11 DEC 2013

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
Question on notice

Wednesday, 20 November 2013

607. Hon Robin Chappie to the Minister for Mental Health representing the Minister for Environment.

I refer to Kimberley coastal cruises that were attended by staff of the Department of Parks and Wildlife (DPaW), and I ask:
(a) which staff participated in the Kimberley coastal cruise conducted by DPaW on or around September 2013;
(b) what was the purpose of the cruise;
(c) what was the cost of the cruise;
(d) who paid the costs associated with the cruise;
(e) was the Minister present on the cruise;
(f) what activities were included as part of the cruise, for example helicopter rides;
(g) does the Minister consider a Kimberley coastal cruise for staff of DPaW an appropriate use of taxpayers' money; and
(h) can the Minister please explain why taxpayers' money is permitted to be used in this way when the Government is cutting funding to other programs such as fighting salinity and dieback and the protection of endangered species?

Answer

The Minister for Environment has provided the following response.

(a) Staff of the Department of Parks and Wildlife (DPaW), the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and the Office of the Environmental Protection Authority (OEPA) including scientists, marine planners and native title negotiators, attended the 30 August to 16 September 2013 Kimberley coastal charter or part thereof.

The following DPaW staff attended the 30 August to 8 September Kimberley coastal charter with Dambimangari traditional owners: Coordinator of Kimberley Landscape Conservation Initiative, Amanda Moncrieff; Kimberley Nature Conservation Leader, Ben Corey; Senior Project Officer, Carolyn Thomson-Dans; Senior Marine Ranger, Daniel Barrow; Kimberley Regional Manager, Daryl Moncrieff; Principal Research Scientist, Kim Friedman; Research Scientist, Lesley Gibson; Principal Research Scientist, Norm McKenzie; Manager Tourism Licensing and Leasing, Rod Quartermaine and Marine Planner, Sarah Bignell. Representatives of the Dambimangari Aboriginal Corporation also attended.

Daryl Moncrieff and Norm McKenzie attended the 8 September to 12 September Kimberley coastal charter with Balanggarra traditional owners. Six representatives of the Balanggarra Aboriginal Corporation also attended.

Daryl Moncrieff; Norm McKenzie; Kimberley Fire Coordinator, Ed Hatherley (in part); Acting Director General, Jim Sharp (in part) and Director of Parks and Visitor Services, Peter Sharp (in part) attended the 12 September to 16 September Kimberley coastal charter with Wunambal Gaambera traditional owners. Six representatives of the Wunambal Gaambera Aboriginal Corporation also attended.

(b) The purpose of the charter was to:

(i) facilitate discussions between State Government agencies and native title groups regarding proposed marine parks and conservation reserves and the related indigenous land use agreement (ILUA) negotiation processes; and

(ii) transfer knowledge of biodiversity values and threatening processes, and to consider management requirements and constraints of the 30 proposed island reserves in the Kimberley and the proposed Great Kimberley Marine Park.

(c) The total cost of the charter was $213,701. This includes costs for vessel charter, staff and traditional owner transfers and accommodation and traditional owner wages to attend the on-country meetings.

(d) DPaW paid for the charter using Kimberley Science and Conservation Strategy (KSCS) funds.

(e) Hon Albert Jacob MLA, Minister for Environment attended one night (12 September) of the Wunambal Gaambera component of the charter.

(f) The following activities occurred as a part of the charter: presentations by DPaW and OEPA staff on marine and island biodiversity values and threatening processes; presentations by DPaW and DPC staff regarding the opportunities available to traditional owners through joint management; group discussion with traditional owners regarding biodiversity values, threatening processes, proposed management actions and statutory planning processes; and field trips to inspect coral reef systems, rock art sites, high tourism visitation sites, and sites impacted by weeds or other disturbance. Marine camera surveying was conducted and mainland and island sites accessed. No helicopter charters occurred except for staff and traditional owner transfers in and out of the Hunter River at the conclusion of the charter and to transfer the Minster for Environment and the acting Director General from the charter.

(g) Landscape-scale conservation initiatives under the KSCS are being implemented by DPaW in partnership with native title holder groups, with many benefits for traditional owners in both employment and direct involvement in the development of management plans and in the ongoing joint management of the parks. The most efficient and cost effective way for key DPaW staff to gain an appropriate level of knowledge regarding the values and threats to these extremely remote areas and to develop relationships and discuss these issues on-country with traditional owners is one charter rather than numerous charters.

(h) The Government has placed a high priority on protecting the unique values of the Kimberley, as demonstrated through its commitment to establish four new marine parks in the north Kimberley, 30 proposed island reserves, Australia's largest national park and a new national park at Horizontal Falls. The protection of the Kimberley's unique natural and cultural values, and the involvement of native title groups in these initiatives, is the most cost effective way to manage the area and is an entirely appropriate allocation of funds. The areas visited are only accessible by sea or air with sea-based access being substantially cheaper and more practical. A charter vessel was the best option available to achieve this.

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