

Question 1 (page 11)

The CHAIR: How many fines have been issued for the illegal taking of groper in any form in the last five years?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I am happy to ask Dr Sloan to provide or submit further information on that, or I'm happy to take it on notice, Mr Banasiak.

The CHAIR: Mr Sloan, do you have the answers to hand?

SEAN SLOAN: Not right to hand, but I can certainly pull it up, Chair.

ANSWER

I refer you to the answer provided by the Department on the matter on page 87 of the transcript.

Question 2 (Page 13)

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Have you received information from scientists about the status of grey nurse sharks?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I would have to check if I've received any specific correspondence or information in relation to that. I'm happy to take that on notice.

ANSWER

Yes. I have received this information through direct correspondence and engaged with experts in the marine space.

Question 3 (Page 11)

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Minister, why did the administrative arrangements orders change from 5 April, when the Government first got in — 5 April 2023 — where, in fact, responsibility for the Marine Estate Management Act 2014 was solely with the environment Minister? Why did that change then to a — it was reissued on 3 May, and the Marine Estate Management Act was with your department. What happened then?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I work in conjunction with my colleague the Minister for the Environment in relation to shared responsibility for this. That's an appropriate way for us to consider all of the relevant interests and information in relation to this. As I've outlined and will continue to outline —

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Was it a mistake the first time, is what I mean.

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: — it's appropriate for me to consult and work across government to consider all of the relevant information when managing this area of my portfolio.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Between the first time it was announced in April and then the second, what happened there? Were you spoken to by departmental officials within your department? Why was that changed? Surely it was right the first time, because it is a Labor Government and that's usually what happens with Labor.

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I don't know about the change that you're referring to, but I'm happy to check the details. I don't know the specifics of the change that you're referring to —

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: That's interesting.

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: — but happy to come back and check the details about reasons why or what happened in between. No problem.

ANSWER

I am advised:

Prior to the State election, the *Marine Estate Management Act 2014* was jointly allocated to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage and the Minister for Agriculture.

On 5 April 2023, when the Full Minns Ministry was sworn in, the *Marine Estate Management Act 2014* was allocated to the Minister for the Environment.

On 3 May 2023, the allocation of the *Marine Estate Management Act 2014* was updated to restore the previous joint allocation of the Act to the Minister for the Environment and the Minister for Agriculture.

I understand this is consistent with practice in recent years.

Question 4 (Page 14)

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: Minister, can you tell me what the Eastern Young Cattle Indicator measures?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: Off the top of my head — I'm happy to take questions on it, but for the specifics, I'll either pass to the department or I'll take them on notice.

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: So you'll take that question on notice?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I'm happy to engage with you, but that's —

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: I'm asking what does it measure?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I'll either get some information from the department — there's a whole bunch of department officials here who can assist you —

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: It's quite an important indicator in New South Wales. If you want to take that on notice, if you don't know, that's fine. Do you know how many New South Wales saleyards are part of the indicator?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I would have to check the details of that. Again, there are people from the department here. If anyone does have the information to hand, I'd invite them to provide it. Otherwise, I'm happy to take it on notice, Mr Farraway.

ANSWER

The Eastern Young Cattle Indicator (EYCI) is a seven-day rolling average of young cattle from 23 saleyards across Queensland, NSW and Victoria.

The EYCI includes vealer and yearling heifers and steers with grade score C2 and C3 and with live weight from 200kg. It is a broad indicator of movements in the cattle market.

Question 5 (page 14)

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: As the New South Wales agriculture Minister, do you not know which saleyards —

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I engage with saleyards across the board. I'm engaging with them on a whole range of issues, including implementing electronic identification tagging. We're providing support to saleyards in order to be able to operate. I'm engaging with specific saleyards in relation to some changes that they might want to make. I engage with saleyards as required.

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: Minister, do you roughly know how many —

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: If there's any specific —

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: — New South Wales saleyards contribute to that indicator?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I would have to check the details on that, Mr Farraway.

ANSWER

Up to 12 NSW saleyards contribute to the indicator.

Question 6 (Page 14)

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: Have you been briefed on the issues that were plaguing the Northern Rivers Livestock Exchange?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I don't know if I've been specifically briefed on that. Again, there's departmental officials here today if you'd like to ask any specific questions.

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: Do you know when that exchange was reopened or when it will reopen?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: Again, I'm not sure if I've received a specific briefing on it, but there are plenty of people here who may well be able to —

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: As the agriculture Minister —

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: — provide some information.

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: — your office hasn't briefed you on some of the significant issues the North Coast has been facing with that livestock exchange over the past six months?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I'm happy to check the details for you. Again, there are a number of officials here if people are wanting information on this topic.

ANSWER

Northern Rivers Livestock Exchange is the regional livestock selling facility for the Northern Rivers based at Casino.

The facility reopened on 7 February 2024 following a closure to resolve operating issues.

Question 7 (Page 14)

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: Chair, for the record, it has been closed. It reopened on 7 February. It had been closed for six months. It is one of the biggest livestock exchanges in the State, but we move on. I'd like to talk about what agriculture is worth to the economy. What are the latest figures that you have about what agriculture is worth to the New South Wales economy?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: Twenty-two billion dollars to the economy. It is a really significant part of our economy in New South Wales.

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: Is that in the 2023 financial year?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: That's the most recent figure.

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: What is its projected value for this current financial year?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I'm operating on the basis that it's, I think, 22.2. But I'll check the specifics of the details for that for you. It's a very significant industry for our economy in New South Wales. I engage with the agricultural industry on that basis. It is business. It is making sure that we're getting food to people both here in New South Wales and internationally. And it is a very significant business and economic contributor to the State as a broad industry.

ANSWER

The gross value of production (GVP) for NSW Primary Industries in 2022-23 was \$21.2 billion.

The preliminary forecast GVP for 2023-24 is between \$17.8 billion and \$18.3 billion.

Question 8 (Page 15)

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: Does the draft report include recommendations?

REBECCA FOX: Yes, it includes recommendations.

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: How many recommendations?

REBECCA FOX: I don't have that information.

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: Are you able to take that on notice?

REBECCA FOX: I can take that on notice, but that could change, as well, depending on what Government considers.

ANSWER

The Functional Review Report is still to be considered by government.

Question 9 (Page 19)

The Hon. EMMA HURST: Good morning, Minister. I also want to talk about some spearfishing. Obviously, there has been an outpouring of public opposition to spearfishing and you talked about the cases of the blue groper. The other species that has received a lot of attention is the giant cuttlefish. I asked a question in the House about community concerns around the killing of these animals last year, given they're classed as near threatened. In written correspondence from your office, we've been informed that regular stock assessments are not conducted for this species. Given the community concern and the fact that this is a globally threatened species, are there any plans to conduct an assessment to try to get a better idea of the population numbers of those giant cuttlefish?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I think this is a good question. I know that this is something that people have been quite passionate about. In relation to whether there is a formal conducting of the status of the fish from the department's perspective, I am happy to give some consideration to what we should be doing in this space. Again, I acted on the blue groper because I understood the sensitivities of this issue. I am aware of the sensitivities in relation to this other one. I'm happy to look at it and perhaps come back.

ANSWER

I am advised:

The Giant Cuttlefish is not currently targeted by any commercial fisheries and are only taken as incidental bycatch, predominantly in the Ocean Trawl Prawn Fishery.

The current catch and catch rates of Giant Cuttlefish for this fishery do not indicate that this species is being overfished and there are no concerns over stocks of this species.

Conducting stock assessments for non-target species will result in outputs that have a high degree of uncertainty.

In addition, cuttlefish are a very short-lived species only living for two years, which makes them more resilient to any fishing impacts.

Question 10 (Page 21)

The Hon. EMMA HURST: Thank you. We have spoken previously about Labor's election commitment to ban puppy farming as well. According to the RSPCA, there are hundreds of these places. Since Victoria and the Labor Party there introduced puppy farm legislation, we've heard that a lot of puppy farmers just relocated into New South Wales. There has been a significant increase in development applications for puppy farms for the councils along the border of New South Wales and Victoria. That came up in the inquiry into puppy farming that was done by the Hon. Mick Veitch in the previous term. Given that this is a really urgent issue and that councils are struggling and there are all these approvals going through for puppy farms, what is your time line on this? Are we expecting to see legislation on this this year, or is it going to fall into this massive POCTAA review, which could see us waiting years before we see something happen?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: We made a commitment to outlaw and to deal with puppy farms and we will deliver on that. I'll work closely with the Minister for Local Government and with local government on the issues that you have raised. I know that there's a lot of concern in the community about it. I think it is appropriate that I get up-to-date information on where councils are and what applications are coming through, rather than trying to engage with you on it without the facts — but I am aware of the increase in applications. I'll work with the Minister for Local Government and I am happy to provide any further details on notice or engage in the next round.

ANSWER

The NSW Government has committed to the introduction of a new animal welfare framework in NSW. This includes legislating a ban on puppy farming.

To progress this work, DPI is working with other jurisdictions and with the NSW Office of Local Government to ensure the reforms are appropriate and effective.

Question 11 (Page 23)

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: What State forests have you visited since becoming Minister for forests?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I've visited quite a few State forests. I'm sorry that I won't be able to list them off the top of my head, but I'm happy to provide information on notice about the forests that I've visited.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Have you visited any that have been subject to allegations of breaches of the IFOA?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I will have to check because, again, I'll have to provide the details of which forests I've visited on notice.

ANSWER

Since becoming Minister, I have visited Sunny Corner State Forest, East Boyd State Forest and Bagawa State Forest.

I am advised that Bagawa State Forest has been subject to a fine of \$30,000 for a breach of the IFOA.

Question 12 (Page 23)

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: Sure. Forestry needs to comply, and I'm sure they will.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: So what have you done specifically to change any kind of behaviour or culture within Forestry Corporation to change their practice of continuing and consistent breaches to a compliance culture?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I don't accept the premise of the question that you're putting to me. Forestry has to follow the rules.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: The EPA is suggesting that they're not being followed, so what have you been doing? Clearly, the EPA is doing things. They're changing protocols and doing all sorts of things. What are you doing as the Minister responsible for this State-owned corporation?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I'm saying that Forestry has to follow the rules. They have to follow the rules.

ANSWER

I refer you to the answer I provided on the matter on page 23 of transcript.

Question 13 (Page 25)

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: That wasn't the question, Minister, but thank you. I respect your answer. In the remaining 20 seconds, are you aware of any wood being provided by the Forestry Corporation to sawmills without wood supply agreements?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I'm not aware of any specifics, but that sounds like an operational question that you're welcome to direct to Forestry Corp themselves.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Could you take it on notice?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I'm happy to take it on notice and check.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: The question then is: What volume of wood has gone to mills without wood supply agreements?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I'll have to check the answer to the first question first but, yes, I'm happy to come back to you.

ANSWER

I am advised that all timber from State forests is sold under a form of wood supply agreement or contract.

The Hardwood Forests Division uses the term Wood Supply Agreement for the contracts that cover the majority of timber supply, with other wood supply agreements described with other terms such as Parcel Sale Agreements.

In the Softwood Plantations Division, the terms Timber Supply Agreement or Parcel Sale are used to describe forms of wood supply agreements.

Authorisations under section 45 of the *Forestry Act 2012* such as non-commercial firewood permits are also a form of wood supply agreement.

Timber sold by product is reported in the annual Sustainability Report.

Question 14 (Page 25)

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Are you aware that DPI or one of the government agencies was aware that blast was present in the Northern Rivers a decade ago but that that information was never disclosed to any rice growers in the Northern Rivers at the start of the sector's development?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I don't know what information was available or not 10 years ago. Obviously I wasn't the Minister at that time. If there is an allegation that you're putting, I'm happy to check the details and ask the department. You have the department here, who may be able to answer. I take the question seriously. I'm not aware of information from 10 years ago, but I am happy to check.

ANSWER

DPI first became aware of the presence of rice blast disease in rice in the Northern Rivers on 10 February 2024 when confirmed by diagnostic testing.

The current detection is the first occurrence of rice blast disease on rice in NSW, although it has been known to occur in rice crops in the Northern Territory, Queensland and Western Australia for some time.

There are historical records of the rice blast fungus (under its previous name) on weeds in NSW that date back several decades. The fungus lives on a range of plants many of which are naturalised in the northern rivers of NSW.

The rice blast pathogen was previously known under a different name. This name was revised, and official records updated in the last few years. The pathogen name was updated following an international review by taxonomists in 2014.

The pathogen was detected on weeds under its old name by a DPI plant pathologist in 2006. The same pathologists at the time compiled extension information on rice blast that was sent to all rice growers in NSW and in that information, the detection on weeds was noted.

This publication also advised all growers that they should undertake regular surveys for rice blast. This is noted in the Rice Blast Contingency Plan dated 2005 (reviewed 2008) and this was before the revision of the taxonomy.

Question 15 (Page 26)

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: If there was known to be blast on grasses in the Riverina, do you think that the rice industry would have been informed very early?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I expect, as per my previous answer, that information is provided and people follow the rules, is the best way to engage on it. I don't know what information was previously known or not known, but you've raised the question with me so I will have a look at that.

ANSWER

Refer to Question 14.

Question 16 (Page 26)

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: Ms Fox, I want to go back over the process around the sacking of the director general. Can you confirm again — because I don't have it here — the date? Firstly, September 23, the functional review started, from your evidence earlier; correct?

REBECCA FOX: That's correct.

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: What was the date that you received the draft report and recommendations? You said it was early January.

REBECCA FOX: That date in early January is when the draft report was finalised. I've been working iteratively through consultation et cetera.

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: What date in early January was that?

REBECCA FOX: Under the terms of reference, it was due on 8 January. We were actually on leave at that time, so I think we agreed with the Premier's Department that it could be handed in, but it was effectively finalised before early January.

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: At what point did you send the draft report to the Minister's office for input?

REBECCA FOX: I'd have to take on notice whether we've actually sent the draft for input.

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: You said earlier that you had reached out to the Minister's office to seek input on the draft report.

REBECCA FOX: Yes. In relation to the report, we have certainly sought input. I don't know whether the draft has been sent. That would have probably been done either by my team or through the Premier's Department. But I can take that on notice.

ANSWER

The Functional Review report is yet to be considered by Government.

Question 17 (Page 27)

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: At what point did you advise the Minister's office that you were terminating the director general of DPI?

REBECCA FOX: I'm also required to afford any senior executive procedural fairness in that process. That procedural fairness process generally involves a preliminary decision being made, and the senior executive being given a period of time to provide to the decision-maker any information they would like taken into account. In my experience, senior executives often want taken into account the timing of their leaving, the way that they might leave those kinds of issues and then the decision-maker makes a final decision. Mr Hansen came back to me quite quickly – within one day – on that Tuesday, in that process.

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: Going back to the question, Ms Fox, when did you advise the Minister that you were terminating the employment of Mr Hansen?

REBECCA FOX: After I'd made the final decision on Wednesday 17 January.

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: You advised the Minister's office on Wednesday?

REBECCA FOX: Yes, after I'd made a final decision and communicated that to Mr Hansen.

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: Where in the process is the draft report? Has that been sent to the Minister's office or to the Premier's office?

REBECCA FOX: I'd have to take that on notice. I'm not aware whether it's been sent. It's certainly with the team in the Premier's Department that does that.

ANSWER

The Functional Review report is yet to be considered by Government.

Question 18 (Page 30)

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I am going to redirect you. Speaking of regional councils, have you spoken to the water Minister in relation to calls from the Alliance of Western Councils to raise the storage level of Burrendong Dam to the current 120 per cent level?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I'm not sure that I've had a specific conversation with the Minister for Water on that issue, but I'm happy to check and come back to you on notice.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Thank you.

ANSWER

Ministerial Offices collaborate on a range of initiatives that require a cross portfolio response.

Question 19 (page 31)

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Thank you, Minister. You are the Minister for Regional New South Wales. These are questions that are very, very specific and very focused on regional New South Wales and Western New South Wales. Just now moving on, Minister, the Yaegl Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation was successful in receiving funding for the delivery of its Yuraygir Camping project at Yamba. They have reported there are delays of some seven months in the payment of the final fifth tranche of funding, which is placing the completion of the project in jeopardy. Can you advise why the final instalment payment to the Yaegl Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation has not been released?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I would have to check the details of that. I'm happy to do so.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: So you take that on notice?

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

ANSWER

I refer you to the answer provided by the Department on the matter on page 92 of transcript.

Question 20 (Page 31)

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Minister, are you aware of any other delays in the delivery of final instalment payments to successful recipients under the Bushfire Local Economic Recovery fund?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: You are welcome to provide any further information to me, but no, I'm not.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: You're not aware, Minister, of any delays of payments of those funds as the Minister responsible for that?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I'm not aware of any specifics, but I'm happy to engage on it if you have anything to put to me.

ANSWER

I am advised that as of 1 March 2024, there are no projects under the Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund that did not receive their final payment within 8 weeks of lodgement of the final payment claim and appropriate evidence.

Question 21 (Page 31)

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: That's fine, Minister. I will, but I'm just quite surprised that you're not aware. But that's absolutely fine. If you take that on notice, I'd very much appreciate that. In response to a supplementary question from December, you stated there were 4,279 claims on hand for reimbursements to customers through the Rural Assistance Authority as of 31 December. What is the figure for 31 January, which should be the most reliable and recently available data? I'm happy for you to take it on notice.

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I am very happy to take that information on notice.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Thank you, Minister.

ANSWER

I am advised that as of 29 February, there are 2,493 claims being processed by the RAA.

Question 22 (Page 31)

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: In the supplementaries, we also asked about the total value of the unprocessed claims, and that information was apparently "undergoing validation" at the time. Is that figure available now, Minister?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: Perhaps, if someone from the department has it. I would invite them to provide it.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Are you aware if it's available, Minister?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I'm happy to provide any available figures—

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Great, so you'll take that on notice as well?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: — to the Committee, Ms Taylor.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: So you'll take that on notice. Thank you, Minister.

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: Sure.

ANSWER

I am advised the total value of the unprocessed claims at 29 February 2024 is \$45.7 million.

Question 23 (Page 33)

The CHAIR: Thank you, Minister, for that clarification. I will redirect now to look at the poor handling and communication of this ban being leaked by your officers. In the last eight months, my office, with fishermen, have fought against four attempts to restrict access based on no science, pure emotion and vested interest. On all those four occasions, there has been no assistance and no input from the access officers that are employed and paid for by Recreational Fishing Trusts. Their salaries are paid for by the Recreational Fishing Trusts — our licences. There has been no engagement in assistance. I put that as a comment to start off with. Minister, what grade level or public service level are the access officers, currently paid by the fishing fee licences?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I will ask Dr Sloan to provide that information if he has it. Otherwise, I'll take it on notice. I'm happy to do that.

SEAN SLOAN: Can you please clarify —

The CHAIR: What's the grade level or the public service level for the access officers who are paid by the fishing fee receipts? Who would be their direct line of report to — who is their line manager?

SEAN SLOAN: If I understand the roles that you're speaking to, they're policy roles that deal with recreational fishing access issues.

The CHAIR: Yes.

SEAN SLOAN: I don't know the answer to that question off the top of my head.

ANSWER

I am advised that the DPI Recreational Fisheries Access Program includes: one Clerk grade 3/4 and two Clerk grade 7/8.

The Clerk grade 3/4 and one Clerk grade 7/8 report to the Program Leader Fish Stocking & Enhancement Operations and the remaining Clerk grade 7/8 reports to the Program Leader Recreational Fisheries.

Question 24 (Page 34)

The CHAIR: Do you know who their line manager is? Who would they report to?

SEAN SLOAN: There's a team within the recreational fishing team that handles those matters. I'm happy to take that on notice and find out the answers. Generally speaking, those types of roles are clerk 7/8 or clerk 9/8 type roles.

The CHAIR: If you can't answer who they report to now, I might move on. You may take this on notice as well. Who gives them the authority to speak and engage with the community, and where does that direction come from? I'm assuming that would be on notice as well.

SEAN SLOAN: If it's about the access issues that we have, there are lots of different fishing access issues that crop up.

The CHAIR: To help you, I might go to a specific example. The other night at the Sutherland Shire Council, I was shown several text messages from Saltwater Access Officer Chris Cleaver, who, in response as to whether he or anyone would be attending the Sutherland council meeting to observe proceedings, at least, or support fishermen, responded to the effect of, "No, we've been told not to as the Government already has a response ready to go." Who directed Saltwater Access Officer Chris Cleaver to communicate that message to fishermen, who pay his wage?

SEAN SLOAN: I'm not familiar with that situation.

The CHAIR: Perhaps take it on notice.

ANSWER

I am advised that no staff were directed to communicate any message to fishers attending a Sutherland Shire Council meeting.

Question 25 (Page 34)

The CHAIR: Perhaps take it on notice. Minister, on the same night I was told how, a week ago, a person in a fisheries uniform followed a person wearing a fishing club shirt into a trophy store as he was getting trophies engraved. The person in uniform identified himself as a former ANSA youth champion and now fisheries officer, and, unsolicited, bragged about how the Government was going to ban the line fishing of groper and there was "nothing you could do about it". Minister, it didn't take much research from my office to identify that officer as Chris Cleaver, Saltwater Access Officer. Who directed Chris Cleaver, Saltwater Access Officer, to accost fishermen, who pay his wage, in the street to brag about them losing access?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: Mr Banasiak, I take the issues that you're putting to me seriously. I'm not familiar with the situation or the allegations that you're putting to me.
The CHAIR: Perhaps take that on notice. I've got one more example to get out.

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I acknowledge what you're putting to me, and I will ask the department to provide me with some advice.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

ANSWER

I am advised that DPI is not aware of the specific circumstances of the alleged incident.

Question 26 (Page 34)

The CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. You might not be aware that I was working with Minister Sharpe's office on an access issue in a national park known as Blue Fish Point. During these negotiations, it was relayed by national parks that an access officer, instead of trying to work for a solution, recommended removing that access. That access officer, whose name is Chris Cleaver, unsolicited, called up a well-known fisherman, who had not even raised the matter publicly, and essentially attempted to silence him about not talking about it publicly. Who directed Chris Cleaver to make such phone calls and speak to fishermen, who pay his wage, in such a manner?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: Again, I appreciate the question that you're putting to me. I am not aware of the circumstances, but I will ask the department to have a look at this and provide me with some advice.

ANSWER

I am advised that DPI has been liaising with the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) regarding fishing access at Bluefish Point rock platform, North Head in Sydney Harbour National Park, which included access down a steep cliff using ropes and cliff anchor points.

It is noted that numerous incidents (people falling during descent or being washed off the platform), including fatalities, at the location had occurred over the years. Following a public safety risk assessment process, NPWS closed public access to Bluefish Point rock platform in March 2021 but since then, some fishers and the public have still been attempting to access the platform via the steep cliff.

DPI was notified by NPWS on 31 January 2024 that the cliff access anchors at Bluefish Point had been removed by authorised contractors to address the NPWS duty of care. The reasoning provided by NPWS was that the anchor points were not maintained or approved by NPWS and were of unknown integrity and posed an unacceptable risk to anyone attempting to climb down the cliff to the rock platform below should they fail. DPI subsequently phoned two well-known rock fishing identities to pass on this NPWS advice as a courtesy.

DPI acknowledged the updated advice via email to the NPWS on 9 February 2024 and subsequently requested if there was any scope to formalise the access in the area with stairs or a steel trackway in the future to retain amenity to this historic fishing site.

Question 27 (Page 34)

The CHAIR: Why do we have saltwater access officers and access officers in general, whose salaries are paid by fishermen, actively conspiring to reduce access? Why am I paying my recreational fee for someone to conspire against access? Why are 391,000 licence fee holders paying their fee for the salary of a person to actively conspire against giving them access?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: Again, I will take what you have put to me today seriously. I will look into it, and I will ask the department to provide me with some further information.

ANSWER:

I am advised that the Angler Access Program involves maintaining, managing, and enhancing access for recreational fishers in inland and coastal locations across NSW.

The program not only enhances and maintains access locations but also identifies new recreational fishing and regional tourism opportunities and facilitates fisher access to new locations.

Question 28 (Page)

The Hon. EMMA HURST: I've had some complaints come to my office about Coffs Coast Wildlife Sanctuary, formerly known as Dolphin Marine Conservation Park, which is the dolphinarium in Coffs Harbour. It has been reported that they're hosting an increasing number of large after-hours events with loud music and alcohol. Is this something that has come to you, Minister? Is it something that you're aware of?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I haven't been briefed on the specifics of parties occurring after hours. Is it after hours — so when it's not open to the public?

The Hon. EMMA HURST: In the night-time, yes.

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: But not open to the public?

The Hon. EMMA HURST: The events are paid events for people to come in, drink alcohol and listen to loud music, with the animals there in captivity.

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I don't believe I've been briefed on that issue. I'm happy to have a look at it if there are concerns for the animals.

ANSWER

I refer you to the answer provided by the Department on the matter on page 93 of transcript.

Question 29 (Page 35)

The Hon. EMMA HURST: I'm particularly concerned, obviously, that these are alcohol-related events, with captive animals at the same facility. Technically, it's not illegal because they do actually hold a liquor licence at the facility. Given that there are potential welfare risks for animals at events where they're mixed with alcohol, are you open to looking into some of the laws and regulations around this and possibly banning events that combine animals and alcohol consumption in this way?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I want to help you with this and, if there's something that needs to be addressed, I'm happy to give consideration to it. Is there a particular concern, other than the fact – and I'm not making light of it – that these events are occurring around the animals? Is there a specific allegation in relation to welfare? If there is, I'm happy to look into that. I'm not responsible for liquor licensing. I'm not dismissing it. I'm happy to engage.

The Hon. EMMA HURST: I understand that. I'm just talking about the animal welfare concerns around intoxicated people, loud music and then captive animals in small pools. We're talking about dolphins and seals. I know this particular facility does a lot of swim-with-dolphin events and things like that. Having heavily intoxicated people around these animals could potentially create a major animal welfare issue.

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I am happy to get some advice on whether there may be concerns for animal welfare in relation to the activities that are occurring there, and I am happy to consider that advice and engage with you on the issue.

ANSWER

Refer to Question 28.

Question 30 (Page 36)

The Hon. EMMA HURST: Have you met with the agencies in regard to the (POCTAA enforcement agencies funding) review?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I haven't. I have engaged with the RSPCA on funding and I would have to check what specific meetings I've had with the others in relation to that issue.

The Hon. EMMA HURST: The Animal Welfare League, yes. Have you received budget submissions from them?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I don't believe so. But, again, I'll have to check that. The funding that was provided to the RSPCA came from the Office of Local Government. It may be that some of these conversations have been had with local government, and I'm happy to check that, rather than passing it around to the Office of Local Government and the Minister to see what may have occurred.

ANSWER

I am advised that a budget submission has been received in my Office from the RSPCA, which will be considered as part of the budget process.

I am advised, that there has been no specific request about further funding received from the Animal Welfare League.

Question 31 (Page 37)

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Minister, I'll just redirect you now. Thank you, I'm happy with that answer. Have you met with any cattle producers recently?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: You would have to define "recently", but I would have to check my diary disclosures. I meet with people —

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Minister, have you spoken to any cattle producers this year?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I meet with people across the agriculture sector on a very regular basis, Ms Taylor.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Minister, if I could just redirect you, please. I'm really trying very hard to ask you very direct questions. Have you met with any cattle producers this year?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I would have to check my disclosures.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Can you provide that on notice?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: Yes, sure, I'm happy to provide that on notice.

ANSWER

Ministerial stakeholder meetings can be viewed via the Ministerial diary disclosure, which is published on the Cabinet Office website.

Question 32 (Page 39)

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Minister, we would love engagement. The question is, in that course of engagement, have you made representations to your Federal counterparts about the significant fluctuations — to use your words — in prices? It's a yes or it's a no, Minister.

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: In relation to lamb prices specifically, I would have to check, but I engage with my Federal counterparts —

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Okay, Minister. Thank you for answering that. Please, can you take that on notice if you've made any representations?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: — on agriculture issues on a very regular basis.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I look forward to you taking that on notice, thank you.

ANSWER

I engage with my Federal counterparts on a range of initiatives to support and advocate for farmers across New South Wales.

This engagement is achieved in a variety of ways, such as briefings and correspondence, verbal updates and in person meetings and visits.

I have written to my Federal counterpart to further engage with Commonwealth agencies about supply chain vulnerabilities, as well as the disparity between farmgate and retail pricing.

Question 33 (Page 39)

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: Minister, how many DPI research stations are there across New South Wales?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I want to say 20. I'll check the specifics.

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: That's all right. Take that on notice.

ANSWER

There are 21 Research Stations (there are 7 additional associated field sites).

Question 34 (Page 39)

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: That's all right. Take that on notice. Do you know how many renewable energy zones there are across regional New South Wales?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: That is not something that's within my remit, but I'm happy to take advice and come back to you.

ANSWER

This question should be directed to the Minister for Energy.

Question 35 (Page 41)

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: Minister, have you had any discussions with Minister Anoulack, the trade Minister, on the signing and agreement of that (NSW Wines) MOU?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I have engaged with the Minister. I'm pretty sure — and I can check the details of this — that I've written to him asking him to consider any support that might be available from his department's or within his remit's perspective for the industry. There are some parts of work that occurs with the industry through DPI, which I will continue working with DPI and the industry on. That's been conveyed to the industry. Where there is work that we can support the industry with in terms of trade or other issues, then we will work across government. My door is open. If people across the industry want to get any support, they're welcome to reach out.

ANSWER

I wrote to both the Minister for Industry and Trade, and the Minister for Jobs and Tourism in December 2023.

Question 36 (Page 43)

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Minister, I want to turn now to an issue that's been affecting primary producers in the community in the Northern Rivers and ask some questions about the Northern Rivers' Agricultural Drainage Review that was put together by Mr John Culleton. Minister, have you seen that report before?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I have.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: When did you receive that report from the department?

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I would have to check the specific date —

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: That's fine. Take that on notice.

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: — for when I received it, Mrs Taylor.

ANSWER

The report was provided on 15 June 2023.

Question 37 (Page 44)

The CHAIR: Okay. This is a project that says in its description that it: ...

reviews the high volume of Crown Lands road closures, Aboriginal Land Claims and other public land disposals to secure angler access for the future.

So \$149,271 is being taken from recreational fishermen to apparently do the job of Crown Lands. When was this project actually approved? That is my first question.

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I will answer —

The CHAIR: You probably need to refer to Mr Sloan, perhaps, or Mr Turnell.

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I am happy to answer it in a couple of ways. In terms of when it was approved, or the details of it, Mr Sloan is here and probably can provide specific details. In relation to the first part of the question, obviously the trust and the fees that are paid are for a broad range of work and support that is done, including in the department, to support fishing across New South Wales.

The CHAIR: I am aware of that.

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: But in terms of the specifics, I'm happy to —

The CHAIR: Mr Sloan, when was this project approved?

SEAN SLOAN: Chair, I don't know the specifics of this project. I can certainly find out for you. Since 2001 there have been 3,300 projects, and we've got 351 active trust projects, so I'll just need to look at the specifics of this one and we can certainly take that on notice and provide you with —

ANSWER

For 2022/23, \$149,271 from the Recreational Fishing Trust for the project titled 'Securing angler access for the future' was approved on 11 April 2022.

Question 38 (Page 45)

The CHAIR: While you're taking on notice, it was confirmed to me by Crown Lands yesterday that they were never consulted on this project. Given that you're actually circumventing their remit – it's their job to actually look at Crown land road closures, Aboriginal land claims, public land disposals – principally, you are now taking money out of our trust fund to do the job of another department. That is how it seems. On top of over \$500,000 in salaries for access officers – one would think that was principally part of their day-to-day business. How this looks to me, and how this looks to the recreational fishermen that pay for these salaries and pay for this so-called project – it looks to them that you are double-dipping.

SEAN SLOAN: Chair, if I can provide some clarification around the nature of that type of work, we have a whole raft of very complex access issues, which can involve individual landholders, local councils and, in some cases, the Crown Lands department. In order for us to be able to work through those issues, it does require some resourcing. There's actually been – it's my understanding – a call from recreational fishers for us to work on that area of access for recreational fishers.

The CHAIR: So what are the salaries there for? That's to do their job, which is to improve access, and then you're taking another \$150,000 out of our fees to do the job of another department.

SEAN SLOAN: No, that project would be resourcing the work that we need to do to go and work with all those different stakeholder groups, which in some cases is private landholders, in some cases is Crown Lands or local governments. There's actually a really complex mix of issues that arise.

The CHAIR: I'm aware of them, and the recreational fishermen tell me they see no evidence of your access officers actually doing that work. I'll leave that as a comment, not necessarily a question.

SEAN SLOAN: Chair, I'm happy to provide some detail on that one because I think there would be some examples we could provide to you.

The CHAIR: Any evidence of where access officers have actually improved access rather than worked to take it away would be great.

ANSWER

I am advised that since 2013, DPI's Access program has assessed approximately 6,000 Crown Road disposal applications involving more than 32,000 individual roads.

This work has resulted in approximately 400 roads either: being retained for public use as they lead to waterways; being retained as reserves of importance; or resolving access resolutions under offset agreements.

Key work directly benefiting recreational fishing involves DPI collaborating with government agencies, local Councils, recreational fishers, the private sector and various other land managers to maintain continued fishing access at shared facilities.

High profile areas include maintaining and managing ongoing access at Sydney Harbour's ferry wharf network and the Walsh Bay precinct.

Additionally, the Access program works with the recreational fishing sector to identify and enhance new fishing locations, actively promotes responsible use of public fishing areas and has developed an online mapping tool which identifies more than 4000 sites which are available to the public for the purposes of recreational fishing.

The Access program has produced a series of Go Fishing guides covering 21 coastal and inland fishing locations available in print and online versions with more location guides to be rolled out.

Access has been negotiated to create new fisheries (such as at Thomsons Creek Dam and the Mill Pond near Lithgow) with discussions continuing on other locations on the NSW South Coast and Central West.

Question 39 (Page 53)

REBECCA FOX: So far, we have reduced overall by 19 positions. Some of those have been machinery of government changes. For example, the Northern Rivers Reconstruction Corporation moved out of our department, and it depends which period of time you are looking at. I think we have actually fully implemented seven this financial year, and others are in the process.

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: How many have been sacked as a total though? You say 19 to date.

REBECCA FOX: I don't know whether they've all been terminated. Some people may have moved on and they haven't been replaced, for example. We're using natural attrition. We're using mobility. So some people might have moved from one role into another role, but we are, overall — and, depending on which time period, I can pull it up for you now. I can give you the exact number. I think it's seven complete for this financial year — if I can find it, if somebody can help me. I can take it on notice and come back to you if you give me a time period. I think we answered some of those questions from the last estimates, on notice.

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: It would be in the current financial year.

REBECCA FOX: The current financial year — okay, no problem.

The Hon. WES FANG: In relation to that, if you could detail whether they were natural attrition, machinery of government or whether they were sacked.

REBECCA FOX: Yes, sure.

ANSWER

I am advised:

- Machinery of government – 10
- Natural attrition (net) – 2
- Terminations – 7

Question 40 (Page 54)

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: Yes. Has there needed to be, since October last year, a reduction in the Department of Primary Industries' participation in educational programs, field days and local agricultural shows because of the travel budget reduction?

SEAN SLOAN: Not to my knowledge. I'm happy to take that on notice and have a closer look at that, but not to my knowledge.

ANSWER

I am advised that DPI staff continue to travel to meet with stakeholders as required in their roles. In some instances, meetings and engagement activities have occurred online or in different formats to create some efficiencies in travel spend, and also allow easier access to the engagement event from all participants.

Question 41 (Page 54)

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: Have there been any events that the Department of Primary Industries has had to decline participation in due to the reduction in the travel budget?

SEAN SLOAN: There may well have been because, obviously, with reduced travel for non-essential activities, we would be making decisions about not attending things that were not considered to be essential activities.

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: Could I ask you to take it on notice, if you could, to provide a list of events that the Department of Primary Industries has had to decline participation in due to that decision and managing your travel budget?

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

ANSWER

Refer to Question 40.

Question 42 (Page 54)

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: The other thing that I would like to clarify, whether you can do it in front of the Committee now or on notice, is can you define what the Department of Primary Industries would deem as "essential travel" with the new travel budget?

SEAN SLOAN: I will certainly have a go at answering it now, but any of our legislative obligations that need to be fulfilled, particularly in relation to high-priority work, like biosecurity response work, any of our legislated fish stock assessment work, any of the work that involves field work to deliver on our legislative responsibilities – we have compliance officers across Fisheries, Hunting, Forestry, Food Authority and Biosecurity. All of those frontline roles and services would be deemed as important and critical. As a quick answer to your question, I think they're the types of things that would be deemed as necessary and critical roles.

ANSWER

I am advised that "Essential travel" includes travel associated with the delivery of DPI's core and legislative responsibilities and frontline services including biosecurity responses, compliance, research and stakeholder engagement.

Question 43 (Page 55)

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: Mr Sloan, what is the reduction in activities across the research stations between the 2022-23 financial year and the current financial year?

SEAN SLOAN: I think I'll take that on notice, that question, to give you the correct answer. I do have some information on the types of projects, the numbers of projects and the investments that we've got this year, but to compare that to last year I'd need to take that on notice.

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: I appreciate that; that's fine.

ANSWER

I am advised:

In FY 2023/24, there are 345 projects operating across DPI's research stations.

In FY 2022/23, there were 346 projects operating across DPI's research stations.

Question 44 (Page 59)

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Given the Forestry Corporation has a policy of operating to the highest ethical standards, should you consider whether to take into account the victims of the assault that was perpetrated by contractors of the public Forestry Corporation?

ROSS DICKSON: That's a court matter. I will take that on notice.

ANSWER

I am advised the assault was reported to the NSW Police and has been dealt with by the courts.

Question 45 (Page 59)

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: What volume of wood has gone to mills without a wood supply agreement?

ROSS DICKSON: I don't have that number with me. I'll take that on notice.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: In doing so, could you please provide a detailed breakdown on that wood by quota – small quota, salvage, pulp and firewood?

ROSS DICKSON: Yes.

ANSWER

Refer to Question 13.

Question 46 (Page 59)

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: What's the current log price for hardwood plantation pulp logs?

ROSS DICKSON: For pulp logs?

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Yes.

ROSS DICKSON: I don't have that number with me at the moment, but we would not be harvesting much pulpwood out of the native forests.

ANSWER

I am advised that the price of products varies depending on a range of factors including species, size, location and harvest and haul costs.

For FY2024 to the end of February 2024, Delivered Prices for Hardwood Plantation Pulplog on the north coast ranges from \$64.81/tonne to \$91.84 per tonne.

Question 47 (Page 59)

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Has the Forestry Corporation or DPI conducted any work to investigate the amount of carbon in standing native forests on public land?

REBECCA FOX: I might ask Mr McPherson to answer that question.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Hello, Mr McPherson.

DAVID McPHERSON: Good afternoon. Thanks for the question. Yes, we have done significant work looking at the carbon stocks in native forests and also where those stocks exist right through the supply chain, including into landfill.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Are those estimates available?

DAVID McPHERSON: Yes, they are.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Where might I find those?

DAVID McPHERSON: I can provide those to the Committee.

ANSWER

I am advised that information regarding Carbon stocks across the value chain is publicly available at <https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/forestry/science/forest-carbon/publications>.

Question 48 (Page 60)

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I understand. Can the Forestry Corporation provide a spreadsheet of the volume or metres of logs removed since August 2019 by compartment, product and diameter at breast height? Is that something you can —

ROSS DICKSON: Can I take that on notice?

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Thank you.

ANSWER

For native forests managed under the Coastal Integrated Forestry Operations Approval, an annual biomaterial report is published as part of Forestry Corporation's Sustainability Report detailing the volume of timber harvested by compartment(s) and product.

For other timber sources, information is reported by broad product category and volume in the Sustainability Report.

Sustainability reports are on the Forestry Corporation website at <https://www.forestrycorporation.com.au/about/pubs/corporate/sustainability-reports>

Question 49 (Page 60)

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Thank you very much. Has the Forestry Corporation undertaken any assessment of the impact on wood supply as a result of the proposed changes to the CIFOA in relation to the greater glider retention tree rates?

ROSS DICKSON: Yes, we have. We frequently run our wood supply models that predict the sustainability of the forest. Whilst we were working with the regulator around the new protocol, we were very conscious about the impact on wood supply.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Can you provide any data or detail around that assessment?

ROSS DICKSON: Yes, we can. We also provide broad, high-level data as well.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: That was just in relation to the assessment of how the proposed EPA changes would impact on the wood supply.

ROSS DICKSON: We have to maintain the balance between the wood supply obligations of the State and also sustainability and conservation outcomes.

ANSWER

I am advised that Forestry Corporation's assessments to date are preliminary rapid assessments of the potential impact of proposed changes before they were drafted. These indicate that the impact on wood supply could be between 0% and 11% variance from current models depending on the region. The Corporation is of the view that it can meet its contractual commitments, even with the protocol amendments.

Forestry Corporation is in the process of completing a periodic update to its long-term sustainable yield models that will incorporate these new conditions. The updated model outputs are expected to be completed and published in late 2024.

Question 50 (Page 60)

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Thank you. What is the total area of koala hubs that have been subject to harvest plans and logging operations since March 2023?

ROSS DICKSON: We are obviously working with the Department of environment around the koala hubs and we are putting in measures to ensure that we are not impacting on the potential koala national park, but in terms of the actual data, I don't have that with me.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Is that something you can provide?

ROSS DICKSON: I can take that on notice.

ANSWER

I am advised that the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) provided Forestry Corporation with maps delineating koala hubs in native forests in the area for assessment for the Great Koala National Park on 19 September 2023.

No native forest areas delineated in the maps provided by the EPA have been harvested from the date the maps were provided.

Question 51 (Page 60)

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Thank you, and also what areas of regional koala significance — the same, if I could, please. Mr Sloan, or Ms Fox, what is the warming scenario that the Government is currently using to assess climate impacts on agriculture and regional communities?

REBECCA FOX: I don't have that information. If Mr Sloan doesn't have it, we'll take it on notice.

SEAN SLOAN: Just to clarify, are you speaking about the seasonal outlook for conditions for agriculture?

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Yes, including scenarios — are you looking at 1.5 or are you looking at 2 — and what you're doing regionally.

SEAN SLOAN: Yes, okay. I'll take that on notice and provide you with some details on that.

ANSWER

I am advised:

To assess the future climate suitability of commodities and biosecurity risks, DPI utilises future climate projections produced by global climate models. These models represent the physical processes and interactions between the different parts of the Earth's climate system.

In recent work assessing the vulnerability of primary industries to climate change, DPI used an ensemble of eight global climate models, containing future projections for the 30 years between 2036 and 2065.

Intermediate ('RCP4.5') and high ('RCP8.5') greenhouse gas emissions scenarios were used for the period between now and 2100. These scenarios are the Representative Concentration Pathways (RCPs), each describing possible future radiative forcing characteristics, long-term atmospheric CO₂ levels and the trajectory of those levels over time.

Question 52 (Page 63)

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: I think the people of regional New South Wales will disagree with you, Secretary. Moving on, how many staff are based in the Orange office?

REBECCA FOX: I don't have the number in front of me. I am happy to take it on notice.

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: Has there been a reduction or increase on the total number of people working for DPI in the past 12 months and also the Department of Regional NSW?

REBECCA FOX: The figures that I have are the ones that are certified or done at a censor date by the Public Service Commission. I don't have those for DPI, but I can give them to you for the department. So this includes all of the departments, including our affiliated entities.

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: You have only got it as a whole number and not broken down?

REBECCA FOX: Yes. I don't have it broken —

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: Would you be able to take it on notice as broken down per business unit or agency?

REBECCA FOX: Sure. We will do that at the times that they are verified, and the Public Service Commission released last week its State of the NSW Public Sector Report, so that information is also publicly available in that report.

SEAN SLOAN: I can assist the secretary with one part of that question, which is, how many staff do we have in the Orange office? It's approximately 400.

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: Is that less than it was 12 months ago, Mr Sloan?

SEAN SLOAN: I don't believe so, Mr Farraway, but we can —

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: Is it less than was there 18 months ago, or are you able to take that on notice — basically, over the last 18 months?

SEAN SLOAN: We can take that on notice. I don't believe there's been any significant change, but we can take that on notice.

ANSWER

From 2022 to 2023, there has been an increase in the total number of people working in Orange Offices for the Department of Regional NSW, including Primary Industries.

Table: Number of DRNSW staff across Orange office locations

Date	Agency headcount – Department of Regional NSW	Primary Industries headcount
December 2022	526	274
December 2023	541	305

Notes:

- (1) DRNSW headcount includes Department of Primary Industries.
- (2) Primary Industries figures exclude the Rural Assistance Authority.
- (3) Head count figures include ongoing and temporary staff only. Casual, contingent workers and secondment outs are excluded.

Question 53 (Page 63)

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: Mr Sloan, in Orange, the new Ian Armstrong Building that was opened by the former Coalition Government a few years ago, is a leased building by government, isn't it? Will DPI lease two floors or one?

SEAN SLOAN: That's correct. It is a leased building.

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: Is it one or two floors — that DPI?

SEAN SLOAN: It would have to be one or two at least.

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: How long is the lease?

REBECCA FOX: All of those arrangements are done on our behalf by Property NSW.

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: Would you be able to take it on notice?

REBECCA FOX: We could you find that information, yes.

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: With regard to taking that on notice, Ms Fox and Mr Sloan, I would like to know how many floors you lease in the building, to confirm how many staff work out of the Orange office now and compared to the last 12 and 18 months, but also how many staff work out of that building that are under the Department of Regional NSW as well? How many positions are based out of that Orange office, if possible?

ANSWER

Regional NSW occupies three sites in Orange – 105 Prince Street; 1447 Forest Road and 180 Margaret Street.

Property Development NSW (PD NSW) leases one and a half floors at 105 Prince Street, Orange on behalf of Regional NSW.

Questions regarding the term of the lease at 105 Prince Street should be directed to PD NSW.

Staff numbers in Orange are provided in Question 52.

Question 54 (Page 63)

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: ... Moving on, Ms Fox, with regard to the Department of Regional NSW and grants, can you advise how many new grants or grant programs were announced this financial year and administered by the Department of Regional NSW?

REBECCA FOX: I think Mr Wheaton might have that information. The numbers are about the same. We had 77 grants — I am going to say, from memory — and 78 in the last 12 months, but some of those come off. The programs change but the overall number is about the same.

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: Would you be able take the 77 or 78 grants on notice and come back to the Committee and split them up per local government area?

JONATHAN WHEATON: Most of those programs will be across regional New South Wales and some of them will cross all of New South Wales if they're a recovery grant, as an example. We certainly have the information here that we had 76 active grant programs across the whole of the Department of Regional NSW in January 2023, then we were managing 77 active programs in December 2023. As Ms Fox had said, some of those programs were discontinued in that time and then we would've started a suite of new ones.

ANSWER

I am advised that the full list of funds currently and previously available can be found on the NSW Government Grants and Funding webpage, available at nsw.gov.au/grants-and-funding.

Question 55 (Page 64)

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: So how many grant programs were currently underway in January 2022? Do you have that information?

JONATHAN WHEATON: January 2022?

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: Yes.

JONATHAN WHEATON: No, I only have it for January 2023.

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: Mr Wheaton, are you able to advise the Committee on notice how many – obviously you've, in evidence, told us how many grant programs for January 2023 and December 2023, correct?

JONATHAN WHEATON: Correct.

ANSWER

I am advised that the full list of funds currently and previously available can be found on the NSW Government Grants and Funding webpage, available at nsw.gov.au/grants-and-funding.

Question 56 (Page 64)

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: That's the programs but can you break it down? How many grants are part of those programs, by local government area, and can you compare that back for the previous 12 months— the same criteria?

JONATHAN WHEATON: You're talking about active grants that have been issued across those—

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: Grants that were issued and administered by the Department of Regional NSW. So we are talking about Stronger Country Communities Fund. We are talking about Resources for Regions— anything that was administered by the department.

JONATHAN WHEATON: Sure. Just to clarify as well that that 76 that were active in January 2023— that is across our whole department. That covers off the Rural Assistance Authority grants. It would cover off any grants that are managed by LLS and other areas, and then including the growth fund programs that you're talking about. We certainly will be able to collate all of that data.

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: Thank you, Mr Wheaton, I do appreciate that.

ANSWER

I am advised that the full list of funds currently and previously available can be found on the NSW Government Grants and Funding webpage, available at nsw.gov.au/grants-and-funding.

Question 57 (Page 64)

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: Thank you, Mr Wheaton, I do appreciate that. Mr Sloan, with regard to the 28 research stations — you may be able to provide this but it's quite a long answer so if you need to take it on notice, I'm more than happy. Can you supply the Committee with a listing of the staffing levels across the 28 research stations in the current financial year versus the previous financial year? I accept they may change for those two years depending on the programs that they were rolling out.

SEAN SLOAN: I can certainly give you a number of staff that we have currently at those sites. To give you a comparison to last year, I would have to take that on notice. I do have some numbers I can provide you now if that's —

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: I'd like it per research station so maybe it's better if you do take them on notice because there are 28 research stations. I don't know if you want to be spelling them all out — maybe a bit later in the day if we've got time, but happy for you to take it on notice and maybe come back to the Committee.

SEAN SLOAN: I've got some information on them as of now but to compare them to previous years, I'd need to take that on notice.

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: That's fine — more than happy with that.

ANSWER

The below list refers to staff numbers at DPI's 21 research stations (noting DPI also has 7 associated field research sites, where staff may work but are technically not based).

	21/02/2024	30/06/2023
Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute (EMAI)	213	213
Central Coast Primary Industries Institute (Ourimbah)	51	68
Tocal Agricultural College	117	115
Port Stephens Fisheries Institute	113	125
Grafton Primary Industries Institute	46	53
Wollongbar Primary Industries Institute	129	91
Glen Innes Agricultural Research & Advisory Station	11	13
Tamworth Agricultural Institute	112	111
Australian Cotton Research Institute (Narrabri)	30	30
Trangie Research Centre	23	19
Condobolin Agricultural Research & Advisory Station	10	11
Orange Agricultural Institute	111	108
Cowra Agricultural Research & Advisory Station	21	17
Wagga Wagga Agricultural Institute	170	132
Yanco Agricultural Institute	56	56
Narrandera Fisheries Centre	27	27
Griffith Centre for Irrigated Agriculture	3	3
Dareton Primary Industries Institute	12	13

Armidale Livestock Industry Centre (UNE)	27	27
Gaden Trout Hatchery (Jindabyne)	11	11
Dutton Trout Hatchery (Ebor)	6	6
TOTAL	1,299	1,249

**Staff who work at these field sites are technically based at nearby research stations where there is office infrastructure. They travel to and from these sites as required.*

Question 58 (Page 65)

The CHAIR: I will seek some advice from the secretariat before I rule on that point of order. I will continue with my line of questioning, and then I will throw to another crossbencher and I will seek advice before I come back with a ruling on that. Through you, Ms Secretary, I might direct some questions to Mr Sloan or Mr Turnell around this line fishing ban of groper. Mr Sloan, the Minister skirted around my question around whether she would actually provide the advice that she sought or received from the department on this issue. Can you answer some questions regarding this advice to ban line fishing of groper? Who actually within the department provided that advice? Where did it come from?

SEAN SLOAN: Thank you, Chair. The advice that goes to the Minister on matters from the department always comes through the director general and through the head of Fisheries. On this matter, it was myself and Mr Turnell. Obviously, there are other people involved in formulating that advice. The Minister had —

The CHAIR: Who else was involved in formulating that advice? I don't need specific names, but titles or positions or sources of information.

SEAN SLOAN: For example, we have —

The CHAIR: I'm happy for you to take the full details on notice, if that's easier.

SEAN SLOAN: I am happy to answer it at a broad level and see if that is satisfactory, Chair. We've got research staff, and we've got Fisheries management staff. We've got communications staff. Usually, when there's a decision that needs to be communicated but also involves whatever scientific and biological information we have, it involves those staff as well. In this case, it would have involved research staff and management staff as well as communications staff.

ANSWER

I am advised that input into the advice brief was provided by various DPI business units including Fisheries Research, Fisheries and Aquaculture Management, Fisheries Communication and Primary Industries Law.

Question 59 (Page 66)

The CHAIR: So she put the option to you, "Should I ban line fishing of the blue groper?" It wasn't an open-ended "Tell me what are some potential management strategies around managing this issue"; it was "Do you think we should ban line finishing of groper?" Was that the actual request?

SEAN SLOAN: The Minister wanted advice on that option, and advice was provided on a whole series of options. One of the important things to pull out there is there were also calls publicly for blanket closures, which would have involved banning of fishing by all methods in areas for all species. When you look at the number of groper that are being taken, which is 164, estimated, in 2021-22, to take an option where you stop the capture of one species – and really importantly, I think, as the Minister pointed out, to consult with recreational fishers about how then that is taken forward in the future – it's an option that now gives the opportunity for recreational fishers to be able to have input into what the future looks like.

The CHAIR: What other management strategies did you provide the Minister with, other than what she proposed for you to explore? What were the other management strategies that you provided the Minister? I'm happy for you to take it on notice if you can't recall.

SEAN SLOAN: Yes, I don't recall specifically, so I'm happy to take that on notice.

ANSWER

The four options provided to the Minister in a briefing were:

OPTION 1: Retain current line fishing rules for Blue Groper

OPTION 2: Retain current line fishing rules for Blue Groper, undertake a statewide advisory campaign promoting spearfishing rules for Blue Groper and implement a 300m extension to the spearfishing closure at South Cronulla.

OPTION 3: Review Blue Groper management under a broadscale review of all recreational fishing possession and size limits.

OPTION 4: Prohibit line fishing for Blue Groper for 12 months, during which time consultation with the community will occur on future management rules for Blue Groper (**recommended option**).

Question 60 (Page 66)

The CHAIR: Sure. Did that advice that you gave the Minister come with a recommendation as to what was the department's preferred management strategy, or did you leave that in the hands of the Minister to decide?

SEAN SLOAN: I don't recall off the top of my head, Chair, so I'm happy to take that on notice

ANSWER

Refer to Question 59.

Question 61 (Page 67)

The CHAIR: Can I go to the issue of trust-funded projects and where we're at? My understanding is there's supposed to be a meeting in March of the trust fund committee. Do we have a date for the next committee meeting to look at the trust fund projects?

SEAN SLOAN: Chair, by that meeting, do you mean the Recreational Fishing Advisory Council?

The CHAIR: I'm more talking more about the Recreational Fishing Trust committees.

SEAN SLOAN: That's the Recreational Fishing Advisory Council, and there's an expenditure committee as well. I don't have the dates off the top of my head. I'm happy to take that on notice, unless Mr Turnell has that.

PETER TURNELL: No.

SEAN SLOAN: No, so I'll take that on notice. There are multiple meetings each year that cover that.

The CHAIR: Do you have a list of projects, either one-year projects or three-year projects, that are currently up for review or renewal? If you do, on notice, can you provide details as to what they are?

SEAN SLOAN: Certainly, Chair. I don't have them at my fingertips, but I'm happy to take it on notice.

ANSWER

I am advised that the Recreational Fishing Saltwater Trust Expenditure Committee will be meet on 6 March 2024 and the Recreational Fishing Freshwater Trust Expenditure Committee on 7 March 2024.

Question 62 (page 68)

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Thank you. I have a quick question about the marine estate management strategy. Would that be you, Mr Sloan, or Mr Turnell?

REBECCA FOX: Mr Sloan.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Mr Sloan, there's four years left, apparently, in that strategy — 2018 to 2028. Where is that up to? Where has it gone?

SEAN SLOAN: The strategy is obviously a broad set of projects where we work between DPI Fisheries, the environment agency, transport — there's a whole raft.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: There was \$18 million allocated to it a couple of years ago. What has happened to that?

SEAN SLOAN: It's shared across the relevant agencies. I can, on notice, pull up some information to provide you with how many projects are underway. Essentially, there's a strategy that identifies —

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: What I might do, then, is get you to give that to me on notice in terms of that \$18 million. That would be very useful. Certain people are telling me that it seems that the funds have just disappeared and not been —

ANSWER

The NSW Government is investing \$287 million over the life of the Marine Estate Management Strategy (2018-2028) to implement over 100 projects across nine initiatives.

Collectively, the actions will improve water quality, reduce marine litter, improve the health of coastal habitats, reduce threats to marine wildlife, ensure sustainable foreshore development, sustainable fishing, and aquaculture, promote safe and sustainable boating, prepare for climate change, and protect the Aboriginal cultural values of the marine estate.

\$45.7 million for Stage 1 – the 2 years from August 2018 to June 2020

\$28.3 million for Stage 2 (year 3) - July 2020 to June 2021

\$30.7 million for Stage 2 (year 4) - July 2021 to June 2022

More than \$182 million for Stage 3 (the final 6 years) - July 2022 to June 2028 equating to approximately \$30 million per year for the remaining 6 years. Over \$30 million was allocated to the Strategy in 2022–23 across the 9 initiatives.

More information is available at [Marine estate management strategy \(nsw.gov.au\)](https://www.nsw.gov.au/marine-estate-management-strategy)

Note: Figures taken from the 2022/23 MEMS Annual Report (December 2023)

Question 63 (page 69)

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Had you seen information or documentation that the environment Minister was supportive of a staged approach to removing the shark nets?

SEAN SLOAN: I don't recall, sorry, and I would need to take that on notice and see if there was any information that came to DPI on that.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: At this stage your evidence is that councils weren't provided with any indication or any opportunity to opt out of shark nets before the Minister said they would be going back into the waters on 21 August – that wasn't the understanding of councils?

SEAN SLOAN: Not that I recall, Ms Faehrmann, but I am happy for you to provide some information to me that I can examine and provide a more detailed response to you, if that is helpful.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Thank you.

ANSWER

In July 2023, the Minister for the Environment wrote to me seeking support for a proposal that the agencies work together and with local councils on a staged approach to remove the shark nets.

The Minister for the Environment was advised of the disparity between and the changing sentiments of councils with nets in response to DPI surveys. The Minister for the Environment was also advised that the DPI would continue its community education and consultation throughout 2023/24.

The survey sought Council preferences on which shark mitigation measures they supported in their LGA, with the measures being Drones, Nets, SMART drumlines, Tagged Shark Listening Stations.

The survey did not offer opt-in and opt-out pathways.

The information package sent to the councils, which included the survey also made it clear that no decision had been made on the future deployment of shark nets. Council's survey responses were provided to the NSW Government to inform the ongoing development of the Shark Management Program.

Question 64 (page 73)

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: To be really clear, Secretary, have you also seen the map that states that now the Great Koala National Park will extend north of Coffs Harbour?

REBECCA FOX: I have only seen one map, which was part of a steering committee meeting. I don't recall the detail, but we could certainly provide on notice the map that was presented to the steering committee. I'm pretty sure Mr McPherson and I attended that meeting together, so we would've seen the same map at that point in time.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: I have to get the clarity on this. Were you both at the same meeting where you saw this map? But your recollection is not as detailed, Ms Fox? And that is not meant to be offensive in any way whatsoever.

REBECCA FOX: I can picture it. I can picture the map in my mind. I just don't know where Coffs Harbour was on that map, but we could certainly provide on notice the map that was presented to us. That was the first map that I'd seen as part of that whole-of-government steering committee. Mr McPherson is likely to have been involved earlier.

DAVID McPHERSON: That's correct.

REBECCA FOX: But I think his evidence is we've only seen one map.

DAVID McPHERSON: Correct.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Thank you very much, Mr McPherson, too, and I look forward to receiving that map that was shown, on notice, so that we can establish what's going on here, because it sounds like it's a little bit different.

ANSWER

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

Question 65 (page 74)

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: That's really good news. What is the current trade deficit in forest and wood products for Australia?

DAVID McPHERSON: I'd have to take that on notice. I can come back to you.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Can you take that on notice?

DAVID McPHERSON: Sure.

ANSWER

For 2022-23, for forest and wood products:

- Total imports to Australia valued at \$6,866 million
- Total exports from Australia valued at \$2,763 million
- Total trade deficit of \$4,103 million

Question 66 (Page 74)

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: You might want to take this one too. How much have imports of hardwood projects from Brazil to Australia increased by in the last few months?

DAVID McPHERSON: Yes, I'll definitely have to take that on notice.

ANSWER

I am advised that Forestry and wood product import from Brazil totalled \$160.1 million in 2022-23 and accounted for 2.3% of the total value of forestry products imported to Australia in 2022-23. Imports of pulp represented 82% of the total value of the imports from Brazil in 2022-23.

Imports of sawn hardwood from Brazil totalled \$6.94 million in 2022-23, an increase from \$1.45 million in 2021-22 and represented 8.9% of the total value of sawn hardwood imports to Australia in 2022-23.

(Reference Global Trade Atlas (2024) <https://cdn.ihs.com/www/pdf/MAT-GTA-SellSheet-Rebrand-v1.pdf>)

I can assure the Hon. Member that hard wood production in Brazil would not have any impact on orangutans as the species is only found in Southeast Asia.

Question 67 (Page 75)

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: We all care. Anyway, I'm not engaging with you. We actually do quite like each other sometimes. What is the driver behind the rapid increase in imported hardwood products from Brazil, Mr McPherson or Mr Dickson?

DAVID McPHERSON: I couldn't say offhand what that driver is.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: You couldn't?

DAVID McPHERSON: No.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Do you want to give it a whirl?

DAVID McPHERSON: It could be related to currency rates — all sorts of factors could come into why people import more.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Do you think it could be related and attributed to the end of native forestry in Victoria, and it's a supply and demand issue?

DAVID McPHERSON: I couldn't say, as I said.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Mr Dickson? This is your specialty area, is it not?

ROSS DICKSON: No, it's not.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Right.

ROSS DICKSON: I couldn't answer that question.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Could you maybe both take that question on notice for me?

DAVID McPHERSON: Yes, absolutely.

ANSWER

I am advised there could be a range of reasons or drivers impacting fluctuations in imports including the exchange rate, international construction trends, supply chain issues, domestic policy decisions or weather events.

Question 68 (Page 76)

The CHAIR: Thank you. I go to the koala summit announced by the environment Minister. Has anyone from your organisation or the department been invited to attend that koala summit?

ROSS DICKSON: Mr Chair, we deal with the operational matters of the corporation, and the policy-related matters are dealt through the department.

The CHAIR: Mr McPherson, has anyone been invited?

DAVID McPHERSON: I'd have to take that on notice. I know that there is a regular annual koala summit, often held in Port Macquarie.

The CHAIR: Just for clarity, so you can get the right information, this is the one set down for Taronga Zoo on 22 March, and it talks about bringing together key knowledge holders from across New South Wales. I'm just wondering whether perhaps maybe Dr Brad Law or someone else that has been doing work within your department in this space has been invited to be one of those key knowledge holders?

DAVID McPHERSON: We will come back to you by the end of today, if we can.

ANSWER

I refer you to an answer provided by the Department on the matter on page 78 of transcript.

Question 69 (Page 77)

The CHAIR: Excellent. Mr Sloan, can I get an update on where we are at with the Recreational Fishing Trust audit? At the last estimates I pressed the Minister and she came back with that she will still have more to say on the matter. Have we actually appointed somebody, or put it out to tender to actually appoint someone to do that audit?

SEAN SLOAN: Yes, Chair. O'Connor Marsden, an independent audit firm, was appointed to do the audit and my understanding is that they have completed an audit. Whether they have finalised their report and provided it yet, I'm not 100 per cent sure, but it is certainly very close.

The CHAIR: There's an audit and there's an audit. What type of audit was it? Was it an audit in the forensic sense, was it a cursory glance or was it like what the Auditor-General does traditionally with your trust fund reports? What were the parameters and terms around the audit?

SEAN SLOAN: It was a comprehensive audit and there were terms of reference that were drafted and those terms of reference as draft were sent out to a group of recreational fishing group stakeholders to provide comments on, and the Minister sought that feedback and then finalised the terms of reference.

The CHAIR: On notice, are you able to provide a copy of the final terms of reference as they were approved by the Minister?

SEAN SLOAN: I'm happy to do that.

ANSWER

Terms of Reference are below.

Objectives and Scope

The objective of the audit is to assess the effectiveness of controls and governance processes associated with the management of the RFT.

To achieve this objective the audit will include the following scope areas and control objectives.

Scope Area	Ref	Control Objective
1. Accountability	1.1	Are there appropriate documentation, processes, and structures to assess funding applications, and are these applied appropriately, including as defined in the Recreational Fishing Trust guidelines. These include funding applications, meeting process and record keeping, committee structure and terms of reference and the assessment process.
	1.2	Does consultation with the Recreational Fishing NSW Advisory Council on Recreational Fishing Trust expenditure priorities occur, as prescribed by the Act.
	1.3	Are funds disbursed from the Trust Funds done so under authorisation of the Minister, as prescribed by the Act.
	1.4	Are there appropriate controls and secure payment and reconciliation systems (including receipting, banking, and debt management) in place to ensure that all amounts that should be paid into the Trust are paid accordingly.
2. Transparency	2.1	Are the projects which were approved in 2022/23 consistent with what can be approved and funded under the Act.
	2.2	Does RTF expenditure align with the priorities as per established investment plans and recreational fisher survey feedback of recreational fishers across NSW.
	2.3	Are there appropriate (as per NSW Government Boards and Committees Guidelines) mechanisms in place to manage any conflicts of interest involving assessment of funding

Scope Area	Ref	Control Objective
	2.4	<p>applications, development of funding recommendations and associated approvals.</p> <p>Are there appropriate processes in place to effectively manage payment of funds to grant applicants, including being contingent upon meeting funding deed obligations and/or completion of project milestones.</p>
3.Fairness	3.1	<p>Are there adequate and appropriate mechanisms to advise potential applicants about opportunities to apply for funding to promote broad engagement in the Recreational Fishing Trust program.</p>
	3.2	<p>Consider whether the NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) calculation of the operational overhead costing rate and the salary on-costs rate for DPI Recreational Fishing Trust project applications are reasonable or require further review, and are appropriately administered.</p>
	3.3	<p>Consider whether there are consistent assessment procedures applied against all funding applications by the Trust Expenditure Committees.</p>
4. Alignment with Government Guidelines	4.1	<p>Are the current RFT expenditure committees established in line with the <i>DRNSW policy – Fisheries advisory groups: Establishments and Governance (TI-O-146)</i> and are the RFT expenditure committees and the Recreational Fishing NSW Advisory Council established in line with the <i>NSW Government Boards and Committees Guidelines</i> and the <i>Public Service Commissioner’s Appointment Standards for Boards and Committees in the NSW Public Sector</i>, including with regard to (but not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the principle of diversity • membership tenure • skills, experience and knowledge of members • probity.

Note:

1. The audit will cover the period from 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023
2. Audit testing may involve the use of data analytics where appropriate.

3. While the audit scope will be the primary area of audit focus, the scope may be broadened, after discussion with management, to include areas of noted concern that may lie outside of the immediate audit area.

Methodology

The audit approach includes:

- holding discussions with management and staff to understand systems, processes, and general compliance and awareness of controls as per the above scope.
- where required, seek evidence of implementation of processes and procedures via walkthroughs.
- developing detailed audit procedures including sample testing and/or data analytics (if appropriate) to test key controls;
- identifying and validating potential audit findings and preparing recommendations for management consideration;
- preparing draft audit report, obtaining management responses (including ownership and target date, if relevant) and producing a final audit report for Management and the Minister.

Question 70 (Page 77)

The CHAIR: Thank you. I might just ask some clarifying questions based on answers on notice. I might direct to you, Mr Orr, questions around aerial culling, the pig coordinator and all the funding around that space. I asked last time, on the \$13 million, for a breakdown of expenditure and you kindly provided a table that broke down control and monitoring, extension activities and labour to deliver the program. I want to get some more detail. You talked about how aerial shooting is part of the control and monitoring piece, which is forecast to take up around \$8.4 million of that \$13 million. How much of that 8.4 is put aside for aerial culling or earmarked for aerial culling, as opposed to the other control methods?

STEVE ORR: I'll probably take that on notice unless Mr Kelly can possibly answer that question, Mr Banasiak. To date we've spent around 3.1 in total and I think, of the 46 aerial programs which have been planned, we have conducted 16. In terms of your specific question about the eight and is that all to go to aerial, my understanding is that is the case, unless you have a different view, Mr Kelly?

ROB KELLY: We'll take it on notice and get a breakdown.

ANSWER

I am advised that forecast expenditure on aerial programs is \$6.08 million.

Question 71 (Page 77)

The CHAIR: Are you able to provide on notice the makes and models of the helicopters that are being used as part of those aerial culls?

STEVE ORR: Yes, we can, Mr Banasiak. There is a standard which we need to adhere to for safety reasons, but we can provide that on notice.

ANSWER

I am advised that the helicopters are typically AS350 Squirrel B2 or B3, or Bell 206 Jet Ranger and Bell 206L Longranger. They must be a turbine aircraft.

Question 72 (Page 77)

The CHAIR: Do you have an hourly operational rate for the flight time?

STEVE ORR: I'll take that on notice.

The CHAIR: Are these operations being undertaken during the day, night or both?

STEVE ORR: I'll take that on notice – sorry, day.

The CHAIR: Are the helicopters fitted with GPS tracking and video recorders?

STEVE ORR: Certainly GPS. I'm not sure about video.

ANSWER

I am advised that the hourly operation rates are: Jet Ranger - \$1900-\$2000/hr and Squirrel - \$2100-\$3000/hr.

All helicopters are fitted with TracPlus which allows for tracking of the location, altitude and speed of the aircraft throughout the entire flight. Recording of video during shooting operations is prohibited.

Question 73 (Page 77)

The CHAIR: Specifically for the taking of pigs, can you provide particulars about the firearm and ammunition being used on these pigs?

STEVE ORR: Yes. We've certainly got a standard in terms of the firearms which are used.

The CHAIR: I think it's FN SCARS, yes.

STEVE ORR: Yes, SCARS and Benellis, but we can provide that on notice.

ANSWER

FN SCAR-H 17 rifles in 7.62x51 and Benelli M4 shotgun. Ammunition for the 7.62 is 130 or 135 grain Hollow point. Shot size for pigs is dependent on the size of the target and is between BB for very small animals and SG for larger animals.

Question 74 (Page 78)

The CHAIR: What is the operational altitude that the pilots fly at while undertaking the shooting operations?

STEVE ORR: That is quite a specific question. I will take it on notice.

ANSWER

I am advised that firearms cannot be discharged over 500 ft above ground level.

The pilot is responsible for making the decision with most shooting done between 20m and 50 ms above ground level. Pilot decision is influenced by geographical terrain, weather and other environmental conditions.

Question 75 (Page 78)

The CHAIR: My concern is who is responsible for notifying landholders, who is responsible for cleaning up – all that sort of stuff.

STEVE ORR: Yes, and just for clarity on the process, the activity is conducted with the consent of the landholder and the landholder actually determines the animals which are targeted. That is done, obviously, prior to the operation. Specifically to your question, which, as I understand it, is what happens if an animal is injured and goes onto a neighbouring property, Mr Kelly, have you got any comment on that or do you want to take it on notice?

ROB KELLY: We'll take that on notice.

ANSWER

Animal welfare takes priority, if the animal is injured it is dispatched as quickly as possible and the landholder is notified as soon as possible.

FAAST shooters typically do not engage animals close to property boundaries. Shooting only occurs on consenting holdings.

An operational buffer typically applies in Shoot Plans to ensure culling occurs away from boundaries. In an unlikely event of a wounded animal crossing a property boundary, the Officer in Charge would liaise with the neighbouring landholder to facilitate euthanasia.

Question 76 (Page 78)

The CHAIR: Are you aware that there is a school of thought that some of that fear of their impact on some of these native species is unfounded, given that the trout and some of these species, particularly the galaxias species, have coexisted for decades without any noticeable impact? Can you point to any studies that would provide clarity as to what this perceived threat and impact is? Obviously, we know there's redfin and carp. We know they're quite impactful on these species. But there's a school of thought out there that trout aren't as detrimental, given that they've coexisted. Can you, on notice, point to any studies?

SEAN SLOAN: I'm happy to pull out any reports that we can to enlighten the Committee on that subject.

ANSWER

Extensive research has been undertaken over many years on a range of threats affecting galaxias species in Australia and overseas, including interactions with introduced and invasive fish species.

The Federal Government's Conservation Advice for Galaxias terenusus - ([Conservation advice Galaxias terenusus \(roundsnout galaxias\) \(environment.gov.au\)](#)) - was published in 2023 and provides links to a range of studies examining interactions between salmonid species and native fish.

Question 77 (Page 78)

The Hon. EMMA HURST: I wanted to continue my conversation with Dr Tracey regarding exhibited animals. As I said, one of the questions on notice from the previous budget estimates said that there'd been 11 facilities audited in the 12 months prior to that estimates hearing. Do you know if those audits were announced or unannounced?

JOHN TRACEY: I'm not aware. Kim, can you —

KIM FILMER: Those audits are mostly announced.

The Hon. EMMA HURST: Can I get you to take it on notice to see if they were all announced?

KIM FILMER: Yes, I can take that on notice.

ANSWER

I am advised that all audits were announced.

Question78 (Page 79)

The Hon. EMMA HURST: I've got some questions that I suspect might need to be taken on notice because they're quite specific. In the same 12-month period of the 11 audits, how many complaints were received in that period? How many of those were audited? How many audits took place that had no complaint prior and were just part of a general auditing process? Can you take those on notice? If there's information you've got, I'm happy to —

JOHN TRACEY: Yes, we can take that on notice.

KIM FILMER: Just to clarify the period of time, are you talking about within the last financial year or since the end of the last financial year?

The Hon. EMMA HURST: No, in the questions on notice that I received from the last estimates hearing, I was advised that in the last 12 months there had been 11 audits — so whatever that period was from those questions on notice from the October estimates hearings, and noting that there were 11 audits in that time period.

KIM FILMER: I've got the data here for 2022-23 and then for the 2023-24 period, if you like, so I can give those to you. For 2022-23, as I said earlier, the audits were six, the inspections were 73 and the complaints were 12.

ANSWER

I am advised that between 13 December 2022 and 13 December 2023:

- DPI received 29 complaints;
- DPI conducted 1 audit and 8 inspections in relation to these complaints. In some cases, more than one complaint was investigated during the same inspection at a facility while other complaints were referred to the appropriate regulator or were administrative issues that were investigated but didn't require a field-based inspection.
- DPI conducted all 11 audits as part of general auditing processes.

Question 79 (Page 79)

The Hon. EMMA HURST: With that in mind, does this mean that no audits occurred due to a general auditing process – it only occurred when there was a complaint made?

JOHN TRACEY: I think we'd have to take that on notice.

KIM FILMER: I think we'd better take that on notice. I think we might get ourselves confused otherwise.

ANSWER

I am advised that DPI conducted all 11 audits as part of general auditing process between 13/12/22 - 13/12/23.

Question 80 (Page 80)

The Hon. EMMA HURST: Could I get from you the maximum number of years that could potentially go by without any audit at any facility that's a low-risk facility? I'm happy for you to take that on notice.

JOHN TRACEY: I can take that on notice for you, yes.

ANSWER

I am advised that there is no maximum number of years between audits. This is because a facility may be subject to targeted audits or follow-ups at any time.

Question 81 (Page 80)

The Hon. EMMA HURST: So that's all checked. At the last estimates I asked about wildlife trafficking and how the DPI ensures exhibited animal facilities are not taking animals illegally from the wild. The answer to the question on notice stated that there are systems in place for authority holders to report on animal holdings to the department and that verification of reported data can be undertaken during the routine inspection schedule. But if there are some that aren't obviously being inspected yearly and that are going for much longer periods without inspections, how do we verify that data? It sounds like it could be quite easy for somebody to potentially have illegally caught animals, and the DPI might not be aware of that for a period of time.

JOHN TRACEY: There are good systems in place there, but I might ask if Dr Filmer can add anything extra.

KIM FILMER: A little bit. The exhibited animal authority holders must maintain animal records over the course of the licensing period, so the department does have data on hand. Getting back to the risk-based auditing system, you can use that and the intelligence around that in terms of, if there could be a higher risk, then that's something that you would want to audit more frequently. So there are processes in place, and if the numbers changed then that might be an indication that something's going on and that could trigger an audit.

The Hon. EMMA HURST: But that potentially could be many years. If it was a facility that potentially isn't being inspected every year, it could be a long time before anything could be checked. I understand that you say that there are records kept, but, obviously, to back up that those records are accurate would require an inspection.

KIM FILMER: Not necessarily, because the facilities need to keep the department informed of their numbers, so the records maintain the traceability of the numbers, and it is through births, deaths and transfers.

The Hon. EMMA HURST: There would only be a pick-up that that was incorrect if somebody went and inspected the records compared to the animals that are at the facility. Is relying on somebody to tell the truth, who is potentially – if they're illegally catching wild animals, I think that you could be safe to assume that they are probably not going to be completely honest in their reporting numbers.

KIM FILMER: That certainly is a possibility. If you want more detail on that, we can provide that on notice.

ANSWER

I am advised that all exhibited animal authority holders are required to maintain animal records of all animal-related transactions. This encompasses documentation of births, deaths, escapes, acquisitions, and disposals of animals.

As a minimum, animal numbers undergo annual administrative review during the renewal process. Any discrepancies or irregularities identified are subject to investigation and may be escalated to an inspector for further investigation.

Transactions involving prescribed species are subject to an approval process, which involves verifying the details of both the seller and the receiver. DPI works closely with

other relevant regulatory bodies such as the National Parks Wildlife Services or interstate jurisdictional agencies to ensure acquisitions and disposals are lawful.

Question 82 (Page 80)

The Hon. EMMA HURST: Thank you. On one of the questions on notice, you said that two facilities were given an E rating in the last 12 months. On notice, can you please advise which two facilities these were and also the reasons why they were given an E rating, unless you've got that to hand?

KIM FILMER: Is that from the last budget estimates session?

The Hon. EMMA HURST: Yes.

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

ANSWER

I am advised that there was one facility, but it had two failed audits. That facility was operated by Native Animals Education Sanctuary Ltd, which recorded unacceptable audit outcomes on 8/9/23 and 5/12/23.

8/9/2023 - Critical defects issued:

- Records and procedures
- Husbandry
- Nutrition, hygiene and health
- Personnel and training

5/12/2023 - Critical defect issued:

- Records and procedures

This facility has been audited since these results and has returned acceptable outcomes. Recent acceptable audit was conducted on 28/2/24.

Question 83 (Page 80)

The Hon. EMMA HURST: In the last estimates hearing I also asked about the new DPI's requirement around exhibiting animal facilities having an approved breeding plan, and I was told that, as part of the question on notice, a justifiable purpose for breeding an animal under the licence condition would include things like a species for conservation purposes. Central Coast Zoo has been breeding animals like meerkats, black swans and brushtail possums, none of which are threatened or endangered. I wonder why that breeding has been allowed to occur and what justifiable purposes were provided that satisfied the department.

KIM FILMER: We don't have that detail. We'll need to take that on notice.

ANSWER

I am advised that NSW exhibited animal authority holders have always had the ability to breed exhibited animals as part of a carefully managed program. The new condition simply clarifies that the exhibitor is to document the breeding plan.

Documented breeding plans enable authority holders to demonstrate compliance with clause 59 of the General Standards for Exhibiting Animals in NSW and enable these plans to be reviewed when required. There are a range of reasons that an exhibitor might breed animals, and they are not limited to conservation purposes.

I am advised that DPI was satisfied that the exhibitor's breeding plan justified breeding these species to meet the needs of zoological institutions in the region and unwanted breeding would be managed through segregation or permanent procedure.

DPI may impose additional conditions on an authority prohibiting breeding of individual species due to risks.

Question 84 (Page 81)

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: My question is, how often is DPI approached by either the IPC, planning department or Local Government to ask for your input on developments and the rating of agricultural land or the significance or output of agricultural areas where these large-scale industrial developments are proposed?

SEAN SLOAN: I would have to take it on notice to see how often we are engaged on those issues. I don't have that sort of information to hand, so I can take that on notice and provide that information. The area of land-use conflict, particularly around renewable energy, is one of the areas that has been flagged for future work by the Agriculture Commissioner, so I expect that issue will get taken up at some level through that role when it's established.

ANSWER

I am advised that in relation to requests for advice on large scale renewables from Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, councils or the Independent Planning Commission, the number over the last four calendar years by region, are:

Planning Region	2021	2022	2023	2024 (YTD)
Central West Orana	17	36	25	8
Far West	0	2	3	0
Hunter	7	9	12	3
Illawarra Shoalhaven	0	1	1	0
Riverina Murray	9	16	21	3
New England North West	1	6	21	4
North Coast	3	5	6	0
South East Tablelands	5	11	15	2
Sydney	1	0	1	0
State wide policy	2	2	4	0
Total	45	88	109	20

Question 85 (Page 81)

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: Can I specifically raise a recent example, which is a solar development at Glanmire, on the outskirts of Bathurst, where — in the IPC's finding, they had approached DPI and asked for their opinion or input to the challenge, that where that development was placed was in some of the best cropping area within that local government area. On notice, would you be able to provide any further information just around that inquiry and the reasoning behind DPI's position that it took when approached?

REBECCA FOX: Can I just jump in, Mr Farraway. Ms Lorimer-Ward's come all the way from Orange today. I suspect she may know the answer — maybe not to that one but certainly the way DPI's involved in the renewable energy zones.

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: Happy if Ms Lorimer-Ward has got something. That's good.

KATE LORIMER-WARD: I can't answer that one specifically, but we do get invited to comment on all developments, and things that we take into consideration as to whether the development is proposed on by physically strategic agricultural land. And, if that's the case, then we always try and work with the developer to minimise the impact on agriculture: Can they modify the development? Can they look at coexistence? We also work with them about biosecurity plans for those sites so that, during the construction, we don't have issues around weeds, pests.

ANSWER

I am advised:

The IPC did not contact DPI seeking advice on the Glanmire Solar Farm.

Question 86 (Page 81)

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: Ms Lorimer-Ward, has there been an uplift in inquiries or approaches to DPI due to just the significant increase of developments across the State?

KATE LORIMER-WARD: Yes, there has been. There's been a significant uplift, and we are involved in providing comment on not only developments that are inside the five regional renewable energy zones but also developments that occur outside of those.

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: On notice, if possible, would you be able to come back to the Committee and advise how many approaches or how many inquiries the department's had in the '23 and '24 calendar years?

KATE LORIMER-WARD: We can.

ANSWER

Refer to Question 84.

Question 87 (Page 82)

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: But the Government, under the department you're in, Mr Wheaton, has flipped the rollout of this, so one could only assume that it is more cost effective to deliver a stadium.

JONATHAN WHEATON: I don't understand what you're saying about "flipped the rollout".

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: It's very, very clear: "Premier reveals shock switch for Orange's \$60 million sports precinct. In a statement released on Friday morning, the Premier's office revealed the rectangular sporting stadium will be built before the athletics track on the Huntley Road side of the precinct. As late as November 2023, the time line for the project still included the athletics track being built before the main stadium, which is on the Forest Road side of the Bloomfield site." I live in this region. I announced a lot of this. I know this project well. The clear intent from council and the Department of Regional NSW has always been that the athletics infrastructure and outfields would be built first and that the stadium would be built in the third and final stage.

JONATHAN WHEATON: We would have to take on notice the exact project plan that has been in place to deliver the full complex but, like I said, we have undertaken close work with council as part of the project control group to ensure that the full complex and the scope that has been agreed to be delivered by council can be delivered within the budget. The sequencing of how that has rolled out — we know that the tender should have been issued by council for those works around the multipurpose playing fields in the middle and that council are still finalising the design work for the final components.

ANSWER

The staging and rollout of this project was reviewed as part of the Department of Regional NSW Health Check and has been agreed by the Department and Orange City Council.

The delivery and sequencing is underpinned by an updated Project Management Plan to ensure the full scope can be delivered by council as originally proposed.

Question 88 (Page 84)

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: I just want to go back to Ms Lorimer-Ward, if possible. With regard to the previous topic we were talking about, and taking it on notice, I think I asked for two calendar years. I actually need four calendar years.

KATE LORIMER-WARD: In terms of inquiries?

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: Yes, with the renewable projects regarding agricultural land and whether it's IPC or local government — just the total number of approaches, and maybe based on LGA or area, that would be really —

KATE LORIMER-WARD: Yes. We'll see what we can provide. I do have total numbers but they're not restricted to renewable energy for last financial year.

ANSWER

Refer to Question 84.

Question 89 (Page 84)

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: Okay. Moving on while I still have a little bit of time. Mr Sloan, with regard to the Federal Government's biosecurity levy, have stakeholder groups like NSW Farmers, the farmers' federation, the work DPI do — Ms Lorimer-Ward may know about this as well, but my understanding is there's a lot of misunderstanding out there about this levy and that on 1 July it's coming into effect. Has DPI received feedback from farming groups and farmers in general about that levy and how it will be managed with the Commonwealth?

SEAN SLOAN: Having stepped into the role now just for a short number of weeks, I have actually had a couple of meetings with NSW Farmers' Association, and I know that it is one of those issues that is of concern to farmers. I haven't got anything formal more than that to say about it at this point, Mr Farraway. I don't know if Ms Lorimer-Ward has any detail on that.

KATE LORIMER-WARD: I've only seen public commentary; I haven't been asked to comment from a policy perspective.

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: Is it fair to say that DPI have not been asked for a policy position on that levy — to support or not support that — in your dialogue with counterparts, with the Commonwealth?

SEAN SLOAN: Not to my knowledge, Mr Farraway.

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: Would you be happy to take it on notice, obviously understanding that you're in an acting role and only for a short period of time.

JOHN TRACEY: I might just add to that. There has been a conversation at the National Biosecurity Committee on the levy. It was broad in terms of policy and more of an update from the Commonwealth about where they were at.

ANSWER

I am advised NSW, as with all jurisdictions, is a member of the National Biosecurity Committee.

The Biosecurity Protection Levy is an initiative of the Commonwealth Government; however all jurisdictions had the opportunity to provide feedback via the NBC forum.

Question 90 (Page 86)

The CHAIR: I'm just doing a bit of mop-up here. Mr Orr, last time in estimates I asked a question around the cat D issue and the process in terms of the Firearms Registry, requesting information of you about whether someone is part of an authorised campaign or not. You came back and said that LLS has received 10 requests since 27 September 2023 from the Firearms Registry to confirm whether a category D applicant is part of an authorised campaign. I'm not seeking specifics of names of people that you didn't acknowledge were or were not but, out of that 10, how many did you confirm were part of an authorised campaign? Are you able to provide that?

STEVE ORR: I think the total is now 14, and I think the number is seven.

The CHAIR: So there was 14?

STEVE ORR: I think the total is now 14, and I think the number is seven.

The CHAIR: And you confirmed that there was seven?

STEVE ORR: Correct.

The CHAIR: Did you want to take that on notice to clarify?

STEVE ORR: I'll confirm, but that's my understanding.

ANSWER

I am advised that there has been a total of 14 individual requests for evidence of participation in an Authorised Campaign from the NSW firearms registry.

Of the 14 requests seven have been assessed as participating in an authorised campaign.

Question 91 (Page 87)

The CHAIR: There's been raised concerns around how that intersects with CASA requirements at flying at a certain height over someone's property you don't have actually permission to fly over at that height because you're not actually conducting an operation on that property.

STEVE ORR: I'll confirm on notice, Mr Banasiak, but that's information I understand —

ANSWER

I am advised that permission is not required to fly over a person's property above 500ft. LLS does not fly at an operational level over nonconsenting properties.

Question 92 (Page 87)

The CHAIR: Okay, thank you. Mr Sloan, while we've got you, just another question that has come to my knowledge. On your Facebook page four hours ago, there was a post regarding fishing on ferry wharfs and it lists out a set of rules. There is one rule that's causing some concern for fishermen: A maximum of six people can fish at any wharf at any one time. Is that a rule insisted upon by Fisheries or is that a rule insisted upon by Transport for NSW and Maritime? It's a rule that I personally haven't heard of before and a lot of fishermen are feeling perplexed by that rule.

SEAN SLOAN: I might see if Mr Turnell can shed any light on that one for us but what I can say is we obviously don't own the wharfs. They're owned by Transport. We do have issues from time to time about fishers' activities and interactions with ferries and other users. There's an education program and a compliance program that we have in place to make sure that we can maintain access to fishers on those wharfs.

The CHAIR: Can you take on notice whether this is a Fisheries rule or — Mr Turnell, you're shaking your head. Can I take it, for Hansard, that it is not a Fisheries rule? Is it a Transport requirement?

PETER TURNELL: It's the first I've heard of it so I doubt it's one of ours.

ANSWER

This question should be directed to the Minister for Transport.

Question 93 (Page 87)

The CHAIR: How do you think this sits with the most recent \$78 million Kamay ferry wharf, which is now being touted as this great fishery, or access for fishermen, and potentially only six people can use it? Does that sound like an efficient expenditure of money for fishing access?

SEAN SLOAN: Let us take it on notice, Chair, and we'll provide you with some clarity on that one.

ANSWER

The NSW Government is building ferry wharves at La Perouse and Kurnell, which will create a water connection between La Perouse and Kurnell.

The project is being coordinated by Transport for NSW. Part of the community benefits will include access for recreational fishing from the wharves.

Question 94 (Page 87)

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: Ms Higginson is allowing me to ask one question as a follow-up. It's to Ms Lorimer-Ward. Just to confirm, regarding the NSW Wine MOU and the meeting that the department was included in, there are two dates in the Minister's disclosure, one being 27 June and the other 26 April. Did the department attend both those meetings with the industry group?

KATE LORIMER-WARD: I'll have to take it on notice but we do tend to attend most meetings with the industry groups.

ANSWER

In relation to:

26 April – the NSW DPI Deputy Director General – Agriculture, attended this stakeholder event which included a variety of primary industries representatives; it was not specifically about the wine MOU.

27 June – This meeting was not attended by the NSW DPI Deputy Director General – Agriculture, nor her direct reports.

Question 95 (Page 87)

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Mr Dickson, I was made aware in the break earlier that another altercation has happened between a member of the community and Forestry Corporation staff members. It relates to an area near Clouds Creek State Forest where the Forestry Corporation allegedly was today placing a gate on private property and seeking to exclude a person from their own private property. An altercation has taken place and it appears that another assault may have taken place. Does this concern you?

ROSS DICKSON: Firstly, this is the first I've been advised of the altercation and, as an acting CEO in budget estimates, it is of extreme concern. My concern is for the wellbeing and the safety of all parties involved and I'll be seeking an early briefing on this matter the moment I get out of this room. I assume the New South Wales police have been involved?

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: They have.

ROSS DICKSON: It will be a police matter, but I'm deeply concerned, and I have to put on record that we don't condone altercations either within the workplace or outside the workplace.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Mr Dickson, I just put to you now that I saw a short piece of video footage and it is really, really concerning. Will you take on notice and report back to this Committee what steps you take, what you say in explanation of conduct of employees of the State on somebody's private property and how this could happen?

ROSS DICKSON: I certainly will. I have to say, Ms Higginson, I am sitting here feeling deeply concerned and will be seeking an urgent briefing on what has supposedly happened. I do have some comfort that the New South Wales police are involved.

ANSWER

I am advised that staff immediately reported the altercation to the police. Separately, Forestry Corporation is looking into the incident and what occurred.

At this stage Police have charged a Forestry Corporation staff member with assault. Forestry Corporation will cooperate with all police investigations into this incident.

Question 96 (Page 88)

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Can I ask some questions that are a bit more specific and may need to be taken on notice. Since August 2019, how many greater glider den trees have been identified by Forestry Corporation during general operations and specifically during broad area habitat surveys? In particular, how many hectares of high-density greater glider habitat have been logged during that time? How many hectares of low-density greater glider habitat have been logged in that time? Is that something you would take on notice?

ROSS DICKSON: Yes.

ANSWER

Refer to Supplementary Question 91.

Question 97 (Page 88)

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: And then, again, since 1 January 2019, in broad area habitat searches, how many of the following have been identified and in which State forests: southern greater glider den trees, yellowbellied glider den trees, squirrel glider dens, spotted-tail quoll dens, brush-tailed phascogales dens, glossy black cockatoo nests, barking owl nests, masked owl nests and sooty owl nests. Are they all things you would take on notice?

ROSS DICKSON: I would have to take it on notice. I can tell you sheep breeds, but I can't tell you those breeds.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Sure. How many hectares of public forest have been subject to broad area habitat searches since the CIFOA came into effect? In particular, I've got a couple of forests. For Myrtle State Forest in the north, how many hectares in that forest have been subject to broad area habitat searches? How many koala records, including koala scats, have been made, and what management action is required in response to those records? How many records were made of other threatened species? How many of each species? How many dens or nests for each of the threatened species?

ANSWER

Refer to Supplementary Questions 92 - 94.

Question 98 (Page 89)

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I don't know who this is directed to. What steps, if any, have been taken in relation to community radio following – Ms Fox, I think it's under your remit. What steps has the Government taken in this budget period to address the recommendation in the 2022 flood inquiry response, specifically about more investment into community radio?

REBECCA FOX: I would have to take that on notice. I'm not sure that's our responsibility, but I'll come back to you.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I think it is.

REBECCA FOX: I'm assuming it sits with the Reconstruction Authority, but I'll come back to you and give you an answer.

ANSWER

I refer you to an answer provided by the Department on the matter on page 89 of Transcript.

Question 99 (Page 90)

The Hon. EMMA HURST: Dr Tracey, if we could continue. We were talking about the justifiable purposes around breeding and that some of the justifiable purposes were around conservation. Do you anticipate that that type of breeding that we were talking about, of non-threatened or endangered species, might be required to cease under the DPI's new requirements on having an approved breeding plan, which justifies the breeding of these animals?

KIM FILMER: I think we better take it on notice.

JOHN TRACEY: We'll take it on notice.

ANSWER

No.

I am advised that the 'Reason for breeding' required in the Breeding Plan is a business decision for the authority holder in line with their business plan. The authority holder must ensure they are complying with spatial requirements as per the relevant standards. DPI will only impose specific limitation on breeding where there are risks identified.

Question 100 (Page 90)

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Has the department undertaken any work in relation to spray drift in the Narromine-Trangie area?

REBECCA FOX: I think we might take that on notice, given it's the end of the day.

ANSWER

Refer to Supplementary Question 101.

Question 101 (Page 91)

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: If so, has there been any work beyond education campaigns? Has the department been in contact with the EPA in relation to spray drift? Has the department approached any organic agriculturalist about the impact that the spray drift may be having on their products? Are you happy to take that on notice?

KATE LORIMER-WARD: I can answer that. We have attended a meeting with producers from the Narromine-Trangie region about spray drift with EPA and we participated in a discussion with them. As you mentioned, we've done a lot of work around education and training in that area.

STEVE ORR: Ms Higginson, we've also done some work with the EPA on the spray drift question and we'll come back to you on exactly what that's been.

ANSWER

Refer to Supplementary Question 101.

Question 102 (Page 91)

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Just going back to what happened in the Northern Rivers during the flood and all of that, as I understand, data lost that farmers held in terms of the chemical use that they had, is it something that the department is considering keeping a database about – something that farmers and agriculturalists can feed into for better systems of understanding?

REBECCA FOX: It's an interesting question. We'll take it on notice.

ANSWER

All people who use pesticides as part of their job must record their pesticide use. This is managed by EPA. For more information, visit: [Compulsory record keeping \(nsw.gov.au\)](https://www.nsw.gov.au/pesticides/record-keeping)

Question 103 (Page 92)

JONATHAN WHEATON: Sorry, 2023 – to get the required information to make the milestone payment under the grant. I am advised that the funding deed variation has now been approved to facilitate the next payment, which should be approved and paid in a swift manner. With regards to withholding payments under the Bushfire Local Economic Recovery fund, the long story short with this program is that it's about a half-a-billion-dollar package worth of funding that was set up to assist economic, environment and social recovery following the fires in that cruel summer of 2019-20. Many of those projects are delivered by community organisations under the disaster recovery principles that are set by the Commonwealth. Community-led recovery is very important. Many projects around the State, not exclusively to that program, are having significant delivery challenges. We don't withhold milestone payments unless there is clear evidence that deliverables haven't been done.

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: If you could still provide that in writing as to when that was reconciled –

JONATHAN WHEATON: For the Yaegl Aboriginal corporation?

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr Wheaton.

JONATHAN WHEATON: Can do.

ANSWER

I am advised that a \$50,000 milestone payment was made to Yaegl Traditional Owner Aboriginal Corporation on 22 February 2024.

Question 104 (Page 93)

KATE LORIMER-WARD: I was just going to answer the question about the last four years in terms of renewable energy developments that have been referred and responded to by DPI. For 2021 it's 45, for 2022 it was 88, for 2023 it was 109 and for 2024 it's 20 so far, to date.

The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY: On notice, are you able to define them by region?

KATE LORIMER-WARD: We can, yes.

ANSWER

Refer to Question 84.