LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

ANSWERS
TO
QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

No. 1

MONDAY 2 MARCH 2015
[House Prorogued]

(Answers to Questions without Notice received by the Clerk up to prorogation of the House, printed and circulated according to standing order)
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21 October 2014

1 FIREARMS LICENCES—Mr Borsak asked the Minister for Roads and Freight, Minister for the North Coast and Vice-President of the Executive Council—

Is the Minister aware of any cases where Roads and Maritime Services has placed a sticker of a New South Wales firearms licence holder's private address on their firearms licence following notification of a change of address? If so, in how many instances has this occurred? Given the fact that disclosing the private address presents a safety risk for firearms licence holders, will the Minister direct Roads and Maritime Services to cease this practice immediately?

Answer—

When a change of address is undertaken at a motor registry or service centre a sticker is provided only for drivers licences and photo ID cards. The sticker is not intended for firearms licences. Because a firearms licence does not contain the provision for an address to be recorded, it’s likely that individuals with firearms licences have received stickers intended for their drivers licences.

2 SEARCH AND RESCUE OPERATIONS—Mr Brown asked the Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services and Minister for the Illawarra—

As the Minister is on a roll on facts, this should be easy. Is it a fact that more than 130 people have been stranded and needed rescuing along 250 kilometres of Blue Mountains walking tracks in the past financial year? Can the Minister advise the House of the cost to the State for the 151 search and rescue operations carried out across New South Wales on public lands in the past financial year? Can the Minister advise also for comparison, the number and cost of rescues of licensed hunters hunting on public lands in that same financial year? In fact, let us make it a sporting proposition and change that to the number and cost of such rescues for both categories of users since 1 July 2006.

Answer—

The NSW Police Force (NSWPF) has advised me that the specific information sought by the Member cannot be provided in the terms requested.

The NSWPF is responsible for the coordination of land search operations. The advice provided reflects all ‘Land Search and Rescue incidents’. On this basis, police advise that 28 Land Search and Rescue incidents occurred within the Blue Mountains Local Area Command in the 2013-14 financial year. Costs associated with these operations are unable to be provided as they are spread across various commands and supporting agencies.

Between 1 January 2006 and 28 October 2014 the total number of reported Land Search and Rescue incidents across NSW was 1157. 200 of these were identified as occurring within the Blue Mountains Local Area Command. I am advised the NSWPF does not keep records relating to the hunting licence status of lost or missing persons and accurate figures cannot be provided on the numbers of hunters rescued.

3 LOCUST CONTROL—Mr Whan asked the Minister for Roads and Freight, Minister for the North Coast and Vice-President of the Executive Council representing the Minister for Primary Industries—

The Department of Primary Industries recently found significant populations of locust nymphs in far west and central western New South Wales. What have the Minister and the Government done to resolve the uncertainty about the future of pest insect control funds since the introduction of Local Land Services? What is the Government doing to prepare for a potential locust outbreak?

Answer—

The NSW Department of Primary Industries, Local Land Services and Australian Plague Locust Commission have been continually working together to provide information and support to landholders.
These agencies have continued to conduct surveillance and make preparations for any potential locust outbreaks annually. Through this surveillance by field staff, several areas were identified as potential localised hot-spots during the spring of 2014. These included the central west, far north-west and south west regions of NSW.

To date the Central West and Western Local Land Service regions have received around 35 reports from landholders. The activity to date has been some localised hatching resultant from laying in autumn earlier this year.

NSW DPI and Local Land Services staff have been assisting landholders with advice and Local Land Services have been handing out relatively small quantities of free insecticide at this stage for the control of nymphal bands. Nymphal bands are where the young locusts come together approximately 2-3 weeks after hatching, which provides the most economic and effective opportunity for control.

As forecast, activity to date has been very localised, not wide-spread. Whilst control is being conducted in some localised areas, there will be a proportion of locust nymphs that reach adulthood and start to swarm and fly. Therefore, some landholders and communities in NSW are likely to see flying locusts. It remains important that this activity is reported so they can be monitored for further egg-laying which can lead to second and third generations over the coming spring-summer period.

There has been significant media activity during the past month. NSW DPI, Local Land Services and Australian Plague Locust Commission have all issued media releases while staff have conducted a number of radio interviews.

It is important to note, that since the formation of the Local Land Services organisation landholders continue to contribute annually to the Pest Insect Destruction Fund, a levy on their annual Local land Services rates. The Pest Insect Destruction Fund covers costs associated with preparing for and controlling plague locust incursions.

The Plague Locust Management Group, comprising of representatives from NSW DPI, Local Land Services and the NSW Farmers’ Association met in September to discuss the current and forecast situations and to approve a 2014-15 Plague Locust Response Plan.

4 OPAL ELECTRONIC TICKETING—Dr Faruqi asked the Minister for Roads and Freight, Minister for the North Coast and Vice-President of the Executive Council representing the Minister for Transport and Minister for the Hunter—

Earlier this year the Minister for Transport stated that Opal card users would have the option of travelling anonymously with unregistered Opal cards. When university students get concession Opal cards, will they have the same access to an unregistered card and the ability to travel anonymously?

Answer—

I am advised:

Concession tickets are available to eligible tertiary students who hold a NSW Tertiary Student Concession Card, on most public transport services. At present, students issued with NSW Tertiary Student Concession Cards are required to produce their concession card when purchasing a concession fare, travelling on public transport services and when requested to do so by a transport officer.

All Opal customers can be assured their personal information is handled securely in accordance with the Opal Privacy Policy. The Opal Privacy Policy has been developed in accordance with the Privacy and Personal Information Act 1998.

5 TAXI AND TRANSPORT SUBSIDY SCHEME— Mr Green asked the Minister for Roads and Freight, Minister for the North Coast and Vice-President of the Executive Council representing the Minister for Transport and Minister for the Hunter—

The Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme maximum subsidy level of $30 was last increased in 1999—therefore, it has gone 15 years without increase. Taxi fares have increased by more than 60 per cent over
the same period. In 2008 Victoria increased the cap under its scheme from $30 to $60, which is now double the subsidy in New South Wales. Will the Minister indicate when the New South Wales Government will update the $30 cap to meet the ongoing needs of those requiring affordable access to taxis as their primary mode of transport?

Answer—

I am advised:

The NSW Government has carried out a review of the subsidies and incentives that support Wheelchair Accessible Taxi services, including the affordability and availability of the Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme.

A number of recommendations to improve the service for customers are now being considered.

6 AUSGRID—Dr Kaye asked the Minister for Fair Trading representing the Treasurer and Minister for Industrial Relations—

It relates to the 37 information technology jobs that were off-shored by AusGrid. What studies were made to assess the trade-off between the long-term impacts on the information technology capacity of New South Wales and AusGrid against the sale price of AusGrid as part of the Government's privatisation process?

Answer—

I am advised that Ausgrid is reviewing the delivery of services within its Information and Communications Technology division as part of a business-wide restructure to reduce non-essential operating costs.

This restructure commenced in 2012 following NSW Government reforms to the state's electricity sector to promote greater efficiencies across the three network businesses and keep electricity prices as low as possible.

Ausgrid's ICT division employs more than 270 staff, and an external review has identified the potential for savings by procuring some services from the market rather than managing those capabilities internally. The review did not examine issues relating to Ausgrid's overall information technology capability.

Ausgrid is currently discussing the merits of this proposal with unions and staff. Should the proposal proceed, any external provider would be expected to maintain a local presence.

Ausgrid undertakes workforce planning in a responsible way to ensure it can maintain a safe, reliable and sustainable supply of electricity across its network area. Decisions about its workforce are based solely on network requirements.

7 M4 WIDENING AND EXTENSION—Ms Voltz asked the Minister for Roads and Freight, Minister for the North Coast and Vice-President of the Executive Council—

What is the Minister's department doing to reassure Granville residents, such as Ms Sharon Murphy, who have raised concerns with his office regarding the new two lanes proposed extension of the M4 motorway, which will overshadow her house, following an accident on the M4 that caused a truck trailer to crash onto the roof of a house in Arthur Street, Granville?

Answer—

I am advised:
As a result of the Sydney Area Transportation Study, part of the land reserved for the M4 corridor was disposed of in 1987. Sydney’s transport needs have dramatically changed over the last 27 years and Roads and Maritime Services continues to consult with stakeholders about future road projects in their areas.

22 October 2014

8 SCHOOLS—Mr Green asked the Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for the Illawarra representing the Minister for Education—

In his answer dated 17 June 2014 the Minister for Education stated that he had not closed any schools in 2014; rather, he used the term "in recess". Given that Wyong Grove Public School has been confirmed to be amalgamated with Wyong Public School next year and that Milbrulong Public School has been declared publicly in news reports to have been closed by the Department of Education and Communities, and given that none of these schools currently is accepting any more students, does the Minister still stand by his statement that these schools are not closed? How does this Minister define the difference between closed and in perpetual recess?

Answer—

A number of news items at the end of 2013 incorrectly reported that Milbrulong Public school had closed.

Wyong Grove Public School and Wyong Public School were amalgamated in January 2014.

Wyong Grove Public School and Milbrulong Public School are currently in recess.

Directors, Public Schools NSW are currently conducting final community consultations.

9 NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE 10/50 VEGETATION CLEARING CODE—Mr Shoebridge asked asked the Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for the Illawarra representing the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for Sport and Recreation and Minister Assisting the Premier on Western Sydney—

When will the Rural Fire Service live up to the commitment given by its commissioner at budget estimates hearings and publish its maps of 10/50 entitlement clearing areas?

Answer—

The NSW Rural Fire Service has advised me that a map of the 10/50 Vegetation Clearing Entitlement Area will be published following the current review of the scheme.

10 DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES PROPERTIES RENTS—Ms Barham asked the Minister for Fair Trading representing the Treasurer and Minister for Industrial Relations—

I refer to the report in the Sydney Morning Herald yesterday that Treasury has directed the Department of Planning and Environment to realise market values on around 1,200 properties that are currently leased from the department by non-government organisations at peppercorn rents. Does the Treasury's decision-making in such matters include any consideration of the impact of Government actions on the wellbeing of people, communities and ecosystems in this State? Has Treasury conducted any analysis of the impact of imposing market rents on services, clients and communities for facilities such as Darling House at Dawes Point and the Warilla Child Care Centre in the Illawarra?

Answer—
I am advised that the direction to realise market value on the sale or lease of Government assets is a longstanding requirement under Treasurer’s Direction TD92/2 469.01.

I am advised that these historical lease arrangements commenced decades ago, with many leases on peppercorn rent.

I am advised that the Department of Family and Community Services is honouring all current lease conditions when they expire while any negotiations take place on new lease arrangements.

11 WILD DOG AND FOX CONTROL—Mr Borsak asked the Minister for Fair Trading representing the Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, Minister for the Central Coast, and Assistant Minister for Planning—

Is the Minister aware of a recent report in the Daily Telegraph about a wild dog and fox poisoning campaign being run by the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service in the Burragorang State Conservation Area in which two different strength baits are being used—namely, a three milligram bait for foxes and six milligram bait for dogs? If wild dogs eat the lesser strength baits meant for foxes and thereby undergo unnecessary suffering, has the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service breached the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act?

Answer—

I am advised as follows:

1. Yes.
2. The National Parks and Wildlife Service follows the requirements for baiting rates as set out in the relevant Pesticide Control Order and the Department of Primary Industries Vertebrate Pest Control Manual.

Questions relating to the appropriateness of these baiting rates should be directed to the Minister for Primary Industries.

12 TAFE NORTHERN BEACHES—Mr Donnelly asked the Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for the Illawarra representing the Minister for Education—

Given that staff at the TAFE Northern Beaches campus have been asked by management to detail a business case as to why the hospitality training course should not be solely located at one campus at Ryde, will the Minister rule out the closure of the hospitality training course at the TAFE Northern Beaches campus.

Answer—

TAFE NSW Institutes regularly review and adjust their training delivery and course offerings to meet the needs of students, industry and the community.

Changes to course offerings involve extensive consultation processes with key stakeholders, including industry, staff and unions.

13 COFFS HARBOUR SLIPWAY—Mr Brown asked the Minister for Roads and Freight, Minister for the North Coast and Vice-President of the Executive Council representing the Deputy Premier, Minister for Trade and Investment, Minister for Regional Infrastructure and Services, Minister for Tourism and Major Events, Minister for Hospitality, Gaming and Racing and Minister for the Arts—

Is the Minister aware of concerns by commercial fishermen in Coffs Harbour that the indefinite closure of the local slipway in August may drive them out of business because boats needing repairs or
inspections will be forced to use Yamba or Port Macquarie? What is the Minister doing to ensure that the slipway remains open, at least for emergencies, during the remediation work?

Answer—

The Minister for Natural Resources, Lands and Water is aware of the issue and is actively working with stakeholders to ensure that appropriate interim measures are in place and a longer term solution is sought.

Arrangements to deal with vessels in distress have not changed.

14 LOCAL GOVERNMENT FIT FOR THE FUTURE—Ms Cotsis asked the Minister for Fair Trading representing the Minister for Local Government—

Given that last Friday a list of facilitators was announced to assist councils in preparing structural change proposals in accordance with their Fit for the Future agenda, how were these facilitators commissioned, what is the total cost of contracting these facilitators and will ratepayers be funding that cost?

Answer—

Details on Fit For the Future facilitators can be found at http://www.fitforthefuture.nsw.gov.au/

23 October 2014

15 WEDDERBURN KOALA HABITAT—Mr Foley asked the Minister for Roads and Freight, Minister for the North Coast and Vice-President of the Executive Council—

In light of increasing housing development in south-west Sydney, and around Wedderburn in particular, will the Minister consider the provision of increased koala signage on roads to help conserve Sydney's largest and best-known koala population?

Answer—

I am advised:

Campbelltown City Council manages the local road network in the vicinity of the Wedderburn koala population. Council has installed koala warning signs along local roads in proximity of identified koala habitat.

16 MID NORTH COAST HEALTH SERVICES—Mr Secord asked the Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for the Illawarra representing the Minister for Health, and Minister for Medical Research—

Given industrial action yesterday by nurses and other medical staff over the sale of Kempsey Hospital's public X-ray unit to private operators, what other plans does the Government have to further privatise health services within the Mid North Coast Local Health District?

Answer—

I am advised:

The Mid North Coast Local Health District has existing relationships across a range of its services with public, non-government and private operators as part of its collaborative approach to the provision of health services to the Mid North Coast community.

17 ZOE’S LAW LEGISLATION—Revd Mr Nile asked the Minister for Roads and Freight, Minister for the North Coast and Vice-President of the Executive Council representing the Premier, Minister for Infrastructure, and Minister for Western Sydney—
I refer to the death of Jacqueline Sparks' unborn child, baby Mia, and to the statement by Judge Conlon in which he said:

Lest there be any doubt about my use of the phrase "life of an infant", one only has to look at the photograph of Ms Sparks in the hospital bed looking down at her perfectly formed, although dead baby daughter in her arms.

However, the court must work within the parameters set by the legislature.

With this further confirmation of the urgent need for legislation to protect the unborn babies of New South Wales, will the Premier urgently authorise a party vote instead of a conscience vote to support the Crimes Amendment (Zoe's Law) Bill (No. 2) that the Legislative Assembly passed by the large majority vote of 63 to 26? Does the Minister agree that the vote should not be one of conscience as Zoe's law bills Nos 1 and 2 specifically exclude medical procedures or treatment, such as abortion, or anything done by or with the consent of the pregnant woman concerned, as per section 8A (4) (a) and (b)?

Answer—

On 21 November 2013 an amended Private Member’s Bill from the Member for The Entrance, Chris Spence MP was passed by the Legislative Assembly and will now be debated in the Legislative Council.

Like the Legislative Assembly there will be a conscience vote for Coalition Members in the Legislative Council.

18. AUSLAN INTERPRETING SERVICES—Ms Westwood asked the Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services and Minister for the Illawarra—

Given the demand for Auslan interpreter services in the Hunter has increased by 119 per cent since the National Disability Insurance Scheme [NDIS] rollout and in light of the Government's de-funding of the only experienced provider for Auslan diploma training, what is the Government doing to ensure there is not a shortage of appropriately trained and qualified Auslan interpreters to meet the expected demand for interpreters as the NDIS is rolled out across the State and that parents of deaf children can access affordable Auslan training courses to enable them to communicate with their deaf children?

Answer—

This matter falls within the portfolio responsibility of the Minister for Education, the Hon Adrian Piccoli MP.

19. LEWISHAM PEDESTRIAN SAFETY—Mr Green asked the Minister for Roads and Freight, Minister for the North Coast and Vice-President of the Executive Council representing the Minister for Transport and Minister for the Hunter—

Recently I received correspondence concerning commuter safety on Hudson Street, which is the main thoroughfare connecting Lewisham light rail to Lewisham train station. Given that commuters are sharing this main thoroughfare with moving vehicles and there is no discernible footpath and given that this street is the only feasible thoroughfare connecting Lewisham light rail station to Lewisham train station, what steps will be taken to ensure commuter safety on this light rail thoroughfare?

Answer—

I am advised:

The Lewisham Towers development, between Hudson Street and Old Canterbury Road, incorporates footpaths and lighting along Hudson Street to the Lewisham West light rail stop. This development is currently under construction.
In the meantime, Transport for NSW has modified Hudson Street to ensure safe pedestrian access to the Lewisham West light rail stop. Car traffic is limited to one way eastbound and on-street parking has been removed to provide a temporary pedestrian path which includes lighting.

Once the development is complete, Transport for NSW will review the streetscape and pedestrian access, to ensure full compliance with the project’s Conditions of Approval and relevant standards.

20 HUNTER NEW ENGLAND HEALTH—Ms Sharpe asked the Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for the Illawarra re presenting the Minister for Health, and Minister for Medical Research—

Will the Minister confirm that the Government is taking $20 million from the Hunter New England Health budget to pay for part of the Inner City Bypass?

Answer—

I am advised by the Minister for Health and Minister for Medical Research:

I refer the Honourable Member to the response by the Minister for Health and Minister for Medical Research to a similar question during Question Time in the Legislative Assembly on Thursday 23 October 2014.

21 BLOWERING DAM WATER RELEASE—Mr Veitch asked the Minister for Roads and Freight, Minister for the North Coast and Vice-President of the Executive Council representing the Minister for Natural Resources, Lands and Water and Minister for Western NSW—

Recreational fishers who travelled to Tumut River over the October long weekend were dismayed to find that releases from the Blowering Dam increased dramatically from 2,297 megalitres to 8,866 megalitres in two days, and then dropped to less than one metre by the Tuesday and Wednesday of the same week. Is the Minister aware that the trout fishing season opened that weekend? Does the Minister agree that in future proper planning should be implemented to ensure that other river and property users are aware of, and have input into, water releases?

Answer—

Tumut River fluctuations in the lead up to the October long weekend were the result of urgent maintenance being undertaken on Blowering Dam. As a result, the flow rate of approximately 9000 megalitres a day was briefly reduced.

While Water NSW takes into consideration local factors when making water deliveries, the primary purpose of releases is to supply downstream customers.

To ensure that other river and property users are aware of releases, Water NSW broadcasts changes to river flows on its automated early warning network (EWN), and is currently working with Tumut Shire Council to raise awareness of this service.

22 LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMALGAMATIONS—Mr Brown asked the Minister for Fair Trading representing the Minister for Local Government—

Is the Minister aware that councils in New South Wales that have previously been amalgamated—such as Upper Hunter Shire Council and Gwydir Shire Council—believe that, despite the fact that they have amalgamated previously, they will still fail to meet the Fit for the Future criteria? If previously amalgamated councils are deemed not to meet the Fit for the Future criteria, will the Minister advise the House how further proposed amalgamations will ensure that councils will meet the criteria to be "fit for the future"?

Answer—
All councils in NSW, other than those in the Far West, have until 30 June 2015 to put forward their proposal on how they plan to be Fit for the Future. Their proposals will be assessed by an Expert Panel.

Information on how to prepare a proposal is available on the Fit for the Future website, www.fitforthefuture.nsw.gov.au, including a Self-Assessment Tool to assess performance against the Fit for the Future benchmarks, and guidance on how to complete a Council Merger Proposal or a Council Improvement Proposal.

Support is available to assist councils through the process. This includes access to fully-funded facilitators; subsidised business case studies to look at potential benefits and costs; and access to a panel of technical experts to assist with financial modelling, community engagement and other key components of preparing an improvement proposal.

23 DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT—Mr Shoebridge asked the Minister for Roads and Freight, Minister for the North Coast and Vice-President of the Executive Council representing the Premier, Minister for Infrastructure, and Minister for Western Sydney—

When will the Minister publicly reject the comments by the Treasurer quoted in today's edition of the Daily Telegraph that the Minister, the Minister for Planning and the Premier are "starting air strikes on the Department of Planning"? Will the Minister commit to rejecting the use of this violent language against the State's hardworking public servants?

Answer—

The Government formed the new Department of Planning and Environment in April 2014 with the objective that it would become world class. To this end a new Secretary, Ms Carolyn McNally, was appointed in July 2014. Ms McNally is working with the staff of the Department to implement the Government’s priorities for policy reform and excellent customer service.

24 MULTICULTURALISM—Mr Wong asked the Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for the Illawarra representing Minister for Citizenship and Communities, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Minister for Veterans Affairs and Assistant Minister for Education—

On 21 October the Hon. Charlie Lynn said in a speech to migrants, "If they do not like it—leave!" What is the Government's response to community concerns regarding that speech?

Answer—

Questions regarding the personal opinions of the Hon. Charlie Lynn should be directed to him.

25 LOCAL GOVERNMENT FIT FOR THE FUTURE—Mr Borsak asked the Minister for Fair Trading representing the Minister for Local Government—

I refer the Minister to correspondence from the general manager of Gwydir Shire Council, Mr Eastcott, to the United Services Union dated 30 September 2014. The correspondence was provided to the local government office on 16 October 2014. It details the council's belief and intention that in order to comply with the Fit for the Future policy it will need to reduce core numbers of employees in its rural communities, all of which have populations of fewer than 5,000 people, in contradiction of the intent of section 218CA of the Local Government Act. What steps will the Minister take to ensure that he honours his commitment to the United Services Union and the people of New South Wales not to allow Fit for the Future to be used as an excuse to reduce or outsource jobs in small and vulnerable communities in regional New South Wales, where local government is often the largest employer?

Answer—
There is no specific requirement for councils to reduce staff numbers in rural centres to be Fit for the Future. The Government and communities expect councils to be financially sustainable and expects councils to routinely review their operations to ensure that they deliver the outcomes agreed to with their communities through integrated planning and reporting in a way that represents best value for money for ratepayers.

Any decision by a council to reduce staff numbers should be informed by the development of an effective workforce strategy under the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework.

4 November 2014

26 COASTAL CROWN LAND—Ms Barham asked the Minister for Roads and Freight, Minister for the North Coast and Vice-President of the Executive Council representing the Minister for Natural Resources, Lands and Water and Minister for Western NSW—

Given the Land and Environmental Court's decision regarding the Aboriginal land claim at Red Rock acknowledged that the beach was not claimable land and instead it imposed an easement on the claim granted for adjoining land to ensure public access to the beach in perpetuity, on what basis did the Minister claim, in comments reported in the Sydney Morning Herald on 2 November, that legislation was required to ensure that "our beaches should not be privately owned by anyone"?

Answer—

The Land & Environment Court decision at Red Rock provides for public access along a 30m strip of beach landward of the high water mark. This easement allows for public access only along this 30m strip. Beyond this area the public do not have legal access to the beach and the remaining land will be transferred to the Local Aboriginal Land Council in fee simple. Land granted under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983 cannot be compulsorily acquired, and can be onsold to a third party, who would take hold of responsibility for maintaining easement access.

27 COASTAL CROWN LAND—Mr Buckingham asked the Minister for Roads and Freight, Minister for the North Coast and Vice-President of the Executive Council representing the Minister for Natural Resources, Lands and Water and Minister for Western NSW—

Given the Government's commitment that beaches and associated coastal land will remain owned by and accessible to the public, will the Minister rule out entering any long-term lease arrangements that would commercialise and prevent public access to coastal land?

Answer—

The government remains firmly committed to the policy of successive governments that the State’s beaches belong to every resident of NSW and should not be privatised. Current and future license or lease arrangements for coastal Crown land will continue to be consistent with that policy.

28 SHOALHAVEN HOSPITAL—Mr Green asked the Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for the Illawarra representing the Minister for Health, and Minister for Medical Research—

Given that the current linear accelerator at Shoalhaven Hospital is operating at capacity, does the Government have a time line for the introduction of a second linear accelerator? Also, will the Minister update the House on staffing, treatment and maintenance since the commencement of the first linear accelerator?

Answer—

I am advised:

The Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District continuously monitors and reviews demand for services. There are no current plans to introduce a second linear accelerator.
29 COASTAL CROWN LAND—Dr Kaye asked the Minister for Fair Trading representing the Minister for Finance and Services—

Has the Government conducted, or caused to be conducted, any valuations of coastal Crown land that are currently the subject of unresolved Aboriginal land claims lodged under the legislation in New South Wales?

Answer—

Land and Property Information has not conducted any specifically requested valuations on coastal Crown land for the purposes of Aboriginal land claims lodged under the legislation in New South Wales.

30 SHOALHAVEN HOSPITAL—Mr Secord asked the Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for the Illawarra representing the Minister for Health, and Minister for Medical Research—

In light of the recent death at Shellharbour Hospital, what is the Government's response to the Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District's Asset Strategic Plan, which recommends that an additional 54 beds are required, due to population growth, at its adult acute and high-dependency service?

Answer—

I am advised:

The Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District’s Asset Strategic Plan is an internal working document which is under consideration by the Local Health District.

31 GREENACRE MOSQUE SHOOTING—Revd Mr Nile asked the Minister for Roads and Freight, Minister for the North Coast and Vice-President of the Executive Council representing the Premier, Minister for Infrastructure, and Minister for Western Sydney—

Yesterday did individuals drive past a Shiite Muslim prayer centre in Greenacre several times and call out "ISIS lives forever" and "Shia dogs"? Did they then threaten to come back last night and say "to kill you, shoot you"? Is the Government aware that the perpetrators later drove past and shot in the head Rasoul Al-Musawi at the prayer centre when he was locking it up? How is the Government responding to this continuing sectarian unrest and violent behaviour? What steps is the Government taking to ensure police action and/or legislation to combat unacceptable, provocative intimation?

Answer—

The shooting on 3 November is currently under investigation. There were no other incidents reported on that day.

The NSW Police Force actively engages with local communities to build cohesion and resilience and to prevent extremist views and community unrest. The NSW Government is working closely with the Commonwealth and other jurisdictions on strategies to promote harmony and community building.

32 ENERGY DRINKS—Mr Donnelly asked the Minister for Roads and Freight, Minister for the North Coast and Vice-President of the Executive Council representing the Deputy Premier, Minister for Trade and Investment, Minister for Regional Infrastructure and Services, Minister for Tourism and Major Events, Minister for Hospitality, Gaming and Racing and Minister for the Arts—

In light of moves in the European Union to restrict sales of high-energy drinks containing guarana and caffeine, what is the Government's response to community calls for similar restrictions in New South Wales, especially in alcohol-serving venues?

Answer—
I am advised that the NSW Food Authority, in conjunction with national, state and territory government agencies, continually monitor developments around the world to ensure NSW and national food standards policy settings are appropriate.

33 COASTAL CROWN LAND—Mr Shoebridge asked the Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for the Illawarra representing the Attorney General and Minister for Justice—

What advice has the Government received concerning whether legislation that would extinguish Aboriginal land claims over beaches and coastal lands but preserves other private interests over the same lands is consistent with, or in breach of, the Commonwealth Racial Discrimination Act 1975?

Answer—

I am advised:

This question should be referred to the Hon Kevin Humphries MP, Minister for Natural Resources, Lands and Waters, and Minister for Western NSW.

34 DUCK MEAT—Mr Wong asked the Minister for Roads and Freight, Minister for the North Coast and Vice-President of the Executive Council representing the Minister for Primary Industries—

What is the Government's response to community concerns about a recent English and Chinese language advertising campaign opposing duck meat in New South Wales, particularly targeting Chinese restaurants? Has the Government sought any advice from the NSW Food Authority about these claims?

Answer—

Advertising campaigns do not fall within the portfolio of Primary Industries.

35 MARINE PARKS—Mr Brown asked the Minister for Roads and Freight, Minister for the North Coast and Vice-President of the Executive Council representing the Minister for Primary Industries—

Will the Government categorically rule out calls by the Nature Conservation Council to have the dual ministerial responsibility for marine parks transferred solely to the Minister for the Environment? Will the Minister confirm that the Government wants to restore balance to marine park management through an approach based on better science? Will the Minister advise the House when the expert panel's findings on the revocation of beaches from sanctuary zones is to be released?

Answer—

(1) Dual ministerial responsibility for marine parks is enshrined in the Marine Estate Management Act 2014 recently introduced by the NSW Government and passed by the NSW Parliament without amendment.

(2) The NSW Government has clearly stated it will pursue an evidence-based approach to managing the marine estate, including marine parks, and has established the independent Marine Estate Expert Knowledge Panel to underpin this approach.

(3) The NSW Government is currently considering advice from the Marine Estate Management Authority regarding the assessment of recreational line fishing in ocean and beach headland sanctuary zones and will release a response in due course.

5 November 2014

36 MURRAY-DARLING BASIN AUTHORITY—Mr Borsak asked the Minister for Roads and Freight, Minister for the North Coast and Vice-President of the Executive Council representing the Minister for Natural Resources, Lands and Water and Minister for Western NSW—
Is the Minister aware of criticism of the Murray-Darling Basin Authority by irrigators between Wentworth and Pooncarie, where the Darling has been on restricted flows from the Menindee Lakes system for several months? Are their claims that the Lower Darling is being overlooked by basin authorities valid? Will the Minister approach the authority to ensure these claims of mismanagement of water will not impact on future permanent plantings?

Answer—

The NSW Government is acutely aware of the water shortages being experienced as a result of record low inflows into the Menindee Lakes. As part of a suite of measures to extend available water supplies for critical human needs, releases to the Lower Darling have been at or below seasonal minimums in recent months. Nonetheless, Lower Darling water users have received full allocations during this time.

With the management of the Menindee Lakes system under NSW control since February 2014, the Government is committed to ensuring that water supplies are managed in the best interests of all water users.

COAL SEAM GAS—Mr Buckingham asked the Minister for Roads and Freight, Minister for the North Coast and Vice-President of the Executive Council representing the Deputy Premier, Minister for Trade and Investment, Minister for Regional Infrastructure and Services, Minister for Tourism and Major Events, Minister for Hospitality, Gaming and Racing and Minister for the Arts—

Policy TI-O-120, the policy that bans benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene, and xylenes [BTEX] chemicals for use in fracking, states:

All CSG drilling additives and CSG fracture stimulation additives must be tested by a NATA-certified laboratory and demonstrated to meet Australian drinking water health guideline values.

Can the Minister assure the House that AGL has complied with its licence and the Government's policy that requires testing of all coal seam gas additives by a National Association of Testing Authorities certified laboratory before fracking occurred in Gloucester?

Answer—

Yes.

NORTHERN NSW LOCAL HEALTH DISTRICT—Mr Secord asked the Minister for Roads and Freight, Minister for the North Coast and Vice-President of the Executive Council—

In light of the community outcry this morning over the Northern NSW Local Health District chief executive officer's criticism in the October newsletter of staff taking too many sick days because they were "engaging in unhealthy lifestyles, (e.g. smoking, excess drinking, overweightness, and being unfit)", does the Government support this statement? Does the chief executive officer retain the Government's full support?

Answer—

The chief executive officer of the Northern NSW Local Health District has the Government’s full support.

BROTHELS—Revd Mr Nile asked the Minister for Roads and Freight, Minister for the North Coast and Vice-President of the Executive Council representing the Premier, Minister for Infrastructure, and Minister for Western Sydney—

Is the Government aware that Liverpool City Council is considering buying brothel business leases and/or properties in an attempt to close brothels in the city centre of Liverpool? Is the Government also aware that under existing laws councils must apply to the Land and Environment Court if they want to
shut down a brothel, which involves lengthy delays and expensive legal costs? What will the Government do to give councils absolute power to close brothels and to reject brothel applications?

Answer—

The Government is aware of media reports about the Liverpool City Council and approved sex services premises. The Government is also aware of the existing legislative arrangements under which councils can apply to the Land and Environment Court for a brothel closure order. The Government has asked the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC) to further investigate options to supplement current legislative arrangements.

40 CENTRAL COAST REGIONAL ACTION PLAN—Mr Donnelly asked the Minister for Fair Trading representing the Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, Minister for the Central Coast, and Assistant Minister for Planning—

The State Government's glossy brochure entitled "Central Coast Regional Action Plan" states on page 16 under the heading Regional Action Plan, "The Government will secure 10 new events for the Central Coast by mid-2013." What were those 10 new events secured by the Government to the Central Coast? I will provide a copy of the glossy brochure.

Answer—

I am advised as follows:

Since 2013, the Central Coast has played host to a number of wonderful events. The list below provides a snapshot of the range of interests that have been celebrated.

- The 2013 NSW Surf Lifesaving Championships were held at Umina and Ocean Beaches. Nearly 8,000 competitors from over 100 clubs took part over the two week event. Families and friends of competitors, including my own, also converged on the usually idyllic beach to support their loved ones. The rough conditions early in the carnival proved challenging for the Nippers and administrators alike, with the first day of the Championships cancelled and some events on subsequent days being moved to Terrigal Beach. The skill and efficiency of the Umina and Ocean Beach Surf Life Saving Clubs in managing these changes was reflected in the decision of the NSW State Committee in deciding to award the Championships to Umina and Ocean Beaches again in 2014.

  Following the Nippers, the Masters and Open competitors took to the surf. All those who took part are to be commended, however it would be remiss of me to not make special mention of my wife, Sophie Stokes. Sophie, together with her teammate Kristyn Monnock, won the Board Rescue in their age group on behalf of the Mona Vale Surf Lifesaving Club.

- The 54th Australian Square Dance Convention was held at the Central Coast Youth Club. Delegates were welcomed from not only around Australia, but also New Zealand, Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany, and the USA.

- Following the success of the inaugural Central Coast 4WD Caravan Camping & Boat Show in 2012, the event was held again in 2013 and 2014 at the Mingara Recreation Club in Tumbi Umbi.

- The Eastern Region Roller Derby rolled onto the Central Coast in 2013 with the Smackdown bouts taking place in Niagara Park. The Vice City Rollers from the Canberra Roller Derby League took out Division A, with the Assassins from the Sydney Roller Derby League coming in a close second. In Division B, the Western Sydney Rollers’ representatives, The Boutlaws, were the champions, whilst the Capital Brawlers from Canberra were the runners-up.

  Smackdown was again hosted in Niagara Park this year. 36 bouts took place on 2 tracks across 5 divisions. This didn’t change the outcome however; the Vice City Rollers were the champions
once more, just ahead of the Assassins. No doubt the Assassins will be aiming to shoot down their rivals in 2015.

- The 60th annual NSW Australian Local Government Women’s Conference took place in Ettalong, with the theme for the conference being Strong Actions New Directions.

- The inaugural Central Coast Fashion Week was held in 2013, with a series of fashion events highlighting the talents of local designers and businesses. The final event, the What The Frock? Gala Dinner, saw the work of over 20 local designers being showcased on a runway at the Mingara Recreation Club.

- The touring exhibition of the finalists for the Archibald Prize 2014 is currently being held at the Gosford Regional Gallery. Entry is free, with the Central Coast community able to view paintings such as:
  - Fiona Lowry’s Penelope Seidler, the winner of the Archibald Prize;
  - Vincent Fantauzzo’s All that's good in me (self-portrait as son Luca), the winner of the People’s Choice award;
  - Tim Storrier’s The Member, Dr Sir Leslie Colin Patterson KCB AO, the winner of the Packing Room Prize; and
  - Salvatore Zofrea’s Ms Gladys Berejiklian MP, a personal favourite.

- The Kariong Mountains High School was the site for the first Plant Lovers Fair in 2013, organised by Central Coast Garden Shows. Many local garden clubs were involved in the Fair, which returned to Kariong with over 30 specialist nurseries in 2014.

- The 2013 Regional Zone 5 Showgirl Finals were hosted by the Gosford Show Society. The winners of the Zone 5 final were Ms Ashleigh Skinner (representing the Mendooran Showgirls) and Ms Gemma Oakes (representing the Rylstone Kandos Showgirls).

- The University of Newcastle Central Coast Campus was overtaken by runners for the 2013 NSW Road Relay Championships. Teams of four pounded the pavement over 2 km and 4 km, with age groupings from under 12’s right through to over 65’s.

- The 21st National Friendship Carnival of Bowls was held on the Central Coast, hosted by the Ettalong Memorial, Avoca Beach, Davistown RSL and Terrigal Bowling Clubs. Over 50 teams took part, and despite the amiable nomenclature of the event, I am told that the matches were particularly competitive.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMALGAMATIONS—Ms Cotsis asked the Minister for Fair Trading representing the Minister for Local Government—

Given the Minister for Local Government said in a 31 October 2014 media release that proposals by councils to voluntarily amalgamate will be assessed by independent experts, who are those independent experts and how were they selected?

Answer—

The Panel has yet to be announced.

NEWCASTLE LIGHT RAIL—Mr Foley asked the Minister for Roads and Freight, Minister for the North Coast and Vice-President of the Executive Council representing the Minister for Transport and Minister for the Hunter—

Will he confirm that Transport for NSW planned to run light rail down the existing corridor in Newcastle but changed that decision as a result of a request from former Newcastle Lord Mayor Jeff McCloy?
Answer—

I am advised:

No. The light rail route was selected following feasibility assessment and extensive consultation with residents, customers, community groups and other Hunter stakeholders.

43 MARTINS CREEK PUBLIC SCHOOL—Dr Kaye asked the Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for the Illawarra representing the Minister for Education—

Why did the department subject the parents of Martins Creek Public School to a lengthy and painful process of consultation when the department's bureaucrats were saying to themselves that this was a done deal? On 6 February Mr Andrew Eastcott, Director of Public Schools NSW for Maitland, said, "Unless a great storm strikes the school will close" and on 3 June he sought an estimate of the sale value of Martins Creek Public School.

Answer—

The decision to keep Martins Creek Public School open in 2015 and close the school at the end of the 2015 school year was based on ensuring the most effective educational provisions for students.

The extensions to the period of consultation have, at all times, been at the request of the parents of Martins Creek Public School.

The statement attributed to the local Director, Public Schools NSW, was a personal opinion about a possible outcome and was not the view of the Department of Education and Communities.

Following a submission to the consultative group, which suggested that the school be donated to an organisation in the disability sector, the Director, Public Schools sought an estimate of the sale value of Martins Creek Public School to assist him in his discussions with the consultative group.

44 COASTAL CROWN LAND—Ms Barham asked the Minister for Roads and Freight, Minister for the North Coast and Vice-President of the Executive Council representing the Minister for Natural Resources, Lands and Water and Minister for Western NSW—

Did the Government consult with the NSW Coastal Panel, the statutory authority whose role it is to provide expert advice on coastal issues, before introducing legislation that would have created definitions of core beach land and Crown beach and coastal land that are inconsistent with the existing definitions and concepts regarding beaches and coastal lands?

Answer—

Yes.

45 NSW HEALTH PATHOLOGY FOOD TESTING SERVICES—Mr Secord asked the Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for the Illawarra representing the Minister for Health, and Minister for Medical Research—

Given that on 17 October NSW Health Pathology food testing laboratories were privatised and the work is now conducted by a Melbourne commercial company, what steps is the Government taking to ensure public safety in the event of a food poisoning outbreak in New South Wales, as micro-samples need to be tested within 24 hours of their collection?

Answer—

I am advised by the Minister for Health and Minister for Medical Research that:

The NSW Food Authority falls within the portfolio of the Minister for Primary Industries. This Question should be redirected accordingly.
FIREARMS REGISTRY—Mr Borsak asked the Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for the Illawarra representing the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for Sport and Recreation and Minister Assisting the Premier on Western Sydney—

Is the Minister aware of the Auditor-General's 2014 report released in March this year which reveals a sharp increase in information security issues? Was the New South Wales Firearms Registry one of the 84 government agencies audited in 2012 and 2013? Was the registry afflicted by any of the 36 per cent of issues reported in 2012 that were repeated in 2013? If so, why has the Government allowed the registry to continue to operate with flaws in its information security systems and to risk the personal safety of all firearms owners and citizens of New South Wales?

Answer—

The NSW Police Force has advised me that the Firearms Registry was not audited by the Audit Office of New South Wales in 2012-13.

The Government is investing $5 million to overhaul the IT systems of the NSW Firearms Registry. The external consulting firm Deloitte was appointed to examine the efficiency and effectiveness of the Registry’s operations, and its systems and safeguards for securing the sensitive information the Registry holds. The NSW Police Force is currently working towards implementing the recommendations made by Deloitte.

FIREARMS REGISTRY—Mr Brown asked the Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for the Illawarra representing the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for Sport and Recreation and Minister Assisting the Premier on Western Sydney—

It follows on from a question asked by my colleague the Hon. Robert Borsak. Was the New South Wales Firearms Registry the subject of any management letters issued by the Audit Office of New South Wales in 2012 or 2013? If so, has the Government held the relevant individuals named in those letters to account for any failures in fulfilling their responsibility to implement the appropriate security measures on the Firearms Registry database?

Answer—

The NSW Police Force has advised me that the Firearms Registry was not the subject of any management letters issued by the Audit Office of New South Wales in 2012-13.

WARNERVALE HIGH SCHOOL PROPOSAL—Mr Donnelly asked the Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for the Illawarra representing the Minister for Education—

With the number of new houses being built in the Warnervale area of the Central Coast, when will the Government commence consulting with the local community regarding the planning for a new high school to respond to the growing population?

Answer—

The Department of Education and Communities is continuing to monitor the development and demographic trends within the Warnervale area. Consultation with both the Department of Planning and Wyong Shire Council is ongoing.

SHOALHAVEN POLICING—Mr Green asked the Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for the Illawarra representing the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for Sport and Recreation and Minister Assisting the Premier on Western Sydney—

I note comments made last night by the new astute Parliamentary Secretary for Police and Emergency Services, who assured the Hon. Mick Veitch and me that the Government "will continue to invest in our regions, with record numbers of front-line jobs, including police and nurses, and the investment in infrastructure, including roads and hospitals. This Government has budgeted for more than $13 billion in infrastructure spending for our regions." Given the Parliamentary Secretary's commitment to police and
infrastructure, will the Minister commit to the building of a police station in the Bay and Basin region of the Shoalhaven before the March 2015 election?

Answer—

The NSW Police Force has advised me:

Officers are assigned to duties across the Shoalhaven Local Area Command, including the Bay and Basin area, based on intelligence and crime trends. Police regularly patrol the central business district, shopping centres and major roads and will continue to provide an appropriate policing service to the area.

50 SAVING OUR SPECIES CONSERVATION PROGRAM—Dr Faruqi asked the Minister for Fair Trading representing the Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, Minister for the Central Coast, and Assistant Minister for Planning—

Almost one year ago the Government announced the Saving Our Species program, but according to the Office of Environment and Heritage website, the program is still in the expressions of interest stage. When will this program be implemented?

Answer—

I am advised as follows:

The Saving our Species Program is currently being implemented. Expressions of interest closed earlier this year.

51 LOCAL INFRASTRUCTURE RENEWAL SCHEME—Ms Cotsis asked the Minister for Fair Trading representing the Minister for Local Government—

During budget estimates last year the former Minister for Local Government committed to publish progress updates for projects funded by the Local Infrastructure Renewal Scheme twice a year on the Office of Local Government's website. Has the Government kept this commitment?

Answer—

Progress updates for completed LIRS projects are available at http://www.olg.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/_LIRS_Approved_Projects_Table_and_Reports_.pdf

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52 BUSHFIRES—Mr Searle asked the Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for the Illawarra representing the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for Sport and Recreation and Minister Assisting the Premier on Western Sydney—

What is the Government's response to the NSW Rural Fire Service's concerns about drones interfering in the operation or the use of water-bombing helicopters during bushfires?

Answer—

The NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) strongly opposes the use of unauthorised drones on any of its firegrounds.

The Civil Aviation and Safety Authority has issued warnings regarding the unauthorised use of drones, as well as advisory circulars to provide guidance for drone operators.

The NSW RFS currently uses a number of specially equipped bush fire intelligence gathering aircraft. Additionally, the Service has participated in trials to determine the benefits and risks of operating drones...
on firegrounds, and further trials are continuing in order to fully explore the potential advantages of this technology.

The NSW RFS is working with other agencies to establish a framework for the safe use of drones in limited visibility environments, such as firegrounds, where a wide range of aerial assets operate.

53 CARRINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOL REMEMBRANCE DAY SERVICE—Revd Mr Nile asked the Minister for Roads and Freight, Minister for the North Coast and Vice-President of the Executive Council representing the Premier, Minister for Infrastructure, and Minister for Western Sydney—

Is it a fact that Carrington Public School at Newcastle has withdrawn from the traditional RSL Remembrance Day service at the suburb’s cenotaph? How did the school establish that all parents do not support the Lord’s Prayer or hymns being included in the school remembrance service since previous surveys have shown that more than 80 per cent of Australians believe in God? How will the Government encourage public schools to continue to support and/or take part in Remembrance Day services that include the Lord’s Prayer and suitable hymns? Lest we forget.

Answer—

Public schools in New South Wales observe Remembrance Day and each school does this in a way that best suits its school community.

This year, Carrington Public School’s service was held at the school and was attended by all staff and students. Student leaders lead the service and community members were encouraged to participate.

The Government supports public schools acknowledging and commemorating the service and sacrifice of Australia’s armed forces each Remembrance Day.

54 CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE COMPENSATION CLAIMS—Mr Shoebridge asked the Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for the Illawarra representing the Attorney General and Minister for Justice—

Will the Government commit to standing together with victims and survivors of historical child sexual abuse and join with The Greens and every other political party that is committed to delivering justice to remove the statute of limitations provisions that operate as a grossly unfair barrier to civil compensation claims made by victims and survivors of historical child sexual abuse?

Answer—

Preventing child sexual abuse and protecting children and other vulnerable people is a key priority for the NSW Government.

In recognition of the enormous stress and trauma victims often experience during civil compensation claims for child abuse, the NSW Government has introduced a range of interim measures to assist victims. These include the implementation of 18 Guiding Principles to guide agencies in responding to civil claims for child sexual abuse. The 18 Guiding Principles are publicly available.

The Guiding Principles have been formulated to minimise any further trauma to victims caused by the experience of civil litigation, and ensure that the NSW Government takes a compassionate and consistent approach in these types of claims.

In particular, principle 10 states that State agencies should not generally rely on a statutory limitation period defence. However, agencies can rely on a limitation defence in matters involving multiple defendants, but only where there is a risk that the State could bear a disproportionate share of the whole liability owed to the plaintiff.

The NSW Government will continue to work closely with the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse on longer term strategies to respond to victims of institutional child sexual abuse.
55 BROKEN HILL WATER SUPPLY—Mr Buckingham asked the Minister for Roads and Freight, Minister for the North Coast and Vice-President of the Executive Council representing the Minister for Natural Resources, Lands and Water and Minister for Western NSW—

What assurance can the Government give that the proposed emergency water bores being drilled at Menindee Lakes to supply water for Broken Hill will not lead to pressure from upstream and downstream irrigators being allocated more water out of the Darling River and Menindee Lakes? Does the Government still agree that the key purpose of the Menindee Lakes system is to provide an assured water supply for Broken Hill?

Answer—

The sharing and use of water in NSW is managed through statutory water sharing plans that set sustainable limits on diversion of water from rivers. Additionally, NSW must comply with sustainable diversion limits prescribed under the Commonwealth’s Basin Plan.

The NSW Government has remained consistent that if bores are engaged they will be used for emergency town water supply only. There is no intention for this to remain a permanent measure, and Broken Hill will continue to draw its supply from surface water. Given the current critical water issues in Broken Hill, it is imperative that we take this action as to do otherwise would be irresponsible. While we are all hoping for significant rain, we must do all we can to ensure that Broken Hill has available water should these dry conditions continue.

56 SOUTHERN RIVERINA RED GUM FOREST MANAGEMENT—Mr Brown asked the Minister for Fair Trading representing the Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, Minister for the Central Coast, and Assistant Minister for Planning—

Is the Minister aware of warnings by the Deniliquin mayor of a devastating fire scenario if a proposed ecological thinning trial in the red gum forests along the Murray River does not go ahead because the Victorian Government has withdrawn from the joint project in the Barmah and Murray Valley national parks? What is the outcome of the Office of Environment and Heritage's assessment of the implications of the Victorian decision? When will the thinning operation get under way?

Answer—

I am advised as follows:

The overriding objective for fire control on the national parks estate is to safeguard human life and property. NSW remains committed to active management of the river red gum parks of the Riverina.

57 CALVARY HOSPITAL WAGGA WAGGA—Mr Secord asked the Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for the Illawarra representing the Minister for Health, and Minister for Medical Research—

What is the Government's response to a decision by Calvary Hospital and the Calvary Day Procedure Centre in Wagga Wagga to terminate their agreement with 25 smaller private health insurers, effective 21 November, which means that day surgery at the city's only private hospital could cease in 10 days?

Answer—

I am advised by the Minister for Health and Minister for Medical Research:

As this matter relates to business decisions between a private health facility and private health insurers, it is not for the NSW Government to respond.

58 WORLD PARKS CONGRESS—Mr Brown asked the Minister for Fair Trading representing the Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, Minister for the Central Coast, and Assistant Minister for Planning—
I refer to the World Parks Congress, which begins in Sydney tomorrow. What major announcements will
the Minister be making to the congress about the Government's plan to allow commercial activity in our
national parks? What types of projects will the Government be offering priority? Which of our national
parks will get the first of these high-end facilities?

Answer—

I am advised as follows:

No announcements regarding commercial activity in national parks were made at the World Parks
Congress.

59 RICHMOND RIVER, CASINO, BLUE GREEN ALGAE DETECTION—Mr Veitch asked the Minister
for Roads and Freight, Minister for the North Coast and Vice-President of the Executive Council
representing the Minister for Natural Resources, Lands and Water and Minister for Western NSW—

What is the Government doing about the recent outbreak of blue-green algae in the Richmond River at
Casino? Is the Government concerned about the recent increase in the number of outbreaks of algae in
the North Coast Regional Algal Coordinating Committee area?

Answer—

The NSW Government takes all necessary action to manage the occurrence of blue-green algal blooms
across NSW. The current bloom in the Richmond River at Casino is due to the early onset of hot
weather and low rainfall in the region, producing low flows in the rivers. These conditions have allowed
blue-green algal blooms to thrive without being flushed downstream.

The Northern Rivers Catchment Action Plan employs direct strategies to address water quality and
nutrient management in partnership with landholders, including assistance with managing erosion and
riverbank vegetation, and programs to reduce nutrient run-off into waterways.

In the event of an outbreak, and in line with the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines, potable water
supplies are treated to remove the algae and their toxins. The public are warned not to use waterways for
recreation or for stock and domestic use through media releases issued by the North Coast Regional
Algal Coordinating Committee and local Councils. Signs are also erected at points of public access by
Councillors and other agencies responsible for the management of these waterways.

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60 MENINDEE LAKES WATER BORES—Ms Barham asked the Minister for Roads and Freight, Minister
for the North Coast and Vice-President of the Executive Council representing the Minister for Natural
Resources, Lands and Water and Minister for Western NSW—

Was appropriate consultation conducted with the local Aboriginal community prior to bringing a drill rig
from Dubbo to Menindee Lakes to drill emergency water bores? Why was the drilling stopped? Can the
Minister assure the community of far western New South Wales that any drilling will not adversely
impact on the numerous Aboriginal artefacts and sites of cultural significance in the area?

Answer—

Appropriate consultation was conducted with the local Aboriginal community prior to mobilising the
drilling rig to the Menindee site.

As part of the due diligence undertaken by the Office of Water a cultural heritage inspection, with
independent cultural heritage inspectors present, was undertaken and during this inspection artefacts were
identified. The Office of Water ceased all work until more comprehensive archaeological surveys and
consultation could be undertaken on the initial proposed drill sites.
An additional drill site was subsequently identified in consultation with independent cultural heritage inspectors. An information session was held with Aboriginal elders and members of the Menindee Local Aboriginal Land Council (MLALC) before a fence was installed around the proposed drilling site and a 70 cm pilot hole was dug at the proposed drill hole location. The fence and pilot hole clearances were conducted in the presence of Aboriginal Elders and monitors, including a monitor from the MLALC. In both instances no Aboriginal artefacts were identified. Drilling commenced on the actual bore on Saturday 29 November 2014.

61 NORTHCONNEX—Dr Faruqi asked the Minister for Roads and Freight, Minister for the North Coast and Vice-President of the Executive Council—

Does the Government plan to build any new roads in order to transport spoil from the drilling of the NorthConnex tunnel and, if so, where will they be constructed?

Answer—

I am advised:

A spoil disposal strategy will be developed before construction starts, to detail the management of spoil. Where possible, spoil would be beneficially reused.

In all cases, spoil disposal sites would be operated in accordance with an approval under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 and other applicable environmental legislation.

62 BUSHFIRE EMERGENCY PAYMENTS—Mr Veitch asked asked the Minister for Fair Trading representing the Minister for Finance and Services—

Have all claims by local government for payments under section 44 bushfire emergencies relating to the 2013-14 bushfire season been paid? Are any councils still awaiting payments and, if so, why?

Answer—

These questions should be directed to the Hon Stuart Ayres MP in his capacity as the Minister for Police and Emergency Services.

63 REDFERN AND WATERLOO PUBLIC HOUSING—Revd Mr Nile asked the Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for the Illawarra representing the Minister for Family and Community Services—

Recent media reports stated that police wanted public housing applicants with drug convictions to be refused housing in Redfern and Waterloo in a bid to stop the cycle of drug abuse. A spokesman for the Minister reportedly stated that the Government will consider banning drug dealers from all public housing in Redfern and the rest of New South Wales. In light of those statements, will the Government commit to a timeline to ensure that drug dealers are not given taxpayer-funded safe havens by barring repeated offenders from public housing, and will the Government implement a "three strikes you are out" system such as the one in Queensland?

Answer—

I am advised by the Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) that FACS works closely with the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal to address the issue of antisocial behaviour in public housing.

64 ELECTRONIC CIGARETTES—Mr Secord asked the Minister for Fair Trading—

Given that the Australian Capital Territory Government yesterday announced it was restricting electronic cigarettes, has the Minister's department provided advice on similar restrictions in New South Wales?

Answer—
This question should be directed to the Minister for Health.

65 DAM WATER RELEASES—Mr Borsak asked the Minister for Roads and Freight, Minister for the North Coast and Vice-President of the Executive Council representing the Minister for Natural Resources, Lands and Water and Minister for Western NSW—

Is the Minister aware of the calls by Riverina councils, such as Tumut and Balranald, for better State government coordination of water releases from local dams, because it seems the left hand does not know what the right hand is doing? What is the Government doing to help these and any other affected councils deal with fluctuating river heights caused by these apparently uncoordinated water releases?

Answer—

Water NSW manages the state’s major dams to provide licensed supply to downstream users including town water supply, irrigation, industry and the environment.

Fluctuating river levels reflect demand, particularly during the main growing season from Spring to Autumn when increased flow rates are required to service peak irrigation demand.

13 November 2014

66 WARNERVALE TRAIN STABLING YARDS—Mr Searle asked the Minister for Roads and Freight, Minister for the North Coast and Vice-President of the Executive Council representing the Minister for Transport and Minister for the Hunter—

Given the Government's plan to build railway stabling yards at Warnervale is creating a great deal of concern and anxiety in the community, when will the Government provide proper information to the Central Coast community about its plans to build railway stabling yards?

Answer—

I am advised:

Transport for NSW is currently investigating a number of sites suitable for the construction of a maintenance depot with stabling facilities to support the new Intercity Fleet.

67 COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SYDNEY EXPENDITURE—Mr Brown asked the Minister for Fair Trading representing the Minister for Local Government—

Is the Minister aware of reports that Sydney Lord Mayor Clover Moore is using council staff, resources and funds to host a tribute function with Greens Senator Ms Lee Rhiannon for former union leader Jack Mundey, who 30 years ago served a single term on Sydney council? Will the Minister investigate whether the use of funds and resources in this way contravenes internal council policies banning spending on political activities? Furthermore, will he also investigate if the function is a backdoor fundraising activity for the member for Sydney for next year's State election?

Answer—

The Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in NSW specifies that a councillor must not use council resources, property or facilities for the purpose of assisting their election campaign or the election campaign of others unless the resources, property or facilities are otherwise available for use or hire by the public and any publicly advertised fee is paid for use of the resources, property or facility. Any concerns that council resources are being misused to raise funds for the forthcoming State election should be raised directly with the Council.

68 GARDENS OF STONE NATIONAL PARK—Dr Faruqi asked the Minister for Fair Trading representing the Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, Minister for the Central Coast, and Assistant Minister for Planning—
Given that the NSW Planning Assessment Commission review of the Coalpac Consolidation Project in October this year recommended, in regard to the Ben Bullen State Forest, that "the pagoda landform should be afforded special significance status and the highest possible level of protection" when will the Government protect this area by declaring stage two of the Gardens of Stone National Park?

Answer—

I am advised as follows:

The Government is aware of the decision of the Planning Assessment Commission. Government agencies are working towards a suitable conservation outcome.

69 GOULBURN BASE HOSPITAL—Mr Secord asked the Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for the Illawarra representing the Minister for Health, and Minister for Medical Research—

Will the Government rule out a northern beaches style private hospital as part of the proposed Goulburn Base Hospital redevelopment?

Answer—

I am advised by the Minister for Health and Minister for Medical Research:

In January 2014, the NSW Government committed $600,000 to progress planning for the next stage of the Goulburn Base Hospital Redevelopment.

Further detailed planning will be undertaken to canvas different health service models, capital and operational requirements.

70 COAL-FIRED POWER STATIONS HEALTH IMPACTS—Dr Kaye asked the Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for the Illawarra representing the Minister for Health, and Minister for Medical Research—

Given the increasing body of evidence relating to the health impacts of coal-fired power stations, including those that come from emissions containing heavy metals, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons and micro-fine particles, what steps is the Baird Government taking to protect the health of communities that live near coal-fired power stations in New South Wales?

Answer—

I am advised by the Minister for Health and Minister for Medical Research:

The NSW Environment Protection Authority is the leading NSW government agency with responsibility for pollution reduction strategies. As the NSW Environment Protection Authority falls within the portfolio of the Minister for the Environment the question should be referred to that Minister accordingly.

71 WOLLOMBI PUBLIC SCHOOL—Revd Mr Nile asked the Minister for Roads and Freight, Minister for the North Coast and Vice-President of the Executive Council representing the Premier, Minister for Infrastructure, and Minister for Western Sydney—

Is it a fact that the rural community of Wollombi in the Hunter Valley has campaigned vigorously to keep its 162-year-old school open but the education department wishes to close the site? Is it a fact that small rural public schools commonly experience fluctuations with temporary low enrolments due to community demographics and the parents fear school closure? Is it the fact that the Minister for Education has closed five small schools in 2014? Will the Minister for Education keep the Wollombi school open during 2015 for a further review? When will the Premier start fighting for our rural communities? What plans does the Government have for this school site, for example as a coalmine?

Answer—
In 2013, Wollombi Public School had four students and a teaching staff of 1.3 FTE. Following a comprehensive consultation process with the local community, a decision was taken to provide more effective educational services for the students of Wollombi Public School, including:

- a broader curriculum;
- a broader mix of students for social development;
- greater opportunities to participate in creative, sport and cultural programs; and
- greater provision for students with special needs.

To provide more effective educational services for the current students of Wollombi Public School, the Department of Education and Communities has recommended that the school be closed at the end of the 2014 school year. Laguna Public School, which is eight kilometres from Wollombi, has the capacity to accommodate and cater for the needs of all current students at Wollombi Public School. The NSW Government has allocated up to $80 million over four years to take the steps necessary to reduce the gap in educational achievement between rural and urban schools through its Rural and Remote Education blueprint.

In 2014, rural and remote schools have been supported to develop educational strategies to meet their communities’ needs. In 2015, the Department of Education and Communities, under this strategy, will launch a virtual secondary school to support student curriculum learning options in remote areas.

18 November 2014

72 MR BOB HAWES, HUNTER DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION—Mr Shoebridge asked the Minister for Fair Trading representing the Minister for Planning and Minister Woman—

When will the Government be demanding the resignation of Mr Bob Hawes, the General Manager of the Hunter Development Corporation, given that he has a clear conflict of interest as half owner of a $60 million development site right next to Wickham Station—exactly where Mr Hawes' Hunter Development Corporation has been proposing that the railway line be cut and replaced with a multi-million dollar transport interchange?

Answer—

I am advised:

The decision about the urban renewal of Newcastle was made by the NSW Government, not the Hunter Development Corporation.

73 NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT ON HOMELESSNESS—Ms Barham asked the Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for the Illawarra representing the Minister for Family and Community Services—

Given that 4½ months of the 2014-15 financial year have already passed and noting that during budget estimates hearings in August the Secretary of Family and Community Services indicated that the identification of programs to be funded under the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness has to be soon, when will the allocation of the $30 million of funding from the Commonwealth's one-year extension to the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness be finalised and announced?

Answer—

The NSW Government is in discussions with the Commonwealth on the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness to ensure the best outcomes for NSW and to provide the best support for vulnerable people in this State.

74 ILLAWARRA COAL SEAM GAS—Ms Sharpe asked the Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for the Illawarra—
What is the Minister's response to community concerns in the Illawarra about the Government's failure to honour its election promise to ban coal seam gas in the water catchment?

Answer—

The ban on coal seam gas exploration and extraction in the Sydney Water Catchment Special Areas remains in place. No coal seam gas drilling activity is taking place in the Special Areas, no activities have been approved and there are no current applications for approval of activities.

The Government will adopt all the recommendations made by the NSW Chief Scientist and Engineer in her Final Report of the Independent Review of Coal Seam Gas Activities in NSW, released on 30 September 2014.

As recommended by the NSW Chief Scientist and Engineer, we will reform the regulatory framework so that evidence-based, best-practice standards are in place and regulators have the tools, resources and capabilities needed to hold the industry to account.

HAWKESBURY-NEPEAN MARINE PARK PROTECTION—Mr Brown asked the Minister for Fair Trading representing the Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, Minister for the Central Coast, and Assistant Minister for Planning—

What discussions or meetings has the Minister or his department had with the Sydney Institute of Marine Science about its director's call for the Hawkesbury-Nepean bioregion, stretching from the Hunter to Wollongong, and including Sydney Harbour, being afforded marine park protection. Will the Minister unequivocally rule out making any such declaration before the March election?

Answer—

I am advised as follows:

Part of the Government’s response to the 2012 Independent Audit of Marine Parks in NSW was a commitment to explore mechanisms to enhance conservation of marine biodiversity in the key gaps identified by the Audit: the Newcastle-Sydney-Wollongong (Hawkesbury Shelf) and Far South Coast (Twofold Shelf) marine bioregions.

Any decisions about enhancing conservation of marine biodiversity in NSW will be considered as a part of the Marine Estate Management Authority’s threat and risk approach to the management of the marine estate.

The Authority founded the Sydney Harbour Strategic Initiatives Network in March 2014. The Sydney Institute of Marine Science is a member of this network. More information on the network and key projects is available on the Marine Estate Management Authority’s webpage (www.marine.nsw.gov.au).

HOSPITAL CAR PARK CONTRACTS—Mr Secord asked the Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for the Illawarra representing the Minister for Health, and Minister for Medical Research—

Will the Minister guarantee that all probity protocols and guidelines, including the New South Wales Department of Finance and Services business ethics statement, have been followed by New South Wales Health Infrastructure in its handling of the five-year leases of Sutherland, Liverpool, Wollongong, Coffs Harbour and Lismore hospitals car park contracts issued earlier this year?

Answer—

I am advised by the Minister for Health and Minister for Medical Research:

There are no leases involved in contracts relating to the operation and management of the listed car-parks.
WILCANNIA WATER SUPPLY—Mr Buckingham asked the Minister for Roads and Freight, Minister for the North Coast and Vice-President of the Executive Council representing the Minister for Natural Resources, Lands and Water and Minister for Western NSW—

Is the Government aware that the people of Wilcannia are on water restrictions and are now sourcing their drinking water from untreated bores? Will the Government commit to building a new weir in 2015 downstream of the town of Wilcannia to create a weir pool for the people of Wilcannia and assure their drinking water supplies?

Answer—

The NSW Government has already begun the process of planning a new weir in Wilcannia, as announced by the Minister for Natural Resources, Lands and Water on October 30. The NSW Government has committed $189,000 in funding to the Central Darling Shire Council to undertake investigations into a proposed upgrade of the Wilcannia weir and associated works.

This project will examine works that will not only improve water security for the town, but also increase social and recreational outcomes. It will enable Council to get on with the job of identifying the best options and move this long overdue project forward.

WESTERN NEW SOUTH WALES DRUG REHABILITATION FACILITIES—Ms Westwood asked the Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for the Illawarra representing the Minister for Health, and Minister for Medical Research—

What is the Government's response to community concerns that there is an eight-week wait for treatment for people in Western New South Wales who are addicted to crystal methamphetamine?

Answer—

I am advised:
Emergency treatment for drug and alcohol use is immediately available via hospitals throughout the Western NSW Local Health District

19 November 2014

OILED WILDLIFE CARE NETWORK—Mr Foley asked the Minister for Roads and Freight, Minister for the North Coast and Vice-President of the Executive Council—

Has the Minister established an oiled wildlife care network as required by the Marine Pollution Act 2012?

Answer—

I am advised:
Requirements relating to oiled wildlife care as stipulated in the Marine Pollution Act 2012 are overseen by the NSW National Plan Executive Committee. This committee is supported by a technical working group, comprising representatives from several agencies and departments.

Transport for New South Wales, in conjunction with the Department of Primary Industries, is reviewing committee structures to determine if additional representation is needed.

MARTINS CREEK PUBLIC SCHOOL—Mr Green asked the Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for the Illawarra representing the Minister for Education—

I refer to the Minister's answer on Thursday 13 November 2014 regarding the closure of the Martins Creek Public School in which he advised that the Minister for Education has made no decision or recommendation regarding the closure of the school. I ask for specific detail. First, has the Minister assessed the special needs of the student, with his carer present, to ascertain any detrimental effects on
the student if the school closes? If not, why not? What is the true cost benefit of such a decision? Secondly, is the Minister aware that the local bus company has been notified that the school will close in 2015?

Answer—

On the 13th November no decision had been made regarding the closure of Martins Creek Public School. Subsequently a decision to keep Martins Creek Public School open in 2015 and close the school at the end of the 2015 school year was made and was based on ensuring the most effective educational provisions for students.

The local bus company was not informed by the Department of Education and Communities that the school would close in 2015 as that decision had not been made.

Assessment information about the special needs of the student has been provided, and this information has been discussed with the carer.

81 UNIVERSITY INTERNET ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY—Revd Mr Nile asked the Minister for Roads and Freight, Minister for the North Coast and Vice-President of the Executive Council representing the Premier, Minister for Infrastructure, and Minister for Western Sydney—

Is the Government aware that in October University of Newcastle staff were warned that university resources were used to broadcast a live solo sex show via live web camera from a campus library? Is it a fact that live web camera shows, sometimes known as "camming" are an online peepshow, where performers set a per-minute rate for viewers, usually through a streaming service that takes a large—anything from 35 to 60 per cent—cut of the profit? What steps will the Government take to ensure that New South Wales higher education institutions are not being used by female students to engage in live online shows or prostitution on university premises or grounds?

Answer—

I note Reverend Nile’s concerns about the reported inappropriate use of university resources.

Under relevant enabling legislation, university governing bodies have responsibility for managing the affairs and concerns of universities, with full control over academic and administrative affairs, including matters relating to student discipline.

As an independent body, the reported conduct is a matter for the university to address.

82 NSW FAIR TRADING COMPLAINTS HANDLING—Ms Voltz asked the Minister for Fair Trading—

Given that the Minister's department's Facebook page states, "If the negotiations [regarding complaints] are unsuccessful we then provide other options where appropriate, including the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal or private legal advice", will the Minister detail how many complaints over the past financial year were not resolved by his department through negotiations and therefore had to be referred externally?

Answer—

I refer to my answer given during question time. NSW Fair Trading resolves 93 per cent of complaints received.

83 MOUNT THORLEY AND WARKWORTH MINES—Mr Shoebridge asked the Minister for Fair Trading representing the Minister for Planning and Minister Woman—

Why on earth did the planning Minister, by instrument dated 6 November 2014, remove all Land and Environment Court merit appeal rights for the people of Bulga and all other affected residents in relation to Rio Tinto's Mount Thorley and Warkworth extension open-cut coalmine applications?

Answer—
I am advised:

In recent years, several major mining projects have been referred to the Planning Assessment Commission for review with public hearings, including the Maules Creek, Coalpac, Watermark and Drayton South projects.

84 POTATO POINT FIREBREAK—Mr Borsak asked the Minister for Fair Trading representing the Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, Minister for the Central Coast, and Assistant Minister for Planning—

My question relates to moves by residents of Potato Point on the South Coast to have their firebreak restored. Is the Minister aware that the CSIRO has found that the National Parks and Wildlife Service Phoenix bushfire model used to predict the vulnerability of Potato Point to bushfire grossly underestimates the behaviour of major fires? Given that the organisation's director for bushfire research, Dr Phillip Cheney, concluded that the current firebreak is inadequate, will the Minister direct the staff of National Parks and Wildlife Service to implement urgently all the recommendations made by Dr Cheney to restore effective bushfire protection to the community?

Answer—

I am advised as follows:

The CSIRO’s study considered the “Phoenix bushfire model”. The findings of this study do not affect the risk assessment for Potato Point. The risk assessment for Potato Point was undertaken by an expert from the University of Melbourne. National Parks and Wildlife Service staff will continue to work with the Rural Fire Service and the local community on the agreed bushfire protection strategy.

20 November 2014

85 NSW NATIONAL PARKS POCKET GUIDE—Mr Brown asked the Minister for Fair Trading representing the Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, Minister for the Central Coast, and Assistant Minister for Planning—

I refer to the NSW National Parks Pocket Guide, Edition 1, which is free and was handed out at the World Parks Congress in Sydney this week—a plug for the Office of Environment and Heritage. Is the Minister aware that, of all the facilities the booklet highlights, there are only nine boat ramps in national parks for the entire New South Wales rural coast? There are seven on the North Coast and two on the South Coast. Will the Government commit to installing more boat ramps in national parks if it is returned to office for another four years?

Answer—

I am advised as follows:

The NSW National Parks Pocket Guide is not an exhaustive catalogue of parks or park infrastructure. Around the state, there are more than 45 boat ramps on NPWS estate.

86 BALMAIN EAST TRANSPORT INTERCHANGE—Ms Sharpe asked the Minister for Roads and Freight, Minister for the North Coast and Vice-President of the Executive Council representing the Minister for Transport and Minister for the Hunter—

Will the Minister ensure that the plans for the Balmain East wharf and transport interchange guarantee a seamless interchange between the ferry wharf and buses—an interchange that avoids the need for passengers, including those with mobility issues, to cross a busy main road, and the need for buses to reverse in a tight bus turning area at the end of Darling Street?

Answer—
I am advised:

Balmain East Wharf will be temporarily closed from Wednesday 14 January 2015, during construction of the new wharf which includes works to the existing bus turn around area, new seating, bicycle racks, and pick up and drop off areas. All efforts will be made to reopen the wharf as soon as possible.

The Government's Transport Access Program is delivering accessible, modern, secure and integrated transport infrastructure where it is needed most. This includes station upgrades, better interchanges, commuter car parks and ferry wharf upgrades. This program includes more than $770 million for improvements.

The NSW Government is investigating new wharves as part of the ongoing work on Sydney's Ferry Future.

87 WOMEN'S REFUGES—Dr Faruqi asked the Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for the Illawarra—

How many staff of the specialist women's refuges across New South Wales have lost their jobs as a consequence of the Going Home Staying Home program?

Answer—


88 RURAL AND REGIONAL POLICE OFFICER HEALTH PROGRAMS—Mr Green asked the Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for the Illawarra representing the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for Sport and Recreation and Minister Assisting the Premier on Western Sydney—

I refer to the Minister's recent announcement that police officers suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder would be the subject of an investment of $15 million in welfare-focused programs. How will the Government commit to ensuring that these programs are accessible to help officers in rural and regional areas as effectively as those officers in metropolitan areas?

Answer—

The NSW Police Force has advised me that the vast majority of its wide range of programs aimed at enhancing the health and wellbeing of police employees are equally accessible to police officers in metropolitan and regional areas. These programs are available in a variety of forms, including individual face to face contact, seminars, publications and intranet-based information.

Some examples include:

- Your Health Check - which involves nurses visiting each Local Area Command across NSW at least once a year;
- e-WellCheck psychological assessments - delivered via computer, mobile device and telephone; and
- Building Resilience - including Beyond Blue seminars, with over 60% delivered regionally, as well as speaking tours such as that delivered recently by Dr Gilmartin, of which 10 out of 14 speaking days were spent in regional and rural NSW and which was also broadcast via the police intranet to ensure access for all officers regardless of location.

89 SNOWY REGION VISITOR CENTRE—Mr Whan asked the Minister for Fair Trading representing the Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, Minister for the Central Coast, and Assistant Minister for Planning—
Over the past couple of years the Government has cut staff and hours at the Snowy Region Visitor Centre in Jindabyne. Now the department is advertising for volunteers to work at the visitor centre. Why is the Government seeking to replace people employed with appropriate conditions and pay with volunteers?

Answer—

I am advised that National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) is in the process of implementing an initiative in which volunteers will provide additional customer interaction and support at visitor centres. This program will not replace existing staff.

90 BAYS PRECINCT EDUCATION INFRASTRUCTURE—Dr Kaye asked the Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for the Illawarra representing the Minister for Education—

My question relates to Treasury modelling showing an extra 15,000 dwellings to be located in the Bays Precinct area. Can the Minister inform the House what discussions have taken place within and involving the Department of Education and Communities about planning for the future educational provision, and inevitable requirement, for an increase in public education enrolment in this area? Have those discussions become part of the planning for the Bays Precinct?

Answer—

The Department of Education and Communities is working with UrbanGrowth NSW (UGNSW) to identify any future need for new education infrastructure. UGNSW has not yet identified housing targets or provided a master plan for the Precinct. The Department of Education and Communities will continue to work with UGNSW to identify strategies to ensure that teaching spaces keep pace with demand in the Precinct.

91 VALLEY HEIGHTS TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT—Ms Westwood asked the Minister for Roads and Freight, Minister for the North Coast and Vice-President of the Executive Council—

Why was the right-hand turn lane from Macquarie Road onto the Great Western Highway at Valley Heights closed during the community consultation phase and before the results of the community consultation were known?

Answer—

I am advised:

In considering the crash history at the intersection of Macquarie Road and the Great Western Highway at Springwood, Roads and Maritime Services developed a project to improve safety by removing the right turn movement from Macquarie Road onto the Great Western Highway.

In response to feedback received during community consultation, Roads and Maritime agreed to trial the removal of the right turn movement to better understand the full traffic impacts on residents.

Roads and Maritime is assessing the findings of the trial.

David Blunt
Clerk of the Parliaments