

Wednesday 26 June 2002

(General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5)

Portfolio

'Agriculture'

QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE DURING HEARING

1. Mr Pearce asked the Minister for Agriculture, the Hon Richard Amery, MP—

What local government areas received a share of the \$6.887 million funding from the Noxious Weeds Control program from mid-last year? (Hansard, p. 9)

Answer:

The following is a list of local government areas and their share of the Noxious Weeds Control funds.

Council	Total for 2002-02	Council	Total for 2002-02
Albury City Council	\$ 8,555	Cootamundra Shire Council	\$ 21,000
Auburn	\$ 2,400	Corowa Shire Council	\$ 36,000
Balranald Shire Council	\$ 8,600	Cowra Shire Council	\$ 126,000
Bega Valley Shire Council	\$ 116,000	Crookwell Shire Council	\$ 63,900
Bellingen Shire Council	\$ 85,500	Culcairn Shire Council	\$ 20,650
Bland Shire Council	\$ 30,000	Dubbo City Council	\$ 39,000
Blue Mountains City Council	\$ 75,900	Dungog Shire Council	\$ 18,200
Bogan Shire Council	\$ 3,850	Eurobodalla Shire Council	\$ 38,000
Bombala Shire Council	\$ 30,000	Fairfield	\$ 1,000
Bourke Shire Council	\$ 34,500	Far North Coast County Council	\$ 286,182
Brewarrina Shire Council	\$ 21,000	Forbes Shire Council	\$ 33,590
Broken Hill City Council	\$ 4,500	Glen Innes Municipal Council	\$ 1,500
Cabonne Shire Council	\$ 60,000	Gloucester Shire Council	\$ 24,500
Camden Council	\$ 67,000	Gosford City Council	\$ 30,000
Campbelltown City Council	\$ 12,600	Goulburn City Council	
Carrathool Shire Council	\$ 108,500	Great Lakes Shire Council	\$ 4,800
Castlereagh Macquarie County Council	\$ 185,610	Greater Taree City Council	\$ 126,000
Central Murray County Council	\$ 137,648	Griffith City Council	\$ 30,000
Central Northern County Council	\$ 203,000	Gundagai Shire Council	\$ 21,000
Cessnock City Council	\$ 3,000	Gunnedah Shire Council	\$ 125,000
Clarence Valley Weeds Authority	\$ 177,480	Gunning Shire Council	\$ 30,900
Cobar Shire Council	\$ 21,000	Hastings Shire Council	\$ 43,500
Coffs Harbour City Council	\$ 80,000	Hawkesbury River County Council	\$ 314,900
Coolamon Shire Council	\$ 12,000	Hay Shire Council	\$ 8,200
Cooma-Monaro Shire Council	\$ 81,600	Holbrook Shire Council	\$ 15,000
		Hornsby Shire Council	\$ 21,000

BUDGET ESTIMATES - AGRICULTURE

Council	Total for 2002-02
HROC	\$ 137,000
Hume Shire Council	\$ 21,000
Illawarra District Weeds Authority	\$ 82,167
Jerilderie Shire Council	\$ 30,000
June Shire Council	\$ 22,200
Kempsey Shire Council	\$ 30,000
Ku-Ring-Gai Municipal Council	\$ 32,500
Lachlan Shire Council	\$ 51,000
Lake Macquarie City Council	\$ 21,000
Leeton Shire Council	\$ 11,500
Lockhart Shire Council	\$ 30,000
Lord Howe Island	\$ 3,000
Maitland City Council	\$ 21,000
Manly Council	\$ 33,000
Merriwa Shire Council	\$ 24,900
Merriwa Shire Council	
Mid-Western County Council	\$ 106,981
Moree Plains Shire Council	\$ 63,000
Mulwara Shire Council	\$ 53,700
Murrumbidgee Shire Council	\$ 19,000
Nambucca Shire Council	\$ 44,500
Narrabri Shire Council	\$ 117,500
Narrandera Shire Council	\$ 30,000
Narromine Shire Council	\$ 297,000
New England Tablelands County Council	\$ 223,486
North West Weeds County Council	\$ 129,027
Orange City Council	\$ 1,000
Parkes Shire Council	\$ 21,000

Council	Total for 2002-02
Parramatta City Council	\$ 26,000
Pittwater Council	\$ 45,100
Port Stephens Council	\$ 24,600
Queanbeyan City Council	\$ 133,800
Rockdale City Council	\$ 6,000
Ryde City Council	\$ 18,000
Severn Shire Council	\$ 115,000
Shoalhaven City Council	\$ 52,500
Snowy River Shire Council	\$ 149,200
Southern Slopes County Council	\$ 129,200
Sutherland Shire Council	\$ 33,000
Tallaganda Shire Council	\$ 29,400
Temora Shire Council	\$ 24,000
Tenterfield Shire Council	\$ 25,500
Tumbarumba Shire Council	\$ 21,000
Tumut Shire Council	\$ 22,200
Upper Hunter	
Upper Hunter County Council	\$ 126,720
Upper Macquarie County Council	\$ 174,000
Urana Shire Council	\$ 21,000
Wagga Wagga City Council	\$ 388,000
Wakool Shire Council	\$ 31,500
Warragah Council	\$ 48,000
Weddin Shire Council	\$ 20,000
Wellington Shire Council	\$ 33,300
Wentworth Shire Council	\$ 22,250
Wingecarribee Shire Council	\$ 39,600
Wollondilly Shire Council	\$ 30,000
Wyong Shire Council	\$ 24,000
Yarrowlumla Shire Council	\$ 46,800

2. Mr M. Jones asked the Minister for Agriculture, the Hon Richard Amery, MP—

1. What is the size of the agricultural export market in NSW? (Hansard, p. 16)

Answer:

The value/proportion of NSW agricultural exports in 2000-2001 comprised 21.2 per cent of Australian agricultural exports, or approximately \$6.2 billion.

2. In relation to Budget Paper No. 3, Vol. 1, p. 3-22, Grants and Subsidies, Wild Dog Destruction Board – Is it appropriate that the figure of \$60,000 remains constant, in view of the size of the problem related to wild dogs? (p. 18)

Answer:

The formula for disbursement of the subsidy was changed following a meeting of 21 Rural Lands Protection Boards on 14 March 1995. Certain aerial baiting costs were included as 'eligible' wild dog control expenditure to more fairly recognise the costs incurred by all Boards.

In any particular year, every Board is reimbursed the same proportion of their 'eligible' expenditure. The grant for Wild Dog Subsidies is \$60,000 per year so the proportional reimbursement changes from year to year according to the total 'eligible' expenditure across all Boards.

3. Mr Colless asked the Minister for Agriculture, the Hon Richard Amery, MP—

1. How many recommendations made by the Audit Office into managing animal disease emergencies are yet to be implemented by the department? (Hansard, p. 21, p. 23).

Answer:

The audit office made 12 recommendations. Many of the recommendations were identified prior to the audit office report and were already being addressed by the Department.

NSW Agriculture has implemented 7 of the recommendations and progress has been made in implementing the remaining 5. It should be noted that all of the recommendations have an element of ongoing activity around them.

2. What projects will be funded from the \$2 million allocated in the budget for Acid soil action? (Hansard, p. 28)

Answer:

Funding for Acid Soil Action is divided between Acid Soil Action (Agriculture) and the Acid Sulfate Soil Project (ASSPRO).

ASA (Agriculture) - \$2.2 million

Projects that address the environmental and agricultural problems associated with acidic soils are selected for funding by ASA (Agriculture) Management Committee.

They are divided into four areas:

- *funding to government agencies for research – 11 projects that include long term experiments, acidification in irrigation areas and plant breeding*

- *funding to government agencies for extension - there are 3 full time and one 1/2 time extension officers servicing the rural community with specific assistance to groups that have received ASA funding,*
- *funding of 38 community co-learning projects throughout those parts of NSW where acid soils are causing problems.*
- *funding of 30 community groups taking part in the soil test interpretation program.*

ASSPRO.- \$0.8 million

Projects that address the pollution of coastal waters with acid released from acid sulfate soils are selected for funding by Acid Sulfate Soil Management Advisory Committee (ASSMAC).

Allocation of funds is to four key areas. These projects were funded in previous years and will continue to be funded in 2002/03:

- *Training and education* *4 projects,*
- *Catalytic on-ground works* *5 projects,*
- *Community participation* *2 projects,*
- *Management and technology* *3 projects.*

ASSMAC will allocate the funds not already committed for 2002/03 at their next meeting in November 2002.

The proportions of ASSPRO funds to organisations for projects that will receive funding in 2002/03 are:

<i>(15) Govt agencies (Extension & Research)</i>	<i>36%</i>
<i>(16) Local Government</i>	<i>13%</i>
<i>(17) Community/industry</i>	<i>30%</i>
<i>(18) Universities</i>	<i>21%</i>

Administration takes approximately 10% of ASA funds.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

4. Mr Jones asked the Minister for Agriculture, the Hon Richard Amery, MP—

In relation to Genetic Engineering (GE) -free zones

1. Did the Minister undertake any consultation with concerned certified organic and GE-free farmers to arrive at the position that GE-free zones are unrealistic for NSW?

Answer:

No

2. Why are GE-free zones in NSW unrealistic?

Answer:

Detailed studies conducted in other States have shown this to be the case.

3. How has the Minister responded to concerns brought to his attention by individual farmers and farming associations in letters recently sent to him regarding GE contamination and the potential loss of markets as a result of the introduction of GE crops, in particular GE canola, in NSW?

Answer:

I have replied to each letter, pointing out that the concerns over loss of markets have not been established by independent studies, that Japan imports large quantities of canola from Canada, where GM and non-GM are not segregated, and the EU also imports GM maize and soybean. In regard to canola, the EU is frequently a net exporter, and in those years will not import any canola, including from Australia.

4. Has there been consultation with the Biological Farmers Association and the Organic Federation of Australia about their concerns with GE contamination? If not, why not?

Answer:

If organisations have such concerns, it would be usual for them to contact me.

Is it a fact that Tasmania has announced it will pursue GE-free status by introducing its own law and South Australia and Western Australia have not ruled out the use of GE-free zones?

Answer:

Yes

5. If GE-free zones are not designated in NSW, by what other measures, if any, will the Government ensure GE contamination does not occur during the cultivation of GE crops in NSW so that growers won't lose their market access as a result of GE-contamination?

Answer:

This is not the Government's role. NSW Agriculture has been involved in national discussions leading to the development of crop management plans to manage the on farm risks identified in the production of GM crops.

In relation to NSW Organic Industry Liaison Committee

6. Why hasn't the NSW Organic Industry Liaison Committee of the Centre for Organic Farming in Bathurst addressed the issue of GE contamination for the NSW organic industry?

Answer:

This is for the Committee to determine.

7. Will the Minister ensure the NSW Organic Industry Liaison Committee will now prioritise the issue of GE contamination in organic farming in NSW? If not, why not?

Answer:

See response to (6).

In relation to Impacts on markets

8. What independent research has been undertaken in NSW to determine the impact of negative market pressures on the NSW economy and farming sector as a result of the introduction of GE crops?

Answer:

The Australian Bureau of Agricultural & Resource Economics has published several studies on the issue. They are publicly available.

9. Is it a fact that consumer confidence in certified organic food in the USA has been rocked because a guarantee can no longer be given that organic products are GM free and USA organic product now has a qualifying statement on the packaging stating that GM contamination may occur?

Answer:

This is a value judgement.

10. How will NSW certified organic farmers be protected from the same fate as their US counterparts?

Answer:

See response to (9).

In relation to GE contamination, Identity preservation & co-existence

11. Does the Minister believe there can be co-existence of GE and non-GE crops without GE contamination to non-GE crops and foods? If so, how so? If not, why not?

Answer:

Yes. Through industry managed crop management plans and identity preservation schemes.

- 12 What level of GE contamination is acceptable to GE-free produce and on what basis would the decision be made and who would decide this?

Answer:

The markets will determine this, in the light of food labelling regulations.

- 13 Did the Wall Street Journal on the 4th June 2002 report that the EU has announced they will downgrade the threshold at which mandatory labelling would kick in from 1% down to 0.5%?

Answer:

Mr Jones has presumably seen the article referred to.

- 14 How will you effectively manage GE-contamination in NSW produce to ensure a rapid response to changes in market requirements?

Answer:

This is not the Government's role.

- 15 Does the position paper by NSW Agriculture called Regulation of Genetically Modified Technology and Products say: "GM free zones do not of themselves assure identity preservation, as transport, handling and processing systems are all involved in the production of food"?

Is the corollary of this that without GE free zones, transport, handling and processing systems won't assure identity preservation either as they can't address GE contamination which occurs during cultivation as a result of cross pollination?

Answer:

- a. *This quote has been contained in briefing documents.***
b. *No.*

- 16 Does the position paper by NSW Agriculture called Regulation of Genetically Modified Technology and Products say: "Separation of crops by 400 metres would make sure the pollen flow was less than 1% and therefore within the limit of contamination allowed in most countries for GM crops"? If so, on what basis is this information provided?

Answer:

Yes. There is an Australian study, conducted by the CRC for Australian Weed Management by Dr M. Rieger.

- 17 Is it a fact that commercial canola seed produced by Advanta Seeds in Canada with buffer zones between 800-1000 metres still resulted in GE contamination levels at between 0.5% - 2%, costing the company millions of dollars in recalls?

Answer:

I am unaware of any technical report that confirms or denies whether this is a fact.

18 Is it a fact that Canadian organic farmers can no longer grow canola because GE-contamination levels are high across the country?

Answer:

I am unaware of any technical report that Canadian organic farmers can no longer grow canola because GE-contamination levels are high across the country.

19 Is it a fact that a recent study by Orson, J. (2002) Gene Stacking in herbicide tolerant oilseed rape: lessons from the North American experience, English Nature Research Report No. 443, revealed the widespread emergence of multiple herbicide resistant volunteer canola plants following the growing of GE canola in Canada?

Answer:

This paper assumes that the occurrence of multiple resistant volunteer plants are, or will be, widespread, but it does not quantify the extent of multiple resistance. However, the paper makes it clear that this is the result of there being no recommended or mandated minimum distance between canola crops with tolerance to different herbicides. This is not the situation in the crop management plans being developed in Australia. The paper also makes the point that these multi-resistant volunteers cause few problems to the farming systems in western Canada.

20 Is it possible that multiple herbicide resistance could occur in GE canola in NSW?

Answer:

It is possible, but at very low probability, given the proposed crop management plans.

21 Could multiple herbicide resistance potentially lead to the increased use of herbicides, possibly more hazardous herbicides such as 2,4 D in NSW? If not, why not?

Answer:

See (20).

22 How would NSW manage multiple herbicide resistance in NSW?

Answer:

See (20).

23 Is it a fact that keeping GE contamination levels in otherwise non-GE produce at 1% is entirely dependent on starting each season with 100% pure GE-free seeds otherwise contamination will quickly compound?

Answer:

No.

24 Will the Minister establish GE-free areas so that guaranteed pure GE-free seed can be supplied each year? If not, where will farmers purchase GE-free seeds from each year?

Answer:

No.

- 25 Is it a fact that research carried out by the Nanjing Institute of Environmental Sciences and State Environmental Protection Administration of China on the environmental Impacts of BT cotton in China revealed that:

(a) adverse impacts on parasitic natural enemies of cotton bollworm associated with BT cotton are leading to a reduction in populations of parasitic natural enemies in BT cotton fields?

Answer:

I am unaware of any technical reports from China on this matter.

(b) BT cotton is not effectively controlling many secondary pests, especially suckling pests?

Answer:

The activity of BT protein is limited to bollworms. It has no activity against sucking pests anywhere in the world.

(c) Development of resistance of bollworm to BT cotton has been commonly recognised?

Answer:

I am not aware of any technical reports from China on this matter.

- 26 What independent investigations, if any, have taken place, or will take place, to ensure ecological problems do not occur as a result of its use in NSW?

Answer:

The Office of Gene Technology Regulator (OGTR) is responsible for assessing threats to human health and the environment posed by any dealing using GM technology. This clearly includes ecological problems posed by the commercial release of GM canola.

- 27 What research work is currently being carried out within NSW Agriculture on GE crops and animals?

Answer:

NSW Agriculture does not have a capability to genetically transform plants or animals. Some GM plants are being evaluated in breeding programs under conditions established by the OGTR. Some work is being conducted on animal vaccines using GM technology, also under the control of the OGTR.

- 28 How does the Minister advise staff and reconcile the conflict that occurs from promoting both organic and GE agriculture?

Answer:

There is no conflict. Both can co-exist.

- 29 Is the Minister concerned that an Australian producer, So Natural Foods, is being forced to change its formulation because the GM-free status of canola cannot be guaranteed and they can't supply their customers with the product they demand as a result? If not, why not?

Answer:

No. This is a marketing and food labelling issue.

- 30 Why are farmers and companies who wish to continue to supply their customers with GE-free products bearing the costs and the burdens being imposed by GE farming?

Answer:

There are currently no costs or burdens.

- 31 Do you agree that GE-free farmers have a right to remain 100% free of all GE contamination? If not, why not?

Answer:

I support farmers efforts to remain free of any form of contamination.

- 32 Do you agree that any costs associated with maintaining a GE free status should be borne by those wishing to use GE technology? If not, why not?

Answer:

It is important that Australia, and NSW, not be denied access to the potential benefits to agricultural production, to consumers, to the environment, and to the economy, of GM technology.

5. Mr Jones asked the Minister for Agriculture, the Hon Richard Amery, MP—

In relation to the use of antibiotics in the intensive farming industry

- 1 (a) Is the Minister aware the concerns amongst doctors and expressed in the media at the routine non-medical use of antibiotics in the intensive farming industry?

Answer:

Yes, I am aware of these concerns but I am also aware that Dr Peter Collignon of Canberra Hospital, has stated publicly that in his estimation only about 5% of human antibiotic resistance is due to animal antibiotic use.

- (b) Is the Minister aware that these antibiotics are stored in the bodies of the animals and passed on to human consumers?

Answer:

I am aware that low level residues of all drugs persist in any treated animal or human.

- (c) Is the Minister aware that antibiotics now have a much-diminished effect in the treatment of human diseases, because of this unintended additional intake of antibiotics?

Answer:

I am not aware of any such linkage having been shown in Australia at any time. The Joint Expert Technical Advisory Committee on Antibiotic Resistance (JETACAR) reported to government in October 1999 and concluded that the problems with antibiotic resistance in Australia, to which Mr Jones refers, are almost entirely related to their direct use on humans, particularly in hospitals.

- (d) Is the Minister aware that intensive farmers are largely dependent on the routine use of antibiotics in their industry, in order to be able to sustain their methods of farming?

Answer:

I do not agree that there is the sort of large scale dependence on antibiotics by intensive livestock producers suggested by Mr Jones. The use of antibiotics of concern in intensive cattle, poultry and pig production has declined in recent years. Animals are increasingly being reared without their use, and those antibiotics that are used are used for more limited periods in the lifespan of the pigs or poultry.

- (e) Has the Minister taken any steps to discuss these issues with the intensive farming industry, in the light of the very serious effect this unwitting intake of antibiotics has on human consumers? If not, why not?

Answer:

Staff of NSW Agriculture frequently discuss these matters with the various industry bodies, such as the Australian Association of Poultry Veterinarians in regard to their Code of Practice for the use of Antibiotics. Further, the relevant industries are very conscious of the whole issue of public concerns about antibiotic use, and are investing large sums of money in research that will continue to reduce their use of such products.

- (f) Has the Minister taken any steps to discuss these issues with the medical profession? If not, why not?

Answer:

NSW Agriculture holds regular consultation meetings with the Department of Health. Antibiotic resistance has been one issue for discussion. The Department has also been involved in the JETACAR process which continues to engage the agricultural and medical professions in the antibiotic debate.

- (g) Has the Minister considered banning the non-medical use of antibiotics in intensive farming? If not, why not?

Answer:

The question of how individual antibiotics are used, and whether they should be "banned" or not, was also dealt with in the JETACAR report. As a result the National Registration Authority for Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (NRA) is progressively reviewing all the animal antibiotics and will make appropriate recommendations in relation to restricting or banning those uses that are assessed as unnecessary, inappropriate or otherwise carrying high risks.

In relation to Feral Animals and the Game Bill

6. (a) Several exotic species have been identified in the Game Bill as “game” although they no longer exist in the wild in any numbers in NSW - for example the California quail and the peafowl.

Answer:

They do exist in the wild in NSW (albeit in small numbers) and are recognised games species worldwide.

- (b) Does this listing represent a lack of knowledge of the situation or does it foreshadow the breeding and releasing of these species to provide more “game” for hunters?

Answer:

No. Section 55 of the Act makes it an offence to release such species, as does the Rural Lands Protection Act 1998 (Section 176), and the Non-Indigenous Animals Act 1987 (Section 13) and the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 (Section 109) also contain similar offences.

7. (a) How much money has the government expended on “feral” animal studies and/or inquiries this year?

Answer:

Expenditure on pest animal management activities by NSW Agriculture through its Vertebrate Pest Sub-Program in 2000/2001 was \$2.24m.

In addition, NSW Agriculture has almost completed a survey of feral animal distribution and abundance at a cost of \$125,000-00.

- (b) How can this expenditure be justified given that any findings of such inquiries are being pre-empted by the approach to feral animals promoted by the Game Bill?

Answer:

Hunting currently serves as an adjunct to conventional pest animal control. The introduction of the Game Bill will not diminish pest animal control by the Government, Rural Lands Protection Boards or landholders. On the contrary, the Game and Feral Animal Control Act 2002 ensures that hunting activity is better integrated into pest animal control activities.

- (c) Has the Government calculated the increase in expenditure on feral animals/pest control programs that will be necessary in order to ensure compensate for the damage done to these programs by the Game Bill?

Answer:

As above, the Game Bill will enhance the relationship between hunting and the other forms of pest animal control in NSW.

8. (a) What is the exact level of public expenditure intended for staffing the Game Council as proposed under Section 12 of the Game Bill?

Answer:

This is not currently known.

- (b) How much will each person on the Game Council receive annually?

Answer:

This is not currently known.

9. (a) The bill proposes the establishment of a Game Council to manage a licensing system for hunters.
- (b) Why does this “Game Council” not include representatives from animal welfare organisations, especially given the Game Bill has been presented by the Minister responsible for animal welfare?

Answer:

Membership of the Game Council will include a person appointed on the nomination of the Australian Veterinary Association, two wildlife scientists and one member appointed on my nomination. In making my nomination I will have regard to the range of skills of other nominees, including animal welfare skills. The composition of the Game Council, along with appropriate links to the NSW Pest Animal Council and the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee, will ensure that regulation of the hunting of game animals in New South Wales is based on a competent understanding of all hunting practices and proper consideration of relevant animal welfare issues.

- (e) If at any stage a decision is to be made that animal welfare representatives are to be included will they form half the membership of the council?

Answer:

As above.

- (d) If they are not to be included and in reasonable numbers, how does the Minister justify this failure?

Answer:

There is no failure. Membership of the Game Council will include a person appointed on the nomination of the Australian Veterinary Association, two wildlife scientists and one member appointed on my nomination. In making my nomination I will have regard to the range of skills of other nominees, including animal welfare skills. The Council will also include members appointed on the nomination of hunting organisations, State Council of the Rural Lands Protection Boards, Landcare, the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council and relevant Government Departments.

This composition along with appropriate links to the NSW Pest Animal Council and the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee, will ensure that regulation of hunting in New South Wales is based on a competent understanding of all hunting practices and proper consideration of relevant animal welfare, environment and pest animal management issues. As a statutory body, the Game Council is also accountable to me as Minister and to the NSW Government generally and is also subject to normal parliamentary processes and scrutiny.

Nothing in the Bill diminishes the Government's opposition to animal cruelty and it must be noted that hunting is already permitted under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979 (POCTAA). Bans imposed by POCTAA on game parks and on hunting methods such as steel jaw traps and trap-shooting with live animals, will continue. Moreover, Clause 6 of the Game Bill explicitly states that nothing in the Bill exempts people from their responsibilities under POCTAA.

10 The current General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5 inquiry into feral animals shows that hunters re-introduce pigs into areas from where they have been removed to ensure the continuing availability of this favoured target.

- (a) What justification is there, then, for assuming that persons who kill for pleasure will comply with legislation and reduce numbers of the animals they most enjoy killing such as feral pigs?

Answer:

It is a fact that a few people may sometimes act in ways that are contrary to the common good and must be addressed by legislation. In this regard, Section 55 of the Act makes it an offence to release game species, and the Rural Lands Protection Act 1998 (Section 176), the Non-Indigenous Animals Act 1987 (Section 13) and the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 (Section 109) contain similar offences.

- (b) On what research is this based?

Answer:

There are instances where pigs have been deliberately introduced into areas for the purposes of hunting. However, like many anti-social activities, only a minority is involved. Introduction of the Act will result in greater awareness of these issues and much greater ability to enforce appropriate behaviour.

11. In the days of the duck-shooting season in NSW, bodies of many endangered birds were slung into eskies or left to rot on the shores of lakes after being shot in error.

Answer:

Duck hunting is still a permitted activity under the National Parks and Wildlife Act. The Game and Feral Animal Control Act does not refer to ducks or any other native species. The Bill actually regulates hunting under an enforceable code of conduct and consolidates current hunting permits already issued by state government agencies and in doing so underpins current animal welfare laws.

12. What confidence can the people of NSW have that the Game Bill will not see many endangered and vulnerable species killed by recreational hunters?

Answer:

The code of conduct will contain mandatory requirements for animal welfare, firearm safety, access to land, and recognition of target species. Failure to observe these provisions will be grounds for cancellation or suspension of a person's game hunting licence.

These requirements will be monitored and enforced by inspectors. This Act provides an opportunity to properly control these activities. Furthermore, the Act does not include native wildlife but it will help control feral animals that impact on wildlife, and will thereby actually benefit our native fauna.

13. On average 560 Australians are hospitalised every year as a result of injuries from firearms. The hunting rifle is the most common type of firearm used in both accidental and self-inflicted injuries. Violence to animals has been linked to violence to humans, and there is evidence that observing violence leads to acts of violence.

- (a) Does the Minister consider there is real cause for concern that this proposed legislation will result in more deaths from firearms? If not, why not?

Answer:

No. The Act ensures that only appropriate persons are granted a game hunting licence. Refusal of a game hunting licence can be on the grounds of:

- **A proven offence (within the last 10 years) involving cruelty or harm to animals, personal violence, damage to property or unlawful entry into land;**
- **A proven offence under Section 55 of the Act (release of animals for the purpose of hunting);**
- **A person not being a fit and proper person; or**
- **in other circumstance as prescribed in the Regulation.**

(b) What processes will be in place to ensure the safety of shooters and non-shooters alike?

Answer:

Nothing in the Act affects the Firearms Act 1996, and it is the latter that regulates a person's access to firearms.

14. (a) What will be the cost of policing the proposed Game Bill if it becomes law?

Answer:

This is not currently known but will be small compared to the benefits of improved pest animal control and resulting protection of our native fauna and flora, and the animal welfare benefits associated with the mandatory code of practice for hunting.

(b) How will policing occur?

Answer:

The Act provides inspectors with appropriate powers to enforce its provisions.

(c) To what extent can policing of hunting activities be effective? On what evidence is this based?

Answer:

The code of conduct will contain mandatory requirements on animal welfare, firearm safety, access to land, and recognition of target species. Failure to observe these provisions will be grounds for cancellation or suspension of a person's game hunting licence. These requirements will be monitored and enforced by inspectors.

15. (a) Does the Minister foresee an increase in recreational shooting if the Game Bill becomes law?

Answer:

Not necessarily, although increased control of game species, many of which are feral animals living on public land, would be a desirable outcome.

(b) How can the Minister justify the increased encroachment of four-wheel drives into fragile areas resulting from such an increase?

Answer:

The Act will regulate hunting under an enforceable code of conduct and consolidate the various permits already being issued by State government agencies to allow hunting on public land. It will be necessary for the Game Council to make recommendations to the appropriate Minister regarding areas of public land where game hunting may be appropriate. These recommendations will not include land managed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service and must be approved by the relevant Minister.

Other protocols governing the use of 4 wheel drive vehicles fall outside my portfolio responsibilities. For example, restrictions on access to fragile areas under the control of the National Parks and Wildlife Service is not affected by the Act.

6. Mr Jones asked the Minister for Agriculture, the Hon Richard Amery, MP—

In relation to Kangaroos

1. Why, considering the non-competitive impact of kangaroos on sheep and cattle, is the kangaroo industry allowed to continue when it is inhumane and brings so much international criticism and shame to Australia?

Answer:

Studies have shown that competition can occur between sheep and kangaroos under certain circumstances, including low food availability such as during drought or when kangaroos reach abnormally high densities. Competition between kangaroos and cattle is less well understood.

2. Why is it not a legal requirement for farmers to state how many cattle, sheep and other non-native animals are part of their grazing pressure before they are issued with a permit to shoot kangaroos?

Answer:

While the issuing of kangaroo permits is a matter for the Minister for Environment, the kangaroo management plan is not primarily focused on managing total grazing pressure, but rather on sustainable resource utilisation and maintaining viable kangaroo populations.

In relation to Farming Subsidies

1. (a) What is the level of direct subsidy paid to the farming industry?
 (b) What is the level of indirect subsidy paid to the farming industry?
 (c) What is the level of indirect subsidy paid to the intensive farming industry?
 (d) What is the level of indirect subsidy paid to the intensive farming industry?

Answer:

It is not always relevant to attempt to categorise the support provided to the agriculture sector as being 'direct' and 'indirect'. For example, contributions by government in the form of marketing and promotion, infrastructure development and repairs and environmental programs assist farmers as well as agribusiness firms and the wider community.

The figures below, however, provide an indication of the assistance provided to NSW farm industries by the NSW Government. These figures relate to the 2000-2001 year.

*The 2001-2002 figures are yet to be compiled.
 Assistance which may be considered 'direct':*

Farmer retirement programs	\$ 0.23 million
Farm productivity improvement	\$ 1.02 million
Disaster Relief	\$ 6.54 million
Farm soil, water & irrigation works	\$19.20 million
Total 'direct' assistance	\$26.99 million

Assistance which may be considered 'indirect':

Research and development	\$ 25.96 million
Advice, extension and training	\$ 25.72 million
Pest and disease control	\$ 17.14 million
Marketing and promotion	\$ 0.43 million
Environmental programs	\$ 98.28 million
Total 'indirect' assistance	\$167.53 million

That is, total assistance provided to the farm sector by the NSW Government during 2000-2001 amounted to almost \$200 million. The three agencies concerned, NSW Agriculture, the Rural Assistance Authority and the Department of Land and Water Conservation do not budget on an 'intensive farming' and 'extensive farming' basis and it would be a major accounting exercise to attempt to disaggregate this support across these sectors.

It is important to note that these support measures do not include any direct production subsidies.

At the national level, a recent OECD publication reports Australia as being second only to New Zealand as having the lowest level of farmer support in the OECD. A measure of this support, the Producer Support Estimate, was 4.0 for Australia in 2001, compared to 1.0 in New Zealand (the lowest), 21 in the United States, 35 in the European Union and 59 in Japan.