



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 4 – REGIONAL NSW

## **BUDGET ESTIMATES 2024 -2025**

### **Supplementary questions**

Portfolio Committee No. 4 - Regional NSW

**Agriculture, Regional New South Wales, Western New South Wales  
(Moriarty)**

Hearing: Tuesday 25 February 2025

**Answers due by: 5.00 pm Monday 24 March 2025**

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**BUDGET ESTIMATES 2024-2025  
SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS**

<b>Questions from Ms Abigail Boyd MLC</b>
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**Australian National Baboon Colony**

(1) Is there 24 hourly onsite veterinary care at the Australian National Baboon Colony?

**ANSWER**

This question should be directed to the Minister for Medical Research.

(2) How many staff are employed at the colony and what are their positions?

**ANSWER**

This question should be directed to the Minister for Medical Research.

**RHDV1-K5 release program by LLS**

(3) Given that releasing rabbit haemorrhagic disease is an extremely cruel method of reducing wild rabbit populations, and that rabbits suffer for days before dying and can pass it on to domestic pet rabbits, what evidence does LLS have to inform its decision to use this method?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

LLS operates under the NSW Codes of Practice and Standard Operating Procedures for effective and humane management of pest animals. These are publicly available at:

<https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity/vertebrate-pests/publications/standard-operating-procedures#:~:text=These%20Codes%20of%20Practice%20and%20Standard%20Operating%20Procedures,in%20the%20control%20of%20pest%20animals%20in%20NSW>

- (4) LLS announced this program to vets and the public just 1 month prior to commencement, to alert people to vaccinate their domestic pet rabbits. What is the reason for this short notice period?
- (a) Is the government confident this is an adequate notice period for pet owners to organise vaccines for their rabbits?
  - (b) On this rabbit haemorrhagic disease release program, has the NSW government coordinated any public communication or community engagement directly with pet owners about vaccinating their pet rabbits?
    - i. Has the government ever done this, with previous rabbit haemorrhagic disease release programs?
  - (c) Has the NSW government given any funding to roll out any sort of education campaign or subsidised/free vaccinations during this rabbit haemorrhagic disease release program?
    - i. Has the government ever done this, with previous rabbit haemorrhagic

disease release programs?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

There is no notification requirement under the Pesticide Control (Rabbit Haemorrhagic Disease Virus) Order 2017 or the product label. However, LLS does undertake targeted communications with veterinarians, and the public through social media and radio.

- (a) There is no notification requirement under the Pesticide Control (Rabbit Haemorrhagic Disease Virus) Order 2017 or the product label. Public notification increases awareness of the program, while targeted communication with private vets enables direct client outreach.

RHDV can be found naturally in the environment, therefore the risk of exposure is always present for domestic rabbits. Vaccine protocol for RHDV consists of 6 to 12 monthly doses.

- (b) LLS does not have a list of domestic rabbit owners to engage directly. Communication has been carried out through media releases, radio interviews, regional subscription based newsletters to landholders, social media posts, newsletters and targeted contact with private vets.
- i. LLS has not. Media releases, information regarding available vaccines, and general information on RHDV is publicly accessible.
- (c) No.
- i. No. All rabbits in Australia are derived from the European rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) and are therefore potentially susceptible to infection. Farmed and pet rabbits should be vaccinated against RHDV. Vaccinations are available from veterinary practitioners. There is no evidence that RHDV causes infection in other species of native and domestic mammals and birds.

- (5) On average, how much does a calicivirus vaccine shot cost?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

The price of the calicivirus vaccine is unknown. Local Land Service has no oversight on vaccines for RHDV. Calicivirus vaccines are administered by private veterinarians.

- (6) How many rabbit haemorrhagic disease programs have previously been undertaken by LLS? Please list all programs in the last 10 years, with the following details for each:
- (a) What strain was used?
- (b) How many people or groups participated (private landholders, councils, etc)?
- (c) What qualifications did those responsible for the release have?
- (d) How long was the program?
- (e) What date prior to commencement of the program did LLS announce it to the public?
- (f) Approximately how many wild rabbits were killed by the virus?
- (g) How was the program monitored?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

Authorised Control Officers started issuing RHDV1-K5 in 2017. Greater Sydney LLS has released RHDV1-K5 in; March 2017, October 2017, February 2019, March 2020, February 2021, March 2022 and March 2025. In 2023 and 2024 conditions were not suitable for release. From Feb 2017 to date, there have been 387 LLS rabbit control programs on properties within NSW using RHDV1-K5.

- (a) RHDV1-K5
- (b) A total of 1726 holdings have been involved.
- (c) Section 9, Persons Authorised, of the Pesticide Control (Rabbit Haemorrhagic Disease Virus) Order 2017 outlines the requirements. A person must be an Authorised Control Officer, or a landholder or their authorised agent or an employee of a NSW public authority for the property and hold the relevant qualification which is either an AQF3 Chemical Accreditation or Vertebrate Pesticide training course developed obo EPA (Vertebrate Pesticide Induction Training)
- (d) There is no set duration, the virus is released.
- (e) Refer to Question 4.
- (f) This information is unknown.
- (g) Verbal reporting from affected landholders noting efficacy through reduction of localised populations and reduced impacts. Some areas also undertook spotlight monitoring to confirm population reduction as well.

(7) What is the reason for LLS doing this release program now at this time?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

The Greater Sydney LLS program is instigated by LLS to counter the negative impacts of rabbits. Expert advice is sought from CSIRO & Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (the Department) Agriculture and Biosecurity to release the virus at a time when the weather is most conducive to it's spread & the wild population is vulnerable (population age & density, resistance etc). Testing prior to the release is also done to gauge exposure/resistance to RHDV1-K5, RHDV1 & RHDV2 in the wild population.

- (8) Under this program, community and landholders are being invited to sign up and participate in releasing the virus. How is this managed?
- (a) What qualifications are required?
  - (b) How many people or organisations have signed up to participate?
  - (c) Are you confident that only trained professionals will be responsible for releasing the virus under this program?
  - (d) How will you monitor the release of the virus, to ensure it will not result in the death of domestic pet rabbits?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

In Greater Sydney LLS, landholders are invited to submit an expression of interest by targeted emails to landholders and media releases..

- (a) Refer to Question 6(c).

- (b) 76 participants from over 163 landholdings.
- (c) Yes. The virus can only be issued to an authorised person.
- (d) Verbal reporting from affected landholders noting efficacy through reduction of localised populations and reduced impacts. Impacts on domestic rabbits are not monitored.

### **Second Generation Anticoagulant Rodenticides (SGARs)**

- (9) Do you have an update on the progress of the APVMA review into anticoagulant rodenticides?

#### **ANSWER**

I am advised that the anticoagulant rodenticides chemical review is still in assessment. The APVMA publishes information about its chemical review process on its website. See <https://www.apvma.gov.au/>.

- (10) Pending this review and its outcome, will you commit to advocate through the Commonwealth-States Agriculture Ministers' Meeting for a national ban on the retail sale of SGARs?

#### **ANSWER**

The APVMA is the Australian Government regulator of agricultural and veterinary chemical products. The NSW Government awaits the outcomes of the APVMA's review process.

Following the review, any necessary changes to the use of SGAR will be considered and implemented.

- (11) The APVMA's review of anticoagulant rodenticides (SGARs) has been delayed multiple times, with a regulatory decision now expected in April 2025 - more than three years after the review began. Given these delays, how is the NSW Government engaging with the APVMA to ensure progress on this critical issue?

#### **ANSWER**

The APVMA consults states and territories before releasing preliminary decisions on chemical reviews.

### **Battery cages**

- (12) The Cook Government in Western Australia was the first state to adopt the nationally agreed Poultry Standards, improving animal welfare for hens and aligning with consumer expectations and the latest scientific evidence. As Australia's largest battery cage-egg producing state, how many hens are currently caged across New South Wales?
- (a) When will the NSW government provide funding to implement the National Poultry Standards, which outlines a phase-out of conventional cages for egg laying hens by 2036?
  - (b) What date will the NSW government begin implementing the phase-out of cages?

#### **ANSWER**

The most recent ABS agricultural census data reported for NSW caged hen numbers (“ABS Agricultural Commodities - 2020-21 Financial Year”) shows that there were 1.79 million in 2020-21, representing 33% of the national caged layer flock.

- a) Development of the Poultry Standards and Guidelines commenced in 2015 with consultation with stakeholders throughout the process, including on the phase-out of conventional cages for egg laying hens. The Standards and Guidelines were developed taking into consideration appropriate timeframes for industry to plan for the transition away from conventional cages.
- b) As part of the 2025 Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Regulation NSW, the NSW Government implemented the first key elements of the nationally agreed Poultry Standards and Guidelines for egg laying chickens.  
The NSW Government is currently considering the best means of implementing the remaining Standards and Guidelines. The timeframe for the phase-out of cages has not yet been determined.

### **Animal welfare reforms**

- (13) The NSW Labor government committed to the introduction of a new animal welfare framework in NSW to replace the state’s outdated animal welfare legislation. How is the review of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979 progressing?

#### **ANSWER**

Work is currently underway on a review of Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979 (POCTAA). The NSW Government is preparing to consult on proposed changes to the POCTAA that will be made public soon.

- (14) When will the NSW government introduce its Independent Office of Animal Welfare Bill?

#### **ANSWER**

The timeline for establishing an Independent Office of Animal Welfare and scope of functions is currently being considered to ensure the Office is fit for purpose.

### **Biosecurity**

- (15) Given the serious animal welfare implications and biosecurity risks, why is it that the NSW government is not aware of how many cattle feedlots, rabbit farms, emu farms, and camel dairies are in NSW?

- (a) Why does the government not monitor these facilities?

#### **ANSWER**

Information about cattle feedlots, rabbit farms, emu farms, and camel dairies is provided to the Department through the NSW Food Authority, land and stock return data, industry data sets (including the feedlot accreditation scheme), and through traceability schemes (including Property Identification Codes).

(a) Cattle feedlots, rabbit farms, emu farms, and camel dairies are not reportable dealings under the Biosecurity Act 2015.

(16) In the event of a biosecurity incident, how would the NSW government control these facilities in these circumstances?

**ANSWER**

The NSW Government would use delegated powers under the Act to implement whatever controls are required such as Biosecurity Emergency Orders, Control Orders, and Directions.

(17) How many animal agribusinesses currently have biosecurity plans in place?

**ANSWER**

Biosecurity Management Plans are voluntary (i.e. not mandatory under the NSW Biosecurity Act) and are therefore not centrally registered and reported.

(18) What is the final number of chickens who died or were killed as a result of including measures taken in response to bird flu outbreaks across NSW in the last year?

(a) Can you confirm where exactly they were disposed of?

(b) Was it a single pit (if so, where?) or on each infected property?

**ANSWER**

Approximately 324,000 birds were depopulated from two NSW infected poultry facilities. This number is based on the numbers of animals understood to be on the farm prior to onset of disease, less estimated mortalities prior to commencement of depopulation.

(a) Bird carcasses were disposed of at the licensed landfill facility at Lucas Heights, on advice from the Environmental Services Functional Area, which is led by NSW EPA under NSW's emergency management arrangements.

(b) Bird carcasses were disposed of by deep pit burial at the Lucas Heights licensed landfill facility, as advised by the Environmental Services Functional Area, which is led by NSW EPA under NSW's emergency management arrangements.

(19) What is in place to ensure NSW's preparedness in the event of an outbreak of African Swine Fever Virus?

(a) In the event of such an outbreak, what is currently in place to ensure NSW pig producers and pig slaughterhouses have sufficient awareness?

**ANSWER**

NSW is party to the national Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement (EADRA) and AUSVETPLAN, which sets out the nationally-agreed approach for responses to emergency animal disease (EAD) incidents in Australia. This includes the preparation of draft legal orders and tracing, surveillance and disposal plans that would be used in the event of an EAD incident.

NSW undertakes additional preparedness measures including surveillance, industry and stakeholder communication, staff training, and has developed, with Australian Pork Limited, and Voluntary Enhanced Biosecurity Standards (VEBS) accreditation program for domestic piggeries.

- (a) The Department maintains a comprehensive stakeholder list for all industries to facilitate rapid information sharing.

Further notifications can occur through media releases, the NSWBioResponse app, social media campaigns, and state and local media outlets.

### **Saleyards**

- (20) When was the last time DPI audited NSW sale yards for compliance and adherence to animal welfare laws?
  - (a) How many were audited?
  - (b) What was the outcome of these audits?

### **ANSWER**

The RSPCA NSW, NSW Animal Welfare League and NSW Police Force are responsible for enforcement and compliance of POCTAA in relation to sale yards.

- (a) The RSPCA did 20 routine inspections of saleyards and AWL did 5 routine inspections in the 2023/2024 financial year.
- (b) There were no PINs, no official warnings and no prosecutions of saleyards from either agency during this period.

### **Puppy farm laws**

- (21) With the passing of the new NSW puppy farm laws, how will the department monitor for any improvements to animal welfare and consumer awareness?
  - (a) Will any related improvements be made public?

### **ANSWER**

The NSW Government is committed to making sure everyone is aware of their responsibilities. This communication will include conducting a baseline study of current community and industry awareness of the laws, the outcomes of which will inform future communication and engagement measures.

Section 23Q of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment Act 2024 also requires all exemption holders for dog premises to permit an audit and inspection of the dog premises at least once every 2 years.

- (a) The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment Act 2024 requires a statutory review of the Act in 6 years to determine whether the policy objectives remain valid. A report on the outcome of this review is required to be tabled in Parliament within 12 months of the review being completed.
- (22) When will the applicable Code of Practice be reviewed?
    - (a) Will it be reviewed with public input?



**ANSWER**

The Code of practice for breeding dogs and cats, will be reviewed before it is applied to all dog breeders from 1 December 2029.

- a) Yes. The NSW Government has committed to revising the Breeding Code in consultation with key stakeholders.

**RSPCA NSW Puppy Farm squad**

(23) How much funding has the government allocated to the RSPCA NSW Puppy Farm squad, in the last three financial years?

**ANSWER**

Dog breeding compliance activities are funded as part of the RSPCA’s enforcement and compliance funding.

(24) Have there been any changes in the number of RSPCA NSW staff on this squad during the last three years?

- (a) Can you provide details about any of their current activities in NSW?

**ANSWER**

The RSPCA Intensive Breeder Taskforce was established in October 2020 with 4 members. After this time, the model of delivery has changed, and dog breeding compliance activities have been funded as part of the RSPCA’s ongoing enforcement activities. As of June 24, there is 1 dedicated member of the taskforce.

- (a) I am advised that from July 2024 to December 2024, the dedicated intensive breeding resource undertook the following activities (this is in addition to the inspectorate’s broader work program which also includes site visits):

<b>New visits</b>	<b>Revisits</b>	<b>Section 24N written notices</b>	<b>PINs</b>	<b>Prosecutions initiated</b>	<b>Animals inspected (Approx)</b>	<b>Number of Animals seized</b>
23	20	27	6	1	823	19

**Rodeos**

(25) How many rodeos or bull riding events are held in NSW each year?

**ANSWER**

In 2023/2024 there were 88 rodeos held in NSW.

(26) Is there a reason the recent review of the POCTA Regulations did not include any changes to these ‘exempted’ events?

**ANSWER**

The Rodeo Code of Practice will be considered as part of the broader animal welfare reform process.

(27) When will the applicable Code of Practice be reviewed?

(a) Will it be reviewed with public input?

**ANSWER**

Refer to Question 26.

(a) Yes

**Animal Welfare Advisory Council (AWAC)**

(28) As a matter of good governance and public transparency, will you publish details about the AWAC meetings and the animal welfare matters they are considering? Please provide these details.

**ANSWER**

Animal Welfare Advisory Council (the Council) has played an important role in the development of the NSW Government's animal welfare reform agenda to date. Its involvement has included consultation on key animal welfare legislation to ban puppy farming and the fit and proper persons reforms.

The operation of the Council will be considered as part of the broader POCTAA Review.

**Bounties**

(29) Bounty systems have been scientifically proven to be counterproductive by various sources including the CSIRO. Given this, why is the government proposing to spend \$2 million on a discredited approach?

**ANSWER**

The NSW Government is committed to address the invasive pest problems across NSW.

The Government has prioritised collaboration amongst stakeholders, landholders and government agencies as the proven and best approach to pest control.

The NSW Government is exploring a range of opportunities to manage invasive pests.

(30) Is the government allocating any money toward humane and progressive strategies that don't risk exacerbating existing issues?

**ANSWER**

The NSW Government allocates funding for a range of programs and approaches for effective pest animal management.

**POCTA regulations review**

(31) How many submissions were made to DPI during the recent review?

- (a) Will these submissions be published in the interests of public transparency?

**ANSWER**

1,727 submissions were received during the consultation period (excluding duplicate submissions). Of these, 1,468 took the form of standardised campaign responses.

- (a) All submissions received in the consultation period have been sent to the Legislation Review Committee, consistent with the requirements of the *Subordinate Legislation Act 1989*.

- (32) How many days precisely was allocated to reading and considering all the submissions?

**ANSWER**

The timeframe for the staged repeal of the regulation was set by the *Subordinate Legislation Act 1989*.

I carefully considered all submissions in line with my obligations.

**Regional NSW portfolio**

- (33) Many domestic and family violence services in regional rural and remote areas do not receive any additional funding or loading despite the additional costs they incur to deliver services across vast geographical areas. In your capacity as Minister for Regional NSW, will you advocate for the NSW Government to consider a regional loading for all funding streams that provide domestic and family violence specialist services?

**ANSWER**

This question should be directed to the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault.

- (34) This question should be referred to the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault. In your capacity as Minister for Regional NSW, will you advocate for the NSW Government to work with Gender and Disaster Australia to incorporate the National Gender and Emergency Management Guidelines into NSW disaster planning?

**ANSWER**

This question should be directed to the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault.

Questions from Hon Chris Rath MLC (*on behalf of the Opposition*)

**Agriculture**

**European Carp**

- (35) In 2016, the Australian Government committed \$15.2 million in funding and began investing the use of carp virus to control carp numbers.
- (a) What is the hold-up in the release of the virus into closed catchments to test

the effectiveness and impact of the virus?

- (b) What progress has been made on 7 priority research actions agreed to in 2023?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

- (a) At this point in time, approvals have not been granted to trial the virus outside of laboratory conditions. Victoria is leading the application for the proposed trial in an enclosed body of water in Victoria and NSW is supporting the trial, through participation in a national technical working group.
- (b) Information on the research actions can be found at:  
<https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/pests-diseases-weeds/pest-animals-and-weeds/carp-biological-control-plan/national-carp-control-plan>.

**Native Vegetation Mapping**

- (36) Can you update the mapping of Native Vegetation in NSW and what the process has involved?

**ANSWER**

This question should be directed to the Minister for the Environment.

- (37) How many complaints have been registered about incomplete mapping?

**ANSWER**

This question should be directed to the Minister for the Environment.

- (38) How many landholders have requested ground truthing on their properties to clarify alleged native vegetation areas?

**ANSWER**

This question should be directed to the Minister for the Environment.

- (39) How many of those properties have had that ground truthing completed?

**ANSWER**

This question should be directed to the Minister for the Environment.

- (40) Have any landholders been found in breach of native vegetation rules, according to the maps, and have any fines been issued?

- (a) If so, how many?  
(b) If so, what is the total monetary value of the fines?  
(c) If so, how many landholders have appealed these alleged breaches?

**ANSWER**

This question should be directed to the Minister for the Environment.

## Sustainable Communities Program

- (41) A Federal Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water report into the Socio-economic considerations of the Restoring Our Rivers: 2024 Selected Catchment Open Tender purchasing program stated that an analysis on regional distribution of impacts would inform the Sustainable Communities Program funding, the total amount available was \$300 million.
- (a) When will the guidelines for the program be available to impacted communities?
  - (b) What consultation methods will be done with affected communities to inform potential projects?
  - (c) Can you provide details regarding the 3-year program and what amount from the funding will be allocated to staff? There have been estimates that it will require \$16 million in funding for staff.
  - (d) How much of the \$160 million of Federal funding for the Sustainable Communities Program is earmarked to be spent in the nine currently eligible LGAs in 2025-2026?
  - (e) On Monday 24th of February the Federal Government announced a further 100 GL of buybacks in the Southern Basin. In Senate Estimates on 28 February, the Government couldn't be specific about where this round of buybacks would come from. How much of the \$160 million dollars is available for support outside of the nine eligible LGAs?
  - (f) Is the \$160 million allocated intended to cover structural adjustment related to all future water buybacks relating to the 450 GL target including those outside the nine LGAs, or do you anticipate further funding for structural adjustment from the Commonwealth?
  - (g) What are the multiple streams of support for Basin communities, referred to on the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development web site, to mitigate adverse socio-economic impacts from water recovery?
  - (h) Can you provide examples of what types of things the money is being spent on?
  - (i) Where will the program be administered and where will the resources reside?
  - (j) How many additional staff will the Department employ to administer this program?
  - (k) How many additional staff has the Department placed in the affected LGAs to implement the program?
  - (l) How and when will monitoring and evaluation of the program be communicated?

## ANSWER

- (a) Program guidelines for the initial investment round are now available on the Department's website.
- (b) The Department is undertaking place-based consultations with exposed Basin communities to understand their priorities and the necessary investments needed to support these communities. The first roundtable was held on 13 March 2025 at Griffith and hosted by Minister Moriarty.

- (c) Up to \$16 million is available to the Department to deliver the program over four years. This covers staffing costs, administration costs associated with program design, place-based and web-based consultation, program delivery, contracting and monitoring and evaluation activities. Any unspent administrative funds will be redirected back into the funds available for community support.
- (d) – (e) The \$15 million Early Investment Round will be targeted to the nine Local Government Areas of Balranald, Berrigan, Carrathool, Edward River, Griffith, Hay, Leeton, Murray River and Murrumbidgee, given their exposure and vulnerability to the Australian Government’s initial water purchasing activities, with the remaining \$145 million to be prioritised according to expected impact and vulnerability across the NSW Basin.
- (f) The Federation Funding Agreement is for \$160 million to support NSW Basin communities covering water recovery, including Australian Government water purchasing under the 450 GL target. The NSW Government will continue to advocate for further funding for NSW Basin Communities.
- (g) The Department has identified potential investment streams and intends to consult with Basin communities, review available evidence, and align these streams with the community adjustment assistance principles set out in the Australian Government’s Restoring Our Rivers Framework. The final investment streams will be made public after due consideration and consultation with impacted communities. [Refer to announcement]
- (h) Please refer to Media Release of 13 March 2024: <https://www.nsw.gov.au/ministerial-releases/first-15-million-to-support-new-jobs-and-investment-projects-nsw-southern-basin-communities>.
- (i) The NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development is delivering the NSW Sustainable Communities Program. The Department employs regionally based staff across NSW, including in Basin communities.
- (j) Staffing and resources will be allocated on an as-needed basis, which may include reassigning existing staff, recruiting new staff located in Basin communities and seeking input and expertise from across the department.
- (k) The Department employs regionally based staff across NSW, including from within Basin communities.
- (l) Program monitoring and evaluation will be completed and communicated in accordance with the Federation Funding Agreement with the Australian Government and the NSW Grants Administration Guide.

### **Drought Infrastructure Fund**

- (42) The former Coalition government allocated \$1 billion to the Farm Innovation Fund, which was renamed the Drought Infrastructure Fund. The program’s website indicates that, as of February 1, 2025, a total of \$1,064,851,790 worth of applications has been approved. Why is this?
  - (a) As of February 26, 2025, how many applications have been approved through the fund?
  - (b) How many of these applications have been received since October 20, 2023?
  - (c) As of February 26, 2025, how much has been drawn down out of the fund?
  - (d) If the full approved amount is drawn down, does the government have a plan in place to find the additional funding?
    - i. If so, where will the funding come from?

- (e) Given applications have closed, if the \$1 billion allocation isn't fully drawn down, will the government reopen the program to allow the full allocation to be exhausted?

## ANSWER

I am advised:

The \$1 billion limit applies to drawn down funds, not approved funds. While the value of funds approved exceeds the \$1 billion allocation, loan recipients are provided a 12-month period to draw down funds for eligible expenses. As not all funds that are approved are fully drawn down by the customer, the total value of funds committed will near, but not exceed, the \$1 billion funding allocation. The allocation has been modelled on draw down rates across the life of the loan product.

- (a) 6,423 applications have been approved up until 26 February 2025.
- (b) 727 applications have been received since 20 October 2023.
- (c) \$881,715,095 has been disbursed up until 26 February 2025
- (d) Not all funds that are approved are fully drawn-down by the customer and, therefore, the total value of funds committed will near, but not-exceed, the \$1 billion funding allocation.
- (e) As loan recipients are provided a 12-month period to draw down funds for eligible expenses, it is expected that the funds committed will near the \$1 billion limit. Further applicants are welcome to apply for the NSW Government's Drought Ready and Resilient Fund.

## Drought Ready and Resilient Fund

- (43) How many applications have been approved through this fund?
- (a) What is the total value of the approved applications?
  - (b) How much funding remains in this fund?

## ANSWER

I am advised:

34 applications have been approved as of 28 February 2025.

- (a) \$6,234,294 as of 28 February 2025.
- (b) \$242,154,067 as of 28 February 2025.

## Hudson Pear

- (44) In December 2022, the former government announced \$2.6 million in funding to assist with the control of Hudson Pear. How much of that funding has been spent thus far?
- (a) Since March 25, 2023, has Hudson Pear been identified in any new areas, or has it been contained within the containment area that LLS identified when the announcement was made?
  - (b) Has any additional funding been sought by LLS for its Hudson Pear program?
    - i. If so, was any additional funding

allocated?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

\$1,361,818 since December 2022 to 28 February 2025.

- a) Yes, some small new incursions have been identified adjacent to the containment line in the North West LLS region. Three other new incursions were identified in 2024 within the Northern Tablelands, Western and North Coast LLS regions. These have been identified and reported by landholders as a result of positive engagement through education and awareness campaigns. Hudson Pear has been removed from the Northern Tablelands and North Coast sites and control. No additional funding has been sought to date as the North West Hudson Pear Program is funded up until 30 June 2027.
  - i. N/A.

**Agriculture Commissioner**

(45) Was the role of Agriculture Commissioner advertised?

- (a) If so, was it advertised internally, externally, or both?
- (b) How many internal applicants from within the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development were received?
- (c) How many external applicants were received?
  - i. Were any of the external applicants former members of the Legislative Assembly?
  - ii. Were any of the external applicants former members of the Legislative Council?
- (d) Did Alison Stone submit an application for the role?
- (e) How many applicants were successful in receiving an interview for the role?
  - i. Of these, how many of the applicants were internal?
  - ii. Of these, how many of the applicants were external?

(f) Was there a panel established to conduct interviews?

- i. If so, who sat on that panel?
- (g) On what date/s did interviews take place?
- (h) On what date was Alison Stone notified that she had received the role as Agriculture Commissioner?
- (i) On what date did Alison Stone commence in the role of Agriculture Commissioner?

**ANSWER**

Yes.

- (a) Externally.



(b) No applications from Department employees were received.

(c) 6.

- i. No applications received in response to advertisement of the role were identified as belonging to former members of the Legislative Assembly.
- ii. No applications received in response to advertisement of the role were identified as belonging to former members of the Legislative Council.

(d) No. Alison Stone was identified via an executive search, which was used to complement the previous advertising of the role consistent with the Public Service Commission Appointment Standards for Boards and Committees in the Public Sector.

(e) No applicants were deemed suitable for progression. This was due to submitting either a non-complying application or not deemed suitable for the role.

i. Refer to 45(e).

ii. Refer to 45(e).

(f) N/A. Refer to 45(e)

i. N/A. Refer to 45(e)

(g) N/A. Refer to 45(e)

(h) Alison Stone was notified after the Governor made the appointment on 12 February 2025.

(i) 17 February 2025.

(46) In the August 27, 2024, Budget Estimates hearing it was outlined that the Biosecurity Commissioner role was considered a three-day-per week role. Is the Agriculture Commissioner role considered a five-day-per-week role?

(a) If not, why not?

(b) On what band of pay is the Agriculture Commissioner role categorised?

## **ANSWER**

The Agriculture Commissioner has commenced as three days per week.

- (a) Contact hours for the role is based on the functions and priorities identified for the Agriculture Commissioner under the Agriculture Commissioner Act 2024. Should the work of the Agriculture Commissioner increase and necessitate additional hours, this will be considered jointly by the Minister and Agriculture Commissioner.
- (b) The Agriculture Commissioner's remuneration was determined consistent with Schedule 1 of the Agriculture Commissioner Act 2024. The role was evaluated in line with the Public Service Senior Executive Remuneration Management Framework as equivalent to Senior Executive Band 2.

## **Regional NSW**

### **Regional Development Trust Fund**

(47) In November 2024, the government announced a \$15 million Rural and Remote Airstrips Program. What data was used to prioritise the three selected airstrips?

(a) What is the financial allocation to Bourke Shire Council?

- (b) What is the financial allocation to Central Darling Shire Council?
- (c) What is the financial allocation to Edward River Council?
- (d) Has work commenced on the Bourke Air Strip?
  - i. If so, when did work commence?
  - ii. If not, is there a scheduled date for work to commence?
- (e) Has work commenced on the White Cliffs Air Strip?
  - i. If so, when did work commence?
  - ii. If not, is there a scheduled date for work to commence?
- (f) Has work commenced on the Deniliquin Air Strip?
  - i. If so, when did work commence?
  - ii. If not, is there a scheduled date for work to commence?
- (g) On what date did the Department initiate work on the concept of a Rural and Remote Airstrips Program?
- (h) On what date did the Department commence work on its first draft of the media release announcing the Rural and Remote Airstrips Program?
- (i) On what date did the final version of the media release announcing the Rural and Remote Airstrips Program receive final approval?
- (j) Will there be future rounds of the Rural and Remote Airstrips Program?
  - i. If so, which airstrips were identified in the statewide audit to receive priority for the next round?

## ANSWER

Technical data provided by the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA), including airstrip location, operator details, geographic co-ordinates, CASA certification status and runway details:

<https://www.airservicesaustralia.com/aip/aip.asp>, in addition to utilisation data on rural and remote airstrips provided by aeromedical service providers.

- (a) The asset owners at the prioritised locations will be invited to apply for funding and undergo an assessment process to determine eligibility and final project deliverables. Applications will be assessed according to published guidelines which will include the maximum grant amounts available for each airstrip. Applicants will be required to demonstrate value for money in the delivery of projects in accordance with the principles outlined in the NSW Grants Administration Guide.
- (b) Refer to 47(a)
- (c) Refer to 47(a)
- (d) Work on the airstrip upgrades is expected to commence from mid to late 2025 following assessment and funding approvals.
- (e) – (f) Refer 47(d)
- (f) The concept was considered by the Regional Development Advisory Council in March 2024 and approved by the Minister for Regional NSW in May 2024.

- (g) 22 November 2024.
  - (h) 28 November 2024.
  - (i) Future investments under the Trust will be considered by the Minister for Regional NSW in the coming months informed by advice from the Regional Development Advisory Council.
- (48) Applications closed on February 20 for the \$50 million Regional Economic Development and Community Investment Program. How many applications were received?
- (a) What is the total value of the applications received?
  - (b) Will the entire \$50 million allocation be exhausted?
  - (c) How many of the 93 councils in regional NSW submitted applications?
    - i. If not all of the 93 councils in regional NSW submitted applications, which councils did not submit an application?
  - (d) How many of the applications were lodged under the “sustainable regional communities” key focus area?
  - (e) How many of the applications were lodged under the “Aboriginal economic development and enterprise” key focus area?
  - (f) How many of the applications were lodged under the “community connection and capacity building” key focus area?
  - (g) How many applications were received under the “improving regional service delivery” key focus area?
  - (h) How many applications were for infrastructure projects?
  - (i) How many infrastructure applications were for the maximum amount of \$5 million?
  - (j) How many infrastructure applications were for the minimum amount of \$500,000?
  - (k) What is the average amount of applications received for infrastructure projects?
  - (l) How many applications were for services and program delivery?
  - (m) How many services and program delivery applications were for the maximum amount of \$1 million?
  - (n) How many services and program delivery applications were for the minimum amount of \$250,000?
  - (o) What is the average application amount of applications received for services and program delivery?

## ANSWER

Applications are currently under assessment and eligible applicants will progress to a merit-based assessment. The final total of eligible applications under the REDCIP program will be known once that process has finished

- (a) Refer to 48.
- (b) Applications are currently under assessment and eligible applicants will progress to

a merit-based assessment. Successful applicants are expected to be notified from 26 May 2025.

(c) The department is unable to disclose applicant details prior to the assessment completion for confidentiality reasons. However, all successful projects will be published on <https://www.nsw.gov.au/grants-and-funding/regional-economic-development-and-community-investment-program/regional-economic-development-and-community-investment-program-guidelines> in accordance with the NSW Grants Administration Guide.

(d) – (o) Refer to 48.

(49) As of February 26, 2025, what is the balance in the Regional Development Trust Fund?

(a) Does this figure account for the \$50 million that has been allocated to the Regional Economic Development and Community Investment Program, given the successful applicants haven't been announced?

## ANSWER

As of 26 February 2025, \$87 million has been allocated to investments under the \$400 million Trust.

(a) Yes.

## Diary Disclosures

(50) In the February 25, 2025 Budget Estimates hearing, the Minister stated she met with the Land Council on a trip to Kempsey. Was she referring to a meeting with the Dunghutti Elders in October 2024, which was posted on her Facebook page on October 13, 2024?

(a) If so, why was this meeting not listed in her meeting disclosures for the October-December reporting period?

(b) Have the Dunghutti Elders received funding from the NSW government, through the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, since March 25, 2023?

i. If so, how much funding have the Dunghutti Elders received?

(c) Did the Minister meet with any other groups that have received NSW Government funding, without those meetings being listed in the October-December disclosures?

i. If so, which groups did she meet with?

ii. If so, why were these meetings not listed in her disclosures?

(d) Of the 30 meetings listed in the Minister's disclosures for the October-December reporting period, how many of these meetings occurred while the Minister was located in Sydney?

i. Can you provide a list of the meetings that took place while the Minister was located in Sydney

ii. How many of these meetings took place while the Minister was located in Local Government Areas defined as being included in the Regional NSW portfolio?

- iii. Can you provide a list of the meetings that took place while the Minister was located in Local Government Areas defined as being included in the Regional NSW portfolio?
- iv. Of the meetings that took place while the Minister was located in Local Government areas defined as being included in the Regional NSW portfolio, how many of these were while she was located in Queanbeyan?
- v. Can you provide a list of the meetings that took place while the Minister was located in Queanbeyan?
- vi. How many of the 30 disclosed meetings took place face-to-face?
- vii. How many of these meetings took place online?

## ANSWER

Refer to Question 3 of Questions on Notice

- (a) Refer to Question 3 of Questions on Notice
- (b) Yes
  - i. The Dunghutti Elders received \$281,150 funding under the Aboriginal owned Assets Program for repairs to damaged buildings and driveways at the Dunghutti Elders Council Meeting Centre in Kempsey. The centre provides emergency relief, access to support services and is a cultural meeting place.

The Aboriginal owned Assets Program opened for applications on 2 March 2023. The program was competitively assessed. The organisation was notified of the grant on 28 November 2023. The project is complete.
- (c) Ministerial meetings are disclosed in line with all relevant policies.
- (d) Ministerial meetings are disclosed in line with all relevant policies.

## Dubbo Sports Hub

- (51) Prior to March 25, 2023, how much funding had been allocated to the Dubbo Sports Hub project?
  - (a) How much was allocated to the project after March 25, 2023?

## ANSWER

An allocation for \$48.6 million was contained in the 2023/24 NSW State Budget.

- (a) The funding commitment was withdrawn by DPIRD following an assessment that the project was no longer viable.
- (52) On what date did the Minister receive the variation request from PCYC seeking to move the location of the Dubbo Sports Hub from Charles Sturt University to Dubbo Sports World?
    - (a) On what date did the Minister sign off on her decision to reject the variation request?

**ANSWER**

A brief regarding the future of Dubbo PCYC was received by the Minister's office on 5 December 2024.

(a) 5 December 2024.

(53) The Minister met with Dubbo Regional Council and PCYC on November 27, 2024. Were these separate meetings?

(a) Did the Minister inform Dubbo Regional Council at these meetings that she would not be approving the variation request?

(b) Did the Minister inform PCYC at these meetings that she would not be approving the variation request?

(c) Did these meetings take place face-to-face or online?

(d) Who were the attendees from PCYC at the meeting?

(e) Who were the attendees from Dubbo Regional Council at the meeting?

(f) Did the Minister, or her staff, meet with representatives from Charles Sturt University in relation to the variation request or the brief that outlined that no tenders for the project should be accepted?

i. If so, on what date?

(g) Did any representatives from the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development meet with representatives from Charles Sturt University in relation to the variation request or the brief that outlined that no tenders for the project should be accepted? No.

i. If so, on what date?

**ANSWER**

Yes.

(a) Refer to Question 52(a).

(b) Refer to Question 52(a).

(c) Ministerial meetings are disclosed in line with all relevant policies.

(d) Ministerial meetings are disclosed in line with all relevant policies.

(e) Ministerial meetings are disclosed in line with all relevant policies.

(f) No.

(g) No

(54) On what date did the Department commence work on the first draft of the media statement announcing that the project was "no longer viable"?

(a) On what date was the final version of the statement approved?

i. Was the media statement sent to the office of the Premier prior to final approval?

ii. If so, on what date?

(b) Was the media statement sent to the office of the Minister for Sport prior to final approval?

i. If so, on what date?

- (c) Was the media statement sent to the office of the Minister for Police prior to final approval?
  - i. If so, on what date?
- (d) Was the approved version of the media statement sent to PCYC prior to distribution?
  - i. If so, on what date?
- (e) Was the approved version of the media statement sent to Dubbo Regional Council prior to distribution?
  - i. If so, on what date?
- (f) Was the final version of the media statement sent to Charles Sturt University prior to distribution?
  - i. If so, on what date?

**ANSWER**

The NSW Government's statement regarding the future of the proposed Dubbo Sports Hub was released on 18 December 2024 and was prepared in line with all relevant procedures.

- (55) Between December 18, 2024 and February 26, 2025, has the Department commenced work on any briefs relating to planned visits to Dubbo that haven't eventuated?
  - (a) If so, on what date was the visit planned?
  - (b) If so, why did the planned visit not eventuate?

**ANSWER**

Yes.

- (a) Late January
  - (b) Circumstances changed.
- (56) On February 19, 2025, a delegation of people attended NSW Parliament to meet with politicians and discuss the project. Did the Minister receive an invitation to meet with the delegation?
    - (a) Did the Minister have a meeting with that delegation on that date?
    - (b) If not, why did the Minister not meet with the delegation?

**ANSWER**

Ministerial meetings are disclosed in line with all relevant policies.

- (57) In the December 18 media statement, the Minister outlined that the allocated funding from the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, which totals \$33.3 million, would be better used for alternative, deliverable projects. Can you provide a list of these "alternative, deliverable projects"?
  - (a) Has any of the \$33.3 million already been allocated to an "alternative, deliverable project" as outlined in the media statement
  - (b) If so, what project/s has the funding, or a portion there of, been allocated to, and how much has been allocated?

**ANSWER:**

Any funding decisions will be made at the upcoming 25/26 NSW Government Budget.

**Regional Media Fund**

(58) Round one of the Regional Media Fund was announced as being worth \$3 million. How many applications were received for this round of the program?

- (a) How many of those applications were successful?
- (b) What was the value of the unsuccessful applications?
- (c) In the February 26, 2025, Budget Estimates hearing, it was revealed that there was \$750,000 not allocated in round one. Why wasn't the \$3 million fully exhausted?
- (d) In the February 26, 2025 Budget Estimates Hearing, it was stated that round two of the Regional Media Fund is worth \$3.75 million, with the unallocated \$750,000 from round one rolling over. However the government's website states round two is worth \$3 million. Will you commit to exhausting the full \$3.75 million in round two to take the total value of the two rounds to \$6 million, being the total combined value of the two rounds as stated in the February 26, 2025 Budget Estimates hearing?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

52 Applications were received.

- (a) 47 applications were successful.
- (b) \$278,372.
- (c) Only 52 applications were submitted and 5 applications were assessed as ineligible. Funding could only be awarded to projects that were assessed as eligible as per the program guidelines.
- (d) \$3.75 million is available for eligible projects in Round 2.

**Western NSW****Walgett Pool**

(59) In 2023, the NSW Government provided a one-off grant of \$375,000 for temporary repair works to the Walgett Pool. Has the government been working with Walgett Shire Council on a long-term solution?

- (a) If so, has Walgett Shire Council applied for funding?

**ANSWER**

On the 28 June 2024 the NSW Government announced it would provide \$250,000 towards planning and design work for a new facility.



### Lightning Ridge Opal Museum

(60) Of the \$34.2 million allocated to the project, how much was contributed by the proponent?

- (a) How much was contributed by the Federal Government?
- (b) How much was contributed by the NSW Government?
  - i. What was the value of the funding allocated by the NSW Government in 2022?
- (c) How many companies tendered for the contract to construct the facility?
- (d) If more than one company tendered for the contract, how many of those companies were based in NSW?
- (e) As of February 26, 2025, are there any businesses that have supplied materials or labour to the project that remain unpaid?
  - i. If there are businesses that have supplied materials or labour to the project that remain unpaid, what will you do to rectify this situation?

### ANSWER

I am advised:

\$5.2 million

- (a) \$9.5 million
- (b) \$19 million
  - i. In December 2022, an additional \$10 million was approved under the Regional Growth Fund tranche three, taking NSW Government's contribution to \$19 million.
- (c) The Tender Evaluation Committee (TEC) selected 8 NSW based contractors from the NSW Government Prequalified Panels to form the basis of the tender panel. 3 of those 8 submitted tenders for the project.
- (d) Three
- (e) Arrangements between grantees and suppliers are third party commercial arrangements.
  - i. Arrangements between grantees and suppliers are third party commercial arrangements. The Department does, however, as part of the grant's assurance framework, ensure all grant payments are fully acquitted, and all expenditure is in line with the project scope under the funding deed.

### Defined Western NSW Portfolio

(61) As of February 26, 2025, how many local government areas make up the defined Western NSW Portfolio?

- (a) Can you provide a list of all of the local government areas as defined in the Western NSW Portfolio?

**ANSWER**

18 LGAs

- (a) Balranald, Bogan, Bourke, Brewarrina, Broken Hill City, Carrathool, Central Darling, Cobar, Coonamble, Dubbo, Gilgandra, Hay, Lachlan, Narromine, Walgett, Warren, Warrumbungle and Wentworth LGAs, and the Unincorporated Area

**General questions****Senior Executives**

(62) As of February 26, 2025, how many senior executives within your department are categorised as Band 4?

- (a) How many are categorised as Band 3?  
 (b) How many are categorised as Band 2?  
 (c) How many are categorised as Band 1?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

**The number of senior executives is publicly reported within Annual Reports.**

**CFMEU meetings**

(63) Given ministerial diary disclosures do not include all meetings and provide exceptions to disclosures, since 28 March 2023, have you met with the CFMEU?

**ANSWER**

I am advised;

In accordance with the Premier's Memorandum *M2015-05 Publication of Ministerial Diaries and Release of Overseas Travel Information*, all Ministers publish extracts from their diaries, summarising details of scheduled meetings held with stakeholders, external organisations, third-party lobbyists and individuals.

Ministers are not required to disclose details of the following meetings:

- meetings involving Ministers, ministerial staff, parliamentarians or government officials (whether from NSW or other jurisdictions)
- meetings that are strictly personal, electorate or party political
- social or public functions or events
- meetings held overseas (which must be disclosed in accordance with regulation 6(1)(b) of the Government Information (Public Access) Regulation 2018 and Attachment B to the Premier's Memorandum), and
- matters for which there is an overriding public interest against disclosure.

Ministers' diary disclosures are published quarterly on The Cabinet Office's website (<https://www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/the-cabinet-office/access-to-information/ministers-diary-disclosures>).

**ETU meetings**

(64) Given ministerial diary disclosures do not include all meetings and provide exceptions to disclosures, since 28 March 2023, have you met with the ETU?

**ANSWER**

I am advised;

In accordance with the Premier's Memorandum *M2015-05 Publication of Ministerial Diaries and Release of Overseas Travel Information*, all Ministers publish extracts from their diaries, summarising details of scheduled meetings held with stakeholders, external organisations, third-party lobbyists and individuals.

Ministers are not required to disclose details of the following meetings:

- meetings involving Ministers, ministerial staff, parliamentarians or government officials (whether from NSW or other jurisdictions)
- meetings that are strictly personal, electorate or party political
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- meetings held overseas (which must be disclosed in accordance with regulation 6(1)(b) of the Government Information (Public Access) Regulation 2018 and Attachment B to the Premier's Memorandum), and
- matters for which there is an overriding public interest against disclosure.

Ministers' diary disclosures are published quarterly on The Cabinet Office's website (<https://www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/the-cabinet-office/access-to-information/ministers-diary-disclosures>).

**Ministerial disclosures to The Cabinet Office**

(65) On what date did you last update/make a ministerial disclosure to The Cabinet Office?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

The Ministerial Code of Conduct (Ministerial Code) requires Ministers to make certain disclosures to the Premier and the Secretary of The Cabinet Office.

I comply with my obligations under the Ministerial Code.

**Department(s)/Agency(s) Employees**

(66) How many redundancies were processed by each Department(s)/agency(s) within your portfolio responsibilities since 28 March 2023?

- (a) Of these redundancies, how many were:
- (b) Voluntary?
- (c) Forced?
- (d) What was the total cost of all redundancies in each Department/agency within your portfolio responsibilities?

- (e) On what page are redundancies published in the respective Department(s)/Agency(s) Annual Reports?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

Redundancies are published in the respective Department(s)/Agency(s) Annual Reports under employee related expenses.

**Department(s)/Agency(s) Annual Reports**

- (67) On what date were the annual report(s) from 2023-24 for each department / agency in your portfolio published?

**ANSWER**

The annual reports were tabled in accordance with the requirements of the Government Sector Finance Act 2018.

- (68) Were the annual report(s) from 2023-24 for each department / agency in your portfolio printed?  
(a) If yes, what was the printing cost(s) for each department / agency?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

Annual reports should be prepared in accordance with the NSW Treasury Policy and Guidelines TPG23-10 Annual Reporting Requirements. TP23-10 also requires that an agency's annual report contain the total external costs incurred in the production of the report, including printing costs.

- (69) Did the annual report(s) from 2023-24 for each department / agency in your portfolio use in part or full an external production / body / consultant to draft?  
(a) If yes, what was the cost(s) for each department / agency?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

In accordance with the Treasury Policy and Guidelines TPG23-10 Annual Reporting Requirements, an agency's annual report must contain the total external costs incurred in the production of the report, including fees for consultants.

- (70) In what month will the 2024-25 annual report(s) for each department / agency in your portfolio be published?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

The annual report of a reporting GSF agency is to be prepared, submitted and tabled in accordance with requirements under the Government Sector Finance Act 2018 and Treasurer's Direction 23-11 Annual reporting requirements.

(71) Will the 2024-25 annual report(s) for the department / agency in your portfolio include a printed copy?

(a) If yes, how much is budgeted for printing in 2024-25 for each department / agency?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

Annual reports should be prepared in accordance with the NSW Treasury Policy and Guidelines TPG23-10 Annual Reporting Requirements. TP23-10 also requires that an agency's annual report contain the total external costs incurred in the production of the report, including printing costs.

**State Records Act**

(72) Have you and your ministerial office had training and/or a briefing about the State Records Act from State Records NSW and/or The Cabinet Office and/or Premier's Department?

(a) If yes, when?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

The Ministers' Office Handbook provides guidance in relation to recordkeeping obligations under the State Records Act 1998.

The Cabinet Office also provide guidance, advice, training and support on these obligations for Ministers' offices.

Further information is available on State Records NSW's website ([www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/dciths/state-records-nsw](http://www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/dciths/state-records-nsw)).

I expect all my staff to comply with their obligations under the State Records Act 1998.

**Advertising**

(73) On what page is advertising published in the respective Department(s)/Agency(s) annual report(s)?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

Annual reports are published on the website of the relevant department or agency and are also held by the Parliamentary Library.

Department and agency expenditure is also published at [data.nsw.gov.au](http://data.nsw.gov.au)

Agency expenditure must be reported in accordance with TD23-11 Annual reporting requirements and TPG23-10 Annual Reporting Requirements.

**Department(s)/Agency(s) Gifts and Hospitality Register**

(74) Does your portfolio department(s)/agency(s) have a gifts and/or hospitality register?

(a) If yes, is it available online?

i. If yes, what is the website URL?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

The Department's staff submit and manage their declarations through an internal online portal. This register is not publicly available.

(75) Does your ministerial office keep a register of gifts and/or hospitality for staff to make disclosures?

(a) If yes, what is the website URL?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

All Ministerial staff are required to comply with the Gifts, Hospitality and Benefits Policy for Office Holder Staff attached to the Ministers' Office Handbook and available on the NSW Government website.

(76) Have any staff members in your office been the recipient of any free hospitality?

(a) What was the total value of the hospitality received?

(b) Are these gifts of hospitality declared?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

All Ministerial staff are required to comply with their disclosure obligations under the Gifts, Hospitality and Benefits Policy for Office Holder Staff and I expect them to do so.

A breach of the Policy may be a breach of the Office Holder's Staff Code of Conduct. The Policy includes disclosure obligations for Ministerial staff in respect of gifts, hospitality and benefits over \$150.

If a Ministerial staff member is required by their role to accompany their Office Holder at an event that the Office Holder is attending as the State's representative, or where the Office Holder has asked the staff member to attend, then attendance at that event would not constitute a gift or benefit for the purposes of the Policy.

**Ministerial Code of Conduct**

(77) Since 28 March 2023, have you breached the Ministerial Code of Conduct?

(a) If yes, what was the breach?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

All Ministers are expected to comply with their obligations under the NSW Ministerial Code of Conduct (Ministerial Code) at all times.

The Ministerial Code sets the ethical standards of behaviour required of Ministers and establishes practices and procedures to assist with compliance.

Among other matters, the Ministerial Code requires Ministers to:

- disclose their pecuniary interests and those of their immediate family members to the Premier
- seek rulings from the Premier if they wish to hold shares, directorships, other business interests or engage in secondary employment (known as ‘prohibited interests’)
- identify, avoid, disclose and manage conflicts of interest
- disclose gifts and hospitality with a market value over \$500.

A substantial breach of the Ministerial Code (including a knowing breach of any provision of the Schedule) may constitute corrupt conduct for the purposes of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988.

**Credit Cards**

(78) Have you ever been issued with a credit card by a NSW Government department(s) and/or agency(s) since 28 March 2023?

- (a) If yes, under what circumstance?
- (b) If yes, what items and expenditure was undertaken?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

Ministers and Ministerial Staff are not eligible to receive Departmental credit cards except in the case of overseas travel. In cases of overseas travel short-term cards will be issued and returned at the completion of official travel together with a travel diary for fringe benefit tax purposes.

Where an NSW Government-issued credit card is provided the credit card must only be used for official overseas business trips and official business purposes, this includes for transport to/from the airport when departing/returning from the trip.

NSW Government-issued credit cards for official business trips overseas will be held with government contract bankers and used within credit limits imposed.

Credit cards are a useful means of expenditure control, but their use should never be for personal purposes.

Costs associated with overseas travel are published on the NSW Government website in line with M2015-05.

(79) Do public servants in your portfolio department(s)/agency(s) been issued with department/agency credit cards?

**ANSWER**

As noted in the response to Supplementary Questions to the initial hearing on 27 August 2024, the use and management of purchasing (credit) cards for official purposes is in accordance with standard procurement arrangements of the NSW Government.

Further, each Department / Agency within the portfolio have a specified policy. These were attached to the response to Supplementary Questions to the initial hearing on 27 August 2024.

(80) If yes, what is the website URL of the credit card policy?

**ANSWER**

Refer to Question 79.

**Department(s)/agency(s) desk or office**

(81) Do you have a desk or office in your portfolio department(s)/agency(s) building(s)?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

I make use of an office in 52 Martin Place and NSW Parliament.

When travelling, Ministers may make ad hoc arrangements to work for periods in Departmental offices

**Senior Executive Drivers**

(82) As at 1 February 2025, how many senior executives in your portfolio department(s) / agency(s) have a driver?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

No senior executive employed by the Department or Agencies within the portfolio have a driver.

**GIPA Applications – Ministerial Office**

(83) Has your Ministerial Office received a GIPA Application(s) since 28 March 2023?

(a) If yes, how many?

(b) If yes, what is the website URL of the disclosure log?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

GIPA statistics for Ministers' offices are published in the annual reports of the Department of Communities and Justice.



**GIPA Applications – Department(s)/Agency(s)**

Since 28 March 2023, have you and/or your ministerial office given instructions to your portfolio department(s)/agency(s) in relation to Government Information (Public Access) Act application(s)?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

Under the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009:

An agency is not subject to the direction or control of any Minister in the exercise of the agency's functions in dealing with a particular access application.

The office of the Minister complies with the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009.

**GIPA Act – Disclosure Log Website URL**

(84) What is the website URL for the GIPA Act disclosure log each of your portfolio department(s) / agency(s)?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

- <https://www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/dpird/access-information/disclosure-logs>
- <https://www.forestrycorporation.com.au/about/right-to-information/disclosure-log>

**TikTok**

(85) Are you on TikTok?

(a) If yes, do you access TikTok from a NSW Government device?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

The Circular DCS-2025-01 Cyber Security NSW Directive - Restricted Applications List advises how NSW Government agencies are required to appropriately manage risks to NSW Government information on government-issued devices, or personal devices that are used for government business.

**Signal**

(86) Are you and/or your ministerial staff on Signal?

- (a) If yes, do you and/or your ministerial staff access Signal from a NSW Government device?
- (b) If yes, does Signal comply with the State Records Act?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

Like the former Coalition Government, a range of communications are used by the NSW Government.

I comply with the State Records Act 1998 and I expect all staff members to comply with their obligations under the State Records Act 1998.

### **Training**

(87) Since 28 March 2023, have you had training from an external stakeholder that included an invoice and payment paid for using your ministerial budget?

(a) If yes, what is the description of training?

(b) If yes, how much?

### **ANSWER**

I am advised:

Ministers have undertaken a program of Ministerial induction training.

Ministers have undertaken training on the Respectful Workplace Policy.

Members of Parliament are provided with a Skills Development Allowance that may be used in a manner consistent with the Parliamentary Remuneration Tribunal Annual Determination.

Ministerial Office Budgets are managed in accordance with the Ministers' Office Handbook.

### **Cabinet documents**

(88) Since 28 March 2023, have you shared Cabinet documents with your Parliamentary Secretary?

### **ANSWER**

N/A, as there is no Parliamentary Secretary for the portfolio responsibilities of the Minister for Agriculture, Regional New South Wales and Western New South Wales.

### **Parliamentary Secretary**

(89) Does your Parliamentary Secretary have pass access to your ministerial office?

### **ANSWER**

N/A, as there is no Parliamentary Secretary for the portfolio responsibilities of the Minister for Agriculture, Regional New South Wales and Western New South Wales.

(90) Does your Parliamentary Secretary have a desk in your ministerial office?

### **ANSWER**

N/A, as there is no Parliamentary Secretary for the portfolio responsibilities of the Minister for Agriculture, Regional New South Wales and Western New South Wales.

(91) Has your Parliamentary Secretary ever used your Ministerial Vehicle?

**ANSWER**

N/A, as there is no Parliamentary Secretary for the portfolio responsibilities of the Minister for Agriculture, Regional New South Wales and Western New South Wales.

**Media releases and statements**

(92) Are all the ministerial media releases and statements issued by you publicly available at <https://www.nsw.gov.au/media-releases>?

(a) If no, why?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

The Department of Customer Service (DCS) is responsible for managing [www.nsw.gov.au/media-releases](http://www.nsw.gov.au/media-releases) and the publication of media releases.

**Overseas Travel**

(93) As Minister, do you approve overseas travel for public servants from your portfolio department(s)/agency(s)?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

The NSW Government Travel and Transport Policy provides a framework for NSW Government travelling employees and covers official air and land travel by public officials using public money. Section 2.1 of that Policy sets out approvals required in relation to overseas travel. Further information in relation to the Policy can be found here: <https://www.info.buy.nsw.gov.au/policy-library/policies/travel-and-transport-policy>

NSW Treasury Policy and Guidelines – Annual Reporting Requirements (TPG-10) requires agencies to include information on overseas visits by officers and employees in agency annual reports.

**Data Breaches**

(94) Does your portfolio department(s)/agency(s) keep a register of data breaches in accordance with the Privacy and Personal Information Protection (PPIP) Act?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

The Department keeps an internal register of eligible data breaches as required by section 59ZE, Part 6A of the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998* (PPIP Act).

Agencies are required by section 59ZD to prepare, publish and make publicly available a data breach policy. The PPIP Act does not provide for the internal register to be made public.

Under clause 17, of Schedule 1 to the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009*, it is conclusively presumed that there is an overriding public interest against disclosure of information contained in a document prepared for the assessment of an eligible data breach under the PPIP Act, Part 6A, if the information could worsen a public sector agency's cyber security or lead to further data breaches.

(95) If yes to 38, what is the website?

I am advised:

The Department keeps an internal register of eligible data breaches as required by section 59ZE, Part 6A of the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998* (PPIP Act).

Agencies are required by section 59ZD to prepare, publish and make publicly available a data breach policy. The PPIP Act does not provide for the internal register to be made public.

Under clause 17, of Schedule 1 to the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009*, it is conclusively presumed that there is an overriding public interest against disclosure of information contained in a document prepared for the assessment of an eligible data breach under the PPIP Act, Part 6A, if the information could worsen a public sector agency's cyber security or lead to further data breaches.

#### **ANSWER**

I am advised the Development's Data Breach Public Notification Register is publicly available at <https://www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/dpird/access-information/data-breach-public-notification-register>.

#### **Discretionary Fund**

(96) As Minister, do you have a discretionary fund?

- (a) If yes, what department(s) / agency(s) administer it?
- (b) If yes, what is the website URL detailing expenditure?

#### **ANSWER**

I am advised:

The Minister's Discretionary Fund is funded and administered by the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development.

<https://www.nsw.gov.au/grants-and-funding/ministers-community-benefit-fund-strategic-projects>

#### **Qantas Chairman's Lounge**

(97) Are you a member of the Qantas Chairmans Lounge?

#### **ANSWER**

I am advised:

The Constitution (Disclosures by Members) Regulation 1983 (Regulation) sets out Members' obligations to disclose relevant pecuniary and other interests in periodic returns to Parliament.

The Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Parliamentary Privilege and Ethics Report on Review of the Code of Conduct, Aspects of Disclosure of Interests, and Related Issues (December 2010) notes that:

“Advice has been received from the Crown Solicitor that use of the Chairman's Lounge by invitation is not a "gift" for the purposes of clause 10 of the Regulation, as it does not involve disposition of property. However, when the membership leads to an upgrade valued at more than \$250, it becomes disclosable as a contribution to travel, and should be reported under clause 11 of the Regulation.”

Clause 16 of the Regulation allows a Member to, at their discretion, disclose any direct or indirect benefit, advantage or liability, whether pecuniary or not.

Relevant disclosures have been made to The Cabinet Office and to the NSW Parliament.

### **Local Government Councillors**

(98) How many of your Ministerial staff is a local government councillor(s)?

### **ANSWER**

I am advised:

Ministerial staff are employed by Ministers, on behalf of the State, in their capacity as "political office holders" under Part 2 of the Members of Parliament Staff Act 2013. All Ministerial staff are required to comply with the NSW Office Holder's Staff Code of Conduct, including obligations to seek approval for secondary employment, and to take reasonable steps to avoid, and in all cases disclose, any actual or potential conflicts of interest (real or apparent).

### **Varroa Mite**

(99) How much money was committed, in-kind or otherwise, for compliance and enforcement by NSW to the National Varroa Mite Destructor Plan between February 2024 and February 2026?

- (a) How much of that money has been spent?
- (b) How has that money been spent?
- (c) How many biosecurity directions were issued in relation to this funding?
- (d) How many PINs were issued in relation to this funding?

### **ANSWER**

I am advised:

The in-kind budget for compliance and enforcement activity in NSW under the National Varroa Mite Destructor Plan is \$1,129,592. This is complemented by the Department's broader

biosecurity compliance, enforcement, education and engagement functions.

- (a) Approximately \$45,000 has been spent on compliance operations targeting hive surveillance requirements. To date, the focus of the Transition to Management Plan has been on promoting voluntary compliance through education and extension.
- (b) Compliance operations targeting hive surveillance requirements.
- (c) 0
- (d) 1

### **Forestry Corp Biosecurity**

(100) How much did Forestry Corporation spend on biosecurity operations in the financial year 2023-24?

- (a) Could you provide a breakdown of how that money was spent?
- (b) Including a breakdown of what weeds/pests the money went towards controlling?

### **ANSWER**

I am advised:

Forestry Corporation carries out a range of activities that contribute to biosecurity, including pest and weed management, plantation and forest health monitoring, and where required implementing specific biosecurity controls on certain operations or at specific sites. Many monitoring and control programs target multiple species.

Total biosecurity expenditure is reported within operating expenses and not separately accounted for. \$1.43 million is allocated to the annual plantation health monitoring program carried out on behalf of Forestry Corporation by the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development.

Information on pest and weed control expenditure is published on page 18 of the Sustainability Report on Forestry Corporation's website at <https://www.forestrycorporation.com.au/about/pubs/corporate/sustainability-reports>

(101) How much did the Forestry Corporation spend on biosecurity operations in the financial year 2022-2023?

- (a) Could you provide a breakdown of how that money was spent?
- (b) Including a breakdown of what weeds/pests the money went towards controlling?

### **ANSWER**

I am advised:

This answer can be found at:

<https://www.forestrycorporation.com.au/about/pubs/corporate/sustainability-reports>

### **Dog Fence**

- (102) How much of the \$37.5 million dollars has been spent to fix the 32km priority section of the dog fence?
- What is the estimated cost per kilometre of fence for the new priority section that is nearing completion?
  - How much funding from the original \$37.5 million will be available for the remainder of the dog fence?
  - What learnings have been gained from the priority section and how will they be fixed when attention turns to the rest of the fence?
  - How many more gaps in the fence or stretches that require attention have been identified outside of the 32km priority area of the dog fence?

**ANSWER**

As at February 2025, \$6.456 million had been spent constructing the 32km priority section of the dog fence. A budget of \$8.7 million is allocated for construction of this section. Surplus funds have been reprioritised within the Department.

- Cost per kilometre will be known once this section of fence is completed.
- Funding commitments for the remainder of the dog fence and other wild dog controls will be considered at the completion of the 32km priority section. This figure is currently \$6 million.
- (d)The key learning is that closing the 32km priority section in the wild dog fence offers the most value, as by reconnecting the SA and NSW dog fences a 2700km barrier is created to stop dogs and other pests seeking entry to NSW. Once the 32 kilometre priority section is completed the Department will consult with pest experts to determine the value delivered by additional wild dog fencing and other control measures, noting Local Land Services have received less than 70 wild dog reports per year in Western NSW over the last 3 years.

**Questions from Hon Mark Banasiak MLC**
**Mummaga Lake and Professional Fishers Returning**

- (103) Why are professional fishers who accepted buyouts now allowed to fish in Mummaga Lake under cultural fishing exemptions?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

Recreational Fishing Havens are areas where commercial fishing has been prohibited by regulations.

Aboriginal cultural fishing may be permitted within areas where commercial fishing is prohibited, following assessment and issuing of a permit or order under Section 37 of the Fisheries Management Act 1994 and a marine park permit for cultural use under the Marine Estate Management Act 2014, if within a marine park.

- (104) Are there any plans to review regulations to ensure recreational fishing havens remain exclusive?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

Recreational Fishing Havens are areas where commercial fishing has been prohibited by regulations. There are no plans to review regulations with respect to recreational fishing havens.

### **Mulloway Stocking**

(105) What is the NSW Government's long-term strategy for mulloway restocking?

### **ANSWER**

I am advised:

The Department's Mulloway stocking program aims to enhance Mulloway stocks and recreational fishing in NSW and support conservation outcomes for fish and fish habitat under a clear management framework.

Juvenile Mulloway are produced using wild broodstock maintained by the marine fish hatchery at the Port Stephens Fisheries Institute. Stocking efforts are currently focused on estuary systems within the State's Recreational Fishing Haven network.

The Mulloway stocking program is supported by the Department - Fisheries research program which monitors the impact and contribution of the stocking program to the recreational fishery and provides information and advice for it to be adaptively managed. This includes assessing the contribution of stocked fish to those sampled in stocked estuaries (using genetics and parentage analysis). Sampling is predominantly collected by citizen scientists, however the Department's researchers supplement this data with their own collections. Part of the research involves a tag recapture program which utilises external tags to examine growth, residency and movements. Acoustic telemetry is used to identify suitable juvenile habitats and to assess predation rates.

The Mulloway stocking program and associated research/monitoring is supported with funding from the Recreational Fishing Trusts.

The Mulloway stocking program is one of the actions forming part of the draft harvest strategy for mulloway in NSW, which will soon be released for public consultation.

(106) Can you confirm whether new regulations around minimum size and bag limits have been effective?

### **ANSWER**

I am advised:

Since fishing rules were revised for Mulloway, the status of the species has changed from *depleted* to *recovering* based on the most recent scientific stock assessment available. This is outlined in the NSW Stock Status Summary – 2023/24. This document can be found here: [https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0008/1574504/Mulloway-Stock-Status-Summary-2023-24.pdf](https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/1574504/Mulloway-Stock-Status-Summary-2023-24.pdf)

(107) How is the government ensuring that conservation efforts for mulloway do not harm



other marine species?

## ANSWER

I am advised:

When developing management strategies, the Department considers numerous factors, including the potential for impacts on other species. In the case of Mulloway, the new rules are designed to restrict targeting of Mulloway, so fishing effort would be expected to decrease, along with any adverse unintended interactions on other species also reducing. If other key fish species were to be targeted, there are specific fishing rules and management controls in place with appropriate monitoring to ensure ongoing sustainable fishing practices. If all fish stocks are being managed sustainably, a natural ecological balance should be achieved, noting that all fish stocks and the ecosystems that support them are subject to natural environmental variation between seasons and years.

## Blue Groper Study and Ban

(108) Was the study on blue groper commissioned for policy decisions, or was it broader research?

## ANSWER

I am advised:

A stock assessment for Blue Groper has been completed that takes into account all of the available data on abundance of the species, size structure of the populations, biology and fishing impacts. The outcomes of this report concluded that Eastern Blue Groper stocks are sustainable with low fishing pressure, but their biology makes them vulnerable to pressure and environmental change. The Department routinely undertakes stock assessments to inform fisheries management approaches.

The paper *Trends in eastern blue groper (Achoerodus viridis) abundance along south-eastern Australia (New South Wales): the influence of latitude, climate change and potential depth refuges* was published in the scientific journal *Marine and Freshwater Research* in 2025. It is a report of the abundance data collected in the Baited Remote Underwater Video (BRUV) program (designed by the Department to collect information on reef fish assemblages) and the Underwater Video Census (UVC) information collected by trained citizen science divers (designed to collect biodiversity information along the NSW coastline). The data used in this publication were some of the data used to conduct a stock assessment on Blue Groper.

(109) How reliable is the data from Baited Remote Underwater Video (BRUV) and Underwater Visual Census (UVC) methods?

## ANSWER

I am advised:

Like any scientific survey method there is uncertainty in the results. Both methods were not specifically targeted at surveying the abundance of Blue Groper, with BRUV designed to survey rocky reef fish assemblages and UVC designed to conduct biodiversity surveys. However, both methods have been consistently administered and by people that have had specific scientific training in each methodology. So despite the uncertainty they both can

provide insights into abundance patterns over time of rocky reef species.

(110) If fishing pressure is minimal, why is a total ban necessary?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

A range of important biological, ecological, social and community factors were considered including feedback from the community consultation as well as recently published scientific information that raised concerns about the potential impacts of climate change and that caution should be taken in managing the species due to their unique biological traits. The extended period of protection will enable further research and monitoring to be undertaken on the impacts that climate change may be having on populations.

The Department also undertook a stock assessment of the Eastern Blue Groper in 2024, which concluded that the Eastern Blue Groper is in a sustainable position, however their species biology makes them vulnerable to pressure and environmental change.

(111) Why was the blue groper report received in July 2024 but only published in February 2025?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

A draft article was submitted to the scientific journal on 12 July 2024. The scientific review process for a paper such as this generally takes at least six months before publication.

**NSW Forestry Corporation & Timber Industry**

(112) Why was the contract for harvesting Redgum in Balranald/Euston suspended without prior notice?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

Contracts were not suspended, but operations were paused. Forestry Corporation has multiple operations underway at any point in time, and sometimes may pause an operation for a range of factors.

(113) Has the government conducted a full cost-benefit analysis on converting State Forests into a national park?

**ANSWER**

No.

(114) If native timber harvesting is banned, how will the government compensate for the loss of local timber supply?

**ANSWER**

The NSW Government is committed to a sustainable forestry industry and supports our forestry workers.

The NSW Government is developing a Forestry Industry Action Plan which will outline the path NSW will take to ensure a sustainable timber industry that aligns with the Government's key environmental priorities.

**Koala National Park Proposal**

(115) What evidence supports the claim that tourism can totally replace the economic contribution of native timber?

**ANSWER**

This question should be directed to the Minister for the Environment.

(116) Why is the government prioritizing expanding national parks over sustainable forestry?

**ANSWER**

The NSW Government made an election commitment to create a Great Koala National Park.

The NSW Government is also developing a Forestry Industry Action Plan which will outline the path NSW will take to ensure a sustainable timber industry that aligns with the Government's key environmental priorities.

(117) Will the Minister commit to basing the final decision on socioeconomic, environmental, and scientific assessments?

**ANSWER**

This question should be directed to the Minister for the Environment.

**Fire Management in National Parks vs. State Forests**

(118) What role did Forestry Corporation play in managing the 2019/2020 bushfires?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

NSW Rural Fire Service and other fire authorities including National Parks and Wildlife Service and NSW Fire and Rescue to collaboratively manage fires across the landscape.

Forestry Corporation is also a member of the Bush Fire Coordinating Committee and local Bush Fire

Management Committees, and works closely with other members in every fire season.

In 2019-20 more than 500 Forestry Corporation staff completed in excess of 16,500 shifts on fires from June 2019 until early February 2020, with staff contributing at every level of fire management from playing a key role in State Operations and supporting strategic state-wide decision making as a fire fighting authority, through to filling essential positions in incident management teams across the state, right through to the frontline firefighting.

Forestry Corporation firefighters are specialists in large forest fires and diverted heavy machinery such as bulldozers from site preparation operations to help build containment lines and keep fires in check.

Forestry Corporation and its contractors also contributed equipment including tankers, light vehicles, heavy vehicles such as dozers and harvesting machinery, drones and contracted aircraft to attack and contain fires and manage their spread. To supplement local resources Forestry Corporation also brought in crews from around the state and contracted firefighting crews rotating from New Zealand and interstate to help.

As well as actively fighting fires, Forestry Corporation staff were also engaged in patrolling forests and manning fire towers to watch for new ignitions from lightning strikes and ensure areas were safe.

Since the 2019-20 fires, Forestry Corporation has invested millions of dollars in restoring public roads and access to forests, making areas safe and salvaging and replanting timber resources.

(119) How does the government plan to manage fire risks in forests if native forestry is banned?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

This is a hypothetical question. The government expects public land management agencies to manage fire risks on public lands regardless of land use or tenure.

**Trout Hatchery Closures & Management Visitor**

**Access & Transparency**

(120) Why are both the Gaden and Dutton trout hatcheries currently closed to visitors?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

Staff resources at the Government's trout hatcheries are currently focused on essential animal husbandry work. This has resulted in a temporary disruption to tourism services at these sites. It is expected that tourist facilities will be available at the Gaden Trout Hatchery in Jindabyne in the near future. Depending on the availability of staff, pre-booked tours have been provided at the Dutton Trout Hatchery, located near Ebor

(121) When will the public and stakeholders be given access to these facilities again?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

Additional services will resume at Dutton as soon as possible, noting the site has been affected by flooding as a result of recent cyclone activity.

(122) Is the government conducting any reviews or restructuring that justifies the lack of transparency?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

Advisory information on the temporary pause on tourist activities is publicly available.

**Staffing & Production**

(123) How many positions are currently vacant at:

- a. Gaden Trout Hatchery?
- b. Dutton Trout Hatchery?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

- (a) As of 10 March 2025, there are no vacant positions at the Gaden Trout Hatchery.
- (b) As of 10 March 2025, one (1) full time Guide Attendant position is vacant at the Dutton Trout Hatchery

(124) What are the specific roles and responsibilities of each vacant position?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

Hatchery Guide Attendant duties include maintaining fish ova, fry and fingerlings, maintaining hatchery records, implementing fish genetic and disease control procedures, stocking and transporting fish, maintaining hatchery equipment and ponds and providing guided educational tours for visitors to the hatchery.

The Department has four employees at Dutton who work on a roster system to ensure these activities are conducted. They work in two shifts, which includes a three-day crossover period.

(125) How long has each of these positions been vacant?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

The full-time Guide Attendant at the hatchery has been vacant since February 2024.

(126) How many of these vacant positions are currently being backfilled?

**ANSWER**

I am advised, none.

(127) For the positions that are backfilled, are they temporary or permanent arrangements?

**ANSWER**

N/A

(128) How many vacant positions at each hatchery are actively being advertised?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

At this point in time none.

(129) Where are these positions being advertised, and what efforts have been made to attract applicants?

**ANSWER**

N/A

(130) On what date was each vacant position first advertised?

**ANSWER**

N/A

(131) Has the government made any internal decisions or plans to permanently reduce staff at these hatcheries?

**ANSWER**

No.

**Budget & Fingerling Distribution**

(132) Is it true that there is no budget allocated for transporting fingerlings across the state?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

No. The Department's hatcheries have allocated budgets, which account for the annual transport of fingerlings to undertake stocking activities.

(133) If so, how does the government plan to maintain fish stocking programs, which are crucial for both recreational fishing and environmental management?

**ANSWER**

Refer to Question 132.

(134) How does this align with commitments to regional communities that rely on stocked fisheries for tourism and local economies?

**ANSWER**

Refer to Question 132.

**Long-Term Plan & Government Priorities**

(135) What is the long-term plan for the Gaden and Dutton hatcheries?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

The NSW Government is committed to continuing to support the State's trout fishery.

The Dutton Trout Hatchery at Ebor and the Gaden Trout Hatchery at Jindabyne produce and stock more than two million trout fry and fingerlings across the Snowy-Monaro, the Central West and the Northern Tablelands each year.

The work undertaken by the dedicated teams at the Dutton and Gaden Trout Hatcheries in producing and stocking high quality trout fry and fingerlings helps ensure the NSW trout fishery continues to provide quality angling opportunities for both locals and visitors and in turn delivers a range of socio-economic benefits across regional NSW.

(136) Is the government considering privatisation or other cost-cutting measures that would impact their operation?

**ANSWER**

Refer to Question 135.

(137) What assurances can the Minister provide that these closures and reductions won't lead to a permanent decline in trout stocking programs in NSW?

**ANSWER**

Refer to Question 135.