

**Question 1 – Page 4**

**The CHAIR:** Minister, could I go to the Dubbo sports hub? Obviously it has been a point of interest in parliamentary sittings over the past couple of weeks. My knowledge is that on 26 September 2024, PCYC submitted a 78-page business case for the alternative location, which is seven minutes from the original site, confirming the project could proceed within the existing budget. That proposal was supported by the New South Wales Office of Sport. Why did you reject that variation when it seems the Office of Sport had supported it?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I'm happy to answer questions about this. It has been a topic of conversation in Parliament. I have answered questions about the fact that the advice I received was that this wasn't a variation request. I know people think that it was a variation request. From memory, there have been three or four variation requests. I'll check the details on that. This project has supposedly been in the works for nearly seven years and there is still no location. There wasn't a proper plan in place to deliver it. Every six months for seven years there seemed to have been more money allocated to it by the previous Government but still no plan and no delivery of the project.

I would prefer it if there was a sports hub in Dubbo built by the previous Government, as they promised some years ago. But they didn't deliver it. What I received was a request for essentially a new project and got advice that it wasn't a variation to the previous project; it was an application for a new project. That's okay. People are entitled to make applications for projects around New South Wales, but they have to be considered in the proper way. In this case, any new proposition here will have to be considered through the Government's processes.

**The CHAIR:** I didn't want to stop you there, but who did you receive the advice from that this wasn't a variation but a new project? Was that someone from within your department that was overseeing the tenders?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** Yes, my department.

**The CHAIR:** When was that advice received, just so we can get some dates around this?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** It would be at some point last year. Someone might be able to tell me the exact date, or I can take the dates on notice. I'm thinking it was around October last year. I'm happy to provide more specific —

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

The Department was advised on 3 October 2024 in an email by the NSW Office of Sport that “As per section 6.4.1 of The Grant Administration Guide, due to the significant change in scope, our plan (OoS) to move forward with this variation request is to treat the proposal as a new grant (The change is substantial and essentially requesting the use of the same funds for a different, unapproved purpose). We would therefore look to terminate the original funding agreement and issue a new tripartite agreement”.

**Question 2 – Page 5**

**The CHAIR:** Mr Bolton, just so we can get the latter end of the timeline right, on 30 October you signed off on a recommendation that the project not proceed as planned. It was already signed by four other people on 22 October. The recommendation was that "no tender be accepted for the contract for Dubbo indoor multi-sport facility, PCYC. Insufficient funds are available for the project to proceed in its current form. The client should review their operational requirements for a viable facility, revisit the project's scope and consider all available options, including alternative sites to progress that project". That doesn't marry up with the timeline that they submitted a variation request in September and you have now rejected a proposal in October, saying that they should look at an alternative site. Were you considering the variation at that point, with that document that you signed, or were you considering the pre-existing project? What advice did you then provide to the Minister about the notion of an alternative site?

**JAMES BOLTON:** There are a couple of things being considered here. One is the tenders through the function of Public Works providing advice. That's separate to the matter and the recommendation that has gone to the Minister around the request from the Office of Sport to consider a new proposal, which occurred in late October. The request came to the department in late October, or that October sort of time frame. I'll get specific dates on notice.

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

As per above, The Department was advised on 3 October 2024 in an email by the NSW Office of Sport that "As per section 6.4.1 of The Grant Administration Guide, due to the significant change in scope, our plan (OoS) to move forward with this variation request is to treat the proposal as a new grant (The change is substantial and essentially requesting the use of the same funds for a different, unapproved purpose). We would therefore look to terminate the original funding agreement and issue a new tripartite agreement".

**Question 3 – Page 6**

**The Hon. WES FANG:** I'll move on. Minister, you said in one of your first answers that you had spent some time in Kempsey. When was that? When was the last time that you were actually in Kempsey?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I'll have to check my diary. I believe I was there last year. I met with the land council. I'm sure it would be in my diary disclosures, but I'm happy to check the specific time and come back.

**ANSWER**

I attended the opening of the Dunghutti Elders Council building in South Kempsey on 11 October 2024.

**Question 4 – Page 7**

**The Hon. WES FANG:** There are 10 copies there. Minister, can you highlight in your diary disclosures when you were last in Kempsey?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I'll have to check the details of the date. Like I said, I'll take on notice the specific time that I was there.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Do you agree that that's a copy of your diary disclosures from the website?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I'm sure it is, and I've said I'll take the date on notice, Mr Fang.

**ANSWER**

Refer to Question 3.

**Question 5 – Page 16**

**The Hon. WES FANG:** There are 10 copies there. Minister, can you highlight in your diary disclosures when you were last in Kempsey?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I'll have to check the details of the date. Like I said, I'll take on notice the specific time that I was there.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Do you agree that that's a copy of your diary disclosures from the website?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I'm sure it is, and I've said I'll take the date on notice, Mr Fang.

**ANSWER**

Refer to Question 3.

**Question 5B – Page 16**

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** Do you know if these SGAR poisons are being currently purchased or used by your department through, for example, LLS? Is there any data around that, including how much is being spent on these poisons?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** Let's ask LLS. I will ask Kate.

**KATE LORIMER-WARD:** I would have to take that on notice. I think the only one I would be aware of was the rodent baiting program on Lord Howe Island that was specifically targeted as part of a program there.

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

LLS does not use SGAR or supply SGAR.

**Question 6 - Page 16**

**The CHAIR:** The Wollongbar laboratories in the Northern Rivers — I am being corrected about my pronunciation. In 2024 there was around \$500,000 worth of internal project work that had to be outsourced because they couldn't hire technical assistants. Are they still having those issues in hiring those technical assistants and, if so, what is being done about it?

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** We are in flood recovery still.

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Sue, be quiet, would you. It's not your turn.

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** When everybody is ready, I'd be happy to answer.

**The CHAIR:** Ignore the children in the corner. Let's proceed.

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** The specifics of that question I will either have to take on notice or I will ask the department, who may know the specifics. What I can say is that you would likely be aware, or people would be aware, that we are doing a whole review on how research is working in New South Wales through my department. That work is well underway. We have got the former chief scientist Mary O'Kane doing this work, which she is doing a terrific job at, with a panel, to assess how things are working and what needs to be adjusted for the future. We also allocated \$60 million for the refurbishment of a number of research stations mid-last year, and work is underway to upgrade some of the research stations. But for this specific question I am not sure. I will check if the department has an answer.

**STEVE ORR:** I can provide a comment. I think what you are referring to, Mr Banasiak, is the tension that is provided in the private sector versus what we provide as a department. If it's okay, we can come back to that.

**The CHAIR:** If you have some further details in the afternoon, you can come back on that. I am just looking for how much project work has been lost from that research facility because they haven't been able to actually hire the technical research assistants that they need to actually complete the work and it has to be outsourced. Can I go to some other staffing issues? Minister, I note that there have been four additional senior executive roles in the Fisheries and Forestry division, but we are seeing high levels of vacancy at the Fisheries Officer compliance level. Are you aware of what the vacancy rate is for fishery compliance officers at the moment?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

There are 9 vacancies in Fisheries Compliance.

**Question 7 – Page 17**

**The CHAIR:** Going to resourcing of the compliance officers, does every compliance officer have a vehicle of their own that they can utilise, or are they going two out? What's the protocol?

**SEAN SLOAN:** No, they don't all have their own vehicles. There is a fleet of vehicles, and they share.

They pool those vehicles and usually an office will have a vehicle –

**The CHAIR:** Are you able to on notice give a breakdown of the pool of those vehicles – where they are

located – so we can ascertain how many vehicles are available to officers per area?

**SEAN SLOAN:** I'm happy to take that on notice, Chair, and find that information.

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

<b>Location</b>	<b>Vehicle #</b>
Maclean	3
Coffs Harbour	2
Wollongbar	2
Tweed Heads	2
Byron Bay	2
Ourimbah	3
Port Kembla	5
Wollstonecraft	3
Sans Souci	3
Port Macquarie	2
Swansea	3
Taylors Beach	3
Tuncurry	3
Bathurst	2
Dubbo	1
Inverell	3
Tamworth	1
Batemans Bay	4
Eden	2
Merimbula	1
Narooma	3
Huskinson	2



Dareton	1
Albury	3
Deniliquin	1
Tumut	1
Jindabyne	1
TOTAL	62

There are also fleet vehicles across the Department available for all employees to book as required to undertake their work.

**Question 8 – Page 31**

**The CHAIR:** Is consideration being given for financial support for commercial fishermen to adopt this technology, given that the last BDO report we saw showed that most of the commercial sector is on the bare bones of their backside in terms of return on capital, or return on owners' equity? Is there consideration of giving some sort of subsidy or financial support for the industry to adopt this technology?

**SEAN SLOAN:** Chair, that's actually what that Commonwealth Government grant was for: to help us do this trial but also to help fund the fitment of those vessel monitoring units to the commercial fleet. That's part of that grant that we received from the Commonwealth Government. But the Commonwealth Government haven't paid for the ongoing management, administration and polling costs, which end up being worn by individual fishers. They are the sorts of considerations we have to take account of as part of the trial.

**The CHAIR:** On notice, can you come back with a bit of a dissection of how much of that 1.96 went to the fitting out of vessels for commercial fishermen and how much went to the specific running of the trial? Some sort of breakdown of costs would be great.

**SEAN SLOAN:** I am happy to do that, Chair. I can say that the vessels that have participated in the trial have had those vessel monitoring units fitted to the vessels with the money that was provided as part of that Commonwealth Government grant.

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

The Department received an Australian Government grant, worth \$1.86 million to facilitate the transition to VMS. To date, approximately \$118,000 has been incurred under this grant to purchase VMS units, data, freight and fitting for commercial fishing vessels participating in the trial.

A wider roll out of VMS has not yet been initiated as the approved platform and technology has yet to be finalised. The Department has recently consulted the commercial fishing industry on this matter.

**Question 9 – Page 31**

**The CHAIR:** To confirm, those vessels that have been fitted – they won't lose that equipment once the trial is over? Will they be able to keep that equipment on there?

**SEAN SLOAN:** I would need to check that, Chair, to see how that will roll through. But I can take that on notice.

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

It is intended that commercial fishing vessels which have participated in the VMS trial will be able keep the VMS equipment provided during the trial. However, this is provided that the VMS equipment is suitable and compatible with the approved vessel monitoring platform.

**Question 10 – Page 31**

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Minister, will you rule out that you or this Government will sell off any of the DPI research stations?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** We're doing a review — I think I talked about this loosely this morning — of research in New South Wales and how it's conducted. We want to make it fit for purpose for the future. We've got the former chief scientist, Mary O'Kane, doing that review. I'll be releasing the interim report that she has prepared soon, and then having a conversation with people across the sector about what we need to be doing as a government to support people in the ag sector now and into the future compared to looking at what happened 50 years ago and what might have been suitable 50 years ago. I also announced with the Premier a \$60 million package in the middle of last year to upgrade some of our key research facilities. That work is underway. I'll provide an update on that soon.

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Minister, could those options you're looking at include selling off some of these assets and capabilities?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** It's not a question of selling them off. The research stations, unless there are any exceptions to the rule, all sit on Crown land. So it's not a question of being able to sell them. But we're looking at what is going to be fit for purpose from now and into the future. That is an appropriate thing to do. That's something that farmers want us to do so that we can ensure our research program, which hasn't really been looked at for well over 12 years, is fit for purpose for the sector

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** So closing them down is on the table?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** We're reviewing the research proposition. I'm not looking specifically at what should exist and what shouldn't exist. We've got Dr Mary O'Kane reviewing the research program and how it's conducted. All of these things will be open for discussion openly with the sector. Again, I'll release the interim report soon and it will be a public conversation.

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Minister, when you say "soon", last year you told us that the ag commissioner was going to be announced soon. That was 358 days later —

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** She's in place. Did you not see the announcement? Alison Stone — she's terrific, actually. You should meet with her.

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Is "soon" 358 days or is it a closer period than that? Because that's what you said last time: the ag commissioner was soon. This report is going to be released soon. Can we expect it some time before March next year or is it sooner than that?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** You can expect to see the interim report well and truly before March next year.

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Do you have the interim report?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I do.

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Have you been briefed on the interim report?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I'll be releasing the details of it soon and you'll be able to consider it. We'll be working with the sector on what some of the interim recommendations are. This is a whole piece of work that we have the former chief scientist and a panel of experts looking at to provide some recommendations. I will be working with the sector on any recommendations so that we can all move forward together. Again, this is something that people across the sector want, to see how our research program can better fit the needs of the sector now and into the future.

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** How long have you had the interim report for?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I'm not sure. Sorry, I don't know. I can't tell you how many days.

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Can you take that on notice, when you received the interim report?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** Yes, I will take it on notice.

## **ANSWER**

The Government received the Interim Report in December 2024.

**Question 11 – Page 33**

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** No, I don't need that from Ms Connell. Minister, when did the Cattle Tick Ministerial Advisory Committee last report to you?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I would have to take that on notice.

**ANSWER**

It has not reported to me.

I am advised that the Cattle Tick Ministerial Advisory Committee was disbanded under the previous Liberal-National Government.

**Question 12 – Page 33**

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Would they have replied to you twice last year?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I would have to take that on notice. I'm happy to come back to you with the details, but I have to take it on notice

**ANSWER**

Refer to Question 11.

**Question 13 – Page 33**

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Are you aware that as part of the cattle tick management program the Cattle Tick Ministerial Advisory Committee reports to you on its twice yearly meetings?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I will accept that if that's what you're suggesting to me. I don't know when it last has. I'll take it on notice.

**ANSWER**

Refer to Question 11.



**Question 14 – Page 34**

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** My question is: Minister, can you tell me how far south cattle tick was detected over this summer?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I'm happy to take the details of that on notice.

**ANSWER**

Pillar Valley, North Coast Local Land Services Region.

**Question 15 – Page 34**

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Minister, can you tell me how the special purpose pest management rate is raised?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** No. I'm happy for the department to provide you with some information if you'd like to get some information about that.

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Is it collected from ratepayers?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I'm happy for information to be provided to you.

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Do you know how many ratepayers were contributing to that fund?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I can give you that information. I wouldn't know the figure of how many ratepayers off the top of my head, but I'm happy to get that information for you. Alternatively, the department can provide the information today. We're happy to be as helpful as we can.

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

Special Purpose Pest Management is calculated as per section 7 of the LLS Regulation which states that Local Land Services must calculate a special purpose rate in accordance with clause 6 (3) or the following formula where —  $R = X + (A \times C)$

*R* represents the special purpose rate payable.

*X* represents the base amount determined by Local Land Services for the purposes of the rate.

*A* represents an amount, determined by Local Land Services, payable for each stock unit based on the total notional carrying capacity of rateable land in the district.

*C* represents the notional carrying capacity of rateable land determined in accordance with clause 17.

Number of ratepayers contributing to the fund are as follows:

<b>FY</b>	<b>Rates Year</b>	<b># of Ratepayers</b>
2022/23	2023	116,181
2023/24	2024	117,162
2024/25	2025	117,633

**Question 16 – Page 35**

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** I'm trying to understand your understanding of this rate. Let's say the money has been allocated to cane toad use, because I can't actually find out that information from you. For the sake of argument, if it is used for cane toad control and we get a late outbreak of locust, do you expect that the money would be redirected from the cane toad control program that it's earmarked for back to locusts where it was originally planned?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I'm going to hand over to Kate to provide some specific information to assist you.

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Sure.

**KATE LORIMER-WARD:** There is a reserve of funds that are retained inside the pest management levy fund to fund the locust control programs. They are protected funds.

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Coming back to you, Minister, will you take on notice to provide me a breakdown of what that money was spent on in 2023-24?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I'm happy to take anything on notice.

**ANSWER**

See breakdown on the money spent in 2023-2024

<b>PROGRAM</b>	<b>2023-24</b>
Regional support / operating costs / plague locust / pest fund	2,696,426
Pig control programs	1,447,717
Dog control programs	1,383,818
Cane toad surveillance/containment line	460,777
Aerial programs (FAAST/baiting)	366,852
Deer control programs	337,330
Rabbit/Cat/Bird control programs	161,694
Fox control programs	57,130
Education and capacity building workshops	36,419
Wild Horse programs	29,495
Invasive Fish programs	23,548
	<u>7,001,206</u>

**Question 17 – Page 35**

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** I asked a question on notice and my specific question was, "What is the breakdown of how this money is spent, including programs that it funded in financial year 2023-24?" Why would that information not be available to me representing the ratepayers who are contributing to that fund?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** Again, you'll need to be more specific. If you're referring to a question on notice, I think we provided you some information yesterday about this. We're here in estimates today. If you want to get some further information about the breakdown, we're here now. Kate Lorimer-Ward is right here, and I'm sure can provide some further information. But there's no tricks here. I'm happy to provide whatever information you'd like. Some of the specific details, we might need to come back on; that's appropriate.

**ANSWER**

Refer to Question 15.

**Question 18 - Page 37**

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** Minister, I want to ask you about Coffs Coast Wildlife Sanctuary holding after-hours events where they serve alcohol while guests interact with dolphins and seals. I know you have sent me a letter in response to this — and I thank you for that letter — in which you advised me that the facility was inspected on 20 December and some corrective actions were taken. First of all, when you say "corrective actions were taken", do you mean that a formal corrective action request, a CAR, was issued under the exhibited animals Act?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I am aware of the issue, and I know we have corresponded about your concerns about functions occurring and alcohol being consumed around these animals. People have had a look at it. I think it'll be helpful to get the department to give you some specific information in relation to your question, because I understand that this is something that you're quite concerned with. That would be Rachel.

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** I might just get a very brief run-down and then we can talk further in the afternoon, if that's okay.

**RACHEL CONNELL:** I'll come back to you on that one this afternoon.

**ANSWER**

I refer you to an answer provided on page 88 of transcript.

**Question 19 – Page 37**

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** In your letter you talked about the fact that the rules around the beverages were being changed. There are new policies on glass near exhibits, banning of beverages – which I assume means alcoholic beverages – and limiting some of the photo opportunities. Since your letter on 20 December, I have been sent further images, which I will give the secretariat to pass up to you, which suggest that some of the new policies are not being followed. This was an event on Valentine's Day, so it was 14 February. It was some time after your letter came to me. I understand that this is probably the first time you have seen these images. Can I leave those with you to pass on to the department and ensure that there is further investigation into this and whether the new policies are being adhered to?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** Yes. Thank you. You have given me some photos. I take you at your word that this is the facility. I haven't been there, so I take your word that this is the facility and the dates that you have indicated. I am happy to seek further advice and check the details for you. I'm happy to come back directly to you and also on notice.

**ANSWER**

I am advised that following referral of the matter to the Department, the Department has scheduled an on-site investigation to be conducted on 26 March 2025 by compliance staff, including a specialist Veterinary Compliance Officer.

**Question 20 – Page 38**

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** About the veterinary shortage and some of the recommendations from the report, one of the key issues is the current lack of title protection for vet nurses and vet technicians who are entirely unregulated at the moment. I have two questions. Is this something that you remain committed to addressing as part of the review of the whole veterinary practices regulatory framework, and are you willing to meet with the Regulation of Veterinary Nurses and Technologists Working Party in this space?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** Sure. In answer to the last part first, I'm happy to meet with that organisation and anyone else who is involved in this field. Often at estimates you ask me to meet with groups, and I do afterwards. It's useful information. This is an issue. The shortage that we've got for vets is a significant issue. This is not a new issue, but it is something that we do need to deal with. The recommendations that came out of the inquiry are important. Some of them have to do with engaging with the Federal Government. We're doing that. We've also expanded the Welcome Experience to specifically focus on vets and provide support for vets to move into regional communities. It's a problem

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** With the review that was committed to in the response to the inquiry, do you expect that that review will be completed within this term of government?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** Let me take the specific timeline on notice. The answer is not no, but I want to provide you with the most accurate timetable that I can. But we know that this is an issue.

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

The Department, in consultation with the NSW Veterinary Practitioners Board, is considering feedback from previous consultation, findings from the Veterinary Workforce Shortages Inquiry, and arrangements in other jurisdictions.

Once this analysis is finalised, the NSW Government will consult with stakeholders on proposed policy proposals and outline a timeframe for completion.

**Question 21 - Page 39**

**The CHAIR:** Minister, can you confirm that the Fisheries compliance unit in your department has received a significant cut to their operational budget for this current financial year?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** That would be a question for Sean.

**SEAN SLOAN:** Chair, the budget for the whole Fisheries group is —

**The CHAIR:** I'm looking specifically at the compliance unit. My understanding is it has been cut from \$4.8 million to \$2.3 million. I'm wondering whether you can confirm that the operational budget has been cut by close to 50 per cent.

**SEAN SLOAN:** No, those figures don't sound right to me, Chair. I'll need to check that and come back to you with the accurate figures. Those figures don't sound right to me.

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

The total operational expenditure budget (labour expenditure, operating expenditure and depreciation) for Fisheries Compliance has decreased by 5.1 percent from \$18.3 million in 2023/24 to \$ 17.3 million in 2024/25.



**Question 22 – Page 39**

**The CHAIR:** Are you acknowledging that there has been a cut to the operational budget of the compliance unit?

**SEAN SLOAN:** The operating budget across the whole Fisheries group has been reduced this year, and all groups are now actively working to fit within their budgets. It's not just Fisheries compliance. Chair, I don't have the exact figures at my fingertips, but I'm happy to take that on notice.

**The CHAIR:** If you could take that on notice, maybe we can pick it up in more detail when we come back after lunch. What specific cost-savings measures have you asked the compliance unit to implement to meet those cuts?

**SEAN SLOAN:** Chair, I haven't given any specific directions. Each of the directors that are responsible for their part of the business are essentially responsible for managing their budgets, and that's a responsibility that each part of the business has.

**The CHAIR:** What directions has the director of the compliance unit given regarding cost savings in this area? Has he asked them to cut back on sending out infringement letters due to postage? Has he said, "We've got to hold back on replacing uniforms"? Has he said, "No more overtime"? Has he said, "We need to limit our patrols to two patrols a week"? Have there been discussions with Revenue NSW about the fees they charge to process infringement notices? What measures has he or she taken to meet those budget cuts?

**SEAN SLOAN:** Chair, none of the things that you've mentioned are strategies that I've heard.

**The CHAIR:** Are you able to take that on notice and come back with a list or description of how the Fisheries compliance unit is meeting its requirements to fit within the budget cuts?

**SEAN SLOAN:** I'm happy to take that on notice, Chair.

**STEVE ORR:** Mr Banasiak, if I could just make the comment that the budget cuts have not necessarily been budget cuts per se. In fact, additional money has been provided to Sean's area. An additional \$5 million was provided to his area. I think it is probably better to characterise it as people fitting within their allocated budget as opposed to "There have been budget cuts."

**The CHAIR:** If what has been reported to me is accurate, that their operational budget in 2022-23 was \$4.8 million, and now they are saying, "You have to fit within \$2.3 million" – and we can debate whether those figures are 100 per cent accurate – then their budget has been reduced. Yes, they have to fit within the new budget, but effectively their budget has been reduced.

**STEVE ORR:** Sorry, Mr Banasiak. As Mr Sloan said, we can come back and explore that this afternoon

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

Fisheries Compliance, like other branches in the Department, conducts regular business planning to operate within its allocated Budget. This includes looking at the best ways of working and assessing priorities and risks to ensure a risk based approach is adopted to inform and prioritise activities.

**Question 23 – Page 40**

**SEAN SLOAN:** Thanks, Minister. Thanks, Chair. The Solitary Ranger is, I guess, the pride of the fleet for our Fisheries unit. It costs us about \$10,000 a day to put her to sea. Obviously, we use the Solitary Ranger in a whole range of things that goes beyond Fisheries compliance. We use her to do some research activities, as well as doing work for other agencies.

**The CHAIR:** Do you charge those other agencies for the use of that vessel?

**SEAN SLOAN:** We do, and those sort of arrangements ebb and flow each year. Parks Australia – there's a whole range of organisations, maritime and others, that we partner with from time to time and year on year. But the way that we fund the activity of that vessel year on year changes, depending on who we're partnering with.

**The CHAIR:** Perhaps on notice, can you tell us how many days this ranger has been out in the last 12 months so we get a gauge of what it's costing the department to run over a 12-month period?

**SEAN SLOAN:** Happy to take that on notice, Chair.

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

Based on a representative operational year, 71 per cent of the Solitary Ranger's patrol activities are compliance, 27 percent are research (and the remaining 2 percent are activities with other agencies under contract). The OPV Solitary Ranger is one of two large offshore vessels, the other being OPV Swan.

**Question 24 – Page 43**

**The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL:** Lovely. I have other questions to put to you, Minister. Regional Media Fund round one, what was the total funding?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** This is a couple of years ago now, so I'll have to take the specific number on notice, unless somebody has it to hand.

**JAMES BOLTON:** I'll have it, in a second.

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** We will find the figure for you.

**The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL:** It was \$3 million —

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** Thank you.

**The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL:** — across all of regional New South Wales. Are you aware of how many regional media organisations received grants for round one?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** Round one, again, is some time ago. I'm happy to take the specifics on notice. We announced it. It's all in the public domain, and I'm happy to provide the list of recipients.

**The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL:** It's 47, Minister.

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** Thank you.

**ANSWER**

The full list of funds currently and previously available can be found on the NSW Government Grants and Funding website: <https://www.nsw.gov.au/grants-and-funding/regional-growth-fund/regional-media-fund-round-1>

**Question 25 – Page 44**

**The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL:** Yes, we're very aware that they're doing it tough. Of the original \$3 million, Minister, was all of that allocated to those 47 grant recipients?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I think, from memory – again, I'll have to take the specifics on notice, because this was quite some time ago, but I understand the question. From memory, I think there might have been a little left over, which was put into the second round, but somebody might check that for me. I'll confirm that on notice for you.

**ANSWER**

This information is available on NSW Government Grants and Funding website:  
<https://www.nsw.gov.au/grants-and-funding/regional-growth-fund/regional-media-fund-round-1#toc-most-recent-recipients>

**Question 26 – Page 44**

**The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL:** Great. If that's the case, perhaps you can just clarify as well, is that because of the numbers that did receive the grant or apply for the grants, which was 47? A bit of clarity around that would be great. The grant amount for round two, do you know what that is going to be or has it been decided?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** We have announced it. I'll have to —

**The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL:** That's right. I've asked you what it is.

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** — the specific numbers —

**STEVE ORR:** It's \$3 million.

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** It's \$3 million. There you go.

**The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL:** Sorry, let me clarify. The funding amount per eligible applicant, I should state, compared to round one.

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** Sorry, I see. They were different propositions. People were applying for different things. Respectfully to all of the applicants, just because you apply, it doesn't mean it's automatically granted. It will have been through a process to work out whether it was in line with the grant guidelines for this particular project and whether it was something that could be delivered. For the specific details of it, as per your specific question, I'm happy to provide further information on notice, unless somebody has it.

**ANSWER**

The full list of funds currently and previously available can be found on the NSW Government Grants and Funding website: <https://www.nsw.gov.au/grants-and-funding/regional-media-fund-round-2>

**Question 27 – Page 44**

**The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL:** The funding amount is going to be approximately \$29,000 per eligible applicant.

**JAMES BOLTON:** Yes, \$29,000.

**The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL:** Minister, that has been reduced from round one.

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** They were different propositions. It's not the same — the two rounds were not the same offering.

**The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL:** Are you aware of how much it has been reduced by?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** But it's not a question of reduction. They were different offerings.

**The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL:** Are you aware of what it has been reduced by?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** No, I'm happy to provide all of the —

**The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL:** Approximately 40 per cent.

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** In order to assist, I'm happy to provide the details of both rounds on notice and both lots of recipients on notice.

**ANSWER**

Detailed information about both rounds of the Regional Media Fund can be found on the NSW Government's Grants and Funding website: <https://www.nsw.gov.au/grants-and-funding/regional-growth-fund/regional-media-fund-round-1>

<https://www.nsw.gov.au/grants-and-funding/regional-media-fund-round-2>

**Question 28 – Page 45**

**The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL:** What have your discussions been in relation to government support around all of that? Has their advice informed round two?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** Yes. I think I've indicated that as part of the answer.

**The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL:** No, I don't think you did.

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** The first round was a focus on more of a digital aspect, I guess. I don't know if that's correctly – I'll provide the details on notice. The second round was more practical support for their business operations, because they gave us feedback that that's what they preferred. We listened to stakeholders, as a government. We made an election commitment to provide this support in line with feedback that we had received from the sector. We engaged with them, as the Government, about what they needed. We set up a process for people to apply. I acknowledge – and I have acknowledged in this answer – that regional media outlets are doing it tough. It's a changing environment, in terms of how people get news. I suspect Sydney-based newspapers are in the same boat, and people are getting news from all different types of channels. The Government will continue to engage with the sector, if it can provide further support in this space.

**ANSWER**

The Grant Guidelines for the Regional Media Fund are available on the NSW Government's Grants and Funding website: <https://www.nsw.gov.au/grants-and-funding/regional-growth-fund/regional-media-fund-round-1>

<https://www.nsw.gov.au/grants-and-funding/regional-media-fund-round-2>



**Question 29 – Page 45**

**The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL:** Talking about, again, regional newspapers specifically, we are seeing advertisements for New South Wales Government being booked in newspapers such as The Canberra Times but not in regional newspapers over the border in nearby New South Wales. Can you explain why that's the situation?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** As you are well aware, since we are both in Queanbeyan, people in Queanbeyan read The Canberra Times. It is directly relevant.

**The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL:** And The Canberra Times is Canberra based.

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** Sure, but people in Queanbeyan read the paper. Advertising is something that the Government made a commitment to reduce across the board. I can't remember the percentage off the top of my head — I will take that on notice — but we made a commitment that we had to get that spend under control in the budget circumstances that we have got. I'm sure decisions about placing ads in that newspaper would have been made in line with the New South Wales community that read that newspaper. But I haven't made that decision. I'm happy to seek further information from the people who do.

**The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL:** That would be great, because advertising in The Canberra Times isn't actually supporting New South Wales regional media. I've got other questions but, I think, Scott, you've got some too.

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** But advertising is —

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Thank you, Minister —

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** — to communicate with the community

**ANSWER**

In 2023 the NSW Government made an election commitment to reduce general government sector advertising expenditure.

This question should be directed to the Minister for Customer Service.

**Question 30 – Page 48**

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** I might go back to some of the questions I was asking before about Coffs Coast Wildlife Sanctuary and whether or not we've got any advice now in regard to the corrective actions and whether they were formal corrective action requests under the exhibited animals regime.

**KIM FILMER:** I haven't got any detail in terms of whether there was a formal PIN or what the action was, but they were certainly given instructions to not be doing what they'd been reported to be doing. If there are any further concerns about that, that should be reported back to the department, and it will certainly be investigated again to make sure that they are complying with the procedures that were put in place after the first investigation.

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** Could I get on notice whether there was any official corrective action request issued?

**KIM FILMER:** Of course, yes. We can take that on notice

**ANSWER**

I refer you to an answer provided on page 88 of transcript.

**Question 31 – Page 48**

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** When we say that there was a ban on beverages, is that just in relation to seal interactions or dolphin interactions or across the whole facility in regard to alcoholic beverages?

**KIM FILMER:** The centre can serve alcohol on the premises. There's nothing stopping them from doing that. There's alcohol serving legislation that controls that. But I think your concern is around the proximity to the actual animals.

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** Yes.

**KIM FILMER:** Again, I can take that on notice to get the specific details about that.

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** I'm referring there to the letter I received from the Minister about ending the serving of beverages. I want to get an understanding of what were the limitations around that. If they're retaining their licence to be able to serve alcoholic beverages, what are the limitations that will be put into place?

**KIM FILMER:** No problems. I think we are best to take that on notice so we can give you an accurate answer.

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

At the time of the visit by Compliance Officers on 20 December 2024, the facility's policy banned the use of glass in the service and consumption of beverages near exhibits, such as the lagoon area.

Their policy also banned the consumption of alcoholic beverages during interactions with seals and dolphins.

**Question 32 – Page 49**

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** How is AWAC's advice communicated to the Minister? Do they provide the minutes of that meeting to the department to then pass on to the Minister? How is that information funnelled back directly to the Minister?

**KIM FILMER:** Certainly there would be minutes available if the Minister wanted that information. But if there's anything of particular note that came out of those meetings, that would be channelled up through the normal channels to the Minister.

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** So the Minister would have to seek out the minutes. There's nothing specifically provided to the Minister as a summary form or anything else from an AWAC meeting that occurs?

**KIM FILMER:** It depends. What I should probably do is check the terms of reference and get the actual process for you on notice.

**ANSWER**

Where relevant, advice from the Animal Welfare Advisory Council (the Council) is provided to the Minister as part of policy and program development processes.

The Council has been consulted on relevant animal welfare reform to date.

**Question 33 – Page 50**

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** What will AWAC's role be as we progress towards major reforms, such as the independent office – I understand there's legislation coming up very soon around that – and an overhaul of the POCTA Act? Will they be consulted and meet on those pieces of legislation as well?

**KIM FILMER:** As I said, they do have a specific legislated function. But if you'd like any detail on that, I think I would again take that on notice to get that right for you.

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

The Council has a statutory role under the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979* (POCTAA) to review and comment on guidelines relating to the welfare of farm or companion animals.

The Council will continue to be consulted on relevant animal welfare reform.

**Question 34 – Page 50**

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** I also wanted to ask about the Research Animals Rehoming Grant Program. The Government recently distributed \$2.45 million as part of the Research Animals Rehoming Grant Program. The grant was originally announced for \$2.5 million. I'm wondering what happened to the other \$50,000.

**KIM FILMER:** That was used to administer the grant. As you would know, the requirement for grants has become a lot more stringent in terms of making sure that everything is done correctly. Some of that funding was used as part of the administration costs of that grant.

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** Can you explain to me what those administration costs would be? Would that be casual staff? What's involved in that \$50,000? How does that break down?

**KIM FILMER:** That would be staffing costs in terms of administering the grant.

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** And that's casual staff?

**RACHEL CONNELL:** I might intervene there. Under the new New South Wales grants administration guidelines there's a really quite comprehensive process that needs to be undertaken in relation to establishing the grant process — articulating the rationale for the grant, the process around which applicants are asked to apply for grants. There's a requirement for probity in relation to the way the grant process is undertaken. A panel is generally convened to review the grant applications and assess them against the grant guidelines. So it's quite a robust process.

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** Is that panel made up of external people, or are they casually paid to come onto this panel? Some of these processes adds an extra burden on the department and I'm wondering where the costs come in.

**RACHEL CONNELL:** In administering that process, and we can —

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** Is that to administer casual staff wages?

**RACHEL CONNELL:** It would be internal staff. We're also supported, in terms of the way that we run grants, from a central part of the department.

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** Could I get a cost breakdown of that \$50,000? I'm struggling to understand, if it's run internally, what the cost mechanisms were.

**RACHEL CONNELL:** We can take that on notice, Deputy Chair. It essentially goes to the administration of the grant process.

**ANSWER**

I am advised that \$48,000 is used over three years for administration/ staffing costs and \$7,000 for independent probity advice.

**Question 35 – Page 50**

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** I just want to understand what administration means and where that money is being spent. If I could get a cost breakdown, that would be fantastic. Also, why was Beagle Freedom, who exclusively works on rehoming animals from research and do a significant amount of the rehoming in New South Wales, overlooked as part of that funding?

**RACHEL CONNELL:** We'd probably would take that one on notice given it was dealt with as part of the decision-making framework around that grant process. That's so we make sure we're not compromising any elements of the way that particular process was articulated under the new guidelines.

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

Each Animal Research Rehoming application was assessed against the criteria set out in the Research Animal Rehoming (RAR) Guidelines using grant assessment methodology, in accordance with the NSW Grants Administration Guidelines.

Grants were awarded to applicants who scored highest against the criteria set out in the RAR Guidelines.

**Question 36 – Page 55**

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** I'd like to talk about the cattle tick management program. Who is that for?

**RACHEL CONNELL:** I'm happy to answer your question.

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Is there a dollar amount attached to that program?

**RACHEL CONNELL:** I think funding for this financial year is about \$4.5 million.

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Has that been fairly stable for a while?

**RACHEL CONNELL:** I think it's probably slightly more than previous years, but I'll take that on notice and confirm.

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

A breakdown of funding for the cattle tick program for the past five years is as follows:

2019 – 2020	\$5.74 million
2020 – 2021	\$5.372 million
2021 – 2022	\$4.53 million
2022 – 2023	\$4.53 million
2023 – 2024	\$4.8 million



**Question 37 – Page 55**

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Is there a dedicated tick management team?

**RACHEL CONNELL:** There is.

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** And they deal solely with tick management?

**RACHEL CONNELL:** We have a team in our compliance division that is essentially specifically focused on tick management issues.

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Have the numbers in that team remained stable? It has been put to me that some of those teams have been taken off, or some of their energies redirected into fire ants. Can you ensure that hasn't happened?

**RACHEL CONNELL:** I'd have to take that specifically on notice. We have had challenges recruiting to that program recently. The kind of work that's required is physical outdoor work with chemicals, so we have had some challenges. But we've been looking at different options to make sure we can deal with the program as it currently operates, and also a pilot we've had operating in terms of working with producers to enable them to undertake their own treatment programs.

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

There are currently 25 staff working in the cattle tick program.

Their roles remain primarily focused on the cattle tick program, however on occasion, these staff may have assisted in fire ant compliance and engagement activity given:

- They are Authorised Officers under the *Biosecurity Act 2015* and are able to exercise their powers to manage both pests, and
- Both programs aim to increase community awareness of proactive biosecurity preparedness measures through community engagement.

**Question 38 – Page 55**

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Are you able to provide, on notice, a breakdown of how many people work on that team?

**RACHEL CONNELL:** We can take that on notice

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

There are currently 25 staff working in the Cattle Tick Program.

- 15 field staff (operating saleyards & on property treatments);
- 8 administrative staff (which includes the leadership team, border surveillance administrators and clerical staff); and
- 2 technical staff

**Question 39 – Page 56**

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** How much of the team's work is proactive and going out on the farm, and how much of it is doing inspections at the saleyards?

**RACHEL CONNELL:** We'd probably have to take that one on notice. As you'd anticipate, it would vary from season to season, and there are particular issues in terms of the way the program is rolled out. They take a risk-based approach, so it will vary from season to season and month to month, depending on what's happening on the ground.

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

The nature of the team's work changes throughout the season.

During peak livestock sale periods, staff undertake more surveillance activities at saleyards. These staff are diverted to farm response activities when sales are less frequent.

**Question 40 – Page 56**

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** I'm deliberately trying to not create fear about cattle tick breaking out in some areas. I appreciate that. Where is the Treasury review of the tick management program up to?

**RACHEL CONNELL:** I think you've been looking at our website. I've seen on the website that a GHD review was commissioned about three or four years ago. But I'll take on notice where that's up to. That was before my time. I haven't been briefed on it while I've been in the department, but happy to find out whether I can give you details of what happened with that program.

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

The review was undertaken in 2019 and the final report submitted to the Minister in March 2020.

**Question 41 – Page 56**

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** I just have one more question in regard to the research animal rehoming grants. Over what period of time will the organisations be spending that funding? Is it a one-year grant or do they have different proposals that go up to two, three years?

**KIM FILMER:** They're over a few years is the simple answer to that.

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** Do you know roughly what time frames that period will be?

**KIM FILMER:** Yes. I can probably give you a little bit more detail on that. Actually, I haven't got the exact details of that here, but I can possibly get those on notice if that's helpful.

**ANSWER**

I am advised that all projects under the Research Animal Rehoming Grants must be completed within 2 years from the execution date of each Funding Deed.

**Question 42 – Page 56**

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** Thank you. Dr Filmer, can you update me on the work the department is doing to adopt the full Australian Poultry Standards, as they come through, in New South Wales?

**KIM FILMER:** I might hand that over to Rachel.

**RACHEL CONNELL:** Obviously, we took the first step. The POCTA Regulation was remade on 31 January. We're also undertaking other work to consult industry on the rest of the standards and how they are implemented, and working particularly with the turkey industry. I understand we've got a working group that's been convened. We're also involved in a Commonwealth process to look at harmonisation nationally as well.

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** Will there be work also on ducks and emus and geese? I know that they were also within the national poultry standards.

**RACHEL CONNELL:** I would have to take that one on notice.

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

The standards apply to all poultry in Australia.

'Poultry' are defined within the national poultry standards as the bird types reared or bred in captivity including chickens, ducks, emus, geese, guinea fowl, ostriches, partridges, pheasants, pigeons, quail and turkeys.

Implementation of the guidelines will be considered for all species covered by the national standards.

**Question 43 – Page 57**

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** Thank you. That's really helpful. Mr Orr, I think these questions might be for you, but please refer on if they're not. I just wanted to ask some questions about the Native Game Bird Management Program. The number of native ducks killed in New South Wales has almost doubled from 2023 to 2024. According to the latest report, it's gone from 15,000 to around 30,000. Do you know why there's been such a significant increase in the number of native ducks that have been killed?

**STEVE ORR:** I might refer that to Mr Sloan.

**SEAN SLOAN:** Thank you for the question, Ms Hurst. I know, on the back of those big flood years, the numbers of ducks did increase, in terms of population numbers. So it's likely that's the reason for the increases that you're referring to, but I actually will need to just take on notice the question and come back to you with an answer. Can you just please just repeat the question specifically?

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** Sure. I was just talking about the Native Game Bird Management Program. The number of native ducks killed in New South Wales doubled from 2023 to 2024, going from around 15,000 to around 30,000. So I just wanted to ask for an explanation as to why there's been such significant rise in the killing of native ducks.

**SEAN SLOAN:** I believe it was in response to the populations increasing, but I'll take it on notice, Ms Hurst, and come back to you.

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

In the 2022-23 program year, there was a total quota of 96,388 native game birds with a total of 15,361 harvested. In the 2023-24 program year, the quota increased to 429,482, with 29,195 native game birds harvested. The increased quota and increased harvest are a result of increased native game bird populations reported in the annual surveys.

**Question 44 – Page 57**

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** Is the increase something the department has investigated, to make sure that there's not a whole lot of illegal recreational hunting going on there?

**SEAN SLOAN:** We do have a compliance program that we operate for our hunting sector, and that program monitors the activity of hunters across the State. So, if there was illegal activity occurring, we would pick that up. I don't think there's any indication that that's the case, Ms Hurst, but I'll clarify those figures for you, on the numbers.

**ANSWER:**

I am advised:

Licensed hunters who are endorsed for the NSW Native Game Bird Management Program are required to report their harvests to the Department. The reported harvests indicate they are complying with the program rules. There is no indication of widespread illegal hunting of native game birds in NSW.

Hunting Inspectors regularly conduct targeted compliance and enforcement operations throughout the Riverina region to ensure hunters are complying with the program rules.



**Question 45 – Page 57**

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** According to the report, along with an increase in killing, there's been a very drastic decrease in the population of ducks in the Riverina. I understand you're saying that the reason for the increase in killing is because there may be more ducks. But, obviously, in the Riverina, that's quite a different situation, given the population has decreased. According to the annual waterfowl quota report 2024-25, the population of eight duck species fell to 43 per cent of the previous year's population estimates. What's the explanation for this dramatic decrease, and what's the department doing to make sure that any of these native birds are not being killed in large numbers?

**SEAN SLOAN:** I'll take that on notice, Ms Hurst, and provide you with the right information.

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

Populations of waterfowl are known to fluctuate from year to year based on prevailing conditions. For this reason, the allowable harvest is set based on contemporary surveys of waterfowl populations as published on the Department's web site in the Annual Waterfowl Quota Reports.

Hunting Inspectors regularly conduct targeted compliance and enforcement operations throughout the Riverina region to ensure hunters are complying with the program rules.

**Question 46 – Page 58**

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** Is it something that you've briefed the Minister on, particularly around these dramatic reductions in the number of ducks in the Riverina?

**SEAN SLOAN:** Not to my knowledge, Ms Hurst, but I'm happy to take that on notice and clarify that.

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

Information on population estimates, quotas and harvests is published on the Department's website.

The Minister has not been specifically briefed on routine operational aspects of the program, such as the annual population survey and associated report and quota.

**Question 47 – Page 58**

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** Just in regard to the general quotas in the report — and I guess this might be something just to clarify with the previous question you took on notice. For most of the native ducks that are listed here, the population seems to have decreased before the number of ducks that were killed increased. So I'm just trying to get clarification. I know you said that the explanation for the increase in killing was because the numbers were increasing, but the figures in the report here suggest the numbers were actually decreasing. So, if I could get some clarification around that on notice, as well, that would be helpful.

**SEAN SLOAN:** Yes.

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

For the 2024-25 program year, the state-wide quota decreased to 188,801 (down from 429,482 in 2023-24). To date, 18,928 native game birds have been harvested in the 2024-25 program year.

**Question 48 – Page 58**

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** While I still have you, Mr Sloan, I want to ask you about *Cestrum nocturnum*. I know we have spoken about this weed previously. In the last estimates, you told me that *Cestrum nocturnum* is currently being assessed for inclusion in the schedule 3 ban from the sale list under the Biosecurity Act 2015. I was wondering if you could provide an update on that and where we are heading with that.

**STEVE ORR:** It's probably a question for Ms Connell, Ms Hurst.

**RACHEL CONNELL:** Yes, and I will take that one on notice and come back to you.

**ANSWER**

I am advised that this species was assessed in July 2024. Given its lower weed risk compared to other species and that it is widespread, it is not appropriate to be included in Schedule 3 of the regulations. That is, it will not be included in a statewide ban from sale.

In the main area of concern on the North Coast, where a previous incident occurred, North Coast Regional weed committee has agreed with this approach, and the General Biosecurity Duty is the correct tool that local control authorities can use to manage this weed.

Details on this weed can be found on NSW WeedWise (<https://weeds.dpi.nsw.gov.au/Weeds/LadyOfTheNight>), where it lists for this species, there is a “general biosecurity duty to prevent, eliminate or minimise any biosecurity risk they may pose. Any person who deals with any plant, who knows (or ought to know) of any biosecurity risk, has a duty to ensure the risk is prevented, eliminated or minimised, so far as is reasonably practicable”.

The Nursery Industry has broadly refrained from selling this species indicating that awareness and education approach is working effectively.

**Question 49 – Page 58**

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** Fantastic. The Minister recently announced \$10 million of funding for weed management, through the Good Neighbours Program. Is it your understanding that any of that will be used to address the *Cestrum nocturnum* problem that we have?

**STEVE ORR:** That's probably a question for Ms Lorimer-Ward.

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** Sure. We're jumping everywhere.

**STEVE ORR:** Sorry, Ms Hurst.

**KATE LORIMER-WARD:** I'll have to take that on notice. I don't have the specific projects in front of me.

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** Thank you.

**ANSWER**

No, Good Neighbours Program is not funding *Cestrum nocturnum*. It is funding *Cestrum elegans* (red cestrum).

**Question 50 – Page 58**

**The CHAIR:** I might stick with you, Mr Sloan. Can you clarify DPI's role in assisting councils with the development of their coastal management plans, particularly those councils that have ICOLLS in them? What role does DPI play in assisting councils in developing those plans, or do they assist at all?

**SEAN SLOAN:** I would need to take it on notice, Chair, and find out what we do. I know we interact with local councils on those coastal plans through our Marine Estate Management Strategy and also in various ways, but I'll need to take that on notice and find out. I think I've mentioned in previous sessions that we have a piece of work going on, particularly the approval processes, around how ICOLLS are managed, which is how we interact with local councils, and I think we are looking at those ICOLL by ICOLL. That piece of work is nearly complete but not fully complete at this point. If that's the line of questioning, I am happy to find out —

**The CHAIR:** Yes, perhaps take it on notice. Obviously I can't ask you how much this audit has cost, because you haven't finished it yet, so I will save that for another estimates.

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

The Department is an agency representative in the Coastal Management Program (CMP) which is led by local Councils in accordance with the NSW Coastal Management Framework administered by the Department of Climate Change, Energy the Environment and Water (DCCEEW). This involves:

- providing advice and recommendations based on Fisheries policies and legislation, which include the protection/improvement of key fish habitat and fisheries resources; and
- reviewing CMP actions and providing support for the implementation of those actions – this is mostly undertaken as part of the Department's legislative responsibility to review and approve works that impact Key Fish Habitats.

The management of ICOLLS, and specifically the management of ICOLL entrances are generally undertaken in accordance with an approved CMP. CMPs that include ICOLL management actions or 'entrance management plans' detail how and when those actions are to be implemented, their costs and proposed cost-sharing arrangements and other viable funding mechanisms. The Department is a key partner in these programs and seeks to ensure a balanced and strategic approach to the management to ICOLLS for range of fisheries values.

**Question 51 – Page 58**

**The CHAIR:** Yes, perhaps take it on notice. Obviously I can't ask you how much this audit has cost, because you haven't finished it yet, so I will save that for another estimates. Specifically with Swan Lake, was MEMA's findings around Swan Lake significantly different from Advisen Proprietary Limited's report? If so, what were the key differences?

**SEAN SLOAN:** Sorry, Chair. Which report?

**The CHAIR:** Advisen Proprietary Limited. I believe there was a report by them done, and then also MEMA did a report on Swan Lake specifically. I just want to know whether there was any significant difference between those two reports and what that might say about one or the other.

**SEAN SLOAN:** I'm not aware of the specifics, but I'm happy to take that on notice, Chair, and come back with that information.

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

It is assumed that the reference to the 'Advisen Proprietary Limited report' is a reference to the '*St Georges Basin, Sussex Inlet, Swan Lake and Berrara Creek Coastal Management Program Swan Lake and Berrara Creek Entrance Management Review*' published by *Advisian-Worley Group (Advisian Pty Ltd)*. This report documents a review of the existing Entrance Management Policy for Swan Lake as part of a series of studies being undertaken within Stage 2 of the Swan Lake and Berrara Creek Coastal Management Program (CMP).

The Department is undertaking an ICOLL management project as part of the Marine Estate Management Strategy. This project's objective is to develop a framework for consistent approvals and management of ICOLLs that can be included in Coastal Management Programs. It seeks to improve the collective understanding of how ICOLL entrance interventions, approvals, conditions and compliance are managed across NSW, and includes:

- A statewide audit report and recommendations on approval framework improvement: assess past decisions and activities through an audit of multi-agency ICOLL approvals for entrance management/openings, including review of the types of approvals, their conditions and recommendations on improvements in clarity, consistency and enforceability.
- Development of guidelines for Councils on best management practices: develop a streamlined and consistent interagency approval and licencing pathway for both the preparation of Entrance Management Plans and one-off opening events.

This project and/or the audit report do not replace the current development of CMPs and associated entrance management plans, such as the Swan Lake report identified above.

**Question 52 – Page 59**

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. While you are taking things on notice, I know you said you would come back around the ranger boat. When you are looking at those days that that has been out, are you able to delineate between what it was doing when it was out there, how many days was it out there doing compliance work, how many days was it doing research with another department et cetera? Are you able to break that down for us at all?

**SEAN SLOAN:** Yes, happy to. During the break, I looked into that, Chair. I suspect you know the answer to this, but the solitary ranger has had engine troubles and has actually been up on the blocks in Coffs Harbour since the middle of last year, getting repair work done. She hasn't been out on patrol, doing any work of late. That's an issue we're obviously working on

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

Based on a representative operational year, 71 per cent of the Solitary Ranger's patrol activities are compliance, 27 percent are research (and the remaining 2 percent are activities with other agencies under contract). The OPV Solitary Ranger is one of two large offshore vessels, the other being OPV Swan.



**Question 53 – Page 59**

**The CHAIR:** Can I go to a fairly tricky and complicated matter? I have asked questions about Mr Frank Connolly Jr in the past, on notice. I am aware that he sent the department a cease and desist letter regarding activities happening on his country, known as Jerrinja. The response that he received back from Mr Turnell was "We note that the matter of the applicant, on behalf of the South Coast people, versus the Attorney General of New South Wales is currently before the Federal Court of Australia in their native title claim. The South Coast people asked the Federal Court to determine that they hold native title in the area that includes the waters of Jervis Bay," and therefore you are not going to comment on the issues raised in the letter.

Does the department see Mr Frank Connolly Jr in a different light to the South Coast people? Mr Connolly Jr is very specific about how he sees him within the broader Aboriginal community. He sees himself as already recognised by the court as the native owner, and he sees that the South Coast people, or those who have signed on to the South Coast people, have actually rescinded the rights that they had and that he is now the only one that does have. Does the department see him differently or have you grouped Mr Connolly Jr in with the South Coast people?

**STEVE ORR:** I think, Mr Banasiak, given the matters are before the courts, it's quite difficult for the

department to provide a commentary on it.

**The CHAIR:** Even as to whether you consider him as part of the South Coast people or you consider

him as separate to that?

**STEVE ORR:** Yes. Respectfully, we are not managing that claim process. That's not something which the department is doing, so I don't think we're really in a position to comment on whether he is involved or whether he is not.

**The CHAIR:** He isn't involved, but it seems, by this letter, that you've lumped him into that category. I'm asking, on behalf of him, do you see him as something different or do you consider him to be part of the South Coast people? If you want to take that on notice and get advice as to whether you can provide any comment —

**STEVE ORR:** I think we'll need to take that on notice, given the sensitive legal situation, Mr Banasiak

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

Mr Frank Connolly Junior has identified himself as a Native Owner of the Jerrinja area. He has not to the Department's knowledge identified himself as part of the South Coast native title claim.

**Question 54 – Page 59**

**The CHAIR:** Good. Does any of your staff within LLS have membership or support for associations or clubs that have expressed anti-recreational hunting views?

**KATE LORIMER-WARD:** I would have to take that on notice. That's not something I have asked our Staff.

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

No association or club affiliations had been declared in the Conflict of Interest Register.

**Question 55 – Page 60**

**The CHAIR:** Have any of your staff provided any written material or advice to the Invasive Species Council?

**KATE LORIMER-WARD:** Not that I'm aware of, but I will take that on notice.

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

LLS are not aware of any LLS staff providing written material or advice to the Invasive Species Council.

**Question 56 – Page 61**

**The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL:** You have briefly mentioned that we didn't get the chance to talk with the Minister this morning about the Regional Development Trust Fund. Could I confirm that, after the March 2023 election, the amount remaining in the former Regional Growth Fund was \$600 million?

**STEVE ORR:** We'll take on notice what was actually remaining within that fund, Mrs Overall.

**ANSWER**

This information is provided in the 2023/24 NSW Government Budget Papers.

**Question 57 – Page 61**

**The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL:** Are you aware of how much was allocated to the new Regional Development Trust Fund?

**STEVE ORR:** The current allocation into the trust fund is \$400 million.

**The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL:** But was \$350 million actually allocated at first and then that was topped up?

**STEVE ORR:** Correct.

**The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL:** And the remaining \$250 million?

**STEVE ORR:** What remaining \$250 million?

**The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL:** Of the \$600 million, I'm sorry.

**STEVE ORR:** I'll take on notice the question about what happened in relation to, if you like, unspent RGF money. That happened a little while ago, Mrs Overall.

**ANSWER**

Refer to Question 56.

**Question 58 – Page 61**

**The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL:** We are at \$400 million, then. How much of that has been allocated to date?

**STEVE ORR:** My understanding is \$37 million. We have just had a round close. A round has just closed for REDCIP and there was a \$50 million allocation to that. We will now get into the process of assessing those applications.

**The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL:** So potentially around \$87 million, depending on if they are all successful or not?

**STEVE ORR:** Correct.

**The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL:** So \$37 million to \$57 million. The food and beverage manufacturing program is made up of loans. Are you able to tell me the anticipated financial return to the Government on the \$5 million investment as part of that?

**STEVE ORR:** The loans ultimately get repaid. The scheme is administered by the Rural Assistance Authority. I think there were seven successful applications, Mrs Overall. The program is now closed. In relation to your question of what is the return and who they were, I'll need to come back to you if you want that level of detail.

**The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL:** Perhaps you could just let me know the interest rate on the program.

**STEVE ORR:** I'll confirm that. It's closed, though.

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

The Engine and Emerging Industries Loan Pilot program offered concessional loans of 2.5% to eligible small to medium enterprises in the food and beverage manufacturing sector, fixed for the life of the loan.

An interest-only period of 2 years also applies to reduce the impact of cash flow during the implementation phase. Maximum loan term is seven years with an eighteen month draw down period.

**Question 59 – Page 61**

**The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL:** Little Big Dairy in Dubbo was used as the case study when announcing the funding. Are you aware of how much of the \$5 million that business received?

**STEVE ORR:** I'll confirm that

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

Loan values approved under the Engine and Emerging Industries Loan Pilot program are commercial in confidence. Applications for loans under the program were capped at \$1 million per eligible enterprise.

**Question 60 – Page 62**

**The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL:** Very quickly, coming to Ms Lorimer-Ward, based on some of the Chair's questioning, I'm after a little bit more in-depth information, if I may. How many feral pigs have been culled by LLS over the last two years?

**KATE LORIMER-WARD:** Sorry, I'll just get my notes up. I'll have to come back to you. My notes have come off my screen.

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

For the period 1 July 2023 - 28 February 2025, LLS coordinated programs have controlled 186,480 feral pigs. The numbers are increasing as delivery of coordinated control programs continue. The number of pigs culled through baiting is not included in these figures.



**Question 61 – Page 63**

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Does anyone else want to add to that? Ms Lorimer-Ward, how many board vacancies are there currently across the 11 LLS regions?

**KATE LORIMER-WARD:** Across the 11 regions there are seven board vacancies in terms of government appointment, not elected memberships.

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** All the elected positions are filled?

**KATE LORIMER-WARD:** All the elected positions have been filled. This year in the most recent election round there were 118 candidates for those positions. So they've all been filled. We do have at the moment seven current vacancies.

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** To be clear, the seven vacancies are ministerial appointments that haven't been filled.

**KATE LORIMER-WARD:** Government appointment ones, yes.

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** How long have they been vacant for?

**KATE LORIMER-WARD:** I would have to take that on notice, but we've been working through a recruitment process since I've been with the organisation.

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** And that's 12 months?

**KATE LORIMER-WARD:** Six.

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** How many applications did you get?

**KATE LORIMER-WARD:** For the elected?

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Yes.

**KATE LORIMER-WARD:** There were 118.

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** You might have to take this on notice. Can we look at how that's been tracking over the last five years, how many applications we're getting for those boards?

**KATE LORIMER-WARD:** Yes.

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

Applications for the seven vacant local board member roles opened on Friday 8 November 2024 and closed on Thursday 5 December 2024. A total of 27 applications were received.

**Question 62 – Page 63**

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Are you able to tell me what programs have been funded in 2023-24 out of the special pest management rates?

**KATE LORIMER-WARD:** The specific projects that are under that I will have to take on notice, because it varies by each region. Each region gets to establish projects when the funds are allocated to the regions. For that level of detail I will have to take that on notice. There is a range, though, of things that that program will fund. It funds people undertaking training, capacity building and activities on ground.

**ANSWER**

Refer to Question 16.

**Question 63 – Page 63**

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Fantastic. The Good Neighbours Program that Ms Hurst mentioned before — \$10 million over 21 programs over two years. So about half a million bucks — \$250,000 a year for 21 projects.

**KATE LORIMER-WARD:** Those projects are from round one. We do have funds which would go into a round two. That's not \$10 million of expenditure in those 21 projects.

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** How much went on round one?

**KATE LORIMER-WARD:** I'll have to take that on notice.

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** This is the \$10 million that I think the Minister announced in the budget in June. He then re-announced it this week as \$10 million. But these 21 projects are not \$10 million?

**KATE LORIMER-WARD:** That's my understanding, that there's a next round to be announced.

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** So you can provide how much has been allocated to this program?

**KATE LORIMER-WARD:** Yes, I can.

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

Round 1-\$3.34 million

**Question 64 – Page 65**

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Who will be responsible for administering the \$160 million in grants that comes as a result of water buybacks?

**STEVE ORR:** That's in Mr Bolton's area.

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Mr Bolton, \$16 million goes to your department as part of that?

**JAMES BOLTON:** As part of the Federal agreement with the department?

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Yes.

**JAMES BOLTON:** Correct.

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Is that 16 on top of the 160? It's on top of; I'm getting some nods. Can you outline, how are you going to spend \$16 million? Is that over a certain amount of time? Can you give me an idea. Is that going to mean more staff? What's that going to mean for your department?

**JAMES BOLTON:** It's going to involve the administration of it, which is the arrangement with the Federal Government, so the \$16 million contributes to that. Additional staff, program specialists, the time frames it takes us to deliver those programs – those sorts of things are considered in that arrangement with the Federal Government.

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Is it going to be all spent in one year, or will that prop up a couple of years of the administration of this?

**JAMES BOLTON:** That'll cover the delivery of that funding, allocation and program.

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Over how many years?

**STEVE ORR:** I think it's four.

**JAMES BOLTON:** I'll take that one on notice, but Harriet Whyte, who's sitting behind me –

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** I'm happy for you to take that on notice.

**JAMES BOLTON:** That is correct, four years.

**STEVE ORR:** Mr Barrett, that's just what the Commonwealth provides. That's the deal.

**JAMES BOLTON:** Four years

**ANSWER**

4 years to June 2028.

**Question 65 – Page 66**

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** I have some questions for LLS, for either Dr Tracey or Mr Kelly. I have some questions about the 1080 program. This might need to be taken on notice: how many litres of 1080 concentrate or how many pre-manufactured 1080 baits has LLS purchased in the last two years?

**ROB KELLY:** I will have to take that on notice for the total amount.

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** I'd also like to know the cost of the amount of 1080 that was purchased in the last two years, if that's possible to get on notice, as well.

**ROB KELLY:** On notice, yes. We can get all that.

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** Do you know the brand or the manufacturer that 1080 product is purchased from?

**ROB KELLY:** No. We can take that on notice, but there'll be multiple because it will be pre-mixed as well as prepared baits.

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

In 2022/23 LLS purchased 1,782 Litres of 1080 concentrate and 144,186 premanufactured 1080 baits.

In 2023/24 LLS purchased 3,701 Liters of 1080 concentrate and 137,612 premanufactured 1080 baits.

In 2022/23 the cost of the 1080 products purchased by LLS was \$371,103.

In 2023/24 the cost of the 1080 products purchased by LLS was \$572,967.

LLS purchases 1080 products from Animal Control Technologies (Australia) Pty Ltd, PAK's National and Thylation Operations Pty Ltd.

**Question 66 – Page 66**

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** To date, has LLS deployed the use of any Felixer devices for use on cats that you're aware of?

**ROB KELLY:** I am aware of one project; there may be more. I can take that on notice. The one I am aware of they're working through at the moment is the malleefowl project in the —

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** Which project, sorry?

**ROB KELLY:** The malleefowl project in the Riverina where there's an exclusion area in a sanctuary that's been set up to protect malleefowl and to eradicate all pests out of that, so they're using Felixer in that malleefowl project. There might others. I can take that on notice for the rest.

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** On notice can you give a bit more information about that project as well?

**ROB KELLY:** Of course.

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** Is it on a trial basis at the moment or is it an actual project in full?

**ROB KELLY:** The malleefowl is an actual project. In terms of the Felixer, I'd have to check whether that's a trial or not. The malleefowl project has been running now I think for around four or five years, in total.

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

LLS has only deployed Felixer Devices in RLLS for a National Heritage Trust funded project focusing on conservation of the Plains Wanderer. The Felixer devices are currently in photo only mode and no 1080 Felixer Cartridges have been issued for this program as yet.

The Malleefowl project does not use the Felixer devices. The conservation area is 55 feral proof hectares used for the release of Malleefowl chicks which are hatched through incubation. The area is deemed to have no predators currently residing in it.

**Question 67 – Page 66**

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** This might need to be taken on notice, but are there any other trials that are occurring in New South Wales with the Felixer under LLS?

**ROB KELLY:** I can check for LLS, yes.

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

No trials are currently being undertaken.

**Question 68 – Page 66**

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** Is LLS currently investing in any research or trials for alternatives to the use of 1080 poison?

**ROB KELLY:** Not to my knowledge, but I'll check. I'll take that on notice.

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

No, LLS is not investing in any research or trials for alternatives to the use of 1080.



**Question 69 – Page 67**

**The CHAIR:** Mr Sloan, can I quickly go to some questions I'm looking for answers for on behalf of the South West Rocks Anglers? Can you explain to me and to them why haul netting and gill netting is still permitted in the Macleay River but banned in neighbouring river systems like the Hastings, Bellinger and Kalang? I'm happy for you to take it on notice if you need to.

**SEAN SLOAN:** Thanks for the question, Chair. I'm happy to go away and look into that. I note there is an historical context to those other closures. It may well be linked to arrangements from quite some time ago. I'm happy to look into those specific areas. As you know, there have been a number of areas closed to recreational fishing, which are now referred to as recreational fishing havens, across New South Wales. And then there has been a large reform of the commercial fishery. The idea with the reforms was to enable the remaining commercial fishers to operate across various parts of the State. It may be that what we come back with is to say that that's one of the areas that needs to remain open to commercial fishing. But I'm happy to take it on notice and look into it.

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

Commercial fishing in estuaries, including the restricted use of mesh nets and hauling, is a component of the Estuary General Fishery.

Commercial fishers operating in the NSW Estuary General Fishery are restricted to 76 of the 130 or so major estuaries in NSW.

The Hastings River and Bellinger River (including Kalang River) are recreational fishing havens while the Macleay River is one of 76 estuaries open to various commercial fishing methods. Additionally, there are various closures applying to different parts of the Macleay River, restricting commercial access.

**Question 70 – Page 67**

**The CHAIR:** Could you also come back to us on this notion of interstate beach hauling crews? These are people who come from interstate, haul off our beaches and then leave and return next season. There's an argument to say that they're not necessarily creating any community benefit by being there and we're not seeing the benefit of that in a commercial sense. Can you come back to us with information around the extent of that and how that fits into our commercial fishing and recreational mix?

**SEAN SLOAN:** I'll absolutely go away and look into that, Chair. What I can say without looking into it is that anybody who is fishing in New South Wales would need to be licensed in New South Wales. It may be that there are employees that those businesses are using and they could be from interstate, but they would have to be licensed in New South Wales.

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

Any person taking fish for sale in NSW is required to hold a NSW commercial fishing licence and endorsement or a permit that authorises the commercial fishing activity concerned.

A person is eligible for a commercial fishing licence if the person:

- owns a fishing business with shares in a share management fishery
- owns a fishing business with endorsements in a restricted fishery
- is nominated to operate a fishing business on behalf of a business owner
- is authorised by a permit or order to take fish for commercial purpose

Interstate fishers, either for commercial or recreational purposes contribute to the state's economy through accommodation and expenditure at local businesses.

The logistics of transporting seafood products has increased dramatically over the past few years limiting market access for product. With limited shelf life and processing locations, it is difficult, with the data available to assess impacts on a local scale. All commercial fishers require a NSW commercial fishing licence and fishing business with the appropriate shares. The fisheries are scientifically assessed to ensure appropriate management measures are implemented.

Unendorsed crew of the endorsement holder do not need to hold a commercial fishing licence however they must remain in the immediate vicinity and be engaged in the same fishing activity at the same time as the endorsement holder.

**Question 71 - Page 68**

**The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL:** May I ask how work is progressing at the Lightning Ridge opal museum? I like to come in out of left field to make my presence felt.

**JAMES BOLTON:** I'm going to have to take that one on notice, Mrs Overall.

**The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL:** Come on, James!

**The Hon. WES FANG:** You always know everything.

**JAMES BOLTON:** I know, but this one has got me.

**The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL:** How would you like me to do this? I'll ask the questions anyway, but you'll take them on notice and get back to me about them?

**JAMES BOLTON:** Absolutely.

**The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL:** What's the total value of the project?

**JAMES BOLTON:** We can take that on notice.

**The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL:** Are you aware of any issues in relation to the project?

**The Hon. WES FANG:** Variations.

**JAMES BOLTON:** I'll take that on notice.

**The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL:** Have all the relevant milestones been met in accordance with funding deeds? This is probably the one that is of most importance. If you're not aware, I understand if you take it on notice, but I would like to have it on record as well. To the best of your knowledge — and obviously not until we have a look at these things — have the contractors paid all of their subcontractors for material and services provided for this project?

**JAMES BOLTON:** We'll take that on notice.

**The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL:** As part of that, are there any companies that have supplied labour or materials to the project that remain unpaid?

**JAMES BOLTON:** I'll take on notice. I apologise that I couldn't answer, Mrs Overall.

**The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL:** That's okay. It is better you than me.

**ANSWER**

I refer you to an answer provided on page 91 of transcript.

**Question 72 – Page 68**

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Mr Sloan, control and containment of tilapia – is that in your patch?

**SEAN SLOAN:** Mr Barrett, I've got a feeling it's a biosecurity question, but ask the question and if I can answer it I will.

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Have we got any idea of what type you're getting into the Murray Darling Basin and what the impact of that would be financially?

**SEAN SLOAN:** First of all, I know that it's a non-native species found all over South-East Asia. It's an aquaculture species. We certainly wouldn't want it in the Murray Darling Basin. It would be a biosecurity issue, in much the same way that carp, as a noxious exotic species, would be. It's a very similar situation, I would suggest, but I'm not as familiar with the biology of tilapia to be able to speak to how invasive they are and how the population would take hold et cetera. But if they are the sort of questions, I think we've got a plan of some description.

**RACHEL CONNELL:** That's right. In relation to impacts, we would generally draw on modelling or analysis done by the Commonwealth from a biosecurity point of view. We can take that on notice to see if there's any work that has been done nationally on it.

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Maybe we don't have the right people on this, but I wonder what your views are on allowing tilapia to be eaten as a species. Currently it's a prohibited matter, so you can't handle it. Are there views in the department about what a change to be able to eat that would have?

**RACHEL CONNELL:** We'll take that one on notice.

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

Currently there is one incursion *Oreochromis mosambicus* (Mozambique tilapia) in Cudgen Lake in northern NSW. Tilapia has spread to many coastal catchments in Queensland and there is a threat that tilapia could enter the Murray-Darling Basin and become established. The NSW Government works closely with neighbouring jurisdictions and the Murray-Darling Basin Authority to develop tilapia exclusion strategies.

Mozambique tilapia is the only finfish where it is mandatory to be dispatched if caught in NSW (Clause 19 of the Biosecurity Regulation 2017) and may not be returned to the water. Any tilapia caught through recreational angling in NSW must be humanely dispatched and utilised or disposed of in a bin going to landfill. Most new tilapia infestations are caused by people moving live fish to new locations, not by natural spread across catchment boundaries.

Other species of tilapias from the genera *Oreochromis*, *Pelmatolapia*, *Sarotherodon* and *Coptodon*, are listed as prohibited matter in NSW under Schedule 2 of the Biosecurity Act 2015.

Harvesting non-natives for human consumption may have unintended consequences in adding value to a pest species. Where invasive species provide economic or social benefits, such as regular use as a food source, species are unlikely to be eradicated as pressure to maintain populations is high. People may also try to recreate these benefits in previously uninvaded areas by deliberately spreading the pest species. This, in turn, increases the economic costs associated with managing pest species due to the need for intensified control measures and ongoing containment efforts.

The Department has an aquatic biosecurity social awareness campaign for pest fish, including tilapia, to encourage positive biosecurity behaviours when encountering these animals in NSW waterways. Raising awareness of what stakeholders can do, for example, not returning pest fish to waterways – instead to dispatch and dispose or utilise them - to help protect their surrounding natural waterways and native species from the threat and impact of pest fish has been shown through social research as a method to achieve behaviour change. The Department is continuing to disseminate these messages through targeted messaging, and to key communities where tilapia are present.

**Question 73 – Page 69**

**The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL:** Bumbalong Bridge — is this another one out of left field?

**JAMES BOLTON:** Mrs Overall, it is out of left field, but I am aware of it.

**The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL:** A project that was previously funded by our Liberal-Nationals Government, which is managed by Regional NSW, has had various complications involving private land access, but it's critically important for the access of RFS vehicles during bushfire incidents. The project has been delayed due to the discovery of Aboriginal artefacts. I really want to know how much longer it will take. The delay has been quite extensive now. There have been numerous consultation stages. Have they concluded yet? Has it gone out to tender yet? What is the timeline? The initial budget was \$4 million. Is that still going to cover the cost of the now delayed project?

**JAMES BOLTON:** I've got Ms Whyte here. She will be able to assist with Bumbalong Bridge. Mrs Overall, we will take some of those questions on notice and get you the latest information. I received a briefing not too long ago that showed the progression of the project, and we were addressing those issues around Aboriginal heritage and access to the site. There has definitely been progression. Ms Whyte, do you have anything to add?

**HARRIET WHYTE:** I haven't got too much else to add on that one, and I don't want to mislead the Committee. I know that between the regional coordination staff and our own teams, we have been working to progress that, but we can take the specifics on notice for you.

**ANSWER**

I refer you to an answer provided on page 91 of transcript.

**Question 74– Page 69**

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Ms Lorimer-Ward, the local community advisory groups, which are required under section 33 of the Local Land Services Act – have we got them functioning in each region?

**KATE LORIMER-WARD:** I understand that each region has at least one of those. Regions have options to establish them for specific purposes or for a more general purpose. My understanding is that they do function in those regions, but I'm happy to take that on notice.

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Could we get a breakdown of where they are functioning? I think you have to have terms of reference for them to come on board.

**KATE LORIMER-WARD:** Yes, and some of them are quite special interest versus more general.

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

LLS has functioning local Community Advisory Groups in each region. Please see below the list of functioning local community advisory groups by region.

- Central Tablelands - Regional Weed Committee and Aboriginal Community Group
- Central West - Regional Weed Committee, Regional Pest Committee and Aboriginal Community Engagement Group
- Greater Sydney - Regional Weed Committee and Aboriginal Community Engagement Group
- Hunter - Regional Weed Committee, Regional Pest Committee and Aboriginal Community Engagement Group
- Murray - Regional Weed Committee, Regional Pest Committee and Community Advisory Group
- North Coast - Regional Pest and Weed Committee and Agriculture Advisory Group
- North West - Regional Weed Committee, Regional Pest Committee and Community Advisory Group
- Northern Tablelands - Regional Weed Committee, Regional Pest Committee and Aboriginal Community Engagement Group
- Riverina - Regional Weed Committee and Aboriginal Community Engagement Group
- South East - Regional Weed Committee
- Western - Regional Weed Committee, Regional Pest Committee, Aboriginal Community Engagement Group and Kanagaroo Management Taskforce

The terms of reference will be available publicly on the regional Local Land Services website pages shortly following the transition to a new platform.

**Question 75 – Page 69**

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** I'll come back to some more apiary stuff in a little while, but regarding access to beekeeping sites—and I'm not sure who I'm directing this to—beekeepers pay \$250 to access Crown lands for their beekeeping sites. We're hearing some reports of that access being impassable. I've got photos and that sort of stuff to table. Is someone able to look into this for us and give us some sort of update about the works going on to ensure that apiarists do have access to their designated sites?

**STEVE ORR:** That's managed out of one spot.

**RACHEL CONNELL:** Yes, we can take that on notice for you, Mr Barrett.

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Just to get some update on that.

**RACHEL CONNELL:** Yes.

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

Issues related to specific sites are managed between the permit holder and the relevant land-holder agency.

The Department occasionally helps beekeepers contact the relevant people at the agency in question but does not have any formal role in resolving individual site access issues.



**Question 76 – Page 72**

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** Can I ask one final question in such a short period of time. Given the change in data, there's now compartments in the south that now look like their only purpose of logging were for low-value products, which is also contrary to the IFOA. Does that concern you?

**ANSHUL CHAUDHARY:** Ms Higginson, different forest types produce different types of products. Some forests produce more sawlogs, and others produce more pulp logs.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** But is it not a condition of the IFOA in the south that primary purposes for those low-value products is not lawful?

**ANSHUL CHAUDHARY:** I'm not aware of that. As I said, we go into the forest to produce sawlogs. But different —

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** Would you be able to take that on notice, about whether that is a concern and something that you're looking at?

**ANSHUL CHAUDHARY:** Yes. I'm happy to do that.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** Thank you.

**ANSWER**

I refer you to an answer provided on page 88 of transcript.

**Question 77 – Page 73**

**The CHAIR:** Has your department done any work in the space of the fish screening devices that have been put on irrigation pumps? What may have to happen if WaterNSW, in their costing exercises, decide that they're not going to fund those fish screening devices? There is debate currently at the moment with WaterNSW and a rate rise for regional water users, and some of the talk is around pulling back on some of those additional costs that get passed onto water users, one of them being the fish screening.

**SEAN SLOAN:** To date, over \$40 million has been spent on improving or installing fish screens in New South Wales, and that's a combination of State funding as well as Commonwealth funding. The Commonwealth has been a significant contributor to that program. Essentially, the outcomes are that, by having modern fish screens on irrigation pumps, we can reduce the number of fish, larvae and eggs that get sucked up into the pumps. Irrigators benefit because they don't get debris stuck in the pumps, and they're more efficient.

**The CHAIR:** I think the benefit is there. It's just a concern of who will pay if WaterNSW pulls back.

**SEAN SLOAN:** My understanding is that we have forward contracts with the Commonwealth, but I will look into that and take on notice the specific question, Chair.

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Still on that theme, have we been able to quantify just how much fish we are losing through irrigation pumps?

**SEAN SLOAN:** We have. I'll need to check the figures. By 2026 at least 50 pump sites are expected to be screened in New South Wales. That is estimated to, essentially, protect two million fish annually. That's not taking into account the impacts on eggs and larvae. That's covering about 6,000 millilitres of water annually as well. They are quite significant numbers. When you factor in the variation in fish stocks annually with periods of drought and flood and so on, they can be quite impactful.

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

I refer you to an answer provided on page 87 of transcript.

Irrigation pumps in NSW entrain an average of 3.5 native fish per ML of water diverted. Over a 90-day irrigation season, an estimated 97 million native fish are entrained annually across the state.

**Question 78 – Page 76**

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** How much proactive work is going into inspecting the biosecurity compliance of beekeepers?

**RACHEL CONNELL:** I would have to take that on notice. We take a risk-based approach in terms of the compliance that we do across the various pieces of legislation that we're responsible for. I will have to take on notice if there has been any particular focus in relation to the bee industry. But, as I said, the key regulatory mechanism in relation to varroa was removed when we transitioned to management.

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Could you perhaps also take notice how many PINs have been issued in relation to bees?

**RACHEL CONNELL:** Yes, I can take that on notice for you.

**ANSWER**

I refer you to an answer provided on page 88 of transcript.

**Question 79 – Page 77**

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** Dr Filmer, continuing on with my questions around Coffs Coast Wildlife Sanctuary, you mentioned when I was asking questions before that part of the special condition was reliant on the fact that dolphins would have access at all times to the other pool. In that regard, is that part of the conditions themselves, or would that be a concern to you if the dolphins were being held just in one of the pools for long periods of time?

**KIM FILMER:** My understanding from the compliance unit is that the smaller pool is not locked off. It adjoins onto the larger lagoon pool. At any given point in time, if a dolphin wants to, it can retreat back into the lagoon pool. It's effectively one bigger pool. Even though it's in two sections, they're joined together, is my understanding.

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** My understanding is the facility often blocks access; it adds some sort of block between the two pools so that the dolphins can't access both pools. My concern is we're looking at it as they have access to these two pools, and therefore there's this special condition because they've got this extra space, but I don't know how often they're given access to both pools. I've heard a lot of evidence that they're often split into groups. There might be one dolphin on their own in one pool and something is blocked off to keep them separated, or they're held intentionally in one pool for long periods of time. I'm assuming it's not a part of the condition that they have to continually, or most of the time, have access to both pools?

**KIM FILMER:** If they're in the larger pool, they wouldn't need to have access to the smaller pool because the larger pool can accommodate up to six dolphins. If they're being locked in the larger pool, I wouldn't have any concerns about that at all.

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** And if they're locked in the smaller pool?

**KIM FILMER:** If they're locked in the smaller pool, then I think that's something I'd need to take on notice and refer to the compliance team.

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

The access between the two pools is opened and closed for a number of reasons ranging from cleaning and maintenance, inter-species interaction management, weather, medical treatment and recovery. These different reasons are managed, with time limits documented and often under veterinary guidance or approval.

The special conditions on the Authority Certificate do not specify that dolphins have access at all times, as this may inhibit appropriate management of the facilities and animal welfare.

**Question 80 - Page 78**

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** But that they don't have to—when they block it off, is my question. I understand you're saying that they do have access, but once the facility blocks off that access—when I look at the special condition, it doesn't require access to the larger pool, is my reading of it.

**KIM FILMER:** Again, I'll have to take that on notice. You got right down to the detail there.

**ANSWER**

Refer to Question 79.

**Question 81 - Page 78**

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** Regarding my original question about animal welfare assessment or advice obtained regarding that special condition, can I ask who that came from?

**KIM FILMER:** I'll need to take that on notice.

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** And whether or not there was any formal advice in writing as well.

**KIM FILMER:** If it's a condition of their licence, then there would be —

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** Sorry, in the advice, not on the licence.

**KIM FILMER:** I'll take that on notice.

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

In 2014, advice was provided to the authority holder by the Delegate of the Secretary of the Department of Trade & Investment, Regional Infrastructure and Services regarding a variation to the authority, as permitted under the Exhibited Animal Protection Regulation. Subsequently, an application to vary the authority was received by the Department which was deemed acceptable by the aforementioned delegate.

The variation permitted the secondary pool to be used as a pool for performances and allow temporary separation of males to control breeding.

**Question 82 – Page 78**

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** In the past five years, two dolphins have died at Coffs Coast Wildlife Sanctuary, leaving just three dolphins in their care. As you would be aware, section 2.4.2 of the standards doesn't allow a single dolphin to be housed. Are there any plans in place as to what will happen when, inevitably, two more dolphins pass away? What sort of work is being done for whichever dolphin ends up being the last remaining dolphin?

**RACHEL CONNELL:** Deputy Chair, that question involves a level of conjecture; it's a hypothetical scenario. We can provide you with information about the current licence conditions and arrangements, in terms of what's been issued from our compliance area, and take anything else on notice around the way the licence operates and the way it's —

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** I'm not really asking about the licence, and I am not talking about a hypothetical situation. Obviously animals die eventually, whether of old age or anything else. There are three dolphins. The standards say that one single dolphin can't be housed alone. Eventually two other dolphins will die. I'm not putting a hypothetical situation. This is something that will inevitably happen.

**RACHEL CONNELL:** The standard would obviously continue to apply and our compliance area, in terms of the work that it undertakes —

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** So the department hasn't met with the sanctuary and asked them what their plans are or what will happen with that final dolphin? That's just left up to the facility itself?

**KIM FILMER:** No. Hopefully that's a long way off. But the department required the facility to pay the \$60,000 bond when they were issued with their licence, and that's to cover any future potential care of the dolphins that may be required.

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** So the department doesn't have any position as to whether that dolphin would be sent somewhere else, to another State, or whether that animal would be euthanised?

**RACHEL CONNELL:** I think it's probably best if we take that one on notice given that issue is managed out of our compliance area on the basis of advice from the Chief Animal Welfare Officer.

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

The Department will work with the establishment, the Zoo and the Aquarium Association to ensure that requirements under the *Exhibited Animals Protection Act 1986* and associated standards are met and the welfare of the animal is prioritised.

**Question 83 – Page 78**

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** How many complaints has the department received about Coffs Coast Wildlife Sanctuary in the past 12 months?

**RACHEL CONNELL:** We'll probably have to take that one on notice too.

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

In the 12 months prior to 25 February 2025, two complaints were received.



**Question 84 – Page 79**

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** How many times has the Coffs Coast Wildlife Sanctuary been inspected in the past five years?

**KIM FILMER:** I can't give you the full five-year data, but I have data here since 2023. They had one audited inspection in 2023 and two in 2024.

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** I don't need to take the other years on notice. That's fine, thank you. In respect to those three inspections over the past two years, what audit result did they receive?

**KIM FILMER:** They received an A-rating, acceptable outcome.

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** Were they issued with any corrective action requests?

**KIM FILMER:** None that I've got noted here.

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** At the beginning of the day I asked the Minister, because she'd sent me a letter talking about corrective action to the facility. You were going to find out for me whether that was a corrective action request specifically. Have we got that information now?

**KIM FILMER:** That hasn't come back to me, sorry. We'll provide that on notice.

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** Has any funding been provided to the Coffs Coast Wildlife Sanctuary from the department in the last two years?

**KIM FILMER:** Not that I am aware of.

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** Could you take that on notice just to confirm?

**KIM FILMER:** Yes.

**ANSWER**

I refer you to an answer provided on page 88 of transcript.

I am advised:

No funding has been provided by the Department to Coffs Coast Wildlife Sanctuary in the two years preceding 25 February 2025.

Audit ratings since DMCP Ltd – T/A Coffs Coast Wildlife Sanctuary took over operations in November 2023:

- 16/10/2023 - A rating, 1 CAR (minor)
- 3/4/2024 - A rating, 0 CARs
- 20/12/2024 - A rating, 0 CARs

**Question 85 – Page 79**

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** In regards to general exhibited animals, how many inspections and audits of exhibited animal facilities did the department undertake in the last 12 months?

**KIM FILMER:** We have those stats here. I've got the financial year; that's probably what we're after?

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** Yes, that's fine.

**KIM FILMER:** For the exhibited animals program, there were 110 audits in the 2023-24 financial year. There were 77 inspections.

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** Of those inspections and audits, how many facilities received a C, D or E rating?

**KIM FILMER:** I don't have that detail here, sorry. I'd have to take that on notice.

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** Can you also provide on notice any details of why each facility received that result as well?

**KIM FILMER:** Okay.

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

C rated -0

D rated -0

E rated -9

Reason for the 9, E ratings were that:

1. Authority holder not complied with conditions relating to animal theft or not notified Department of animal theft within 2 hours.
2. Animals are not bred as part of a carefully managed program or not complying with conditions relating to breeding programs.
3. Written emergency plan (EM) not available, or EM plan not comply with conditions of authority, or EM plan does not have sufficient detail to prevent or minimise animal escape and animal /human death or injury.
4. Health checks not conducted daily
5. Diet is not appropriate or adequate for each species
6. Authority holder does not have adequate staffing to comply with Standards.
7. Animal records do not comply with requirements.
8. Not comply with specific or general conditions on authority/permit.
9. All people working or caring for animals have not declared they have been charged or convicted of a relevant offence, or the authority holder does not have a written policy regarding relevant offences.

**Question 86 - Page 79**

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** In the last 12 months, did the department issue any major or critical corrective action requests. If so, how many?

**KIM FILMER:** For the 2023 —

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** Sorry, for the last financial year.

**KIM FILMER:** We have issued four warning letters, two directions or orders, and 15 penalty notices.

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** What were those facilities?

**KIM FILMER:** I don't have those details, sorry. I'd have to take that on notice.

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

In the financial year 2023-2024, 26 Critical CARs and 18 Major CARs were issued. The CARs were issued to licensees of 17 fixed establishments and 1 mobile Exhibitor.

**Question 87 – Page 80**

**The CHAIR:** Can I go back to you, Mr Sloan? I have been made aware of an issue that was occurring with the fishing fee receipt payment system, where it was incorrectly displaying that the payment was being made to the Recreational Fishing Alliance and not to the department. Can you confirm the exact date that this issue began and how long it lasted?

**SEAN SLOAN:** I'm aware of the issue, Chair. I will need to check some notes to give you an accurate answer on it. We have rectified it. It was a service provider issue, which we have dealt with. If I can have a bit of time, I'll be able to clarify that for you.

**The CHAIR:** All of the questions that I have for you are around that issue. Maybe I can put them to you and if you take them on notice, I can throw to someone else for the remainder. Were there any internal audits or reports to show how many people were affected?

**SEAN SLOAN:** I'd need to take that on notice, Chair.

**The CHAIR:** Have you attempted to notify all those who were impacted of the mistake?

**SEAN SLOAN:** I understand we have.

**The CHAIR:** Have you issued any public statements regarding this issue, clarifying that the RFA didn't actually receive the funds?

**SEAN SLOAN:** We have.

**The CHAIR:** Was that a public statement or was it just to the individual anglers?

**SEAN SLOAN:** I'll need to check that, but I can confirm that. I think it was an issue that was identified in May 2024.

**The CHAIR:** Does the department have any contractual or operational oversight over Experian's role in processing these payments? If so, what is it?

**SEAN SLOAN:** I'll get the specifics, but as a contracting authority, we would have some oversight.

**The CHAIR:** Did Experian actually explain to the department how it occurred and how they have resolved it?

**SEAN SLOAN:** I understand that it was an administrative error, but I'll confirm that.

**The CHAIR:** Have they provided assurances that those errors won't happen in the future?

**SEAN SLOAN:** I believe so.

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

The mismatching of merchant details has been identified to date back to 24 May 2024. Individuals have not been contacted over the error in statements. A public statement was included in the February 2025 information bulletin for recreational fishers (Newscast) that was sent out on 28 February 2025 explaining the mismatched referencing on some

bank account statements and that confirming that the RFA is not involved in recreational fishing fee payment transactions.

Experian Digital is the company that some financial institutions use to identify merchant transactions. Experian updated the reference across partnered banking apps in early January this year and customers should no longer see reference to the RFA.

**Question 88 – Page 82**

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Ms Lorimer-Ward, back to the pig control programs. The Minister was unable to do this, but are you able to refer to which recommendations of the NRC review those programs are in line with?

**KATE LORIMER-WARD:** In terms of the overall review?

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Yes. The press release welcoming the review stated that "in line with the report recommendations, the Government has invested in a pig control program". I wonder which recommendation this was in line with?

**KATE LORIMER-WARD:** I'll have to take on notice the specific numbers, but it was the general turnaround. Those were the recommendations around integrated programs and the need for these to be coordinated and to look at multiple approaches, not just a single approach. I'll get back to you about the specific recommendations.

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

The Feral Pig and Pest Program (FPPP) delivers against recommendation 11 *'DPIRD to deliver a risk-based awareness and education program to increase public understanding of the importance of invasive species management, shared responsibilities, and how to participate'*. Specifically 11(a), high risk pathways, hotspots and potential risk creators and 11(b), 'How' the public can deliver their biosecurity duty responsibilities and participate in partnerships.

The FPPP is also aligned with Recommendation 12 *'DPIRD Develop a NSW invasive species knowledge system that is smart and responsive'*, specially 12(b) where LLS is collecting standardised data and mapping of feral pigs control activities, and financial planning and expenditure data of pests; and 12(c) where the FPPP has a MERI plan and program logic linked to achieving outcomes aligned to the NSW Invasives Species plan and regional plans. Additionally, an annual landholder survey of feral pig impacts has been developed and implemented to capture metrics and data to help measure environmental and agricultural impacts and changes perceived by landholders.

**Question 89 – Page 83**

**KATE LORIMER-WARD:** We've modified the program this year so it is much more integrated and multi-species. Their review was based on the program when it was single species. This year it's much more integrated, with the preference being a primary and secondary management approach, and one that is multi-species.

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** So the scope of the program has expanded?

**KATE LORIMER-WARD:** Yes.

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Is the additional \$100,000 to cover the additional scope of that program?

**KATE LORIMER-WARD:** I would have to take that on notice.

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

The additional \$100,000 is to purchase capital equipment to support the implementation of the program and its activities.

**Question 90 – Page 83**

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** And that didn't happen before? In the 2023-24 program, if deer were spotted in a helicopter shoot, were they left?

**KATE LORIMER-WARD:** I would have to take that on notice. I wasn't part of the program.

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

In the 2023/24 Feral Pig Program, other invasive species were also removed during aerial shooting operations. The species of feral animals removed is subject to the consent provided by participating landholders.



**Question 91 – Page 83**

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Would you be able to take on notice what additional staff were put on in 2023-24 to deal with biosecurity issues? I think Mr Orr alluded to them in a couple of answers.

**STEVE ORR:** Are you referring to 2023-24 or 2024-25? The current financial year?

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Both, just to see what they are going towards. I presume the same would have happened with varroa mite, but they were funded by the national action plan, not from within DPI.

**RACHEL CONNELL:** That's right.

**ANSWER**

The total number of staff engaged in biosecurity responses are:

- FY24 – 1,461
- FY25 – 459 (as of 13 March 2025)

It should be noted that the transition of the Varroa mite program from a response to management phase is the primary driver of the fluctuation in staff involved in biosecurity response between years.

A number of staff were mobilised to support the Varroa mite response program from across the broader Department, and have now returned to their substantive roles.

**Question 92 – Page 84**

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** In a response to a question from me recently in question time, the Minister spoke of \$135,000 that was allocated towards *Harrisia cactus* control. Ms Lorimer-Ward, are you able to provide a breakdown of what that was spent on?

**KATE LORIMER-WARD:** No, I would have to take that on notice. I haven't got that specific data.

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

The \$135,000 was spent under two projects on weed control contractors and chemical covering over 5,500 ha.

\$60,000 for *Harrisia Cactus* control outside core infestation in the Gwydir & Moree Shires.

\$75,000 of general weeds maintenance project allocated to manage *Harrisia Cactus* on TSR within core infestation area.

**Question 93 – Page 84**

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Ms Connell, there are currently 125.2 full-time equivalent staff working in the biosecurity and food safety compliance team. Does that sound right?

**RACHEL CONNELL:** Yes, I think that's included in a parliamentary question.

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** That's what was provided the other day.

**RACHEL CONNELL:** You're right.

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Are these 125.2 staff all on the same award?

**RACHEL CONNELL:** I would have to take that one on notice.

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Are they all required to do the same duties?

**ANSWER**

I refer you to an answer provided on page 88 of transcript.

**Question 94 – Page 84**

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** I'm getting nods. I think I'm happy with what I've got. Thank you very much. I also, thanks to these responses, believe there's been 1,627 biosecurity directions issued in 2024. Would I be able to get a breakdown of those directions, per biosecurity matter?

**RACHEL CONNELL:** I might just get you to clarify what you mean by "biosecurity matter".

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** By which biosecurity matter those directions are referring to: blackberries, nightshade et cetera.

**RACHEL CONNELL:** Yes.

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

The Department's Biosecurity & Food Safety staff issued the following biosecurity directions in 2023-2024:

- Cattle Tick (278)
- Red Imported Fire Ants (47)
- Apiary (Bees) (2)
- NLIS (2)
- Tropical soda apple (284)
- African boxthorn (169)
- Blackberry (146)
- St. John's wort (104)
- Serrated tussock (86)
- Green cestrum (83)
- Silverleaf nightshade (79)
- Tiger pear (53)
- Chinese violet (32)
- Prickly pears – Opuntias (25)
- Blue heliotrope (24)
- Scotch broom (20)
- Sticky nightshade (14)
- Groundsel bush (13)
- Frogbit (12)
- Alligator weed (10)
- Harrisia cactus (10)
- Cotoneaster (9)
- Mother-of-millions (7)
- Noogoora burr (7)
- Sickletorn (7)
- Bathurst burr (6)
- Gorse (6)
- Wheel cactus (6)

- Cape broom (5)
- Salvinia (5)
- Velvety tree pear (5)
- Giant devil's fig (4)
- Privet - narrow-leaf (4)
- Hudson pear (3)
- Lantana (3)
- Pampas grass (3)
- Privet - broad-leaf (3)
- Sweet briar (3)
- Tree-of-heaven (3)
- White blackberry (3)
- Bitou bush (2)
- Black locust (2)
- Boneseed (2)
- Coolatai grass (2)
- Fireweed (2)
- Ludwigia (2)
- Parthenium weed (2)
- Prickly pears - *Cylindropuntias* (2)
- Rhizomatous bamboo (2)
- Rope pear (2)
- Spiny burrgrass - *longispinus* (2)
- Water hyacinth (2)
- African lovegrass (1)
- African olive (1)
- African turnip weed - eastern (1)
- Asparagus fern (1)
- Balloon vine (1)
- Cat's claw creeper (1)
- Cockspur coral tree (1)
- Common thornapple (1)
- Devil's claw - yellow-flowered (1)
- Giant rat's tail grass (1)
- Kidney-leaf mud plantain (1)
- Mesquite (1)
- Mexican poppy (1)
- Moth vine (1)
- Nodding thistle (1)
- Sagittaria (1)
- Wild radish (1)
- Yellow bells (1)

**Question 95 – Page 84**

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Would I be able to also have the same for the PINs issued in that year?

**RACHEL CONNELL:** I'd have to take that one on notice, obviously.

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Yes. And I presume that's the progression. Right? You get a biosecurity direction and, if that's not dealt with correctly, it then moves on to a penalty infringement notice.

**RACHEL CONNELL:** Yes. That's right. That's the cascade in the regulatory scheme. As I said before, we usually start with an approach which is based on education. And then, subject to, obviously, the available evidence, the top of the regulatory triangle is a prosecution.

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** If I can get a breakdown of those things, I'd be happy. Thank you. I'll just pass on to Mr Fang.

**ANSWER**

The Department's Biosecurity & Food Safety staff issued 56 penalty notices for biosecurity offences in the 2023-2024 financial year.

- Apiary (Bees) –24
- National Livestock identification System (NLIS) –16
- Red Imported Fire Ant –12
- Cattle Tick–2
- Prohibited pig feed –1
- Eggs (SE Control Order) -1

**Question 96 – Page 86**

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** How many times have you hosted the Minister at the DPI building in Orange?

**STEVE ORR:** I'll take that on notice, but I can recall at least one.

**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** In 2024.

**STEVE ORR:** I'll take that on notice.

**ANSWER**

I make every effort to call into the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development offices when visiting regional NSW.

The NSW Cabinet attended the Ian Armstrong Building last year.

**Question 97– Page 86**

**The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL:** My apologies, Mr Bolton. I didn't realise that Mr Barrett had already asked that. I'll swap that over to bushfire preparedness in State forests — as part of the Forestry Act, obviously. Forestry Corporation had its own fleet of pumpers and tankers for bushfires. Is that still the case?

**ANSHUL CHAUDHARY:** Yes, that's right. We do. We partner with the RFS when it comes to major fires, though. We are one of the four firefighting authorities. We have got our own firefighting fleet as well as our trained firefighters, and we do both community firefighting and protecting the forest. But we partner quite closely with the RFS on that.

**The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL:** You've been working with the mosquito fleet as well in the trial stage of that in areas such as Manna and Weelah?

**ANSHUL CHAUDHARY:** The mosquito fleet?

**The Hon. NICHOLE OVERALL:** That's the farmers and their vehicles for firefighting services.

**ANSHUL CHAUDHARY:** I am not aware of that, I'm sorry. I would have to check that.

**ANSWER**

This question should be directed to the Minister for Emergency Services.