

1 September 2003

(General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5)

Portfolio

Local Government, Emergency Services and Rural Affairs

QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE DURING HEARING

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

- 1. Ms Pavey asked the Minister for Rural Affairs, Local Government and Emergency, the Hon Tony Kelly, MLC—**

What are the costs, to date, to the Department of Local Government of the defamation case brought by the Mayor of Maclean Shire Council, Mr Chris Gulaptis (Hansard page 2)?

Answer: There have been no direct costs to the Department of Local Government

- 2. Ms Pavey asked the Minister for Rural Affairs, Local Government and Emergency, the Hon Tony Kelly, MLC—**

Can the Minister advise if the Director General has breached any departmental protocol or practice by authorizing the publication of an article in a newspaper relating to a current investigation against the Mayor of Maclean Shire Council (Hansard page 2)?

Answer: There has been no breach

- 3. Ms Pavey asked the Minister for Rural Affairs, Local Government and Emergency, the Hon Tony Kelly, MLC—**

- (a) Could the Minister advise the committee of the title, duties and salary of Mr Terry Flanagan who is employed by the Minister (Hansard page 3)?
- (b) Has Mr Flanagan been provided with an office and, if so, what is the cost of the office fit out and rental (Hansard page 3)?

Answer: Like all public servants, Mr Terry Flanagan is employed in my office under the Public Sector Employment and Management Act 2002. He is a Policy Adviser on Rural Affairs and is based in Grafton.

He is the only staff member based in that office.

The budget for the Ministerial Office was determined by Budget Committee of Cabinet.

Expenditure is approved by Ministerial staff in accordance with financial delegations approved in accordance with the provisions of the Public Finance and Audit Act.

Expenditure in 2003/04 will be in accordance with the needs of the office and priorities for expenditure.

All ministerial accommodation is in accordance with approvals and requirements.

- 4. Mr Lynn asked the Minister for Rural Affairs, Local Government and Emergency, the Hon Tony Kelly, MLC—**

For each of your portfolio agencies in 2002/2003:

- (a) How much was spent on media monitoring from Reame Australia Monitoring Services as outlined in the Premier's Department Circular 2002/2003?
- (b) What is the estimated expenditure for 2003/2004 (Hansard page 3)?

Answer: All costs incurred were appropriate to the needs identified.

5. Mr Lynn asked the Minister for Rural Affairs, Local Government and Emergency, the Hon Tony Kelly, MLC—

For each of your portfolio agencies in 2002/2003, how much was spent on media monitoring other than from Reame Australia Monitoring Services in 2002 (Hansard page3)?

Answer: As for answer to Question 4 above.

6. Mr Lynn asked the Minister for Rural Affairs, Local Government and Emergency, the Hon Tony Kelly, MLC—

- (a) How much did your Ministerial office spend on media monitoring from Reame Australia Monitoring Services?
- (b) How much did your Ministerial office spend on media monitoring other than from Reame Australia Monitoring Services (Hansard page 3)?

Answer: As for answer to Question 4 above.

7. Mr Lynn asked the Minister for Rural Affairs, Local Government and Emergency, the Hon Tony Kelly, MLC—

In regard to your public relations media staff, in 2002/2003 for each of your portfolio agencies:

- (a) How many media or public relations advisers were employed?
- (b) What is the total cost of this?
- (c) What is the forecast for 2003/2004 for the number of media or public relations advisers to be employed, and their total cost (Hansard page3)?

Answer: Staff are employed in accordance with the provisions of the Act regulating employment in that agency.

All costs incurred were appropriate to the needs identified

8. Mr Lynn asked the Minister for Rural Affairs, Local Government and Emergency, the Hon Tony Kelly, MLC—

In 2002/2003:

- (a) How many media or public relations advisers were employed by your Ministerial office?
- (b) What is the total cost of this?
- (c) What is the forecast for 2003/2004 for the number of media or public relations advisers to be employed, and their total cost (Hansard page 3)?

Answer: Ministerial staff are employed by the Director General of the Premier's Department in accordance with the provisions of the Public Sector Employment and Management Act 2002.

Remuneration for Ministerial staff is determined by the Director General of the Premier's Department.

9. Mr Lynn asked the Minister for Rural Affairs, Local Government and Emergency, the Hon Tony Kelly, MLC—

In regard to advertising, for each of your portfolio agencies:

- (a) How much money was spent on advertising in 2002/2003?
- (b) Can you provide a list of each campaign cost and which firms were involved, and could you please also provide a monthly breakdown of advertising expenditure (Hansard page 4)?

Answer: Premier's Memorandum 2002-14, released 13 September 2002, made changes to the process of advertising tenders, coordinated by the Government Advertising Agency.

Premier's Memorandum 2002-15, released 18 September 2002, advised of a number of changes to advertising policy and procedures relating to recruitment advertising and the role of the Cabinet Sub Committee on Advertising.

Agencies are now required to submit to the Cabinet Sub Committee on Advertising each January and July a campaign advertising plan and budget for the next six months.

The Government Advertising Agency is continuing efforts to achieve cost savings in advertising across New South Wales Government agencies and departments.

10. Mr Lynn asked the Minister for Rural Affairs, Local Government and Emergency, the Hon Tony Kelly, MLC—

On the issue of legal fees, for each of your portfolio agencies in 2002/2003:

- (a) How much was spent on legal expenses?
- (b) What was the breakdown of these expenses?
- (c) Who provided these legal services (Hansard page 4)?

Answer: Legal expenses are incurred when it is necessary to engage a solicitor or counsel to provide advice or represent the Government in a matter.

In order to protect the interests of the people of New South Wales legal advice or assistance is obtained when this assistance is necessary.

It is impossible at this early stage of the financial year to predict the likely expenditure in 2003/04.

Wherever possible the services of the Crown Solicitor or in-house legal assistance is utilized for advice on legal issues.

11. Mr Lynn asked the Minister for Rural Affairs, Local Government and Emergency, the Hon Tony Kelly, MLC—

In 2002/2003:

- (a) How much did you, in your capacity as Minister, spend on legal expenses?
- (b) What was the breakdown for these expenses?
- (c) Who provided these legal services (Hansard page 4)?

Answer: As for Question 10 above.

12. Ms Pavey asked the Minister for Rural Affairs, Local Government and Emergency, the Hon Tony Kelly, MLC—

- (a) What resources were expended in implementing strategies for the department's disability action plan in 2002/2003?
- (b) What were these strategies?

(d) What was the outcome of implementation (Hansard page 7)?

Answer: Agencies are required to prepare a disability action plan under section 9 of the Disability Services Act 1993, and to make provision for periodic furnishing of reports.

It is impossible at this early stage of the financial year to predict the likely expenditure in 2003/04.

13. Ms Hale asked the Minister for Rural Affairs, Local Government and Emergency, the Hon Tony Kelly, MLC—

How many staff do you have (Hansard page 7)?

Answer: Ministerial staff are employed by the Director General of the Premier's Department in accordance with the provisions of the Public Sector Employment and Management Act 2002.

Each Ministerial Office has a number of Departmental Liaison Officers attached to the office, depending on the size and complexity of the portfolio. These arrangements mirror the same circumstances that occurred during the Greiner/Fahey Governments.

14. Ms Hale asked the Minister for Rural Affairs, Local Government and Emergency, the Hon Tony Kelly, MLC—

Can the Minister list services and charges provided to local government by the State Government or by State Government owned entities within your portfolios, which rose by more than .8 percent last financial year (Hansard page 7)?

Answer: No services or charges provided to local government by the Department of Local Government rose by more than .8 percent last financial year.

15. Ms Hale asked the Minister for Rural Affairs, Local Government and Emergency, the Hon Tony Kelly, MLC—

Can you provide any financial records over the past two years (Hansard page 8)?

Answer: Please see response to Question 14. above.

16. Ms Hale asked the Minister for Rural Affairs, Local Government and Emergency, the Hon Tony Kelly, MLC—

Could the Minister provide details of the offer to councils of special rate variations in response to cost shifting (Hansard page 11)?

Answer: A circular is sent to each council in NSW outlining the circumstances that a council may apply for a special variation.

An application to exceed the general rate pegging limit is only considered under the following circumstances:

- Where additional income is required to finance a project that has regional significance or has a demonstrable regional economic benefit. This can be demonstrated by joint participation by several councils in the planning and/or execution of the project or by participation in planning or contribution of funds towards the project by the State/ Commonwealth or by demonstrated consistency with a relevant regional management plan endorsed by the State Government.
- Where additional income is necessary to finance new or enhanced local government services or facilities that are specified in the councils draft Management Plan. Proposals may include infrastructure maintenance or replacement programs and services related to sustainable natural resource management, waste management, environmental protection, pollution control and protection of public health.

- Where additional income is necessary to meet substantial increases in Government contributions or charges for example: variation of charges by the Valuer General, NSW Fire Levy or Rural Fire Contribution.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

17. Mr Lynn asked the Minister for Rural Affairs, Local Government and Emergency, the Hon Tony Kelly, MLC—

Could the Minister advise the committee of the salary package for the Commissioner's Chief of Staff, Ms Wendy George (Hansard page 23)?

Answer: The classification for this position has been determined at RFS Officer Level 16, which is approximately equivalent to SES Level 2.