ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
MINISTER MORIARTY

Question Number	Question	Answer
1 Page 4	**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** The NSW Shark Management Program's annual report is usually released at the end of July or beginning of August. Why has it been delayed this year? Why has it not been released? **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I'll take on notice about whether it's been released. I don't know. I'll check the details for that.	I am advised: The SMP Annual Report can be found here: https://www.sharksmart.nsw.gov.au/shark-nets
2 Page 5	**The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I will get some advice on any of the specifics that people are raising. As I said, I wasn't aware that people had raised it. These letters are dated pretty much the last 48 hours. I'm very happy to go through it, seek advice and meet with people about any concerns that they might have. **The CHAIR:** Can you take on notice whether you've received any other correspondence earlier on than these ones that have obviously come through this week? Have you received any other correspondence	I am advised: Yes

	or had any meetings or just general advice as to whether you've known about this prior to these things coming through in the last couple of days? **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I'm happy to check.	
3 Page 6	**The CHAIR:** Going back to the EIS issue, once you get your advice regarding the accumulation, are you prepared to write to or discuss with the planning Minister to that have EIS amended to include that risk? **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I'll need to go through all this. I'll need to seek some advice on the circumstances and I'll give consideration to it once I've done that.	I am advised: I am happy to discuss issues raised with me with my colleagues.
4 Page 6	**The CHAIR:** I will go to the Rural Assistance Authority. In terms of recovery grants, how many farmers have actually been paid since June and how many are still waiting to receive a payment? **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** Good question. I will take on notice the specific numbers. We'll see if we can come back to you ASAP about the details for that.	I am advised: As of 11 September 2025, a total of 2,613 applications have been received, with: • 1,255 applications approved across all flood grant programs, with an initial upfront payment processed for each application. • 532 applications have been withdrawn (due to duplicate applications or transferring between programs). • 5.8% or 72 applications have been declined. • In, total, 71% of applicants have received a determination (Includes Approved, Withdrawn and Declined) Of the applications to be processed: • 10% or 266 applications are awaiting assessment • 4% or 98 applications are in assessment • 15% or 385 are awaiting further information from client

	The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: How do you not know that? **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** There has been work happening over the weekend. **The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** The Premier knew it. **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** Excuse me, I'm trying to answer the question. I don't really need heckling from the sidelines. Let's be respectful. This is an issue that I have intervened in. It is really important that we're getting money and financial support to farmers who have been impacted by floods and natural disasters. **The CHAIR:** If you don't have the data in front of you, can you also take on notice also what's the oldest claim still sitting on someone's desk waiting to be processed? **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** Sure. What is important to say is that it has taken too long in some cases for people to get feedback from the department. I have intervened and the department has now	As of 11 September 2025, RAA was assessing applications received on 19 August 2025. RAA was assessing invoice claims received from 5 September 2025.

	doubled the resources to make sure that we can get on top of the situation and get money out the door to people. I appreciate that people have now been doing that. Everyone—as far as I'm aware—who does have a claim in has been contacted, including over the weekend. We had department officials working over the weekend to get this matter dealt with.	
5 Page 6	**The CHAIR:** You said you've doubled staff. What was the original number? **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** We've now got 50 people in total dealing with claims. The breakdown for who's doing what in relation to that I will take on notice, unless of course the secretary wants to provide specifics. It is important for people to understand that we have put additional resources into this. I don't want this to be taking a long time for people to be getting money, so we have put additional resources into this just in the last week to make sure that we can clear the applications through. That has been occurring, including over the weekend, because we need	I am advised: The Rural Assistance Authority have 24 staff assessing applications, 10 staff vetting applications, 11 staff processing payments and 6 staff for program administration.

	make sure that people are getting their money in a more timely way.	
6 Page 6	**The CHAIR:** Perhaps you'll have to take this on notice as well, but how many people have actually got money in their accounts, not just approved on paper? **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I can get you that.	I am advised: As of 11 September 2025, 1,255 applications have been approved with an initial upfront payment processed. The total of upfront disbursements is $6 million and total of all disbursements including claims is $13.9 million.
7 Page 6	**The CHAIR:** And what's the average payout? Is it $5,000 or are people seeing the full $75,000 grants—maybe an average, a median et cetera, if you could get us some data. **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** Yes, I'm happy to provide it. I'll see what I can get for you in terms of the information. I'm happy to be as transparent as possible. **The CHAIR:** If there's an average wait time, longest wait, how many people are getting knocked back, potential reasons why they might get knocked back. You don't need to identify the individual people, but just some general reasons that might help people sharpen up their applications in the future.	I am advised: All approved applicants have received an initial upfront payment of $5,000. The approved application amount for all Special Disaster Relief Grant is $75,000. Approved Special Disaster Relief Grant applicants have until 4 September 2026 (4pm) to submit eligible invoices to claim up to their approved application amount. For the Special Disaster Relief Grant $3.9 million has been paid in upfront disbursements and another $6.4 million in additional claims as at 11 September. As of 11 September 2025: • The average approval time (business days), excluding periods where applications are on hold awaiting customer information, is currently 19.8 days. • The average approval time (business days), including periods where applications are on hold awaiting customer information, is currently 26.7 days. • 46 Special Disaster Relief Grant applications have been declined. Across all flood programs 72 applications or 5.8% have been declined. The highest reason for declined applications not meeting the program eligibility criteria – 50% primary production income. Other reasons include not demonstrating impact and applying from an ineligible LGA.
8 Page 8	**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I want to	I am advised:

	move to the issues of staff salaries in your office. Can you advise why you had an increase in the last financial year for your staffing arrangements? **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I believe people might have got an increment, but I will happily take on notice any specific details.	Information concerning Ministers' Office Budgets can be found in Section 4 of the Ministers Office Handbook. https://www.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/noin dex/2025-02/Ministers%20Office%20Handbook.pdf. Minister's Office Budget and Expenditure information is published in the Premier's Department's Annual Report
9 Page 8	**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Did you put on any additional staff, or is it that everyone there got a pay rise? **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** Additional staff compared to what? **The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** To the previous financial year. There is an increase of about $125,000 in your staff salaries and costs. Was it a new position that was created? How do you account for that increase in funding into your office? **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I'll have to take the specifics on notice. I think I've had roughly the same size team the whole time. If there is an amendment to that or anything different over the course of this financial year	I am advised: Information concerning Ministers' Office staff numbers are reported every 6 months. This information can be located here: https://www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/premiers-department/access-to-information/premier-and-ministers-staff-numbers

	compared to the last, I'm happy to provide any further information.	
10 Page 9	**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** But there is more money going into your salaries. At the same time, you've got hundreds of jobs being cut from your department. Can you understand how people would find that a little bit hard to take when you're paying staff more or putting on additional staff and you've got 165 people losing their jobs in your agency? **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** There is just short of 5,000 people working in the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development. I think we're at 4,800. I'll take the specific numbers on notice. There is a change management program underway in the department which is being conducted inside of the department. I'm not interfering in that, nor should I. We've got to make sure, as I've said many times, that the resources that we've got are being spent in regional communities to support regional communities and that we're doing it in a financially responsible way. That process is	This question was answered in the hearing.

	well underway. There is a consultation process underway with people across the department. That's got another little while to run. No final decisions have been made, but that may well be the impact.	
11 Page 12	**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Minister, can I come back to this. I know the Chair asked you. Can you tell us right now how many applications have been received for the primary producer grant so far and how many have been approved? **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I did say that I would take that on notice. **The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** But how do you not know? You come to budget estimates today— **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I can give you a ballpark, but I've said I would take that on notice, which I'm entitled to do. I want to give accurate, proper information. **The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** You said you look at these every day. **The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** The Premier could give it to	I am advised: As of 11 September 2025, • 1,655 Special Disaster Relief Grant applications have been received, and 787 applications have been approved. • 296 Rural Landholder Grant applications have been received, and 108 applications have been approved. • 666 Natural Disaster Relief Grant applications have been received, and 360 applications have been approved. • In, total, 71% of customers have received a determination (Includes Approved, Withdrawn and Declined)

	me a week ago, and you said you look at it every day. Isn't it the fact that we asked the Premier in budget estimates, and then, suddenly after that, mysteriously you're putting all these extra resources in? You sat on this for 100 days and did nothing to speed it up. It was only when it was raised with the Premier that you actually decided to put some more effort into getting this money out the door for farmers. Isn't that what happened? **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** No. That's not true at all. **The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Then why can't you tell me the number of applications? The Premier could. Why can't you? **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I want to make sure that I'm providing specific details for you.	
12 Page 12	**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** You said you could give me a ballpark. What's a ballpark, then, if that's the best you can do? **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I've said that I'll find the information. I've also said I would try to find	Please refer to Question 11.

	it as we're going. I'll give you the information that I have. There are 1,510 applications for the $75,000 special disaster grant and 265 applications for the $10,000 Rural Landholder Grant. **The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** How many for that first grant have been approved? **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** You've just made a really big deal of wanting this information. **The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I said how many primary producer grants— **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** Chair, I'm literally providing the information, and I'm still getting cut off. **The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Received and approved, if you can. **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** You've got to let me answer the question. **The Hon. GREG DONNELLY:** Point of order— **The CHAIR:** Do you want to answer it?	

	The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: Yes. The figure for the $25,000 natural disaster grants is 596, the total being 2,371.	
13 Page 13	**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Do you have the total approved? They're the applications. How many have been approved? **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I will come back to you with those details	I am advised: As of 11 September 2025, 360 Natural Disaster Relief Grant applications have been approved.
14 Page 16	**Ms CATE FAEHRMANN:** Good morning, Minister. Is the Government establishing a new peak body for recreational fishing in New South Wales? **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** Yes, we made an election commitment to do that. Work is underway to create that body. There is a budget allocation for it. I have asked— **Ms CATE FAEHRMANN:** Do you know how much that is? **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I'll take it on notice. I want to say $1 million. **Ms CATE FAEHRMANN:** That's right. It's $1,050,000.	I am advised: The Government is providing $1,050,000 over 3 years to support the establishment and initial operations of the recreational fishing peak body.

15 Page 22	**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Are you able to tell me how many applications have been received through the Drought Ready and Resilient Fund? **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** Yes, I probably can. Let me see what I you can find for you. While I look for the specifics, it's around 250, but I'm happy to provide specific details for you.	Answered in hearing.
16 Page 22	**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Can you tell me how many have been approved as well, if you've got that there? **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** Let me see what I can find. I'm happy to provide—I'll get the specific numbers for you. **The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** You will have to take that on notice as well? **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** Yes.	Answered in hearing.
17 Page 22	**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** So you can't tell us how many people have applied for disaster funding or drought funding as we sit here? **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I have told you that, actually. I	I am advised: As of 10 September 2025: • 97 Drought Ready and Resilient Fund loan applications have been declined. • 52 Drought Ready and Resilient Fund loan applications have been withdrawn • 34 Drought Ready and Resilient Fund loan applications are in assessment.

	gave you the breakdown. **The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No, you took most of it on notice. **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** No, I provided the answer. **The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No, I asked for how many applications have been approved. **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** You kept cutting me off while I gave the answer, but I gave the answer. **The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** You didn't have it when it was asked by the Chair. Can you tell me, then, how much of the $250 million has been allocated through the Drought Ready and Resilient Fund? **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** Yes. It's around 8 or 9 million, plus we had to complete—so the number of applications received, 223; applications approved, 49; value approved is $8.97 million. **The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** How many applications, then—of only 49 approved, have	

	200 been rejected or are they still being processed? **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I'll have to seek further information about that.	
18 Page 22	**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Do you know how many have been rejected and why? **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I would have to seek further information about that, but I'm happy to come back—	I am advised: As of 10 September 2025, 97 Drought Ready and Resilient Fund loan applications have been declined. The most common reason for applications being declined is Serviceability. Other key reasons relate to eligibility to apply, or eligible activities funded through the loan.
19 Page 24	**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Residents of Manning Point and Harrington are really concerned that the seawall could break the next time that there are rough seas and ocean swells, potentially causing flooding in both localities. Are you aware of any work being done so far to that seawall? **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I am not aware of that, but if anyone else has some information— otherwise, I'll take it on notice and I'll come back to you.	This question should be directed to the Minister for Roads.
20 Page 28	**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** But Minister, the NRC recommended changing forestry management practices after the fire.	Nothing taken on notice.

	Forestry didn't do that. They kept logging. It's just haemorrhaging, Minister. The Treasurer said in estimates just the other week that he wished it wasn't like this. It's a sector losing money. Will it be easier for you, as the manager of Crown land forests, if we weren't destroying them and haemorrhaging money? **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I guess I'd say I'm not wishing for that. I'm doing the work on it. The Government is doing the work on— **Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** Is there a financial saving or any recovery from the $14.9 million loss in the first part of the financial year? **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** We're doing work on what an industry can look like into the future. **Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** Does that include closing down the hardwood sector if that's the advice? **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** We're looking at what an industry can look like into the future. I'm not in a position to give details.	

	Ms SUE HIGGINSON: We know it's in plantations. Everyone knows that. When will you, as the Minister, announce that—everybody else knows—for the workers' sake and for everyone's sake? **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** The Government is working through all of these issues. Increasing our plantation estate in New South Wales is a 10-, 20-, 30- or 40-year proposition. It should have started 10, 20, 30 or 40 years ago. It didn't. **Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** That's not an excuse to continue haemorrhaging public money and destroying forest, Minister. **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I'm not suggesting that's the case. What I'm saying is we're doing a lot of work on all of these issues together in a Forestry Industry Action Plan so that we can give certainty to everybody involved in this sector and everybody who has an interest in it as to what a sustainable industry looks like into the future.	
21 Page 28	**Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** This is a very quick one	I am advised:

	and you can take it on notice. When did you first become aware of the Shooters' recreational hunting bill? **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I'm not sure when I first became aware of it. It's something that has been discussed. I know it's before the Parliament. **Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** Would you take it on notice and give us a date? **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I will try. I don't know that I could give a specific date for when I became aware. I know there have been conversations about it, but I'm happy to try. **Ms SUE HIGGINSON:** Roughly? This year, last year, two years ago? **The CHAIR:** She has taken it on notice. You are now eating into everyone else's time.	Early 2024.
22 Page 32	**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** The former biosecurity commissioner completed a review into the governance of pest and weed management. When did she hand that to you?	I am advised: The reports were received by my office on 30 June 2024.

	The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I have got that. We have a response to that. I will be releasing a biosecurity plan very soon. I'm not in a position to give a sneak peek today. **The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** When did she give you that report? **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I'm not sure of the exact date, but I can take the date on notice. I have it. **The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** This month? Last month? **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I'm not sure, but I have it.	
23 Page 36	**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Minister, you might need to take this on notice, but when did Halter first ask your office for the meeting with you that then took place on 7 May with the CEO Mr Piggott and strategic directions—Brent Thomas attending? **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I'm not sure. I will take that on notice. A little further context is that there was a function that evening with others who were involved in that area of policy that I was attending. I	I am advised: My office received a meeting request from Brent Thomas on 1 May 2025.

	believe they were here for that and it was an opportunity when people were in the building. But, in terms of when they asked me to have the meeting, I'll take that on notice.	
24 Page 36	**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** It was a virtual fencing event in the Parliament. Is that what you're saying? **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** No, they were going to be in the Parliament. People were going to be in the Parliament. That was the nature of the timing for the meeting. As we do during sitting days, it's good to coordinate— **The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** But normally to get this meeting with you, as you say, on a busy Wednesday, they'd need to be asking weeks in advance for the meeting, wouldn't they, to schedule something? **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** Not necessarily. I made an announcement. There was interest in the announcement. It was a pretty big story. There are a lot of stakeholders. Often, when I make announcements, there are a lot of people who reach out, wanting to	Please refer to Question 23.

	have conversations about them. **The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Is that your recollection? They asked for the meeting after the announcement? **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I don't know—well, I would imagine; they wouldn't have known I was making the announcement. I will have to take the specific request on notice. What I'm saying in general terms is, I made an announcement, there was a lot of interest in it, a lot of interest in having further conversations about it. That's not unusual.	
25 Page 36	**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** It would have been your expectation, from a probity point of view, that they wouldn't have had advanced knowledge of the announcement on 30 April? **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I didn't engage with anyone before I made the announcement because I don't tend to foreshadow announcements because it takes away from the opportunity to make it a good story.	Please refer to Question 23.

	The Hon. MARK LATHAM: Sure, but you're not the only one in the Government. Can you take on notice, too, that in requesting the meeting it was a request that Brent Thomas would be attending? **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I'll have to take that on notice.	
26 Page 37	**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** So that's your evidence, but didn't you say earlier on you're not sure whether or not Mr Thomas requested the meeting before or after the announcement? **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I made the announcement. A number of people, a number of organisations, including NSW Farmers and others, had cause to have conversations with me about it. There's nothing special here. **The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** But you said earlier on you didn't know if it was before or after the announcement that Mr Thomas sought the meeting. **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I've said that I'll take on notice when a request was made. I didn't talk to	Please refer to Question 23.

	anyone about the announcement before I made it—obviously other than inside of government.	
27 Page 38	**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** What involvement have Halter and Mr Thomas got in the consultation process now? **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I'm sure the company would have been consulted. I would have to take on notice—but a range of stakeholders were consulted, interested parties, NSW Farmers and the like. The department did—eastAUSmilk, who, I understand, have representatives here today, were part of the consultation. Consideration has been given to national guidelines that the Federal Government has been working on in relation to the use of virtual fencing. Since we've made the announcement, other States are interested in the use of virtual fencing in other States. These national guidelines have been worked on by the Federal Government through national committees for some time. I don't know if they've been released, but they are now national guidelines into virtual fencing,	Question answered in hearing.

	which is yet another layer of consideration that people have been giving to allowing virtual fencing in New South Wales or in Australia regardless of who they might know or not know. Those guidelines have been provided to people as part of the consultation for what we might prepare as part of a draft reg.	
28 Page 43	**The CHAIR:** I've only got two minutes. I don't need the background. I know it's an election commitment. You've given taxpayers' money. The concern is that they're dysfunctional already. They haven't had an AGM within 18 months. I've got more than half of Wallis Lake fishers saying they're walking away; the same with Hawkesbury. How can we have a peak body funded by taxpayers who claim to represent fishers when half their members are walking away in frustration? It's dysfunctional. **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I have concerns about it, so I'll continue to look at the structures that are in place. It is important, if I can just explain as I was trying to before, the Government was	I am advised: The remuneration for the Wild Harvest Fishers Incorporated Chief Executive Officer is a matter for the board.

	delivered by us providing financial assistance for it to be set up. That was a matter for industry about how it was to be set up. They're now doing that. It's not functioning the way that it needs to. **The CHAIR:** I'll stop you there. You've issued taxpayers' money for a project. There is a level of accountability that money is spent wisely and has an impact. Clearly, it's not having an impact. Have they been given the whole funding? **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** No. **The CHAIR:** Will you hold the remainder of the funding back, then, until you're satisfied that they are going to function? **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I wouldn't go so far as to say that they're not at this stage, but I am taking this— **The CHAIR:** Well, their fishers are walking away. **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I have met with some of them. There have been some things put to me recently. I am looking	

	into those. That's as far as I would take my public comments at this point, but I am looking into the issues. **The CHAIR:** Have you sighted any audited financial statements from them? **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I haven't, but that doesn't mean that people aren't seeking that information. This is something that I'm actively looking at. **The CHAIR:** Do you know what the CEO is being paid at? **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I would have to take that on notice.	
29 Page 44	**The CHAIR:** Do you know what his role is or what his role should be? **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** Remember, this is not a government agency. We provided support for it to be set up. The industry then needed to run it. If that is not working, then that is something that needs to be looked at. **The CHAIR:** Do you know that they don't even have a public-facing website?	I am advised: The Minister for Agriculture plans to meet with the Independent Chair of Wild Harvest Fishers Incorporated (WHFI) to discuss concerns raised by some commercial fishing stakeholders regarding the governance and operation of the peak body. This meeting will include investigating ways to ensure WHFI effectively progresses its operational plan.

	The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: That's a matter for the organisation, but I am looking into some of these issues. The CHAIR: Can you, on notice, report back whether or not you are satisfied with their performance, and whether you will be continuing the funding? **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I'm happy to come back on notice about what I'm currently looking at.	
30 Page 44	**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Minister, in the last budget estimates we learned that you've got a discretionary fund titled the Minister's Community Benefit Fund. How much was the original allocation for you to utilise through that fund? **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** Not much. Let me find the details for you and I will come back to you.	I am advised: Funding has come from within the budget allocation of the Department.
31 Page 44	**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Has it been topped up since the original allocation that you were given? **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** I don't believe so, but let me take that on notice.	Please refer to Question 30
32 Page 44	**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Can you	I am advised:

	tell me how much is currently in that fund? **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** Again, I'll take it on notice.	There is currently no further allocation under the Minister's Community Benefit Fund.
33 Page 44	**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** The website for the fund states that it's not open for applications, so what's the process for that funding to be distributed? **The Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** At the moment, it's not a thing that opens for applications in the same way that the Regional Development Trust or other funds would be open for, but it's an opportunity for some organisations to apply for funding. I'll get more details for you.	I am advised: Administration of the Fund is managed by the Department and in compliance with The Cabinet Office's *Grants Administration Guide (March 2024)*.
34 Page 44	**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Just on that, it's not an open fund, so what is the process for the funding to be distributed? How does an organisation access that money? **Hon. TARA MORIARTY:** Let me get the details for you on notice, but it can provide ad hoc grants for concepts from community organisations. It has funded things like the women's Magic Round and other good programs through ad hoc applications. I'll	I am advised: Information on the Fund can be found at: https://www.nsw.gov.au/grants-and-funding/ministers-community-benefit-fund-strategic-projects Administration of the fund is managed by the Department and in compliance with The Cabinet Office's *Grants Administration Guide (March 2024)*.

	provide the details for you.	
35 Page 46	**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** I have also got some questions in regards to DPIRD's involvement with the NSW Pet Registry. Is it best to go through you, Ms Connell? **RACHEL CONNELL:** That is correct, but I will note that the hearing for the Local Government portfolio is tomorrow. **The Hon. EMMA HURST:** Yes, and I'll have some more specific questions tomorrow with that. I do know, obviously, that it relates specifically to the puppy farm legislation. I wanted to ask it from that angle here and then I've got some different questions for tomorrow. I'm just wondering what DPIRD's role is right now in relation to working with the OLG at helping to get the Pet Registry functioning to match with the puppy farming legislation. **RACHEL CONNELL:** We're working very closely with the Office of Local Government. We have worked quite closely with them since the legislation passed on a number of fronts, including	I am advised: The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (the Department) is working closely with Office of Local Government (OLG) on implementation of the Puppy Farms Amendment Act. Funding will be provided to the OLG to assist with implementation.

	implementation of the exemption scheme. We provide advice to them on an as-needs basis. Our teams meet together regularly. In relation to the progress on the registry, I would refer you to the Office of Local Government and the Minister for Local Government. **The Hon. EMMA HURST:** Has DPIRD contributed any funding to the Office of Local Government to build that section of the puppy farm Act into the Pet Registry? **RACHEL CONNELL:** I would have to take that question on notice.	
36 Page 46	**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** If you could. If you're able to also find out how much funding has been provided and, if no funding has been provided, whether there's plans to provide funding from DPIRD towards OLG for that work. **RACHEL CONNELL:** Yes, I'm very happy to take that on notice.	See answer to question 35.
37 Page 47	**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** My understanding is that the Office of Local Government has already conducted work in this space. It has cost them $4 million so far, and they	See answer to question 35.

	have been trying to get money from DPIRD for that first part of that work—for the $4 million. Is that your understanding? **RACHEL CONNELL:** I can't speak to the costs that have been incurred by the Office of Local Government. As I said before, I will take on notice the issue of whether we've provided or are in the process of providing funding for other parts of implementation of the Pet Registry reforms. I will note that the Pet Registry is a responsibility of the Local Government portfolio.	
38 Page 47	**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** It's not so much the Pet Registry part of it. It's the part of the implementation of the puppy farming legislation which was put forward by the agriculture Minister. That was her legislation. One part of that legislation required the Pet Registry to have a particular function to oversee the breeders. My understanding is that the Office of Local Government has started that work on behalf of DPIRD. That $4 million cost isn't for the puppy farm register. That $4 million was for implementing the	See answer to question 35.

	puppy farm bill. They haven't been able to get those costs recovered yet from DPIRD. **RACHEL CONNELL:** As I said before, Ms Hurst, we're working very closely with the Office of Local Government on implementation of the reforms. That also includes working with them in relation to how the funding for the reforms is being applied. I'd need to take on notice the specifics of that funding.	
39 Page 48	**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** Will there be any restrictions on the level of electric shock that can be delivered to those animals and, if so, what would be that level? **PETER DAY:** I'd have to take the actual specific range on notice, but I'm aware that the national guideline does prescribe that, yes. **The Hon. EMMA HURST:** If you could take on notice what that level is, that would be great. **PETER DAY:** Yes	I am advised: The draft Australian Animal Welfare Guide for Virtual Fencing referred to is an outcomes-based guide and does not contain specific restrictions regarding levels or types of electric or audio stimuli.
40 Page 48	**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** To Ms Connell or Mr Day, when did the department first	I am advised: The Department has been providing advice to various Ministers for Agriculture on virtual fencing since at least 2016 and has been contributing to a national process to develop an

	provide advice to the Minister about virtual fencing? **RACHEL CONNELL:** I'd have to take that on notice. As I said before, Mr Latham, the development of the draft national rules or standards has been in development since 2021, so we'd have to take that one on notice, but I assume it was early in—	animal welfare guide on the use of virtual fencing since August 2021. This has included providing advice to the current Minister for Agriculture on the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Virtual Stock Fencing) Bill, which was introduced into Parliament in February 2024.
41 Page 48	**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** After the election, the book you provide to new Ministers—what colour is it? The blue book? Is that what you do here? **RACHEL CONNELL:** Yes, but I wasn't in the department at that point in time, so I'd have to take that on notice in terms of when she was first advised.	I am advised: Incoming government briefs are prepared across all agencies following a State election. Consistent with convention, they are provided on a cabinet-in-confidence basis to incoming Ministers.
42 Page 48	**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** The Minister said it was a Labor Party election promise, so it would have been in the blue book after the election. Can you take that on notice as to whether or not that's right and what was, generally, the advice that was provided? Was that advice any different to the handling of the Donato private member's bill later in 2023?	Please refer to Question 41.

	RACHEL CONNELL: I obviously can't give you any advice on that front, given I don't have visibility of the advice that was provided in the first instance. I do understand that the incoming Government briefs are generally subject to Cabinet in confidence, but we can take that on notice and confirm for you.	
43 Page 49	**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Does the Cabinet Office ever say that the Premier can't be party to considering this because of the interest he has with his very best friend being involved with one of these companies? **RACHEL CONNELL:** I'm not privy to the way the matter was considered by Cabinet. **The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** By Cabinet Office or by Cabinet. Did the department provide advice about market structure—that this is a duopoly, effectively, and there wouldn't be any New South Wales company or jobs provided? **RACHEL CONNELL:** Not to my knowledge, but I will point out that I understand we consulted with at least	I am advised: Vence is a provider of virtual fencing technology that is owned by MSD Animal Health.

	three commercial providers during our recent consultation. **The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Who's the third? There's Halter, Gallagher and— **PETER DAY:** Vence. **The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Like JD Vance. **PETER DAY:** With an E, not an A. **The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Is it two Es? **PETER DAY:** Yes. **The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Vence. Who are they, and where are they from? **PETER DAY:** I'm not across where they're actually from, but I'll take that on notice for you and come back.	
44 Page 49	**RACHEL CONNELL:** I will note that we are not the only State currently consulting on a proposal to make virtual fencing legal. I understand South Australia and Victoria— **The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Sure. It's legal in Queensland and Tasmania, and Victoria is doing a trial and South Australia is talking about it. But that's not the thing	This question should be directed to the Premier.

	that I'm questioning. Could I ask Kate Meagher from the Premier's Department, have you been involved with virtual fencing in terms of delivery and engagement? **KATE MEAGHER:** No, I haven't. **The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** Who in the Premier's Department or the Cabinet Office has looked after it as it has gone forward to this point in time? **KATE MEAGHER:** I'd have to take that on notice.	
45 Page 49	**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** What happens at the Cabinet Office and the Premier's Department if the Premier has to declare an interest because of a certain reason? What is the process by which it's handled internally? Do they send it over to the Deputy Premier? **KATE MEAGHER:** I'll take that on notice. It's probably best for me to refer that to the Cabinet Office.	This question should be directed to the Premier.
46 Page 49	**The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** You've not had any experience with this issue as it has gone forward to Cabinet?	This question should be directed to the Premier.

	KATE MEAGHER: None at all. **The Hon. MARK LATHAM:** But you can take that on notice and perhaps give me a chronology of how it was handled? The Premier obviously gets a blue book as well after the election. From the Premier's Department's point of view, could you take this on notice as well: The Minister said it was a Labor election promise. Was it addressed in the blue book following March 2023? **KATE MEAGHER:** I'm happy to take it on notice.	
47 Page 49	**The CHAIR:** Through you, Mr Orr, can I direct my questions to Fisheries. That might be Ms Black, initially. How much money has gone to the Surf Life Saving association for their rock fishing safety program so far? **TARA BLACK:** I'd have to take that on notice and come back to you this afternoon.	Question answered during the hearing.
48 Page 50	**The CHAIR:** Is there going to be a review of this program overall in terms of its effectiveness? **TARA BLACK:** I think the Surf Life Saving program is very	I am advised: Reporting by Surf Life Saving NSW on the first phase of its Rock Fishing Safety Program indicated: • 94% of safety session participants identified that they were more confident in how to stay safe while rock fishing since attending the session • 95% of safety session participants identified that they had learnt something new about rock fishing safety

	effective. It's a very important— **The CHAIR:** What metrics are you using to make that assessment? **TARA BLACK:** Surf Life Saving have had very good attendance and engagement at their events, and they put out very important messages to rock fishers. **The CHAIR:** Has that led to a decrease in rock fishing deaths? That's the ultimate metric. **TARA BLACK:** I'd have to take that on notice. But, yes, I agree, that's the ultimate metric.	• 98% of safety session participants in a follow up survey indicated that they had worn their new lifejacket while rock fishing There is a range of rock fishing safety advisory and communication programs aimed at promoting key safety messaging, which has involved a collaborative approach by various agencies, organisations and other stakeholder groups, including DPIRD, local Councils, NSW Police, Surf Life Saving NSW, Australian National Sportfishing Association and the Recreational Fishing Alliance. Additionally, the Rock Fishing Safety Act in 2016 was also implemented to improve rock fishing safety outcomes in NSW.
49 Page 50	**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Mr Orr, in relation to the restructure happening within the department, how and when was it first communicated to you that it was needed? **STEVE ORR:** From whom, Ms Mitchell? The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Was it from the Minister? When did the discussion start about the change management—I think was the term the Minister used—within the department? When was that first	I am advised: Late 2024.

	communicated to you and by whom? **STEVE ORR:** It came from within the department, Ms Mitchell. It's up to the department to operate within its resources. There are a number of factors which led us to making the decision that we needed to implement a change management plan. I can run through what those factors were. But in terms of my responsibility, it's my responsibility to ensure that the department is operating within the fiscal resources that we have. We believe that we needed to make the changes, which are currently out for comment and draft at this point, in order for us to run in a fiscally responsible way. **The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** So this was all instigated by you as the Secretary when you first took on the role? What was the timing of that? **STEVE ORR:** I took on the role at the end of April last year. Since that time, obviously, there was the formation of DPIRD on 1 July. When we did that there were a number of structural	

	changes, which we've talked about in this place previously. A number of structural changes were implemented. Not long after that we went into the budget cycle and I think, through that process, it became apparent that there were some ongoing financial tensions in certain parts of the department. That's what led to the discussion about the need for change management plans. **The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Did you take that to the Minister to say that this was something that you believed you needed to do? **STEVE ORR:** It was discussed with the Minister, that's right. But it didn't come from the Minister. **The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** No, but you had that discussion with her? STEVE ORR: Correct. **The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Do you know when you first would have raised it with the Minister? I'm happy if you need to take that on notice. **STEVE ORR:** I'll take that on notice	

50 Page 51	**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** In terms of the headcount figures, I think you just said it's currently 4,900— **STEVE ORR:** Correct. **The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** —full-time equivalent. I appreciate what you said about the process still being underway in terms of that restructure, but what is the predicted full-time equivalent headcount once that's finalised? **STEVE ORR:** If you just look at our ongoing headcount—and it's not full-time equivalent; I'm just using a headcount number, which is different to an FTE number—we are currently at 3,402. That's the number of ongoing staff. That would reduce by 165, as proposed in the change management plans. **The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** You might need to take this on notice, but are you able provide a breakdown of exactly how many staff are employed in each role and where you would expect those to be found from those 165? Is that easier if I do that on notice for you	I am advised: Proposed changes were outlined in the draft Change Management Plans.

	because it's quite specific? **STEVE ORR:** Yes. It's detailed generally in the change management plans themselves, Ms Mitchell, so we should be able to do that. **The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I might put that on notice just in terms of the specifics because I'm interested in admin, research and development—who's in compliance et cetera. **STEVE ORR:** By and large, I should just say as a general comment, we've very mindful of not impacting on service delivery. Equally, the department has close to 200 locations across New South Wales, and we didn't want any of those locations to close. They were a couple of driving factors to assist with the decision-making.	
51 Page 52	**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** I'm not sure who, but this question might come to you, Ms Connell. Specifically the research going on into the Southern Multi Breed herd—can someone update me on where that's up to? **RACHEL CONNELL:** The Southern Multi	I am advised: Southern Multi Breed (SMB) data collection on the herd completed June 2025. Project final report and official end date of the SMB program is April 2026.

	Breed research program was a joint program between the department and Meat and Livestock Australia. They are the research and development corporation that's responsible for the livestock industry, obviously. I understand UNE also was a partner in some of that work. That was a five-year funded program. MLA was obviously providing a significant amount of funding to that program of research. I'd have to take on notice the exact date it came to an end. I think it was June this year.	
52 Page 54	**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Of the 549 approved, have they received the $5,000? How many of those have received the full $75,000? **STEVE ORR:** The 549 is they've received the $5,000. Then the balance, assuming they've applied for the lot, would be payable on production of receipts. **The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Do you know how many have got the full $75,000 yet, though? Do you have that data? **STEVE ORR:** No, I don't have that	I am advised: As of 11 September 2025, 5 applicants had claimed and received the full $75,000. Approved applicants have until 4 September 2026 (4pm) to submit eligible invoice claims up to their approved application amount.

	number, Ms Mitchell. I can take that on notice if it's helpful. But the total value of the applications which have been approved to date is $38,000,900. The total, if you want what has been paid actually to people, is $2,000,745.	
53 Page 55	**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** Can you explain to me how a national guideline would impede a public consultation? **PETER DAY:** There still would be consultation if it was going to be made into a regulation later on as well. But for the purposes of the guideline itself, it was around just trying to get some technical input from the relevant stakeholders around the operation of that guideline going forward. **The Hon. EMMA HURST:** But our understanding is the Minister said that she is introducing regulations to allow for shock collars.	I am advised: Consultation on the proposed regulation is being undertaken with a range of stakeholders.

	PETER DAY: That's correct. **The Hon. EMMA HURST:** So my question was why was there no public consultation on any proposed regulations? **RACHEL CONNELL:** I think Mr Day has answered the question. We took the nationally developed draft guidelines and undertook consultation on the specifics of those guidelines with a range of key stakeholders across various parts of the spectrum. **The Hon. EMMA HURST:** I understand the process. I'm just trying to understand why there was no public consultation process within that. I understand that there's a national guideline. I understand that there was targeted consultation with particular groups. I was just trying to get an understanding of why there was a decision made to not have any public consultation on the proposed regulations. **RACHEL CONNELL:** We'll take it on notice in terms of any Government decision. But it's not unusual for us to do targeted	

	consultation in terms of technical specificities of regulations and standards.	
54 Page 56	**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** One of the key issues is the current lack of protection for vet nurses and vet technicians, who, as you know, are entirely unregulated at the moment. There's obviously a great opportunity for those skilled professionals to take on more work and actually assist with this shortage that we're dealing with, but they need to be properly regulated and supported to be able to do that. Has the department been doing any work specifically in that space to help sort of fix some of that gap around the vet shortage? **RACHEL CONNELL:** We've been doing quite a bit of work in relation to the vet shortage. It has become a focus for our—I will get Tara to remind me of the name—Welcome Experience. We've incorporated some measures to support workers and attract workers into New South Wales. That's obviously in response to the inquiry. We are also doing some work	I am advised: As outlined in the NSW Government response to the Parliamentary Inquiry on the Veterinary Workforce Shortage in NSW, the NSW Government has committed to considering this issue as part of a broader review of the veterinary practice regulatory framework.

	with Local Land Services in terms of them becoming an employer of choice for vets and undertaking education and awareness. We're also working quite closely with some NGOs that operate in the space. **The Hon. EMMA HURST:** Sorry, and that work has anything to do with the title protection for vet nurses and vet technicians? **RACHEL CONNELL:** And protection for vet nurses is part of, in my understanding, some of the work that we're doing in terms of regulatory options. But I'd have to take on notice the specific aspects.	
55 Page 57	**The CHAIR:** Right. Can you tell us what that stock assessment said about the mulloway stocks in terms of estimated spawning biomass? Have you got that, and how it compared to the previous study in 2021-22? **THOR SAUNDERS:** Mulloway has been classified as depleted since 2004-05. The most recent stock assessment before the one that was just published still had it as depleted. With the new stock assessment	I am advised: The Draft Mulloway Harvest Strategy has been designed to provide an adaptive management framework that responds to changes in stock health and assessment information. The draft harvest strategy focuses on managing total catch levels that are suitable to meeting rebuilding objectives. This was confirmed through the independent Total Allowable Fishing Committee, informed by assessment modelling, to be 125 tonnes. The Mulloway Harvest Strategy Working Group was fully briefed on the stock assessments and management options that were provided during the public consultation process. The minutes of the Working group meetings can be viewed at https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing/harvest-strategies/have-your-say-draft-nsw-mulloway-harvest-strategy-and-management-options/Mulloway-Harvest-Strategy-Working-Group

	there was sufficient information to suggest that, while the biomass was still hovering maybe just above that 20 per cent of un-fished levels, it was still down around that level, but the management that had been put in place and some of the signals in catch rate and size of the fish were positive enough for us to say that it's actually looking like it's recovering, which still means that the biomass is at a depleted state. **The CHAIR:** But if it's recovering, why would the draft harvest strategy go for such a rigid framework rather than looking at other options? **THOR SAUNDERS:** There was a range of options looked at with what's in the draft harvest strategy. The model was used to test whether that was going to effectively recover mulloway to the level that was desired under the harvest strategy, which is up to 30 per cent, and this was the level that was determined by that model with some uncertainty around it to recover it within the appropriate time frame.	

	The CHAIR: Are you able to table the options that were presented to the working group and any data around what came with those options? **THOR SAUNDERS:** It was under the TAF committee, so it's on the public record, but I can provide that, yes.	
56 Page 57	**The CHAIR:** What engagement have you had on the commercial fishing peak body, Ms Black, or you, Dr Saunders? **TARA BLACK:** I attended a meeting with the Minister a few weeks ago with the wild caught harvest coalition. **The CHAIR:** Have you had any meetings with the commercial fishing peak body as it's been established? **TARA BLACK:** I haven't. I've only been acting in this role for three weeks. But I have spoken on the phone to the chair. **The CHAIR:** What about you, Dr Saunders? Have you had any engagement? **THOR SAUNDERS:** I've only met the CEO a couple of times. I haven't had any official sort of engagements,	I am advised: The Wild Harvest Fishers Incorporated reported on 31 July 2025 that its membership included 138 members.

	attended any of their meetings or anything like that. **The CHAIR:** So you haven't discussed anything in terms of their work or what policy or anything that— **THOR SAUNDERS:** Just in broad sense. **The CHAIR:** Are any of you aware of how many members they actually have currently compared to when they first established? **TARA BLACK:** I think we'd have to take that on notice.	
57 Page 58	**The CHAIR:** If you would take that on notice, how it compares to when they were first funded by the Government, that would be great. Is your agency doing any assessment on how they're spending this money? **TARA BLACK:** I think the Minister's intention is to meet with the peak body representatives sometime soon. She's obviously met with a group of stakeholders and not yet discussed the claims that they've made with that group. That's something that's still going on. We do have a funding deed in place with the	I am advised: A funding deed has been executed with the Wild Harvest Fishers Incorporated which includes a series of milestones based on submission of 6-monthly activity progress reports and a project plan at various timeframes.

	peak body that requires them to provide us with different information to support its establishment. I would just say the— **The CHAIR:** Is there some sort of acquittal process that they need to show what they're spending the money on? **TARA BLACK:** Yes, I believe so. I'll double-check that, but I believe so. **The CHAIR:** Are you able to provide that to us so we can understand what they're spending the money on? **TARA BLACK:** Yes.	
58 Page 58	**The CHAIR:** Mr Orr, can I go to you about the aerial culling questions we asked on notice, or my colleague asked on notice, a little while ago? I'll pass them to you to refresh your memory. Just so we can get a bit of a baseline, how do you make sure that the numbers that are reported by aerial shooters are accurate? **STEVE ORR:** I think it's a question for Mr Kelly. **ROB KELLY:** I've obviously read those, but in terms of	I am advised: During the week beginning 18 August 2025.

	accuracy of aerial culling, when we do aerial shoot programs the cull or the animal is confirmed killed by two sources: The pilot and the navigator. **The CHAIR:** When they do a flyover, do they actually check to see that that animal is down? **ROB KELLY:** They do. Once the animal has been shot, they do a fly back over. It requires a minimum of two shots and then more shots until confirmed killed. **The CHAIR:** Okay, so they actually sight the animal being down? **ROB KELLY:** Yes. **The CHAIR:** And deceased? **ROB KELLY:** Yes. **The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Mr Orr, does the RAA sit directly under you? **STEVE ORR:** Yes. Well, sorry, not in a direct way. The RAA sits under Ms Myers, who is the deputy secretary or chief operating officer for the department. **The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** When the Minister said last week, "We're putting	

	additional resources in today," was that the first you'd heard of that? **STEVE ORR:** When? **The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Last week, when she made the announcement to double the resources into the RAA? **STEVE ORR:** No. I discussed the matter with the Minister and we agreed we needed additional resources. When that was, I'd need to take that on notice.	
59 Page 59	**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** The talk of doubling the number of staff—was that to get to 50? **STEVE ORR:** No. Just in terms of clarity, doubling the number of staff refers to assessment staff. This time last week there were 12 assessment staff. Now there's 24. **The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Where did those additional 12 come from? **STEVE ORR:** I'd need to take that on notice, Mr Barrett.	I am advised: Recruitment of additional staff came from within and outside of the Department.
60 Page 59	**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** When she says things like she instructed the department to act and told the department to	I am advised: Further clarification on the question is required to provide an answer.

	put in more resources and that's what they're doing, my experience with the RAA would be that they were doing everything they possibly could with the resources that they had at hand. Do you think it's true to imply that this sort of stuff only happened because the Minister intervened, as she mentioned earlier? **STEVE ORR:** The Minister was pretty clear, particularly with me and some of the other staff who were involved in assessing it, about needing to increase the efficiency by which we're actually processing applications. As you can imagine, Mr Barrett, there were a number of factors going into the management and oversight of this particular program. The Minister touched on some of those previously. We had a cat C and then we went to a cat D. It was a significant administrative load just to move people from one to the other. We didn't want people having to go through an additional application process simply because it became a cat D. There were additional information	

	requirements and then we had to get staff trained and developed so they could actually run the program. That took some time. The efficiency is what we're now looking at to ensure that the program and the assessment process is as efficient as possible. Certainly the Minister has been clear with me and others within the department about the need to put on additional resources to get information back to people in terms of where their application actually sits. **The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** If we're able to double the resources in essentially a week—coincidentally, since this was put on the Premier's radar in budget estimates—how come it has taken three months to get to that point that we need to increase the resources into dealing with these applications? **STEVE ORR:** The cat D become available in early July. The cat C was obviously in place about a month beforehand. I think it's a reasonable question in terms of how quickly we responded to the	

	event. As I said, there was a number of factors that we had to deal with early on, which slowed the process down. As with all of these things, Mr Barrett, we have a look back through to ensure that we learn from the experience. Certainly those learnings will be applied when we deal with this next time around. **The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** I presume you'll have to take this on notice given your answer to an earlier question, but how many of those staff who are on there are higher grade staff working on this? **STEVE ORR:** Again, I'd need to take that on notice.	
61 Page 60	**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** I appreciate the efforts that were put in over the weekend to catch up on this. Do we have any understanding of what this would have cost in overtime? **STEVE ORR:** Again, I'll take that on notice. There are funding arrangements between the State and the Commonwealth in terms of the way in which these events are funded. That factors into it. The sort of staff which we can actually	I am advised: The overtime cost is $11,601.

	use in relation to those funding arrangements is also another factor. But, in terms of the amount of money that was spent over the weekend with respect to overtime, I'd need to take that on notice.	
62 Page 61	**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** In relation to requests from the Minister's office wanting to understand the background and history of the project, my understanding is that there was a request from them that came at the end of October wanting more information about the project. Do you recall that? **JAMES BOLTON:** Not specifically, but I can provide some clarity on the prompt for the brief that went up that I referenced before. The prompting for that brief was a request from the Office of Sport around October 2020. Is that what you're referring to? It was for us as the department, DPIRD, to consider entering into a new proposal with PCYC. **The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** What I have is that there was a request from the Minister's office towards the end of October wanting a briefing by the	I am advised: Further clarification on the question is required to provide an answer.

	following morning of a complete timeline of the project— so, separate to the Office of Sport, the Minister's office coming to you wanting more information on the history of the project. Do you recall that? **JAMES BOLTON:** I can recall some of that. But, once the project and consideration of it—essentially a few things happened at the time, which was the programs and this responsibility moving into my portfolio. Like I said before, the key consideration that I was a part of was the brief that went up around the end of November. So I can take on notice some of the questions around that previous brief that you referenced.	
63 Page 61	**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** That would be good. What's your recollection in terms of the brief that went up in November? **JAMES BOLTON:** The brief, as just described, considered a lot of things like the issues around the project and the lack of delivery and the timing that had occurred previously. It also had some recommendations around how to proceed, moving forward.	I am advised: The Department's formal advice was provided in the November 2024 brief.

	The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Who came up with those recommendations? Was that through you? **JAMES BOLTON:** Yes, that's through me. **The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Prior to that brief, was there ever a discussion with the Minister's office about not funding that project? **JAMES BOLTON:** I'll have to take that on notice. The key decision point is obviously the brief that goes up. There may have been discussions between the Minister and myself at the time, but it's my responsibility to provide a brief	
64 Page 62	**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Can you tell me how many submissions were received? **ROB KELLY:** I can. We have received 1,471 submissions. **The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Have you got them dated? Any chance you can tell me what was submitted after 4 July? **ROB KELLY:** I will have to take that on notice. I don't have the information to hand.	Question was answered during the hearing.

65 Page 62	**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Through you, Mr Orr, and possibly to Ms Connell—I'm not sure—has anyone got assurances about the impacts of the proposed waste incinerator at Parkes and what impact that might have on agricultural production, in particular when it comes to LPA accreditations. **STEVE ORR:** Maybe Mr Bolton might answer the question. **JAMES BOLTON:** The energy from waste facility proposed in Parkes is the point of the question. To a certain degree, our role is essentially providing a lease to the proponent. The development is not approved yet, so the proponent has to go through a series of approvals with DPHI and the EPA. Through that process, they will assess all the things that are a concern to the community. Human health is the key one. All that work and information is to come through the application process. **The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** I understand that. I just wondered, from an ag	I am advised: No.

	perspective, has anyone sought advice on what impact it might have there, particularly when it comes to the LPA? **STEVE ORR:** Has the proponent sought advice from us? Is that your question? **The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** No. Has the department sought advice at all on what impact it might have on agriculture, being the department of agriculture? **RACHEL CONNELL:** I'll take that on notice in terms of any advice we have provided into the process.	
66 Page 63	**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** The biosecurity commissioner—let's use the reports that have been lodged from the previous commissioner. Do either of these reviews include assessments of arrangements in relation to varroa mite, FMD or fire ants? **RACHEL CONNELL:** The previous Independent Biosecurity Commissioner, Dr Marion Healy, undertook a number of reviews. The information on those reviews is available on the commissioner's	I am advised: The review of governance of pest and weed management in NSW and the review of compliance and enforcement of pest and weed biosecurity did not include consideration of emergency management arrangements for declared biosecurity incidents.

	website. I will take on notice whether they dealt specifically with the matters you raised. I will specify that they were focused on invasive species. One of the reviews focused on governance in relation to invasive species, and the other one looked at compliance in relation to invasive species management.	
67 Page 64	**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** I've got some questions in regard to mulesing. I asked some questions on notice about what assessments have been made on potential export market losses if mulesing is not phased out. The response I got was that the New South Wales Government continues to monitor the changes to traditional and technical barriers to trade in the primary industry sector over time. Can I ask you to elaborate on what technical barriers have been identified specifically relating to mulesing? **PETER DAY:** The question was, Ms Hurst, around technical barriers to stopping mulesing. Is that correct? **The Hon. EMMA HURST:** Yes.	I am advised: Technical barriers to wool trading monitored by the NSW Government include operational, logistical, and product-specific challenges. Mulesing is just one aspect of ethical and sustainable wool production, and growers are meeting increased quality assurance requirements of supply chains, certification and traceability standards to maintain market access.

	PETER DAY: I'd have to take that on notice in terms of that response that was given to you previously so I can find out the background to that one. In terms of mulesing itself, currently our advice from industry is that we're up to about 97 per cent rate of mulesing in the land market at the moment.	
68 Page 65	**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** Pain relief—great. Could you take it on notice in regard to elaborating on what technical barriers have been identified? In my question on notice, I also got the response back that ongoing research and work into breeding naturally resistant sheep by industry has resulted in a 190 per cent increase in the last eight years in the number of flocks that no longer require mulesing. I'm wondering if you could tell me what the source of that information is and if this is a New South Wales statistic or Australia-wide. **PETER DAY:** What I've got here is that Australian Wool Innovation have invested more than $48 million between 2001 and June 2024 on flystrike RD&E,	I am advised: The source of the statistics provided in the response to LC 4031 was the National Wool Declaration Integrity Program. The figures describe the increase in the percentage (%) of wool which is being marketed under the declared non-mulesed status. These are National figures.

	including on breeding more flystrike-resistant sheep; blowfly control; mapping the Lucilia cuprina genome, which is the blowfly itself; use of pain relief; parasite control; and husbandry. **The Hon. EMMA HURST:** My question was quite specific. It was about the question that I put on notice. The answer said there had been a 190 per cent increase over the past eight years in the number of flocks that no longer require mulesing. I'm happy for you to take it on notice if you don't have it in front of you, but my question is what was the source of that information, specifically, and whether that statistic is New South Wales specific or Australia-wide. **PETER DAY:** I'll take that on notice, Ms Hurst.	
69 Page 65	**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** Has DPIRD assessed the cost-effectiveness and welfare benefits of transitioning from non-mulesed sheep at all? **PETER DAY:** I'll have to take that on notice in terms of the cost-benefit analysis. I'm not aware of that.	I am advised The Department has not, but Meat and Livestock Australia has run an analysis on 'Phasing out of mulesing: cost, benefits and opportunities'. The outcome from this analysis is reported on the MLA website: https://www.mla.com.au/research-and-development/reports/2022/Phasing-out-of-mulesing-cost-benefits-and-opportunities/

70 Page 65	**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** If there has been a cost-benefit analysis, could you also provide details of that cost-benefit analysis? **PETER DAY:** I will.	See answer to question 69.
71 Page 65	**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** Animal welfare laws are State based. My question then would be whether DPIRD has any kind of responsibility or oversight into the welfare of sheep in these industries? **RACHEL CONNELL:** Obviously the prevention of cruelty to animal legislative framework applies, and there's a significant work stream that takes place nationally in relation to animal welfare matters. But, in this case, I think it's a positive thing that the industry is investing quite significantly in changes and supporting those changes across the sector, not just in New South Wales but nationally. **The Hon. EMMA HURST:** In regard to Coffs Coast Wildlife Sanctuary, I've sent some documentation to the Minister and the department regarding some concerns that	I am advised: In March 2025 a site inspection at Coffs Coast Wildlife Sanctuary was conducted. The dolphins are not permanently confined to the Discovery Stadium Pool (the second primary pool). The standard applicable to the second primary pool was varied in 2014.

	we continue to have, including evidence that there appears to be closing of the gate between the two dolphin pools and containing the dolphins to the smaller, noncompliant pool for the purposes of performance or interactions with the public. Has the department looked into those concerns from the further evidence that was sent through in June this year? **PETER DAY:** Our last inspection at Coffs Coast was on 26 March this year. **The Hon. EMMA HURST:** Has anything been done since my letter in June indicating that there was evidence that the noncompliant pool was still being used as the primary pool at certain instances for the dolphins? **PETER DAY:** I'd have to take that on notice in terms of a follow-up to that correspondence, Ms Hurst	
72 Page 66	**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** I've got some follow-up questions as well. Again, you may need to take this on notice. I want to get the number of times the dolphins have been confined to the	I am advised: The occasional closure of the gate between the Marine Lagoon and the Discovery Habitat, the frequency and duration of these closures are at the discretion of the authority holder and are not reported to the Department. Justification for separation includes demonstrations, cooperative care, presentations, interactive sessions, and

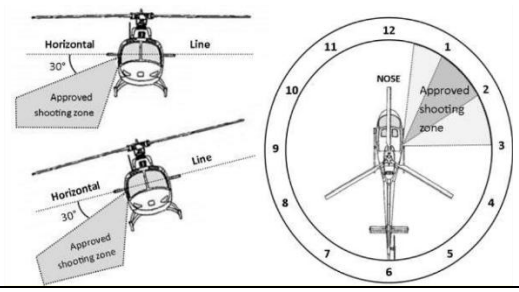
	noncompliant pool in the last 12 months, including how long the dolphins were confined to the noncompliant pool on each occasion, the justification for the confinement on each occasion and whether any veterinary advice was sought to support the confinement on each occasion. Could you to take that one on notice, Mr Day? **PETER DAY:** I'll take those on notice.	behaviour training. These practices were described as essential for maintaining positive animal welfare. Coffs Coast Wildlife Sanctuary has documented veterinary endorsement for animal encounters, interactions, events, and presentations. The standard applicable to the second primary pool was varied in 2014.
73 Page 66	**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** I also want to find out if there was any animal welfare assessment that has been undertaken or advice that has been obtained in respect to the 2024 decision to grant them a special condition to allow them to even use a noncompliant pool. **PETER DAY:** That approval for the pools—my understanding was that has been given since prior to 2014. I'm not privy to the information that informed that decision, but it would have been based on the technical information at the time. But I can take that on notice in terms of what was actually considered as part of that decision.	I am advised: The standard applicable to the second primary pool was varied in 2014. The Secretary approved the variation to the Dolphin standards for the establishment based on several supporting factors; including that the pool was in-situ prior to the licensing under the Act in 1989, and that there was a difference in dolphin species, their size and spatial requirements.

	The Hon. EMMA HURST: If there has been any advice since then as well, particularly given that the experts in the space are raising major concerns—are you able to take that one on notice? **PETER DAY:** Yes, I will.	
74 Page 66	**The Hon. EMMA HURST:** What's the current annual cost that the department spends on supporting recreational hunting in New South Wales, including licences? Do you have a breakdown of how much that's costing? **TARA BLACK:** We receive roughly $1.9 million a year in licensing fees, which goes into the trust fund. **The Hon. EMMA HURST:** But how much does the Government spend? **TARA BLACK:** I'd have to take that on notice.	I am advised: The cost to run the Hunting Regulation Team in 24/25 was approximately $5.39m. This cost was partially offset by revenue from licence fees, which totalled $1.85m.
75 Page 67	**The CHAIR:** Mr Kelly, I might just go back to those questions I was asking earlier on the aerial shooting operations. I take you to the answer provided to question number two on program four, north-west Willow Tree, the question being, "For each	I am advised: The Willow Tree Deer Aerial Program was stood down (i.e. no flights or shooting) on the 9 October 2024 due to adverse weather conditions.

	locality operation, what were the specific dates and times for each day the helicopter shooting operations were conducted?" **ROB KELLY:** Which one was it, sorry? **The CHAIR:** The answer to number two, program number four, north-west Willow Tree. Can you confirm why there's no flight data for 9 October listed? **ROB KELLY:** For 9 October? **The CHAIR:** Yes. **ROB KELLY:** I'll have to take that on notice as to why. There are a number of reasons why we don't fly on certain days. It could be weather. It could be a whole range of things	
76 Page 67	**The CHAIR:** Can you also take on notice then, if there was no flight data, no flight operation happening, how did they shoot 196 animals on a day when they didn't fly? **ROB KELLY:** Yes, I'll take that on notice	I am advised: The ArcGIS QuickCapture system records animal kills live during the flight using Coordinated Universal Time (UTC), not Australian Eastern Standard Time (AEST). For reporting, this data must be converted to AEST, UTC is 10 hours behind AEST, or 11 hours during daylight savings. However, when the data was extracted for the identified report, this time conversion was not applied. As a result, kill times were reported in UTC, 11 hours earlier than they actually occurred in AEST, leading to some kills being incorrectly reported on stand down days.
77 Page 67	**The CHAIR:** If you turn to the corresponding data regarding animals shot, it lists that on 9 October they shot 196. Who was conducting	I am advised: Local Land Services conducted the aerial shooting operations.

	the operations at Willow Tree during that time period? Was it contractors or was it LLS staff? **ROB KELLY:** Just hold on two seconds, I will be able to find that. I actually don't have that level, down to that detail. We can provide that. **The CHAIR:** If you could provide that on notice, whether it was contractors and, if so, who those contractors were. **ROB KELLY:** Yes.	
78 Page 67	**The CHAIR:** Full disclosure: I was in the Willow Tree area, on private property, on 10 October when operations were being conducted, along with the land manager and some of my staff. We traversed an area that was then shot probably no less than 30 minutes after we were out of it. The wind was going up into the tree line, so we walked in that direction and did a big loop. If you know anything about animals, we'd just scented up that whole area, so there would have been no animals. We saw no sign of deer, pigs, foxes of any kind. And then, no less than 30 minutes after I left, but my staff remained, the	I am advised: The FAAST shooters must adhere to the FAAST manual and only engage target species that are listed on the approved shoot plan. Deer can move quickly through the landscape, particularly during an aerial culling operation. It is feasible animals could move into an area within a 30-minute timeframe.

	helicopter was witnessed shooting blindly into that tree line. Does that comply with FAAST protocols? **ROB KELLY:** I'll have to take that on notice to get the details of that. I don't doubt your recollection, but obviously I don't have that detail at hand of the logs for the day.	
79 Page 67	**The CHAIR:** You'd be surprised, then, that when that property manager walked the area that the 300 shots were fired into, not only could he not smell anything but there was only one carcass of one red deer hind, that was known as a satellite deer, in that whole area. If 300 shots had been fired, you would expect there would have been a lot of dead animals on the ground, wouldn't you, Mr Kelly, and the smell would be pretty high? **ROB KELLY:** Again, I'll take that on notice. But if there were a lot of dead animals on the ground, the smell would be quite high, yes.	I am advised: There is insufficient detail to identify the exact location in question. Location of confirmed kills and flight tracking are georeferenced and verified on the digital mapping platform ArcGIS QuickCapture.
80 Page 67	The CHAIR: But you would expect there would have been a fair number of carcasses on the ground if they had fired 300 shots across the property?	I am advised: There is insufficient detail to identify the exact location in question. Location of confirmed kills and flight tracking are georeferenced and verified on the digital mapping platform ArcGIS QuickCapture.

	ROB KELLY: Yes, you would expect so. The CHAIR: Can you come up with any explanation as to why there wouldn't be a huge number of dead animals rotting on the ground? **ROB KELLY:** As I've said, I'll take that on notice. We've got the data around the tracking details of that, so I can take that on notice and can provide that data.	
81 Page 67	**The CHAIR:** Can you also take on notice, when you're looking at the tracking data, on the day that we were there, that same chopper was seen in full view firing shots into an empty gully? **ROB KELLY:** I'll take all of those on notice, yes.	I am advised: The FAAST shooters must adhere to the FAAST manual and only engage target species that are listed on the approved shoot plan.
82 Page 68	**The CHAIR:** As the helicopter was banking, they were firing the shots. Can you take on notice as to whether that fits in with the FAAST protocols? **ROB KELLY:** We'll take that on notice.	I am advised: The approved shooting zone in all FAAST programs is the area between 12:30 and 3 o'clock with 3 o'clock being strictly 90 degrees from the nose of the helicopter. All shooting is carried out in the arc which is above the helicopter skid, and at least 30 degrees below the horizontal line of the helicopter. 
83 Page 69	**The CHAIR:** Sure. Ms Black, under part 5B of the Forestry Act, only	I am advised: The review of the Western IFOAs has not commenced. The Minister for Agriculture and Minister for the Environment are

	the forestry Minister and the environment Minister can amend an IFOA. Why did DPIRD give the lead to EPA on the work on the western IFOA rather than do it themselves? **TARA BLACK:** My understanding is that the Ministers are able to amend the IFOA itself but the protocols can be amended by the EPA. **The CHAIR:** Can those protocols be amended without a ministerial direction to do so? **TARA BLACK:** I'll have to take that on notice. My understanding is that, in at least the protocol amendments that I've looked into recently, they were at the direction of the Minister for the Environment. She gave a direction to the EPA to do that. **STEVE ORR:** We'll just confirm that.	jointly responsible for the review of IFOAs, which are conducted jointly by their respective agencies.
84 Page 69	**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I want to come briefly back to the Dubbo sports hub, just in relation to the timing of who had oversight from what point. Mr Bolton, you said from November last year was when you were more involved in that project. Is that correct?	I am advised: The Deputy Secretary Regional Development and Delivery was aware of the project in August 2024, focused on the project management services being provided by NSW Public Works. Involvement in relation to the grant was in October 2024.

	JAMES BOLTON: I'll take that on notice for specific dates when I was made aware of it, but roughly around that time frame.	
85 Page 69	**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Because there are some briefs from October that went to you as well, Mr Orr, so I'm just trying to work out exactly who would have been responsible for it. If you could take that on notice, that would be great. **JAMES BOLTON:** Yes.	I am advised: The Deputy Secretary Regional Development and Delivery was the final approver of the November 2024 brief before it was provided to the Minister's Office.
86 Page 69	**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Obviously, the decision was made part way through this term of government for that project not to proceed. Are you able to tell me how much had been spent on design, tendering and other costs since the 2023 election? Again, if you need to take it on notice, that's okay. **JAMES BOLTON:** On notice, we can.	I am advised: $332,827.80 of the grant funding available was spent on project management services provided by Public Works since April 2023. Information on additional project costs spent by PCYC would need to be sourced from PCYC.
87 Page 69	**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I'm told the PCYC received an email in August 2024, I think from your agency, telling them to look for an alternative site for the sports hub. Does anybody recall that email or that request that they look for a different site?	I am advised: Contact included emails and the Project Control Group meeting on 29 August 2024, which considered the tender outcome and next steps required to work through scope and site options.

	JAMES BOLTON: Do you have any more detail on the email? **The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** That's what I have—that it was in August 2024 and that they should look for an alternative site. Could you take on notice, perhaps, what contact was made with the PCYC in August 2024? **JAMES BOLTON:** Yes.	
88 Page 69	**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I have some questions now for Ms Whyte and for Dr Tyndall. Ms Whyte, you're executive director, regional programs and partnerships? **HARRIET WHYTE:** Yes, that's right. **The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Which programs fall under your direction as an ED? What are you responsible for? **HARRIET WHYTE:** At the moment, I've got responsibility for the Regional Development Trust, the Sustainable Communities Program, the ports funds and the Minister's Community Benefit Fund, as well as our contracting and grants management function.	I am advised: 142 grants with a combined dollar value of $91,444,175.

	The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Feel free to take it on notice, but are you able to tell me the total dollar value of grants that have been rolled out through these programs since you began in this role? **HARRIET WHYTE:** I can take that on notice. Obviously, as you'd be aware, with the grant programs, the dates that you're wanting to know would be helpful as well. I've got responsibility for the contracting and payments, but some of those grants were awarded some time ago that we're now seeing through to delivery. **The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Maybe just any that have been awarded since you took on the ED role. Could you do that on notice? **HARRIET WHYTE:** Yes. I've been in the ED role for a year, so since July last year	
89 Page 69	**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** If we do the last 12 months, that'll be a good starting off point. In relation to the staff within your team—and I appreciate the secretary has spoken about some of the changes and the draft changes that are being	I am advised: In August 2025, Regional Programs and Partnerships had 118 roles.

	worked on—how many roles do you currently have, and how many do you believe you'll have after the restructure? **HARRIET WHYTE:** I can take that on notice to get the specifics at a specific date for the number of roles. As I think the secretary has outlined, the draft change management plan is just a draft. We're seeking consultation to land on the final numbers. We have proposed a number of role reductions of 30 roles being reduced in my space—that's 30 ongoing roles.	
90 Page 70	**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Dr Tyndall, I have a couple of questions for you. In a similar vein, how many FTE roles are currently in your area of the agency—Strategy, Media and Ministerial Services? **ADAM TYNDALL:** I can take the exact figure on notice, Ms Mitchell, but the headcount is about 70-odd—about 73.	I am advised: As at 10 September 2025, Strategy, Media and Ministerial Services has ~ 74 FTE.
91 Page 70	**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Do you have a rough breakdown of how many within those 70 roles are media or comms, and what the breakdown is? Again, if	I am advised: As at 10 September 2025, there are ~ 37 FTE media and communications roles within Strategy, Media and Ministerial Services.

	it's on notice, that's fine **ADAM TYNDALL:** I can take that on notice, Ms Mitchell. Happy to do that.	
92 Page 71	**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** How many media advisers do you have currently, do you know? **ADAM TYNDALL:** I can take that on no	I am advised: There are currently 5 roles with the title Media Advisor.
93 Page 71	**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** That's all I have for you, Dr Tyndall. I'll move on to something else. My next questions are directed towards Mr Chaudhary. I'm looking into Forestry Corp. These questions are quite specific, again, but it's fine if you need to take any on notice. How much of the existing softwood plantation estate is currently producing timber that will meet Australia's MGP10-plus standard? How does that compare to projected demand for housing over the next decade or so? **ANSHUL CHAUDHARY:** It's probably best to take that on notice. We do produce roughly about three million tonnes of timber, and most of our softwood timber goes into housing frames. Generally, I think we produce	I am advised: Forestry Corporation's strategy is to manage the softwood plantation estate to optimise the generation of timber suitable for a structural sawlog (MGP10) standard and value recovery training and audit procedures are in place to maximise recovery of this product category. Around half of the three million tonnes of timber produced from softwood plantations annually is structural sawlog and this is projected to be maintained over the next 10 years, with annual fluctuations in response to factors including customer demand.

	timber that would build about 40,000 homes a year, but I can take the specifics of that on notice, Ms Mitchell.	
94 Page 71	**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** That would be great. Do you know what proportion of the estate is at or near maturity? **ANSHUL CHAUDHARY:** In the Black Summer fires, we lost about a quarter of our softwood estate. That was significant. That's about $100 million of revenue per annum that has been impacted. A lot of our forest is in the early stages. We have replanted about 50 million trees over the past five years. Particularly in the Snowy Valley area, we've got young-age plantations. But, specifically, if you want me to give you a profile of age classes, we can do that separately. **The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Yes, on notice is fine. If you're able to do that, that would be great. **ANSHUL CHAUDHARY:** Yes, absolutely.	I am advised: Approximately 18 per cent of the softwood plantations managed by Forestry Corporation are currently greater than or equal to 25 years of age.
94.1 Page 71	**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** In terms of research and	I am advised:

	development, can you outline for the Committee what sort of investment you're making in seedling quality and some of the seed stock research and any work in that space? **ANSHUL CHAUDHARY:** Sure. We've got a tree breeding or tree improvement program within the organisation as well. We are also part of the radiata pine breeding organisation in New Zealand. We do some research with them. We've got research and development that we do with the department as well. Again, if you want some specifics on that, I can probably get you that. **The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** That would be good.	Information about Forestry Corporation's research and development is published in the Sustainability Report each year.
95 Page 71	**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** That would be good. Did you say there's a specific program to do with the genetics for pine? Is it with New Zealand? **ANSHUL CHAUDHARY:** For genetics, yes. We procure most of our seeds from New Zealand, given the biosecurity and all that sort of reason. A lot of genetics goes into it. I'm not the expert in	I am advised: Forestry Corporation of NSW has an internal tree breeding program supported by the Radiata Pine Breeding Company (RPBC), which is based in New Zealand. Forestry Corporation is a major shareholder in the RPBC. Through the RPBC, Forestry Corporation engages in research and establish multiple genetics trials every year with objective of improving tree growth and quality. Detailed information about the RPBC's research and programs is available on their website https://www.rpbc.co.nz/ RPBC membership also provides access to seed resources that have been improved through breeding programs and seed orchards. Historically most seeds have been sourced from New Zealand, but Forestry Corporation has also established a domestic seed orchard using trees with genetics proven to perform well on the State forest estate.

	that area, but I can get some information for you on that. **The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Yes, just some information on notice would be great.	
96 Page 71	**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** How many qualified foresters does Forestry Corporation currently employ to manage the softwood estate? **ANSHUL CHAUDHARY:** Again, I can take that on notice, but we have a lot of qualified foresters now in our business in various levels—on the frontline staff as well as supervisors and forest technicians in the organisation. Again, I can take that on notice to get you an exact number if you want. **The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** That would be great. Even if you've got those numbers maybe over the last three years to see whether they're increasing or declining, that would be good. Again, I'm happy for you to take it on notice.	I am advised: Forestry Corporation appoints people who have been determined to hold the skills and qualifications required for each particular role. Specific qualifications held by individual staff members are not centrally compiled.
97 Page 74	**Ms CATE FAEHRMANN:** Let's use an example of Port Stephens-Great Lakes Marine Park. Do you know how many	I am advised: All Fisheries Officers undertake functions within and across districts and marine park boundaries.

	marine parks officers are employed within that park? **THOR SAUNDERS:** I believe the regional fisheries officer position, which we're just looking to fill at the moment, is one of those. I'd have to take on notice about the other officers that are specifically orientated around marine parks, but we do have other officers that are there that would assist in doing marine park compliance work.	The Fisheries Office located at the Port Stephens Fisheries Centre has 5 roles in total covering the district and marine park. The roles located at the office currently consist of: 1. District Fisheries Officer Port Stephens. 2. District Fisheries Office Port Stephens Greater Lakes Marine Park (vacant). 3. Fisheries Officer (Grade 3) Port Stephens Greater Lakes Marine Park. 4. Fisheries Officer (Grade 1-2) Port Stephens Greater Lakes Marine Park. 5. Fisheries Officer (Grade 1-2) Port Stephens.
98 Page 74	**Ms CATE FAEHRMANN:** So you're filling the position of senior marine park officer or not? **THOR SAUNDERS:** Yes, we are. **Ms CATE FAEHRMANN:** With that title? **THOR SAUNDERS:** I think the title is the regional fisheries officer. I'd have to take that on notice.	I am advised: A review of resourcing is underway with consideration being given to how the Port Stephens District and Port Stephens Greater Lakes Marine Park are best supported to deliver on responsibilities.
99 Page 75	**Ms CATE FAEHRMANN:** How is that undertaken? For example, I've been told that Port Stephens traditionally has high levels of illegal fishing activity, especially in the commercial fishing sector, with some commercial operators working within the	I am advised: The area has four out of five Fisheries Officer roles currently filled – all roles can undertake and are tasked with compliance responsibilities across any fishing related activities in the area. The suggestion that the one current vacancy has seen commercial fishing compliance work ignored is not accepted. Contacts with commercial operators fluctuate across years along with detected compliance rates.

	marine park. The major offending sectors are the Estuary General mesh net and mud crab trapping fishery as well as the ocean trap and line sector and, because of the continued failure to fill that Port Stephens-Great Lakes Marine Park senior marine park officer role that is dedicated to look at that, some of that activity is increasingly being ignored. **THOR SAUNDERS:** I would have to take on notice what the illegal fishing estimates are amongst different regions and whether the Port Stephens marine park is higher than any other region.	
100 Page 76	**The CHAIR:** Ms Black, coming back to the IFOA question, I wanted to clarify that, when I initially asked you the question, I wasn't talking about protocols in the coastal IFOA; I was talking about EPA taking the lead in the review of the western IFOA. I believe Jackie Miles from EPA has taken the process lead in reviewing that for the last five years. All that has seemingly been achieved is to rewrite the terms. Nothing seems to be processing. I'm wondering who gave	I am advised: The Department, FCNSW and the EPA have been discussing proposed arrangements for the review of the Western IFOAs. The review is yet to commence.

	the process lead to essentially review the whole western IFOA—so, not a protocol change, but the whole review? **TARA BLACK:** I'm not sure that that's the case. I'd have to double-check that and come back to you, but my understanding would be that our department would work with the EPA on that review, given it's the two Ministers that would sign off on the IFOA.	
101 Page 76	**The CHAIR:** Can you come back and explain to us why it has taken five years to review the western IFOA, then, if you are working with EPA—and who actually is the lead agency in this? **STEVE ORR:** I don't think, Mr Banasiak, we're actually aware of a review process happening at the moment. **The CHAIR:** There isn't a review process? **STEVE ORR:** Not a formal one that we're aware of. **The CHAIR:** Can you come back on notice as to what is actually happening with the western IFOA? It's my understanding that Ms Miles from EPA has	I am advised: The Minister for Agriculture and Minister for the Environment are jointly responsible for reviews of IFOAs under the Act. The Department, FCNSW and the EPA have been discussing proposed arrangements for the review of the Western IFOAs. The review is yet to commence.

	been doing some sort of review of it. **STEVE ORR:** Sure.	
102 Page 76	**The CHAIR:** Why was EPA the instructing agency on the 2018 Forestry Legislation Amendment Act, rather than DPIRD? As part of a GIPA, I asked, and there were no records found within your department around that. That piece of legislation had to do with private native forestry, so I'm just wondering why EPA would take the lead in drafting legislation for a forestry bill. **TARA BLACK:** We might have to take that on notice. **The CHAIR:** I'm happy for you to take that on notice. **STEVE ORR:** I suspect—not too many of us were around back then, Mr Banasiak, but there was a shift of PNF away from being administered through the EPA into Local Land Services. So it came into—I think it's part 5B. **ROB KELLY:** Part 5B, yes. **STEVE ORR:** Yes, of the Local Land Services Act.	I am advised: The Department worked closely with the EPA on the Forestry Legislation Amendment Act 2018. The (then) Minister for Lands and Forestry introduced the Bill to Parliament.

103 Page 76	**The CHAIR:** Can you take on notice whether that was part of that transition? It might have been before the transition. **STEVE ORR:** Yes, I imagine it would be, because the legislation changed around about that time, but we can take it on notice.	I am advised: Yes, it was part of the transition of responsibility for Private Native Forestry approvals of private native forestry plans from the Environmental Protection Authority to Local Land Services.
104 Page 77	**The CHAIR:** Perhaps on notice regarding the recreational fishing trusts, are you able to come back with the breakdown between saltwater and freshwater expenditure in the last financial year—what has been spent— and also how much has been spent on staffing within DPI versus actual physical improvements in terms of fishing resources? **TARA BLACK:** Yes.	I am advised: Funding of $7.5 million and $10.9 million was drawn from the Recreational Fishing Freshwater and Saltwater Fishing Trusts in 2024/25, respectively. $8.5 million was spent on labour expenditure in 2024/25 to benefit recreational fishing. These projects include fisheries enhancement (e.g. fish aggregating devices (FADs), artificial reefs and fish stocking), promoting fishing access, habitat action grants to improve fish habitat, research on recreational fishing (e.g. fishing surveys, stock assessment, and angler catch projects), education (e.g. fishing workshops, Fishcare volunteers, school education to increase participation in recreational fishing), enforcement of fishing rules (Fisheries officers) and Trust management and Licensing administration. More information on these projects can be found here
105 Page 78	**The CHAIR:** Thank you. Opposition? **The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Can I just ask a follow-up on that? **The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Sure. **The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Can we also have how much has come into the fishing	Question answered during the hearing.

	trust over those same periods, please? **TARA BLACK:** Yes	
106 Page 78	**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** I only have one question. It's about the opal museum project out at Lightning Ridge—maybe through you, Mr Bolton. Is that right? **JAMES BOLTON:** Yes. **The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** We've just had some concerns. I know the member for Dubbo has written to the Minister about some subcontractors not being paid, particularly concrete suppliers. I understand it's not a government project, but there is a significant amount of State government funding that has gone to it. What sort of checks and balances do you put in place with that funding to ensure that suppliers and subcontractors are paid? **JAMES BOLTON:** With that specific project, and any other contract, we have contract managers regularly engaging with the proponent around their delivery. Milestone payments and so on are granted once the milestone is met. Through that	I am advised: Funding deeds are between the Department and grantee. The Department is not a party to subcontractor agreements. However, the Department expects grantees to demonstrate responsible financial management and due diligence in administration of grant funding.

	audit process, we would check for things like that. For that specific project, I'll take on notice what checks were put in place for that matter.	
107 Page 78	**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** If you could advise, it was Concrete Industry Supplies in Tamworth. My understanding is they were left about $200,000 out of pocket for materials that they had supplied last year. As I said, I appreciate when there are various subcontractors involved it can get a little bit challenging, but it would be good to know where that is up to. In terms of the project overall, work has paused on it. It is about 80 per cent complete. Has there been more government money that was invested in that project in this year's budget, do you know? **JAMES BOLTON:** There was a commitment for an additional $1 million in this year's budget. **The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** What was the process for those proponents to apply for that additional funding? **JAMES BOLTON:** I'll have to take that one	I am advised: $1 million was allocated as part of the 2025-26 Budget process.

	on notice. Our role was more around the administration of the funding agreement once the government decision was made to increase it by $1 million. We've implemented that decision.	
108 Page 78	**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** It was effectively a decision of the Minister to provide that top-up funding? **JAMES BOLTON:** Correct. **The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** Do you know whether there were—again, I'm happy if you need to take it on notice—any sort of requirements that that additional funding would then lead to the completion of that construction so that the project would be finished? **JAMES BOLTON:** I'll have to take on notice the consideration of that. **The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** If you could provide whatever you can on notice, that would be great. **JAMES BOLTON:** Sure.	I am advised: The Department is in negotiations with the Australian Opal Centre (AOC) regarding the outstanding works the $1 million will be attributed towards.
109 Page 78	**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** I'm just going to try and rattle through a few things in	I am advised: The external evaluation of The Welcome Experience is due to be finalised by 30 September 2025.

	the time remaining. The Welcome Experience—is that you, Mr Bolton? **JAMES BOLTON:** Yes, it is. **The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** I understand there is an evaluation that is due out. Has that been released as yet? **JAMES BOLTON:** I might throw to—is it not you, Harriet? **HARRIET WHYTE:** No. **JAMES BOLTON:** Actually, it's in Ian Smith's patch. **STEVE ORR:** Ms Black, who used to look after the program, might be able to help you. **TARA BLACK:** My understanding is the evaluation isn't finalised yet. **The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Is there a particular hold up? **TARA BLACK:** I'm not sure of those details. **The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** My latest stats said it's in 55 LGAs. Is that still the case? **JAMES BOLTON:** Correct.	Once finalised, the Department will provide a copy of the evaluation report to the Minister's office and consider publishing it on the Department's website.

	The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Are we looking to expand that? As far as I understand, it's been expanded to some of the people that can access it. But what about the number of LGAs? **JAMES BOLTON:** Through the review process that's still underway, we're considering options for its future, so how it can potentially be expanded into other LGAs. We'll work with the Minister through that decision process, but we're in the thick of that at the moment. **The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Is the evaluation report something the department will release, or does that have to go through the Minister's office before it gets released? **JAMES BOLTON:** That's a good question. I'll take that on notice.	
110 Page 79	**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Thank you. Mr Kelly, what percentage of TSRs are currently leased? **ROB KELLY:** I will see if we've got that. I might be able to give you a number but not necessarily a percentage.	Question answered during the hearing.

	The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Ballpark would be fine. **ROB KELLY:** Righto. Hold on a sec. I'll get to that for you.	
111 Page 79	**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** While I've got you, Mr Kelly, regarding the Illawarra Feral Deer Management Program, my understanding is that there was a panel of contractors in place up until 2023. That contract then expired. Recently, I believe, a new panel has been established. Would it be true that the qualifications expected of that panel have decreased since 2023? **ROB KELLY:** I'll have to take that on notice. I don't have the comparison between 2023 and now.	I am advised: There was no established supplier panel for pest animal contractors prior to the current panel. Contractors were engaged by tender and contracts issued to the successful supplier. Due to South East LLS's broader operational need for pest control contractors to support initiatives across the region, the decision was made to establish a panel of suppliers. Standards for the current panel requires contractors to meet a number of minimum qualifications, licencing and capability to deliver services such as; trapping, baiting, fumigation, ground shooting, monitoring and surveillance and tranquilisation. As it relates to the Illawarra Feral Deer Management Program, two qualifications that were previously required for contractors were removed; NSW Construction White Card and a Game Harvesting Licence.
112 Page 79	**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Has there been anything in place since 2023 and this new contract? **ROB KELLY:** Again, I'll have to take that on notice for that program. I know they've had panel providers, but I'll have to take it on notice specifically for that program.	I am advised: Throughout the period of the current tender process, South East LLS continued to engage contractors directly via short term contracts for the Illawarra Feral Deer Management Program.
113 Page 80	**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Would you also be able to take on	I am advised: 673 feral deer have been controlled since January 2023.

	notice how many deer have been removed out of the system since the end of that contract in 2023? **ROB KELLY:** Specifically for the Illawarra deer program? **The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Yes. **ROB KELLY:** Yes.	
114 Page 81	**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Mr Kelly, can you tell me how much is in the LLS Future Fund at the moment? **ROB KELLY:** I'll check on that. If I don't have it at hand, I will take it on notice	I am advised: The balance of the Local Land Services Future Fund is currently $26.040 million.
115 Page 81	**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** That's not critical. My recollection was it started at $35 million and that interest was then to be given—$1.5 million per board each year. Is that correct? **ROB KELLY:** I'm not sure it's per board. I'll get the exact numbers for you.	Please refer to Question 114.
116 Page 81	**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Do you know where I can find out what that money is for? Because that was initially, of course, ratepayers' money that was put into the government agency and ring fenced for	I am advised: The creation of the Local Land Services Future Fund was announced along with the formation of Local Land Services, created from cash reserves held by the Livestock Health and Pest Authorities and Catchment Management Authorities. The fund was created to support future customer service initiatives of Local Land Services.

	ratepayers' use. I wonder if I can see somewhere what the rules are around that money. **ROB KELLY:** Around how it's spent? **The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Yes. **ROB KELLY:** And how it's allocated? **The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Yes. **ROB KELLY:** I'll take it on notice, but I'll give you a general overview. The Future Fund primarily goes to refurbishing LLS offices. It's capital. It goes to capital projects, primarily to refurbish either the LLS offices or build bait sheds, those sorts of activities.	Governance arrangements are in place for the management of the fund undertaking capital expenditure on front of house customer service upgrades and other activities to improve service delivery to customers. Local Land Services does not fund any operating expenditure from the Future Fund.
117 Page 81	**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** This might be for you or to Mr Chaudhary; I'm not sure. How many aerial shoots have taken place over State forests in the past two years? **ROB KELLY:** I can't get the past two years; I can give the last 12 months. I have that data at hand. I can give it to you. For LLS-organised and controlled aerial shoots—noting that there can be private	I am advised: In the 2024-25 financial year, there were eight LLS-organised and controlled aerial shoots and twenty baiting or trapping programs. Two control programs discussed with State Forests did not go ahead.

	contractors that do it or outside of LLS—there were eight undertaken.	
118 Page 82	**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** How many were applied for? **ROB KELLY:** That I would have to take on notice. If we're looking at a combined—whether it was an aerial shoot or other biosecurity activities like, say, aerial baiting and things like that, there were over 50 State forests.	Please refer to Question 117
119 Page 82	**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Were any of those not participated by Forestry Corp? **ROB KELLY:** There were. I don't have the exact number. I know there were a few. There were very sound reasons for those. Some were already open for recreational hunting. There were others closed for harvesting—a whole range of things.	Please refer to Question 117
120 Page 82	**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** With that information you'll provide me, are you able to provide why those programs were not taken— **ROB KELLY:** I'll take that on notice. I'm not sure we'll have all of the details for those, but I'll take it on notice for those that we have.	I am advised: Hunters had booked the use of the forest, through the Game Licencing Unit, at that time the aerial shoot was proposed.

121 Page 81	**The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** Can someone give me an update of where we're up to with carp? Last we heard there was an enclosed water in Victoria where they were seeking an application for a trial, possibly. **RACHEL CONNELL:** We're happy to, from a biosecurity perspective, provide an update. Obviously it's an issue that's managed by the Commonwealth in terms of the regulatory controls and approvals. We are expecting to have a role in terms of the next iteration of testing of the virus. **LISA SZABO:** There is a known biocontrol agent for carp. There's been a couple of attempts at getting the necessary research behind it, to have confidence that it's not going to have crossover effects into species that it shouldn't. We're currently in the process of negotiating with one of our partners around a research project to deliver certainty around that aspect. **The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** This is the carp herpes virus?	I am advised: Carp herpes virus (KHV) is found in most of the world, apart from Australia, New Zealand and South America. Currently, only carp and their hybrids with goldfish are known to be carriers of KHV- these are not legally permitted to be imported, and so the risk of importation would be associated with illegal importation of these carriers.

	LISA SZABO: Yes. **The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT:** What is the risk that it gets imported? Does it exist naturally in other countries? **LISA SZABO:** I'd have to take that one on notice, actually.	
122 Page 84	**The CHAIR:** Mr Kelly, just going back to the aerial shooting operations, can I take you to the number of animals shot in program number three, Central West LLS, on 30 September and 1 October. I'm looking at feral pigs. **ROB KELLY:** That's Trundle and Tullamore? **The CHAIR:** Yes. You see these figures more often than I would. Would it be unusual to have exactly the same number of pigs, or any animal, shot on two consecutive days? **ROB KELLY:** I don't know whether I can comment if it's unusual or not; the numbers are the numbers. **The CHAIR:** To be frank, I'm questioning the numbers. It seems strange that they're exactly the same across two separate	No question taken on notice.

	days. To be fair, I'm questioning them based on what I saw on 10 October, where choppers were shooting into empty gullies. When you go back and investigate what happened on around 9 October and 10 October, what would be the process if you find fraudulent activity in terms of falsifying how many animals were shot? **ROB KELLY:** That's a hypothetical question in terms of what the findings would be. **The CHAIR:** Yes, but I imagine you would have some sort of process. You talked about a process of verifying and checking these numbers. One would hope you would have some sort of process in place if you found that contractors were falsifying these numbers. This is taxpayers' money. We know that pigs are a huge problem. People are screaming for more support up north, particularly in the Tamworth area, and potentially you had an aerial operation essentially wasting bullets and money, shooting into empty gullies, when they could have been redeployed up north. What would be the	

	process if you found fraudulent activity? **ROB KELLY:** The process—without us specifically referring to this program, because we haven't yet looked at the data in that—like any sort of issue in relation to disciplinary matters, goes through the standard process, through HR. We do an investigation and, depending on the findings of that, we will act appropriately. **The CHAIR:** Would it differ if they were contractors versus employed LLS staff? **ROB KELLY:** There's still an investigation. The pathways for what you do to manage that will differ, but there's still an investigation. **The CHAIR:** Sure, but the consequences would obviously differ, would they, if you had to issue a consequence if you found wrongdoing? **ROB KELLY:** The consequence will be different because there are obviously different avenues to take, whether they are a staff member or whether they are a contractor.	
123 Page 84	**The CHAIR:** Mr Saunders, going back to mulloway in terms	I am advised:

	of stocking, are you able to provide perhaps on notice how many fingerlings were released in 2024-25 and whether there is a breakdown per river system? **THOR SAUNDERS:** I could have done it right now, but my computer just died. I can definitely take that on notice.	126,024 Mulloway were produced at the Government's Port Stephens Fisheries Institute marine hatchery for the 2024-25 season. 19,346 juvenile Mulloway were stocked into the Hastings River, 52,594 into Lake Macquarie and 54,084 into the Georges River.
124 Page 84	**The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL:** In relation to the Welcome Experience, Mr Bolton, do you have any data on how many people who have used that program have asked questions about maternity and birthing services that are available in the different LGAs where you offer the program? **JAMES BOLTON:** I'm not aware of that, Ms Mitchell, but I can clarify on notice	I am advised: The Department does not have this data.