

**Question 1 (page 5)**

**The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR:** Thank you, Chair. This is a very serious issue and I will continue with that. As the Minister for Regional New South Wales, have you ever communicated over text or email with someone who works or has previously worked for CMAX Advisory or its associated entities?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I don't know who works for CMAX Advisory or any of its associated entities. I'm aware that it exists because it sounds familiar to me. I don't know who works for it.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Would you take that on notice? **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I don't know who works for it. That's the answer.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Can you do your due diligence and check to see whether you actually have?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I don't know who works for it. That's the answer.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** But you know of CMAX Advisory.

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** It sounds familiar to me as an organisation. That's the answer I've given; it's the answer I'll continue to give.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Do you think maybe as a Minister —

**ANSWER**

I did not undertake to take the above question asked by the Hon. Sam Farraway and the Hon. Bronnie Taylor on notice.

I refer you to my answer to the question on the matter on page 5 of the Transcript.

**Question 2 (Page 6)**

**The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR:** Sure. Thank you very much, Chair. I will put that in a package. An SO 52 was lodged, and two weeks later the Labor Party got a donation. CMAX Advisory is run by the Taubenschlags; you can or cannot remember whether you know them or are aware of them. You've also said that you won't provide this Committee with any text messages or emails that you may have had in contact with them.

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** No, I didn't.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** You refused to take it on notice.

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I don't know them.

**The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR:** You refused to take it on notice.

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I don't believe I've had conversations with them. If you want to put stuff to me in a package, then make it accurate.

**The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR:** It is accurate. The thing is you're not answering the question. These are very serious issues, of which, Minister, you appear to be right at the centre. They're very serious issues. I have asked you respectfully multiple times about that—

**ANSWER**

I did not undertake to take the above question asked by the Hon. Sam Farraway and the Hon. Bronnie Taylor on notice.

I refer you to my answer to the question on the matter on page 5 of the Transcript.

**Question 3 (Page 11)**

**The CHAIR:** We might pick up with Mr Hansen later; I've just got more questions for you. I will just go to your announcement for the \$13 million feral pig management program. I'm just wondering whether you, perhaps on notice, can provide some more details in terms of a detailed breakdown of how that \$13 million is being expended and how much has already been expended thus far. I note that the four dot points include providing advice, supplying baits and traps, assisting with coordinating baiting programs and becoming involved with other control techniques such as trapping programs. I note there's no mention of aerial shooting of pigs. I'm just wondering whether that's also one of the other control techniques that will be included as part of that \$13 million funding.

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** The answer is yes, and that work is —

**The CHAIR:** Which part of the question?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** Aerial shooting — it is underway. Let me see what I can find for you now. Otherwise, I will take the breakdown —

**The CHAIR:** I'm happy for you to take it on notice. If you can provide it for the afternoon session, that would be great.

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** Yes. I'm happy to provide details. I'll see what I can do in relation to the timing of that. I understand — and people will correct me about the details of this — there was an operation conducted on Friday where over 500 of these pests were dealt with in one day, from an aerial perspective. So it is part of the program, but I'm happy to give you the specifics so that you can dig into that a little more.

**ANSWER**

Aerial shooting, as per FFAST protocols, is a control technique that will be used in combination with other control techniques as part of the Feral Pig Program.

Program expenditure breakdown and expenditure as at 30/9/2023.

	Forecast	Expenditure as at 30/9
Control and monitoring	\$8,466,663.00	\$88,637.00
Extension activities	\$455,336.00	\$415.00
Labour to deliver program	\$4,078,001.00	\$30,799.00
TOTAL	\$13,000,000.00	\$119,851.00

**Question 4 (Page 12)**

**The CHAIR:** That's fine. I might move on to the funding announcement that you made, Minister, along the lines where you committed \$2.2 million to review supply chains, address food security issues and be a voice for farmers. For the first part of that, will that review of supply chains include an examination of the practices and tactics of collusion that is happening at saleyards? I've witnessed firsthand the buyers now not even doing proper bids and using hand signals to actually drive down the sale prices. I know the ACCC have gone there and obviously the buyers are on their best behaviour when ACCC are there, but will this review of supply chains actually look at the tactics of collusion and driving down sale prices?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I'm happy to have a look at that. That's not something that has been put to me, but I accept that you're putting that now. I'm happy to look into that and get further details, and it can either be added to that process or can be something that I have a look at. That sounds like something I will take very seriously.

**The CHAIR:** Can you elaborate as to what you mean by "be a voice for farmers" in terms of that \$2.2 million package?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** It is a commitment to look at these. This sounds like a specific issue that I will need to look at, but it is about having a look at supply chain issues. These are things that get raised with me — and were raised with us before being in government — by farmers. They want to get a better understanding and to have me be an advocate for them to understand what happens in terms of their product on farm and the cost that they might get for it, and what happens in between, that being at the end of the supermarket aisle and what people pay for it. I am happy to look at those issues and work with farmers to make sure that they're getting the best deal that they can.

**The CHAIR:** As part of looking at the supply chain, will you be looking at the process of abattoirs being reviewed, specifically how they calculate the weight and the fact that they actually remove a lot of the components of the animal which they still use to make money from, but the farmer never sees the benefit of, like all the offal, the intestines? They essentially make a profit off that and the farmer never sees the benefit. Are you going to look at how we can maybe develop a fairer process in the processing of our products for farmers?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I'm happy to consider any of the relevant issues in terms of that commitment that fit within that supply chain remit, but it's a standing invitation. If there are particular issues that are affecting farmers and their ability to get a good deal, then I'm happy to have those issues raised with me and work with them on how we can deal with that.

**ANSWER**

The Minister for Agriculture has asked the Director General of the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) to provide a report into;

- long term challenges and opportunities for the production and supply of dairy and fresh food in NSW;

- the near-term substantive risks to production and supply; and
- any areas for further work to address the issues and opportunities identified, including the optimal delivery model of this work.

Consideration of supply chain issues includes looking at abattoirs and saleyards, alongside other market transparency issues, will form part of this report, noting however that Australian Consumer and Competition Commission (ACCC) has primary responsibility for the regulation of markets.

**Question 5 (page 36)**

**The CHAIR:** Minister, are you aware of the 2022 Ernst and Young report on forestry operations, particularly the socioeconomic status of the hardwood timber industry?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I may have been briefed on it. You're welcome to put questions to me on it.

**The CHAIR:** It was funded by the Commonwealth and obviously also funded by the NSW DPI. Perhaps on notice can you come back to me with what your department and what your Government's position is on that report?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I'm happy to come back with details on the report that you've put to me. I'm happy to deal with any other questions but, yes, that's fine, I'm happy to take that on notice.

**ANSWER**

To address existing information gaps, the North East NSW Forestry Hub engaged Ernst and Young (EY) to estimate the economic contribution of the NSW hardwood timber industry. The report was publicly released in February 2023.

The analysis shows that the hardwood timber industry is a very significant contributor to the NSW economy, and that the contribution of the industry is even more important at a regional scale.

It estimated the contribution of the NSW hardwood timber industry to the NSW economy as being:

- \$2.9 billion in gross revenue,
- \$1.1 billion in gross value add, and
- 8,900 full time equivalent positions.

The NSW Government aims to strike the right balance between jobs and the environment and remains committed to a sustainable timber industry.

The NSW Government is working with industry on a blueprint for the future of timber sector, that acknowledges the value add of the production of timber products to the NSW economy.

**Question 6 (Page 40)**

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Based on that then, Minister, and in order to keep it simple, I'll redirect the question. Can you commit that there will be no job losses for the Department of Regional NSW where those jobs are based in regional New South Wales — make it collectively, rather than separately?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** Seventy-six per cent of the staff in the department currently — I'll check that that's the most accurate figure, but it's roughly about that percentage of the department — are based in regional New South Wales. That's completely appropriate for a department that is for regional New South Wales. I have repeatedly said, and I'll continue to say, the resources that we have and that I have within my remit need to be spent in an appropriate way to deliver the things that we said —

**ANSWER**

DRNSW has 76 per cent of staff working in regional NSW.

**Question 7 (Page 40)**

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Okay. But specifically, Minister, in your agency, within your department, the Department of Regional NSW, how many executive level positions are looking to be cut?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I'll take the specific details of that on notice, but we took a commitment to the election that we would reduce across the board, across all of government, the number of senior executives across all of government because the numbers blew out across all of government under your Government —

**ANSWER**

The NSW Government made an election commitment to reduce senior executives across government by 15 per cent and Regional NSW is working to deliver that commitment as part of the sector.



**Question 8 (Page 41)**

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** That's what I'm confirming here. You are now the Minister for Regional New South Wales. I want to confirm — you have confirmed as evidence today for the Committee that there will be cuts at the executive level within the department, but it is not resolved as yet just exactly how many of those positions are to be cut.

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I didn't say that at all. You asked me for the details and I said I would take it on notice, and I'm taking it on notice.

**ANSWER**

The NSW Government made an election commitment to reduce senior executives across government by 15 per cent and Regional NSW is working to deliver that commitment as part of the sector.

**Question 9 (Page 42)**

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Moving on. Minister, with regard to drought, how much of New South Wales is currently considered to be in some form of drought across New South Wales?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** The last statistic I have is 3 per cent but, if that's changed, I'm happy to get more details from Mr Hansen.

**ANSWER**

These figures are updated regularly and published online through DPI's Enhanced Drought Information System.

**Question 10 (Page 44)**

**The CHAIR:** I am going to take a point of order because there's too much talking over the top of each other. I respect that the Minister is trying to give a fulsome answer, but the honourable member has redirected and asked for a more specific figure of above \$100 million and as to whether you have some more clarity.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** It's so vague, Minister. I just don't know. Is that \$200 million, \$250 million or \$101 million? How much is in that fund as of today?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** It's not that it's vague. It's that there are amounts that people might not have called down on, which means that there is more money available. Specifically, as of this moment in time today, I will take it on notice, but there is that amount of money available for people to apply for to affix their drought infrastructure preparedness —

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Thank you for taking that on notice. I appreciate it. Just to redirect about the Farm Innovation Fund, how many farmers have accessed support through that program as of today?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** Let me get you the details for that. I might have to take the actual numbers on notice.

**ANSWER**

As at 5 November 2023, there is \$116,922,163 remaining in the Farm Innovation Fund.

As at 5 November 2023, the Farm Innovation Fund has 3,231 approved customers.

**Question 11 (Page 47)**

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** The State Development Committee did an inquiry on the proposed animal welfare bill. Did you read the report on that bill?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I have read the report.

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** One of the major aspects that came up during that report was frozen surgical artificial insemination. Are you not across what that is?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I'm across what it is. I am not sure what you're asking me.

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** Obviously if you know the background – the background was that it was originally proposed by the National Party to outlaw that. The ABA has been talking about outlawing it. I want to know, from you, where we're up to – within your department – on the issue.

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** Sure. I'll find out exactly where that's up to and I will take it on notice and come back to you.

**ANSWER**

The Government is committed to reviewing *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979* and introducing a new animal welfare framework. This work will include consideration of issues raised through parliamentary inquiries.

**Question 12 (Page 50)**

**The CHAIR:** I might pick up on that later. Minister, you made an \$80 million commitment around fire ants. Could you provide a breakdown, perhaps on notice, of what that \$80 million includes and who is charged with expending it?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I can – \$95 million, in fact.

**The CHAIR:** Sorry, \$95 million. That's even more.

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I also welcome the fact that the Federal Government came up with some more much-needed funds over the weekend to assist with this. What I can do is take on notice the breakdown, but it is funding things such as awareness. We're making sure that the community knows what to look out for and what they can and can't transport across the border. I understand letterbox drops have been done, and there is signage up around the border communities. We have detection operations in place, and we're working closely with police on that. They've run some operations checking materials that come across the border. But the specifics and the actual breakdown I'll take on notice and provide.

**ANSWER**

The \$95 million is NSW's commitment to the National Fire Ant Response Plan which is comprised of 4 key areas: Treatment, Surveillance, Compliance and Monitoring and Evaluation.

The expenditure is the responsibility of the National Fire Ant Response Program based in Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries under the guidance of the National Steering Committee representing all jurisdictions.

**Question 13 (Page 50)**

**The CHAIR:** In the last two minutes — and perhaps this will be on notice as well — the good neighbour program, which is aimed at tackling weeds and pest infestations between neighbouring public and private lands, how much money is going towards that program? If you could give a breakdown as to where it's going, that would be great.

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** Ten million dollars is for that program. I'm happy to take on notice the specific —

**ANSWER**

The NSW Government committed \$10 million to the Good Neighbour Program.

The Government is in the process of developing the Program, informed by the advice of the interim Biosecurity Commissioner. The specifics and structure of the Good Neighbour Program will be announced in due course.

**Question 14 (Page 51)**

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** Minister, earlier this year I asked you a question in the House about the rodeo code, and you commented that it was extraordinary that it hadn't been reviewed in 33 years and that you would get an explanation as to why that review had not occurred in that period. What time line is there in regard to a review now? When can we expect to see something for public consultation?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I don't have current plans to review things in this space. I do recall you asked me about the period of time where it hadn't been reviewed. I will have to take on notice the details of what that was. I apologise; I can't remember. I know this is something you're paying attention to.

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** If you could take that on notice —

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** Sure.

**ANSWER**

The NSW Rodeo Code (1988) is based on the National Consultative Committee on Animal Welfare (NCCAW) endorsed national rodeo code.

A review of the NSW Code commenced in 2013 but was not finalised as a national review was initiated in which NSW participated, but which has not progressed.

The Australian Veterinary Association supports implementation of nationally consistent legislation for the regulation of rodeos across Australia.

**Question 15 (Page 52)**

**The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR:** I think mine will be directed to Ms Fox. I want to talk about the Regional Job Creation Fund. The \$100 million round three was announced, opened and closed for applications before the recent election. How many businesses applied for funding from the New South Wales Regional Job Creation Fund in round three?

**REBECCA FOX:** I can get that information for you. I have also got Mr Wheaton — who is eating croissants in France, I think — who might be able to help me. I have got that information.

**The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR:** Why on earth are you here, Mr Wheaton, when you can be outside enjoying France?

**REBECCA FOX:** I think it's 3.00 a.m., so he's doing a good job.

**The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR:** Poor Jonno. Well done to you. I'm happy for you to take —

**REBECCA FOX:** I've got it here. Round three, the total funding of that program was \$100 million. Sorry, I don't have that broken down for round three, unless you do, Jonno.

**The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR:** That's fine.

**REBECCA FOX:** We'll take it on notice.

**The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR:** I just wanted to know how many businesses applied for the funding for round three.

**REBECCA FOX:** No problem. I can take that on notice.

**ANSWER**

Answered during the hearing on page 53 of the transcript.



**Question 16 (Page 53)**

**The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR:** Could we be provided with the names of the businesses, because, usually, you used to put that up on the website – what was there, how many you'd had and how many people had applied. Would we be able to have that information, please – of those 264 people that applied for a fund that now no longer exists?

**REBECCA FOX:** I will take that on notice.

**ANSWER**

The Department of Regional NSW publishes applicant names of successful grant recipients. No project funding decisions were made for Regional Job Creation Fund Round 3.

Given there were no successful applicants for Round 3, this information is not publicly available.

**Question 17 (Page 55)**

**The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR:** We've announced a \$250 million Working Regions Fund. I get really confused with all the names because we have so many funding things. We've abolished the Regional Job Creation Fund, and I have so many comments here from members when they were in Opposition, who are now in government, that just loved the fund. But we haven't got that anymore, and now we have no detail around the Working Regions Fund.

**REBECCA FOX:** I don't think it's been —

**The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR:** Wouldn't that be held by Regional NSW? You are the gurus of the regions and you have runs on the board for all the amazing projects and things that you've run. How could it not be with Regional?

**REBECCA FOX:** It may come to Regional; it just hasn't been worked out at this point in time. But the Treasury team may have more information.

**The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR:** Do you have any time line? I mean I've just never heard of this — announcing a \$250 million Working Regions Fund with no detail and no-one in charge of it. Sorry, I don't understand.

**REBECCA FOX:** I think it sits with Treasury, but I'll take that on notice and I'll come back to you.

**The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR:** Sorry, I just don't understand how, if it's "working regions", it sits

**ANSWER**

Answered during the hearing on page 71 of the transcript.

**Question 18 (Page 58)**

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** How has that remained the same with that one position? What was the new position that was created that made sure that the number still remains the same?

**SCOTT HANSEN:** I will get the title of it wrong, but I will come back to you to before the end of this session.

**ANSWER**

Answered during the hearing on page 87 and 88 of the transcript.

**Question 19 (Page 59)**

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** I'm not sure if this is a question for yourself or Ms Filmer, but I note that there is currently a recruitment process underway to appoint new members for the Animal Welfare Advisory Council. In respect of the existing council, are you able to advise how many times they have met in the past three years?

**KIM FILMER:** Maybe.

**SCOTT HANSEN:** The answer is yes.

**KIM FILMER:** Yes, I think we can. There were five meetings in 2021, there was one meeting in 2022 and we have not had any meetings in 2023.

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** Are there minutes for these meetings? If so, is it possible to make those available to the Committee?

**KIM FILMER:** There are certainly minutes for the meetings, but I don't think they are readily distributed, so I don't know the answer to that.

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** Could you seek advice on whether or not that could be tabled with the Committee?

**SCOTT HANSEN:** Yes, we will take that on notice.

**ANSWER**

The minutes of the Animal Welfare Advisory Council are confidential, and it is not appropriate to release them.

**Question 20 (page 59)**

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** In May I asked the Minister a question in the House about *cestrum nocturnum*, which was still being allowed to be sold in New South Wales. This particular weed led to the tragic deaths of two horses, Joey and Midnight, who accidentally consumed the plant. I understand these plants are being sold in nurseries throughout New South Wales. The Minister advised at the time that she has requested that the department investigate options for and the feasibility of banning the sale of *cestrum nocturnum*. I understand there are different versions of *cestrum* that are banned, but I'm interested in *cestrum nocturnum*. Can I get an update on this investigation and any advice on action that has been taken?

**SCOTT HANSEN:** You can. Give me a minute to get an update on that and I will come back to you in the next round if we can

**ANSWER**

Answered during the hearing on page 68 of the transcript.

NSW DPI and Council Weed Officers visited the property where the two horses died on 30 May 2023 where it was determined that *Cestrum nocturnum* was responsible for the horses' deaths.

NSW DPI has contacted the National buyer for Bunnings who has indicated that they do not sell *Cestrum nocturnum* in NSW. Similarly, the NSW Nursery Garden Industry Association has confirmed that none of its members sell this species. These two groups represent a high proportion of the industry, which suggests that the industry is already meeting its existing General biosecurity duty to minimise risk through not actively selling the plant (noting the risk of the species posed by sales is not significant compared to its natural spread as an environmental weed).

DPI will continue to take opportunities to raise awareness in the community through social media and field days in collaboration with the local council.

Specifically, DPI have added information on *Cestrum nocturnum* on the Weedwise website and have done a Weed Wednesday promotion. Rous County Council, the Local Control Authority (LCA) for the region in which the horses died, have included information on *Cestrum nocturnum* in several awareness campaigns.

**Question 21 (Page 63)**

**SCOTT HANSEN:** Ninety-one staff are on a casual or fixed-term contract basis, and we have our 26 permanent staff members in the RAA in ongoing roles.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** That's this year, is it?

**SCOTT HANSEN:** Yes.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** How many were there last year?

**SCOTT HANSEN:** I'd have to take that on notice. I'm sure it will come to me before we —

**ANSWER**

Answered during the hearing on page 83 of the transcript.

**Question 22 (Page 66)**

**The CHAIR:** Mr Hansen, before lunch you made some comments around how the Recreational Fishing Trust audit would facilitate some discussions around the concepts of what a peak body is and what a statutory authority is. If that's the case, why are we running peak body workshops next month before we've actually had an audit? It seems premature that you would run those workshops without a clear path. I know Mr Sloan is coming up, and I'm aware that he signed the letter that went out to all the associations.

**SCOTT HANSEN:** Before lunch I was purely buying time to be able to get Dr Sloan to the table for you, Chair, so I might throw to him. But as I do so, we do need to bring all the recreational fishing groups together around a table and have a conversation around what would this look like for them and what do they see. That'll be also —

**The CHAIR:** But you implied that the audit was dependent on that. If the audit was dependent on or would feed into that discussion then why have the discussion now, when the audit is nowhere near having commenced?

**SCOTT HANSEN:** No, but I don't think the first conversation is going to be the last conversation on the peak council, either, so commencing them around the same time might actually help us. But I'll throw to Dr Sloan, if I might.

**SEAN SLOAN:** The sequence that we're following to implement the Government's election commitment is to first have the audit conducted, and I think you covered that off in the morning session around the fact that there were some draft terms of reference that were sent out to a group of recreational fishing stakeholders. We got comments and that process will shortly proceed. The next step in there, which I think is what the director general was referring to, is the fact that there's a whole package of election commitments that relate to fisheries, and one of them is on the Recreational Fishing Trust audit. There's another one on establishing an expenditure board, and I think that process around looking at the requirements for an expenditure board will follow the trust audit.

Separate to that, there are election commitments around establishing peak bodies for both the commercial fishing sector and the recreational fishing sector, and so we're proceeding with those processes because that's a separate process around how those fishing sectors can represent themselves to the Government. I wrote to quite a long list of recreational fishing groups just recently to invite them to what will essentially be a series of workshops to work through what that would look like, and engaged all of the bodies that are out there. We engage with a lot of fishing bodies, particularly in the recreational fishing space, and so we want to bring them all together, have the discussion about what it might look like and then work from there. Similarly, with the commercial sector, we've started the same process.

**The CHAIR:** My understanding is the commercial peak body discussions are more well advanced than the recreational ones. On notice, are you able to provide a list of the associations that have been invited?

**SEAN SLOAN:** Happy to do that. If I've got a bit of time, I can probably search it and bring it up and run through it now.

**ANSWER**

Invitation letters to attend the first Recreational Fishing Peak Body Forum were sent from the Deputy Director General, DPI Fisheries to the organisations, committees and recreational fishing identities listed in table below:

OzFish Unlimited
Australian Fishing Trade Association
NSW Game Fishing Association
Recreational Fishing Alliance of NSW
Australian National Sportsfishing Association (NSW Branch)
Professional Fishing Instructors and Guides Association
Australian Underwater Federation
Underwater Skindivers & Fishermen's Association (NSW Branch)
NSW Council of Freshwater Anglers
South West Anglers Association
NSW Fishing Clubs Association
Central Acclimatisation Society
Council of Southern Districts Angler Clubs
Monaro Acclimatisation Society
New England Trout Acclimatisation Society
NSW Rod Fishers Society
Orange Trout Acclimatisation Society
Edward- Wakool Angling Association
Recreational Fishing NSW Advisory Council (RFNSW) chair
Recreational Fishing NSW Advisory Council (RFNSW) representative
Ministerial Fisheries Advisory Council (MFAC) (recreational representative)
Charter Fishing NSW Working Group chair
Recreational Fishing Saltwater Trust Expenditure Committee (RFSTEC)
Native Fish Australia
Womens Recreational Fishing League
Australian Women in Fishing
McGlashan Media
Fishing World
Shimano Australia
The Fly Program
Forge Through
Tribe Disability
Disability Adventures
Brent Hancock - TackleWorld Port Stephens
Gavin McCallum - TackleWorld Nowra
Mel Spikes - Spikes Fishing Australia
Gabriel Kim - ISO Fishing Tackle
Dan Guilfoyle - recreational fishing identity
Calli Vecchi - recreational fishing identity
Gianni Lo Giudice - recreational fishing identity
Seamus McCleave - recreational fishing identity
Simon Pender - recreational fishing identity
Guy Jamieson - recreational fishing identity
Dan Selby- recreational fishing identity



Pat Linehan- recreational fishing identity
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Lani Kondrackas- recreational fishing identity
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**Question 23 (page 66)**

**The CHAIR:** I don't want to waste my question time in rattling it off now. I think that's all I have for that line of questioning at the moment. Perhaps on notice, how much money is being given to external organisations, particularly the Invasive Species Council, from your various departments? I just wanted to get some figures over the last five years. Whether directly or indirectly, how much money have your departments given to the Invasive Species Council? I'm happy for you guys to take that on notice.

**REBECCA FOX:** I'll take that on notice.

**ANSWER**

Answered during the hearing on page 86 of the transcript.

**Question 24 (Page 70)**

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Thank you, Mr Chair. My question is to the secretary, Ms Fox. This is a question that I posed to the Minister as well, but there was a bit of uncertainty. What is the current status of the Office of the Cross-Border Commissioner?

**REBECCA FOX:** The Office of the Cross-Border Commissioner exists as usual. Its functions are being carried out.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Who is in charge of that office today?

REBECCA FOX: Today there is an acting director in charge of that office.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Is the actual Cross-Border Commissioner not there?

**REBECCA FOX:** I'd prefer to take those questions on notice. I'm very concerned about my obligations to ensure the health and wellbeing of all of the staff and to ensure that I don't breach any privacy obligations, so I'd prefer, if the Chair allows, not to comment on employment arrangements of individual staff.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Okay.

**REBECCA FOX:** But I can assure you that the Office of Cross-Border Commissioner is functioning.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** For the record, the commissioner and assistant commissioner are both on leave, let's just say.

**REBECCA FOX:** I'm not confirming that or answering that question at the moment, if that's okay. I have got some information on the Working Regions Fund that Mr Taylor asked me about, if that's okay,

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Of course.

**ANSWER**

The employment arrangements of individual employees are confidential.

**Question 25 (Page73)**

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** One of the concerns I have — and I put this to an experienced department and the people within the department — is whether there is a need for an advisory council when we essentially already have an apolitical independent department that has a track record of delivering in the regions, in particular, grant programs? Do you believe an advisory council takes away some of the expertise that has been built up within your agency since its creation?

**The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE:** Point of order: seeking an opinion on a matter of Government policy.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** I will redirect the question. Is an advisory council needed because your department does not have the resources to continue to grade and to assess grant applications?

**REBECCA FOX:** Sorry, could you repeat the question?

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Is an advisory council needed because of the cuts to your department as a decision of Government in order to grade these community grants?

**REBECCA FOX:** The use of an advisory council in this kind of regional development program and trust is a model that works in other jurisdictions, for example, in Western Australia. Those jurisdictions also have departments that are responsible for primary industries, for regional development, all of the functions that we have in our department. I always welcome additional input. I think it's important to get as many perspectives as you can in that regard. It would be helpful to have community input and input from different stakeholders.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Would you be able to provide on notice a list of the eligible LGAs in regional New South Wales that would come under the trust or would be eligible for projects in their LGAs?

**ANSWER**

The Regional Development Trust is established by *the Regional Development Act 2004* (the Act) to support investment in NSW regions. The Act currently defines 'regions' as all areas outside the Sydney metropolitan area. Eligible LGAs to receive funding under the Trust will be considered as part of the current review of the *Regional Development Act 2004*.

**Question 26 (Page 81)**

**REBECCA FOX:** Yes, I can do that.

**The Hon. SAM FARRAWAY:** Thank you. Okay, I've done Walgett pool. Thank you, Mr Wheaton. I'll direct this to Ms Fox and then you can work out who you want to refer it to. It is the first one, regarding the Community Assets Program. Clarence Valley Council was invited to make an application under the Community Assets Program for up to \$7.5 million. It was one of seven local government areas in the Northern Rivers that was impacted by the 2022 floods. It was deemed unsuccessful, their \$7½ million grant. Do you know anything about this or are you able to advise why Clarence Valley was the only LGA in the Northern Rivers deemed unsuccessful in its application for funding?

**REBECCA FOX:** I can't give you anything specific, and I'll refer to Mr Wheaton in a minute. Generally any applicants for any of our programs that are deemed ineligible or unsuccessful are offered a briefing, so I would have expected the team to go back if the applicant wants a briefing. That would have explained it to them. I'll ask Mr Wheaton whether he's got any further information on that particular one. If not, we can take it on notice.

**ANSWER**

Answered during the hearing on pages 81 and 82 of the transcript.

**Question 27 (Page 85)**

**SCOTT HANSEN:** Sorry, Chair, you asked a question about the Invasive Species Council contribution. I think your colleague in the upper House also asked a similar question on notice to us recently, so I know our number, which is a \$33,000 contribution in the last five years from DPI. That has been our payment into an interstate government and industry program that the Invasive Species Council is managing.

**The CHAIR:** Before I pass to Ms Hurst, on notice can you provide some information about how you provide some level of accountability for how that money is spent?

**SCOTT HANSEN:** I'm happy to provide that. I think we provided similar in the response to questions on notice.

**ANSWER**

In July 2023, DPI provided \$33,000 to the Invasive Species Council (ISC) for the NSW contribution to the Decade of Biosecurity Initiative. The initiative is led by eight organisations, along with support from state and federal governments. The ISC plays an administrative and coordination role for the Initiative.

The Decade of Biosecurity Implementation Plan is underpinned by a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework, which will enable the Decade of Biosecurity Steering Committee to track and analyse progress and adjust practices if required, to ensure the Plan is successful in delivery of its aim and objectives.

**Question 28 (Page 86)**

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** Do you know what proportion of New South Wales emissions are attributable to rural land clearing?

**STEVE ORR:** No, I don't.

**STEVE ORR:** It's not something which we look at specifically. Mr Hansen may know the answer to that. Are you talking about emissions from —

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** From rural land clearing specifically.

**STEVE ORR:** From clearing itself?

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

**STEVE ORR:** I will take that on notice.

**ANSWER**

Data collected by the Australian government to meet our reporting obligations to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change show that the net GHG emissions associated with land use change in the NSW agricultural sector for 2021 were -1.9 Mt CO<sub>2</sub>-e. This negative value represents net sequestration, comprising 7.9 Mt CO<sub>2</sub>-e emitted due to deforestation and -9.8 Mt CO<sub>2</sub> due to reforestation.

**Question 29 (Page 88)**

**JONATHAN WHEATON:** Mr Banasiak, I have a couple to clear up as well. Just with regard to Walgett pool, the first motion that was passed by council to decommission the pool was on 5 July. Our team had no notice of the issue with the pool prior to the media report that indicated that the cost would be at \$1.7 million, and then the decision the council office confirmed was rescinded on 23 August, like I said. Just to confirm, the flood Community Assets Program application through Clarence Valley, their notional allocation was \$2 million. They had applied for \$7.5 million for the Grafton Memorial Pool, and we will take on notice how we assessed the geotech report that was submitted by council with its application. Lastly, I just want to say thank you very much to the Committee for letting me join online. It's time for me to boire du vin rouge, which is to drink some red wine for the folks at Hansard.

**ANSWER**

The Department of Regional NSW assesses all information submitted for each application as per the Program Guidelines. This includes NSW Public Works undertaking the Resilience and Viability assessment of all applications submitted, including the supporting information.

For the Clarence Valley Council application, it was assessed that the geotechnical report did not provide conclusive evidence that the pool was solely and directly damaged by the eligible flood events.



## Questions taken on notice but not highlighted by Budget Estimates Secretariat:

(Page 10)

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** You mentioned that you've met with animal protection organisations. Did you meet with any animal protection organisations prior to attending the Agriculture Ministers' Meeting in July?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I will have to check the timing of this, but I've certainly met with a number of animal welfare organisations over the six months that I've been Minister. So I've probably engaged before that meeting, but I would have to check the specific timing.

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

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** Sure.

## ANSWER

I am advised:

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

In the six months prior to the 25 October, this includes meetings with:

- RSPCA
- Animal Welfare League NSW
- Animal Care Australia
- Veterinary Practitioners Board
- World Animal Protection Australia
- Friends of Bats and Bushcare Inc
- Australian Alliance for Animals

**(Page 36)**

**The CHAIR:** I also draw your attention to a large report. Are you aware of the StollzNow social licence to operate?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** Yes, I am.

**The CHAIR:** Mr Chaudhary is nodding; I'm sure he's read all 252 pages. I'll narrow your reading, Minister, to the qualitative and quantitative findings. I'm wondering whether you could, perhaps on notice, come back with what your Government's position is on those qualitative and quantitative findings in that report. Is that possible?

**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** Yes, I'm happy to do that. The survey results were quite interesting, and I think what they demonstrate is that there's certainly an appetite for a discussion around this space in the public domain and the social licence in this space, and it's absolutely part of what I want to do broadly in terms of my responsibilities in that space.

## **ANSWER**

Our government acknowledges the StollzNOW report on native forest harvesting in NSW, confirming a strong social license for the industry.

With a robust methodology, it reveals that 69% believe in the importance of the native forest timber industry, while only 17% support closure.

The report underlines broad community concerns about reducing local supply, including reliance on lower-environmental standard imported timber, potential exploitation, and adverse impacts on the environment, housing costs, jobs and forest management.

Additionally, 66% express concerns about bushfires, and 64% worry about native habitat loss in relation to trees and forests generally. 54% of respondents had concerns regarding destruction of animal habitat with regards to forestry activity.

These results underscore that native forestry is a nuanced issue, emphasising the need for sustainable solutions to continue securing the array of community values derived from our forests.

This report strongly affirms that native forestry has a social license to operate in NSW and offers valuable guidance for addressing concerns. The government encourages more reports like this to ensure evidence-based decisions secure the future of this critical sector.

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**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** Thank you. Can I ask whoever is the appropriate person about the broad area

habitat searches that are undertaken? Is that you, Mr Chaudhary?

**ANSHUL CHAUDHARY:** In native forestry? Is that what you're referring to?

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** Yes.

**ANSHUL CHAUDHARY:** It's probably me — native sites, yes.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** Thank you. I'm quite gravely concerned. We looked at 13 operations. They are Doubleduke, Gibberagee, Forest Land, Orara East, Tamban, Wild Cattle Creek, Styx River, Ballengarra, Burrawan, Bulls Ground, Bachelor State Forest and we looked at all of those to kind of assess, just as a random, in terms of operations that have either been completed or about to be completed. So it was 13 operations covering five and a half thousand hectares of public native forest and looking at the BioNet records to see how the Forestry Corporation is complying with its broad area habitat search obligations. The results were pretty alarming, really.

There was very little and next to no records of the species that are required to be searched for as a result of those habitat searches. It strongly suggests that we're either not doing them well or we're not doing them at all. Is there something you can help us in understanding what's going on there?

**ANSHUL CHAUDHARY:** I can probably talk a bit broadly about the way we undertake the searches.

In Forestry Corporation, we've got highly trained and skilled ecologists and technicians in the field that undertake these searches and surveys in accordance with the environmental rules set that we've got in New South Wales. So when I say that I refer to the coastal integrated forest operations approval — CIFOA — that regulation or rules set requires you to undertake a whole range of searches, and broad area habitat searches is one of those searches. I'm sure you're aware the IFOA is based on a landscape basis, which basically means that it provides protection to a whole range of native animals and native plants on a landscape basis as opposed to individual species. In some cases there are prescriptions for certain types of species, but generally it's broad scale. Our harvest plans are drawn up in accordance with the coastal IFOA and they're regulated by the EPA. So there are a whole range of surveys, Ms Higginson, but if there's any specific forest — I know you talked about 13 areas — I could take them away and have a look at them specifically and come back to you.

**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** That would be great.

## ANSWER

Since 2021 in these 13 compartments, Forestry Corporation staff have carried out surveys and searches across approximately 5,000 kilometres, recorded more than 5,787 records of threatened and non-threatened species and marked approximately 150,000 trees for retention, in addition to trees set aside in wildlife habitat clumps and protected areas.

(Page 78)

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** What led to the decision to delay logging at Kiwarrak?

**ANSHUL CHAUDHARY:** I don't have specific answers on that particular forest, but generally it could be a number of reasons, such as logistics — you know, trying to arrange crews, making sure the harvest plans are in order. A whole range of things could go into commencing or delaying operations.

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** Are you able to take that on notice if that information is available elsewhere?

## **ANSWER**

Forestry Corporation delayed operations in Kiwarrak State Forest following community feedback about matters including access to the mountain bike facilities over the summer school holiday period and potential fire risks during the summer months.

Forestry Corporation had some flexibility in the schedule so adjusted the dates to avoid the summer school holiday period.

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**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** Thank you. In September the New South Wales Government announced logging would be immediately ceased within koala hubs found within the boundaries of the proposed Great Koala National Park. Which compartments were either active or planned to be logged and had to be stopped as a result of this decision?

**ANSHUL CHAUDHARY:** There's about 106 koala hubs that have been identified as a result of that Government decision. It covers an area of approximately 8½ thousand hectares. The actual impact may be a bit more than 8½ thousand hectares because the koala hubs — if you look at it on a map, it's actually scattered across the landscape. To make sure we're not harvesting in those areas, there will be exclusion zones and buffers and those sorts of things. That means that there'll be a larger area than the approximate 8½ thousand hectares that will be excluded.

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** Do we know exactly which compartments or zones will be included in that yet?

**ANSHUL CHAUDHARY:** Yes. We have a map that has been provided to us which outlines which areas of the forest are designated as koala hubs. The regulator has also amended the regulation to ensure that those hubs are now excluded from harvesting and our harvest plans are now going to be developed in accordance with that.

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** Can we get a copy of that map?

**ANSHUL CHAUDHARY:** I'll have to check that to see how we can make it —

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** Could you seek some advice?

**ANSHUL CHAUDHARY:** It's not our map. We didn't produce it, but I'll take that on notice.

**ANSWER**

Answered during the hearing on page 88 of the transcript.

(Page 78)

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** Thank you. Can you also provide — and this might be one to take on notice — a list of where logging crews and contractors were redeployed to after the moratorium on logging in koala hubs came into place?

**ANSHUL CHAUDHARY:** Yes. I mean, I can take that on notice in terms of specifics, but generally we've been trying to relocate them to other areas. There have been some impacts. At the moment we have stood down some contractors as well. It is a combination of the koala hub decision but also the voluntary standdowns that we have in place.

#### **ANSWER**

Three crews operating in Clouds Creek State Forest were temporarily stood down until the mapping was received and have since resumed operations in this same forest under updated harvest plans. One crew operating in Moonpar State Forest was relocated to Tamban State Forest.

(Page 78-79)

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** And of that 8,400 hectares of koala hub subject to the moratorium, how much of this had been logged in the past 10 years?

**ANSHUL CHAUDHARY:** The specifics of that I'll have to take away, Ms Hurst, because we haven't looked at it as koala hubs. We look at it basically as State forest in our landscape, and we have been harvesting in State forest in accordance with the environmental rules in regrowth forest over many, many decades. Specifically for the 106 koala hubs, I will have to take that away.

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** Will that data be available? I understand that it has been divided into hubs

now, but will there be some sort of way of tracking whether or not those spaces have been logged previously?

**ANSHUL CHAUDHARY:** That's a very good question. I'm not sure about it because we haven't been

tracking data based on those hubs. That's a new configuration. We've tracked harvesting data and surveying and searches based on State forest or compartments. I'll have to go back to our staff and see whether that's something we track and we are able to produce that information or not.

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** If you are, could I put that on notice as well?

**ANSHUL CHAUDHARY:** Sure. Absolutely.

#### **ANSWER**

Forestry Corporation has not carried out an assessment of the harvest history of these specific areas. Spatial data showing the harvest history of every compartment in every State forest is publicly available on the Forestry Corporation website.

(Page 79)

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** How many hectares are currently on the coastal integrated forestry operations approvals plan portal for logging — active, approved or planning — within the boundaries of the proposed Great Koala National Park?

**ANSHUL CHAUDHARY:** That information is available on our plan portal. The plan portal looks at what is planned and what is proposed as well. So it gives you a bit of a forward look into our operations. I'm not sure exactly how much that is, but I can tell you, on average, as I was explaining to Ms Higginson earlier, we harvest about 1 per cent of the entire native forest estate that we have got. Generally that would be about 30,000 hectares, but that's across the State forest. It's not up in the koala park area. It's in the entire State forest we've got.

**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** Are you able to take that question on notice in regard to how many hectares from that coastal integrated forestry operations approvals plan portal for logging so that we've got that specific data?

**ANSHUL CHAUDHARY:** Yes.

## ANSWER

There are approximately 184,000 hectares of State forest in the area identified for assessment for the Great Koala National Park, including 84,000 hectares that are permanently protected and 100,000 hectares available for harvesting.

Forestry Corporation publishes a live map via its Plan Portal that shows the current operational schedule, which is subject to regular change.