



## LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

2023-24-25

FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT

# QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

No. 460

THURSDAY 20 MARCH 2025

(The Questions and Answers Paper published on Monday to Friday of each week will contain, by number and title, all questions to which answers have been received the previous day and any new questions asked that day. Consequently, the full text of any question will be printed only twice: when notice is given; and, when answered.)

Notice given on date shown.

| <b>Publication of Questions</b>                     | <b>Answer to be lodged by</b> |
|---|-------------------------------|
| Q & A No. 445 (Including Question Nos 3387 to 3387) | 20 March 2025                 |
| Q & A No. 446 (Including Question Nos 3388 to 3392) | 21 March 2025                 |
| Q & A No. 447 (Including Question Nos 3393 to 3393) | 24 March 2025                 |
| Q & A No. 448 (Questions—Nil)                       | -                             |
| Q & A No. 449 (Questions—Nil)                       | -                             |
| Q & A No. 450 (Including Question Nos 3394 to 3408) | 27 March 2025                 |
| Q & A No. 451 (Including Question Nos 3409 to 3410) | 28 March 2025                 |
| Q & A No. 452 (Including Question Nos 3411 to 3421) | 31 March 2025                 |
| Q & A No. 453 (Including Question Nos 3422 to 3423) | 1 April 2025                  |
| Q & A No. 454 (Including Question Nos 3424 to 3425) | 2 April 2025                  |
| Q & A No. 455 (Including Question Nos 3426 to 3426) | 3 April 2025                  |
| Q & A No. 456 (Questions—Nil)                       | -                             |
| Q & A No. 457 (Including Question Nos 3427 to 3444) | 7 April 2025                  |
| Q & A No. 458 (Including Question Nos 3445 to 3455) | 8 April 2025                  |
| Q & A No. 459 (Including Question Nos 3456 to 3456) | 9 April 2025                  |
| Q & A No. 460 (Including Question Nos 3457 to 3460) | 10 April 2025                 |

**27 FEBRUARY 2025**

(Paper No. 445)

\* 3387 ENVIRONMENT—BRUMBY POPULATION COUNT—The Hon. Rod Roberts to ask the Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage—

- (1) At the Animal Welfare Committee's inquiry hearing on 31 July 2024 for the proposed aerial shooting of brumbies in Kosciuszko National Park, you stated that a brumby population count would be conducted in October 2024. To that end, could you please advise:
- (a) when the brumby population count was completed?
  - (b) how many brumbies were counted in the Kosciuszko National Park?
  - (c) were these numbers publicly released?
    - (i) If not, why?

Answer—

- (1)
- (a) The field work for the annual aerial population survey of wild horses in Kosciuszko National Park (the park) was completed in November 2024.
  - (b) The final population estimate is still being analysed, although preliminary estimates indicate around 3,000 to 4,000 wild horses in the park. These numbers may change once the independent review is complete.
  - (c) The final population estimate has not yet been publicly released.
    - (i) Analysis of the population survey results has taken longer than previous surveys, as two additional methods were trialled alongside the Distance Sampling method that has been used in previous years. As with previous surveys, the survey results are peer-reviewed by independent experts from the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) and the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries. Once the peer review has been completed, the survey report will be finalised and made publicly available on the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water website.

**20 MARCH 2025**

(Paper No. 460)

3457 AGRICULTURE—FARM ANIMAL DEATHS DUE TO DEHYDRATION—The Hon. Emma Hurst to ask the Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales—

- (1) This week, it was reported that hundreds of cows and calves died of dehydration in two separate incidents in Queensland in January 2025. Is the Government aware of any incidents of farmed animals, including cows, dying from dehydration at animal agribusiness facilities in the past 12 months?
- (a) If so, could you please provide details, including any action taken in response to these deaths?
- (2) What action is the Government taking to prevent incidents of farmed animals suffering and dying from dehydration in New South Wales, particularly over the hot summer months?

3458 ROADS—CLOSURE OF WOLGAN VALLEY ROAD—The Hon. John Ruddick to ask the Special Minister of State, Minister for Transport, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy representing the Minister for Roads, and Minister for Regional Transport—

- (1) The closure of Wolgan Valley Road following extreme rainfall in late 2022 has severely impacted the Wolgan Valley and Lithgow community. The Emirates One&Only Resort in Wolgan Valley is

closed and formerly employed about 50 Lithgow locals who have had to find alternate employment. Other tourist operators in the Valley are similarly impacted and have had to close their doors or adjust to reduced business. Tourist access to the area is now limited with no public access to the valley. The timeframe for a new road to be opened has been delayed to early 2031. What is the current State Government expenditure on Wolgan Valley Road since its closure in November 2022?

- (2) What is the anticipated cost of the new road proposed by Lithgow Council?
- (3) We understand issues have been raised with the slope risk analysis used to justify the original closure and the proposed new road, and that a recent review of the slope risk analysis found severe deficiencies with the report and methodology used. Given the report is the reason for the closure, will the government be seeking recompense from the consultants responsible?
  - (a) Will the government be offering compensation to affected businesses and property holders for a closure that could have been avoided?
- (4) Consultants have put the cost to remediate hazards on the old road to a marginal tolerable risk level at about \$50 million. Why was this approach not further explored, given the huge costs involved in constructing a new road which would still be subject to substantial geotechnical risk?
- (5) Wiseman's Ferry Road suffered similar landslides to Wolgan Valley Road following flooding in 2022. The road has similar geotechnical issues to Wolgan Valley Road but has remained open to public traffic through the period of construction and repair. The total cost of repairs along Wiseman's Ferry Road are running towards \$50 million, including \$18 million for reconstruction of the historic Thomas James Bridge. The works are expected to be completed in 2026. Why was this approach not used for the Wolgan Valley Road?
- (6) Has the proposed \$500 million plus expenditure proposed for the new Wolgan Valley Road been properly justified, especially since a review of the risk analysis used to close the road has been shown to be flawed?

3459 ENVIRONMENT—LICENCES TO HARM NATIVE ANIMALS—The Hon. Emma Hurst to ask the Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage—

- (1) In 2024, how many licence to harm applications were:
  - (a) granted?
  - (b) renewed?
  - (c) varied?
  - (d) refused?
  - (e) suspended?
- (2) Broken down by species, what is the total number of animals allowed to be harmed or killed pursuant to licences to harm in 2024?
- (3) Broken down by species, how many animals were reported as killed pursuant to a licence to harm in 2024?
- (4) Broken down by different methods used, what methods were used to harm or kill animals pursuant to licences to harm in 2024?
- (5) How does the Government ensure accurate reporting of the number of animals killed under licences to harm?
- (6) How many site inspections did NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) conduct in respect to licence to harm applications in 2024?
- (7) Are site inspections conducted for every application, or for any applications?
  - (a) If not, why?
- (8) How does NPWS verify claims of serious threats to safety, damage, or economic hardship before issuing licences to harm?

- (9) How does NPWS verify that non-lethal alternatives have been investigated and implemented, or determine that non-lethal alternatives are not suitable or feasible, before granting a licence to harm?
- (10) What compliance and enforcement activities has NPWS undertaken generally regarding licences to harm?
- (11) How are complaints of non-compliance with licences to harm investigated?
- (12) How many complaints were received in 2024 regarding potential non-compliance licences to harm?
  - (a) What action, if any, was taken in response to these complaints and the outcome?
- (13) How does NPWS ensure landholders are not harming protected animals without a licence?
- (14) Does the Government collect data on how many of the native birds listed in clause 2.21 are harmed each year in those areas where licences are not required?
- (15) How is compliance with clause 2.2.1 monitored and enforced by the Government?
- (16) The exemption under section 6A of the Game and Feral Animal Control Act does not apply to the Biodiversity Conservation Act. What actions has the Government taken to ensure that individuals harming or killing native game birds are appropriately licensed under both regimes?

3460 LOCAL GOVERNMENT—COMPANION ANIMALS FUND—The Hon. Emma Hurst to ask the Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Western New South Wales representing the Minister for Local Government—

- (1) Providing a breakdown per council, per year, how much did each council in New South Wales receive from the Companion Animals Fund in the last three years?

David Blunt AM  
Clerk of the Parliaments