

Questions on Notice

BUDGET ESTIMATES 2015-2016

General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5

Primary Industries, Lands and Water

Friday 4 September 2015

Question, page 2

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: How much did Sydney Water spend in 2014 as a result of repairs or compensation payments required for damaged property as a result of pipe and main breaks?

Mr De ROOY: I will have to take that question on notice. I do not have those figures with me at the moment.

**ANSWER**

**In the 2014/15 financial year Sydney Water paid out around \$1 million in claims.**

Question, page 10

Mr JEREMY BUCKINGHAM: What characterises vertisol?

The Hon. NIALL BLAIR: Are you asking for my opinion, or are you asking for a technical response?

Mr JEREMY BUCKINGHAM: I am just asking the question.

The Hon. NIALL BLAIR: Well, no. You said in my opinion.

Mr JEREMY BUCKINGHAM: I will withdraw that question and I will ask another one. Minister, what characterises vertisol?

The Hon. NIALL BLAIR: I will take that on notice.

**ANSWER**

**Vertosols are characterised as having a clay texture throughout the profile; display strong cracking when dry, and shrink and swell considerably during drying and wetting phases. They are often highly fertile and have the capacity to store large quantities of water.**

**Australia has large areas of cracking clay soils and in NSW they are common in Northern NSW west of the Great Dividing Range and in the far South West of the state.**

Question, page 13

Hon. MARK PEARSON: The activist footage was not relied upon. Why did the RSPCA withdraw the charges that resulted in the case being dismissed?

**ANSWER**

**I am advised that on 17 November 2014, the RSPCA NSW withdrew the prosecution after consultation with independent Counsel, based on matters relating to legal evidence.**

Question, page 15

Hon MICK VEITCH: In 2015 you took to the election a policy stating you were going to "investigate the use of sonar technology to detect sharks". From 2011 to 2015, was any money expended on investigating the use of sonar technology to detect sharks?

**ANSWER**

**There is current expenditure in 2015 associated with review of emerging technologies for bathers protection. From 2011 until this expenditure, sonar technology was kept under review by shark scientists as the technology is rapidly developing.**

Question, page 17

Hon. MICK VEITCH: Last year how much did Crown Lands spend on legal cases.

**ANSWER**

**\$248,337**

Question, page 20

Chair: The next question may need to be taken on notice. Minister, you would be aware of the inquiry into the adequacy of water storage in New South Wales. I think the Hon. Rick Colless was in charge of that. That report with 18 recommendations was given to the Government and it responded in January this year. Would you be able to provide the Committee with an indication of when, how and on what timeline those recommendations that were accepted by the Government will be implemented?

**ANSWER**

**Minister Blair responded to a letter from The Hon Robert Brown MLC on this matter on 5 August 2015.**

Question, page 20

Mr JEREMY BUCKINGHAM: Has the Minister inspected Wilcannia weir?

**ANSWER**

**Information regarding scheduled meetings held with stakeholders, external organisations and individuals are published in accordance with Memorandum 2015-07 Publication of Ministerial Diaries.**

**The Government has disclosed 3,934 meetings since the policy commenced in July 2014.**

Question, page 24

The Hon. MARK PEARSON: I will put a scenario to you. Is not one of the major risks to biosecurity the practice of intensive farming—putting thousands and thousands of animals in a very small space where there is high ammonia and high humidity, the animals are being pushed to grow at extremely

high rates and where there are numerous compromises on various levels? Those factors are surely amongst the major risks to biosecurity in Australia and New South Wales.

**ANSWER**

**[Information](#)** relating to biosecurity risks and how to manage them are included in the **NSW Biosecurity Strategy**, which is available on the **Department of Primary Industries' website**.

Question, page 28

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Minister, it would be remiss of me not to talk about Local Land Services. I refer to complaints and grievances that people may wish to lodge with their respective Local Land Services. How many complaints have been received in the last financial year that you are aware of? Is there a mechanism for documenting those complaints and grievances?

The Hon. NIALL BLAIR: I will refer to Ms Anthony in a moment for the specifics of the number of complaints and about the process. One of the pleasures that I have had since being the Minister and travelling to different parts of regional New South Wales is the face-to-face feedback that I have got on the ground about the work of the staff of Local Land Services. I know you want information about complaints, but what we do not do well enough is lodge compliments. Ms Anthony may be able to tell you the number, but I will raise tenfold on any number of complaints that we get of the praise of these hardworking staff across New South Wales also get.

Mr SMITH: Can I clarify the question? Are you asking about complaints from members of the public about services provided?

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Yes.

Ms ANTHONY: Complaints to Local Land Services are all recorded at regional level in a complaints register. That information is available and is collated both at regional level and State level. I do not have the number of complaints with me but I can take that question notice, but it is a very open and transparent process.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I would appreciate it if you would take it on notice. It would be good if I could get the information via Local Land Services. How many staff are dedicated to administering complaints?

Ms ANTHONY: I cannot answer the exact number of staff dedicated to complaints, but it certainly would not be a dedicated position. That is a very small part of the work that we are required to do as complaints do not come very often so there would not be somebody in place to receive them.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Is the information I am talking about available on the website?

The Hon. NIALL BLAIR: On the issue of complaints, we will take that question on notice and provide you with as much information as possible as to the number, if that information is available.

#### **ANSWER**

**Local Land Services received 78 complaints in 2014 and 68 complaints in 2015 (as at 4 September 2015).**

**If a customer wants to lodge a complaint or give feedback about Local Land Services, they may visit or phone their regional office, speak to our staff or access the feedback portal on Local Land Service's website.**

**Formal complaints are lodged in writing, maintained on a complaints register and reported to regional management and Boards. Information about complaints is included in the Annual Report and available on our website.**

Question, page 29

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: In 2014-15 what is the cost of the payroll expenses to Local Land Services?

Mr SMITH: Do you mean the cost of processing the payroll?

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Yes.

Mr SMITH: Yes, we will take that on notice.

**ANSWER**

**The cost of processing the payroll is included in the partnership agreement in place between Local Land Services and the Department of Industry covering a range of corporate support services including payroll. There is one annual corporate service fee of \$3.2 million.**

Question, page 29

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Is there an administration fee charged against each Local Land Services by the Department of Primary Industries for services provided?

Mr SMITH: Yes. Within the department we have certain functions that serve the whole department and related entities, and to make sure there is discipline and efficiency in how those services are provided, there is a range of fees-for-service arrangements that we use between entities.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Is it the same fee across all of them? Is it a percentage or a dollar amount?

Mr SMITH: It is based on recovery of the efficient cost of providing the service in each case.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Will that be available in the annual report for Local Land Services?

Mr SMITH: Probably not, but we are happy to provide it.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: It would be good if you would take it on notice.

Mr SMITH: There is no secrecy about any of that.

**ANSWER**

**There is no administration fee charged against each Local Land Service region by the Department of Primary Industries for services provided. Any third party services are included in financial reports and available in the Annual Report.**

Question, page 30

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Minister, what was the cost of managing invasive nature species on Crown Land in the past financial year?

**ANSWER**

**Refer to the answer provided to supplementary question 334.**

Question, page 40

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Can the Forestry Corporation confirm that it is in a position to meet its obligations under the wood supply agreements from the Pilliga?

Mr ROBERTS: Yes, we believe we are. We have extensive modelling and inventory processes to project the wood supply into the future. We believe that with the area of supply for the mills in the cyprus area that there is sufficient wood to meet the wood supply agreements.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Can you provide that modelling and material to this Committee?

The Hon. NIALL BLAIR: You asked the question. They believe they can meet it, so—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Can you provide the details of the modelling to this Committee?

The Hon. BEN FRANKLIN: Point of order—

CHAIR: The time for your questioning has concluded, Mr Shoebridge. I think you should put the second part of your question on notice.

**ANSWER**

**The Corporation presented information on the Cypress Wood Resource study to the Natural Resources Commission (NRC) in 2010.**