



Elizabeth Quay \$1.7m two month operating cost slammed by Opposition

By Andrew O'Connor

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Elizabeth Quay cost the WA Government nearly \$1.7 million in its first two months of operations, including nearly \$500,000 on an opening festival, new figures have revealed.

Information released in Parliament showed more than \$484,000 was spent running the three-week festival which followed its official opening on January 29.

The costs included more than \$4,400 to run exercise classes at the quay.

In a written response to Opposition questions, Planning Minister Donna Faragher confirmed the total expenditure during the two months from January 29 to March 31 was \$1,662,600.

But she implied the \$1 million spent in the first month provided good value.

"Given that there were an estimated 1.27 million visitors during the first month of operations, this equates to less than \$1 per day per person," she said in her response.

But the figures also showed more than \$577,000 was spent in March and there would be an ongoing cost estimated at \$220,000 per month.

The Opposition seized on the figures as evidence taxpayers were bearing the costs of the Government's attempts to attract people to an area without permanent attractions.

"Obviously they would have liked to have more private sector involvement, would have liked to have more buildings in place, they would have been paying a return, therefore taxpayers wouldn't be paying," Opposition planning spokesperson Rita Saffioti said.

Ms Faragher said the Government was receiving some rental revenue from the handful of food and drink outlets open at the quay, but Ms Saffioti was unconvinced.

"They're saying they're collecting some revenue through the pop-ups but clearly, the costs are outweighing any revenue at the moment," she said.

"And this cost is going to be borne by taxpayers until we can get private sector investment, until the private sector is attracted to go and invest down there."



PHOTO: Elizabeth Quay officially opened on January 29. (ABC News: Dave Weber)

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The Opposition used a budget estimates hearing to question the Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority (MRA) over progress with key property developments.

The MRA granted Chevron a two-year delay on building a new Perth headquarters at the quay, with construction not due to start until 2019.

The authority is negotiating with Brookfield Properties on two lots at the site, valued at around \$60 million.

MRA chief executive Kieran Kinsella told the hearing the MRA hoped to finalise a contract by October.

Mr Kinsella was also questioned about the cost of repairs and rectification work at the Elizabeth Quay water park.

The park remains closed after ongoing problems with bacterial contamination of the water.

The MRA will spend about \$200,000 upgrading the filtration system to almost double its capacity.

The park is expected to re-open sometime in June.

Ms Faragher later issued a statement, saying the quay had attracted millions of people to the city.

"It is no surprise that the Opposition has no vision for this city and they clearly don't support the Government's current enhancement of the CBD," she said.



PHOTO: The water park is expected to reopen in June after filtration system upgrades.
(720 ABC Perth: Emma Wynne)

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