LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

QUESTIONS

AND

ANSWERS

No. 91

THURSDAY 24 FEBRUARY 2005

(The Questions and Answers Paper published for the first sitting day in each week will contain, by number and title, all unanswered questions, together with questions to which answers have been received on the previous sitting and any new questions. On subsequent days, new questions are printed, as are questions to which answers were received the previous day. Consequently the full text of any question will be printed only twice: when notice is given; and, when answered.)

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24 FEBRUARY 2005

(Paper No. 91)

2069 HEALTH—PREGNANCY TERMINATION DATA—Revd Mr Nile to ask the Minister for Education and Training representing the Minister for Health—

(1) What predictions does the Government have regarding future New South Wales abortion rates?

(2) Does the Government have any statistical data on the long-term effects on women’s emotional and physical health post abortion?

(3) Has the Government recognised the growing body of scientific data linking abortion to mental illness and breast cancer?

(4) What is the Government’s definition of a ‘late term abortion’?

(5) How much does the State Government contribute to abortion services in New South Wales?

(6) What is the market structure of the ‘private abortion sector’ and how are they accredited?

(7) What controls does the Government have in place with regard to counselling procedures?

(8) What is the predicted impact of mandatory counselling on abortion rates in New South Wales?

2070 EDUCATION—BEACON HILL HIGH SCHOOL—Revd Mr Nile to ask the Minister for Education and Training—

(1) How did the Department of Education and Training decide to close Beacon Hill High School following extensive community consultation, including the initial review into secondary education on the northern beaches which received 53 submissions from various interested parties and not one submission mentioned or recommended the closure or sale of a school?

(2) According to freedom of information documents provided, Beacon Hill High School was an integral component of the new education plan in May 2000. In June 2000, only one month later, Beacon Hill High School was scheduled for closure.

(a) Are there any documents which explain the change of view and subsequent approval?

(b) If so, what are these documents and can they be made available to RBHHSC?

(3) The Ombudsman’s report dated 22 April 2004 confirmed that a School Closures Review Committee was not established for Beacon Hill High School. Why weren’t the Principal and P&C President of Beacon Hill High School not notified of the establishment of the School Closures Review Committee as per section 28 (3) of the Education Act 1990?

(4) The Crown Solicitor’s advice dated 10 December 2003 states that, “you instruct me that the Minister established a School Closures Review Committee within 21 days of the announcement”. Why did the Department of Education and Training incorrectly advise the Crown Solicitor that a School Closures Review Committee was established for Beacon Hill High School?

(5) Why were the other six schools nominated for closure on the same day as Beacon Hill given the benefit of a review by the School Closures Review Committee?
(6) The Department of Education and Training (DET) advised the school community in June 2000 that no year 7 enrolments would be accepted at Beacon Hill High School in 2001. Why did DET commence the closure of Beacon Hill High School 12 months prior to obtaining the Minister’s formal approval on 14 June 2001?

(7) The previous Minister, the Honourable Dr Andrew Refshauge, subsequently advised in writing that Beacon Hill High School was closed under section 28(10)(b), which states that a school can be closed “if the majority of the parents of children attending the school approve of the closure”.

(a) Is there any written evidence that the majority of parents approved of the school closure?
(b) If not, why not?

(8) DGS 03/3231 states, “The formal process for the closure of Beacon Hill High School began some 18 months before the intended date. All parents received a formal notification and were asked if they had objections.”

(a) Did DET provide this document to the Beacon Hill High School parents, students and community?
(b) Can DET provide a copy of the notification?

2071 COMMERCE—FINANCIAL VIABILITY OF CONTRACTORS—Ms Rhiannon to ask the Special Minister of State, Minister for Commerce, Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, Assistant Treasurer, and Vice-President of the Executive Council—

(1) How many principal contractors to the NSW Government and subcontractors to those contractors have entered into voluntary administration:

(a) Been declared bankrupt?
(b) In the last five years?

(2) (a) What are the names of those companies?
(b) What goods or services was each company contracted to deliver?

(3) What tests does the Government apply to determine the financial viability of a company applying to work on a government project or provide a government service?

(4) Does the collapse of the Walters Corporation indicate that there is a problem with how the assessment of companies applying for work with the Government is undertaken?

(5) Does the pre-qualification process that companies must satisfy in order to win a contract from the NSW Government need to be made more stringent to avoid bankruptcy proceedings, so that companies and their workers do not suffer the same fate as the recently bankrupted Walter Corporation?

2072 HEALTH—NSW AMBULANCE SERVICE—Ms Hale to ask the Minister for Education and Training representing the Minister for Health—

(1) Did the Ambulance Service of New South Wales cancel the contract for Southern Region SLSA Helicopter Service Pty Ltd to provide emergency helicopter services to Wollongong hospital on 10 February 2005 due to continued breaching of the Funding and Performance Agreement?

(2) Why did the Ambulance Service of New South Wales direct CHC, the company now providing helicopter rescue services to Wollongong Hospital, to be based in Albion Park?
(3) Is the Ambulance Service of New South Wales aware that the site in Albion Park has no administrative support and no hanger for the helicopters?

(4) What involvement, if any, did the Ambulance Service of New South Wales have in the preparation of lease agreements for Southern Region SLSA and CHC to use helicopter pads in Coniston and Albion Park?

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2073 NATURAL RESOURCES—WETLANDS—Mr Cohen to ask the Minister for Rural Affairs, Minister for Local Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Lands representing the Minister for Infrastructure and Planning, and Minister for Natural Resources—

(1) Have more than 8,000 ibis chicks perished due to a lack of water in the Gwydir wetlands?

(2) Had the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources agreed to release water from Copeton Dam upstream of the breeding site before this tragedy occurred, but did not release enough water to meet the needs of the nesting birds, despite requests for larger flows to be released?

(3) Were 95% of the reed beds in the Macquarie Marshes burnt at a time when insufficient water was present in the marshes?

(4) Given the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources plays a major role in the management of both of these sites, what is the Department doing to remediate them and ensure that situations such as these never happen again?

(5) Given there had been recent rainfall in the Gwydir Catchment, why was only 75 megalitres per day initially delivered to the wetland and why was it delivered so late?

(6) What are the reasons for the significant delay in increasing this allocation to 130 megalitres per day?

(7) What steps are Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources now taking to ensure both that this problem is rectified and that it is prevented from happening again in the future?

(8) What action is the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources taking to improve environmental flows and deliver other environmental improvements to the Macquarie Marshes?

(9) Will the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources consider making temporary or permanent modifications to the supplementary water rules for the Macquarie Marshes to increase environmental flows?

(10) What is the strategy that the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources now has to manage the provision of environmental flows now that the National Competition Council has suspended $26 million in competition payments to New South Wales for its failure to provide adequate water for the environment?

(11) Given that no other State has ever had Competition Payments suspended for failing to deliver environmental flows, what are the reasons behind New South Wales being the only State not to deliver the environmental flow requirements specified by the National Competition Council?

(12) What is the response of the NSW Government to the decision by the National Competition Council to suspend compensation payments?

(13) What is the response of the NSW Government to the opinion of the National Competition Council that the environmental allocations of water by the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources are sub-standard and below every other State in Australia?
2074 NATURAL RESOURCES—FORESTRY CLEARING—Mr Cohen to ask the Minister for Rural Affairs, Minister for Local Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Lands representing the Minister for Infrastructure and Planning, and Minister for Natural Resources—

(1) How many hectares as the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources approved for clearing in each month of the past 12 months for each of the Central West and North West Regions, including those for private native forestry?

(2) Has there been any panic clearing in New South Wales in response to the Government’s proposed native vegetation reforms?

2075 ENERGY AND UTILITIES—WATER RESTRICTIONS—Mr Cohen to ask the Minister for Rural Affairs, Minister for Local Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Lands representing the Minister for Energy and Utilities, Minister for Science and Medical Research, Minister Assisting the Minister for Health (Cancer) and Minister Assisting the Premier on the Arts—

(1) How many fines have been issued for residential breaches of water restrictions since their introduction last year?

(2) How many fines have been issued to businesses since their introduction?

(3) Does the Government have any plans to privatise Sydney’s sewerage system?

2076 ENERGY AND UTILITIES—DEMAND MANAGEMENT FUND—Mr Cohen to ask the Minister for Rural Affairs, Minister for Local Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Lands representing the Minister for Energy and Utilities, Minister for Science and Medical Research, Minister Assisting the Minister for Health (Cancer) and Minister Assisting the Premier on the Arts—

(1) Given the operational time of the New South Wales Greenhouse Office and the media reporting on the consideration of a Demand Management Fund, has your department been involved in discussion with the New South Wales Greenhouse Office about a Demand Management Fund to tackle New South Wales’ electricity demand and to help reduce electricity bills for consumers and greenhouse gas emissions?

(2) If not, why not?

(3) If so:
   (i) what were the details of the discussions, and
   (ii) when will the Government act to implement a substantial Demand Management Fund?

2077 ENERGY AND UTILITIES—RENEWABLE ENERGY TECHNOLOGIES—Mr Cohen to ask the Minister for Rural Affairs, Minister for Local Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Lands representing the Minister for Energy and Utilities, Minister for Science and Medical Research, Minister Assisting the Minister for Health (Cancer) and Minister Assisting the Premier on the Arts—

(1) Has the Government recently identified over 6000MW of demand management savings, renewables, gas and co-generation?

(2) Does the Government believe that renewable energy technologies have the potential to replace coal-fired power generation as the major source of the State’s future energy needs?

(3) What action is the NSW Government taking in its role on the Ministerial Council on Energy, which is overseeing amendments to the National Electricity Law and the National Electricity Market to promote reforms which ensure ecologically sustainable development, reductions in greenhouse emissions, obligations to implement Demand Management and consumer protection?
ENERGY AND UTILITIES—DESALINATION—Mr Cohen to ask the Minister for Rural Affairs, Minister for Local Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Lands representing the Minister for Energy and Utilities, Minister for Science and Medical Research, Minister Assisting the Minister for Health (Cancer) and Minister Assisting the Premier on the Arts—

(1) With regard to the Government’s plan to use desalination to meet Sydney’s water needs:
   (a) What is the timing involved in the project?
   (b) What is the scale/size of the project?
   (c) Where will the project be located?
   (d) How much will the project cost?
   (e) What modelling has been done to determine environmental impacts?
   (f) What are the greenhouse implications?
   (g) How will waste products such as brine be disposed of?

(2) Are there any plans for further desalination plants along coastal New South Wales?
   (a) If so:
      (i) What is the timing, scale and size of the project?
      (ii) Where will it/they be located?
      (iii) How much will the project cost?
      (iv) What modelling has been done to determine environmental impacts?
      (v) What are the greenhouse implications?
      (vi) How will waste products such as brine be disposed of?

(3) Are there any plans for desalination plants in inland New South Wales?
   (a) If so:
      (i) What is the timing, scale and size of the project?
      (ii) Where will it be located?
      (iii) How much will the project cost?
      (iv) What modelling has been done to determine environmental impacts?
      (v) What are the greenhouse implications?
      (vi) How will waste products such as brine be disposed of?

(4) What is the total amount spent by the NSW Government on desalination including research and construction?

(5) What is the amount spent on other water saving initiatives such as storm water collection and water efficiency?

ENERGY AND UTILITIES—WASTE WATER—Mr Cohen to ask the Minister for Rural Affairs, Minister for Local Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Lands representing the Minister for Energy and Utilities, Minister for Science and Medical Research, Minister Assisting the Minister for Health (Cancer) and Minister Assisting the Premier on the Arts—

(1) In the Government’s recently announced $560 million dollar package for recycling water in new land releases in Western Sydney, what is it doing to recycle wastewater in existing metropolitan areas and in particular from sewerage treatment plants in Western Sydney?
(2) Minister Sartor has said that water recycling is a major part of the Metropolitan Water Plan. Will this be limited to new land releases only?

(3) The package announced by Minister Sartor claimed that work will start immediately. When will water savings start flowing from this work?

(4) The $560 million project announced is a public-private partnership. Who are the private partners?

(5) Have the private partners been found, or is the Government yet to secure partners?

(6) If private partners have not been secured, what part of the works can start immediately?

(7) (a) Is the Government exploring dual reticulation for greywater use, such as watering gardens, from existing sewerage treatment plants?
(b) If not, why not?
(c) If not, how long will it be before recycled water can be used for greywater reuse purposes across Sydney?