



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

PORTFOLIO COMMITTEES

**BUDGET ESTIMATES 2023-2024**  
**Supplementary questions**  
Portfolio Committee No. 4 – Regional NSW

**Agriculture, Regional New South Wales, Western New South Wales**

Hearing: Wednesday 21 February 2024

**Answers due by:** Tuesday 19 March 2024

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**BUDGET ESTIMATES 2023-2024  
RESPONSES TO SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS**

**MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE, MINISTER FOR REGIONAL NSW,  
MINISTER FOR WESTERN NSW**

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

**AGRICULTURE**

**Sheep and Goat Electronic Identification**

- (1) At your prior Estimates hearing in December, the committee was told there had been 1680 applications for funding from producers to assist with the implementation of electronic identification. How many applications have been received between December 13, 2023 and February 26, 2024?

**ANSWER**

I am advised 851.

- (2) At the same hearing the committee was told that about \$11 million of the \$14 million available through this program was under application. How much of that \$14 million is under application as of February 26, 2024?

**ANSWER**

As at 26 February 2024, the full \$14 million allocation has been committed, noting some producers may have applied for the rebate but will only claim a proportion of it.

- (3) If the \$14 million is fully exhausted, will the NSW Government be providing additional funding to assist producers who may have missed out?

**ANSWER**

The Government will continue to review what programs need to be in place to support producers transition to the implementation of mandatory individual electronic identification.

**Drought Funding**

- (4) As of the most recent reporting date, how much funding remains available in the Drought Innovation Fund, which had previously been known as the Farm Innovation Fund?

**ANSWER**

As at 25 February the balance of funds remaining in the Drought Infrastructure Fund (DIF) is \$89.9 million.

- (5) How many applications have been received for this fund between November 20, 2023 and the most recent reporting date?

**ANSWER**

I am advised that 147 applications have been received between 20 November and 25 February 2024.

- (6) How many applications have been received between November 20, 2023, and the most recent reporting date for the Drought Ready and Resilient Fund?

**ANSWER**

I am advised that 64 applications were received between 1 December 2023 and 25 February 2024.

- (7) As of the most recent reporting date, how much of the \$250 million in funding for the Drought Ready and Resilient Fund remains available?

**ANSWER**

As at 25 February 2024, \$238.3 million remains available in the Drought Ready and Resilient Fund.

**Local Land Services**

- (8) Applications have closed for Ministerial appointments to Local Land Services boards. How many applications did you receive?

**ANSWER**

I am advised that 157 applications were received.

- (9) The Local Land Services website also outline that applications for the position of LLS board chair have closed, and an announcement was due in late December or January. When will that announcement be made?

**ANSWER**

I am advised that the Department is considering the applications received for the position of Local Land Service Board Chair.

An announcement on the Local Land Services Board Chair will be made once this process has been completed.

- (10) How many applications were received for the role of LLS Board chair?

**ANSWER**

I am advised that 30 applications were received.

- (11) Board elections for the LLS regions are due to be held in May 2024, with 34 board members to be elected. How many applications have been received as of February 26, 2024?

**ANSWER**

No applications have been received yet as the Notice of Election has not been announced. The Returning Officer will provide the Notice of Election on 18 March 2024.

- (12) A specific email address (board.recruitment@lls.nsw.gov.au) has been established for

potential candidates to seek additional information about the roles and how to apply.  
How many people have made enquiries through this service?

**ANSWER**

I am advised that 23 enquiries were made to the board.recruitment@lls.nsw.gov.au email address. More than double that number of enquiries were taken via telephone.

**Northern Rivers Agricultural Drainage Report**

(13) When did the consultation period commence in relation to the Northern Rivers Agricultural Drainage Report?

**ANSWER**

Mr Culleton consulted extensively with stakeholders when preparing his advice for Government.

Feedback on the Coastal Floodplain Drainage Option Report (a separate, but linked, report) is being sought and this feedback period opened on 19 February and closes on 21 April 2024.

(14) Was the commencement of the consultation period advertised and promoted by the NSW Government?

**ANSWER**

Mr Culleton consulted extensively with stakeholders when preparing his advice for Government.

The Northern Rivers Agricultural Drainage Report was published on the NSW DPI website on Wednesday, 20 December 2023.

(15) If so, which communication channels were utilised to promote the consultation period?

**ANSWER**

Refer to Question 14.

(16) Have you had formal meetings with impacted stakeholders in the Northern Rivers in order to discuss the recommendations of the report prepared by John Cullerton?

**ANSWER**

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

(17) Will you commit to future engagement with stakeholders in the Northern Rivers prior to the April 21, 2024, cut off date for consultation, which you quoted in your February 21, 2024, Estimates hearing?

**ANSWER**

I engage with stakeholders on a wide range of issues and will continue to do so. I encourage any stakeholder who wishes to discuss their concerns within my portfolio remit to reach out to my office.

(18) Did you meet with Mr Cullerton between March 27, 2023 and December 20, 2024 to

discuss the contents of his report and the recommendations included in it?

**ANSWER**

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

(19) If so, when did you meet with Mr Cullerton to discuss the report and the recommendations included in it?

**ANSWER**

Refer to Question 18.

(20) Have you sent correspondence or engaged in formal meetings with the Minister for Planning, Minister for Environment, Minister for Water, Minister for Local Government or Minister for Lands to discuss the recommendations of Mr Cullerton's report?

**ANSWER**

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

(21) If so, when was the correspondence sent and/or the meetings held?

**ANSWER**

Refer to Question 20.

**NSW Department of Primary Industries**

(22) When will the NSW Government start a formal recruitment process for the Grade 3 Senior Executive that will replace the former Director-General of the Department of Primary Industries?

**ANSWER**

Recruitment within the Department is a matter for the Secretary of the Department for Regional NSW.

(23) Is it the intention for the role to be titled "Director General"?

**ANSWER**

I am advised that all roles within the Department must comply with the executive structure and roles titles as per the *Government Sector Employment Act (2013)*.

(24) Will this process be an open application process, or will it be an internal recruitment process?

**ANSWER**

I am advised that recruitment will be undertaken in accordance with the *Government Sector Employment Act 2013*, the *Government Sector Employment Regulation 2014* and the *Government Sector Employment (General) Rules 2014*.

(25) Was the former Director-General provided with a pay-out at the cessation of his employment with the Department of Primary Industries?

**ANSWER**

I am advised that due to privacy obligations, the Department of Regional NSW is unable to comment on individual employment matters.

(26) If so, what were the terms of the payout?

**ANSWER**

Refer to Question 25.

(27) On what date was the Premier or his department notified by either the Minister or her department that the former Director General had been sacked?

**ANSWER**

The Premier's Department was notified on Wednesday, 17 January 2024.

(28) Is there a budget allocation to the Department of Regional NSW to cover the cost of a rebrand of the Department of Primary Industries, as flagged by the Secretary?

**ANSWER**

No.

(29) Has the Department received advice on how much a rebranding of the DPI would cost?

**ANSWER**

No.

(30) If so, what figure has been provided?

**ANSWER**

Refer to Question 29.

## **REGIONAL NSW**

### **Regional Funding**

(31) Of the \$350 million announced in the Budget for the Regional Development Trust Fund, how much is still available as of February 26, 2024?

#### **ANSWER**

Expenditure from the Regional Development Trust Fund will commence in 2023/24.

(32) Given the 2023/24 financial year will see a reduced amount allocated through the program, how much is budgeted for distribution in the 2024/25 financial year?

#### **ANSWER**

All investment decisions from the Regional Development Trust Fund will be made by the Minister on the considered advice of the Regional Development Advisory Council.

(33) Is the trust fund subject to any administration costs?

#### **ANSWER**

Refer to Question 32.

(34) If so, how much has been expended in administration costs?

#### **ANSWER**

Refer to Question 32.

(35) When will applications for this program open?

#### **ANSWER**

Expenditure from the Regional Development Trust Fund will commence in 2023/24.

(36) Who selected the temporary board members that were appointed in December 2023?

#### **ANSWER**

Appointees to the Regional Development Advisory Council were identified through a process managed by the Department of Regional NSW working with an independent talent search agency, in consultation with the Premier's Department and NSW Treasury.

As the Minister for Regional NSW, I appointed members to the Council in accordance with the Regional Development Act 2004 and Regional Development Regulation 2018.

(37) Did the temporary board members have to apply for their positions?

#### **ANSWER**

Refer to Question 36.

(38) If not, what was the process undertaken to find the seven people who make up the temporary board?

#### **ANSWER**

Refer to Question 36.

(39) What metrics have been set to determine the success or failure of the program?

**ANSWER**

Trust investments will be evaluated in accordance with Treasury Policy Guidelines 22-22: Evaluation Policy and Guidelines.

(40) Has any correspondence been received from councils objecting to the change in government funding strategy?

**ANSWER**

In my role as Minister for Regional NSW, I regularly engage with a range of stakeholders on their investment priorities for regional NSW.

(41) If so, how much correspondence and from which councils?

**ANSWER**

Refer to Question 40.

(42) Has the Minister sent formal correspondence to the Minister for Natural Resources in relation to a pause in the Royalties For Rejuvenation program?

**ANSWER**

Our Offices collaborate on a range of initiatives to support regional mining communities.

(43) Has the Minister received formal correspondence from the Minister for Natural Resources in relation to a pause in the Royalties For Rejuvenation program?

**ANSWER**

Refer to Question 42.

**Regional NSW Travel**

(44) When were the Minister's flights and accommodation booked for her visit to Western NSW on December 12, 2023, and December 13, 2023?

**ANSWER**

All Ministerial travel was taken in accordance with the relevant standards and guidelines set out in Part 5 of the Ministers Office Handbook (Handbook), available at <https://www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/premiers-department/ministers-office-handbook>.

(45) Was the Minister ever scheduled to visit Eugowra and Orange with the Premier on January 23, 2024?

**ANSWER**

Yes.

(46) If so, why did she not attend?

**ANSWER**

I was required to attend to an urgent biosecurity matter, and as such was unable to attend the



scheduled visit.

I am committed to revisiting Eugowra and Orange as part of my on-going travels across Regional NSW.

### **Regional NSW Definition**

(47) What is the definition of regional NSW in reference to the portfolio held by the Minister?

#### **ANSWER**

The Minister for Regional NSW currently represents the Local Government Areas (LGAs) set by the definition of the former government being regional LGAs, excluding Greater Sydney, Wollongong and Newcastle.

(48) Are Newcastle and Wollongong included in the defined area known as “regional NSW” as it relates to the portfolio held by the Minister?

#### **ANSWER**

Refer to Question 47.

### **Regional NSW Priorities**

(49) Does the Minister have a list of priorities for the area defined by the Regional NSW portfolio?

(50) If so, what are the priorities?

(51) If not, why not?

#### **ANSWER**

(49) – (51)

My priority as Minister is to deliver for Regional NSW and to address the neglect of the regions by the former Liberal-National Government.

### **WESTERN NSW**

#### **Western NSW Definition**

(52) As of February 26, 2024, which local government areas are included in the Western NSW area, as defined by the Minister’s portfolio?

#### **ANSWER**

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

(53) How many of these LGA’s has the Minister visited in-person?

#### **ANSWER**

Minister’s diary disclosures are public available and are published on the Cabinet Office website.

(54) Does the Minister have regular communication with stakeholders in each of these LGAs?

**ANSWER**

I regularly engage with stakeholders on a wide range of issues and will continue to do so.

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

**Western NSW Funding**

(55) Between March 25, 2023 and February 26, 2024, how many grants administered through the Department of Regional NSW have been announced for allocation to LGAs within the defined Western NSW portfolio area?

**ANSWER**

I am advised that Government grant information is publicly available on the Regional NSW website.

(56) If applicable, what is the total dollar value of those announced grants.

**ANSWER**

See answer 55.

(57) Between March 16, 2019 and March 25, 2023, how many grants administered through the Department of Regional NSW had been allocated to LGAs within the defined Western NSW portfolio area?

**ANSWER**

Government grant information is publicly available on the Regional NSW website.

(58) What was the total dollar value of those grants?

**ANSWER**

See answer 57.

**Western NSW Priorities**

(59) Does the Minister have a list of priorities for the area defined by the Western NSW portfolio?

(60) If so, what are the priorities?

(61) If not, why not?

**ANSWER**

(59) – (61)

My priority as Minister is to deliver for Western NSW and to address the neglect of Western NSW by the former Liberal-National Government.

Questions from Ms Abigail Boyd MLC
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**IOAW**

(62) In relation to the NSW Government's intentions to establish an independent office of animal welfare, when will the public be given the opportunity to provide input through a public submissions period?

**ANSWER**

Refer to Question 63.

(63) Has the NSW Government consulted with any animal welfare stakeholders on this to date?

**ANSWER**

The NSW Government is committed to delivering on the animal welfare reforms it took to the election, which includes an Independent Office of Animal Welfare and we will undertake all appropriate consultations.

**Pig gassing**

(64) Is the Department undertaking any action to review pig gassing practices?

**ANSWER**

I am advised that DPI has conducted a scientific literature review of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) stunning practices.

The review included examining recognised factors that affect pig response to CO<sub>2</sub> stunning, to support best-practice, humane outcomes across industry.

The literature review is publicly available on the NSW DPI website. The DPI is finalising factsheets, based on the literature review, for use by industry. These have been developed in consultation with industry.

The literature review is publicly available on the NSW DPI website.

(65) Is the Department undertaking any work towards more humane alternatives?

**ANSWER**

I am advised DPI has conducted a scientific literature review on what research has been and is currently being conducted in Australia and internationally, to identify alternatives to CO<sub>2</sub> stunning that are effective, welfare-positive and commercially viable.

The conclusion from the literature review was that at this point in time, CO<sub>2</sub> stunning is the most welfare positive, and practicable option.

The Department has shared this review with industry, intends to monitor research developments, and ensure Industry is aware of options that are being explored both in Australia and internationally.

The literature review is publicly available on the NSW DPI website.

**Animal welfare codes of practice**

- (66) Can the Department advise when the Animal Welfare Code of Practice – Pound & Shelter Code of Practice will be reviewed with public input?

**ANSWER**

The Government has committed to reviewing the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979 (POCTAA). A review of standards, guidelines and codes of practice supporting POCTAA will be considered during the legislative reform process.

- (67) Can the Department advise when the Animal Welfare Code of Practice – Breeding Dogs and Cats will be reviewed with public input?

**ANSWER**

Refer to Question 66.

- (68) Can the Department advise when the Animal Welfare Code of Practice – Rodeo Code of Practice will be reviewed with public input?

**ANSWER**

Refer to Question 66.

**Regional NSW**

- (69) Considering the limited access to services in regional New South Wales, what commitment has the NSW Government made to urgently increase funding to rural and regional specialist domestic and family violence services to meet demand and ensure accessible services for all victim-survivors regardless of where in NSW they live?

**ANSWER**

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

- (70) On behalf of its disaster-affected regional members, Domestic Violence NSW made submissions to the Inquiry into the response to major flooding across New South Wales in 2022 and the NSW Independent Flood Inquiry. The NSW Government is yet to implement any of the 12 recommendations made to ensure the safety of women and children experiencing domestic and family violence whilst also being impacted by a major natural disaster.
- (a) How will the current NSW Government ensure that NSW disaster management planning includes responses to domestic and family violence?
  - (b) How will the NSW Government ensure that women and children experiencing violence have private, safe and child-friendly spaces in recovery centres, away from perpetrators?
  - (c) What training is being or will be provided to recovery centre volunteers to ensure they can appropriately identify and respond to domestic and family violence?
  - (d) What alternative accommodation will be provided for people at significant risk of violence when a recovery centre is not appropriate?

**ANSWER**

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

- (71) How will the current NSW Government ensure that domestic and family violence services are adequately resourced to provide accessible support to victim-survivors during periods of disaster recovery?

**ANSWER**

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

- (72) Will the current NSW Government work with Gender and Disaster Australia to incorporate the National Gender and Emergency Management Guidelines into NSW disaster planning? If not, why not?

**ANSWER**

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

Sexual Assault.

(73) The Domestic Violence NSW 2023 Regional Forum addressed the urgent need for domestic violence responses embedded in disaster management planning, along with adequate long- term funding for domestic violence responses – can you advise when this will happen?

**ANSWER**

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

**Questions from Ms Sue Higginson MLC**

**AGRICULTURE**

**Forest logging**

- (74) Has any public consultation been undertaken to assess public support for native forest logging?
- (a) If yes, what were the results of that public consultation?
  - (b) If no, why not?

**ANSWER**

Yes.

The North East Regional Forestry Hub recently conducted research, which involved extensive public surveying, to understand more about social license for native forestry in NSW.

This Project was carried out by StollzNow Research, the report can be found at <https://nenswforestryhub.com.au/news-reports/reports/report/7-forestrys-social-licence-to-operate>

- (75) How many employees are there in the NSW Forestry Corporation?
- (a) How many are administrative?
  - (b) How many are directly engaged in forestry operations?
    - i. How many in the softwood division?
    - ii. How many in the hardwood division?
    - iii. How many are engaged in compliance monitoring?
  - (c) How many are neither administrative or directly engaged in forestry operations?
    - i. How many are directly engaged in conservation work?

**ANSWER**

I am advised that employee numbers are reported in the Annual Report each year broken down by office-based and field-based based roles. Annual Reports are on the Forestry Corporation website at <https://www.forestrycorporation.com.au/about/pubs/corporate/annual-report>.

Most staff are directly involved in more than one listed activity. Approximately 345 staff are employed in the Hardwood Forests Division, 243 in the Softwood Plantations Division, 68 in Governance and Assurance and 69 in People and Safety and Finance and Technology.

- (76) How many entities are contracted by the NSW Forestry Corporation to conduct wood harvesting operations?
- (a) List the entities.
  - (b) How many employees, within each entity, are directly engaged in forestry operations?
    - i. How many are working in softwood?
    - ii. How many are working in hardwood?

**ANSWER**

I am advised that at 1 March 2024, there were approximately 33 businesses engaged by Forestry Corporation to carry out timber harvesting, not including stumpage operations, where harvesting contractors are engaged by the customer.

- (a) At 1 March 2024, the businesses engaged by Forestry Corporation to carry out timber harvesting were:
- Bassover Pty Ltd
  - Black Bear Logging
  - Bloomfield Timber Industries
  - Boss Logging
  - Brian Smith Timber Transport Pty Ltd
  - Burgundy Heights Pty Ltd
  - C3 Australia Pty Ltd
  - Cooper Logging Pty Ltd
  - D T Richards Pty Ltd
  - Forest Enterprises Development & Consultancy Pty Ltd
  - G & J Groves Pty Ltd
  - Greensill Bros Pty Ltd
  - Harvestco Pty Ltd
  - Haulers & Fallers Pty Ltd
  - High Country Forestry Pty Ltd
  - Hoffmans Timberline Pty Ltd



I&L Logging  
 LW & CK Cocks  
 Mangan Logging Pty Ltd  
 MC Logging Pty Ltd  
 Monaro Forest Harvesters Pty Ltd  
 Newells Creek Logging Pty Ltd  
 Osborne Harvesting  
 P&T Lonergan Pty Ltd  
 Pine Harvesters Pty Ltd  
 Progressive Felling Services  
 Qorona Australis Pty Ltd  
 Qube Forestry Pty Ltd  
 Rosin Developments (Logging) Pty Ltd  
 Staffords Logging  
 Silvertop Logging Pty Ltd  
 Tawmar Timber Pty Ltd  
 Two Matts Pty Ltd

- (b) Forestry Corporation does not compile or maintain information on employees engaged by third parties who carry out services under contract.
- i. Approximately 18 businesses are engaged by Forestry Corporation in harvesting hardwood timber, not including stumpage operations where contractors are engaged by customers. Some contractors hold contracts for both hardwood and softwood harvesting.
  - ii. Approximately 17 businesses are engaged by Forestry Corporation in harvesting softwood timber, including some contractors who hold contracts for both hardwood and softwood harvesting.

For further information, refer to <https://www.forestrycorporation.com.au/about/right-to-information/contracts-held>

- (77) How many sites have been identified as being appropriate for new development of plantation timber?
- (a) What is the total area identified in NSW as being appropriate for plantation timber?
  - (b) How many sites within the estate currently managed by the Forestry Corporation?
    - i. What is the total area of these sites?
  - (c) How many sites are there that are not within the estate currently managed by the Forestry Corporation?
    - i. What is the total area of these sites?

## ANSWER

I am advised:

- (a) Based on data from three Forestry Hub reports, projections suggest that 2.2 million ha have been identified as technically suitable for potential plantation establishment. The identification process doesn't consider any current or future land use restrictions, for example land use conflicts and the requirement to preserve agricultural land.
- (b) The estate managed by Forestry Corporation consists of native forests and timber plantations. The plantations within this estate are continually replanted. The area of plantations within the Forestry Corporation estate is reported in the Sustainability Report each year. Sustainability Reports are on the Forestry Corporation website at <https://www.forestrycorporation.com.au/about/pubs/corporate/sustainability-reports>

(c) In FY24 Forestry Corporation has purchased approximately 6,500 hectares of land including areas of existing plantations as well as land suitable for plantation establishment.

(78) Is there a forecast shortfall of timber supplies?

- (a) What is the projected shortfall of hardwood?
  - i. List the projected shortfall for each timber type based on use.
- (b) What is the projected shortfall of softwood?
  - i. List the projected shortfall for each timber type based on use.

**ANSWER**

I am advised that issues relating to Australia being a net importer of timber and forecasts of increasing domestic demand over coming years have been discussed through recent Commonwealth and NSW Parliamentary Inquiries, complemented by research from bodies such as ABARES.

The ‘Economic potential for new plantation establishment in Australia: Outlook to 2025’ report by ABARES published in 2019 indicates there may be a domestic shortfall situation for softwood by 2025.

In 2021, domestic production is calculated to have produced 3.619 million m<sup>3</sup> of sawn timber products. By 2046 to 2050, the gap between annual average sawn softwood demand of 6.507 million m<sup>3</sup> and modelled domestic production capacity will be around 2.638 million m<sup>3</sup> per annum.

Import supply at that level would represent 40.5% of total demand.

If imports were to be the sole source of supply to meet the implied gap in 2050 this would represent some 40.5% of Australia’s apparent consumption, compared to the historic level averaging 19.7%.

(Reference Forest & Wood Products Australia (FWPA) 2022)

Forestry Corporation provides annual reporting on sustainability which is available on the Forestry Corporation website

- (79) What entities have been consulted with in relation to the development of an action plan for the industry?
  - (a) When did the development of the plan commence?
  - (b) When did consultation with entities commence?

**ANSWER**

The development of the Forestry Industry Action Plan is in its formative stages and is being led by The Cabinet Office with representation across NSW Government.

The Plan will be informed by stakeholder engagement over the coming months.

- (80) What specific actions have been undertaken since March 2023 to reduce the chances of Forestry Corporation breaching conditions under the CIFOA?
- (a) Have any work policies been updated since March 2023?
    - i. If yes, which ones?
  - (b) Have any new compliance policies been updated since 2023?
    - i. If yes, which ones?
  - (c) Have any additional employees been dedicated to compliance activities since 2023?
    - i. If yes, how many and in which regions?
  - (d) Have any additional employees been provided to conduct broad area habitat surveys?
    - i. If yes, how many and in which regions?
  - (e) How many operations have been subject to complaint by the public or other entities since March 2023?
    - i. How many complaints relate to a breach of the CIFOA?
    - ii. List the compartment numbers and State Forests that have been subject to a complaint?
  - (f) How many instances of written correspondence from the Minister to the Forestry Corporation since March 2023 have identified a need to ensure compliance with rules governing native forest logging?
    - i. List the dates of correspondence?
  - (g) How many instances of written correspondence from the Minister to the Forestry Corporation have occurred since March 2023?
    - i. List the dates of the correspondence?
  - (h) How many times has the Minister communicated to the Forestry Corporation since March 2023 a need to ensure compliance with rules governing native forest logging?

## ANSWER

I am advised:

- (a) Forestry Corporation regularly updates operating procedures in response to improved systems and processes, new information and new regulatory requirements.
  - i. Operating procedures that relate to forest mapping and harvesting.
- (b) No.
- (c) Compliance forms part of the responsibilities of many roles. In 2020-21 a dedicated compliance unit was set up to focus on enhancing the Corporation's compliance with the CIFOA. No additional positions have been required since March 2023.
- (d) Broad area habitat searches are conducted in all areas where CIFOA harvesting operations take place, unless impenetrable understorey restricts safe access. No additional positions have been required since March 2023.
- (e) Information is not recorded in this way.
  - i-ii. This question should be directed to the Minister for Environment.
- (f) I expect Forestry Corporation, and all State-owned corporations, operate in line with the relevant legislation.
- (g) The Minister and her office correspond with Forestry Corporation on an ongoing basis.
- (h) Refer to Question 80(f)

- (81) Who is Forestry Corporation “proper”, as referred to by the Minister on page 27 of the transcript?  
(a) List the people and their positions.

**ANSWER**

Forestry Corporation’s executive structure is set out in its Annual Report.

- (82) What is the Forestry Corporation’s policy and process for employees that are misleading the public?

**ANSWER**

Forestry Corporation expects employees to adhere to the Code of Conduct which is published on its website at <https://www.forestrycorporation.com.au/about/policies>

- (83) What protocol exists to support employees of the Forestry Corporation who witness a violent crime?  
(a) Has counselling been offered to any employees of Forestry Corporation in relation to the assault committed against Mark Graham?

**ANSWER**

I am advised that all Forestry Corporation staff have access to a confidential Employee Assistance Program, which includes counselling services.

- (84) What protocols exist to support members of the public who are victims of violent crime at the hands of Forestry Corporation employees and contractors?

**ANSWER**

I am advised that criminal matters are referred to the NSW Police.

- (85) What requirements for training in de-escalation exist for Forestry Corporation employees and contractors?  
(a) What free and voluntary courses exist for training Forestry Corporation employees and contractors in de-escalation?

**ANSWER**

I am advised that authorised officers carry out mandatory training which includes discussion of de-escalation of confrontations.

Forestry Corporation has also engaged a third-party training provider to deliver training to staff and contractors in managing difficult stakeholder interactions, which included strategies for de-escalating confrontations in protest situations.

- (86) Are employees and contractors for the Forestry Corporation allowed to continue working in public areas after being charged with a violent crime against a member of the public?  
(a) What are the risk management procedures for allowing this?  
(b) Are employees and contractors that have been stood down pending investigation for violent assault still paid?

**ANSWER**

I am advised that any alleged criminal conduct is a matter for police and ultimately the courts, underpinned by the presumption of innocence and right to a fair trial.

In relation to employment with Forestry Corporation, alleged misconduct would be considered on a case-by-case basis, having regard to evidence and the code of conduct.

(87) What is the current average return cycle for native forest logging?

**ANSWER**

Return cycles are highly variable and depend on the region, forest type and various other factors relating to the merchantability of timber.

(88) What proportion of the public native forest estate has been logged over the last:

- (a) 10 years?
- (b) 20 years?
- (c) 30 years?
- (d) 40 years?
- (e) 50 years?

**ANSWER**

The public native forest estate includes approximately 5.6 million hectares on nature conservation reserve tenure and 1.9 million hectares on multiple-use public forest tenure. On average, 1-2 per cent of the State forest estate is harvested each year, which is approximately 0.2 per cent of the total public native forest estate.

Information in relation to harvesting of native forests is also provided in the Sustainability Report, available on the Forestry Corporation website.

(89) What is the current gross capacity for annual carbon recovery in public native forests?

- (a) What is the total estimated carbon emissions from public native forest logging?
  - i. List carbon emissions by source?

**ANSWER**

The public native forest estate includes approximately 5.6 million hectares on nature conservation reserve tenure and 1.9 million hectares on multiple-use public forest tenure (State forests). Annual carbon sequestration in State forests is reported by Forestry Corporation (see the 2022-23 Sustainability Report [Page 19] <https://www.forestrycorporation.com.au/about/pubs/corporate/sustainability-reports>).

Greenhouse gas emissions that arise as a result of native forest harvest relate primarily to the use of fossil fuels in heavy machinery required for harvest and haulage activities and are significantly less than one percent.

Any loss of carbon from trees is biogenic and in a sustainably managed forest system considered to be neutral (i.e., any loss of carbon is offset by sequestration happening within the broader forest estate). This is the basis of the related Montreal Process indicator and measurement of carbon in NSW and Australian forests (e.g., <https://www.forestrycorporation.com.au/old11992200/our-forests/carbon-and-forests>), the FCNSW Sustainability Report (<https://www.forestrycorporation.com.au/about/pubs/corporate/sustainability-reports>) and SOFR reporting (Indicator 5.1a: Contribution of forest ecosystems and forest industries to the global greenhouse gas balance)).

To have confidence in the values used, carbon accounting is based on a Life Cycle Assessment framework. This process recognises different elements in considering carbon in native forests.

Information in relation to annual carbon sequestration in State forests this is provided in the Sustainability Report, available on the Forestry Corporation website.

- (90) Have any estimates been produced that show potential annual carbon recovery if public native forests were not subject to logging?  
 (a) What are those estimates?

### ANSWER

Yes.

There are a range of disturbance factors that have an impact on carbon sequestration in native forests. At a landscape level, by far the biggest driver of carbon losses are bushfires.

This is clearly evidenced in work commissioned by the Natural Resources Commission in NSW on the carbon balance of NSW forests

(<https://www.nrc.nsw.gov.au/Carbon%20balance%20of%20NSW%20forests%20-%20Project%20CC1%20-%20Update%20report.pdf?downloadable=1>).

A holistic Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) approach, along the value chain and not just in the forest, is designed to track greenhouse gas (GHG) emission impacts throughout the life of the product or production system. This is regardless of which industry sector generates them (Ximenes - Carbon dynamics in native forests – a brief review; [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/354692134\\_Carbon\\_dynamics\\_in\\_native\\_forests\\_-\\_a\\_brief\\_review](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/354692134_Carbon_dynamics_in_native_forests_-_a_brief_review)).

Research regarding the carbon balance in actively managed forests includes:

- Carbon dynamics in native forests - a brief review (2021)  
[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/354692134\\_Carbon\\_dynamics\\_in\\_native\\_forests\\_-\\_a\\_brief\\_review](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/354692134_Carbon_dynamics_in_native_forests_-_a_brief_review)
- Carbon stocks and flows in native forests and harvested wood products in SE Australia (2016)  
[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/286924370\\_Carbon\\_stocks\\_and\\_flows\\_in\\_native\\_forests\\_and\\_harvested\\_wood\\_products\\_in\\_SE\\_Australia\\_httpwwwfwpacomauiimagresresourcesAmended\\_Final\\_report\\_C\\_native\\_forests\\_PNC285-1112pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/286924370_Carbon_stocks_and_flows_in_native_forests_and_harvested_wood_products_in_SE_Australia_httpwwwfwpacomauiimagresresourcesAmended_Final_report_C_native_forests_PNC285-1112pdf)
- Greenhouse gas balance of native forests in New South Wales, Australia (2012)  
[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/274436002\\_Greenhouse\\_Gas\\_Balance\\_of\\_Native\\_Forests\\_in\\_New\\_South\\_Wales\\_Australia](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/274436002_Greenhouse_Gas_Balance_of_Native_Forests_in_New_South_Wales_Australia)

- (91) Since August 2019, how many Greater Glider den trees have been identified by the Forestry Corporation during general operations and specifically during Broad Area Habitat Surveys?  
 (a) How many hectares of high density Greater Glider habitat has been logged in that time?  
 (b) How many hectares of low density Greater Glider habitat has been logged in

that time?

**ANSWER**

I am advised that all Forestry Corporation records of threatened species and subject species are published on the NSW Bionet Atlas. Forestry Corporation only records den trees when they meet the specific definition set out in the CIFOA. The search methodology is not linked with the record.

The NSW Environment Protection Authority established and defined high-density greater glider habitat and low-density greater glider habitat zones in the CIFOA protocol amendment made on 2 February 2024.

- (92) Since 1 January 2019, in Broad Area Habitat Searches, how many of the following have been identified by the Forestry Corporation:
- (a) Southern Greater Glider dens
    - i. Number per state forest?
  - (b) Yellow-bellied Glider dens
    - i. Number per state forest?
  - (c) Squirrel Glider dens

- i. Number per state forest?
- (d) Spotted-tailed Quoll dens
  - i. Number per state forest?
- (e) Brush-tailed Phascogale dens
  - i. Number per state forest?
- (f) Glossy-black Cockatoo nests
  - i. Number per state forest?
- (g) Barking Owl nests
  - i. Number per state forest?
- (h) Masked Owl nests
  - i. Number per state forest?
- (i) Sooty Owl nests
  - i. Number per state forest?

**ANSWER**

All Forestry Corporation records of threatened species and subject species are published on the NSW Bionet Atlas. The search methodology is not linked with the record.

- (93) How many hectares of public native forest have been subject to Broad Area Habitat Searches since the CIFOA came into effect?

**ANSWER**

I am advised that broad area habitat searches are conducted in all areas where CIFOA harvesting operations take place, unless impenetrable understorey restricts safe access.

- (94) For Myrtle State Forest:
- (a) How many hectares in each forest have been subject to Broad Area Habitat Searches?
  - (b) How many Koala records (including Koala scats) have been made, and what management action is required in response to any records?
  - (c) How many records were made of other threatened species, how many of each species, how many dens or nests for each threatened species?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

- (a) Broad area habitat searches are conducted in all areas where CIFOA harvesting operations take place, unless impenetrable understorey restricts safe access.
  - (b) All Forestry Corporation records of threatened species and subject species are published on the NSW Bionet Atlas. The CIFOA sets out the management action required in response to records of specific species. The CIFOA is published in full on the EPA website.
  - (c) All Forestry Corporation records of threatened species and subject species are published on the NSW Bionet Atlas.
- (95) For Braemar State Forest:
- (a) How many hectares in each forest have been subject to Broad Area Habitat Searches?
  - (b) How many Koala records (including Koala scats) have been made, and what management action is required in response to any records?
  - (c) How many records were made of other threatened species, how many of



each species, how many dens or nests for each threatened species?

### ANSWER

- (a) Broad area habitat searches are conducted in all areas where CIFOA harvesting operations take place, unless impenetrable understorey restricts safe access.
- (b) All Forestry Corporation records of threatened species and subject species are published on the NSW Bionet Atlas. The CIFOA sets out the management action required in response to records of specific species. The CIFOA is published in full on the EPA website.
- (c) All Forestry Corporation records of threatened species and subject species are published on the NSW Bionet Atlas.

### Rice Blast

- (96) When did the Department first become aware of the presence of Blast in the Northern Rivers?
- (a) How did the Department communicate to agriculturalists about the presence of Blast on the Northern Rivers?
    - i. When did this occur?
    - ii. Where did this occur?
  - (b) Has there been any communication from the Department to agriculturalists on the Northern Rivers since the initial discovery and communication about Blast?
    - i. List the instances of communication?
  - (c) What information has been provided to rice growers in the Northern Rivers about the presence of Blast?
    - i. Where is that information accessible?
    - ii. What communication has occurred from the Department to rice growers on the Northern Rivers in connection with the latest outbreak of Blast?

### ANSWER

I am advised that 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. Prior to this, there had been no detection of rice blast disease in rice in NSW.

- (a) DPI was in ongoing phone and email contact with a leading grower and consultant in the region who acted as the conduit between DPI and the northern growers.
- (b) In addition to the liaison mentioned above, LLS visited impacted farms on 20 February 2024 during which further samples were collected and submitted to assist the investigation, DPI and LLS provided a thorough presentation to the northern rice growers on 23 February 2024 and answered questions around the history of rice blast and management, and DPI has continued to liaise with growers across the state about rice blast.
- (c) As well as communicating with growers via one-on-one discussions, presentations and social media, DPI has updated its website including the rice blast fact sheet (Primesheet) which has been widely distributed through rice industry communication channels. It can be found here: [Rice blast \(nsw.gov.au\)](https://www.nsw.gov.au/rice-blast)

**Fire Ants**

- (97) What steps is the Government taking to stop and reverse the spread of fire ants in Wardell?
- (a) Will the Department inspect all post-flood construction sites for fire ants?
  - (b) Are there any precautions being undertaken for unoccupied properties and the lack of residents able to monitor the properties?

**ANSWER**

I am advised that DPI in partnership with the National Fire Ant Response Team have quickly controlled and delimited the nests at Wardell. The ants are not able to spread any further at Wardell and surveillance indicates that this site is limited to the immediate incursion site. The area will be also subject to broadscale baiting to address any undiscovered nests. There is a 5km movement control zone established around the site. In addition to this work, DPI has also undertaken extensive tracing, investigation and compliance work to address the potential source of the infestation.

- (a) DPI has inspected all 11 Reconstruction Authority temporary housing villages linked to the Wardell infestation. All were found negative for red imported fire ants.
  - (b) DPI has been working closely with the Reconstruction Authority to ensure that they have the information they need to effectively surveil properties they are managing. The Reconstruction Authority has been an active member of the Incident Management Team during this response. DPI has also been doing extensive public engagement activities to increase public awareness and also working directly with councils that may be involved in managing unoccupied properties.
- (98) Has any work been undertaken to assess the impact of fire ants continuing to spread and potentially becoming an endemic pest?
- (a) Can the Department say if management practice would change if it became and endemic pest?
  - (b) What would the financial cost be if the pest became endemic?
  - (c) If the pest were to become endemic, has the department identified priority exclusion zones?
    - i. Are these zones predominantly agricultural?
    - ii. Has the Department been in contact with NPWS about priority protection areas for National Parks?

**ANSWER**

I am advised: Yes.

- (a) Yes.  
Regular control treatments would be required in perpetuity in all parts of Australia that provide suitable habitat for fire ants.
- (b) Containing the spread of fire ants will provide an estimated economic benefit of around \$1.65 billion per year in avoided costs and impacts.
- (c) No.
  - i. Any open areas of lawn, paddock, pasture or grassland are highly suitable habitat for fire ants, therefore priority exclusion zones could be agricultural, residential, public, recreational or protected.
  - ii. No.  
However areas of dense vegetation such as majority parts of many protected areas are not suitable habitat for fire ants. Any cleared areas such as camping grounds or open grassy woodland or grasslands and beaches would be

susceptible.

### **Agricultural chemicals**

- (99) What work is underway to work with the APVMA to review regulations relating to agricultural chemicals?
- (a) Has there been any direction from the Government that there should be a review of chemicals that are banned in other countries?

### **ANSWER**

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

- (a) The APVMA consults with representatives from State and Territory governments throughout the review process, including prioritisation. Regular updates are provided quarterly to the Registration Liaison Committee, of which DPI is a member. The APVMA also consults with state and territory governments when a regulatory decision is proposed and published for public consultation.

As part of this process chemicals banned in other countries, and the reasons for such bans are considered, along with issues including chemistry, environment, health, residues, trade and spray drift.

- (100) Is the Department aware of the report showing up to 174 pesticides in the Richmond River produced by Southern Cross University Researchers?
- (a) What work is the Department undertaking in response to traces of a chemical, fungicide benomyl, that was banned almost 20 years ago?
- (b) Is the Department investigating what records of agriculture have been lost as a result of flooding in the Northern Rivers?
- i. Would the Department be helped if there was a live, centralised and digital tracking of agricultural chemical use?
  - ii. Has any work been conducted into establishing that system?

### **ANSWER**

I am advised that the reported paper by Southern Cross University researchers was published in January 2024.

- (a) The EPA regulates the use of pesticides in NSW, under the *Pesticides Act 1999*. Therefore, they have the authority to investigate issues such as misuse or illegal use of pesticides in NSW.
- (b) DPI is not investigating what records of agriculture have been lost as a result of flooding in the Northern Rivers.
- i. DPI is not likely to be helped if there was live, centralised and digital tracking of agricultural chemical use, as the EPA is the regulatory authority for pesticide use in NSW.
  - ii. DPI has not conducted any work into establishing such a system as the EPA is the regulatory authority for pesticide use in NSW.
- (101) Has the Department undertaken any work in relation to spray drift in the Narromine-Trangie area?
- (a) Has there been any work beyond education campaigns?
  - (b) Has the Department been in contact with the EPA in relation to spray drift?
  - (c) Has the Department approached any organic agriculturalists about the impact that spray drift is having on their products?

**ANSWER**

I am advised that the Narromine-Trangie spray drift issue is being managed by the EPA as they are the regulatory authority for pesticide use in NSW.

- (a) DPI provides education and training on the use of agricultural chemicals, which fulfils the EPA's requirement for chemical users to be qualified to use pesticides in NSW. Work beyond training and education remains within the authority of the EPA.

LLS also contributes to the co-design of EPA engagement and awareness programs.

- (b) DPI has met with the EPA and landholders in the Narromine-Trangie area regarding spray drift.
- (c) As regulation of pesticides, including spray drift, is within the authority of the EPA, the department has not approached organic agriculturalists about the impact of spray drift on their products.

(102) Has there been any assessment by the Department about the risks of certain chemicals being used that are banned in markets like the EU?

**ANSWER**

I am advised that detailed risk assessments are conducted by the APVMA prior to product registration and through the review process.

The Department discusses use of chemicals banned in markets like the EU with the Commonwealth DAFF, in relation to conditions of trade with those countries.

DPI continues to work with industry on projects such as Integrated Pest Management that seek to reduce or avoid chemical usage.

**Rural Boundary Clearing Code**

(103) When will the Government review the Rural Boundary Clearing Code?

- (a) How many councils haven't got the required biodiversity mapping in place to protect threatened species habitat?
- (b) How much land has been cleared under the code?
- (c) Will the Government create a mechanism to allow councils that have opted in to the code to opt out?

**ANSWER**

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

**Rates on Conservation Lands**

- (104) Is there any plan to review the rating system as it applies to private conservation lands?  
(a) If not, why not?

**ANSWER**

No.

All landholders have biosecurity obligations including those under conservation agreements. Local Land Services can provide landholders with biodiversity agreements assistance including information and advice to increase their land management capacity.

**Private Native Forestry**

- (105) How many PNF approvals have been granted since 1 March 2023?

**ANSWER**

I am advised 415.

- (106) How many compliance checks of PNF operations have been conducted by the Department since 1 March 2023?

**ANSWER**

This question should be directed to the Minister for Environment

- (107) How many PNF operations have been and are being investigated for breaches of approvals?

**ANSWER**

This question should be directed to the Minister for Environment.

- (108) How many Councils have contacted the Department requesting oversight of applications for PNF approvals since 1 March 2023?  
(a) If any, which Councils?

**ANSWER**

None.