectares claim is successful it will cost around \$12 million per annum. The reason I am particularly interested in Mr Finch's line of questioning is that probably at the end of June, I and other members of this Parliament are going to be expected to decide whether this is the right thing for Tasmania or not, so I need to understand whether Forestry Tasmania or Parks and Wildlife can effectively manage an additional lot of land. That is particularly why I am interested in knowing whether the department could effectively manage, whether it is Forestry Tasmania or whether it is Parks and Wildlife or a proportion of each, and whether \$7 million is going to be enough money. That is why we need to understand because we will provide this report to other members of parliament and our colleagues particularly in the Legislative Council, because there is enormous pressure, as you can appreciate, on our saying we accept it or not. Is there some comment on that \$12 million? Is that a figure that has been discussed at your informal meetings, or is that question just too hard?

Mr EVANS - It's just too hard at the moment. Hypothetically, if 430 000 hectares were created then it would roughly equate to about \$16 a hectare. That is significantly more than Peter has indicated we currently run the reserve estate on. If it is 572 000, the number is smaller. It depends on who is best placed to manage the land, it depends on some economies of scale and it depends on the capacity to earn external revenue. I think the figure is about \$5 per hectare that we would earn in terms of leases/licences. So there is all of those nuances still to be worked through.

Mr MOONEY - A big point of difference between Tasmania and the rest of Australia is that we just do not have the invasive species on-ground that they have in the rest of Australia. For example, NSW Parks spends multi-millions of dollars every year just to control wild dogs. That is not to decrease the number, it is just to keep them at a set level. We do not do that in Tasmania. They have all sorts of other invasive species. They have camels, pigs, dingoes - all things that the other conservation agencies have to deal with that we do not in Tasmania. Therefore we do not need to spend that sort of money.

CHAIR - Can I suggest, and I know we are going to go down this path shortly, but we have very hot summers with a lot of fuel on the ground. That is vividly in my mind from what we have seen in the past and I know that Mr Dean wants to go down that line of questioning. I heard at one stage that the time imperative was not going to be put upon the Parliament and then I heard from another Federal minister that it will be 30 June, so we have to somehow try to decide whether we believe that we can, as a State, manage an additional resource. Is there anyone else who would like to follow that line of questioning?

Mr MULDER - I have a few left.

CHAIR - Because then we will start on the bushfire scenario.

Mr MULDER - This per hectare cost of managing your current estate which, of course, you cannot say but we can read between the lines and we know that clearly that is not enough because I have a feeling that there is lots of work you would like to be doing that you cannot do and that is basically in the recurrent and the maintenance stuff and that is before we get into the projects. I would like to explore this a little bit further. If some or

all of this Forestry stuff comes to you, given the fact that you have said that a lot of this stuff is coastal where you have got a few tracks and things, can you actually manage that sort of size or quantity of Forestry reserve? It is a bit late if someone says, 'Yeah, we'll hand it to National Parks', for you then to decide you cannot manage it. You must have done some forward thinking into what the impact would be and what sort of resourcing you would need in this area.

Mr MOONEY - Just look at the map at the moment. All the brown is what we look after now and all the green is parts of that forest that is being discussed, but we manage land now identical to the Forestry area being looked at. That border is not a border of forest type, it is just a border mostly along river or ridge line to meet the title section for the World Heritage Area proclamation.

Mr MULDER - But if you trot up to Lake Rhona as you cross the Denison River, you walk out of forests on one side of the river and buttongrass plains on the other, and that's where that line is running.

Mr MOONEY - Yes.

Mr MULDER - There is a fundamental difference between -

Mr MOONEY - But there is some very serious forest in here which is very high integrity and obviously has World Heritage status. As the secretary mentioned, we will make do with what we get as far as funding goes but it is fair to say we will require further funding if we get further estate.

Mr MULDER - Do you think you could manage the \$11 per hectare with the recurrent funding you are talking about now, or would the nature of those reserves require additional funding to that \$11 per hectare?

Mr MOONEY - The reserves that Forestry look after now are genuinely quite different from our reserves. The main point of difference is they have a large number of access points and roads constructed into them for the logging requirements, bridges, all sorts of issues like that, so we would have to have a very good assessment of all those types of infrastructure. Number one, are they are still required, and number two, are they used much now? For example, the honey industry must have access to all these sorts of areas so that is one industry we would have to continue to work with. We would not want to take on reserves that would place further restrictions on current commercial businesses, so there is an honour to take on there and we just do not know what the scale of that is at present because it is not our estate. There is good information that Forestry has on that anyway.

Mr MULDER - That is my concern, that there will be a severe shrinking of the existing infrastructure which is what has happened in your own patch at the moment because of the fact that you can't maintain everything and therefore once this goes into reserves it's shrinking. The line I'm pushing is in the context of what the Premier has repeatedly said, what the minister has repeatedly said, what the Federal negotiators have all said, that they envisage that some of these areas will still be available for multiple use for low-impact resource extraction.

It seems to me that National Parks, which is struggling to maintain what they have, is now going to get a whole new ball game where the expectations from us will be that if you are saying that tourism is the future of Tasmania we need a government department that is not only going to maintain the existing infrastructure but to sensitively manage a whole range of new developments as well as industry. You are saying, 'Oh well, it's too early to make those decisions and we don't know what it was', but have you got some preliminary thinking or some vision about what you want to do in these areas to return some value to the Tasmanian economy which we are going to lose by changing its use?

Mr MOONEY - I think a lot will depend upon what category of reserve is decided. I think there is an awful lot of influence being put into the negotiation phase at the moment and it's fair to say that the lower the category, the more use can occur on a reserve.

Mr MULDER - Forestry, for example, have what they call managers for multiple uses. National Parks obviously manage for more than one use but I'd suggest that Forestry are much more into the camping grounds and those sorts of things than you guys have been in the past.

Mr MOONEY - Well, it depends. If you go up the east coast of Tasmania, there are about 29 camping grounds that we look after and Forestry doesn't look after one. We have many reserves beyond National Parks.

Mr MULDER - I'm talking about the forest-type reserves, not the coastal-type reserves. There is an impact there.

Mr MOONEY - I don't know how many camp grounds Forestry have.

Mr MULDER - I'm just not getting a feeling of comfort that if this stuff goes into reserves which, as the Premier has outlined, meets her vision, and it is a complex thing that requires a lot of maintenance and a lot of infrastructure or else we will be back to the days of shrinking access to these sorts of things, which is the opposite of what you're trying to do. I'm just not getting a great deal of comfort that National Parks has really thought this through.

CHAIR - Surprise, surprise.

Mr MULDER - That's not a criticism of National Parks.

CHAIR - No.

Mr MULDER - You guys have to implement policy but the fact is that ministers can stand up in public and say these great things about how this is going to develop all this for tourism and then we talk to you guys who say, 'Well, we really haven't given it any thought because we haven't been asked to give it any thought'. Obviously, you're not going to comment on it but I'm getting the impression that once again, they're standing in front of television cameras just saying what they think the public want to hear without any idea of what that actually means for the State Budget or for the people who have to implement it. In that sense you have my sympathy.

Mr EVANS - Having said that, the agreement does provide for ongoing funding for land management and the figures have been developed through some comparisons with other land management costs. The detailed work is still being undertaken as we speak and it's not appropriate today that we pre-empt the outcome of that work.

Mr MULDER - We talked about \$11 per hectare to manage existing land or reserves. Is that the kind of figure that you envisage would be sufficient to maintain this whole new area?

Mr MOONEY - It would all depend on the type of reserves are presented to us because, as I said, most ex-Forestry reserve has an enormous road network in them that our current reserves that we look after do not have, and there are all sorts of requirements attached to road and bridge maintenance at a higher degree than what we have in our present system. So it just all depends what is presented to us at the end of the day.

Mr MULDER - Forestry had an income stream to do that with; they don't anymore but they did have an income stream to do that with. What I am saying to you guys is that if you are going to go into these parks and we're not going to have the kinds of reserves where there isn't any of this sort of commercial activity occurring then there is no income stream upon which to fund it. I have tried to avoid the term but we have a fear, I think, most Legislative Councillors, that we are basically going to lock it up, and how on earth could that develop our tourism industry or access our resources? That is why I'm trying to get a feel for: if we're not going to lock it up, what thought has gone into how we are going to continue access and derive an economic benefit out of these reserves?

Mr GAFFNEY - Through you, Madam Chair, I think the member should just speak for himself, not for the whole Legislative Council.

CHAIR - Thank you, members.

Short suspension.

CHAIR - Welcome back. I now invite Mr Dean to commence his line of questioning in relation to bushfires and wherever else he would like to travel as well.

Mr DEAN - Thanks, Madam Chair. The issue of bushfires comes within your area and the area of Forestry quite obviously. First of all, I just want to know how many trained fire personnel you would have within your area. I am told that you had a crew of about 50 at one stage and are down to about 12 now.

Mr MOONEY - We have 136 staff who are fire-trained and fire-fit and they are distributed mainly in the three regions throughout Tasmania. Within that component we have a dedicated single fire crew that operates from Hobart and their first core response is to any major fire event in the State, so there are two levels of responsiveness there.

Mr DEAN - So you are saying that you have that number of staff trained fully in fire fighting?

Mr MOONEY - We have 136 staff who can go to a fire at the three different levels that we have in operation of fire. They are within our normal staff complement of rangers, field officers and managers and in addition to that at the moment there are 12 fire crew staff,

but all they do is fire 100 per cent of the time, whereas the others will go to a fire when there is a fire.

Mr DEAN - Okay. Under the terms of reference then, what work are you doing in relation to fire protection, the controlled burns of your reserves and -

Mr MOONEY - We have quite a large fuel reduction burning program and in addition to that we have quite a large program of fire trail maintenance and preparedness with neighbours and local government, but the fuel reduction program is the one that we have put in a lot of energy into at the moment. For example, you may have noticed that we burnt at the Trevallyn Reserve and the Kate Reed Reserve not long ago and they are the type of burns that we have to do to protect the built assets around the urban environment and also the semi-urban environment and we are trying to build the capacity around Tasmania so that we don't have another recurrence such as the east coast fires of several years ago. We are trying to reduce the fuel loads around those important communities to lessen the impact of a major wildfire.

Those fuel reduction burns are what we call 'planned burns', and they happen mainly in autumn and spring and often on the same day that Forestry do their regeneration burns, but they are very different types of burns. A Forestry regeneration burn is a burn that reduces the rubbish from a Forestry coupe operation, whereas our burns are fuel reduction burns, so they are the lower-energy burns that creep through the forest understorey but they do produce a fair bit of smoke.

CHAIR - How many complaints do you get? Poor old Forestry gets bombarded.

Mr MOONEY - We obviously have people who are concerned about smoke. The issue of smoke is a health issue, especially the effect on asthmatics. I suppose there is a tolerance there that people will go to and then there is a line in the sand and we have to do a lot more letter-dropping and pre-noticing now to communities and work with local government as well to find out if there is anyone in certain areas with big health issues and we do a lot of work with that. For example, with the Trevallyn fire, we only burnt 18 hectares there. We had 53 staff there for two days, an enormous resource to do that 18-hectare burn, and we had to notify 3 500 people but we did not get one complaint. That is the amount of effort we had to go to just to do an 18-hectare burn. I think they are fantastic things to do but they are very resource-consuming and we certainly don't do as many as we wish but we are doing as many as we can.

Mr DEAN - How much of your budget do you put aside for firefighting and for burn-offs?

Mr MOONEY - We have \$1.4 million provided to us for the fuel reduction burning program on an annual basis and -

Mr DEAN - Would you use that?

Mr MOONEY - Yes, we certainly use it; that is soaked up very quickly. With wildfires in Tasmania, the way they are managed is with a different budgetary process. If we have a large wildfire and especially multi-agency, where the Fire Service and Forestry will attend, you have accumulative bills but then at the end of the year we request for additional funds through Treasury to compensate us for that fire, because some of our

fires run into a million-dollar bill at the end of the day. They are wildfires, though, unplanned burns.

Mr DEAN - You said that you burn as much as you can. I take it that as much as you can is not as much as you would want to do, and this is where the TFGA come into it. They have made a submission and I have spoken with the TFGA and Jan Davis on many occasions, and they are really concerned about the growth that they say is in the reserve areas and conservation areas and they are really concerned as to the impact that is going to have on private forests, private properties and fencing in particular. What they are saying is that very clearly Parks and Wildlife do not have the funding and the resources necessary to complete the annual fuel reduction burns in the State. That is a problem for them.

Mr MOONEY - Last year we had a combined budget submission with the Tas Fire Service for an enlarged fuel reduction program but unfortunately that did not get any support. At the moment we are still in negotiation with Tas Fire Service to get some funding for that program. This is post the disastrous Victorian fires, and one of the highest recommendations of that royal commission was that land management agencies needed to increase fuel reduction burning programs. Victoria, New South Wales and Western Australia have been provided with extra funding to do that and in Tasmania we are still in the negotiation phase of that.

Mrs TAYLOR - With the Federal Government.

Mr MOONEY - No, the State Government. It is a State government responsibility, not Federal. All fire management in States and Territories is a State and Territory responsibility.

Mr DEAN - I just want to make clear that I am not being critical of you. It is your resources and the funding that I have concerns with, as do the TFGA and a lot of others. How much discussion or consultation do you have with, say, the TFGA in relation to your fuel reduction programs? Do you consult with them on a regular basis?

Mr MOONEY - Not necessarily the TFGA. We have State fire management committees all over the State. I cannot remember the number but they are comprised of land managers which are government and private farmers, TFS permanent and volunteer brigades, Parks and Wildlife Service and Forestry. They meet regularly and do what they call fire plans. They work out cooperative programs to do big burning programs that involve private and public land. We did a very big 700-hectare one only recently adjoining the Freycinet National Park on private and Forestry land as well. That is where we do most of our negotiations. The TFGA is generally an association that represent farmers, but the coalface is the better level to work on in the operations. A lot of those major landowners are actually on these fire management committees and they are the ones that have input to where they would like fuel reduction burning to be completed.

Mr DEAN - I think it is probably another process to go down at Estimates perhaps, but the TFGA are saying they would like more consultation with you in relation to the people that they represent and their real issues and concerns.

Mr MOONEY - Well, we have regular meetings with their members, but as an association we don't, but we could.

Mr DEAN - That is something that you might be able to take on board that might come from this.

CHAIR - Peter, in relation to funding you said that you and the Tas Fire Service put together a joint submission that wasn't funded. Who wouldn't fund it, both agencies or another body?

Mr MOONEY - It was put up as a budget submission.

Mr DEAN - And it hasn't been supported. What did you put up, Peter?

Mr MOONEY - It was quite a wide-ranging program. It involved mainly the setting up and support of the State fire management commission, a body which has representatives of landowners and government bodies, so like the host agency of all of those fire management committees. It was to give that more support in designing a whole new framework of fuel reduction across the whole State and then implement it. It was quite a reasonable ask as a figure but it is fair to say that it was perhaps too big at the time.

Mr DEAN - Forestry Tasmania has also made a submission, obviously, and they have some concerns in relation to this area as well.

Mr MOONEY - Forestry Tasmania have made a submission to this?

Mr DEAN - Yes, a submission to us.

Mr MOONEY - About Parks and Wildlife Service management?

Mr DEAN - Well, no -

Mr MOONEY - That's interesting.

Mr DEAN - Just on general issues about their views -

Mr MOONEY - I'd like to see that one.

Mr DEAN - Their views and their positions in relation to certain things. They say that they are well equipped for fire burn-offs, fuel reduction and so on. How much consultation do you have with them? How closely do they work with you in relation to the management of your properties' fire reduction?

Mr MOONEY - On a daily basis. They have exactly the same issues as us. They have all the risks and threats to deal with that we deal with. For example, we share training programs. We have an incident, Tasmania is the only state that has three authorities that come together to manage a fire -

Mr DEAN - Yes.

Mr MOONEY - None of the other states have that so we are quite efficient in that mechanism. So that is Tasmanian Fire Service, Parks and Wildlife and Forestry. We have staff go to the same training courses to get accreditation for management of different scales of fire. I could go to a fire and I could manage a fire on Forestry land and a TFS person could come in and manage one on Parks land so it is interwoven; it's just seamless. There is daily cooperation between Forestry and Parks.

Mr DEAN - Just on that, when this committee receives a submission, it will probably go online and you will probably have the opportunity to look at those submissions but there's nothing critical of your department.

CHAIR - They actually say they have a good working relationship with Parks.

Mr DEAN - That's right but they will be available once the committee makes a decision.

Mr GAFFNEY - To quote one sentence for your benefit:

'not in a position to pass comment on the capacity or otherwise of the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service to manage the existing estate and any additional areas. It is fair to say that we enjoy a good working relationship with Parks and Wildlife Service, particularly in the area of fire management.'

Mr MOONEY - Okay, that's alright.

Mr DEAN - You are doing what you can do but you are saying that you would like to do more in that area. To do more in that area, what would you need to be able to provide the fuel reduction burns that we need in this State to ensure that we don't have those huge fires they had in Victoria and that we had in 1967 and so on. What would be required of Parks and Wildlife Services? Would we need to double the funding of \$1.4 million you are saying you are budgeted for at this stage?

Mr MOONEY - Any increase would be a benefit but I can't give you a definitive quantum because at the moment we are just dealing with what we have.

Mr DEAN - But surely, you would know what burn-off reductions you would like to do each year, but with the capacity you have you can only do this amount. So you must know what you would like to do to ensure the safety of this State and the safety of your neighbours and so on.

Mr MOONEY - Any increase would result in a safer environment. The difficulty with this year, for example, is that we had a reasonably wet summer so that was one of the factors that didn't allow Forestry and us to do the burning that was intended. Forestry nowhere near completed their burning program, nor us. It's fair to say that if you have a higher critical mass available on set days, you will achieve more, whereas there is only so much capacity on set days, so you couldn't spread that effort. Any increase in capacity will give you extra burning.

Mr GAFFNEY - On the fuel reduction burns, whether it's Forestry or Parks or whether it's a farmer down the road, how do we target the community expectation about what's a

necessary burn and what's not. Because of what's happening in certain areas there's a widespread belief that fuel reduction is not necessary. There doesn't seem to be any visual or media presence to say that we do fuel reductions because of this, this and this. I am just wondering whether there is any margin within your budget to put a bit more positive spin on the need for it?

Mr MOONEY - I agree. It's not only in this area; it's with many things we do. We need to sing the song better. Believe it or not, there is still a fear in the Tasmanian community since the 1967 fires that a fire is evil and any fire is no good. We have to get through to the community that fire managed well can be a very good tool to decrease the risk of wildfire, but I don't believe that is entrenched in the Tasmanian community's mindset at the moment. We have an obligation and we are working on that through this winter and next summer to be gearing up our publicity and messaging at a far better level. I agree, we need to do that across all forestry and TFS. It is a difficult thing because if you look at the TFS workforce, there are approximately 300 permanent and 5 500 volunteers, and most of those volunteers join to put fire out. They join to save infrastructure, to look after their property or save their neighbour's property. When you ask them to come on a fuel-reduction burn, they are volunteers and people who have a working life. They give up their time to fight a fire and put it out, so to ask them to stay overnight and look a fuel-reduction burn is a very big ask. There are a lot of issues there that aren't simply resolved overnight.

We're working with the Fire Service on that. A fire service needs every volunteer who puts their hand up; they can't afford to say no. It's the intention of what the volunteer wants to do within the community and I think it is a fair call. I have been a volunteer firefighter and I don't know if I could have spend the time and had the luxury to put days into a vegetation burn that is not reducing risk to an asset straightaway. There are a lot of issues that we have to tackle there.

Mr GAFFNEY - I think the feeling is different within communities after the Victorian bushfires, where before bushland was preserved and just after they wanted to do a fuel-reduction burn. I think the time is right for that around towns where that resistance has gone, but the pendulum has swung a little bit about statewide fuel burns against what we want to try to do.

Mr MOONEY - I think a lot of it is to do with the general environmental discussion. It's an easy way to state, 'How can you prove fire is good?', but it's well known that if you reduce fuel you're going to reduce the capacity for a fire to get such a voluminous front. We know that for sure; it's been tried and tested and it is scientifically proven. At the end of the day it is putting that priority in amongst all the other priorities of government and coming up with a solution that can provide more resources for us, which is not my decision.

Mr GAFFNEY - I feel for Forestry every time they do a burn. Every backyard person and every farmer will burn on the same day and you know that Forestry is going to be tagged with the reason why there is smoke in the air.

CHAIR - Has there ever been any consideration for air curtain burners? I know they are approximately \$150 000 each and you have to move them around but they are a very effective way of managing burns, particularly in some of the sensitive areas. I think

about the Bridport wildflower reserve. You couldn't have a burn in that area. They are an efficient way of -

Mr MOONEY - I am not technically familiar with the system.

CHAIR - I'm not either, but I've had a look at them and they look like a good way to manage some of those areas that are close to residences, for example.

Mr MOONEY - I can give a guarantee that I will look into it.

CHAIR - That's all I can ask. Obviously it's a challenge and we have realised that and I hope that perhaps that path of joining up with the Tasmanian Fire Service and having that whole coordinated approach might see some favourable budget response in the future. That will be something that I feel sure the committee will look at when they deliver their report, but I won't pre-empt that.

Mr DEAN - Just one question on fire - where you have fire on reserves and in the conservation areas and there is property damaged as a result of that, and TFGA have raised the issue where say private fence lines are burned out, do you compensate for that or would you consider to do that?

MR MOONEY - I could not say straight off but what generally happens is, the last big fire we had of that nature was on King Island. Lavinia Reserve went up and it went through 28 properties that were adjoining the reserve and basically we negotiated outcomes with individual landowners but there is not a general agreement that the Crown provides any compensation or assistance. It is just case by case on what the circumstances are.

It is a complex area because a lot of farmers have insurance for that already and so you get that difficult situation where one farmer is insured and another farmer is not. Do you support the farmer who is not insured? It gets quite complex.

I believe that post-Victoria there is a better mechanism being determined through the insurance companies and government in general but I am not quite sure what it is. We do not basically say no and we do not basically say yes. It just upon the circumstances and case by case.

CHAIR - You might recall the issue with the Midland Highway and the farmer there. I think that might have been the situation - one insured, one not. It can be difficult.

Mr MOONEY - It was not on our land.

Mr FINCH - He hastened to add.

Laughter.

CHAIR - No. The State Government had a role in that and it was a difficult one to manage their way through.

Mr MOONEY - I remember the signs.

CHAIR - There was a number of signs saying there has been no assistance from the State Government. We will move on because it is important.

Mr FINCH - As I normally do during budget estimates when we talk about the PWS, I like to focus my mind on staff and how they are travelling through the processes of change and the departments being under different control and the changes at the upper levels of what occurs and then how that filters back down to staff on the ground.

I am really just searching for comments here because in one of the reports that has come to us for this inquiry, we have had a report that there is low staff morale in the PWS, and that is a general comment that has come in. I am wondering whether I could get a sense from you whether that is correct.

Is that your perception of the situation and, also, could you extrapolate that out to what remedies are put in place or how you deal with that perception that somebody might have that there is low staff morale?

Mr MOONEY - It is really an opportunistic time, Mr Finch, because I was just about to go to Launceston to one of our workshops. We just had a workshop last week. The morale situation is an interesting feature I think in any government agency at the moment, it is not just Parks.

It is fair to say that every government agency is under the hammer as far as producing more with less and that is a catchphrase that everyone uses but it does not really give you any answers. It is a nice catchphrase but it does not do a lot for you. All I can describe is the way that we try to deal with this issue.

For example, we had a workshop last week. I think 50 staff turned up and about 70 staff will turn up to the next workshop in Launceston. What we do is, we run through a whole exercise of staff inputting their feelings and aspirations and where they feel we need to put energy and also where they feel we can put less energy. That does change from year to year. We do these workshops about every two years I suppose.

A really good example is that staff, and rightly so, are saying that we have to stop some of the communication systems we use now and change our style. We have to use social media a lot more now. We have got to get better connections with the new users over reserves and perhaps produce far less of those paper brochures that we have in all our parks. It is different levels of connection that they are talking about.

Also another big impetus is that we need more youth in the workforce - I get that a fair bit. That is simply because we are full of baby boomers. This room is no different from any other room I suppose.

When you get your level of seniority and bureaucracy or representation, you are usually a wise, old, experienced person. It is very rare that you are going to put a very young person in a senior role but that is a big pressure point that we are on, on that succession management. That is probably one area that I will need to, and we will, increase a lot more and I think the way that we can do that - we have done some experiments recently where someone who is just about to retire we have offered an opportunity for staff to get involved in that role for one day a week so that they can test the water and see how they

go at it. We are not paying them extra money to do that, we are just giving them an opportunity but it is obviously a higher level for them and those staff are going in there and doing that and then by the time that person retires that staff member is really one of the best placed people to get that job. They still have to compete for it and get it but they have sort of been trained up for it anyway and that is the sort of succession we have to do at all sorts of levels. I will be leaving in several years' time and I need to do that in my role and other roles similar and I think that will be a big boost of confidence for staff in general because I think what normally happens is that staff are out there in the field doing things and they can never see the forest for the trees, I suppose is the expression, and they just don't know whether there is a future or something over the horizon and I think we have to provide that at a better level.

The morale is an interesting thing and the best measure of that is things like sick leave and absenteeism. We have very low sick leave and absenteeism in Parks. I can guarantee that is not the same for other government divisions.

Mr MULDER - You wouldn't like to run a prison service, would you?

Laughter.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr FINCH - Sorry, I apologise.

Mr MOONEY - I must be honest, Mr Finch, we don't have 100 per cent of staff saying everything is wonderful and we never will because we are a diverse range of staff and there are some staff there who don't like change and won't move on and there are other staff who just want to stay in their little patch and not move on. I suppose in general the feedback I got last week from the workshop, and it is a very open workshop - they are not driven by me, we just get a consultant in to work them and I am one of the participants - there was quite a good feeling. For example, through the whole workshop there was not one mention of the word 'resource' or 'budget', they were all trying to find solutions that could work with the means we had. There was not the despondency of 'We can't do anything because we have no money'. I was quite chuffed with that and that is staff from out the bush, from in the office and from all sorts of places. I must admit there will be a few staff who will never be happy but that is life, I think.

Mr EVANS - If I can add an observation from where I sit, people join the Parks and Wildlife Service not because they want to become the traditional public servant. They are passionate about the role and that tends to come through in talking to the staff. Just to give you an example of that: we had a function last year to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the Parks and Wildlife Service over at the Lindisfarne Yacht Club and it was an amazing event because I walked in there and the room was just full of people, current staff but also heaps of staff from the past and some of them are now in their 70s and 80s. They had all come back to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the Parks and Wildlife Service and I wandered around the room and talked to people and none of them were complaining about bad decisions or lack of budgets or changes in government department arrangements or changes of government that have happened over the last three decades. They were all talking about how proud they were to work for the Parks and Wildlife Service and they were all celebrating really what a great organisation it is.

When I left there I thought, you show me one other part of Government that would have a thirty-year anniversary and get people from all past generations come back, all have a common interest and all tell positive stories. I don't think you could find another part of government - I don't think the police service would celebrate in that way.

Mr MULDER - They do it every year, I think.

Laughter.

Mrs TAYLOR - The Antarctic people do but they are not typical.

Mr EVANS - I don't there would be many other parts in the State Government that would respond in that way and that tends to pervade the organisation so it is a really positive bunch of people by and large and Peter is quite right, you will always get some that are disgruntled but most of them come to work because they want to come to work to do the job and not to just earn a pay packet.

Mr MOONEY - The other thing about the workshops is that we are forming working groups to be more inventive with revenue retention. We collect now about \$11.5 million in revenue and we retain that and it goes straight back into the reserve system and management systems.

CHAIR - Do you see that increasing?

Mr MOONEY - Yes, and we can have that increase but what we have got to use is different mediums to increase it. As an example, we have two apps that we have designed - the FrogLog and Bird in the Hand. You can download those off iTunes for \$US1.19. That Bird in the Hand app cost us \$5 000 in development funds to design and make. Now it is on the iTune system we do not have to manage it at all. There are no management rights. We get 97 cents every time someone downloads that. You will get someone in France, a student, downloading that app and we get 97 cents into our reserve account. That is one example. We have had demand and requests through our Facebook site that people want all sorts of apps for all sorts of things. The actual benefit to the reserve system is we actually are not dealing with a visitor. We do not have to supply toilet paper for them or anything. They are sitting over in Germany or France but they are using this new social media network. So they are getting connection with us, they are paying us money and it is from overseas. We are not asking anyone in Tasmania to do it. So they are the sort of things we need to really expand because that will increase our revenue significantly but not be an impost on a Tasmanian community or anyone locally.

Mr FINCH - Just to draw that link back to your staff, of course if they feel that the organisation is contemporary in that way and is prepared to change and to be up to date, that is good for morale.

Mr MOONEY - The benefit about that inventiveness for staff is, for example, Mole Creek Caves. A little tourist site. It is pretty big when you go in it but it is an important tourist site. It has been there for many years. Our local manager there was having a arrangement with a company that just brings Asian people into Tasmania for about six days. They wanted to get on our itinerary but they felt a bit uncomfortable because we do not have any literature in Mandarin or anything on our website. We all know about

the year of Asia; Australia has to invite more Asians in. He knew someone that spoke Mandarin. He made up a simple brochure in Mandarin. That is enough now to book in this regular tour. Once every two-and-half weeks there are going to be 60 new customers coming through that cave, and it is prebooked. It is so easy to manage it if it is prebooked. The worst thing to manage is when you get this influx of people at 11 o'clock that all want to go on the same cave tour and that are not booked. You can only fit 30 people at a time into the cave. So that, for example, is one little manoeuvre that a person has done. It didn't cost him anything but he has an increase in revenue stream and it is a managed system.

Mrs TAYLOR - What did you give him?

Mr MOONEY - He gets a pat on the back. He does get a few other things. I suppose the benefit for him is he is making his business more sustainable and we are not going to reduce it. He has actually grown. He employs 18 people in the Mole Creek region, all part-timers but they are all local people and that is a really big advantage.

Mrs TAYLOR - My question was not facetious because I think we often don't do that well and again it is something that all of us can take on board I think to celebrate successes. It does not mean you actually have to give the people money but you give them kudos or acknowledgement.

Mr MOONEY - I think the biggest benefit to him is that he has the guarantee from myself and my senior management team that that business is going to be supported significantly into the future rather than be reviewed all the time or looked at.

Mrs TAYLOR - Nominate him for one of the many State Government awards. There are those things that we do not often think about.

Mr MOONEY - Yes.

CHAIR - We will pass that on to his local member in the Legislative Council.

Mr DEAN - I will just change tack onto an area of concern for the TFGA. This has come out many times and you would be aware of it. They have a real concern that because of what they perceive is a lack of resources that you have, lack of funding, that weed control is getting out of hand. They say that they as private owners of properties have got to control weeds. There are requirements on them to do that, but they say that they are being invaded by weeds and a number of them that are coming from reserves and conservation areas and so on. What are you putting into weed control and weed reduction?

Mr MOONEY - As you can appreciate, weeds in Tasmania are managed through quite a few different regimes. NRM spend a lot of time on weed management. I suppose a classic example for us is The Nut at Stanley. You can go there at certain times of the year and it looks a wonderful yellow because of the gorse. That's a very difficult site for us because it's very steep terrain. It's a classic example of a monolith that's reserved land and it's got the gorse on it and there's all this fantastic agricultural country around it that are dealing with the spores of the gorse. What we've had to do there is have a lot of negotiation with the landowners and Cradle Coast NRM to come up with a 10-year plan where we're

going to actually nail it finally forever. It's been a cooperative approach, I suppose. I must admit, if we could do that everywhere it would be fantastic but we have to choose areas of highest priority. There will be other areas that we just can't work with yet but hopefully we can in the future. That is one example.

Five years ago we just didn't know what we could do there because we were chipping away at it but it was not beating the recruitment of the new gorse that was coming in, so we had to change our tack. The reason it's worked now is a bit like an individual farmer who joins a co-op. We've got a lot more efficient use of equipment and machinery now because we pre-plan. A farmer is making equipment available for us to use in his down period, whereas before we would be asking our own staff and asking the budget for more resources for equipment when there was perfectly good equipment just down the road, but we didn't have a relationship. That's the change. We are getting far better cooperative relationships, but it's a big trust thing too.

Mr DEAN - Have you got a program in place where each year this is what you're going to target by way of weeds in a certain area? How do you manage it? Do you act on complaints?

Mr MOONEY - It is heavily reliant upon, often, Federal Government funding programs that are available. On the west coast we've had quite a big program there on two different fronts. On the roadside there is mainly gorse and broom that we tackled there and then in the remote location it was a coastal weed that came from Victoria. When you open it, it has a white liquid that's quite toxic.

CHAIR - They should be funding that then, Peter.

Mr MOONEY - Yes. We got a really good program there but that's a different one again because that could be very invasive on the agricultural industry. It hasn't reached the agricultural industry yet because it's mainly staying on the coast. What we set up there was a volunteer program. We actually now have 60 people that come in, who pay their way and treat it like a voluntourism holiday. We actually have a waiting list of 200 people in Victoria and New South Wales that want to join this program. It's amazing. We helicopter them in. So they're self-funding this whole program of weed removal and we'd never do it with our own staff. They walk the whole west coast every summer. Even though the agricultural industry isn't seeing that directly, we are protecting the agricultural industry by not allowing it to further invade the internal part of the country.

I must admit, though, there are areas that a farmer may have now, such as the Midlands and one of our small forest reserves like the Tom Gibson Reserve, where he must be thinking, 'What am I going to do?', because all that weed is cross-border. That's the area we need to get better management of and I'm sure that's an area TFGA are on about.

Mr DEAN - It's a major concern to them. They're spending thousands and thousands of dollars a year.

Mr GAFFNEY - I am interested in the coastal policy and where that's stagnated. What input does Parks have into any future, because a lot of that land is managed by Parks? We've just heard that it's probably the community that's the main game but with Parks it's more let's hold it at bay. Some of the current guidelines have not changed the times

communities to be involved. Some of the guidelines that are current have not changed the times that the community wants to have input into it.

Mr MOONEY - I think that's a very important point. I think we are in a transition zone in Tasmania, to be honest, as far as looking after land is concerned. Community conservation or community land caring has significantly grown in Tasmania in need and demand, and the Government has not necessarily met that demand. I believe we have to get far better cooperation and arrangements on-ground so the community can do things and have the empowerment to do so. You are right, the coastal policy in its old format was a bit too regulatory and restrictive and I think you will find that the language is changing now and discussions and openness are at a better level, but we have room to move and we have to improve. My view is that that is the only way forward. For example, Parks is never going to have the resources or staff to do everything, but they don't have to because a lot of the community wants to do it anyway but they just need the empowerment, and we have to provide that. That is the point of transition difference, from the Government saying, 'We're the best, we're the experts, leave it to us', to saying, 'How can you do this with us and how can we make it happen?'. There are some fantastic small examples of where it is happening but it is not in the broad sense.

Mr GAFFNEY - There are sections with nice walking tracks that Parks can't maintain but the community is quite happy to maintain but the guidelines say, 'Do not remove'. I understand the need for that but significantly that then takes away the opportunity for that to be a walking track that is well maintained by the community.

Mr MOONEY - I think it's that empowerment and trust that the Government in general is acknowledging now but perhaps didn't have the tools before to implement. Even our legislation is quite good; it can allow that, but it needs delegation and proper governance. It's just that we have never done that ourselves to external people. We are doing a lot more now and we just have to accelerate it more and more. I think the community is very willing and able and in fact some of our community are far better at doing this than we are because they are far more experienced in their own right - for example, retired farmers who have gone to the coast. Imagine the skills and abilities they have to look after a patch of land. When you have a young, fresh-faced ranger straight out of university you wouldn't exactly say that they were far more experienced at the land management function. Again, we have to work with our staff to give them the confidence to do that empowerment, and we are doing it step by step. I would love to come here in five year's time and say it is done.

Mr MULDER - When are you going to invite Bear Grylls down here to have a decent run? On a serious note, that sort of promotion of our parks and wildlife would get you an awful lot of interest throughout the world.

Mr MOONEY - I think that's totally to do with this terminology we have now of 'lock up'. I think it's a very unfortunate terminology. Believe it or not, we have more commercial businesses on our reserved land in Tasmania than they have in any other State in Australia. The commercial businesses we have at the moment put in place in Tasmania's reserve system is at a greater level than any other State.

CHAIR - We've got more reserves than any other State.

Mr MOONEY - Yes, but you wouldn't think that when you read the average media at the moment. They think we are all locked up. We have to get the ability to attract a new level of clientele into our reserves that can enlighten people to how we do things. We have gone beyond the days of just looking after bushwalkers. That is how we were set up; we were set up in a management regime that just looked after bushwalkers. Bushwalkers are a very small element of our reserve visitors now. There is all this other sector that wants to engage with us and do things, but we have to be more welcoming and inviting. I thoroughly agree with you about Bear Grylls, although I don't know what he would eat!

Mr MULDER - That's the next question: do you object to him eating the odd cockroach, spider or mushroom on the way through? That goes to the point you're making about if we have a lock-up mentality then those things can't happen.

Mr MOONEY - A lot of our non-national parks will allow that type of activity. Everyone seems to concentrate on the national park itself but in a lot of these reserves you can do all sorts of stuff, but everyone seems to want to talk about the national parks or the World Heritage Areas.

Mr MULDER - That comes back to the point I was making earlier on, that there is a concern in the community - if not unanimously in the Legislative Council apparently - that these things going into forest reserves will result in exactly that sort of thing so that you couldn't invite Bear Grylls to jump into one of these and eat a cockroach on the way out.

Mr MOONEY - That's why it's critically important we get the classification level worked out.

Mr MULDER - I have spoken in the past about an idea that was put to me when I was working at Queenstown just after the Franklin blockade that you can basically travel from Strahan to Huonville -

Mr MOONEY - On foot is a pretty major walk.

Mr MULDER - No, on water. Not walk on water, we will leave that to others, but you can by going up the Gordon River, and there are tracks you may have to walk around with rafts and boats and things, but with a little bit of development that, I can assure you, would be one of the world's iconic journeys - to travel up the Gordon, across Lake Pedder and down the Huon.

Mr MOONEY - At Cradle we have a new business of canyoning, where you put a wetsuit on and jump into a very narrow ravine and go down at like 1 000 miles an hour.

Mr MULDER - We use to know them as water slides but I reckon this one's a bit different.

Mr MOONEY - In theory, we took a big risk in approving that business because it was something that was totally foreign to all the staff and they were saying it would be too risky, but the risk is taken out by the operator. Make sure that they have the right insurances and the right training and let them go for it. It is a new business that is

flourishing, which is great and that's the sort of thing we really have to promote because that is showing that we are a multi-use organisation and we can accommodate it.

Mr MULDER - The new Lake Pedder sits at the headwaters of both the Huon and the Gordon and I think if we want to look at proper usage of our parks they are exactly the sort of things we should do. While I have the floor, Madam Chair, can Parks please put the signpost back at the track to Mount Pelion West?

Mr MOONEY - Has that gone?

Mr MULDER - It has been removed on purpose apparently and the entrance has been disguised but I am assured, even though I have missed it twice now, my sons tell me that as soon as you get into the track it is a nice open track, no dramas at all, and it still appears on the map at Pelion Lodge but there is no signpost.

Mr MOONEY - I will make sure. The other thing is that there is an open invitation for any members who wish to go on an overnight walk anywhere and we can accompany you and take you as a familiarisation process - perhaps somewhere like the Overland Track. It is fine to talk about an issue and a function that is in the State but it is another matter to actually do it and then have a clear understanding of what it really is. I think one thing we have to do a lot more of is work with politicians on that sort of activity because a lot of you people might get access to people with all sorts of ideas but if you do it yourself you can get a far better context. That is an open offer and we would provide that.

CHAIR - I have walked a bit of the Overland Track from Denny King's hut.

Mr FINCH - Are you talking specifically about the Overland Track?

Mr MOONEY - Yes, but it can be all sorts of locations and places - but maybe not Macquarie Island.

Mr DEAN - Going back several years, I am not quite sure what committee it was but we were talking with Scott Gadd about a number of issues with our reserves and our conservation areas, and it has now been brought up again with us in the submissions we have here about the extra cost, work and resources required from your area in relation to trail bike riders, four-wheel drivers who are tearing up our reserves and our conservation areas and so on. What is happening in that area and how much funding do you put aside to try to get in front of this? Where is it going?

Mr MOONEY - Probably, by example, the Arthur-Pieman is the best place to talk about at the moment. I don't know how many of you have been to the Arthur-Pieman and gone further south on the rugged four-wheel drive tracks down at Sandy Cape and further south, but the Arthur-Pieman has been a really interesting project. We got some funding a year-and-a-half ago to assist with the whole new way of looking at what we do at Arthur-Pieman. We just used to get this conflict all the time from the four-wheel-drivers and the aboriginal community telling us we are not doing enough work; the conservation movement saying we are slack and not doing anything at all; and the four-wheel-drivers wanting more access and it was just never ever going to get anywhere.

We basically did a whole lot of natural values assessments, social assessment and the track assessment, and then we came back to the individual groups and have been trying to work out solutions. At the end of the day we have come up with what we call a solution.

I suppose I can just give you raw numbers - there were 95 identified different four-wheel-drive tracks in the Arthur-Pieman and we are going to close off 15 but fix up the other 80 at a significant level that will not decrease any aboriginal heritage and natural values, or cause environmental impact on all those issues.

That takes serious effort and money but the way we are able to do it is, we have applied a permit system - a bit like for the Overland Track. It is not an entrance fee but it is a use fee and we can do it under legislation. What we have guaranteed to the people who use the reserve is that if you pay this annual fee, we will guarantee every single cent will go back into these particular activities.

When we started the fee process we got a very low uptake, as you can imagine. We had a lot of people going driving through at 2 o'clock in the morning to bypass the ranger's place and all that sort of thing but eventually, through good enforcement and management but no fines attached, we have got a better uptake and now it is at an uptake level where we have got sufficient funds that we are actually putting back now into the infrastructure.

We put a new \$35 000 road bridge in about five months ago. That bridge has been on the point of collapse for about four years and we have always said we were going to have to close the road because we have no money to fix it. But now we actually have a mechanism where we can fix it but it is the money from the people who use the reserve that is actually fixing it and they see where the money goes. That is the trick.

If you just put it back into administration or it goes back into the coffers, no-one wants a bar of it. I think that is the mindset change. I am not saying we have got 100 per cent acceptance because there are still some people who will always want to go to their favourite beach regardless of whether there are special birds breeding or not because they have always gone there.

I suppose the other big point of difference is that a lot of people talk about traditional practices and uses. The reason I am carrying on about this is that it comes up to me all the time. A lot of people come to me and say, 'Look, you're denying me access to where my grandfather used to go and my grandfather's grandfather,' and all that sort of thing. We are not denying them access. The difficulty is how they get there.

Their grandfathers never had a great big four-wheel-drive with 18-inch-wide tyres or ATVs that could climb trees. Their grandfathers walked in there with a sack on their back with a bit of lard and a bit of bacon and he caught his crayfish and ate it on the spot. He did not have a big freezer on the back of his four-wheel-drive where he would take 100, well, some crayfish out but that is the point of difference. It is the mechanism that people are using now to gain the access that is just completely different from the old days.

What we are trying to do is have people understand that, 'Look, we are not going to deny you the access but what we want you to do is go a certain route, not just choose your own pathway wherever you like'.

That cultural change is slowly but surely happening. That is an example in the Arthur-Pieman and my belief is if we can make this work in the Arthur-Pieman we can make it work anywhere to be honest.

Mr DEAN - Because it is happening in other areas around the State, on the advice that I am getting.

Mr MOONEY - What is happening is that people realise that we are not everywhere and they are making opportunity of it. The social media stuff is an interesting thing.

The other day I had a report from one of my senior rangers. He got onto a crowd, a user group, not a traditional four-wheel-drive group, a new one, I have forgotten what they call themselves - the Spartan Adventurers or something, I cannot remember. They were about 20 people and they were determined to go to this new area that we had just rehabilitated. They wanted to actually muck up our rehabilitation. They were networking on social media organising the trip in their own rights but somehow a senior ranger got into that network as a pseudo name and he got straight to them very quickly on the social network. He said, by the way this is Ranger Blog, I know what you are up to and then they suddenly thought, oh my God, he knows about us, but he had dialogue with them and redirected them to Adamsfield where we have a nominated track with all sorts of difficulties with it and they got a permit. They did not know about Adamsfield but because they know about Adamsfield now they will go there now, and they want to join up and help us rehabilitate that, whereas 24 hours previously they were the enemy. Now they are our friends. It is simply because we communicated with them at their level rather than at our level. That is the point of difference so we have got to get a lot smarter with how we connect with people. Most people do not get up in the morning and want to go and abuse Parks or destroy things; they just want to have an adventure.

Mr FINCH - I want to talk about the scientists who work for the Parks and Wildlife Service. There was a change in the late 1990s in respect of that. I think that there is some contract work that now takes place in respect of that scientific knowledge of reserves and what we do in the Parks and Wildlife Service. Can I just be apprised, or can the committee be apprised, of where the scientific values fit in the PWS?

Mr MOONEY - We have the greater agency that my boss looks after, DPIPWE, and within DPIPWE there are a number of divisions. Parks and Wildlife Service is one division. Then we have Resource Management and Conservation and that is where all the botanical, zoological and natural value scientists sit. They work with us, they do not for us, but they work next to us. I will just lead you through an example: the Three Capes Track. We had to do an environmental assessment of what we are doing at the Three Capes Track. We contact the scientists who are working at RMC about the values on the eagles, all the mammals, the plants, the threatened species. They come out and do assessments, they work with us and they provide us reports and then we use that as far as our decision-making goes for what we do on the ground. That is repeated all around Tasmania basically.

Sometimes the work we require is at too great a scale that RMC staff just have not got the resources to supply. Then we have to go to consultancies. We have to go to the private sector and get that. That might be a very big assessment, for instance for the eagle assessment for Three Capes we went to consultancies because we needed it done at a certain time of the year when the eagles were breeding and the scientists at RMC just did not have the time available because they were doing survey work somewhere else. We use them whenever we can and as much as possible, but at other times we have to use other staff.

That is not to say we do not have scientists within Parks. We have some really credible people in Parks with doctorate degrees in pure sciences and we use their skills for different mechanisms at different times but the nominated resource we always use is the RMC people because they are the specialists in the botanical, zoological and geological areas. It is a good relationship and it seems to work well. In some ways it is good having them one step removed because they provide us with their science advice and we take that on. They do not provide us with their social or philosophical advice that used to happen a lot in Parks. When the scientists were in Parks they would form a view about something, 'I have got to be careful what I say here'. They would form a view that we wanted their personal opinion about putting up a toilet block somewhere but all we were asking for was their botanical advice about the location. You would end up getting all of this advice and jargon about the philosophy of having a toilet block there. That was not we actually wanted from them, whereas now it is very good. We get their actual disciplined advice only at the level that they have to provide. Then we decide with the community whether it is a good idea to have a toilet block or not and that is what we should be doing. Does that make sense?

Mr FINCH - So with those changes that were made, this is a better arrangement.

Mr MOONEY - I think it is more professional and I think it is more relevant to the task at hand rather than having a lot of other chatter and discussion that was not relevant to the task at hand.

Mr EVANS - If I can add, that same group of specialists that sit inside RMC provide advice into the park system in terms of the management of the public lands, the reserved land, but they also provide advice on a whole range of other things. They provide input into EPA assessments; they provide input into the assessments of major projects. They help farmers. They do a whole range of other things so that they are not just part of the Parks and Wildlife Service, which is what used to happen prior to that separation. A lot of the challenges in conservation and the protection of natural values are on private and other land rather than necessarily reserve lands which are already locked away - not locked away but reserved for those specific purposes.

CHAIR - We talked a little bit about feral animals and their impact, what is the most damaging feral animal? Does Peter have some idea?

Mr MOONEY - Today?

CHAIR - Yes.

Mr MOONEY - We still have a lot of wild dog activity, especially in the Cradle reserve and the Walls of Jerusalem. That peaks and troughs. The difficulty with that is that it is totally related to hunting methods used by different people and the ex-greyhound industry. It is stag hounds; they are the biggest problem we have.

CHAIR - Not feral deer?

Mr MOONEY - It would be lovely to have no deer in any of our reserves but I must admit there are some. The deer ranges change from time to time. We have had a slight increase in the Waratah region, for example, over the last few years and some areas of the Central Plateau. At present we are still pretty sound so far as integrity goes of the larger reserve system in the World Heritage Area. With deer, I am not sure what the future holds. We don't manage deer as such in our regime. Obviously foxes are a potential and we always have that on our minds. The other issues are more related to, not individual invasive species but the cause and effect on our native wildlife such as the devil disease, the chytrid disease on frogs and the unfortunate ulcer disease on platypuses. That is more a virus-type arrangement, which is always a very hard thing to manage. So far as individual invasive animals, it would be the potential of foxes, wild dogs present at the moment and some bird species that play games with our native species, such as the noisy miners and the sulphur-crested cockatoos. Generally speaking, in the middle of our reserves that is not a lot of cause and effect.

Mr DEAN - I was going to mention feral cats.

Mr MOONEY - Feral cats are everywhere. They are an amazingly adaptive animal. I was down south of Melaleuca not long ago and I was having lunch on the track and this great big tabby stood about 10 feet from me and just looked at me. He was about 18 kilos. The cat legislation could go a long way to help us there because, of any single thing that would help the wildlife in Tasmania, the cat legislation would be the biggest achievement we could gain.

CHAIR - My final question is to Kim - and I don't deal in rumour and innuendo very often, but I thought I would take the opportunity - in the last couple of days I've had some information that your department might be taking over the Forest Practices Authority. They are running at a significant loss, I believe, about \$900 000 down on their previous income stream, given what has been happening, and I just want to know whether that is true.

Mr EVANS - Obviously with the budget position you will get the opportunity to talk to Graeme as part of the Estimates process, but that is news to me; I haven't heard that.

CHAIR - Would you be interested if that came about?

Laughter.

Mr EVANS - No, I haven't heard that rumour.

CHAIR - As I said, I don't normally deal in rumour and innuendo but I thought it was a good opportunity to ask the question.

Mr EVANS - I can say that I have no knowledge of that whatsoever.

Mr DEAN - Can I ask one very quick question on the funding you have available to you? As a result of the name change in the Fox Eradication Program, I understand that the funding that was there still goes towards the Fox Eradication Program - none of that funding has moved across into the department for other things?

Mr EVANS - Again, we can talk about that in greater detail at Estimates. It is early days and we are looking at putting together a more integrated invasives program and using the broader resources within that group to deal with the highest priorities. Foxes will remain a key focus of the work. I think it is a bit like amalgamating Crown Land Services and Parks; it provides an opportunity to get efficiencies and give us greater critical mass to deal with highest risks in terms of invasives and priorities.

CHAIR - Thank you, gentlemen. We will be looking at the evidence we have received this morning and we could well ask for a revisit. Thank you very much for your time.

THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.