

**Legislative Council Hansard Excerpt - Legislative Council Estimates Committee A -
Monday 6 June 2022 - Ferguson**

**Output Group 4 - Regulatory and other Services
4.2 Tasmanian Planning Commission**

Ms WEBB - This 4.2 - Tasmanian Planning Commission and we will just revisit something we have discussed previously in Estimates on the State of the Environment Report because it does remain here listed on page 151, under the Planning Commission as one of the responsibilities of the commission. We know it has not occurred since 2009. We have missed two.

From memory, last year when we spoke about it the then minister indicated advice was being sought from an interdepartmental committee on the format and purpose of the State of the Environment Report and where responsibility should lie for that work, recognising that it probably wasn't correctly situated in the TPC. Was advice received from that interdepartmental committee? If so, what did that indicate and has a decision been made on whether to transfer the obligation to prepare and release the State of the Environment Report from the TPC to a different agency? If so, which one?

Mr FERGUSON - Thanks, I will ask the deputy secretary to respond first.

Mr LIMKIN - Thank you for your question. The interdepartmental committee is still considering this work. There has been a raft of work completed over the last six months. At this stage, we intend to be able to report to Government by the end of the year on options available on the State of the Environment Report and provide Government with options and a way forward at that point in time.

Ms WEBB - So, we have not progressed much further than where we were when we discussed it last year I gather then from that answer, minister?

Mr LIMKIN - My understanding, Ms Webb, is that as of last year, the Government had announced it was reviewing the State of the Environment Report. We were only tasked late last year to do this. We have commenced as quickly as we could. There are a number of elements around this, including the change to the EPA which required this work to be consulted through that process and our colleagues at the EPA needed some time to go through that change before engaging with this.

We have now been engaging probably a good six months and as I said, we are at the final stages of developing options for Government to make some decisions going forward.

Ms WEBB - Minister, in light of this, that we are still in limbo somewhat and we have missed the 2014 iteration; we have missed the 2019 iteration. There would then be a 2024 iteration. Does the Government have and do you have, a commitment as to when you will see the next State of the Environment Report delivered under whatever new arrangements transpire?

Mr FERGUSON - The advice that I have on this is it has been a long-running issue. I think it has even predated our Government, in terms of some of these matters.

I am told that preparing a state of the environment report is very resource-hungry. I think that was acknowledged in the question. We want to make sure that it is done correctly and given that it will be a large investment of time, resources and money, in preparing a new report, we want to make sure it is fit-for-purpose, that it is done by the proper body and that it more effectively integrates with the other elements of the planning system that we have.

That is why Mr Limkin is chairing that deputy secretaries steering committee with doing that review of the reporting requirements. I am not yet in receipt of any recommendations from that process, but when I am, naturally I would be more forthcoming about next steps.

I understand that project planning for the review will commence shortly, and that the review will include extensive public consultation. That is the best advice I can provide for now. It clearly is not a resolution to the matter, but we have the right commitment and wherewithal to sort it out, and to then commission the actual state of the environment report through a body that is properly equipped to do it.

I will just ask Mr Risby, what would be an appropriate time frame to indicate to the committee. I am sensing that it would be in the realm of perhaps two years' time.

Ms WEBB - Thank you and in light of that, given that there is a national state of the environment report due in early 2022 this year, which I believe has been done, but not released by the federal government, what Tasmanian information or data was provided to the Australian Government for inclusion in that report? If information or data was provided, who, at a state level, provided that?

Mr RISBY - I seem to recall this matter cropped up last year, and my response at that time, from a planning point of view was that I have not been approached for planning information to feed into that.

I seem to recall that the EPA may well have been approached for the environment matters, but that is not something I can be sure of.

Mr FERGUSON - Who would be the right person to ask? Would it be the Environment minister?

Mr RISBY - It would be the Environment minister and his team.

[end of excerpt]