

22 JUNE 2001

(General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5)

Portfolio

Agriculture and Land and Water Conservation

QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE DURING HEARING

1. **Mr R Jones asked the Minister for Agriculture, and Land and Water Conservation, The Hon Richard Amery MP—**

(Relevant area in Hansard: p13)

Has the ground water dependent ecosystems policy been finalised? If not, when will that be?

ANSWER:

The Groundwater Dependent Ecosystems Policy is nearing completion and is to be made available on the DLWC web site.

2. **Mr R Jones asked the Minister for Agriculture, and Land and Water Conservation, The Hon Richard Amery MP—**

(Relevant area in Hansard: p13)

What resources are going into compliance and monitoring of Water Catchment Management Board plans?

ANSWER:

- Catchment management plans are statutory plans not regulatory so there is no compliance associated with them. However, once the plans are signed off by Cabinet, the targets and actions become government policy. The plans may then influence regulatory plans (such as those for water or vegetation) that are in preparation or the review of such regulatory plans at some subsequent date.
- Catchment management plans are in their final stages of completion. They will then need to be publicly exhibited and approved by government. It is expected their implementation will commence in 2002. Once signed off both targets and actions become government policy and the prioritised actions guide investment in each catchment.
- Progress towards meeting these targets needs to be monitored. Currently the Act provides for functions of the Catchment Management Boards, including those “to monitor, evaluate and report on progress and performance of total catchment management strategies and programs”. A more detailed outline of this process is being considered by the Department of Land and Water Conservation for inclusion in the proposed amendments to the Catchment Management Act.

3. **Mr R Jones asked the Minister for Agriculture, and Land and Water Conservation, The Hon Richard Amery MP—**

(Relevant area in Hansard: p13)

When will the States Water Management Outcomes Plan be finalised and implemented?

ANSWER:

The draft State Water Management Outcomes Plan is currently being reviewed by relevant agencies prior to consideration by the Government. At this stage, it is anticipated that the draft Plan would be released for a consultation process with a view to finalisation by the end of 2001.

Implementation of the Plan, once finalised, will occur over its five year life primarily through implementation of catchment management plans and water management plans. In addition, it is a requirement of the *Water Management Act 2000* that all decisions made by local councils and public authorities pursuant to the Act must be made to give effect to the State Water Management Outcomes Plan.

4. Mr R Jones asked the Minister for Agriculture, and Land and Water Conservation, The Hon Richard Amery MP—

(Relevant area in Hansard: p13)

What resources has the Department of Land and Water Conservation spent on compliance with water licenses in the last 12 months?

ANSWER:

About \$3.3 million was spent by the Department of Land and Water Conservation on water licensing compliance in 2000/1. This covers all licence surveillance for regulated streams, unregulated streams, groundwaters, and rural floodplains, including reading meters on licensed works required to have meters.

5. Mr R Jones asked the Minister for Agriculture, and Land and Water Conservation, The Hon Richard Amery MP—

(Relevant area in Hansard: p14)

Will you advise how much the Department of Land and Water Conservation is spending on the conservation of a wetlands throughout New South Wales, outside New South Wales protected areas, including expenditure on mapping, establishing the conservation status, preparation of wetlands management plans, grants to the community for management plans, grants to the community for on ground works, and grants to the community for education and awareness, and will you advise how much the New South Wales Government will be spending on acid sulphate soil mitigation in the year 2001-2002?

ANSWER:

Response provided under Question 37.

6. Mr Johnson asked the Minister for Agriculture, and Land and Water Conservation, The Hon Richard Amery MP—

(Relevant area in Hansard: p15)

Will the Minister provide an assessment of the cost of answering the questions on notice for budget estimates 2001-2002?

ANSWER:

It is estimated that the Department of Land and Water Conservation incurred an amount of \$10,000 to answer the questions on notice for budget estimates 2001-2002.

7. Mr Gay asked the Minister for Agriculture, and Land and Water Conservation, The Hon Richard Amery MP—

(Relevant area in Hansard: p15)

In regard to contaminated land, what has been the total cost of all legal actions and appeals? What is the amount of the compensation in total that was paid out arising out of these legal actions on the land contaminated by the former tick control board?

ANSWER

The estimated total costs, up to 13 June 2001, for legal representation and disbursements in respect of legal action against the State of New South Wales by land owners and former land owners of dip site land formerly leased by NSW Agriculture is approximately \$134,000.

No compensation has been paid in respect of these matters. A number of cases were settled recently on commercial grounds. No admission of liability on the part of NSW Agriculture was made. The terms of these settlements are confidential.

8. Mr M Jones asked the Minister for Agriculture, and Land and Water Conservation, The Hon Richard Amery MP—

(Relevant area in Hansard: p22)

With reference to budget item 3-18 "Dairy farms benchmarked for profit"

Could you advise me please, on this line item, as to what these numbers represent?

ANSWER

The numbers represented here are the number of dairy farms that are involved in formal inter farm comparison of the physical and financial performance parameters for their farm. This process allows dairy farm businesses to rank their businesses to identify gaps in their farm's production system. Such gaps are then met with managerial, capital or technical inputs to improve the farm business performance.

9. Mr R Jones asked the Minister for Agriculture, and Land and Water Conservation, The Hon Richard Amery MP—

(Relevant area in Hansard: p23)

Has the department allocated funding to the Australian Terrestrial Ecosystems Project – FATE to harvest native animals, headed by Professor Michael Archer of the Australian Museum?

ANSWER:

The Department of Land and Water Conservation has not allocated any funding to the Australian Terrestrial Ecosystems Project (FATE).

10. Mr R Jones asked the Minister for Agriculture, and Land and Water Conservation, The Hon Richard Amery MP—

(Relevant area in Hansard: p25)

How much of the \$21 million set aside for the Education and Training Plan for Sustainable Agriculture in the Sydney region will be used to help non-English speaking farmers convert to organic production of fruit and vegetables? They have difficulties sometimes in knowing how much pesticides to put on their vegetables and fruit. How much of that will be used to convert to organics?

ANSWER

The NSW Department of Education and Training has allocated \$21 million over 5 years to support the Education and Training Plan for Sustainable Agriculture in the Sydney Region. Details of how this funding is being broken up would have to be sought from that Department.

Many of the training programs under the plan which NSW Agriculture is preparing in cooperation with the Department of Education and Training, TAFE and other agencies, will have information relevant to sustainable agriculture and the principles of organic agriculture in general.

11. Mr R Jones asked the Minister for Agriculture, and Land and Water Conservation, The Hon Richard Amery MP—

(Relevant area in Hansard: p27)

You would be aware that councils across the State are being approached by Monsanto and Adventist to trial genetically engineered crops in their regions. What advice are you giving to local councils about the risks associated with trialing and growing GE crops in their regions? If no advice is being given, do you undertake to advise the councils about the risks as a matter of urgency? What assurances can you give to our major trading partners Japan and Europe, and to other countries demanding GE-free and certified organic produce, that our export crops are and will continue to be free from GE contamination? What measures will be taken to ensure identity preservation and the segregation of GE, organic and non-GE crops? Is the process of segregation possible and financially viable?

ANSWER:

The Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics (ABARE) has researched the claim that there are large overseas markets which either require GMO-free produce, and/or which offer significant premiums for GMO-free produce.

Some countries have banned the import of some GMO products, eg. the European Union prohibits the import of GM canola from Canada. However, this is of limited impact since the EU produces large quantities of canola itself, and is frequently a net exporter. The EU does allow the importation of some GM soybean and corn.

Australian exporters have found it extremely difficult to obtain premiums for non-GM canola, for any significant quantity. The most recent ABARE publication concludes that "there is only patchy evidence of premiums for non-GM grain and oilseeds in world markets".

I have not offered advice to Councils on this matter.

Identity preservation is a matter for the market to decide. If there is sufficient commercial advantage or requirement for these systems, they will develop.

12. Mr Johnson asked the Minister for Agriculture, and Land and Water Conservation, The Hon Richard Amery MP—

(Relevant area in Hansard: p27)

In relation to this department, will you provide the cost of answering all the questions that you are required to answer?

ANSWER: It is estimated that the Department of Land and Water Conservation incurred expenditure of \$20,000 for the preparation of suggested responses for use by the Minister at the Committee hearing, and the time of Senior Executive members to attend the hearing.

The total costs of providing the answers to the questions placed on notice by the General Purpose Standing Committee No 5 on 22 June 2001 cannot be quantified with any degree of accuracy, and have been incorporated into the NSW Agriculture Department's core business of managing these issues. However, I have been able to obtain details of the time taken by the respective officers answering these questions and from this I have calculated their costs. I do need to stress that preparation of some responses was quicker than others because the relevant officers had the information readily available, usually as a result of responding to previous queries.

Details are as follows:

Total Hours taken for answers: 86 hours

Total Calculated direct Salary Costs: \$3,458

These costs do not include salary on-costs or the costs of support staff who have been included in the process.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

(Relevant area in the budget papers: [3-1, Budget Paper No. 3 – Vol 2])

1. Mr R Jones asked the Minister for Agriculture, and Land and Water Conservation, the Hon Richard Amery MP—

[In relation to FATE (Future of Australian Terrestrial Ecosystems) Project]

- (1)
 - (a) Has the Department allocated funding to the “FATE (Future of Australian Terrestrial Ecosystems) Project” to harvest native animals, as headed by Professor Michael Archer of the Australian Museum?
 - (b) If so, why is the Department promoting kangaroo killing given the impossibility of a satisfactory level of hygiene being achieved with kangaroo meat?
 - (c) How many farmers are involved in the project?
 - (d) Where are the properties?
 - (e) Will they, or are they being subsidised? If so, by how much?
 - (f) How long will the project operate for?
 - (g) Will the Department release the results of the project?
 - (h) If so, when and if not, why not?
- (2)
 - (a) Is the Department aware of the Queensland Department of Natural Resources’ report of 1996 into “The Wild Harvest and Marketing of Kangaroos” which states firmly that converting a farm from sheep/beef to kangaroos is simply not profitable and that it is simplistic and unrealistic to claim that the conversion of traditional grazing properties to kangaroo harvesting properties will rectify land degradation?
 - (b) Is the Department taking this report into consideration?
 - (c) If not, why not?

ANSWER:

Answer to (1) (a) provided under Question 9.

Answer to (1) (b) – (h) and (2) (a) – (c):

- (1)
 - (a) No
 - (b)-(h) Not applicable
- (2)
 - (a) The Department is aware of a number of publications from Queensland indicating the current unprofitability of kangaroo harvesting relative to livestock grazing.
 - (b) Not applicable as the Department had no current involvement in the FATE project.
 - (c) Not applicable.

2. Mr R Jones asked the Minister for Agriculture, and Land and Water Conservation, the Hon Richard Amery MP—

[In relation to Non-animal Research Technologies]

- (1) In your answer to a question at the 1999 Budget Estimates Committee on the funding of non-animal research technologies, you stated that, as a result of discussions surrounding the use of council pound animals in research institutions, a recommendation had been raised "that we investigate the establishment of some sort of institution to consider alternatives to using animals in research", that the University of Newcastle "is currently negotiating with the RSPCA, which is talking also with our Minister in the Hunter, and we are now considering what propositions are involved there" and that "as a result of those negotiations, we will make an approach to the Federal Government under the co-operative research concept. The amount of money that could be available through that stream is a matter that we will explore."
- (a) Could the Minister please provide an update on the progress of this proposal?
- (2) One of the aims of the "Australian code of practice for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes" is to "promote the development and use of techniques which replace animal use in scientific and teaching activities" and that "the acquisition, care and use of animals for all scientific purposes in Australia must be in accord with this Code of Practice, and with Commonwealth, State and Territory legislation."
- (a) Has the Department allocated any funding from its 2001-2002 budget to researching, developing and implementing non-animal research technologies, thereby ensuring that this requirement of the Code is promoted?
- (b) If not, why not?

ANSWER:

- (1) (a) Negotiations between the University of Newcastle and the RSPCA to establish such a National Centre did not eventuate. The University has indicated a willingness to progress this concept should adequate sources of funding become available.

The Government is continuing to promote the issue of the use of alternatives to the use of animals, primarily through the Animal Research Review Panel and the Animal Welfare Unit of NSW Agriculture.

- (2) A research and development fund has been established within NSW Agriculture for the purpose of improving research methods including the development of alternatives to the use of animals. A portion of the charge for tests conducted by NSW Agriculture laboratories are allocated to this fund. At any one time, approximately \$120,000 is available in this fund.

An example of a current initiative enabled as a direct result of this fund is the development of an *in-vitro* test that replaces the need to use cattle and sheep for pasture digestibility trials. The development of this *in-vitro* test is in its final stages. To date the conduct of such trials has required the use of cattle and sheep that have had holes surgically created into their stomachs (rumen fistulae). This alternative test therefore represents a significant step forward in terms of animal welfare.

3. Mr R Jones asked the Minister for Agriculture, and Land and Water Conservation, the Hon Richard Amery MP—

[In relation to Research Licences]

- (1) (a) What is the income received from research licences?
- (b) What is the expenditure on approving research licences?

ANSWER:

- (1) (a) As from 12 July, 1999 Animal Research Licences were abolished. Therefore, income received from research licences is NIL.

- (b) As Animal Research Licences have been abolished, the expenditure in approving these research licenses is NIL.

4. Mr R Jones asked the Minister for Agriculture, and Land and Water Conservation, the Hon Richard Amery MP—

[In relation to Animal Ethics Committee]

- (1) (a) What is the expenditure of Director-Generals Animal Ethics Committee?
(b) What is the operational expenditure of the Committee's discretionary funds?

ANSWER:

- (1) (a) \$24,410
(b) \$16,463

5. Mr R Jones asked the Minister for Agriculture, and Land and Water Conservation, the Hon Richard Amery MP—

[In relation to Exhibited Animals Protection Act]

- (1) (a) What is the income received from licensing under the Exhibited Animals Protection Act?
(b) How many licences were issued?
- (2) What is the total number of circuses in operation?
- (3) What is the total number of:
- (a) zoos and fauna parks?
(b) mobile exhibits?

ANSWER:

- (1) (a) \$64,604
(b) Animal exhibitors are issued various authorities to exhibit animals. In the last licensing period, the following types of authorities were issued:

| | |
|-----------|-----|
| Approvals | 33 |
| Permits | 629 |
| Licences | 66 |

- (2) 11
(3) (a) 66
(b) 34

6. Mr R Jones asked the Minister for Agriculture, and Land and Water Conservation, the Hon Richard Amery MP—

[In relation to Genetic Engineering]

- (1) Will the Minister allocate funds to boost NSW's unique marketing advantage in the export of genetically engineered-free produce?

- (2) What assurances can the Minister give to our major trading partners Japan and Europe, and other countries demanding GE-free and organic produce, that export our crops are, and will continue to be, free from GE contamination?
- (3)
 - (a) What measures will be taken to ensure identity preservation (segregation) of organic, GE and other non-GE crops?
 - (b) Is identity segregation physically possible and economically viable?
- (4) How much money will be allocated in this financial year to the promotion of gene technology in food production in NSW and how much to the promotion of sustainable and organic agricultural systems?
- (5)
 - (a) Will the Minister publish the locations of GE-crop trials and genetically engineered crops in NSW and will he put in place measures to notify farmers, neighbours and members of the community prior to the release of genetically engineered organisms?
 - (b) If not, why not?
- (6) What provisions have been made for insurance claims arising out of contamination of neighbours' crops, loss of market advantage and pollution of the environment from GE contamination?

ANSWER:

- (1) Given the fact that there is little or no marketing advantage in export markets for GMO-free produce, I can see no benefit in allocating funds for this purpose.
- (2) Assurances on GM freedom are usually the responsibility of the marketer of the product.
- (3)
 - (a) Identity preservation is a matter for the market to decide. If there is sufficient commercial advantage or requirement for these systems, they will develop.
 - (b) Identity preservation is physically possible.
- (4) No money will be spent on promoting gene technology in food production.

NSW Agriculture has recently announced a substantially increased investment in organic food production at Bathurst.
- (5) (a)-(b) This is the responsibility of the Office of Gene Technology Regulator.
- (6) None.

7. Mr R Jones asked the Minister for Agriculture, and Land and Water Conservation, the Hon Richard Amery MP—

[In relation to Organic Culture]

- (1)
 - (a) The Minister has indicated that \$400,000 is allocated annually specifically for organic farming systems in NSW. Does the Minister consider this level of funding is adequate to assist the fastest growing agricultural sector at this point in time?
 - (b) Will the Minister provide increased funding to organic agriculture?
 - (c) If not, why not?
- (2) What percentage of the \$66 million allocated for research and advice on sustainable land use will be directed to organic agriculture?

ANSWER:

- (1) (a) While \$400,000 is allocated specifically for staff working on organic farming systems, a far greater level of NSW Agriculture's budget supports the science underpinning this sector.
- (b) The recent declaration of the Bathurst Agricultural Research and Advisory Station (BARAS) as NSW Agriculture's Centre for Organic Farming is already involving increased funding to organic agriculture. In 2000/2001, \$300,000 of capital funds was allocated to build a new office block on the station and relocate town advisory staff. These staff are now part of the Centre for Organic Farming and will increasingly be promoting organic farming practices to farmers in NSW. Farming systems on the Bathurst centre will progressively be modified to research organic and biodynamic agriculture with a view to progressive organic certification.
- (b) Not applicable
- (2) Sustainable land use research and advice is all directly or indirectly supporting moves to organic agriculture, by providing underlying scientific information which gives farmers confidence to change their production systems to lower chemical and artificial fertiliser use and more sustainable practices.

8. Mr R Jones asked the Minister for Agriculture, and Land and Water Conservation, the Hon Richard Amery MP—

[In relation to Antibiotics]

- (1) (a) Do farmers in NSW use antibiotics such as tetracycline, penicillin and streptomycin, as growth promoters for livestock?
- (b) Is the Minister aware that the European Union has banned the use as growth promoters most antibiotics that are used in human medicine? If not, why not and if so, why are farmers in NSW still allowed to use them?
- (c) Is the Minister also aware that researchers at the University of Illinois in the US have uncovered a new route by which dangerous antibiotic genes can spread - bacteria in the soil and ground water beneath farms acquiring tetracycline resistance genes from bacteria originating from pigs' guts?
- (d) What is being done to ensure such resistance genes are not being passed on through water-borne bacteria to humans?

ANSWER:

- (1) (a) Farmers in NSW use a limited number of antibiotics approved by the National Registration Authority for Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (NRA) as being suitable for use as growth promoters.

None of the particular antibiotics listed in the question are approved for this use, and use of antibiotics by farmers contrary to the label instructions is illegal in NSW.

- (b) Yes.

The responsibility for controlling antibiotics used as growth promoters rests with the National Registration Authority for Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (NRA). They are in the process of implementing a number of recommendations made by the Joint Expert Technical Advisory Committee on Antibiotics Resistance (JETACAR) in 1999, including that they "review the use of antibiotic growth promotants currently registered in Australia that do not appear to fulfil the criteria listed in Recommendation 1". Recommendation 1 said that the only antibiotics that should be used as growth promotants are those which are "rarely or never used as systemic therapeutic agents in humans or animals".

NSW Agriculture will defer to any recommendations arising from the NRA review process.

- (c) Yes

- (d) The report referred to by the Hon Mr Jones is the first of its kind in the world. The significance of this research finding is still being debated within the scientific community and additional research will be required before any specific action would be considered. The responsibility for any such action will rest with the National Registration Authority for Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (NRA) and their consultants within the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care.

9. Mr R Jones asked the Minister for Agriculture, and Land and Water Conservation, the Hon Richard Amery MP—

[In relation to Native Vegetation]

- (1) (a) As the Minister has declared that the no net loss of native vegetation policy will be in place by July 1st, can you detail exactly how that policy will be implemented?
- (b) Will any landholder wishing to clear land be obliged to plant an equivalent area of vegetation somewhere else? If not, why not?
- (c) If there is to be an offset policy, how will this be implemented without causing a net loss in vegetation?
- (2) (a) Can the Minister detail exactly how the \$21 million set aside for the Education and Training Plan for Sustainable Agriculture in the Sydney Region will be spent?
- (b) Will any of these funds be used to assist farmers in the Sydney region to convert to organic production of fruit and vegetables, which is where the biggest growth market is and which is much safer in particular for growers for whom English is a second language and who may not be able to properly understand the instructions for safe use of pesticides both for themselves and for those who eat the produce?
- (3) (a) Now that grey headed flying foxes have been listed as threatened and it is evident that shooting will soon no longer be an option, what is the Department doing to help fruit growers to protect their crops from flying foxes, birds and other protected native species?
- (b) Will the Department ensure that every fruit grower is made aware that shooting will no longer be an option so that they can protect future crops with netting or other devices?

ANSWER:

- (1) (a) The Government recently released a Discussion Paper titled *Offsets, Salinity and Native Vegetation* (<http://www.dlwc.nsw.gov.au/care/salinity/offsets.html>). That paper states that NSW will seek to achieve the No Net Loss goal through vegetation retention and revegetation targets, regional vegetation management plans and an offset policy.
- (b) The nature of any offset requirements associated with clearing will be determined through the development of an offset policy. The Government will consider the development of this policy once it has reviewed public submissions on the Discussion Paper: *Offsets, Salinity and Native Vegetation*.
- (c) The Discussion Paper: *Offsets, Salinity and Native Vegetation* states that the Partnership Agreement for the Bushcare program under the Natural Heritage Trust established a national goal 'to reverse the long-term decline in the quality and extent of Australia's native vegetation cover' by June 2001, commonly referred to as No Net Loss.

By seeking to reverse the decline in both quality and extent of native vegetation, the No Net Loss goal is effectively a 'net gain' goal. This 'net gain' will be achieved through a range of measures including both publicly and privately funded programs to revegetate cleared land and to improve the management of degraded native vegetation. The role of an offset policy in contributing to this 'net gain' will be determined once Government has reviewed public submissions on the Discussion Paper: *Offsets, Salinity and Native Vegetation*.

- (2) The NSW Department of Education and Training has allocated \$21 million over 5 years to support the Education and Training Plan for Sustainable Agriculture in the Sydney Region. Details of how

this funding is being broken up would have to be sought from that Department. Many of the training programs under the Plan which NSW Agriculture is preparing in cooperation with the Department of Education and Training, TAFE and other agencies, will have information relevant to sustainable agriculture and the principles of organic agriculture in general.

- (3) NSW Agriculture provides advice to fruit growers on all aspects of best practice management for horticultural production, including minimisation of damage by flying foxes. Based on the available evidence the only viable alternative to shooting is full exclusion netting and this is the advice that is given to growers.

NSW Agriculture is currently investigating the impact of native and introduced birds on winegrape production through funding provided by the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation. Netting is also the only viable approach to bird control in grapes.

At this time it would be premature to advise fruit growers that shooting flying foxes is no longer an option. Management of flying foxes under their new status as vulnerable species has not been determined and some level of managed shooting has not been ruled out.

I understand that discussions are soon to be held with all stakeholders in flying fox management to determine future mitigation regimes to protect fruit crops

10. Mr R Jones asked the Minister for Agriculture, and Land and Water Conservation, the Hon Richard Amery MP—

[In relation to 1.1080 Poisoning]

- (1) (a) Is the poison 1080 being used to kill non-native animals in NSW? If so, what animals, and how many, are being killed with 1080?
- (b) How much funding is used to provide training programs in 1080 baiting?
- (c) How many training programs are run for 1080 baiting?
- (d) How many people are trained each year?
- (e) How much funding is used for research into 1080 baiting?
- (f) How much funding is used for research into alternatives to 1080 baiting?
- (g) What is the current view on the effect of poison 1080 on non-native animals? On what research was this based?
- (h) What evidence must be produced before a permit to use 1080 to kill non-native animals is granted?
- (i) What pressure has been placed on farmers and other stakeholders to put up fencing to protect their land rather than poison?
- (j) Have farmers been informed that removal of animals from an area creates spaces into which other animals move and therefore poisoning is a short-term solution which must be done repeatedly? If not, why not?
- (k) What measures are taken to stop secondary poisoning - that is non-target animals eating the poisoned carcasses? If so, how are these measures being enforced?
- (l) The use of 1080 has been banned in Brazil since 1982. In the US last year a similar ban was proposed. Why does the Department continue to allow the use of this highly toxic and dangerous poison?

ANSWER:

- (1) (a) Yes. 1080 is used extensively in management programs for rabbits, feral pigs, foxes and wild dogs. It is not possible to quantify the number of animals controlled as a result of these programs.

- (b) \$ 47,503.00
- (c) NSW Agriculture provides intensive training (usually one to one) for all new staff from Rural Lands Protection Board and other agencies employed to work with 1080. These staff must receive this training and pass a formal examination before they can be authorised to work with 1080. The activities of these authorised control officers (ACOs) are also audited regularly and each ACO is required to re-sit an equivalent formal examination within 12 months and thereafter, every four years.

Based on the previous year's costs, this activity is estimated to cost about \$31,614 during 2001-02.

Once per year, NSW Agriculture also runs a one-week practical methods course for new staff from Rural Lands Protection Boards and other land management agencies. This provides high quality entry-level training in both agricultural protection and conservation competencies in view of the broad ecological overlaps involved and because the objectives are, for the most part, complementary. The course is widely recognised and is attended by staff from virtually all agencies implementing pest animal control. The budgeted cost of providing this training in 2001-02 is \$15,889.

NSW Agriculture, Agricultural Protection Officers and Rural Lands Protection Board staff also extend information to farmers on best practice pest animal management at field days etc. This activity is not costed.

- (d) The number trained depends on need. Last year there were 12 new ACOs trained and 26 ACOs re-accredited (19 RLPB & 7 NPWS). 38 people also attended the one-week practical methods course last year. The number of farmers attending field days and pest animal forums cannot be quantified.
- (e) The amount of research conducted into improving pest animal control strategies involving 1080 has been substantial over the last 25 years. This research has been undertaken by the relevant State Government Agencies and the CSIRO. It would be difficult to cost the sum total of this research. However, an extensive bibliography of publications arising from this research could be provided which would indicate the extent of this research.
- (f) The Pest Animal Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) has received about \$7 million per year since 1992 to develop immunocontraception which can be considered as an alternative to 1080. Of this, \$2 million is direct government funding while the other \$5 million comes from in kind and cash contributions by the various partners and collaborators (NSW Agriculture is a collaborator). The ecological research undertaken by the CRC also has cross benefits for pest animal management programs including those based on 1080.
- (g) 1080 blocks the tricarboxylic acid cycle, disrupting oxidative metabolism and thereby causing death. This is widely reported in the scientific literature.
- (h) 1080 is one of the most closely regulated and monitored pesticides in NSW. Its sale, possession and use are strictly regulated under the *Pesticides Act 1999* and the national *Agvet Code 1994*. The National Registration Authority issues Off-Label permits setting out conditions under which 1080 may be used to control rabbits, feral pigs, foxes and wild dogs. This process takes account of technical advice provided by relevant state and federal agencies and reflects the broad body of scientific research and practical experience across these jurisdictions.
- (i) NSW Agriculture advises landholders on all of the available options for pest animal management including the use of 1080. While techniques such as fencing are available, the relative costs and benefits make their use impractical in most situations.
- (j) NSW Agriculture works with Rural Lands Protection Boards and public land managers (especially the National Parks and Wildlife Service) to promote multi-stakeholder regional vertebrate pest management committees and plans. This process is changing attitudes to pest management and has resulted in a steady increase in the number of farmers and public land managers participating in cooperative group based control programs. Nevertheless, pest animal management will always be an ongoing proposition since pest animals could not be completely eradicated without an unrealistically enormous commitment by Government.

- (k) The Off-Label Permits specify bait types, dose rates and use patterns all of which aim to minimise the incidence of secondary poisoning. Persons who put out 1080 poisoned baits are also required to collect uneaten 1080 bait material and if possible, poisoned carcasses, and to dispose of them safely. These permit conditions are enforced through legislation administered by the EPA. There is also considerable peer pressure to use 1080 safely because no practical alternative currently exists.
- (l) The purpose of Off-Label Permits is to ensure that 1080 can be used safely and experience with 1080 use shows this to be the case. The EPA also goes to considerable effort investigating any use of 1080 outside these permit conditions. So while 1080 is toxic, its use is tightly controlled and it is in fact much safer than many of the more common pesticides. Added to these regulatory controls is the research effort placed into ensuring that 1080 baiting programs are both efficacious and environmentally sound. No other country in the world has gone to similar efforts in respect of 1080. At the present time, 1080 is the only tool available in many situations to protect agriculture and the environment from destructive vertebrate pests. The community can therefore be reassured that the use of 1080 is so well researched and so tightly controlled.

11. Mr R Jones asked the Minister for Agriculture, and Land and Water Conservation, the Hon Richard Amery MP—

[In relation to Irrigation Efficiency]

- (1)
 - (a) Is the Minister aware that drip irrigation for cotton significantly reduces water wastage and may also reduce pest pressure?
 - (b) What is the Department doing to persuade cotton farmers to adopt drip irrigation?
 - (c) Is the Minister aware of any cotton farms with drip irrigation?
- (2) The Minister announced in his press release of 29 May 2001 an allocation of \$2.6 million to help irrigators adopt more water efficient practices.
 - (a) Will this money be prioritized to ensure the least efficient users of water are targeted first?
 - (b) What programs will this money be spent on and when will these programs deliver water savings?

ANSWER:

- (1)
 - (a) Yes. Drip irrigation provides an opportunity to improve irrigation efficiency and in some instances can reduce pest pressure in cotton. Evaporation losses associated with sub-surface drip tend to be less than with furrow irrigation and can be reduced through techniques employed during installation; and run-off is reduced.

The capital cost associated with installing drip irrigation can be substantial (\$3500/ha to \$4500/ha and sometimes \$7500/ha). Some management issues are still being resolved and the technology is still evolving. However, the cotton industry has a long history of research into this issue, showing mixed results in sub-surface drip irrigation trials. The industry is developing an irrigation module for its best management practice manual series, which has a substantial emphasis on irrigation efficiency.
 - (b) The DLWC is continuing to encourage irrigation efficiency, especially by ensuring that policy development creates opportunities for irrigators to improve efficiency, such as through the incentives provided by an effective water market. Joint DLWC/NSW Agriculture efforts continue to provide advice about a wide-range of technologies and practices.
 - (c) Yes. There are numerous cotton farms on which drip irrigation is being trialed and / or used commercially. In fact, 3100ha or 1.3% of the area on which irrigated cotton was grown in Australia was irrigated with sub-surface drip irrigation in the 1999/2000 season. Also, in excess of thirty commercial cotton growers in Australia are currently using drip systems, 16 of whom are located in NSW.

The Measure Water to Manage Water project, a collaborative project between Macquarie River Food and Fibre, Macquarie Valley Landcare Group and NSW Agriculture is examining efficiencies on a variety of different system types; and has a focus on the cotton industry.

- (2) (a) The priorities are to help irrigators to adopt more water efficient water use practices and are focused on maximising efficiency gains. DLWC continues to work with industry groups at both a peak and regional level to refine priorities, so that maximum return on investment is achieved.
- (b) The money will be used to support WaterWise on the Farm, especially the Introduction to Irrigation Management course; support benchmarking activities across groups of irrigators currently conducted by Water Use Efficiency Officers; provide technical and policy development support to Water Management Committees; and support these committees by conducting socio-economic analysis of proposed management options.

12. Mr R Jones asked the Minister for Agriculture, and Land and Water Conservation, the Hon Richard Amery MP—

[In relation to Funding for Animal Welfare Organisations - RSPCA]

- (1) (a) Is the Department aware that current levels of funding for animal welfare organisations such as the RSPCA are inadequate when compared to other states and territories? For example, in SA the RSPCA receives almost three times as much Government funding as in NSW.
- (b) What is the Department doing to alleviate this inequality?
 - (i) Will the Department ensure that levels of funding will be reviewed and increased?
 - (ii) If so, when and if not, why not?
- (2) (a) Government departments are currently exempt from for paying filing fees on each summons and each subpoena, which are currently \$54 and \$29 respectively. Will the Government provide such an exemption to animal welfare organisations?
- (b) If not, why not? An exemption such as this would be a way of effectively increasing the Government's contribution to these organisations without an additional outlay.

ANSWER:

- (1) Funding in NSW is determined with regard to the conditions within NSW. The funding of organisations such as the RSPCA and Animal Welfare League is considered adequate.
- (2) This matter falls within the portfolio of the Attorney General, the Hon. Bob Debus MP. Responsibility for setting fees and exemptions on summons' and subpoenas lies with the Rules Committee, Local Courts (Civil Claims Act) 1970.

13. Mr R Jones asked the Minister for Agriculture, and Land and Water Conservation, the Hon Richard Amery MP—

[In relation to Funding for Animal Welfare Organisations – Animal Rights and Rescue Group]

- (1) (a) Is the Minister aware that the only rescue and desexing program for animals on the Far North Coast from Coffs Harbour to Tweed Heads and as far west as Tenterfield is the Animal Rights and Rescue Group (apart from the Animal Welfare League who only operate in the Byron Shire)?
- (b) Does the Minister know that the Animal Rights and Rescue Group operate without Government funding or support?
- (c) The Animal Rights and Rescue Group no has no permanent shelter, their carers are overcrowded with at least 140 cats and dogs in care constantly, and they are no-kill. They take at least 5 dogs a week from local pounds, in addition to all the abandoned puppies that would otherwise go to the pounds. Will the Minister commit to provide funding for the Animal Rights and Rescue Group as

is provided for the RSPCA, the Cat Protection Society and the Animal Welfare League? If not, why not?

ANSWER:

The RSPCA has shelters located in Tweed Heads and Coffs Harbour that provide rescue and desexing services. RSPCA allocates its resources to meet commitments across New South Wales.

Funding is allocated by Treasury and has been fully committed for this year.

I am aware that my Department does not provide funding to the Animal Rights and Rescue Group. However, I am not aware of the situation regarding funds from other Government sources.

14. Mr R Jones asked the Minister for Agriculture, and Land and Water Conservation, the Hon Richard Amery MP—

[In relation to Funding for Animal Welfare Organisations – WIRES]

- (1) (a) Is the Minister aware that WIRES, the NSW Wildlife Information and Rescue Service, with over 1,400 volunteers throughout NSW caring for injured wildlife, is currently walking a budgetary tightrope and given the current funding situation, will be insolvent within two months?
- (b) Is the Minister aware that approaches to the Department have been made to discuss the lack of funding forthcoming, but to no avail? Will the Department ensure that levels of funding will be reviewed and increased? If so, when? If not, why not?

ANSWER:

I am not aware that WIRES will be insolvent within two months. NSW Government provides WIRES with \$17,050 from NSW Agriculture, \$15,000 from the National Parks & Wildlife Service and \$25,000 from the Roads & Traffic Authority.

15. Mr Colless asked the Minister for Agriculture, and Land and Water Conservation, the Hon Richard Amery MP—

- (1) (a) Did you seek or receive reimbursement, or did your government agency pay or is in the process of paying, for an 'out of pocket' expense, incurred by you, as outlined in Ministerial Memorandum No. 99-24, in 2000-01?
- (b) If so, what was the breakdown of these expenses?
- (c) What is the forecast amount to be spent in 2001-02?
- (2) (a) Does your Ministerial Office have a discretionary allowance?
- (b) How was it expended during 2000-01?
- (c) What is the forecast for expenditure in 2001-02?
- (3) (a) What was the breakdown of expenditure for the day-to-day running of your Ministerial Office in 2000-01?
- (b) What is the forecast of expenditure in 2001-02?
- (4) (a) What is the breakdown of expenditure, as authorised by your Chief of Staff, and outlined in Ministerial Memorandum No. 96-28, for 2000-01?
- (b) What is the forecast for expenditure in 2001-02?
- (5) What was the total cost of salaries for your Ministerial staff in 2000-01?
- (6) What was the total cost of Ministerial motor vehicle expenses in 2000-01?

(7) For each agency in your portfolio, what was spent in 2000-01 on media services?

ANSWER:

- (1) (a - c)
Ministerial memorandum 99-24 provided guidelines on the policy for reimbursement of expenses related to general expenses. The expenditure must relate to expenditure on official government business.
- (2) (a) No.
(b) Not applicable.
(c) Not applicable.
- (3) (a) Expenditure for Ministerial Offices is determined by the Budget Committee of Cabinet.
Expenditure must be in accordance with the provisions of the Public Finance and Audit Act.
(b) See previous answer.
- (4) (a) Approval of expenditure must be in accordance with delegations and in accordance with the Public Finance and Audit Act.
(b) This will depend on the nature and extent of any expenditure in 2001-02.
- (5) Expenditure was in accordance with the remuneration levels determined by the Director General of Premier's Department as the employer of ministerial staff.
- (6) Motor vehicle management is undertaken within policies administered by State Fleet Services and the Department of Public Works and Services
- (7) As there is no definition of media services this question is difficult to answer.

As was the case under the former Coalition Government all agencies undertake a range of monitoring activities and monitoring is undertaken within appropriate delegations.

16. Mr Colless asked the Minister for Agriculture, and Land and Water Conservation, the Hon Richard Amery MP—

- (1) Can the Minister provide more detail on the soil pesticide redemption works on the North Coast?
 - (a) How many sites are there?
 - (b) Will NSW Agriculture committee to further studies into the issue of the Tick Control Board's legacy of contaminated land?
- (2) (a) Why is there no reference in the budget to compensation to owners?
(b) What has been the total cost of all legal action and appeals involving NSW Agriculture and parties seeking compensation for issues arising from land contaminated by the former Tick Control Board?

[Budget Paper No 3, Volume 1, p 3-5, Asset Acquisitions]

ANSWER:

- (1) (a) Four.
(b) Yes.
- (2) (a) Compensation is not being paid.

- (b) The estimated total costs up to 13 June 2001 for legal representation and disbursements in respect of legal action against the State of New South Wales by land owners and former land owners of dipsite land formerly leased by NSW Agriculture is approximately \$134,000.

17. Mr Colless asked the Minister for Agriculture, and Land and Water Conservation, the Hon Richard Amery MP—

- (1) (a) What budget provision has been made for the NSW Grains Board and which department has the responsibility for allocating these funds?
- (b) Has any money been budgeted for grain producers owed money as a result of the NSW Grains Board collapse?
- (c) Is there any provision in the budget for the ongoing operations of the NSW Grains Board?
- (2) Have there been any funds allocated for the potential deregulation of the contract poultry meat growing industry?

ANSWER:

- (1) (a) Other than a temporary guarantee offered by the NSW Government (for a fee) when the Board was first constituted, the NSW Grains Board is and always has been a fully self-funded commercial organisation. The commercial nature of the Board was a feature stressed by the Hon Ian Armstrong MP, the then Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs, in 1991 when the Act establishing the Board was introduced. The Board has raised revenue through fees and commodity trading activity and made distributions back to growers after netting out its costs. Therefore, while the legislation establishing the Board is administered by NSW Agriculture, no provision for the Board has ever been, or is required to be, made out of Consolidated Revenue.
- (b) The NSW Government has guaranteed to provide a loan of up to \$13.5 million to the Board to ensure that grain producers owed money by the Board are paid in full. This is a loan facility, not a grant, and any drawings against it will be recouped by the Government out of revenue raised by the Board. The loan will be administered by NSW Treasury.
- (c) No
- (2) No. NSW Agriculture receives a budgetary allocation from Treasury of approximately \$40,000 per year to support the Poultry Meat Industry Committee. The allocation matches the money collected by the Committee from prescribed fees levied on the industry and paid into Consolidated Revenue.

The issue of whether or not the interests of the NSW public would be better served with different regulatory arrangements in the poultry meat industry and, if so, what those arrangements might be, is still under investigation.

18. Mr Colless asked the Minister for Agriculture, and Land and Water Conservation, the Hon Richard Amery MP—

[Budget Paper No 3, Volume 1, p 3-31, Assistance to Farmers, Operating Statement]

- (1) (a) Please differentiate between “West 2000” and “West 2000 Plus” funding in 2000-01.
- (b) Why has the allocated funding for the “West 2000” program in the Department of Agriculture’s budget dropped by \$3,052,000.00 in 2001-02?
- (c) What is the relationship between the “West 2000” Program listed under the Department of Land and Water Conservation and “West 2000” listed under the Department of Agriculture?

ANSWER:

- (1) (a) WEST 2000 refers to the WEST 2000 Rural Partnership Program that commenced in February 1997. WEST 2000 was funded to a total of \$17.5 million from the NSW and Commonwealth Governments. Both the Department of Land and Water Conservation and the NSW Rural Assistance Authority manage WEST 2000 funds. WEST 2000 is drawing to a close with all funding committed, but not necessarily actually spent, on 19 June 2001.

WEST 2000 Plus is a new program which reflects the current challenges of the Western Division. WEST 2000 Plus is equally funded by the NSW and Commonwealth Governments to a total of \$11.825 million over three years. While WEST 2000 Plus had a budget allocation in the 2000-2001 financial year, the NSW Minister for Land and Water Conservation and the Commonwealth Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry did not formally sign a financial agreement for the program until 12 December 2000.

The total budget allocations for WEST 2000/WEST 2000 Plus in the Department of Land and Water Conservation component of the 2000-01 budget papers was \$1,986,000. Of this allocation, \$988,000 was for WEST 2000 and \$1,512,000 for WEST 2000 Plus. \$2,500,000 has been allocated to WEST 2000 Plus by the NSW Government in the 2001-02 financial year.

- (b) The "WEST 2000" program expenditure within the Rural Assistance Authority in 2001-02 will be limited to carry-over assistance approved prior to 30 June 2001, but where the payment of assistance did not occur prior to that date. This is the scheduled winding-down phase of that program.
- (c) The programs are identical. The funds referred to in the Department of Land and Water Conservation are the State Treasury component of WEST 2000 and WEST 2000 Plus. The funds listed in the Department of Agriculture's budget papers generally relate to the Commonwealth component of WEST 2000 and WEST 2000 Plus which are acquitted and disbursed to agencies and individuals by the NSW Rural Assistance Authority.

19. Mr Colless asked the Minister for Agriculture, and Land and Water Conservation, the Hon Richard Amery MP—

Is there any budgetary provision to reform the Meat Industry Consultative Council under Safe Food NSW and if so, are there any plans to do so?

ANSWER:

There is no budgetary provision to reform the Meat Industry Consultative Council (MICC) under Safe Food Production NSW. Following dissolution of the former MICC in late 2000, I commissioned an independent review of consultative arrangements between the meat industry and SafeFood. I have since received the report submitted by the reviewers, Mr Peter Frawley and Dr Bruce Standen, and I am still considering the options for future consultation.

As an interim arrangement, pending my decision on a formal consultative arrangement to replace the former MICC, SafeFood has initiated an informal interim committee to maintain a forum to discuss issues of commonality to SafeFood and the meat industry. There is minimal cost involved and this has been provided for in the SafeFood Meat Branch budget.

20. Mr Colless asked the Minister for Agriculture, and Land and Water Conservation, the Hon Richard Amery MP—

[Budget Paper No 3, Volume 1, p 3-19]

- (1) (a) Please explain the budgetary provision for assistance to the sheep industry to combat Ovine Johne's disease?
- (b) Is there a provision for providing financial assistance to affected producers?

ANSWER:

- (1) (a) The NSW Government now has budget allocations and commitments totalling \$23,295,000 to assist the sheep industry to combat ovine Johne's disease (OJD). \$21,045,00 of this expenditure arises from NSW participation in and contribution to the National Ovine Johne's Disease Control and Eradication Program (NOJDP).

Over the course of this six-year national program that began in 1998, direct NSW Treasury allocations to the program will total \$7.245M. With this \$7.245M and funds from other states, the Commonwealth and the sheep industry, the national program is now funding research to improve our understanding of the biology of this disease and surveillance to determine the current extent of infection and to facilitate the control of further spread. Most of this research and surveillance activity is taking place in NSW, leading to major advances in OJD control such as the new Pooled Faecal Culture test.

To support the national program, NSW Agriculture has established a major program on OJD involving an estimated total commitment of \$13.8M in salaries and operating costs for the seven years from 1998 to 2005. NSW Agriculture staff in this program are not only delivering the key research and disease surveillance/control elements of the national program, but also many additional activities to help OJD affected producers in NSW including farm business management and adjustment advice.

The NSW Treasury has allocated a further \$2.25M over three years, subject to the availability of matching funds from industry, for any agreed purpose in the area of OJD control or assistance to affected producers that is recommended by the industry advisory committee I have established for that purpose.

- (b) There is currently no NSW Treasury budget allocation for direct financial assistance to OJD affected producers. However, under the national program, many New South Wales sheep producers affected by OJD have received significant financial assistance with the costs of flock testing for both disease control and market assurance purposes. NSW Agriculture has provided several OJD diagnostic tests to producers at reduced cost. Some affected producers have received direct financial assistance from the national program for costs arising from their assistance with specific research projects. The \$2.25M in NSW Treasury matching funds is available for financial assistance to affected producers, subject to the development of an assistance package by the industry advisory committee.

21. Mr Colless asked the Minister for Agriculture, and Land and Water Conservation, the Hon Richard Amery MP—

[Budget Paper No 3, Volume 1, p 3-21]

Why is funding on Quality Assurance Programs down on last year at a time when exotic diseases and pests are of paramount concern?

ANSWER:

The reduced funding in the Quality Assurance Program is reflected in the "Standing Committee on Agriculture" budget item. As a result of a review of the Ovine Johne's Disease Program, a revised cash flow has been implemented to meet the program's requirements. The total original budget will still be provided to achieve the desired outcomes of the program. However, the timing for the provision of the funding has changed.

Funding for the core recurrent activities of the Quality Assurance Program has been maintained at its previous year's level, reflecting the Government's commitment to addressing exotic disease and pest issues.

22. Mr Colless asked the Minister for Agriculture, and Land and Water Conservation, the Hon Richard Amery MP—

Why are animal health investigations used to support market access claims, budget to drop by 3,000 investigations in 2001-02?

ANSWER:

The reduction is a result of a move toward targeted and more sensitive surveillance programs for the diseases of importance - a more efficient and productive way of supporting market access claims.

23. Mr Colless asked the Minister for Agriculture, and Land and Water Conservation, the Hon Richard Amery MP—

[Budget Paper No 3, Volume 1, Section 3 - In relation to Country Town and Water Sewerage]

The total program of the Country Towns Water Supply and Sewerage Scheme is some \$850M over 10 years, starting 1995

- (1) (a) Will the \$850M be provided within the 10 years?
- (b) Could you provide details of projects started since 1995?
- (c) Could you provide details of projects completed?
- (d) What new projects does the Department plan to undertake for the period ending 2005?
- (e) Is there a problem with the financial management of the Country Town Water Supply and Sewerage Scheme?
- (f) How many rural and regional sewerage systems have been subject to Pollution Reduction Programs by the Environment Protection Authority?
- (g) Where are these systems located, and in which local government authorities are they?
- (h) What is the Government's position on retrospective funding for projects commenced by local government authorities subjected to Pollution Reduction Programs by the EPA?

ANSWER:

- (1) (a) The Carr Government places a high priority on ensuring that people in regional communities have access to acceptable town water and sewerage services.

Recognising that local councils need assistance to address deficient water and sewerage services, the Government provides technical, management and financial support to regional communities through the "backlog" component of the Country Towns Water Supply and Sewerage Program.

All regional communities identified in 1994 as having a sub-standard water or sewerage service are eligible for assistance.

Furthermore, in 1997, the Carr Government announced that towns with populations of less than 1000 were eligible for higher rate of assistance to install sewerage services at a higher rate of subsidy (ie 75% rather than the usual 50%).

Towns with poor or failing water and sewerage systems and towns without basic water and sewerage services are most in need of this essential public infrastructure, and are generally given priority under the backlog program.

In the early 1990's the estimated cost of assisting all regional councils to improve their sub-standard services was \$855 million.

However, regional communities have not initiated backlog works at a rate consistent with the initial estimated rate of expenditure.

In other cases, the need to conduct comprehensive environmental impact studies and consultation to establish community consensus on the features of a town water or sewerage program has increased project timelines.

As a result, average annual expenditure since 1995 has been \$57.5 million.

Including the current 2001-02 financial year allocation of \$66.8 million, a total of \$411.4 million has been allocated to the program by the Carr Government since March 1995.

When necessary, the Carr Government has increased annual funding in an effort to match demand. In 2000-2001 for example a Treasury supplementation of \$5 million was provided to assist with priority projects.

Also in March this year the Premier, Bob Carr, announced an additional \$60 million over four years in response to the need for additional funding.

Therefore, while funding has usually been provided at a rate consistent with applications by Councils for assistance under the program, a lower overall level of demand has meant that less than the originally estimated \$855 million will be spent over ten years.

To reassure local government that funds to upgrade regional services are still available, however, the Carr Government has consistently indicated that it remains committed to the program.

In the current financial year the Carr Government is spending approximately \$1.3 million dollars a week to achieve better town water and sewerage service outcomes for regional communities.

(b) **New projects started in 1995/96**

- 1 Coffs Harbour/Sawtell Sewerage Stage 3
- 2 Scone Water Supply
- 3 Kootingal Moonbi Water Supply
- 4 Port Macquarie sewerage
- 5 Bowraville Sewerage
- 6 Lightning Ridge Water Supply
- 7 Minnie Waters Sewerage
- 8 Wooli Water Supply
- 9 Hastings point Sewerage
- 10 Tea Gardens Sewerage
- 11 Lismore Sewerage
- 12 Adelong Water Supply
- 13 Uranquinty Water Supply
- 14 Urana/Oaklands Sewerage
- 15 Tumbulgum Sewerage
- 16 Moama Sewerage
- 17 Cooma Sewerage
- 18 Mogo Sewerage
- 19 Shoalhaven City Water Supply 2A
- 20 Parkes/Peak Hill Water Supply
- 21 Bathurst Sewerage
- 22 Gulgong Sewerage
- 23 Baradine Sewerage

New projects started in 1996/97

- 1 Kempsey Sewerage
- 2 Marulan Sewerage
- 3 Nimmatabel Sewerage
- 4 Narrabri Sewerage
- 5 Albury Sewerage
- 6 Berridale Water Supply
- 7 Mungindi Sewerage
- 8 Dubbo Sewerage
- 9 Ganmain Sewerage
- 10 Macksville Sewerage
- 11 Mumbil Sewerage

12 Gunnedah Sewerage

New projects started in 1997/98

- 1 Coffs Harbour Reuse Demonstration
- 2 Cowra Sewerage Phosphorous trial
- 3 Delegate retarding basin
- 4 Griffith water meters
- 5 Albury Sewerage – Woodlot and Wetland
- 6 Bulladelah Water Supply Stage 3
- 7 Wye Point Sewerage (Hunter Sewerage Project)
- 8 Hastings District. Water Supply Stage 2E
- 9 Humula Water Supply
- 10 Callala Sewerage
- 11 Jindabyne Sewerage Stage 2
- 12 Bathurst Water Supply stage 2
- 13 Dungowan Dam stabilisation
- 14 Parkes Water Supply reservoir roof
- 15 Bungendore Water Supply
- 16 Rileys Hill Sewerage
- 17 Bombala Sewerage
- 18 Lake Cargelligo Water Supply
- 19 Narrabri Sewerage – Farm
- 20 Oberon Water Supply
- 21 Guyra Sewerage
- 22 Marulan Water Supply
- 23 Murwillumbah Sewerage
- 24 Shoalhaven City Water Supply 2B
- 25 Tamworth Sewerage stage 2 part A
- 26 Warren Sewerage

Projects started in 1998/99

- 1 Gresford Water Supply
- 2 Hastings District Water Supply Stage 2F Pipeline
- 3 Kempsey Water Supply
- 4 Manilla Sewerage
- 5 Richmond River Shire Telemetry
- 6 Uki Water Supply
- 7 Condobolin Water Supply roofing
- 8 Eugowra Sewerage
- 9 Canowindra Sewerage
- 10 Moree Sewerage
- 11 Yamba Sewerage - Stage 1
- 12 Corindi Sewerage
- 13 Stuarts Point Water Supply
- 14 Hay Water Supply

Projects started in 1999/00

- 1 Captain's Flat Dam Remedial Works
- 2 Hastings District Water Supply Stage 2G – Dam
- 3 Orange Water Supply – Water Treatment
- 4 Rylstone Dam Remedial Works
- 5 Uki Sewerage
- 6 Warren Water Supply Augmentation
- 7 Batlow Water Supply – Water Treatment
- 8 Crescent Head Sewerage Augmentation
- 9 Scotts Head Sewerage
- 10 Comboyne, Telegraph Point, Long Flat W.S.
- 11 Leeton Sewerage Augmentation
- 12 Waterview – Seelands – Eatonsville W.S.

- 13 Manning Dist. Water Supply – Wingham Reservoir
- 14 Tenterfield Dam Flood Warning System
- 15 Dungog Sewerage Augmentation
- 16 Moruya Sewerage Reticulation
- 17 Milton/Ulladulla Sewerage Interim Works
- 18 Adelong Sewerage Augmentation
- 19 Shoalhaven Regional Effluent Management Scheme
- 20 Culburra Orient Point Sewerage Augmentation

Projects started in 2000/01

- 1 Sunset Strip Water Supply
- 2 Wakool Sewerage Scheme

(c) One of the major Government achievements in rural NSW is the provision of affordable and appropriate water supply and sewerage services to 1.6 million people in country towns. The following 134 major water supply and sewerage projects have been completed since 1995:

- 1 Aberdeen Water Supply
- 2 Adelong Water Supply, Stage 2
- 3 Albury Sewerage
- 4 Alstonville/Wollongbar Water Supply, Stage 2
- 5 Attunga Water Supply
- 6 Ballina-Lennox Head Sewerage
- 7 Baradine Sewerage
- 8 Barooga Water Supply
- 9 Barraba Water Supply
- 10 Bathurst Sewerage 2 – NLP
- 11 Batlow Water Supply
- 12 Bega Valley Telemetry
- 13 Bellingen Sewerage
- 14 Berrima Sewerage Retic Works
- 15 Blayney Sewerage – NLP
- 16 Boorowa Water Supply
- 17 Bowral Sewerage PRP
- 18 Brocklehurst Water Supply
- 19 Bulahdelah Water Supply
- 20 Bulahdelah Sewerage
- 21 Buronga Gol Gol Sewerage
- 22 Callala Bay Sewerage
- 23 Camden Haven Sewerage
- 24 Canowindra Sewerage
- 25 Captains Flat Dam Remedial Work Water Supply
- 26 Casino Water Supply Meters
- 27 Coffs Harbour Northern Area Sewerage
- 28 Coffs Harbour Water Supply, Stage 3
- 29 Collarenebri Water Supply
- 30 Condobolin Water Supply – Reservoirs Roofing
- 31 Cooma Sewerage
- 32 Corindi Sewerage
- 33 Corowa Sewerage Augmentation, Stage 2
- 34 Cowra Sewerage STP (C.P./DN) PA – NLP
- 35 Cowra Water Supply
- 36 Crescent Head Sewerage
- 37 Crookwell Sewerage
- 38 Daleys Point Sewerage
- 39 Delungra Water Supply
- 40 Deniliquin Sewerage
- 41 Dungog Sewerage
- 42 Dungowan Dam Remedial Works -
- 43 Eugowra Sewerage
- 44 Euston Sewerage

BUDGET ESTIMATES—AGRICULTURE, AND LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION

| | |
|-----|---|
| 45 | Forbes Sewerage |
| 46 | Forster/Green Point Sewerage |
| 47 | Ganmain Sewerage |
| 48 | Geurie Water Supply |
| 49 | Gilgai Water Supply |
| 50 | Gilgai Sewerage |
| 51 | Goodooga Water Supply |
| 52 | Goolgowi Water Supply |
| 53 | Gosford Regional Sewerage |
| 54 | Gosford/Wyong Water Supply – Joint Works |
| 55 | Gresford Water Supply |
| 56 | Griffith Sewerage, Stage 2 – NHT |
| 57 | Gulgong Sewerage |
| 58 | Gunnedah Emergency Water Supply |
| 59 | Gunnedah Sewerage |
| 60 | Guyra Sewerage |
| 61 | Hastings District Water Supply Stages 2A, B and C |
| 62 | Hastings Point Sewerage |
| 63 | Jindabyne Sewerage Augmentation, Stage 3 |
| 64 | Kempsey District Water Supply – Emergency |
| 65 | Kempsey Water Supply, Stage 2B |
| 66 | Kew/Kendall Sewerage |
| 67 | Kootingal/Moonbi Water Supply |
| 68 | Kyogle Water Supply – Reservoir |
| 69 | Lake Cathie/Bonny Hills Sewerage |
| 70 | Leeton Sewerage |
| 71 | Leeton Water Supply, Stage 2 |
| 72 | Lighting Ridge Sewerage |
| 73 | Lightning Ridge Water Supply |
| 74 | Lismore Sewerage |
| 75 | Macksville Sewerage |
| 76 | Manilla Sewerage |
| 77 | Marulan Water Supply |
| 78 | Mathoura Sewerage |
| 79 | Merimbula Sewerage |
| 80 | Minnie Water Water Supply Augmentation |
| 81 | Moama Sewerage |
| 82 | Mogo Sewerage |
| 83 | Moss Vale Sewerage |
| 84 | Moulamein Water Supply |
| 85 | Mumbil Sewerage |
| 86 | Mungindi Sewerage |
| 87 | Nabiac Sewerage |
| 88 | Nana Glen Water Supply |
| 89 | Nimmitabel Water Supply |
| 90 | North Darlington Point Sewerage |
| 91 | Nundle Water Supply |
| 92 | Oberon Sewerage, Stage 1 |
| 93 | Ocean Shores Sewerage |
| 94 | Orange Sewerage |
| 95 | Orange Water Supply – Water Treatment |
| 96 | Pacific Palms Sewerage |
| 97 | Pacific Palms/Seal Rocks Water Supply |
| 98 | Parkes Sewerage |
| 99 | Perthville Sewerage |
| 100 | Port Macquarie Sewerage, Stage 3 |
| 101 | Potato Point Water Supply |
| 102 | Richmond-Brunswick Reg Water Supply Study |
| 103 | Rileys Hill Sewerage |
| 104 | Robertson/Burrawang Water Supply |
| 105 | Rylstone Water Supply PAC |
| 106 | Shoalhaven City Water Supply, Stage 2 |

BUDGET ESTIMATES—AGRICULTURE, AND LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION

| | |
|-----|---------------------------------|
| 107 | Shoalhaven Sewerage Telemetry |
| 108 | SRCC Uranquinty Water Supply |
| 109 | Stroud Water Supply |
| 110 | Stuarts Point Water Supply |
| 111 | Tamworth Sewerage 2A – Westdale |
| 112 | Tamworth Water Supply PAC |
| 113 | Tamworth Water Supply, Stage 2C |
| 114 | Tea Gardens/Hawks Nest Sewerage |
| 115 | The Rock Sewerage |
| 116 | Tooleybuc Water Supply |
| 117 | Tullamore Reservoir Roofing |
| 118 | Tumbulgum Sewerage |
| 119 | Tumut Sewerage |
| 120 | Tweed Area Sewerage, Stage 2 |
| 121 | Uki Water Supply |
| 122 | Uralla Sewerage |
| 123 | Urana/Oaklands Sewerage |
| 124 | Urunga Sewerage |
| 125 | Wardell Sewerage |
| 126 | Warren Sewerage |
| 127 | Wellington Dam |
| 128 | Wilcannia Sewerage |
| 129 | Wongarbon Water Supply |
| 130 | Wooli Water Supply |
| 131 | Wyong Shire Council |
| 132 | Yamba Sewerage – Interim Works |
| 133 | Young Water Supply |

- (d) In March, the Premier announced an extra \$60 million over four years for the Country Water and Sewerage program. It will enable 18 new sewerage and water supply projects to start construction this year. These include new sewerage services for communities in Brungle, Hat Head, Millthorpe, New Brighton, North Karuah and the villages of Candelo, Cobargo, Kalaru, Wallaga Lake and Wolumla.

There is extra money for the Coraki sewerage scheme. There will be major upgrades for the regional sewerage systems in Coffs Harbour and Tamworth. We will be providing water treatment facilities at Brungle near Tumut and at Lake Cargelligo. And upgrading the water supplies to Boggabri, Quandialla and Warialda among others.

- (e) No. The Carr Labor Government remains committed to the \$855 million Country Towns Water Supply and Sewerage Program for reasons explained in relation to part (a) of this question.
- (f) At present twenty-three rural and regional sewerage schemes are currently subject to a Pollution Reduction Program, with more under negotiation between local authorities and the EPA.
- (g) Local water authority schemes currently affected include Greater Lithgow City, Moree Plains Shire, Forbes Shire, Mudgee Shire, Tumut Shire, Cowra Shire, Wagga Wagga City (Koorringal), Narrandera Shire, Greater Taree City, Corowa Shire (Mulwala), Tweed Shire (Hastings), Wellington, Deniliquin, Young Shire and Wingecarribee Shire (Mittagong).
- (h) The Government can only approve funding applications from councils in NSW, which have submitted their application within the guidelines. The conditions of government financial assistance to country towns' water supply and sewerage schemes require all works or variations to have approval before commencement.

Retrospective funding is not available and currently there is no need for this as the EPA and DLWC are working together on the appropriate management of treated sewage to achieve the best possible outcomes for the community and environment.

24. Mr Colless asked the Minister for Agriculture, and Land and Water Conservation, the Hon Richard Amery MP—

[Budget Paper No 3, Volume 1, Section 3 – State Water p3-9]

- (1) (a) The Total expenditure for 2001-02 is estimated to be \$562.3M (Budget Paper No 3, Vol 1, p 3-9). How much of this expenditure is allocated to State Water?
- (b) Is there a conflict of interest with DLWC being the regulatory authority, the source of funding, and at times, a service provider for State Water?
- (c) Can State Water adequately operate as an efficient, commercial business unit when it is subject to the DLWC budget, and to DLWC protocols and policies?

ANSWER:

- (1) (a) Estimated State Water total expenses is \$44.242 million.
- (b) There is no conflict of interest with well defined roles for service delivery and operating protocols specified by Government.
- (c) Yes. The assets managed by State Water and the functions contracted to State Water are the responsibility of the NSW Government, reflecting wider objectives than just commercial efficiency.

25. Mr Colless asked the Minister for Agriculture, and Land and Water Conservation, the Hon Richard Amery MP—

[Budget Paper No 3, Volume 1, Section 3 – Hawkesbury-Nepean Catchment Management Trust p3-43]

- (1) I refer to the decision by the Minister for Land and Water Conservation to sack the Hawkesbury-Nepean Catchment Management Trust on 6 April 2001 (Budget Paper No 3, Vol 1. (p3-43).
- (a) Given that the fundamental and independent role of the Trust was to provide a useful mechanism through which the 19 Councils, community and government agencies within the catchment could communicate, how will an integrated approach to catchment management, in this basin area, now be co-ordinated?
- (b) Can the same quality of communication be guaranteed?
- (c) If the Trust was deemed to be costing too much to administer why were its members not given the opportunity to review their budget?
- (d) If it was deemed that more on-ground works should be undertaken by the Trust, which was not one of its original or intended purposes, why were its members not given the opportunity to change the Trust's role in this regard?
- (e) Who is now responsible for the preparation of the four yearly comprehensive state of the environment report previously prepared by the Trust?
- (f) How will the DLWC assume the Trust's previously respected role in being deeply involved with the indigenous people of the catchment in working through their issues towards positive reconciliation?

ANSWER:

- (a) The State Catchment Management Coordinating Committee has been asked to review the current draft strategic plan prepared by the former Trust. The State Committee is to provide recommendations that will allow implementation of the strategy in a broader whole of government context than would have been possible under the Trust. Once approved by government, implementation of the strategy will recognise the existing roles and resources of government, local government and community bodies.

Implementation of the Strategy will be supported by a suite of new policy that will deliver integrated natural resource and environmental management outcomes in the Hawkesbury Nepean in a manner that recognises the regional priorities and builds new partnerships with existing players. In this context the Government recognises and supports the crucial role that local government must play in the management of our natural resources.

This will support the role of democratically elected Councillors in bringing community issues to the attention of Council and Government and Council's role through the planning process and by implementation and support for coordinated local government and community programs. A stronger local government role will support the role of Landcare and Bushcare groups with priority programs on public and private lands.

In recognition of the critical role of local government currently has and must continue to play in the future, the Government has recently established the Local Government Advisory Group with membership of elected Councillors from the 20 Councils in the former Trust Area. I have asked this body to coordinate local government on-ground and community programs that target priority regional environmental programs. The Government has also recently appointed the Hawkesbury Nepean River Management Forum in response to specific Healthy Rivers Commission recommendations. The Forum has been directed to provide recommendations that will allow the development of environmental flow rules that will support the Sydney Catchment Authority in the management of its dams within 2 years. The Forum has membership from key water users, environmental and industry bodies, and state agencies and has been directed to prepared recommendations for environmental flows that reflect an integrated approach to river management and recognise community, local government and government needs.

- (b) The new arrangements will provide superior communication between Government and the Community. Participation by elected Councillors from all Councils in the former Trust area in the Local Government Advisory Group will support the priority outcomes and ensure that issues are reflected in Council Business papers and communicated with Council staff. This will ensure that key outcomes are integrated in Council business plans and budgets, that will ensure effective links to planning process, or coordinated works implementation by Council or community groups. Discussion of key issues within the Local Government Advisory Group will ensure that Government can be advised of emerging local government and community issues, allowing appropriate and timely and strategic policy determination and project investment.
- (c) The Trust had been continually involved in the review of its budget and the need to move to a more strategic approach. The Government's stance on the Trust's budget was discussed by the Trust on many occasions during business plan and strategic planning.

The 1999 Regulation review, which was undertaken in accordance with the Subordinate Legislation Act 1989, directed the Trust to take a more strategic and cost effective approach that would build implementation partnerships with community, local government and government. During the Regulation Review and on occasions the Government made it abundantly clear to the Trust Management and the Trustee's, that in line with budget constraints on other agencies and government programs, the Trust would not be given an increased budget and must live within its means.

Despite awareness of Government concerns, the Trustee's through the business planning cycle continued to promote staff and programs that in many cases continued to duplicate existing agency and local government programs and provide staff entitlements and structures that were well in excess of other industrial awards and agency staff structures. These expectations were unable to be sustained by the direct state budget.

- (d) The Trust was initially established to bring about environmental improvement in the Hawkesbury Nepean Catchment. The initial functions of the Trust were initially directed by Section 27 of the Catchment Management Act 1989 and the additional functions listed in Section 6 of the Hawkesbury Nepean Catchment Management Trust Regulation 1993. The Act and Regulation did allow the Trust to implement on ground works, but they apparently chose not to do so.
- (e) The Department of Land and Water Conservation will coordinate the future natural resource and environmental management reporting. The department will work with the Local Government Advisory Group to coordinate consistent reporting using the existing reporting process.

Coordination of reporting and analysis through the Local Government Advisory Group will allow the DLWC and the government agencies to realign service delivery to match environmental priorities and community and local government support needs. With the assistance of the Local Government Advisory Group DLWC will also be able to revise the final Hawkesbury Nepean catchment strategy to reflect current needs. This will ensure that government and private investment is constantly matched with community and local government programs in the area of greatest need and in a manner that brings about real environmental improvement.

- (f) The Government and DLWC have a strong and proven record of working with local Aboriginal communities. In accordance with Government policy DLWC will continue to seek Aboriginal membership on statutory Boards and committees that it establishes as well as community panels for the assessment of Natural Heritage Trust and other government funding. All Boards and Committees have been directed to ensure that they consult with local indigenous communities and to integrate their community's concerns and needs into their plans and recommendations.

The department will continue to promote awareness of Aboriginal culture offering board and committee members Aboriginal cross cultural awareness training. This training, which is coordinated by the department's Aboriginal Natural Resource Officers, promotes awareness of Aboriginal cultural richness, diversity, as well as indigenous perspectives and needs in natural resource management. DLWC will extend the work of its Aboriginal Natural Resource Officers into the former Trust area.

26. Mr Colless asked the Minister for Agriculture, and Land and Water Conservation, the Hon Richard Amery MP—

[Budget Paper No 3, Volume 1, Section 3 – Catchment Management p3-42]

- (1) (a) As per the Budget Estimates Papers 2001-02 (page 3-42), 18 Catchment Management Plans have been submitted to the Minister, by the new appointed Boards, for his approval. Given that the key principle of catchment management is that each catchment has its own vastly different characteristics, can the Minister guarantee that these Plans will fully recognise and protect the individual make up of each catchment?
- (b) To what degree has community consultation been undertaken in preparing these draft Plans?
- (c) When will the Minister give his approval?
- (d) What is the next step with respect to the practical introduction of these plans?

ANSWER:

- (1) (a) The members of catchment management boards have been appointed for their knowledge and experience of natural resource management in their catchment. This will ensure that the targets and management actions in the draft catchment management plans developed by the boards are tailored to the characteristics and needs of each individual catchment.
- (b) Consultation with the community in the development of their draft catchment management plan is one of the principal functions of the boards. They are carrying out this function according to a communication strategy prepared soon after their establishment last year. A range of methods, including meetings, focus group workshops and newsletter mailouts, are being used at the various stages of plan development to encourage input from the community. In addition, it is expected that the draft plans will be publicly exhibited following their completion to provide further opportunity for community consultation.
- (c) Government approval of the draft plans will follow their revision as a result of the public exhibition, expected to take place in the first half of 2002.
- (d) Once signed off both targets and actions become government policy and the prioritised actions guide investment in each catchment. The term of a Catchment Plan is proposed to be 10 years. The Department of Land and Water Conservation would oversight the development of detailed implementation plans for the Catchment Plans, including the development of investment

strategies. An investment strategy would need to allocate the budget from all revenue sources according to the priorities set by the boards approved plan.

The Department of Land and Water Conservation would be responsible for the collation of annual implementation reports that would be forwarded to the Catchment Management Boards. The Catchment Management Boards would then be responsible for auditing these implementation reports against the actions and rules in the Catchment Plan, and reporting on their findings to the Minister for Land and Water Conservation.

In addition there would be a mid-term review of the Catchment Plan carried out under guidance from the Minister for Land and Water Conservation to determine whether the Catchment Plan was on track for meeting its natural resource outcomes ie targets.

27. Mr Colless asked the Minister for Agriculture, and Land and Water Conservation, the Hon Richard Amery MP—

[Budget Paper No 3, Volume 1, Section 3 – Soil Conservation p3-43]

I refer the Minister to Budget Paper No 3 Volume 1, page 3-43, 22.1.3, Catchment, Coastal and Floodplain Communities.

- (1) What components and activities are included in:
 - (a) Soil conservation grants – other
 - (b) Soil conservation grants – budget dependent agencies?
 - (c) The budget for “Soil conservation grants – budget dependent agencies” has been reduced by \$600,000 for the coming financial year. What impact will this have on the implementation of onground soil conservation works programs?
- (2) With respect to staffing for the soil conservation function within the Department, can you advise:
 - (a) How many staff are currently employed as professionally trained soil conservationists in the Department of Land & Water Conservation?
 - (b) How many junior professional staff are currently being trained in the scientific and technical aspects of soil conservation in the Department?
 - (c) How many field service staff are currently within the Soilworks branch of the Department?
 - (d) What training programs are in place to train staff and contractors to build their skills in practical soil conservation in the Department? What is the expected expenditure on these training programs during 2001/2002?
 - (e) Given that the Budget Paper No.3, Vol 1 page 3-9 states that one of the Department’s strategies is to provide “innovative advice and services that are client and outcome focused” can the Minister provide an explanation for the use of Government Departmental staff and equipment to construct a dam on a property at Binda that was unlawful?
 - (f) Can the Minister further explain why officers of his Department then reconstructed the illegal dam without first checking that the owner of the property had obtained a licence?
 - (g) Court Records show that Departmental Officers were aware that the original dam was constructed illegally. Why did Departmental Officers not take any rectification action until they were threatened with legal action by downstream property owners?
 - (h) Does not this particular case highlight the problems associated with the absence of properly trained professional soil conservationists in the highly technical and legally demanding field of applied soil conservation?

- (i) What were the legal costs and dam reconstruction costs incurred by the Department as a result of this incident?
- (3) (a) What programs are currently being implemented to control soil erosion in the Department?
- (b) What is the expected expenditure on these programs in 2001/2002?
- (4) (a) What programs are currently being implemented to manage soil fertility decline in NSW soils in the Department?
- (b) What is the expected expenditure on these programs in 2001/2002?
- (5) (a) What research programs are in place to investigate the decline of soil fertility in NSW?
- (b) What is the expected expenditure on these programs in 2001/2002?

ANSWER:

- (1) (a) "Soil conservation grants – other" is a generic line item title for a number of funding programs including:
- Bushcare
 - Farm Forestry
 - Fisheries Action
 - Murray Darling 2001
 - National Landcare
 - National Rivercare Initiative
 - National Wetlands Program
 - Waterwatch Program
- (b) "Soil conservation grants – budget dependent agencies" represents the components of the above programs where the project proponent is a Government department.
- (c) Reduction in the budget for government agencies is an indicative figure only. Actual Commonwealth allocations are not known at the time the budget papers are printed and indicative figures are used.
- (2) (a) There are 105 professionally trained soil conservationists in DLWC. Apart from soil conservation functions, many of these officers are engaged in landscape management and natural resource functions.
- (b) Nil
- (c) Soil Services has 26 field service staff in the soilworks group providing supervision to plant operations.
- (d) Soil Services in association with TAFE have developed a nationally accredited conservation earthworks training system for internal staff and industry. The course is a practical competency based range of programs covering basic earthmoving operations up to a diploma level in Land Management (conservation earthworks). Staff are encouraged and assisted to progress through this training system. Soil Services budget for training programs in 2001/02 is approximately \$42,000.
- (e)-(f) One of the services provided by the Department of Land and Water Conservation is a specialist conservation earthmoving and soil consultancy facility known as Soil Services. The owner of the property at Binda engaged Soil Services to construct a dam on his property. By mistake, the constructed dam exceeded seven megalitres in capacity. Had this dam remained in operation, it would have required a licence pursuant to the provisions of Part 2 of the Water Act 1912. Following a complaint from a downstream landowner, it was agreed that the above dam should be removed. Soil Services then constructed an alternate storage on an adjacent hillside within the property.

- (g) The Honourable Member is mistaken. The Department of Land and Water Conservation readily accepted that an error had been made. It then acted quickly to rectify the situation. Construction of the initial dam commenced on 29 January 1998 and was completed thirteen days later. Removal of this dam and construction of the second dam commenced on 25 March 1998 with these works being completed by 2 April 1998. The decision to build a completely new dam was made with the agreement of the immediate downstream landowner on 2 March 1998. Notwithstanding this agreement, the same landowner initiated legal proceedings against the Department on 9 March 1998.
- (h) No. In this case, a mistake of size was made when constructing the original dam. The Department acknowledged the mistake and rectified the situation. It has subsequently introduced a quality assurance system for its earthwork operations. Under this system, staff are required to work through a check list of issues prior to works commencing. This list includes consultation with affected neighbours and determination of licence regulations. Staff have been instructed on the implementation of the system which should now ensure that similar situations do not occur again.
- (i) In defending the action brought against the Department as a result of this incident, legal costs of about \$85,000 were incurred. Soil Services incurred a cost of about \$11,000 in removing the initial dam and constructing the alternate storage.
- (3) (a) The programs currently being implemented to control soil erosion include:
- Soil conservation advisory services
 - Soil Services
 - Section 10 Soil Conservation Projects
 - Special Conservation “Advances” Scheme
 - Soil survey
- (b) The expenditure on these programs is expected to be:
- Soil conservation advisory services - Very difficult to quantify as these advisory services are integrated with other natural resource advisory services conducted by the Department of Land and Water Conservation.
 - Soil Services – \$13M
 - Soil Conservation Projects - There will be \$582,000 spent on 14 Section 10 Soil Conservation Projects located throughout the state.
 - Special conservation “Advances” Scheme - It is anticipated that about \$1.8M will be available through the Special Conservation Scheme for low interest loans to farmers for soil conservation and stock and domestic farm water supplies works.
 - Soil survey – the Department presently employs 27.2 equivalent full time positions (EFT’s) on soil surveys throughout the State.
- (4) (a) This is a matter for NSW Agriculture
- (b) This is a matter for NSW Agriculture
- (5) (a) This is a matter for NSW Agriculture
- (b) This is a matter for NSW Agriculture

28. Mr Colless asked the Minister for Agriculture, and Land and Water Conservation, the Hon Richard Amery MP—

[Budget Paper No 3, Volume 1, Section 3 – State Water- Substantial Funding on Electronic Information Systems]

When can the public expect to be able to access information and services from State Water via the Internet?

ANSWER:

State Water provides information and services via its Customer Service Officers and Operations Officers, who interact with customers on a day to day basis. In surveys, most customers have indicated this as their preference for

information provision. However, some customers have sought the Internet as a preferred source of information from State Water.

State Water's own home page is currently in developmental stages and will be incorporated into a revised natural resource management home page, coordinated by DLWC. This is due to become accessible in December 2001. State Water has done considerable work over the last 4 years in information provision via the Internet.

Data collected by State Water on a daily basis is also available under the Sustainable Water section of DLWC's Internet home page. This includes daily river flow information, storage capacity and water release data, available at <http://waterinfo.dlwc.nsw.gov.au/>.

Since February 2001, State Water customers have been able to use the Internet or telephone to pay their State Water accounts, using BPAY®.

Since July 2000, a Billing Enquiry Freecall 1800 353091 as well as Billing Enquiry Email swace@dlwc.nsw.gov.au have been available for all State Water customers.

29. Mr Colless asked the Minister for Agriculture, and Land and Water Conservation, the Hon Richard Amery MP—

[Budget Paper No 3, Volume 1, Section 3 – Blue Green Algae/Myall Lakes]

With regard to the blue-green algae outbreaks in Myall Lakes. This problem has been ongoing for over a year causing significant impacts on tourism due to partial closure of the Lakes.

- (1) (a) Why has the DLWC contracted a new company to carry out water monitoring tests?
- (b) Has the Lakes been closed unnecessarily due to inaccurate water testing carried out by the DLWC and the NPWS?
- (c) What practical steps have been undertaken to reduce the level of excess nutrients entering Myall Lakes throughout the catchment?
- (d) How much have these measures cost the State Government to date?
- (e) Can the Minister guarantee the DLWC will fully co-operate in the forthcoming Federally funded Blue-Green Algae Monitoring Project for the Myall Lakes.

ANSWER:

- (1) (a) The laboratory testing is contracted to NPWS with DLWC providing guidance on suitable laboratories. Parallel testing by two laboratories for a period last year provided consistent results on the freshwater species that were dominant at the time. The species then present were *Microcystis* and *Anabaena*, at levels requiring the issue of a “high alert”. Over time, as the lake became more brackish, an additional blue green algae species with a small cell size (called *Chroococcus*) was detected by one of the laboratories. Due to its ability to detect the algal species with smaller cell sizes, this laboratory was selected for ongoing monitoring to ensure all algal species were detected and appropriate health warnings were issued in accordance with the New South Wales guidelines.
- (b) No. Both laboratories used for testing provided consistent results on the toxic freshwater species that were dominant at the time, at levels requiring the issue of a “high alert”. All sampling has been undertaken in accordance with the “Draft National Protocol for Monitoring of Cyanobacteria and Toxins in Surface Waters” and alert levels and triggers were based on New South Wales’ guidelines for recreational waters.
- (c) Studies by DLWC have confirmed that the majority of nutrients entering Myall Lakes are from sources within the catchment. Hence government agencies have been working with the community to raise awareness and encourage adoption of practices to reduce the level of excess nutrients entering the Myall Lakes. For example, a catchment plan is currently being finalised, which outlines strategies primarily aimed at reducing nutrient inputs from the catchment into the lake. A Rivercare plan covering some 40km of riverbank has been completed and onground works

aimed at reducing sediment and nutrient inputs have commenced. As the bulk of nutrients entering the lake from the catchment are from freehold land a number of fact sheets have been produced and field days have been held to increase landholder awareness of what they can do to reduce nutrient levels.

The department has provided assistance to dairy farmers in the catchment who applied for Federal funding for upgrade of their dairy effluent management systems. NSW Agriculture has conducted workshops over the past two years with dairy and chicken farmers on best practice management. The National Parks and Wildlife Service is currently implementing the Myall Lakes National Park Toilet and Wastewater Strategy.

In March 2001, the Federal Minister for the Environment advanced a grant of \$72,250 from the Coast and Clean Seas program. The primary focus of this project is investigate the relative contribution of different nutrient sources to the lake, assess benthic habitat and biomass, undertake further sediment and nutrient work, and determine the trophic status of the lake.

- (d) The Department of Land and Water Conservation to date has spent:
- \$300 000 on algae, sediment and lake and catchment water quality investigations, community education and completion of the Rivercare and catchment plans. On-ground erosion control works have commenced at a cost of \$10 000, and more works are planned.

The National Parks and Wildlife Service to date has spent:

- \$535 000 on developing and implementing the Toilet and Wastewater Strategy.
- \$190 000 on algae and water quality sampling, and community education.

NSW Agriculture has spent \$13 000 on staffing of programs over the past two years including workshops with dairy and chicken farmers on best practice management.

The Department of Land and Water Conservation and National Parks and Wildlife Service will contribute a total of approximately \$170 000 to the Coast and Clean Seas project in 2001/2002.

- (e) The Department of Land and Water Conservation is in fact the lead agency for the *Monitoring Blue Green Algae in Myall Lakes Project* and was responsible for developing the initial Coast and Clean Seas funding application. The department is fully committed to ensuring the success of the project in cooperation with partners in the project. In addition the project has identified a steering committee to oversee project progress against objectives and community consultation.

30. Mr Colless asked the Minister for Agriculture, and Land and Water Conservation, the Hon Richard Amery MP—

[Budget Paper No 3, Volume 1, Section 3 – Budget Miscellaneous p3-32]

- (1) I refer to Budget Paper No 3, Vol 1. (p3-32), Retained Revenue for the Sale of goods and services is estimated to be approximately \$101.7M in 2001-02, which an increase of around \$6.6M from 2000-01.

- (a) Can you inform the committee what “goods and services” this refers to?
 (b) Is the estimated increase as a result of increased prices or increased “sales”?

ANSWER:

| | | |
|-----|---|-----------|
| (a) | Bulk Water Income | \$40.200m |
| | Soil Services Income – earthworks and consulting | \$13.000m |
| | Murray Darling Basin Commission recovery of Maintenance, Capital and operations Hume Dam and other infrastructure | \$21.066m |
| | Land and Water Consulting Income | \$3.584m |
| | Rental of Cottages | \$0.614m |
| | Agistment Fees | \$0.819m |
| | Miscellaneous Services – includes foreshore leases, conference centre fees, hydro power fees, data base searches, laboratory income, drilling operation income, sale of maps and other products | \$17.400m |

BUDGET ESTIMATES—AGRICULTURE, AND LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION

| | |
|---|----------|
| River Management Agreement income | \$0.410m |
| Solicitor inquiry fees | \$0.292m |
| Hunter Catchment Management Trust Contributions | \$0.950m |
| Recoup of costs from other Agencies | \$1.536m |
| Other unclassified receipts | \$1.851m |

- (b) All income (except for Bulk Water and Soil Services) has been escalated by 2.4% on the previous year, in accordance with Treasury advice. The Estimate for bulk water assumes IPART will endorse the Department's 2001 submission for the next phase of moving to full cost recovery. Soil Services income has been increased due to an anticipated increase in sales.

31. Mr Colless asked the Minister for Agriculture, and Land and Water Conservation, the Hon Richard Amery MP—

[Budget Paper No 3, Volume 1, Section 3 – Taxes/Fees/Fines p3-32]

I refer to Budget Paper No 3, Vol 1. (p3-32), Retained taxes, fees and fines are estimated to be around \$2.9M, can you provide the Committee with a breakdown of which programs these taxes, fees and fines come from?

ANSWER:

The \$2.9M in retained taxes, fines and fees are levies on Crown land caravan park operations. The fees are paid to the Public Reserves Management Fund.

32. Mr Colless asked the Minister for Agriculture, and Land and Water Conservation, the Hon Richard Amery MP—

[Budget Paper No 3, Volume 1, Section 3 – Staffing p 3-37]

- (1) The Budget papers indicate that the Effective Full Time Staffing of the Rivers and Groundwater program have increased from 890 in 2000-2001 to 980 in 2001-02. Can you provide the committee with details as to where these 90 staff have been posted?
- (2) Why is there a net movement of staff from Land and Vegetation and Catchment, Coastal and Floodplain Communities Programs into the Rivers and Groundwater Program?

| Program | | 2000/01 | 2001/02 | Increase |
|---------|------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|
| 22.1.1 | Rivers & Groundwater | 890 | 980 | 90 |
| 22.1.2 | Land & Vegetation | 736 | 723 | -13 |
| 22.1.3 | Catchments, Coastal & Flood Plains | 498 | 491 | -7 |
| | TOTALS | 2124 | 2194 | 70 |

ANSWER:

- (1) The staff numbers shown in the budget papers represent an estimated, average full time equivalent (EFT) number of staff which will be costed to a program during the budget year. The budgeted increase in staff numbers for the Rivers and Groundwater program reflects resourcing priorities to be applied to the implementation of the Water Management Act during 2001-2002 and recruitment of State Water positions following relocations to Dubbo in 2000-2001. The increase in resources will be Statewide and flexible, depending upon the nature of work and duration of tasks required to implement the new Act, rather than an establishment of positions in any one area or location.
- (2) The net movement in staff between programs represents a change in resourcing priorities between programs.

33. Mr Colless asked the Minister for Agriculture, and Land and Water Conservation, the Hon Richard Amery MP—

[Budget Paper No 3, Volume 1, Section 3 – Auditor General]

I refer to the Auditor-General's Report to Parliament 2001 Volume One.

- (1) With regard to the DLWC's restructure what is the current status of the voluntary redundancy program initiated in 2000/01 to address the 48 remaining displaced employees as at 30 November 2000?
- (2) A valuation committee was formed to identify, record and value all parcels of Crown lands in NSW. Up until 31 December 2000 the Committee had only met once on 18th July 2000:
 - (a) What is the current status of the committee's designated work?
 - (b) When will this work be finalised?
- (3) With regard to sand bypassing of the Tweed River's entrance, (a joint project between the NSW and Queensland Governments), what is the current status of the DLWC's role in managing the second stage of this project which includes the design, construction and maintenance of a sand bypassing system?
- (4) What were the benefits and/or cost savings associated with the DLWC's implementation of the new SAP payroll system as from 1st March 2001?

ANSWER:

- (1) Of the 48 displaced employees as at 30 November 2000/01:
 - 3 accepted voluntary redundancy and have left the department;
 - 10 were redeployed to other permanent positions within the department;
 - 9 are temporarily appointed in established positions and are currently not displaced;
 - 3 are on external secondments to other government agencies and are currently not displaced;
 - 23 remain displaced and are undertaking meaningful work within the department while awaiting redeployment to a suitable position either in DLWC or elsewhere in the public sector.
- (2) (a) The Crown spatial layer will be completed to a stage by December 2001 to allow the valuation project to be undertaken in the first half of 2002. The Committee is currently developing a valuation methodology appropriate for the task, which will be undertaken by the State Valuation Office.
 - (b) The project is due for completion in April 2002.
- (3) The sand bypassing system at the Tweed River has been successfully designed and constructed under a development agreement between the NSW and Queensland Governments and McConnell Dowell Constructors (Aust) Pty Limited. The system was commissioned on 4 May 2001 after successfully completing operational tests. The project is now in the operations and maintenance phase. Dredging and beach nourishment is currently being undertaken in addition to sand pumping and maintenance. DLWC is the agency that represents Queensland and NSW for the purpose of implementing this project. It does this on behalf of NSW, which is the Coordinating State under the Deed of Agreement between the two States that was ratified by the *Tweed River Entrance Sand Bypassing Act 1995*.
- (4) The implementation or "go live" date for the new SAP payroll system has been delayed to the end of August 2001 due to technical issues associated with configuring a new specially developed NSW public sector version of the SAP software. As a result, benefits and cost savings are yet to be realised.

34. Mr R Jones asked the Minister for Agriculture, and Land and Water Conservation, the Hon Richard Amery MP—

[In relation to Water Management]

- (1) What resources are going into compliance and monitoring of Water and Catchment Management Board plans?
- (2) What resources has DLWC spent on compliance of water licences in the last 12 months?
- (3) Has the Groundwater Dependent Ecosystems Policy been finalised? If not, why not?
- (4) When will the State Water Management Outcomes Plan be finalised, and implemented?

ANSWER:

- (1) Answered under Question 2 – Questions taken on Notice during Hearing
- (2) Answered under Question 4 – Questions taken on Notice during Hearing
- (3) Answered under Question 1- Questions taken on Notice during Hearing
- (4) Answered under Question 3 - Questions taken on Notice during Hearing

35. Mr R Jones asked the Minister for Agriculture, and Land and Water Conservation, the Hon Richard Amery MP—

[In relation to Weirs, Levees, Dams, Fishways & Snags]

- (1) What expenses were incurred by the DLWC in conducting environmental assessments when granting or renewing licences for the extraction of water from a defined watercourse, and for renewing licences for works such as weirs, levees and dams?
- (2) What expenses were incurred by the DLWC in constructing fishways on publicly owned weirs?
- (3) What expenses were incurred by the DLWC by its compliance section in relation to reading meters on water pumps?
- (4) What expenses were incurred by the DLWC for consultancies regarding engineering works to structures such as dams and weirs?
- (5) What expenses were incurred by the DLWC for the construction of devices to mitigate the release of cold water from dams?
- (6) What expenses were incurred by the DLWC for consultancies regarding the determination of the environmental compliance costs of researching and constructing cold water pollution mitigation devices on publicly owned dams, and for the construction of fishways on publicly owned weirs?
- (7) What expenses were incurred by the DLWC in adding large woody debris (or 'snags') to waterways for the conservation and management of fish stocks and the restoration of habitat?
- (8) What expenses were incurred by the DLWC in conducting environmental assessments of levees and other structures on floodplains and wetlands?
- (9) How many staff did the DLWC allocate to the mitigation of cold water pollution from dams, and to the construction of fishways and to the removal of obsolete weirs?

ANSWER:

- (1) DLWC incurred approximately \$700, 000 in conducting environmental assessments when granting or renewing licences for the extraction or obstruction of water from defined watercourses.
- (2) No fishways were constructed in 2000/01 on DLWC weirs. A total expenditure of about \$300,000 was incurred by State Water in maintenance, investigations, designing and planning of fishways in 2000/01. \$150,000 was spent on documenting past projects and writing up design guidelines.
- (3) The following expenditure was incurred by State Water in relation to reading meters on licensed works. (Note: Not all licensed works are water pumps and not all water pumps are licensed works. Not all water pumps have meters).

Metering costs 2000/01

| | \$Million |
|--------------------|-----------|
| Regulated Rivers | \$2.054 |
| Unregulated Rivers | \$0.082 |
| Groundwater | \$0.405 |
| | \$2.541 |

- (4) As per the Government definition of a consultancy, no expenses were incurred by State Water for consultancies regarding engineering works.
- (5) No expenses were incurred for the construction of devices to mitigate the release of cold water from dams. Seven of the 18 dams have multi-level offtakes and two have bi-level offtakes. A total expenditure of about \$800,000 was incurred for maintenance of intake towers with multi-level offtakes.
- (6) A total expenditure of about \$250,000 was incurred for investigations and planning for construction of fishways and selective withdrawal of water at dams and weirs.
- (7) The DLWC supported a trial in the Williams River, undertaken by Macquarie University. The trial involved placing large woody debris (LWD) in a 2 km reach of river. There is an extensive monitoring program associated with the trial. The Hunter Region spent \$94,850 on the project in 2000/01. This included surveying and technical support as well as placement of LWD by the DLWC River Works construction gangs. \$110,000 has been budgeted for 2001/02.

The Department's Centre Natural Resources spent \$23,000 (in 2000/01) on design and monitoring and estimates a further \$44,000 will be spent in 2001/02. Total DLWC expenditure for 2000/01 was \$117,850. Planned expenditure for 2001/02 is \$154,000.
- (8) The Department incurred an amount of \$420,000 in conducting environmental assessments of levees and other structures on floodplains and wetlands throughout New South Wales.
- (9) State Water allocated a total of 2EFT for removal of obsolete weirs, construction of fishways and selective withdrawal facilities.

36. Mr R Jones asked the Minister for Agriculture, and Land and Water Conservation, the Hon Richard Amery MP—

[In relation to St Marys Sewerage Treatment Plant (STP)]

- (1) Could the Minister advise the expenditure details for the upgrade of the St Marys STP?
- (2) Would the Minister advise if the Hawkesbury-Nepean Catchment Management Trust (HNCMT) was involved in the upgrade Development Application process?
- (3) Could the Minister provide details of expenditure by the HNCMT in its role in the Development Application?

- (4) Could the Minister provide details of Sydney Water's contracts on this site with Australian Water Technologies (AWT)?
- (5) Could the Minister advise of any parties this sites' upgrade is involved with? Has the upgrade been out sourced?
- (6) Could the Minister advise the cost of the upgrade and the cost for flood prevention and Cumberland Plains Vegetation preservation for the STP?
- (7) Could the Minister advise the time frame for the upgrade and will this development have any bearing on the recent Regional Environment Plan 30 for St Marys?
- (8) Could the Minister advise if the HNCMT was sacked over its submission to Penrith City Council on the Development Application for the site upgrade last November 2000?
- (9) Was the Minister aware of the objections by the community group, ADI residents action group, to the proposed upgrade at the St Marys STP?

ANSWERS:

- (1) This is a matter for Sydney Water Corporation
- (2) The former Hawkesbury-Nepean Catchment Management Trust has had no involvement with the upgrade of the St Mary's STP
- (3) See response to Question 36 (2)
- (4) This is a matter for Sydney Water Corporation
- (5) This is a matter for Sydney Water Corporation
- (6) The cost of the upgrade is a matter for Sydney Water Corporation
- (7) This is a matter for Sydney Water Corporation
- (8) The Government's decision to abolish the Trust was based on the need for greater operating efficiencies leading to improved on-ground catchment actions
- (9) No

37. Mr R Jones asked the Minister for Agriculture, and Land and Water Conservation, the Hon Richard Amery MP—

[In relation to Wetlands Conservation and Management]

- (1) Will the Minister advise how much the DLWC is spending on the conservation of wetlands throughout NSW (outside of NPWS Protected Areas) including expenditure on:
 - (a) mapping;
 - (b) establishing their conservation status;
 - (c) the preparation of wetlands management plans;
 - (d) grants to the community for management plans;
 - (e) grants to the community for on-ground works; and
 - (f) grants to the community for education and awareness?

- (2) Will the Minister advise how much the NSW Government will be spending on acid sulphate soil mitigation in the year 2001-002?

ANSWER:

- (1)
 (a)–(f) Under the NSW Wetland Action Grants Program, the NSW State Wetland Advisory Committee administers around \$100 000 per annum for community-based wetland rehabilitation projects. These grants are aimed at management plan preparation, onground works for rehabilitation purposes and education and awareness.

DLWC is not currently undertaking any statewide mapping. NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service currently has National Heritage Trust funding to complete statewide mapping of wetlands in NSW. DLWC has had input into this process.

- (2) Funding for acid sulfate soil mitigation is provided through two sources. Funding of \$902,000 sourced from the Environmental Trust and administered by DLWC will be spent on acid sulfate soil hot spot remediation in the year 2001-02. The Acid Soil Action Program administered by NSW Agriculture has an acid sulfate soil component valued at \$0.5 million for 2001-02.

38. Mr R Jones asked the Minister for Agriculture, and Land and Water Conservation, the Hon Richard Amery MP—

[In relation to Water]

The price of irrigation water in California and Israel is over \$120 per Megalitre. In NSW, the maximum price charged varies from 20 cents to \$6 for that quantity. The Minister's Department of Land and Water Conservation (DLWC), in its 2001 submission to Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal shows that the current prices return less than 60% of the costs of administration, yet argues that the prices be increased by no more than 20% per year to avoid a claimed inconvenience to their clients.

- (1) Can the Minister explain why it is that these other developed, dry countries which charge one hundred-fold the prices currently levied in NSW, enjoy both a vibrant horticultural sector and the billions of dollars in revenue to the State generated by these water charges, while NSW forgoes these benefits?
- (2) Is full cost recovery not expected to be attained until 2004, at the current rate of increase?
- (3) Does the DLWC acknowledge that "Environmental problems exist in NSW rivers and groundwater systems due to water regulation and extraction" and "Full cost recovery does not include the total cost in arresting the widespread natural resource degradation."?
- (4) The Minister has recently unilaterally revised the terms of reference and timeframes of the water management committees.
- (a) Does the Minister expect that these Committees will be able to make credible decisions on water flow levels (ie environmental flows) when there is no data available whatsoever on current river flows for many of the rivers in question and no credible local information on ecological flow requirements?
- (b) Can the Minister give an undertaking that the Water Management Committees will be restored to their original scope and breadth, before the community's investment and the goodwill of those serving is consumed by the soulless and unpopular task of setting Bulk Access Regimes?
- (c) Why did the Minister appoint an additional irrigator to the Mid North Coast Water Management Committee (MNCWMC) when the Committee consensus was that the Committee had an adequate representation of views, and a partisan appointment would seriously undermine the trust that had been built up to that point?
- (d) Is the Minister aware that the appointment has lead to serious disruption of MNCWMC meetings and much time has been lost as the new appointment insists on revisiting and overturning

consensus decisions made before his appointment and as a result has stalled the committee planning process?

- (e) Will the Minister take action to remove this additional water user representative to restore balance and proper functioning of the MNCWMC or at the very least censure him and remind him of his obligations to committee process and terms of reference?

ANSWER:

- (1)-(3) Cursory comparisons of water prices applying in New South Wales with those applying overseas are not appropriate. This is comparing apples with oranges. The Department of Land and Water Conservation's bulk water price accounts for only a small portion of the total cost of irrigation to NSW farmers. In fact, it only accounts for 7% of the variable irrigation cost of rice farming.

However, bulk water pricing reform is a clear component of the original water reform package adopted by NSW Government in 1997. Pricing reform is also required for NSW to meet its commitment to implement the Council of Australian Governments' water reform framework. Historically, bulk water services have been provided free of charge or well below cost. This has been to the detriment of the sustainability of our water resources. This can no longer continue.

The maximum bulk water price in NSW is determined by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal in accordance with the requirements of the *Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal Act, 1992*. One of the requirements of the Act is for the Tribunal to take into account the impact of price changes on customers.

The Department acknowledges that price rises, to improve cost recovery, may impact on customers, and that any resulting dislocation effects should be minimised. The most appropriate way of doing this is to provide certainty about future prices. This is achieved by phasing in price changes over several years in a transparent manner.

The COAG agreements on the water reform framework provide guidance for Australian jurisdictions concerning what is recoverable through water charges. The framework does not include the total cost of arresting all natural resource degradation, nor should it. Implementation of the framework in NSW provides for full cost recovery levels including a share of the environmental costs associated with the management of blue green algae and salinity.

If the price changes proposed in the Department's recent pricing submission to the Tribunal are adopted, full cost recovery would be achieved by 2004 in most regulated valleys. The exception is where the Tribunal has declared that an ongoing government subsidy is required. For unregulated systems, full cost recovery is not being proposed in the medium term because many water users on these streams will incur additional costs with the implementation of metering and monitoring. The Department will continue to refine price paths for unregulated and other systems to progress the achievement of full cost recovery. This will be done in a manner similar to the process implemented for regulated systems.

- (4) (a) It is not true that to say that there is no data available whatsoever on river flows for many of the rivers for which Water Sharing Plans are currently being developed. Nor is it true to say that there is no credible local information on ecological flow requirements. In the State's major regulated river systems, available stream flow data dates back more than 100 years. The Department of Land and Water Conservation has developed computer models which are able to assess the impacts that differing levels of water demand and differing sets of management rules would have on river flows over that 100 year period.

There are also lengthy records of flow available in many of the smaller unregulated rivers. Where data is not available, computer models are being used to generate flow data.

While the availability of information on environmental flow requirements is not as comprehensive, there are still quite large amounts of data available on key environmental elements. Environmental flow rules were implemented in these systems in 1998. Since then, the rules have undergone annual review and revision based on improvements in understanding of environmental flow requirements and improvements to computer models.

In 1998, the Government also implemented a large scientific project called Integrated Monitoring of Environmental Flows. This program will assess the link between flow and ecological responses in the major regulated rivers and the Barwon Darling River. The Department of Land and Water Conservation is also preparing environmental flow reports for each of the major regulated valleys. Water Sharing Plans will be reviewed periodically and as information is gathered, it will be used to improve and better target environmental flows.

- (b) As you would be aware the Water Management Act 2000 was passed by Parliament in December last year. A very important provision of the new Act is that it provides for water management committees to be established as statutory committees to develop statutory water management plans. Prior to the new Act I had established a number of water management committees across the State to prepare water management plans. This was particularly the case for the major regulated river systems and the Barwon-darling river which were set up to provide recommendations on environmental flow rules for their systems. However under the previous legislation these plans had no statutory or legal basis.

In March this year I re-constituted the existing water management committees as advisory committees under the new Act with specific Terms of Reference to provide me with recommendations on water sharing. The requirement to focus on water sharing recommendations was driven by the provisions in the new Act which requires Bulk Access Regimes for the priority water sources to be developed by December 2001. The setting of Bulk Access regimes through statutory water sharing plans provides water users with more secure access to water and also provides clear rules for ensuring that water for the fundamental health of our rivers and groundwater systems is protected.

I retained the existing water management committees for this purpose because they had the experience and knowledge to meet this requirement given the very limited time frame and because of the importance of the water sharing plans which will be in effect for 10 years. I am now determining priorities for other water management plans throughout the State. Once the committees have completed their current terms of reference they may be given new terms of reference to move onto these other priority water management areas.

- (c) The new water user member was only appointed after careful consideration of the present balance and geographical representation on the committee. Effectively, the committee had five advocates for the environment side of the debate; three Nature Conservation representatives, a Fishing Industry representative who also is a key member of Ocean Watch and a recreational fishing representative. On the rural side only three representatives were nominated with only two being water users and the other representing the NEW England Landcare movement. Hence my decision was that on balance it was important that the lower Macleay River was represented and that a new water user representative would not bias the committees overall balance.
- (d) I have been made aware of the issues relating to the new member by the Nature Conservation Council. At my request the Regional Director, North Coast, DLWC has spoken to the water user representative in question. The representative has been reminded of member's responsibilities to reach consensus in the decision making process and the importance of committee solidarity in its decisions.
- (e) The responsibilities of the member in the committee process has been reiterated verbally by the Regional Director, North Coast.

39. Mr R Jones asked the Minister for Agriculture, and Land and Water Conservation, the Hon Richard Amery MP—

[In relation to Land]

- (1) (a) When does the Minister expect the Regional Vegetation Management Plans for Richmond, Clarence and the Manning Regions to be put on public exhibition?
- (b) How are the Vegetation Management Committees to produce regional plans when they have been given no budget to commission the extra work required ?

- (2) (a) Over the Christmas break, the DLWC released for public consultation a document entitled "Best Operating Standards for Private Native Forestry". Despite assurances, this document was not placed on the DLWC's website.
- (b) Why did the DLWC support a substantial diminution of controls on private land logging from its previous guidelines issues in 1998?
- (c) Did the DLWC imagine that by calling it 'Best Operating Standards' no one would notice that the standards were actually worse?
- (d) What is the current status of this document and what are the current rules which apply to logging on private land?

ANSWER:

- (1) (a) The Richmond and the Clarence RVMPs at this stage, expect to have their draft plans submitted for public exhibition before the end of the year. The Manning RVC are aiming to have a draft plan on exhibition around September 2002.
- (b) The Government supports the preparation of regional plans through provision of background information and analysis. The Agencies on RVCs, DLWC, NPWS and NSW Agriculture all provide support to the Committees to assist in production of plans. This support is set out in an interagency protocol between the Agencies.

It is expected that RVMPs will also need funding for implementation. Each RVMP will need to detail what it will cost to implement the plan, an indication of current contributions from stakeholders and how additional funds might be sourced, if required.

The Government is also considering a range of other funding sources to support the implementation of RVMPs and other natural resource management plans. The NSW Government is currently involved in discussions with the Commonwealth for the release of the NSW component for the \$700 million pledge for the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality.

The NSW Government is also exploring the use of market mechanisms through the Environmental Service Trading Scheme. With an initial investment of \$2 million the Government will purchase the environmental credits developed through management changes on 20 properties around the state. The experiences gained from these transactions will guide further work in this area.

The Native Vegetation Advisory Council is also finalising the Native Vegetation Conservation Strategy for presentation to Government – it is expected that this strategy will provide guidance on support necessary for regional vegetation management planning.

- (2) (a) The document is currently being prepared for placement on the DLWC website.
- (b) DLWC does not accept the assertion that the draft Best Operating Standards (BOS) represents a diminution of previous guidelines. Previous guidelines were very brief and the BOS has been prepared to provide more detailed information on existing controls. Private land logging is regulated through the Native Vegetation Conservation Act 1997.
- (c) No, this was not the intent of calling it 'best operating standards'.
- (d) The document has been revised on the basis of 45 written submissions received from the community on the draft and released as interim Best Operating Standards. The Community reference panel set up by the Minister for Land and Water Conservation to review exemptions is expected to report to the Minister soon – this report may contain recommendations regarding how private forestry is dealt with under the NVC Act.

The Native Vegetation Conservation Act 1997 provides the legislative framework for management of clearing (including logging of private native forestry) in NSW.

40. Mr R Jones asked the Minister for Agriculture, and Land and Water Conservation, the Hon Richard Amery MP—

[In relation to Country Towns Water Supply and Sewerage Scheme]

- (1) (a) Can the Minister explain why the Country Towns Water Supply and Sewerage Scheme continues to be subjected to a funding shortfall year after year?
- (b) Is the Minister able to provide an updated list of completed projects and a forward program for the approaching financial year?

ANSWER:

- (1) (a) A detailed answer to this question has already been given in relation to Question 23 part (a)
- (b) A Detailed answer to this question has already been given on Question 23 parts (b) and (c) and the following summarises the key highlights for the financial year 2001/02.

The 2001/2002 budget has the first year increase of \$15 million included in the total allocation of \$66.8 million. It will enable 18 new sewerage and water supply projects to start construction this year. These include new sewerage services for communities in Brungle, Hat Head, Millthorpe, New Brighton, North Karuah and the villages of Candelo, Cobargo, Kalaru, Wallaga Lake and Wolumla.

There is extra money for the Coraki sewerage scheme. There will be major upgrades for the regional sewerage systems in Coffs Harbour and Tamworth. We will be providing water treatment facilities at Brungle near Tumut and Lake Cargelligo. And upgrading the water supplies to Boggabri, Quandialla and Warialda among others. There will be more to come in future Budgets. In 2001/2002, investigations will be completed for Barellan, Forbes, Manildra and Narromine sewerage works, and Dalgety and Adaminaby water supply among other projects.

41. Mr R Jones asked the Minister for Agriculture, and Land and Water Conservation, the Hon Richard Amery MP—

[In relation to Landclearing]

- (1) What resources will be given to the development of a Threat Abatement Plan for the Key Threatening Process "Loss of biodiversity as a result of loss and/or degradation of habitat following clearing and fragmentation of native vegetation"?
- (2) Have you been advised when to expect the NSW Scientific Committee announce its Final Determination in relation to the nomination to list "Loss of biodiversity as a result of loss and/or degradation of habitat following clearing and fragmentation of native vegetation"?
- (3) How much money is being directed towards investigating and prosecuting breaches of the *Native Vegetation Conservation Act*, considering that there have been approximately 500 reported breaches of clearing legislation and there is only one prosecution is underway?
- (4) How many people are there on the ground to deal with the assessment of landclearing applications and to provide assistance to regional vegetation management committees?

ANSWER:

- (1) This is a matter for National Parks and Wildlife Service.
- (2) This is a matter for National Parks and Wildlife Service.

- (3) About \$2.5 million was spent by the Department of Land and Water Conservation on Native vegetation compliance in 2000/1. This will increase significantly for 2001/2. Additionally, the State Crown Solicitor's office meets the costs of its legal officers and pays for barristers' and expert witness' fees.

Reports are of alleged breaches to be investigated. Some clearings are found to be legal. Prosecution may not be appropriate for some based on the evidence and the likelihood of success while some may warrant alternative compliance options other than prosecution, including options to remedy any harm to the environment caused by an alleged offence.

- (4) In the regional DLWC office, regional planning staff are available, including an Executive Officer (dedicated to an individual Regional Vegetation Committee (RVC)), Regional Vegetation Planner, Landscape Manager and Regional Director. Other regional staff (such as GIS, Scientific and catchment staff) are also available to assist RVCs, depending on their area of expertise. An estimate would be at least 12 regional staff in each Region where RVCs have been established.

The Head Office DLWC numbers at least 10 staff to assist RVCs. This includes vegetation planning staff providing advice on plan preparation, staff from the Community Collaboration Directorate providing support on Committee processes and staff from Legal Branch available to advise RVCs.

There are staff from other agencies including National Parks and Wildlife Service, NSW Agriculture and Local Government who provide direct assistance to RVCs.

Within each DLWC region there is a Resource Access and Compliance Branch, which is dedicated to compliance, and licensing issues. Within these Branches there are a number of dedicated Vegetation Management Officers reporting to a Native Vegetation Coordinator. Depending on the nature of the region, in some regions some of the assessment work – particularly the pre application interview is undertaken by a more locally based catchment management officer.

42. Mr R Jones asked the Minister for Agriculture, and Land and Water Conservation, the Hon Richard Amery MP—

[In relation to Genetic Engineering]

- (1) (a) Is there a budgetary allocation for the protection and cleaning up of soils and water contaminated by genetically engineered organisms?
- (b) If not, why not?

ANSWER:

- (1) (a) No.
- (b) My portfolio has no regulatory powers in this area.