



The Honourable John Barilaro MP

Deputy Premier
Minister for Regional New South Wales
Minister for Industry and Trade

Question 1 (Page 5 of transcript)

The HON. ADAM SEARLE: Okay. Can I ask you to produce for the Committee some of those reports because the reports that I have seen show that the cost of nuclear technology, including SMRs, is trending upwards, not downwards? This is in the real world, not some hypothetical future possibility.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: You talk about a hypothetical future; a minute ago you were trying to say SMRs are the unicorn of reactors—

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: No. I said—

Mr JOHN BARILARO: And now you want me to produce something that actually verifies the cost of it. You are not being clear at all. **The Hon. ADAM SEARLE:** I am.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: You either believe in SMRs or you don't.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: We know SMRs do not operate anywhere but you say you have seen reports that say that they can be produced more cheaply. So I would like you to produce some of those reports because I am not aware of them.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: Okay

ANSWER

A NSW parliamentary inquiry into the Uranium Mining and Nuclear Facilities (Prohibitions) Repeal Bill 2019 was established last year. Submissions made to this inquiry addressed the cost of nuclear technology.

Question 2 (Page 6 of transcript)

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: I ask a question in relation to employment in regional New South Wales. Given the decision of the Federal Government that has been confirmed by the Minister for social services to not fund equal pay for workers in the social and community services sector beyond December 2020, what modelling have you done on the impacts of the cuts to community and support services in rural and regional New South Wales and on the reduction in jobs in the community sector?

Mr JOHN BARILARO: Your question is about jobs in regional and rural New South Wales. If you look at the data that we have seen right across the board and the investment by the New South Wales Government around the investment in infrastructure and our regional growth programs through Growing Local Economies [GLE] or our Stronger Country Communities Fund, as of December last year you saw somewhere close to 38,000 new jobs created in regional and rural New South Wales—the largest number of jobs in the regions than any other regional area of Australia. Something we are very proud of is the stimulus that we have put in behind growing jobs in the bush. Your question refers to an equal pay question from the Federal Government, which is out of my jurisdiction. I think that is a question for someone else.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: The largest employer in regional New South Wales is under the title Health Care and Social Assistance. We are well aware that the census of 2016 showed that that accounted for 14½ per cent of support and assistance; those jobs have continued to grow. The best estimate of the Australian Council of Social Service is that we are now going to see a 40 per cent reduction in not only those services but also obviously the employment opportunities.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: This is a question I will take on notice.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: Please take on notice and I would welcome any advice.

ANSWER

Questions relating to social services should be directed to the Hon. Gareth Ward MP in his capacity as Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services.

Through programs such as the \$1.7 billion Regional Growth Fund the NSW Government is supporting job creation in regional areas. In the year end to December 2019, 38,000 jobs have been created in regional and rural NSW.

Question 3 (Page 11 of transcript)

The Hon. EMMA HURST: Deputy Premier, last time at budget estimates I asked you about the western Sydney Aerotropolis and whether there was any consideration given to allow the live export of animals by planes. You said that at this stage you were not sure that anything was being considered. Do you have any update on that situation?

Mr JOHN BARILARO: No, sorry, I do not. Unfortunately, I have been consumed by the fire recovery. Happy to take that on notice again.

ANSWER

Export controls are a matter for the Commonwealth Government.

Question 4 (Page 15 of transcript)

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: When it comes to hazardous material that the Deputy Premier spoke about—we all know some of these places were quite old—as I understand it, they were sprayed. Particularly if it is asbestos, there was an over-spray placed on the debris. With the recent heavy rains in a lot of these communities, has that impacted that overlay and has there been a need to go back and respray or put some sort of material over the top to hold it in place?

Ms FOX: I would have to take that question on notice and get some technical advice.

ANSWER:

I am advised PVA is applied to burnt properties as one of several measures to reduce the risk of community airborne asbestos exposure.

PVA is a non-toxic water based glue. It is easy to clean-up with water prior to drying. Once dry, it is water resistant and only softens somewhat after major longer-term immersion in water. Normal rain and runoff does not materially soften it.

PVA does not have an infinite life when exposed to either UV or water, however, in conjunction with the other control measures such as signage and exclusion fencing, the potential for community airborne asbestos exposure is considered to be extremely low.

Air monitoring has been undertaken broadly throughout the affected communities both in these fires and in previous fires. No potentially hazardous air monitoring results have been recorded.

Question 5 (Page 15 of transcript)

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I move to drinking water. One of the issues that has been raised a lot is that there is a lot of work being done around talking to people and telling them what is available but they lost their water tank or whatever and they need clean drinking water. What is in place to make sure that they do not run out of clean drinking water because they have lost the capacity to actually harvest that water?

Mr WILLING: Initially, the Australian Defence Force [ADF] were dropping water to people to ensure that they had access to water. But in terms of process around ensuring that they have got water now, I will take that on notice and come back to you.

ANSWER

Refer to Question #46 (pages 66-67).

Question 6 (Page 15-16 of transcript)

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Deputy Premier, the local Tumut papers—the Tumut and Adelong Times— on 6 March ran an article. There is a particular farmer who has been quite critical. I will quote him: The government make out they're doing a lot, but they're not doing much at all ... I'm just starting to get sick of it, really. It's not worth worrying about. Clearly there is a degree of frustration. The article goes on. He is saying about how he made several approaches for assistance and he has been denied each of the assistance approaches. Clearly there is a degree of frustration. Why are people being denied?

Mr JOHN BARILARO: Without knowing the detail of what he has actually requested, it is very difficult. We have certain categories of support for farmers, businesses and individuals. Without knowing exactly what this gentleman is actually asking for—if he has been denied—it may not have fit in one of those categories. Is he a farmer? Is he an orchard grower? You are saying Tumut or Batlow.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: He is in Batlow.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: We have just announced a \$3.5 million to start clearing sites in those farms because of all the issues that we are facing there. We have been working with the industry. I met with the industry and a number of farmers only last week. No-one raised that with me. They are now looking towards what happens next. The Batlow brand is so important. The orchards are important. It is a five- to seven-year turnaround when it comes to replanting an orchard at Batlow. There is going to be a serious impact on that local community. Then the issue of accommodation was raised. We worked with local government there to deal with the accommodation issue. But this issue, I am happy to take on notice. These are the issues, Mr Veitch, that keep me up at night. There are people who have probably fallen through the cracks. If he has been denied any support, without knowing the facts of what he has asked for, I am more than happy to take that on notice and have a look at why.

ANSWER:

I am advised the DRO is undertaking inquiries to ascertain the status of eligibility of the individual referenced in the article for the available assistance measures.

As at 23 April, approximately \$72.7 million has been provided in grants to primary producers.

Question 7 (Page 16 of transcript)

Mr JOHN BARILARO: Down the South Coast I think 12 councils came together—someone correct me if I am wrong—and put together a plan and pitched it to the Government, which we then have embraced. Now we are working with those councils. They are at the heart of this. Some councils have a capacity in their existing places; others do not. But they are at the heart of this. We will identify the appropriate land if we are building a new tip. It could be Crown lands, it could be someone else's land, but we are going to do that part.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: On this point, can I please ask on notice that you provide us with a list of the tips and also asbestos waste facilities?

Mr JOHN BARILARO: Yes, I am happy to do that.

ANSWER

I am advised that the table below sets out all the landfill waste and recycling facilities that are being used, or will be used, across the state by the bushfire clean-up.

South	Central Waste	ACM or Non-ACM
South	Woodlawn (Veolia)	ACM or Non-ACM
South	Bowral Waste	ACM or Non-ACM
South	W Nowra Recycle + Woodlawn	Non-ACM only
South	Surf Beach Cell 1	Non-ACM only
South	Brou	ACM only
South	Bald Hill	ACM or Non-ACM
South	Gregadoo	Non-ACM only
South	Eastern Creek (Bingo)	ACM or Non-ACM
South	Cooma (Council)	ACM or Non-ACM
Central	Lithgow Council tip	ACM or Non-ACM
Central	Kemps Creek (Suez)	ACM or Non-ACM
Central	Raymond Terrace (Suez)	ACM or Non-ACM
North	Bucketts Way	ACM or Non-ACM
North	Grafton Regional landfill	ACM or Non-ACM
North	Veolia Queensland	ACM or Non-ACM
North	Kempsey Waste Facility	NACM only
North	Port Macq. (Cairncross)	ACM or Non-ACM
North	Glen Innes (Council)	ACM or Non-ACM
South	West Belconnen	ACM or Non-ACM
North	Torrington	Non-ACM only
North	Armidale Waste Mgmt	ACM or Non-ACM
North	Kyogle Waste Facility	being investigated
South	Windellama	ACM or Non-ACM
Central	Lucas Heights	ACM or Non-ACM
Central	Buttonderry Landfill	being investigated
Central	Woy Woy Landfill	being investigated

Central	Mudgee Solid Waste	being investigated
Central	Cessnock Waste	ACM or Non-ACM
Central	Bathurst Council tip	being investigated
Central	Singleton Landfill	being investigated
South	Central Waste	ACM or Non-ACM

Question 8 (Page 18 of transcript)

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Deputy Premier, I will pick up where Labor was. You mentioned before the intention is to clean up what needs to be cleaned up and you want to support residents impacted. I am on the South Coast. Someone reached out to me recently about a particular case near Bendalong, which they said was illustrative of some of the experiences that were being had. An elderly gentleman down there lost a shed and all of his equipment but not his house; some large trees around the house were badly damaged and he lost all the fencing and the like. He registered with the recovery centre and Service NSW and was told his property would be cleaned up. A contractor came out and lopped the dangerous trees so they did not fall on this property.

Laing O'Rourke visited recently and said he does not qualify for a clean-up and, because of this 15-metre rule, the shed was not within 15 metres of the house. So he is left in the situation where the fences will not be taken out, the shed will not be cleaned up and the trees that were lopped now are just left on the property next to his house because Laing O'Rourke have said that it does not qualify for clean-up. This is an experience that seems to be being felt by a number of people.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: That alarms me. There is no 15-metre rule, and this is starting to come out as a theme. We will go back and have a look at that. I am more than happy to take that particular case so I can actually pursue that and then we can talk to Laing O'Rourke. There is no 15-metre rule.

ANSWER

I am advised that Public Works Advisory is reviewing this case and that an officer has contacted the individual in Bendalong regarding their situation.

Question 9 (Page 20 of transcript)

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Morning, Deputy Premier. When it comes to logging State forests, have you sought a statewide review to see what kind of additional restrictions are required now given so much habitat has been destroyed? Have you sought that statewide review and can you table it?

Mr JOHN BARILARO: I can ask either Mr Hansen—

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Perhaps, Deputy Premier, you could answer whether you have sought the statewide review?

Mr JOHN BARILARO: Of course we are reviewing the estate right across the board. We have no choice but to do that. That is why I can make statements like about the loss of the harvestable hardwood up north and the pine plantations down south. Is it a complete review? I think that is still an ongoing piece of work.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Can you provide us with a full set of answers on notice—it is going to be quite detailed—about where that review has got to?

Mr JOHN BARILARO: We will take it all on notice. Thank you, Mr Shoebridge.

ANSWER

Forestry Corporation will review its sustainable yield models to take into account the impact of this season's fires and the outcome of that assessment will inform future planning.

Question 10 (Page 21 of transcript)

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: We have limited time. I appreciate there is more detail that can be done afterwards. Deputy Premier, I wrote to you in mid-February asking will you exercise the force majeure provisions in wood supply agreements given the unprecedented level of burning and destruction of forests. You responded by saying "there are force majeure provisions in the contracts" and not answering the question. Will you get advice about exercising the force majeure provisions in wood supply agreements to prevent the serious damage to the remaining forests in order to meet commercial wood supply agreements? Mr

JOHN BARILARO: Mr ROBERTS?

Mr ROBERTS: We have declared force majeure on our north coast wood supply agreements and some others in the State as well. The force majeure provisions provide relief for the period of time that the event that creates the force majeure actually continues, but they also obligate the contract holders to do their best to be able to supply the products subject to the contracts, on a pro rata basis.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I understand that. Can you provide details on notice of which wood supply agreements you have exercised the force majeure provisions on?

Mr ROBERTS: Yes, we can do that.

ANSWER

Forestry Corporation has declared a force majeure event in relation to all customers and contracts on the north and south coast and softwood customers and contracts accessing timber as part of their supply from the Grafton, Tumut and Bombala management areas. The force majeure event is due to the impacts of fire and Forestry Corporation has advised customers and contractors that it may not be able to meet some of its contractual commitments in fire-affected areas.

Forestry Corporation is working with customers to determine what this will mean in terms of individual contracts and wood supply agreements for the rest of the year and over the remaining years of each contract.

Question 11 (Page 21 of transcript)

The Hon. EMMA HURST: You mentioned the brewery plan. Is there going to be any kind of plan in regard to plant-based proteins as well?

Mr JOHN BARILARO: I might go to Mr Scott Hansen on this.

Mr HANSEN: This is where I actually get to tell the good news stories about our plant research and development base that we were going to get to in the last hearing but ran out of time. We currently have 135 projects worth \$163 million within the Department of Primary Industries [DPI] in plant production research. We not do a lot post farm gate in any of our commodity spaces, but our job is working on the attributes of the production and the quality and consumer attributes of plants that end up in the plant and protein mixes and in the plant and protein production systems.

The Hon. EMMA HURST: But we do not know if they actually are, do we? My understanding is a lot of the plant-like protein alternatives that are coming into the market are predominantly produced overseas. We do not know if our actual raw ingredients are going in there.

Mr HANSEN: Our chickpea and our soya bean industries, which have basically shot through the roof in the last couple of years, have done so off the back of demand for them.

The Hon. EMMA HURST: Would you be able to get me some data about the growth of that on notice?

Mr HANSEN: Yes.

ANSWER

Plant-based proteins are derived from pulses and soybeans. On average pulses constitute approximately 10 per cent of the total area planted to crops in Australia, up to 25 per cent in favourable production conditions. Soybean production is captured in the category of "oilseeds", they account for about 3 per cent of Australia's "oilseed" crop. NSW produces chickpeas, faba beans, soybeans and lupins. Growth in Australian production of pulses and soybeans has been underpinned by research to improve varieties and productivity for local conditions, and increase resilience to disease.

National pulse production has grown from 1.3 million tonnes in 1990 to be consistently over 2 million tonnes in recent years. Predictions reach as high as 4 million tonnes per year, which would translate to a commodity value of A\$1.5 billion plus further on-farm benefits valued at more than A\$500 million. Peak production level for pulses was achieved in NSW in 2016/2017, when more than 1 million tonnes were grown in NSW and more than \$500 million worth exported.

In NSW in 2018/19, plantings were exposed to seasonal drought that delayed sowing and establishment, and severe frost events in late winter and spring that limited yield.

This was exacerbated by an overall reduction in the area planted to pulses due to tariffs being applied by trading partners and a dip in prices in 2017/2018.

NSW continues to export a large proportion of its pulse crop, predominantly to India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, with China and Africa increasing their consumption.

Much of the Australian pulse crop is exported to high value international markets, with exports consistently worth more than \$1 billion per annum. Australian production of soybeans is variable, with around 60,000 tonnes produced in 2014/2015. Roughly half of the national crop is crushed for oil and stockfeed, and most of the crop is sold domestically. Whilst the market for edible products such as tofu and soy 'milk' is growing, only about 10 per cent of global soybean crop is eaten by humans.

Question 12 (Page 22-23 of transcript)

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: I will not direct this to anyone in particular, I will let you sort out who should answer it, if possible. How many requests for assistance for materials or a financial contribution to the repair of boundary fences, damaged or destroyed by the fires, has the Forestry Corporation received?

Mr ROBERTS: I would have to take that question on notice.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: I also ask, how many of these requests have been approved to receive support and what was the nature of that support—financial, materials or labour? I presume you will take that on notice as well.

Mr ROBERTS: Yes, I would have to take that on notice.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: I will run through the questions. How many requests for assistance with boundary fencing did the Forestry Corporation receive in each of the last three financial years? How many of these were approved? On notice?

Mr ROBERTS: Yes.

ANSWER

The NSW Government has announced a funding package for boundary fencing worth \$209 million across a range of crown land tenures, including state forests.

Question 13 (Page 23 of transcript)

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Can I just ask then about exclusion fencing. This is the perfect opportunity—if you look at where these corridors where the fires have burned through, it has cleared all the undergrowth. This could be the perfect opportunity to look at putting in place exclusion fencing. It is the "good neighbour" approach for our adjoining landowners. But not only that, in years to come it becomes a productivity gain for everyone: pest-proof fences. Are we looking at that at all? Has there been any approaches to give consideration to that? I appreciate it is more expensive but in the longer term it will pay for itself.

Mr HANSEN: There has certainly been consideration around exclusion fencing and around what needs to be done to assist. It needs to typically be done at a regional level for it to be effective, as you would be aware—not individual property—and, therefore, is a more regional-based discussion with groups of landowners for better value with regards to all moving simultaneously to do so. But that is something that is definitely on the table.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: For State forests—Forestry Corporation, whatever you call it these days—are you also looking at exclusion fencing in places?

Mr ROBERTS: I am not aware of any specific initiatives, but I could take that on notice. As I said earlier, we are working very closely with the Department of Primary Industries [DPI] and other government agencies to see whether there is a way we can get some funding to reconstruct these fences.

ANSWER

The NSW Government has announced a funding package for boundary fencing worth \$209 million across a range of crown land tenures, including state forests.

Eligible applicants may also be able to apply for funding from either the Drought Assistance Fund (DAF) or Farm Innovation Fund (FIF). The DAF is an interest-free loan of up to \$50,000 per applicant. The loan can be used for activities that promote profitability and resilience which may include the construction or repair of fencing. The FIF can be used for permanent capital works that improve productivity up to the value of \$1 million.

Question 14 (Page 27-28 of transcript)

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: What percentage of the wood programs are you meeting at the moment?

Mr ROBERTS: I would have to take that on notice.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: You must have a bit of a ballpark? Are your customers screaming this much or that much?

Mr ROBERTS: I think it would be fair to say that up until the new year period we were doing what we would normally do in a year, which would be sort of between 45 per cent and 55 per cent of the volume, but I would have to come back to you on notice to give you the accurate figures and I cannot tell you where we are sitting at the moment.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: How is that determined? Obviously that is additional pressure; you are going to have communities concerned about the ecological impacts of this. You get to make that decision, right? You do not need to be pushing into burnt areas. The Deputy Premier said you made a decision not to go into Port Macquarie into some of the unburnt areas. How are you making those decisions?

Mr ROBERTS: We are making those decisions based on a number of criteria, but in particular in our own minds we would rather be in burnt forests than in green forests.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Can you table those criteria?

Mr ROBERTS: In terms of how we think about them?

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Yes.

ANSWER

Forestry Corporation has declared Force Majeure on all Wood Supply Agreements on the north and south coast and is working to meet minimum obligations for all contracts within the framework of the IFOA.

The criteria used to balance this draws on the intensity of fires within geographic areas; the availability of suitable plantation areas to operate in; and the EPA process of assessing risk and determining site specific conditions to protect soil, water and habitat for harvesting operations in fire-affected areas of forest; as well as the need to keep regional timber communities working and mills supplied to produce much-needed re-building materials. Forestry Corporation's harvest schedules change regularly as Forestry Corporation maintains the discretion to schedule operations based on a range of conditions including weather, markets and logistics.

Question 15 (Page 30 of transcript)

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Mr ROBERTS, I refer to the efficiency dividend that you are required to pay to government. In light of the fire season that has been and the impact on the operations of Forestry Corporation, have you sought to have that either reduced or suspended for this year and possibly future financial years?

Mr ROBERTS: We have not made that specific request, no, but we have been, as you can imagine, in very regular and detailed conversations with Treasury about the future of the business and any impacts that the fire might have on our revenue and profitability. So those debates are ongoing. We do not have a final conclusion as yet, but we have been talking to them on a very regular basis.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: So you have talked about other matters but not the efficiency dividend?

Mr ROBERTS: My chief financial officer may well have covered that particular topic but I have no knowledge about that.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: You can take it on notice?

Mr ROBERTS: I could take it on notice, yes.

ANSWER

This matter is still being considered by government.

Question 16 (Page 31 of transcript)

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: One of the issues for the mills down our way will be such a large volume of timber going through the plant to the mill and then storing post-treatment. Are we assisting the mills with finding suitable land where they can store the timber?

Mr ROBERTS: I am not aware of any work that is being done in that area but it may well be the recovery team in Tumut might well have been looking at that. I will take that on notice.

ANSWER

Forestry Corporation is working with its customers in the Tumut area to help facilitate options for the storage of sawn timber.

Question 17 (Page 32 of transcript)

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: With regard to getting the burnt softwood out of the high country, what discussions are taking place with RMS to ensure that the road network can sustain an extensive trucking arrangement of logistics down into Tumut? I am particularly concerned about that intersection on the Snowy Mountains Highway and Wondalga Road.

Mr ROBERTS: Again, I would have to take that on notice. I know that obviously transportation of logs is a major issue in a recovery situation such as this. I am not sure of any specific conversations, but I will take it on notice.

ANSWER

Forestry Corporation is keeping Snowy Valley Council informed of likely truck movements for salvage timber harvesting operations and they are considering how they prioritise recent funding made available for log haulage routes.

Question 18 (Page 32-33 of transcript)

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: What was the final cost of consultants, lawyers and others commissioned to undertake the scoping study for the sale of the softwood division of the Forestry Corporation?

Mr JOHN BARILARO: That is actually a question for Treasury. I am more than happy to take it on notice.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: What was the estimated cost of the Forestry Corporation staff time and resources committed to assisting and providing information in the scoping study?

Mr ROBERTS: That would be very hard to estimate. It was not our scoping study. We interrelated with Treasury and some of the consulting people but we tried to minimise our engagement in that process. I would not have an estimate of that.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: You cannot answer it?

Mr ROBERTS: I would have to take it on notice in terms of whether we had an estimate or not, yes.

ANSWER

There is no such estimate available and questions regarding the scoping study is a matter for the Treasurer.

Question 19 (Page 33 of transcript)

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: Was Forestry Corporation senior management consulted on the scoping study prior to the announcement on 20 February this year that the sale would not proceed?

Mr JOHN BARILARO: Yes, of course.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: Did the scoping study provide an estimate of the value of the softwood division?

Mr JOHN BARILARO: I assume so.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: Can you tell us what it was?

Mr JOHN BARILARO: Again, that is a scoping study that is conducted by Treasury. I am not sure if there is anything commercially in-confidence on that. I will take that as a question on notice.

ANSWER

This is a matter for the Treasurer.

Question 20 (Page 34 of transcript)

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: The \$24 million that was budgeted previously for land acquisition, has that been expended or is it going to be?

Mr ROBERTS: We did spend some money. Land was particularly expensive. I think we bought about 350 or 400 hectares in total when we started the program.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: That was at Oberon?

Mr ROBERTS: There was Oberon and also down at Tumut and Tumbarumba. Those funds are still within the corporation.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: How much is left? You can take that on notice.

Mr ROBERTS: Yes, I will.

ANSWER

Approximately \$1.5 million of the \$24 million equity fund has been utilised to purchase privately-owned land for the purposes of expanding the plantation estate leaving about \$22.5 million.

Question 21 (Page 35 of transcript)

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Deputy Premier, why have the petroleum exploration licences—I think there are about 14 in the north-west—not been extinguished yet?

Mr JOHN BARILARO: Sorry?

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: The expired petroleum exploration licences [PELs]. You made some public comments about it last year or the year before. It was subject to a National Party motion. It was quite widely covered. I think the intention was the National Party was going to have them extinguished.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: Have a look at what the National Party has done. I mean we inherited—

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Not extinguished them?

Mr JOHN BARILARO: Hang on, when we came to this State we inherited 70 per cent of the State covered in PELs. Today it is 7 per cent. I mean, that is a huge reduction. The active ones we have going at the moment—

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: That is not the question.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: What is the question?

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: The question was about the expired petroleum exploration licences that you said were going to be extinguished that have not been extinguished. I am just asking you why they have not been extinguished.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: I do not know. I will take that question on notice.

ANSWER

The NSW Government is considering renewal applications for several Petroleum Exploration Licences (PELs). The PELs remain active and exploration can continue, subject to licence conditions and relevant environmental approvals.

Any PEL renewal application needs to comply with the requirements outlined in the Petroleum (Onshore) Act 1991. This includes minimum standards for exploration work programs and technical and financial capabilities, as well as adherence to all codes of practice including environmental management, rehabilitation, produced water and community consultation.

Question 22 (Page 39 of transcript)

The CHAIR: Just one final question: My colleague Roy Butler wrote to you regarding a particular emerging industry, where they are taking end-of-life tyres and turning them into carbon and oil products and it is 100 per cent capturing those products. They were seeking some assistance from your Government in terms of guaranteeing some funds. They have the customers, they have the market—they just need a guarantee so that they can capitalise on this market. Where are we at with that?

Mr JOHN BARILARO: I have seen the correspondence and I am not sure if I have responded yet, but these are the sorts of industries that, absolutely, as a nation and as a State—especially with even the plastic ban that the Federal Government has announced—we can grow in regional New South Wales, their industries. That is why we are always looking at opportunities to support industry across the board, especially new industries. If you look at the 20-year economic plan for regional and rural New South Wales—the blueprint—it identifies areas around energy as opportunities for industries and new industries, including recycling. So I will give you a further answer when I get an opportunity to respond to Mr Butler.

ANSWER

A response has been provided directly to Mr Butler.

Question 23 (Page 39 of transcript)

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: Deputy Premier, can I ask you on jobs, in respect of the bushfire disaster, what analysis has been undertaken of the number of jobs that have actually been likely to have been lost over time as a consequence of the bushfires?

Mr JOHN BARILARO: That is a good question. It is probably a moving feast. I am not sure of what work has been done. Mr Barnes?

Mr BARNES: One of the things that is happening both in the industry plans and in the renewal of the regional economic development strategies is jobs analysis.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: Can we get a copy?

Mr JOHN BARILARO: As soon as we get some work done, we will be more than happy to share that information.

ANSWER

The Office of the Coordinator-General, supported by Boston Consulting Group, is completing the analysis of bushfire's impacts on the Regional Economic Development Strategies. This analysis will be used to establish an understanding of the impact of the bushfires on industries, employment and local economies. This will inform development of industry recovery plans and strategic priorities for economic recovery and development. A key focus area will be jobs.

Regional Economic Development Strategies (REDS) bushfire addenda will be made public when finalised.

Question 24 (Page 41 of transcript)

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: That \$24 million may well be more. Would that be fair to say?

Mr HANGER: Yes, the Government will obviously go through its budget processes and work out the exact size of the round.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Have all of the 11 projects that were funded under round six commenced?

Mr HANGER: I will have to take that on notice. I would expect there may be some negotiations still ongoing, but I will take that one on notice and confirm whether they have actually got shovels in the ground yet.

ANSWER

All projects funded under Round 6 now have active funding deeds in place. These projects can now commence.

Question 25 (Page 42-43 of transcript)

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: Are there benchmarks that Laing O'Rourke have to meet in terms of being paid?

Ms FOX: There is certainly an audit and assurance process and certain things that they have to provide in order to be paid. Public Works is running that assurance and audit process across the top of that contract.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: So that is in addition to the contract? I am trying to work out is that publicly available, what those milestones are?

Ms FOX: I do not think they are milestones, in effect. It is effectively 4,000 tiny little jobs. The clean-ups take two days, three days per property on average. So, it is effectively managing 4,000 little jobs and those actual works are generally being done by local contractors on the ground. Those prices come back up and are reviewed and submitted. Laing O'Rourke is paid to manage that process.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: How do you know that they are actually meeting their obligations?

Ms FOX: We have a schedule that is monitored and Public Works Advisory role is to administer that contract in accordance with the interests of the community and the interests of the Government.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: That is what I am trying to work out. How will the community know that the milestones are being met or falling behind?

Ms FOX: That is being monitored regularly the same way that any contract is monitored. There is a schedule. They have a contractual obligation to do that initial scope of works by the end of June. They are on target to meet that and we are monitoring that. The schedule obviously changes as we add more properties and that is Public Works Advisory role in that space.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: I well understand that it is secret and we cannot know how much they are being paid. But is that aspect that tells us how well they are performing that is being monitored secret?

Ms FOX: I do not think that is secret, no.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: How would someone in the community who has been affected by the fires have access to that? For example, I am someone in Conjola. I am really concerned that nothing is happening. Certainly nothing is happening to my property. I know there is this large multinational firm who has been contracted. I want to know whether they are actually meeting the contract. How do I find that information out?

Ms FOX: I am not sure that meeting the contract is the right question for a member of the public. It is whether or not their property will be cleaned up and there is a rolling schedule. That schedule is affected by a whole variety of things such as the

availability of waste, availability of contractors to do the work, consent from the home owners. That schedule is being monitored by Public Works Advisory and released as we go through three weeks in advance. It is changeable, in order to get the work done, and the commitment is that the majority of the work will be done for people who have opted into the program by the end of June.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: Today there would be a schedule available, I will call them of milestones, but I could call them key performance indicators or whatever, that Laing O'Rourke has agreed and undertaken to meet. Can that be made available to the Committee?

Ms FOX: I do not know that there are milestones. There is a forward program of work to be done that is changing and is set for the next three weeks that is available and on the website, yes.

ANSWER:

I am advised that there is close monitoring of progress of delivery across all aspects of the program including: stakeholder engagement and communication, procurement of suppliers, approvals to commence work from property owners and works undertaken on site.

This monitoring is undertaken in a variety of ways, including Public Works Advisory staff conducting inspections of work areas to monitor progress of works against forward schedules, weekly meeting between PWA and LOR staff to review forward schedules and progress against actual program, central meetings between PWA & LOR senior managers and executives.

The current forecast schedule is available at www.cleanup.lnbr.com.au.

Laing O'Rourke (LOR) was engaged after demonstrating during the procurement process they had the capacity to mobilise resources to deliver the clean-up program in line with Government expectations.

The contract was awarded when the scope of the works was unknown but anticipated at only 2800 residential properties. As such the contract is setup to allow for expected increases in scope. The extent and number of properties requiring clean-up is now more certain at about 4,000.

LOR has provided an updated schedule based on the expanded scope of 4,000 properties. The revised schedule projects the sequence and pace of the works based on maintaining the end June 2020 completion date.

Consistent with all managing contract models, LOR has an obligation to use its best endeavours to complete the program by the required date. This includes to prepare schedules, maintain progress and carefully coordinate and administer subcontracts.

Question 26 (Page 43 of transcript)

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: They could fall totally flat on their face, not doing any work, and no member of the community would know about that. We are getting lots of people telling us that nothing is happening around there. I am trying to get some sort of idea from the Government, who has a contract, how you measure whether or not Laing O'Rourke is doing a fantastic job or not?

Ms FOX: We have a schedule that is changeable due to the scope of the works, because people have to opt in, and the government is monitoring that schedule.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: I ask again, can you make that schedule as of today available and also make available the criteria used to monitor that?

Ms FOX: Yes, I can make that available. The schedule is on the website and we are monitoring that. So we can make that available.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: Can you make available the criteria you use to monitor that?

Ms FOX: Yes, no problem.

ANSWER

See answer to question 25.

Question 27 (Page 45 of transcript)

The CHAIR: Mr ROBERTS, it is my understanding that for any aerial shooting to take place on State forest land an approach first needs to be made by yourself to the group that would be conducting that. You would have to ask for the assistance rather than it be offered to you. It is my understanding that local services undertook an aerial pest control shooting program in Vittoria State Forest on 12 and 13 March and there is another aerial pest control program scheduled for the Jenolan State Forest between 31 March and 2 April. First of all, is my assertion correct about the relationship between the Forestry Corporation and LLS and who engages who?

Mr ROBERTS: I would have to take that on notice.

ANSWER

Forestry Corporation works cooperatively with LLS and other stakeholders to manage pests and weeds.

Question 28 (Page 45-46 of transcript)

The CHAIR: I will just put it bluntly: There have been concerns expressed that LLS are unduly pressuring forestry workers to allow them into these State forests that are designated for hunting. **Mr ROBERTS**, would you be able to rule that out as occurring?

Mr ROBERTS: As I said, I do not have the details of the particular operations that you are talking about to be able to talk in detail about that. I would have to take that on notice.

The CHAIR: Can you also take on notice any other State forests that are declared for hunting in which LLS has been given approval to undertake aerial pest control in the last say 12 months?

Mr ROBERTS: Yes, I can.

The CHAIR: With that, can you provide the dates to that effect in terms of any potential future dates in the next six months that you are aware of, as well?

Mr ROBERTS: Yes.

ANSWER

The aerial pest control program in Vittoria State Forest occurred in a State Forest area where there is no recreational hunting permitted due to other conflicting uses of the forest. In Jenolan State Forest, the area is generally open for recreational hunting. However, following the Green Wattle Creek fire a hunting exclusion was applied to allow for site preparation and pre-planting of the plantation to occur. Forestry Corporation agreed to be part of a cross-tenure pest control program that also includes other agencies and lands around Jenolan State Forest. The program will use the lack of ground cover after the fire to manage pest species and also help control potential damage to any newly planted pine seedlings from wild animal browsing.

Other aerial operations which have taken place over the past 12 months and planned for the next six months include:

- Nullo Mountain and Coricudgy State forests. These forests are closed to hunting following the January fires. This program is ongoing, so it will be continuing in the next six months.
- Yelkin and Cargelligo State forests.
- Binya, Conapaira South, Conapaira East, Melougel, Lachlan Range and Melbergen State forests.
- Badja State forest. This forest is currently closed following fires.

Question 29 (Page 46 of transcript)

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: The Hon. Trevor Khan loves when I get around to it. He is waiting. You also mentioned earlier that you needed to keep wood supply agreement holders up to date with what the Forestry Corporation is doing, I assume, to get back to being able to meet your obligations. Have you had to give any of those updates to wood supply agreement holders yet?

Mr ROBERTS: We have got ongoing contact on a daily basis, almost, with our customers on the North Coast out of our Coffs Harbour office.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Yes, but would there not be a formal contractual requirement? Do you have to provide a written update every 30 days?

Mr ROBERTS: Yes, when we have significant information to relay to them then we would indeed update them. But as I talked about earlier this morning, we are doing the wood supply modelling for the long term and we are waiting until we conclude that before we advise that to our customer base.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: So you have not provided a formal written update at all? I am just wondering if any of this is available on the public record. Are you able to put on notice any of these letters that you have provided to wood supply agreement holders?

Mr ROBERTS: I can take that on notice, yes.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: How many approved harvest plans are out there for unburnt forests that might be able to be actioned by the Forestry Corporation?

Mr ROBERTS: I would have to take that on notice.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Do you have any sitting with the EPA at the moment for approval, or has that largely been suspended? No new—

Mr ROBERTS: You are talking about green harvest blocks—

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: This is green—unburnt, yes.

Mr ROBERTS: Unburnt blocks. Again, I would have to take that on notice.

ANSWER

See Appendix 1 for letters for tabling.

All Forestry Corporation's approved harvest plans are published on its plan portal.

Question 30 (Page 46-47 of transcript)

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: You were not able to answer before the percentage of the wood supply agreements that you are delivering at the moment, but surely as CEO of the Forestry Corporation you would know how many cubic metres of timber is being cut, trucked and delivered on a weekly basis. How much are you taking out of the North Coast at the moment?

Mr ROBERTS: I did say I would take that on notice. I do not have those details in my head.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: I have spoken to some of the campaigners up there. This is supposed to be on the website, pretty regular updates with regards to how much timber is cut and delivered. It is not up to date. You surely get weekly reports about how much timber you are cutting and delivering.

Mr ROBERTS: There would be weekly reports in the business but I would not get visibility of those on a weekly basis.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Is there any way before the end of today's meeting you would be able to see if that information is available? Just a—

Mr ROBERTS: Yes, I am happy to see.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: —raw cubic metre amount and not species-specific or anything from the North Coast?

Mr ROBERTS: Very happy to see if we can do that for you.

ANSWER

The status of harvest plans is noted in the Forestry Corporation plan portal on the website.

Question 31 (Page 48 of transcript)

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: There have not been site-specific conditions with the Coastal IFOA [CIFOA] since it came in in 2018 that you aware of?

Mr ROBERTS: Not that I am aware of, but I could take that on notice to make sure that I am telling you the right story.

ANSWER

Site specific conditions have not been used for post-fire harvesting before as the need has not arisen since the CIFOA was brought into place in November 2018. However, site-specific conditions are often necessary to facilitate forestry operations under the CIFOA. A common example of the use of this condition would be in instances or sites where Forestry Corporation requires access to a track that traverses a mapped exclusion area.

Question 32 (Page 49 of transcript)

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Of those 250 compartments, are any of those in areas that are identified as koala habitat? I understand that these are burnt areas.

Mr ROBERTS: I would have to take that question on notice.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: If you could actually provide a list on notice of the 250 sites that have been put forward or compartments that have been put forward by the Forestry Corporation I would appreciate that as well.

Mr ROBERTS: We can do that, too.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: I have not read them all, but from what I can see the ones that are up there are time limited. I understand that they are maybe 12 months. Is that the maximum that you understand that these site-specific approvals have been granted for? Is that 12 months from the time the harvest plan is agreed? Is that 12 months from the time logging in the compartment starts?

Mr ROBERTS: I would have to take that on notice, but I guess what I can say is that the volume of timber in these blocks is a relatively small amount of volume in terms of our total annual program. We would not expect that they would run for very long in terms of harvest.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: What percentage of your total annual program do you think is going to come from burnt timber? You could see that one coming, could you not?

Mr ROBERTS: I could, yes. I will take that on notice.

ANSWER

The current list of applications for site specific conditions is below.

An estimate of the volume of timber to be harvested from fire-affected areas is not readily available. Forestry Corporation is in negotiations with the EPA to determine what areas affected by fire can be harvested under site specific conditions.

Site specific approvals are valid for 12 months from the date of issuing. The program of timber supply over the coming 12 months will vary in different areas of the State. On the north coast supply will be drawn from hardwood plantations, a small number of operations in unburnt forests in geographic areas which were not impacted heavily by fires and areas of fire-affected forests where site specific conditions for selective harvesting operations are issued by the EPA. On the south coast, a larger proportion of the forests were impacted by fire so operations are likely to be more focused on fire-affected areas. In general, fire-affected areas of forest are expected to regenerate over-time and operations continue under the usual conditions of the CIFOA.

Region	State Forest	Sites
Eden	Crown	8003A
Eden	East_Boyd	11, 12, 13
Eden	East_Boyd	209A_210A_211A_219A
Eden	Nadgee	95
Eden	Nadgee	116A_117A
Eden	Nadgee	59, 60, 63
Eden	Yambulla	269A_290A
Eden	Yambulla	301A_302A
Eden	Yambulla	342A_343A
Eden	Yambulla	309A
North	Bagawa	767
North	Ballengarra	5, 6
North	Boundary Creek	249, 251-258_260
North	Braemar	006, 008
North	Clouds Creek	125, 126, 127
North	Clouds Creek	161, 162, 163, 166
North	Enfield	49, 65, 66
North	Ewingar	653, 655, 666
North	Ewingar	656, 657, 663, 664, 669
North	Girard	456 & 457
North	Girard	6, 7, 8
North	Giro	19, 20
North	Kangaroo River	242, 243, 244, 246
North	Sheas Nob	186, 187, 188, 221, 232
North	Thumb Creek	428, 429, 431
South	Bodalla	3034A
South	Clyde	206_467
South	Mogo	161A_173A
South	Mogo	574A
South	Shallow Crossing	212A
South	South_Brooman	58A
Tumut	Bago	23A_26A
Tumut	Bago	5A
Tumut	Bago	73A
Tumut	Bago	80A/82A/83A/84A/85A

Question 33 (Page 50 of transcript)

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Thank you. Just before the luncheon adjournment the Minister was talking about the \$46 million stimulus package. Do we have any details about that package, what it actually looks like?

Mr BARNES: This is the package that refers to the equity injection for this financial year? I do not believe so, but we can take that on notice.

ANSWER

The \$46 million package will go towards the early replanting of plantations, expanding nursery capacity to help grow the seedlings needed over the next decade to fully restock the plantations and repair of some fire-damaged infrastructure like roads and bridges in State forests required to gain access and harvest.

The NSW Government has also announced a \$140 million Bushfire Industry Recovery Package. This package includes support for the forestry industry.

Question 34 (Page 52 of transcript)

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Through State Forests or Forestry Corp—I will get it right one day—in Forestry Corp was there much damage to that sort of infrastructure?

Mr ROBERTS: Power pole infrastructure?

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Any of that sort of thing. You were talking earlier about bridges and things like that as well.

Mr ROBERTS: It is not something that I am aware of in detail. I imagine there would have been but I can take that on notice if you would like any specific information.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Yes, if you could.

Mr HANSEN: Sorry, I had to socially isolate myself just a moment ago for a cough. I hear I missed a question with regard to the breakup of the \$46 million?

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Yes.

Mr HANSEN: So it has some of those components in it. It has three key pieces. It has got urgent infrastructure repairs, which are for roads and bridges as per **Mr ROBERTS'** commentary earlier. It has money in there for the nursery expansion, both at Tumut and Grafton, and it also has replanting, so funding for replanting in there as well.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: It has been taken on notice so if you could give us the breakdown but thank you for that. With regard to fire trails and fire trail maintenance, now that we have come through the fire season in Forestry Corp—as a part of the review—are we going to look at the adequacy of our maintenance of fire trails throughout our State Forests?

Mr ROBERTS: That again will be a consideration for the State inquiry as to how fire trails are maintained right across the State. There has been a lot of work done in that area over recent years. A lot of work has gone into signage so we know which trails you can access with what kind of equipment and get out safely. There is a fund through the RFS where you can apply for funds to upgrade trails and the Bush Fire Coordinating Committees also have a program of works within the areas they are responsible for to look at and upgrade those trails. So there is a pretty sound process but I am sure that it will get looked at again.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Is there a list available of the damage to Forestry Corp assets because of the fire? Have we undertaken that detailed review yet?

Mr ROBERTS: No, we do not have those full details. We do know that we have lost a large number of bridges, road signs and those kinds of things. We have estimated numbers but we have not got a full tally as yet.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Are you able to on notice just table those? If it is estimated, just make it clear it is estimated. I have got one last round of questions before I hand over to my colleague.

ANSWER

Assessments are still being conducted of the damage to infrastructure in State forests.

Question 35 (Page 53-54 of transcript)

Mr BARNES: Just while Ms Fox comes in, earlier today the Deputy Premier put a total figure on the table of 220-odd applications for the \$10,000 bush loan. I think he underestimated that. It might have been an earlier figure. This is since yesterday, Mr Willing?

Mr WILLING: I can advise the Committee that as of lunchtime there were 458 \$10,000 grants that had been approved, totalling over \$4.5 million out the door, which is outstanding.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Are you able to provide those details in a breakdown by region or local government area [LGA]?

Mr WILLING: We should be able to but it is a growing figure.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: As of today's date. If you could do that, that would be good.

Mr WILLING: Sure.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Thank you.

ANSWER:

I am advised that as at 23 March 2020, 3,399 applications had been received for the small business support grants of \$10,000 and \$9,240,000 of funding had been distributed.

Applications received by LGA as at 23 March 2020:

- Shoalhaven – 653
- Eurbodalla – 600
- Bega Valley – 578
- Blue Mountains – 327
- Wingecarribee – 261
- Snowy Monaro Regional – 143
- Wollondilly – 130
- Port Macquarie – Hastings -122
- Clarence Valley – 96
- Snowy Valleys – 91
- Mid Coast – 78
- Kempsey – 68
- Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional – 67
- Hawkesbury – 65
- Lithgow – 61
- Richmond Valley – 30
- Nambucca – 5
- Unknown – 4

I am further advised that as at 23 April 2020, 13,568 applications had been received for the small business support grants of \$10,000 and \$64,810,000 of funding had been distributed.

Question 36 (Page 54 of transcript)

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: Last Thursday The Guardian reported on the story of Lindy Marshall from Verona near Cobargo. She lost her home and has been living in a fire-damaged shed at her property. She relies on friends for clean water and has to shower in other people's homes. So the question the paper and we are asking is, why is Lindy Marshall living in limbo in a farm shed?

Mr WILLING: I can advise that to this point we have helped over 8,000 people into emergency accommodation. Almost \$2,500,000 has been spent on over 18,000 room nights. We have just recently concluded an agreement with Minderoo to provide emergency pods for situations like Ms Marshall's. At the moment the criteria around that is being developed in terms of the prioritisation of those. That is occurring with local government areas, recovery coordinators et cetera as well. I would be happy to take on notice some detail in relation to Ms Marshall's situation.

ANSWER:

I am advised that Service NSW was in contact with Ms Lindy Marshall in January 2020 and offered to arrange emergency temporary accommodation. Ms Marshall declined as she preferred to remain on her property.

Ms Marshall has been approved to receive a temporary accommodation pod so she can continue to live on her property. Minderoo will arrange a site inspection to ensure the land is suitable for installation of a pod prior to its delivery.

Question 37 (Page 56 of transcript)

Mr HANSEN: **Mr ROBERTS**, can you provide the report that was submitted by the Forestry Corporation to the EPA on notice to the Committee?

Mr ROBERTS: The report on the various blocks that we have had a look at?

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: No, just the—23.4 requires you to submit a report to the EPA before it will consider granting site-specific operating conditions. I just want to see that report, if I could.

Mr ROBERTS: There are applications that we make to the EPA for those site-specific conditions so, yes, I can copy you those.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Are they different for each of the sites—

Mr ROBERTS: Yes.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: —or is it one report? If you could, that would be great. **Mr ROBERTS:** Yes.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Was there any legal advice sought to determine whether the current circumstances fitted, I guess, what was envisaged with this particular section of the IFOA?

Mr HANSEN: I would have to take that on notice. I am not aware that we did but I do not know. EPA, obviously, being the contractual party to the IFOA, I am not sure whether they did. I would have to take that on notice.

ANSWER

Forestry Corporation has submitted reports to the EPA on sites where site specific conditions have been sought / granted – see Appendix 2. An example of the report for South Brooman is attached and this is consistent for the format for other areas. Part 2 should be referred to the EPA.

Question 38 (Page 58 of transcript)

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: I do look forward to recalling the regulator to ask that question. I got the sense from your comment as well, Mr Hansen, that the 250 might have been: Here is our starting point, and we have gotten down to 10 forests and a number of compartments in those forests. Is it correct that the ones that are on the EPA's website are the only ones for which you are seeking site-specific conditions?

Mr ROBERTS: I would have to have a look at the full list that is on the EPA website but what I can say is that there are about 11 areas that we would be looking at site-specific conditions for on the North Coast, as an example. There may be a number of compartments within those areas but that is the level that we have been considering.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Just so the community can get a sense of what is actually going on here, we have got the EPA site. If you can provide on notice the compartments and the State forests that they are related to—

Mr ROBERTS: Yes.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: —for which you are seeking site-specific conditions as a result of the fire. Is it the intention of Forestry Corporation to come back for another bite at this cherry and look at other sites down the track?

ANSWER

In general, fire-affected areas of forest are expected to regenerate over time and operations continue under the usual conditions of the CIFOA.

Question 39 (Page 58-59 of transcript)

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: In many of the new site-specific conditions there is a clause that requires the Forestry Corporation to work with the Natural Resources Commission or other agency agreed by the EPA to monitor the long-term impacts and recovery on the site as part of the monitoring program. I had a look at the one at the Styx River. What are the arrangements that are in place with the NRC, or is there another body that the EPA has identified to do that work?

Mr ROBERTS: I would have to take the specific details on notice but what I can say is that we do have long-term monitoring sites right across the forest. It is part of the new CIFOA. What we do is, rather than focus on specific areas within specific blocks, we actually look to the landscape level in terms of species. So if you talk Styx River, we have sites where we monitor the Hastings River mouse with little tubes that they go through. We have got cameras down in Eden looking at long-nose potoroos, we have song meters for koalas, and all of those long-term monitoring operations have already recommenced.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: I appreciate that, **Mr ROBERTS**, but this is a clause that is in the site-specific conditions. It is not about long-term monitoring, which is good to do. I am sure the Hastings River mouse that lives in the Styx River will appreciate this plastic log to live in, now that it does not have any trees, but I am asking about applying this particular condition, which is around these 12-month site-specific conditions. How are you working with the Natural Resources Commission, or another agency, to do the long-term impact and recovery assessment? Or are we not there yet? You have just approved it but we have not really worked that out.

Mr ROBERTS: I would have to take that on notice.

ANSWER

The site-specific conditions issued by the EPA require monitoring the effectiveness of the site-specific conditions. How this monitoring will occur is being developed with the EPA and the approach will also feed into the long-term monitoring programs being developed with the NRC under the CIFOA.

Question 40 (Page 59-60 of transcript)

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: I want to move on, if we can, to the audit program that is conducted by the EPA. I know this is not your bag, necessarily, but I want to understand how the EPA works in with contractors and the Forestry Corporation when it comes to audits. Last year was the first full year we have had the Coastal IFOA in operation. It was striking to me that last year the EPA only did three audits that are listed on its website. The year before they did eight. In a year we have had big changes. There have been fewer audits and all those audits that were done identified significant impacts. The Forestry Corporation is supposed to comply with the Coastal IFOA anyway. Do you have any idea why the auditing program seems to have been significantly reduced and what are you doing to ensure compliance from a Forestry Corporation perspective?

Mr ROBERTS: You would have to ask the EPA about how they time their audits but we work in with their operational staff across the State. They tell us they are coming to do an audit and they go and do an audit. We get advised after the event. In terms of our own operations, we are certified to the Australian Forestry Standard. We have an audit program through that external third party, which operates every six months. They come in and have a look at particular parts of our operations and ensure that we are complying with the regulations, that we comply with our own internal management systems and that we have good processes around everything that we are doing.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Are they published?

Mr ROBERTS: Yes, I think they are on the website, but let me take that on notice.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Can you confirm when the last one was?

Mr ROBERTS: Yes.

ANSWER

Summaries of the external audits against the Australian Standard for Sustainable Forest Management are made available through Forestry Corporation's website. The most recent audits were undertaken in June 2019 for Softwood Plantations Division and July 2019 for Hardwood Forests Division.

Question 41 (Page 60 of transcript)

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Essentially my question relates to our international presence and our obligations to people who are working for the New South Wales Government in these international offices.

Ms BELL: Sure.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: What have we done to protect those individuals? That is the first thing. Secondly, probably on notice, if you could provide us with a list of the offices and what we have actually done?

Ms BELL: Obviously, the first office impacted was our China office. Both our Guangzhou office and our Shanghai office have been closed for six weeks. They are all working from home. We were able to get them in masks and help them with supplies, so they have been covered. Because it has been a rolling feast the next office is our Tokyo office. Our team there is working from home because schools in Tokyo have closed. Same with Seoul and same with San Francisco this week. Probably the same with us.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Do not sit too close to Mr Khan.

Ms BELL: I have noticed that.

The Hon. TREVOR KHAN: I am feeling wonderful.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: If you could take on notice where the other offices are.

Ms BELL: Sure. It is becoming, obviously, each week—in fact, it is probably the same for most of our offices in Australia as well.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: If you could just take that on notice and give us the offices, that would be great.

Ms BELL: Sure.

ANSWER

All NSW Government trade and investment representatives overseas are safe and well. We check on their welfare daily, mostly via videoconference or teleconference. A daily register of the well-being of each staff member is being maintained.

The NSW Government currently has locally engaged trade and investment staff in Guangzhou, Shanghai, Mumbai, San Francisco and Abu Dhabi. Staff are also embedded within Austrade in Tokyo, Seoul and London, based within the Australian Embassy or High Commission.

Question 42 (Page 60 of transcript)

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I am not sure who of the people here would be able to answer the next question. In August 2013 the Government offered financial incentives for skilled workers and businesses to relocate to the regions and set a target of relocating 1,500 metropolitan public sector jobs to regional New South Wales by 2021? I just want to know where that sits in government now. Who is responsible for that? Has that number been met? I am happy for you to take it on notice.

Mr BARNES: We are happy to take that one on notice. That target, obviously, has historical importance and triggered a whole host of things that government did, including, at the time, I think, bolstering presence in certain regional towns but I will need to find out who the metric owner of that is and how progress is going there. The one thing I could say is that in our patch, which is the regional New South Wales patch, we have been very mindful around making sure that there is no diminish in terms of the numbers of regional workers that we have in regional locations.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: If you could take it on notice, it is one of those things that could fall off the table, the changes of structure of administration of government.

Mr BARNES: Yes, absolutely.

ANSWER

The NSW Public Service Commission Annual Workforce Profile Report 2019, which is available online, publishes detailed information and statistics relating to public service positions, including statistics on how many positions are based regionally. The Public Service Commission reports to the NSW Premier and questions about decentralisation policy can be directed to the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

Question 43 (Page 61-62 of transcript)

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Thank you, **Mr BARNES**. I am from regional New South Wales. I am being told that there are regional positions just not being backfilled as a part of the exercise. Would that be correct?

Mr BARNES: Look, I can say that at the moment that would be I think limited to the positions in the regions that are contract labour or short-term, temporary employment. I think the understanding is that quite clearly if there is a position that is a permanent, ongoing position those will be backfilled.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: With regards to the backfilling, what do we expect to save or create that would go towards the efficiency dividend? What is the dollar number? I am happy for you to take that on notice.

Mr BARNES: I am happy to take that on notice for my particular patch and ask Mr Betts for the broader.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: That would be good, thank you. You also spoke about consultants. How much do we spend on consultants? Again, you might have to take this on notice and get back.

Mr BARNES: I will take that on notice.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Essentially across the department, how much did we spend on consultants the previous financial year and this financial year?

Mr BARNES: And this financial year, yes.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Year to date. And then the same thing: How much do you intend to save by not taking on board or renewing the consultants? That would be a question on notice.

Mr BARNES: Yes.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Also potentially on notice as well, those consultants that we are not going to continue using, what were they doing?

ANSWER

The department will ensure that there is no net change to employment numbers in regional areas, in line with the Premier's regional jobs guarantee. It has taken a prioritised approach to recruitment, filling critical roles as quickly as possible and delaying non-critical recruitment where business needs allow and make it feasible to do so. Whilst slowing recruitment and backfilling contribute to our overall savings goals, there is no financial target relating to these measures as vacancies created by departing staff are difficult to forecast.

The department was formed on 1 July 2019; former agencies' spending on consultants for 2018-19 is included in their annual reports. The department's annual spending in this financial year will be published in its annual report after the completion of the year. The department remains committed to operating within its budget and achieving the savings required by the Government.

Question 44 (Page 62-63 of transcript)

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Mr BARNES, I am not picking on you but essentially you are Mr Betts by proxy. Hopefully you can take these on notice for Mr Betts to get a chance to respond to as well. If I was to propose to you, then, what is the average day rate for consultants last financial year and this financial year—without actually identifying anyone we just want to know what the average is, would that be available?

Mr BARNES: I believe so, yes. We could take that on notice.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Can you take that on notice for last year and this one to date? That would be good.

Mr BARNES: Yes.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Also what is the longest tenure that we have a consultant on for? Do we engage consultants on a three-month, six-month, 12-month basis?

Mr BARNES: I again can take that on notice.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Okay. I guess where I am going to is—would we have anyone on board that has been there for, say, four or six years? Is there a long-term contract with a consultant that is on the books?

Mr BARNES: Again I am happy to take that on notice. Usually consultants have defined periods for them to undertake their consultancy. If the nature of the role has an ongoing element to it, it may well be that they have been engaged as a contractor or under a contract. But I will take that on notice.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: So contractors are different to consultants?

Mr BARNES: Correct.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Okay. So on the basis of consultants or contractors, if they were to provide a service to the department—to the Government—and then that stops, how long before they could become permanent employees?

Mr BARNES: If you are talking about someone who was engaged as a temporary contract public servant—and that is what they would have to be—then there are some industrial norms that would apply. I would have to take advice from Industrial Relations because in different jurisdictions there are different thresholds. But typically if a person is engaged as a temporary contract public servant, as opposed to a contract with an end date or a consultant, then that might be around one or two years, depending on the jurisdiction. Again I am happy to take that on notice.

ANSWER

(a) The Department engages professional services providers for a wide variety of tasks where the capability or capacity may not be available in the current workforce. As such, there is a wide degree of variability in day rate depending on the services engaged.

(b) The longest serving consultant within the department has 28 months' tenure; the average length of engagement for a consultant within DPIE is 8.6 months.

(c) The department adheres to the GSE Act, rules and regulations regarding the recruitment, extension and employment of public servants on temporary or fixed term contracts.

Question 45 (Page 65 of transcript)

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: On the audits that you were mentioning before, you indicated that the Forestry Corporation has its own audits. Could you take on notice of whether those are made public or confirm when the last of those audits were done?

Mr ROBERTS: We will do that, yes.

ANSWER

Summaries of the external audits against the Australian Standard for Sustainable Forest Management are made available through Forestry Corporation's website.

Question 46 (Page 66-67 of transcript)

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Is that the case, Mr Roberts, that what they are getting at the Eden woodchip mill is currently from Victoria?

Mr ROBERTS: I am not actually sure. I have not spoken to the owner of that business for about a week. I am not sure where the wood is coming from but they do have some of their own plantations. It might be coming from across the border.

Mr BARNES: I can double-check that. I am in Merimbula on Thursday. One of the ANWE guys told me that the week before last.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: I apologise: This may mean some musical chairs again. I just have a few quick questions, one again in relation to clean-up. I just want to talk briefly about a matter that was raised this morning—that is, the provision of clean water. I was wondering if you could talk about what happens if someone's tank has actually been melted by the fire. Is there a program to replace the tank? How long is that taking and how many have been replaced?

Ms FOX: That is not part of the Laing O'Rourke clean-up. We would take away destroyed tanks as part of the clean-up. Maybe Assistant Commissioner Willing can answer the other part.

Mr WILLING: I might take that one on notice, if I can, and come back to you. But in general terms some property owners are using charity funding to purchase tanks that have been destroyed et cetera. I will take it on notice and get you some further details on that.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: Given that we are on the topic, can you talk about the provision of clean water generally? For example, how many people are still relying on bottled water?

Mr WILLING: I do not have the answer to that. Again, I will take it on notice. But I can indicate that the ADF alone delivered over 4.7 million litres of water during this current bushfire period. So a significant amount of water has been delivered on the ground. It is still available and they still delivering it where required. It is a difficult question to answer but I will take it on notice.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: In relation to the tanks, beyond charities what programs are there to replace tanks? How long, how many and how long do you expect? Thank you for taking that on notice.

Mr WILLING: Yes.

ANSWER TO QUESTION from JUSTIN FIELD regarding supply of wood to Eden Chip Mill:

Forestry Corporation does not have information on the operations of the ANWE facility that do not relate to supply from NSW State forests. As at 30 March 2020, no

timber harvesting has occurred in State forests post-fire in the Eden region. Industry understands that some timber has been supplied to ANWE from the south coast management area. The NSW RFS, as the bush fire lead agency, facilitate make safe operations post major fire events. These trees were identified as a danger to public safety, felled and taken to the facility.

ANSWER TO QUESTION from PETER PRIMROSE regarding program to replace water tanks:

I am advised there is no discrete program to replace water tanks damaged or destroyed by bushfires. Disaster Relief Grants are available to low-income families for essential structural repairs to homes which can include the replacement of water tanks to bring these houses up to a safe and habitable standard.

Question 47 (Page 69 of transcript)

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: In addition to doing something as part of the bushfire recovery in relation to existing industries that were affected, what plans are there to bring new industries to those affected communities?

Mr BARNES: Obviously you might have heard us talk previously about the Government's Regional Economic Development Strategies, the Government's approach to both special activation precincts, which is moving apace, and local activation precincts, which are a cut-down version of that. All of those things are proceeding with a view to diversifying the economy and making sure that, where possible, we can bring footloose companies into the regions. We do have a bucket of money where we can incentivise bespoke footloose companies into regional locations and we have been successful in the last couple of weeks in making some very good announcements about brand new jobs being brought into regional locations. I am happy to provide that information to you.

ANSWER

The Government established the \$20 million Regional Investment Attraction Fund (RIAF) to grow businesses and boost jobs in regional areas, through two categories:

- new jobs in Special Activation Precincts;
- to retain and/or create jobs in regional NSW for "foot loose" businesses seeking to relocate.

Question 48 (Page 70 of transcript)

This question has been removed.

Question 49 (Page 49 of transcript)

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Sorry, **Mr ROBERTS**, I did not quite finish around that EOI process. I just wanted to be clear, you said it had been abandoned.

Mr ROBERTS: On hold.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: On hold. Had contracts been signed to purchase or use that wood or is it just that the process of accessing it has been abandoned?

Mr ROBERTS: I would need to get back to you on those specifics.

ANSWER

At this stage no contracts have been awarded as a result of the EOI process although it may be progressed in the future.