

22 JUNE 2001

(GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO. 5)

PORTFOLIO

LOCAL GOVERNMENT, REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT
AND RURAL AFFAIRS

QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE

1. Mr R Jones asked the Minister for Local Government, Minister for Regional Development, and Minister for Rural Affairs, the Hon Harry Woods MP—

(Relevant area in Hansard: p9)

The citizens living in the Thredbo and Perisher Valley areas do not have any voting rights in local government. Do you feel responsibility for these people's entitlements to vote and what action will you take to enhance their opportunities to participate in local government elections?

Answer:

Residents of Thredbo and Perisher Valley have the same electoral rights as other voters in local government elections. Their residence within Kosciuszko National Park does not affect this. Those localities fall within the area of Snowy River Shire Council.

Under the Local Government Act 1993, a citizen who is entitled to vote at a State or Federal election is entitled to vote at a local government election. A person who is entitled to vote must also enrol in order to exercise that right. Enrolment is based on where a person resides so that a resident of an area is entitled to vote for the local council of the area. The same residential electoral rolls are used for State and local government elections. If a person is therefore enrolled in Thredbo or Perisher Valley, he or she will be entitled to vote in the election of the Snowy River Shire Council.

A person is also entitled to vote in local government elections if he or she is the "owner of rateable land" in the council area or if he or she occupies land for over 3 years or is a ratepaying lessee. This allows people who pay rates to the local council through owning rateable property, leasing property, or who are effectively resident in the area to vote. Entitlement is based on whether the land is rateable. Under the Local Government Act, land that falls within a National Park is exempt from rates. The entitlement to vote that comes with paying rates is therefore not applicable in these cases. However, this does not affect a person's entitlement to vote if that person is a resident of an area.

2. Mr R Jones asked the Minister for Local Government, Minister for Regional Development, and Minister for Rural Affairs, the Hon Harry Woods MP—

(Relevant area in Hansard: p14)

(1) How many cats and dogs were seized under the Companion Animals Act 2000-01?

(a) How many of these were microchipped?

(b) How many were released?

(c) How many were euthanased?

- (d) Have numbers seized and euthanased increased or decreased since the introduction of the Companion Animals Act?

Answer:

- (a) to (c) This information has not previously been collected. Recent survey results from councils for 1999-2000 are currently being collated and analysed.
- (d) Anecdotal reports indicate an increase in the number of microchipped animals received by pounds and shelters in NSW and a decrease in the number of animals surrendered. For example, Pittwater Pound reports that 70-80% of animals seized are now microchipped. The RSPCA also reported a 17% drop in the total number of animals received and a 29% drop in the number of animals euthanased in its 1999-2000 annual report. A preliminary survey of mostly metropolitan pounds published last year on the Department of Local Government's web site from information collected by the Companion Animals Advisory Board indicated that numbers of seized and euthanased animals had not increased across the board since the introduction of the Act.

3. Mr R Jones asked the Minister for Local Government, Minister for Regional Development, and Minister for Rural Affairs, the Hon Harry Woods MP—

(Relevant area in Hansard: p15)

[In relation to the Companion Animals Act]

- (1) Will you give assurances that the following problem areas will be addressed in the forthcoming review of the Companion Animals Act;
- (a) The kill rate in council pounds;
- (b) The rate of compliance with registration requirements;
- (c) The number of animals being killed in pounds in lower socioeconomic areas;
- (d) The amount of companion animals owners being unaware that registration and identification are separate requirements, both of which must be met;
- (e) The number of councils that do not provide any leash-free areas for dogs, a requirement of the Act;
- (f) Reports that certain councils, including Lismore, are impounding cats without adequate facilities and are not keeping them for the specified time; and cases where people's loved animals have been put to death simply because they cannot pay the hundreds of dollars required to meet fines and fees?

Answer:

Advice has been sought from the Companion Animals Advisory Board on problems encountered with the operation of the legislation and issued associated with companion animals. I wrote to the cross bench members and opposition spokesman inviting submissions, which could be referred to the CAAB. The CAAB is also consulting with a range of stakeholders and it is presumed that these issues may be canvassed by the CAAB in its review. Amendments to the Act will be prepared after consideration of the advice from the CAAB.

4. Miss Gardiner asked the Minister for Local Government, Minister for Regional Development, and Minister for Rural Affairs, the Hon Harry Woods MP—

(Relevant area in Hansard: p17)

Can you provide us with a list of the personnel on the Regional Communities Consultative Committee?

Answer:

The list of people who comprise the RCCC are, Dianna Gibbs (Chairperson), Lynda Summers (Deputy Chair and representing Health Interests) Gerald Moore (representing Aboriginal Issues), Chris Bertram (representing Social Services), Joe Knagge (representing Business and Industry Issues), Jessie Quigley (representing Women's Issues), Lyall Wilkinson (representing Educational Issues), Michael Madden (representing Trade Union Interests), Michael Schultz (representing Environmental Issues), Robert Rutzou (representing Religious Interests), Bernadette Kelly (representing Ethnic Interests), Joyce Wheatley (representing Local Government Interests), Heidi Green (representing Youth Interests) and Gerry Cross (representing Farming Interests)

5. Mr Gay asked the Minister for Local Government, Minister for Regional Development, and Minister for Rural Affairs, the Hon Harry Woods MP—

(Relevant area in Hansard: p22-24)

- (1) 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?
 - (a) If so, what was the breakdown of these expenses relating to it and what was the forecast amount to be spent in 2000-01?
- (2) Does your ministerial office have a discretionary allowance?
 - (a) If you do, can you take on notice how it was expended in 2000-01 and what the forecast is for expenditure for 2001-02?
- (3) What was the breakdown of expenditure for the day to day running of your ministerial office in 2000-01? How much did it cost to run your office?
 - (a) What is the forecast for expenditure in running your office for 2001-02?
- (4) What is the breakdown of expenditure as authorised by your chief of staff and outlined in Ministerial Memorandum No. 96-28 for 2000-01?
- (5) What is 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) 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) As there is no definition of discretionary allowance it is impossible to answer this question.
- (3) 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.
- (4) Approval of expenditure must be in accordance with delegations and in accordance with the Public Finance and Audit Act.
- (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.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

(Relevant area in the budget papers: [12-1, Budget Paper No. 3 – Vol 2])

6. Mr Gay asked the Minister for Local Government, Minister for Regional Development, and Minister for Rural Affairs, the Hon Harry Woods MP—

- (1) For each of your portfolio agencies, how much money was spent on advertising in 2000-01? Can you please provide a list of each campaign and cost?
- (2) For each of your portfolio agencies, what is the estimate of money to be spent on advertising in 2001-02? Can you please provide a list of each campaign and estimated cost?

Answer:

- (1) All advertising was undertaken in accordance with government guidelines for advertising.
- (2) The exact cost will depend on the nature and scope of advertising identified for 2001-02.

7. Mr Gay asked the Minister for Local Government, Minister for Regional Development, and Minister for Rural Affairs, the Hon Harry Woods MP—

- (1) For each of your portfolio agencies, how much was spent on consultants in 2000-01? Can you please provide a list of each consultant, project and amount for each contract, including those under \$30,000?
- (2) For each of your portfolio agencies, how much funding has been set aside to cover the cost of consultants in 2001-02? Can you please provide a list of each consultant, project and estimated amount for each contract, including those under \$30,000?

Answer:

- (1) The cost of consultants is reflected in the Annual Report.
- (2) Payments are made out of general operating expenses. It is not possible to answer this question at this stage of the financial year. Expenditure will depend on the need for consultancy services throughout the year.

8. Mr Gay asked the Minister for Local Government, Minister for Regional Development, and Minister for Rural Affairs, the Hon Harry Woods MP—

- (1) For each of your portfolio agencies, how much was spent on overseas trips in 2000-01 by officials? Can you please provide a list of each trip, purpose and cost?
- (2) For each of your portfolio agencies, what is the estimate of money to be spent on overseas trips in 2001-02 by officials? Can you please provide a list of each trip, purpose and cost?
- (3) Did you take any overseas trips in the last financial year? What is the total cost of your overseas trips in 2000-01? Can you please provide a list of each trip, purpose and cost? For each trip, can you please provide a breakdown in airfare costs, hotel costs, car hire, and accompanying staff and officials?

- (4) What is the estimate of money to be spent on your overseas trips in 2001-02? Can you please provide a list of each trip, purpose and cost? For each trip, can you please provide a breakdown in airfare costs, hotel costs, car hire, and accompanying staff and officials?
- (5) For each of your portfolio agencies, how much was spent on inter-state trips in 2000-01 by officials? Can you please provide a list of each trip, purpose and cost?
- (6) For each of your portfolio agencies, what is the estimate of money to be spent on interstate trips in 2001-02 by officials? Can you please provide a list of each trip, purpose and cost?
- (7) What is the total cost of your interstate trips in 2000-01? Can you please provide a list of each trip, purpose and cost? For each trip, can you please provide a breakdown in airfare costs, hotel costs, car hire, and accompanying staff and officials?
- (8) What is the estimate of money to be spent on your interstate trips in 2001-02? Can you please provide a list of each trip, purpose and cost? For each trip, can you please provide a breakdown in airfare costs, hotel costs, car hire, and accompanying staff and officials?

Answer:

- (1) Details regarding all overseas travel is included in the Annual report and in accordance with the appropriate guidelines.
- (2) International travel by public servants is undertaken in accordance with appropriate guidelines. Expenditure in 2001/02 will depend on particular issues requiring overseas travel.
- (3) Official travel is undertaken in accordance with appropriate guidelines.
- (4) This will depend on the nature and scope of any travel undertaken in 2001/02. Costs incurred during overseas travel will be in accordance with appropriate guidelines.
- (5) Interstate travel by portfolio agencies was undertaken in accordance with appropriate guidelines. Costs incurred during interstate travel was in accordance with the appropriate guidelines.
- (6) This will depend on the nature and scope of any travel undertaken in 2001/02. Costs incurred during interstate travel was in accordance with the appropriate guidelines.
- (7) Official travel was undertaken in accordance with appropriate guidelines. Official travel was undertaken in accordance with the appropriate guidelines in a cost effective manner.
- (8) It is too early to provide an estimate at this stage of the financial year. However, expenditure will depend on the nature and scope of any travel in 2001/02.

9. Mr Gay asked the Minister for Local Government, Minister for Regional Development, and Minister for Rural Affairs, the Hon Harry Woods MP—

For each of your portfolio agencies, how much money in total was spent on Olympic-related costs? Of this amount, how much was reimbursed by additional appropriations, or by assistance from Olympic agencies?

Answer:

Expenditure was in accordance with Olympic related priorities and in accordance with agency requirements.

10. Mr Gay asked the Minister for Local Government, Minister for Regional Development, and Minister for Rural Affairs, the Hon Harry Woods MP—

For each of your portfolio agencies, how much money was spent on performance pay for public servants in 1999/00, and 2000/01? Did you personally approve these bonus payments?

Answer:

On 28 August 2000 Premier's Memorandum 2000-21 was issued indicating that performance pay was not to be made available to members of the Chief and Senior Executive Services.

In August 2000 details of performance payments were published in the Sydney media relating to a range of performance payments made in 2000.

Approvals for performance payments as well as all other remuneration to members of the Senior Executive Service were made by the respective Chief Executive Officers.

11. Mr Gay asked the Minister for Local Government, Minister for Regional Development, and Minister for Rural Affairs, the Hon Harry Woods MP—

- (1) (a) In 2000/01, how much was spent on your ministerial expenses?
- (b) Can you please provide a breakdown by expense, for example hotel expenses, office refurbishments etc? What is the forecast amount to be spent in 2001/02?
- (2) (a) For each of your portfolio agencies, how much money was spent for entertainment purposes in 2000/01?
- (b) What was the breakdown by cost and nature of these functions?
- (c) What is the forecast to be spent in 2001/02?

Answer:

- (1) Expenditure was in accordance with the relevant approvals and guidelines.
- (2) (a) and (b) Expenditure was undertaken within allocations to agencies.
- (c) This will depend on the nature and extent of expenditure required. It is too early in the financial year to estimate a figure.

12. Mr Gay asked the Minister for Local Government, Minister for Regional Development, and Minister for Rural Affairs, the Hon Harry Woods MP—

- (1) (a) For each of your portfolio agencies in 2000/01, what fees and fines were increased, and by how much?
- (b) In 2001/02, what is the forecast for fees and fines to be increased, and by how much?

Answer:

Fee increases are originated within agencies on an annual or periodic basis and are referred to Parliament's Regulation Review Committee for consideration. Most increases fall within the Consumer Price Index (CPI). Fines are set under the relevant legislation and are usually subject to annual CPI adjustments.

13. Mr Gay asked the Minister for Local Government, Minister for Regional Development, and Minister for Rural Affairs, the Hon Harry Woods MP—

- (1) (a) For each of your portfolio agencies, in 2000/01, how much was spent on legal expenses?
(b) What was the breakdown for these expenses?
- (2) In 2000/01, how much did you spend on legal expenses?

Answer:

- (1) Expenditure on legal expenses followed appropriate review of the circumstances, the need for such expenditure and within appropriate guidelines. In the case of core work for public sector agencies the crown solicitor meets these costs.
- (2) Expenditure on legal expenses followed appropriate review of the circumstances and the need for such expenditure.

14. Mr Gay asked the Minister for Local Government, Minister for Regional Development, and Minister for Rural Affairs, the Hon Harry Woods MP—

- (1) (a) How many Ministerial Staff are currently employed by you?
(b) What is the total salary cost of these staff?
- (2) (a) For each of your portfolio agencies in 2000/01, how much was spent on office fitouts and refurbishments?
(b) What is the estimated cost for 2001/02?
- (3) (a) For each of your portfolio agencies in 2000/01, how much was spent on the cost of leases in the Sydney CBD?
(b) What is the estimated cost for 2001/02?
- (4) (a) For each of your portfolio agencies in 2000/01, was there any vacant or under-utilised office space?
(b) If so, how much did this cost?
- (5) (a) For each of your portfolio agencies in 2000/01, how much was spent on the salary packages for Senior Executive Service?
(b) What is the estimated cost for 2001/02?

Answer:

- (1) (a) Ministerial staff are employed by the Director General of the Premier's Department in accordance with the provisions of the Public Sector Management Act 1988.
(b) All costs were in accordance with the expenditure necessary to facilitate the effective functioning of the office and within allocations to Ministerial Offices.
- (2) (a) All expenditure was in accordance with guidelines and procedures for office fitouts and refurbishment.
(b) This will depend on the nature and extent of any changes to office fitouts and refurbishment.

- (3) (a) Expenditure on lease of government office accommodation followed careful review of the particular circumstances and needs of agencies. The Government Asset Management Committee oversees policy of government accommodation.
- (b) This will depend on a range of factors and it is too early in the financial year to estimate expenditure. The Government Asset Management Committee will oversee leasing issues.
- (4) (a) and (b) The Government Asset Management Committee oversees all asset management in the NSW public sector. The GAMC ensures that all agencies adopt a strategic approach to property management.
- (5) (a) Salary packages for the Senior Executive Service are set by the Statutory and Other Offices Tribunal. Current bands for each level are:
- | | |
|---------|------------------------|
| Level 8 | \$258,000 to \$318,315 |
| Level 7 | \$218,615 to \$276,135 |
| Level 6 | \$181,960 to \$219,510 |
| Level 5 | \$158,840 to \$194,770 |
| Level 4 | \$145,350 to \$169,420 |
| Level 3 | \$132,410 to \$155,575 |
| Level 2 | \$118,675 to \$137,145 |
| Level 1 | \$109,225 to \$127,130 |
- (b) This will depend on the number of SES officers employed and their current point within the particular range.

15. Mr Gay asked the Minister for Local Government, Minister for Regional Development, and Minister for Rural Affairs, the Hon Harry Woods MP—

- (1) (a) In 2000/01, for each of your portfolio agencies, how many media or public relations advisers were employed?
- (b) What is the total cost of this?
- (c) What is the forecast for 2001/02 for the number of media or public relations advisers to be employed, and their total cost?
- (2) (a) For each of your portfolio agencies in 2000/01, how much was spent on public opinion surveys?
- (b) What was the breakdown for the cost of these surveys?

Answer:

- (1) Staff numbers will vary from time to time depending on leave or peak periods.
- (2) On 20 December 2000 Premiers Memorandum 2000-28 was issued indicating that under no circumstances should surveys of clients, other uses of government services or citizens be used to elicit information of a political nature.

16. Mr R Jones asked the Minister for Local Government, Minister for Regional Development, and Minister for Rural Affairs, the Hon Harry Woods MP—

[In relation to Impounded Animals]

- (1) How many cats and how many dogs were seized under the Companion Animals Act during 2000-2001?
 - (a) How many of these animals were microchipped?
 - (b) How many were released?
 - (c) How many were euthanased?
 - (d) Have numbers seized and euthanased increased or decreased since introduction of the Companion Animals Act?

Answer:

See answer to question 2.

17. Mr R Jones asked the Minister for Local Government, Minister for Regional Development, and Minister for Rural Affairs, the Hon Harry Woods MP—

[In relation to the Cost of Introducing the Combination Animals Act and Review]

- (1) What has been the overall cost of introducing the Companion Animals Act?
- (2) The Minister has stated he is unable to give a commitment that the following problem areas will be addressed in the forthcoming review of the Companion Animals Act:
 - the kill rate in council pounds (a prime aim of the Act)
 - the rate of compliance with registration requirements
 - the number of animals being killed in pounds in lower socio-economic areas
 - the amount of companion animal owners being unaware that registration and identification are separate requirements, both of which must be met
 - the number of councils that do not provide any leash-free areas for dogs - a requirement of the Act
 - reports that certain councils, including Lismore, are impounding cats without adequate facilities and are not keeping them for the specified time
 - cases where people's loved animals have been put to death simply because they cannot pay the hundreds of dollars required to meet specified fines and fees
- (a) Will the Minister give a commitment to give the recommendations arising from the Companion Animals Advisory Board his fullest consideration?

Answer:

- (1) It is not possible to estimate the overall cost of introducing the Companion Animals Act. In 1999/2000 councils were granted an amount in the rate pegging calculation to cover implementation costs. Ongoing costs are addressed through fees charged.
- (2) As with all advice I receive, the advice from the Companion Animals Advisory Board will be given my full consideration. Any issues which require action will be placed before cabinet and the normal process of executive Government will take place.

18. Mr R Jones asked the Minister for Local Government, Minister for Regional Development, and Minister for Rural Affairs, the Hon Harry Woods MP—

[In relation to the Companion Animals Fund]

- (1) Under the Companion Animals Act, provision was made for payment of money from the Greyhound Racing Authority (NSW) Fund to the Companion Animals Fund (Section 84). Why has no money been paid into the Companion Animals Fund from the Greyhound Racing Authority Fund?
- (2) What effort is the Government making to ensure that funds will be forthcoming from the GRA Fund and how much is budgeted for 2001/2002? What is the likely amount of money that has been lost as a result of the Government's failure to obtain these funds?
- (3) How much money is in the Companion Animals Fund?
- (4) What are the details of the itemised expenditure from the Companion Animals Fund?

Answer:

- (1) The Greyhound Racing Authority has no powers by the Act under which it operates to collect such moneys from greyhound owners.
- (2) As there is no legal basis under which the GRA can collect such funds, such funds will not be forthcoming. No funds have been budgeted for 2000/2001 or later years. The number of greyhounds seized by councils or otherwise causing a problem necessitating council animal management expenditure is extremely small compared to all other types of dog. The small number of irresponsible greyhound owners that lose their exemption under the Act and are required to register their animal and therefore already contribute to the Fund.
- (3) The amount of money in the CA Fund varies at any given time depending on the payments to and by councils and other operating costs such as the Register, CAAB expenses and fees, administration and staffing. As at the 31 March 2001, \$8,206, 252 had been collected in registrations and \$6,624,247 had been re-imbursed to councils. Monies held in the fund are usually committed to expenses and payments to councils.
- (4) Expenses and revenues for the Companion Animals Fund for the financial year 2000-2001 are reported in the DLG's Annual Report currently being prepared.

19. Mr R Jones asked the Minister for Local Government, Minister for Regional Development, and Minister for Rural Affairs, the Hon Harry Woods MP—

[In relation to the Companion Animal Register]

- (1) Will the Minister provide the following information for each council area regarding the number of animals in each category on the current Companion Animal Register:
 - (a) the number of dogs microchipped but not registered;
 - (b) the number of dogs microchipped and registered;
 - (c) the number of cats microchipped and not registered; and
 - (d) the number of cats microchipped and registered?
 - (e) How many dogs and how many cats on the Register are desexed?
 - (f) How many assistance animals are on the Register?

- (g) How many working dogs are on the Register?
- (2) Is there any indication from these figures that some councils are not meeting their obligations under the Act in terms of ensuring that the details of microchipped animals are being entered onto the Register? If so, what will the Department do about this? If nothing, why not?
- (3) The number of animals registered for 2001-2002 is less than the previous 12 months. Does this reflect the low rate of compliance with the new registration requirements?
- (4) How do these numbers compare with forecasted figures about the rate of uptake of the microchipping system?
- (5) How does the number of dogs on the Register compare with the number of dogs registered under the Dog Act?
- (6) What is the annual cost of the contract with Standards Australia to provide the Companion Animals Register?
- (7) What services are Standards Australia to provide?
- (8) What are the performance criteria for Standards Australia?
- (9) What is the cost of the call centre for the 24 hour hot line service for vets?

Answer:

- (1) (a) to (g) From the date of operation of the register 1 July 1999 to the 1 July 2002, there were 236582 dogs and cats microchipped not registered and 208723 dogs and cats microchipped and registered on the NSW Companion Animals Register.

It is not possible to ascertain exactly how many animals on the register are desexed. Animals may be desexed after the owner has provided the lifetime registration fee and there is no requirement for the owner to report when their animal is desexed. The Register records the number of animals desexed at the time of registration. The number of desexed animals recorded in the Register from 1 July 1999 to the 1 July 2002 was 126770.

From the date of operation of the register 1 July 1999 to the 1 July 2002, there were 362 assistance animals microchipped and registered on the NSW Companion Animals Register.

Working dogs are exempted from the requirements of the act to be microchipped and registered, unless this exemption is lost. In these cases or should an owner elect to microchip and register their working dog, the animal is registered as for other dogs and whether it is a working dog is may be recorded but not in such as way as to allow for a total figure to be generated.

- (2) No the figures do not indicate that councils are not undertaking the data entry for identifications. Some councils have been identified as having poor rates of registration and these have been followed up on an individual basis by staff of the Department of Local Government. Some councils contract out their data entry or have arrangements with neighbouring councils.
- (3) No.
- (4) It is difficult to compare current figures with forecasted figures, as the lack of information to make an accurate forecast meant that such figures were over a large range. The Australian Companion Animal Council's publication 'The Power of Pets' (2000) estimates that there were 1,340 000 dogs and 810,000 cats owned in NSW in 1998. Not all of these animals are required to be chipped and registered. However, in comparison with estimates of dogs registered under the Dog Act, the current rate of registrations under the new system would appear to be comparable.

- (5) The number of dogs registered under the Dog Act is not known, because this information is not collected centrally. However, in metropolitan Sydney, it was estimated in 1996 to be around 30%. In rural areas it was estimated to be around 2%. If it is assumed that 30% of the dogs were registered under the Dog Act in 1998 across the entire of the state, using the ACAC figures this would be around 402,000 dogs. The number of dogs identified and registered on the CA Register is 445,305.
- (6) This information cannot be provided, as it is commercial in confidence.
- (7) The contract requires Standards Australia to operate the NSW Companion Animals Register. Details of the contract cannot be provided as they are commercial in confidence.
- (8) The performance criteria for the contract to operate the NSW Companion Animals Register are detailed in the contract, which is commercial in confidence. The contract is managed by senior staff of the Department of Local Government.
- (9) Between August 2000 and May 2001, the centre operated at a total cost of \$18,626.

20. Mr R Jones asked the Minister for Local Government, Minister for Regional Development, and Minister for Rural Affairs, the Hon Harry Woods MP—

[In relation to Lawns]

For suburbs without areas of lawn (and/or other suitable permeable surfaces) why aren't local councils providing low cost user pays car wash areas, with onsite water reuse and treatment facilities?

Answer:

The decision to provide such facilities falls within the discretionary powers of each local council.

21. Mr R Jones asked the Minister for Local Government, Minister for Regional Development, and Minister for Rural Affairs, the Hon Harry Woods MP—

[In relation to Genetic Engineering]

- (1) Could the Minister advise what Councils should do to ensure they remain a GE-free region in effect rather than position only?
- (2) (a) Could the Department Assistant Councils and Regional Organisations of Councils to amend their Environment Plans to ensure they are able to have a truly GE-Free status?
- (b) If not, why not?

Answer:

- (1) I do not believe that there is any legislative power that would allow a council to prohibit the growing of a genetically modified crop.
- (2) The Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 empowers councils to zone land by way of Local Environmental Plans. This legislation does not fall within my administration.