

**1. Mr Lynn asked the Minister for the Environment, The Hon R. J. Debus, MP—**

- (a) How many days were lost at Taronga Zoo in 2002-03 as a result of industrial action? (*Hansard p. 2*)
- (b) How much money has the zoo spent on legal expenses associated with industrial action in 2002-03? (*Hansard p.3*)

**ANSWER**

(a) The Zoological Parks Board of NSW advises that 84 employees at the Zoological Parks Board of NSW participated in 140.72 hours of unauthorised industrial action. On average this amounts to an annual total of 1 hr 40 mins per person taking part industrial action.

(b) The Zoological Parks Board of NSW advises that it has spent a total of \$12,321.75 on legal expenses associated with industrial action in 2002/03.

**2. Mr Pearce asked the Minister for the Environment, The Hon R. J. Debus, MP—**

- (a) Did the Lord Howe Island Board award two contracts to the same shipping company?
- (b) Is there a conflict of interest in relation to this matter? (*Hansard p.6*)

**ANSWER**

I am advised that the answer to both questions is no.

**3. Mr Pearce asked the Minister for the Environment, The Hon R. J. Debus, MP—**

In relation to the spill of 80 tonnes of fuel oil by HMS *Nottingham*, how has the Waterways Authority responded? (*Hansard p.7*)

**ANSWER**

This question should be answered by my colleague the Hon Michael Costa MLC, Minister for Transport Services who administers the Marine Pollution Act 1987.

**4. Mr Cohen asked the Minister for the Environment, The Hon R. J. Debus, MP—**

In the past financial year, how many feral horses have been removed from the Kosciusko National Park since the implementation of the wild horse strategy?  
(*Hansard p.8*)

**ANSWER**

36.

**5. Mr Cohen asked the Minister for the Environment, The Hon R. J. Debus, MP—**

What funding was allocated in the budgets for 2001-02 and 2002-03 for threatened species conservation? (*Hansard p.9*)

**ANSWER**

\$8 million for the 2001-02 budget and the 2002-03 budget. In addition, \$32 million will be allocated over the next four years to the State's Zoos to help the survival chances of threatened species and undertake wildlife captive breeding programs

**6. Mr Cohen asked the Minister for the Environment, The Hon R. J. Debus, MP—**

Can you indicate what resources were allocated to complete the finalisation of recovery plans in the 2002-03 budget? (*Hansard p.10*)

**ANSWER**

It is not possible to give an exact costing as the salary costs for part or all of a number of positions are included. However, resources utilised were salary costs of the National Parks and Wildlife Service officers involved in completing the plans and addressing public submissions made to those plans during the public consultation process including those of the NSW Scientific Committee.

**7. Mr Cohen asked the Minister for the Environment, The Hon R. J. Debus, MP—**

Could you provide details of the actual spending and income of the National Parks and Wildlife Service for the current financial year and the budgeted spending income for the coming financial year to be broken down to the lowest department area level? (*Hansard, p.10*)

**ANSWER**

This question was answered by the Director General at the Estimates Committee hearings and I refer the Honourable Member to the relevant pages of the Hansard. However, I also point out that recurrent funding per hectare of national park in NSW has more than doubled since the 1994-95 Budget. In fact, the rate of increase in per hectare funding has significantly outstripped the overall growth in the national parks estate. There has never, in NSW history, been more funding allocated for national parks than has been the case under the Carr Government.

**8. Mr Cohen asked the Minister for the Environment, The Hon R. J. Debus, MP—**

Could you provide details of the western land acquisition budget for the year 2003-04? (*Hansard p. 11*)

**ANSWER**

The estimated western land acquisition budget for the year 2003/04 is \$6.6 million.



**9. Mr Lynn asked the Minister for the Environment, The Hon R. J. Debus, MP—**

What goods or services did the Environment Protection Authority obtain for the \$14,591.25 that it paid airfare.com.au between 14 April and 28 June 2000 [ostensibly for assistance in the IT section by Ms Rachel Priest]? (*Hansard*, p.12)

**ANSWER**

I am advised that this money was paid to fill a short term vacancy within the EPA's Information Technology Branch to provide IT Helpdesk services.

**10. Mr Lynn asked the Minister for the Environment, The Hon R. J. Debus, MP—**

Can you advise whether it is the Environment Protection Authority's practice to employ a travel agent to carry out work in the Authority's IT section?  
(*Hansard p.12*)

**ANSWER**

I am advised that, on occasions when a short term vacancy arises, it is the practice of the EPA to employ an individual or contractor with the appropriate experience and skills necessary for the position.

**11. Mr Cohen asked the Minister for the Environment, The Hon R. J. Debus, MP—**

- (a) How much did the Hunter River Salinity Trading Scheme make last year?
- (b) What total volume of saline discharge entered the Hunter River last year? (*Hansard p.16*)
- (c) Can you indicate how many times the river salinity exceeded the drinking water standard and also the agricultural standard last year? (*Hansard p.17*)

**ANSWER**

- (a) The Hunter River Salinity Trading Scheme had a shortfall of \$164.75 last financial year. This shortfall will be recovered from scheme participants in the 2003/04 financial year.
- (b) Hunter River Salinity Trading Scheme participants discharged 335 tonnes of salt over the 2002/03 financial year.
- (c) The salinity levels in the Hunter River did not exceed the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines. There is no single agricultural salinity standard for the range of different agricultural uses of irrigation water. The salinity levels in the Hunter River complied with the scheme's targets which are designed to ensure that the water can be used for irrigation.

**12. Mr Cohen asked the Minister for the Environment, The Hon R. J. Debus, MP—**

- (a) Can you indicate how the hexachlorobenzene (HCB) is stored on the Orica site at Botany?
- (b) Can you indicate whether the car park, which used to have signs saying 'Do not pierce the asphalt capping on the car park', is still used for HCB storage?
- (c) Can you provide the Committee with any current information on the condition the system of storage at the site? (*Hansard p. 18*)

**ANSWER**

- (a) I am advised that the bulk of the HCBs are stored on Orica premises in polythene lined steel 205L drums. These drums are stored in a bunded weatherproof building. The remainder of the HCBs are stored in concrete tanks (about 3m high and 2m diameter). The concrete tanks have a steel outer shell. These tanks are stored on a bunded concrete platform. There is also some low level HCB contaminated soil waste stored in the encapsulation below the car park.
- (b) Yes it is, and the signs warning against piercing the capping are still present.
- (c) Yes. I am advised that there is no indication of any adverse impacts arising from the encapsulation.

**13. Mr Cohen asked the Minister for the Environment, The Hon R. J. Debus, MP—**

What was the total allocation for the South Creek pilot study? (*Hansard p. 19*)

**ANSWER**

Approximately \$220,000 has been allocated to the South Creek Pilot study in 2003/04. This includes 1 EFT staff.

**14. Mr Pearce asked the Minister for the Environment, The Hon R. J. Debus, MP—**

Have the security companies that protect Sydney's water supply employed individuals including foreign students on student visas to undertake the security work? (*Hansard*, p.21)

**ANSWER**

The Sydney Catchment Authority (SCA) has appropriate security arrangements in place, based on advice from the NSW Police.

The SCA currently contracts security firms to provide security patrols. The SCA advises me that all these contractors employ personnel licensed under the *Security Industry Act 1997*. All four companies have assured the SCA that they do not employ overseas travellers or individuals on temporary visa arrangements.

**15. Mr Cohen asked the Minister for the Environment, The Hon R. J. Debus, MP—**

How effective have the efforts of the National Parks and Wildlife Service been in reducing the decline of the little tern along the beaches of New South Wales? In particular, could you provide information on:

- (a) Lake Wollumboola, which is a significant little tern nesting site, and
- (b) Becton development site north of Byron Bay, where the little tern is under threat? (*Hansard*, pp.24, 25)

**ANSWER**

In the mid-1990s, the National Parks and Wildlife Service commenced intensive management of selected breeding sites on the NSW coast that had potential for long term breeding success of little terns.

I am pleased to advise that these efforts have resulted in an almost 100 per cent increase in breeding sites since 1997/98 to 15 sites in 2002/03. Similarly, over the past five years, the estimated number of breeding pairs of Little Terns have increased from 251 to 461, the number of nests from 326 to 772, the number of eggs laid from 739 to 1597 and the number of birds fledged from 238 to 376.

Little Tern breeding colonies are located on beaches that are subjected to increasing levels of human disturbance. The efforts of the National Parks and Wildlife Service over the last decade, assisted by the local community at some breeding sites, have reversed the serious declines in both Little Tern numbers and breeding sites in NSW over the past 30 years.

The National Parks and Wildlife Service has prepared a draft recovery plan for the Little Tern which has been on public exhibition.

The National Parks and Wildlife Service has been undertaking active management of the breeding site at Lake Wollumboola since the mid 1990s. This includes public education, on site wardens, electric fencing and fox control programs. Numbers of fledglings have generally been greater at this site since active management began.

The last nesting record of one pair of Little Tern at Belongil Creek (adjoining the Becton development site north of Byron Bay) is reported to have occurred in the 1992/93 breeding season. National Parks is not aware of any substantial breeding of Little Terns at that site in the last 30 years.

National Parks is undertaking targeted fox control on Belongil Spit using poison baits. This program is primarily to protect the threatened Pied Oyster-catcher, but will also benefit any Little Terns present in the area. The baits pose no threat to either bird species.