Portfolio Committee No. 1 – Premier and Finance

Budget Estimates, 2 September 2025

Minister the Hon. Courtney Houssos MLC (Finance, Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement, and Natural Resources)

Questions on Notice

(1) The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: Minister, when was the payroll tax threshold last increased? And to what amount? The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Thank you, Mr Tudehope, for a question in relation to payroll tax — obviously undertaking some work in the inquiry into payroll tax at the moment. The payroll tax threshold, from recollection, has moved around a little bit. It did under your Government. But, in regard to specifics, I might have to take that on notice. Actually, I could probably pass to any number of the esteemed public servants who are accompanying me today. The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: So you don't know when it was. The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: When it was last lifted? The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: Yes, the threshold. The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I couldn't tell you off the top of my head. I have probably got it here. I can tell you when it was frozen, Mr Tudehope. I can tell you when the threshold was —
I am advised: Information about the payroll tax free threshold is available on the Revenue NSW website.

(2) The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: Would you accept that there is an RBA inflation calculator which suggests that in 2024-25 it would be worth about $1.43 million? Would you accept that? The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I'll take it in good faith. I'd probably want to go and check the calculations or ask some of our esteemed public servants in NSW Treasury to check it. The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: I'm happy for you to do that. That's, effectively, a 19.3 per cent inflation over the four financial years. Would you accept that?
I am advised: NSW Treasury considers a range of factors when providing advice in relation to tax settings, including inflation.

(3) The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: Minister, just in relation to payroll tax, how many more businesses do you anticipate will be liable for payroll tax in 2025-26 who did not pay payroll tax in 2024-25? The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I'm happy to take that one on notice or perhaps even pass over to Revenue NSW.
I am advised: Information about payroll tax is included in Chapter 5 of Budget Paper No. 1.

(4) The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: Minister, you've now received the second quarterly report, have you not, covering the period of April to June 2025? The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: No, I haven't received that report yet, Mr Tudehope. There's still at least one agency that I'm aware of that hasn't completed that reporting. The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: When do you anticipate receiving that? The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I'm happy to take that one on notice. I know that the work is ongoing. I'd make this point, as I did earlier, which is that this is new reporting that we are asking government departments to do. It's part of the process of us rebuilding our local capacity and encouraging more of our government procurement spend to be spent locally. You know, Mr Tudehope, that $42 billion is spent by the New South Wales Government each and every year, and we want New South Wales government agencies and departments to be looking locally. That's what this policy is focused on. This policy also requires government agencies and departments to start to collect data in a way that they haven't had to do that before, and I'd really thank the government agencies and departments for the work that they are doing to collect this data. It is important that that work is undergoing.
I am advised: This question was answered during the hearing (see page 11 of the transcript). All NSW Government agencies have now provided the required information to NSW Procurement.

(5) The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: Which agency is missing? The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I might just take that on notice, because I've got it in the back of my mind, but I don't want to mislead the Committee. If I've got the information correct, then I'll get it to you later in the hearing. The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: So there is an agency missing. You know that. The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Yes. The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: You just can't identify which one it is. Is that what you're saying now? The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: No, I'm saying that I receive regular briefings on these, Mr Tudehope, as you would expect. Before naming agencies—actually, I'd make this point. I don't really want to—I've just thanked government agencies and departments for the work that they're doing. This is a new and a different way of doing procurement, as opposed to how you ran procurement, Mr Tudehope, of sending billions of dollars and thousands of jobs offshore. The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: That's not the question. Which agency— The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: What we are doing is we are asking agencies and departments to look locally for a local supplier. This is, I would say, a relatively small but a significant change in the way that we want government agencies to do that. This is only the second quarter of collection, and we will certainly work through the collection of the data as we work through processing the data. This is a question— The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: So later today will you confirm which agency has not in fact— The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: If I'm able to get that information for you, Mr Tudehope, then I will.
Please refer to the response in question 4.

(6) The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: We're all adults here. You're the Minister now. Minister, just in relation to the reporting, what is the roadblock which would prevent an agency from reporting on contracts over $7½ million? What is the roadblock? The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I don't have that information for you, Mr Tudehope. The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: Have you asked?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I don't have that information for you today.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: Have you asked?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I'm happy to take that on notice for you.

I am advised:

NSW Government agencies are updating and refining their work processes to ensure timely compliance with the 'If not, why not' ministerial direction.

(7) The CHAIR: Minister, do you know if the Port Kembla Energy Terminal, PKET, will be importing gas from 2027 as Squadron Energy has claimed?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I'm not aware of the exact timeline of that, Mr Buckingham. I know there have been some developments in relation to that, and there are ongoing questions about the east coast gas supply. I think even in the newspaper today AEMO was talking about east coast shortages by 2029.

The CHAIR: When hasn't AEMO spoken about east coast gas shortages?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I'm not aware of that. I'd have to take that one on notice.

I am advised:

This question is best directed to the Minister for Energy.

(8) The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: Thanks very much, Ms Beattie. Minister, Australia provides 95 per cent of the world's opals, and the bulk of those come from New South Wales. You said just now that it's a small part of the mining industry, but it's obviously a very important part of the world's supply of opals. Can you provide the annual turnover of opal output in New South Wales?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: That's an excellent question, Mr Borsak. My understanding is that we are the only source of black opals in the world. I would make the point that when I had to take steps to pause opal mining as we reissued the titles, there were some significant global market implications for that. So we are really happy to see that a large proportion of that opal mining is now back underway. Ms Beattie has explained how that work is ongoing. One of the things we asked the independent review to do was to look at the economic contribution of opal mining.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: Do you have a figure?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: My understanding is we don't, but I'd be happy to pass to Ms Beattie. This is somewhat contentious within the mining community, but

opal miners don't pay royalties. They have to pay some fees in association with the work that they do. So there are some limitations to the information that's provided to us. GEORGINA BEATTIE: We did a cost-benefit analysis as part of the work that fed into the independent review. But, as the Minister said, that is our best estimate of the contribution. It is really important to the regional economies in Lightning Ridge and White Cliffs. We know that. The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: So how much is it? $1 million? $10 million? $100 million? GEORGINA BEATTIE: I'd have to take it on notice to see the number that's in the report, but a number of caveats are also referenced in the report.
This question was answered during the hearing (see page 20 of the transcript).

(9) The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I don't have an announcement in relation to that today, Mr Tudehope. I spoke earlier about the work that we are doing in relation to our local content policy, and that's directly related to the work that we're doing on the Jobs First Commission. It's true there is some funding that's reserved within the New South Wales budget, but that work is continuing. The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: Did I hear you say correctly, Mr Coutts-Trotter, that was $7 million? MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: It's a little bit over $7 million over four years, and the profile ramps up over time, from memory. The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: In the initial year, do you recall how much that is? MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: No, I'm happy to take that on notice for you.
This question was answered in the hearing (see page 14 of the transcript).

(10) The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: Minister, in the Government response to the first recommendation of Procurement practices of government agencies in New South Wales and its impact on the social development of the people of New South Wales: Final Report you point explicitly to the role played by Business Connect in ensuring that — and these are your words — "businesses have the capacity and skills to participate in government procurement processes". Why are you cutting off Business Connect? The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: In relation to Business Connect — this is obviously a decision that you have canvassed elsewhere — it's a decision that's been taken by the Government because it didn't have ongoing funding. As I said earlier, we are

fiscally prudent. A disciplined approach to our budget has meant that we have made the decisions in relation to that.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: It was your position, though, was it not, that, in terms of dealing with government in relation to government procurement processes, Business Connect played a vital role in relation to government procurement?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I don't have the Government response in front of me right at the moment in relation to that recommendation. I would say that I support the important work of the inquiry and we certainly made that Government response to the inquiry. I've said it many times. I'll take this opportunity to thank Dr Kaine again for the work that she did in chairing that inquiry. That helped us inform the broad range of reform that we are undertaking. In relation to the specific recommendation, you would be aware of it, Mr Tudehope. You were on the inquiry. But I'd make this point: There are lots of avenues for support for New South Wales small businesses through the New South Wales Business Bureau.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: What are they? What are those avenues that you identify?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I'd be happy to come back to you on notice in relation to that. Business Bureau operates within Service NSW and, if you have specific questions in relation to the support for that—

I am advised:

The Business Bureau helps small businesses navigate the NSW Government to access programs and services, apply for licences and permits, and sell their goods and services to the NSW Government.

In addition, the Government has:

- put forward workers' compensation legislation which would limit the projected 36% increase in premiums for small businesses
- raised the level at which government departments and agencies can purchase goods and services directly from small and medium businesses: from $150,000 to $250,000
- eased insurance requirements on small businesses by only requiring proof of insurance when a small business wins a contract, rather than at the time of tendering.

Further questions are best directed to the Minister for Small Business.

(11) The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: Were you involved in the decision? Were you consulted in relation to the removal of the funding for Business Connect?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Yes.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: You were consulted? The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I'm going to take that one on notice because you would be aware, Mr Tudehope, that I'm a member of the Cabinet. I'm a member of the Expenditure Review Committee, so I'd just take that one on notice.
I am advised: Matters discussed by the Cabinet and the Expenditure Review Committee are subject to Cabinet confidentiality.

(12) The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: Minister, one very valued Business Connect adviser is NSW Procurement Specialists. Their website lists the 12 remaining webinars they will be conducting between now and the axe falling on 30 September, including webinars targeted specifically at startups and at Aboriginal businesses. Who will be offering similar webinars on government procurement for small business from 1 October 2025 onwards? The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I'd be happy to come back to you on notice in relation to the specifics.
I am advised: The Service for Business website has free online resources, including webinars and podcasts on a range of key topics to support small businesses. Further questions on this matter are best directed to the Minister for Customer Service.

(13) Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Picking up on that Jobs First Commission, I actually asked the Treasurer, who said, "Rest assured, when the Minister for Finance is here, she would love to talk to you about this." We have $7 million in the budget. We've learnt that it's over four years. One million is in the first year. Presumably, logic would tell us that we're going to have a Jobs First Commissioner by the end of the financial year. The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Ms Boyd, I'm not sure if you were here for the answers that I provided to Mr Tudehope. Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I was. The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: They're going to be the same answers, which is that we have set aside some funding in the budget in order to do that. That's because the work on the Jobs First Commission is progressing. We haven't finalised that work. Our approach is, once we finalise the decision-making process, then we will be able to make announcements about the funding.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: But a million dollars is a lot of money. If it's not to employ a commissioner, then what on earth would you be using it for? The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I would anticipate that it would be to employ the appropriate staff. But I don't want to give commitments in relation to exactly what that looks like until the Government has completed its decision-making process and our consultations have completed with industry. Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Maybe there's a disconnect between you and the Treasurer, then, because the Treasurer has included in the budget — you have $1 million to spend in the next financial year on the Jobs First Commission. How are you going to spend that money? The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: As I said to you, Ms Boyd, my answer doesn't change, which is the Government hasn't made decisions about exactly what that money will be put towards just yet. I would completely reject the premise of your question saying that there's any distance between the Treasurer and myself. We work very closely together. On this particular — Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Just to be clear, I wasn't saying that. The budget is saying that. It says there's $1 million for this. Can you tell us if you've at least started drafting the enabling legislation? The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I might just come back to you on notice about that one because there are a couple of different legislative pieces that we're working through at the moment.
This question is answered by supplementary question 64.

(14) Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: We don't have multiple systems for electronic fines. We have the one system. I thought everything was brought together under Revenue NSW, so what is Revenue NSW doing? The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: This is where the responsibilities in relation to the issuing of fines or the issuing of orders rests with the individual agency or department or council. Revenue NSW is then passed along that information by the individual department or by the agency. That's my understanding of the delineation of responsibilities. We have made some requirements on councils, you would be aware, to issue an immediate notification to parking fines. Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: As well as the electronic fines. The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: But in relation to individual agencies, it's usually a matter for them. Let me pass to the deputy secretary. PHIL MINNS: I haven't really got much to add, Ms Boyd. I think the Minister is correct in explaining our role in that process. Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Is it a Service NSW responsibility?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: No, it's up to the individual. Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I understand that, at an individual level, we have agencies making these decisions. But in terms of modernising the fines system, are you saying it has nothing to do with Revenue NSW? PHIL MINNS: We're doing a lot of work. We're constantly investing in trying to bring more customer-friendly and simplified processes to bear. Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Are you working with agencies to modernise? PHIL MINNS: My understanding is yes but, for that particular case, I would want to take it on notice and go back to the team. Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Minister, last year it was identified that Customer Service, the Rental Bond Board and Revenue NSW were unlawfully recouping merchant fees. What has been the financial impact of ceasing collecting the merchant fees in the years since it has been turned off? The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I would have to take that one on notice. I'd say that we're awaiting the Ombudsman's report in relation to that. But for the financial impact I'd have to come back to you on notice. I could pass to the secretary. MICHAEL COUTTS-TROTTER: From memory, it's $25 million to $30 million a year. But I'm happy to confirm that on notice.
I am advised: The financial impact of these agencies ceasing collecting merchant fees is $28.4 million annually.

(15) The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: Minister, could you just maybe take on notice how much money has been raised under this scheme in the last five financial years? The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I can tell you that, since 2019-20, the foreign surcharge on land tax and stamp duty has raised more than $2.6 billion. The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: That's reflective of the accelerating property market, I'll bet. The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I'd make this point, Mr Borsak: that our property taxes in New South Wales do not apply to an Australian citizen's principal place of residence. So we don't levy taxes on the family home. And if a permanent resident lives in Australia for more than 200 days and is building their life here, perhaps sending their children to local schools, then they are not required to pay this foreign tax surcharge. But if they don't live here for more than 200 days, if they're not an Australian citizen, then they are levied this surcharge.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: Of the $2.6 billion — and again you probably don't have these figures to hand — how many would be for permanent foreign residents? And how many would be for the people that are caught in these circumstances? The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I'd be happy to take that on notice. My understanding is that we don't have that breakdown, but I'd be happy to come back to you on notice in relation to that.
I am advised: Revenue NSW is unable to identify the number of permanent foreign residents who pay surcharge as this data is not collected at the time of the assessment.

(16) The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: Just getting back to opals again, so put your opal ring on. What can the Government do to help promote and push this industry forward once you sort it out, as it were? One of the key issues is you've got to know what it's worth. Nobody seems to know what it's generating. The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I can provide you with an update there, or I think we can. GEORGINA BEATTIE: Thank you, Minister. I'm happy to share that the report of the independent review said that there's $93 million a year of industry impact from the opal sector. That's made up of $63.1 million in direct output and $29.9 million of flow-on benefits. The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: That's pretty decent for small title businesses, isn't it? The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Yes. The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: That's pretty decent. Can you consider what you could do to help promote that? Maybe it's not your portfolio, obviously. The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I might come back to you on notice, Mr Borsak. I know that Minister Moriarty was doing some work in relation to this. As I said to you earlier, given the rarity of black opals and the fact that we are, as I understand, the only source of them in the world, we think that's a great opportunity for us to be showcasing that, and I think the Government's looking at doing some more things in Lightning Ridge, but I might come back to you on notice in relation to that.
I am advised: The Minns Labor Government recognises the important role of opal mining and related industries to the Lightning Ridge and White Cliffs regions. The Minns Labor Government is committed to ensuring that the response to the Independent Review provides a balanced framework to support a stable and sustainable opal mining industry into future.

(17) The CHAIR: Minister, is the New South Wales point of consumption tax collected via online gambling collected based upon the point of consumption of gambling services or upon the nominated address of the person placing the bet? The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I recall that you asked me some questions in relation to this last time, which also included you getting a notification on your app, I think, for the first time. I'd be happy to come back to you with an answer after the break on that one.
This question was answered during the hearing (see page 27 of the transcript).

(18) The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: In relation to the overlay of the Federal issues and the native title claims and what's happening there, is that something you can provide an update on? Have you spoken with any of your Federal counterparts in relation to those issues? The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: In relation to those issues, I'd come back to you on notice with a response because I just want to be really careful about what I say there. The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I understand that, but all I'm asking is, firstly, have you had discussions with Federal colleagues about those specific issues? The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Again, as I said to you at the outset, as I flagged, those are the specific issues that we are working through carefully and delicately. I'll come back to you on notice with a response, or I can pass to the deputy secretary.
This question was answered during the hearing (see page 50 of the transcript).

(19) The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: You did say earlier that you wanted to thank your colleagues who represent those mining-impacted communities and work in that space. I am wondering why Dave Layzell, as the member for Upper Hunter, wasn't invited to that round table, given that a couple of his councils were there. Was he not asked to attend? The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I don't recall why, but I'm happy to come back to you on notice. I just don't recall. The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Ms Beattie, do you know whether Mr Layzell was invited, as the member for Upper Hunter? GEORGINA BEATTIE: I'd have to check that as well, Ms Mitchell. I can't recall whether he was invited or not. I know he wasn't there. The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I checked with him this morning and he said he wasn't asked to attend. I'm wondering, Minister, given that you had two of the councils

from his electorate there, why there wasn't an invitation issued to an MP who has a very big role to play representing mining-impacted communities. Wouldn't it have been important to have had him there?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Yes, sure. My starting point would be that they were people who had constructively engaged in the processes. We were developing our Future Jobs and Investment Authority.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: You had a lot of Labor MPs, but you didn't invite a local member, even though you had two of their councils.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: That's because they would be all the members representing that particular part of the State who advocated—

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Muswellbrook and Singleton are in Upper Hunter. You had the councils there, but you didn't invite the local MP.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Like I say, my starting point was people who had constructively engaged with me or with Resources as we developed the Future Jobs and Investment Authority. We had a long consultation process. We had a number of round tables. We had a submission process that the department coordinated. And, like I say, that was the opportunity for us to go back to those people who had engaged constructively with us. But I'm happy to come back to you on notice.

I am advised:

Information in relation to consultation on the Future Jobs and Investment Authority was published in the Future Jobs and Investment Authority Consultation Outcomes report.

(20) The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Are you aware that Forestry Corp was not represented on the industry advisory panel consulting on the koala park or the steering committee? Is that in line with what you would expect?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Again, I can't recall if I was briefed on that particular group. I assume that I would have been but, yes, I can't recall.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Could you maybe take that on notice and come back to me with an answer?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Sure. I would make the point again that the implementation of the Great Koala National Park is really a policy that is being led by Minister Sharpe and Minister Moriarty, so they're probably best placed to be answering questions in relation to placement on the—what was the name—industry advisory boards and the like.

The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: The industry advisory panel or the steering committee. I appreciate that, but your name is also on—you are a signatory as a

shareholder Minister. If you could come back to me on what your understanding is on that, even on notice, I would appreciate that.
This question is best directed to the Minister for Environment.

(21) The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Broadly in relation to the softwood timber industry — obviously very critical to the housing sector — have you given any direction as a shareholder Minister to Forestry Corporation to look at expanding the softwood estate so that the Government can meet its housing target? The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I might come back to you on notice in relation to that. We've certainly done some work with Forestry Corp, because it is currently projected — the secretary would correct me if I'm wrong here. I think the losses are projected to the end of this decade. We're certainly looking at different work that we need to be doing across the corporation. You were asking whether we have issued a directive in relation to expanding — The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: What direction have you given them in terms of expanding the softwood estate to meet those housing targets? The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: You would accept that there is quite a long lead time between establishing a plantation and it coming to fruition. From memory it's more than two decades. We are doing a range of things in order to address the housing shortages that we inherited because of the lack of action from your Government. The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: This was about what you have done. But if you're happy to take that on notice in terms of any directions, that would be great.
This question is best directed to the Minister for Environment

(22) The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: Minister, you'd be aware of the commitment by the Government to the delivery of the Penrith indoor sports precinct? The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: No, I'm not aware of that. The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: You're the Minister for Western Sydney? The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I'm the Acting Minister for Western Sydney at the moment. But I am not aware of that particular election commitment.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: Perhaps you could take these questions on notice then. The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Sure. The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: I'm not critical of you for not knowing. Can you tell us what the time frame for the delivery of the public works associated with the precinct is and confirm, as part of that, that the State Government will cover the cost escalations in the project so as to ensure that the council does not have to bear those costs? The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: With the greatest of respect, Mr Tudehope, I'm answering questions in my substantive portfolios here today. I'm the Acting Minister for Western Sydney. I'd be happy to take — The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: That's your portfolio. The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I appeared at estimates last week in the portfolios of Education and Western Sydney, before Portfolio Committee No. 3, and I answered a range of questions there. But I'm happy to take those on notice and come back to you.
I am advised: The Western Sydney Infrastructure Grants program is overseen by NSW Treasury. Updates on the Indoor Multi-Sports Stadium Project can be found on the NSW Government Grants and Funding website.

(23) The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: Thank you. In your capacity as the education Minister, I'm going to ask you a question, since you raised workers compensation earlier. How many teachers currently are making claims for workers compensation in New South Wales at the moment? The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Mr Tudehope, I'm the acting education Minister whilst the current education Minister is seeking treatment. We discussed a range of Education issues last week. Your colleague Ms Mitchell asked me a number of questions. I will take that on notice.
Please refer to the answer to Supplementary Question 22 of the August 2025 Portfolio Committee No. 3 – Education Budget Estimates Hearing.

(24) The CHAIR: You'll get a couple of minutes at the end there, Mr Tudehope. Minister, the US cannabis industry is growing at a compounding annual growth rate of 34 per cent. In 2022 it was worth $43 billion to their economy. In 2023 it was worth $57 billion. And predictions are that it will be worth over $400 billion per annum to the US economy by 2032, making it comparable to the alcohol

industry. And, in actual fact, the alcohol industry is in decline. What are some of the policies that you are promoting in this State to attract the medicinal cannabis industry to the State? The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Mr Buckingham, you've certainly asked me questions in relation to the opportunities in relation to medicinal cannabis and the manufacturing here. I know that we do have some companies that are doing some great work. I think from memory it was around the north of the State. The work in relation to specific industries has really been set by our Industry Policy, and that's led by Minister Chanthivong. He released that and talked about the specific opportunities, particularly in relation to renewable energy, critical minerals, mining, amongst other things. The CHAIR: Did it mention medicinal cannabis? The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I don't believe it did, but I'd be happy to come back to you on notice.
I am advised: The NSW Industry Policy is available online at https://www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/investment-nsw/resources/nsw-industry-policy

(25) The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: Are there circumstances, Mr Smythe, where someone who uses a home office does pay land tax in relation to that part of their premises? CULLEN SMYTHE: I'll take that on notice.
I am advised: Under Section 5 of the Land Tax Management Act 1956, if a property is primarily used and occupied by the owner as their residence, and only one room is used for business (e.g. working from home), that business use may be disregarded — provided the business is mainly conducted elsewhere. In this case, the Principal Place of Residence (PPR) exemption still applies. However, if more than one room or a separate flat is used primarily for business (e.g. a yoga studio and home office occupying 50% of the property), Section 9C of the Act applies. The property is then treated as mixed-use, and an apportionment is made. The business-use portion (e.g. 50%) is excluded from the PPR exemption and becomes taxable land value. If the owner's total taxable land value exceeds the threshold, land tax may apply.

(26) The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: I'm not entirely sure. Minister, just returning to the deed of release which was the subject of the Ombudsman's report, in relation to that deed of release, when did you first become aware of it? The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I'd have to take that on notice and come back to you. I am aware of it now. It's a very, very serious issue, and I share the Ombudsman's concern. I would make the point that every person has the right to seek independent review, and the use of deeds of release to prevent individuals from exercising those statutory rights is unacceptable.
I am advised: The Crown Solicitor’s Office may not draft a deed or other agreement requiring any person to withdraw or undertake not to make complaints or applications for investigation or relief lodged with any investigative body. The Crown Solicitor has issued an office-wide policy to this effect.

(27) The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: Minister, going back to the earlier question about surcharge duty, Dr James Hoskins wrote to you on 27 May 2025 canvassing all the issues which we have explored today. When are you going to reply to his letter? The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I'm going to be clear again, Mr Tudehope, unless you can furnish me with some evidence— The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: I have a copy of his letter in front of me which he has furnished to me. The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Okay. I'd have to take that on notice. I think I may have responded. The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: You may have responded? The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Yes. The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: You may have responded, but he hasn't received a response. The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I'll take that on board. I'm not aware. I know that we have been working through the issues that were raised by Dr Hoskins. I just can't recall if I've actually signed the final version of the letter or not.
I am advised: I have exchanged a number of letters with Dr and Mr Hoskins since the matter was first raised with me, including providing a response to Mr Hoskins’ letter of 27 May 2025.

(28) Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Minister, are you aware of biological monitoring results of work that's undertaken by NSW Resources Regulator in relation to the lead levels of workers in lead mines across the State? Are you kept informed about that work? The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I don't recall exactly being briefed on that. I might have to come back to you on notice. They may have provided a briefing to me; I just can't recall that. Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: In terms of the lead mining districts across New South Wales, are there workers in those mines who have had to be removed from those mines because of high lead levels? The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I can't recall that at the moment. The point I'd make is that most of the lead mining that I'm aware of actually occurs with other minerals. For example, last year I opened— Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Yes, I'm aware of that, but I'm asking you about the workers and whether you are advised by your department that workers can be exposed to lead, and asking you whether workers have to be removed from mines because their blood lead levels are too high. The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I would just say that I would expect that there is some level of monitoring that's undertaken by workers. I know that's certainly work that's done within the coal industry, is the ongoing monitoring of workers, and that would largely be reported to me. Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: There was a briefing sheet in some documents that I obtained, from 7 August 2024, which states that since 2021 the regulator has assessed 33 notifications made by mine operators of elevated blood lead levels of workers. My question is are you aware of that? The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I just said that I will take on notice the specifics of the monitoring process that's underway. I know that monitoring of workers does occur. I would say that I'm aware that we have very robust safety requirements and monitoring that occurs within the coal industry. I would say that, as we see more critical minerals and high-tech metals mines, there may need to be ongoing reform in order to make sure that the tragic lessons that we have learned in relation to safety within the coalmining industry can be transferred towards our other mining areas, but that's an area that continues to be underway and we continue to consider.
I am advised: I am briefed by the NSW Resources Regulator on a range of issues, which may include health monitoring of employees.

(29) The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Minister, I understand the Government is not continuing with Royalties for Rejuvenation and you've moved to the Future Jobs and Investment Authorities model, but can you tell me what's happening with the former expert panels that were in place under Royalties for Rejuvenation? The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Yes. As I told you in the last budget estimates hearing, those are expert panels that are established in legislation, and so I anticipate that those particular panels — that those legislative changes will be brought in when we introduce our Future Jobs and Investment Authorities legislation later this year. The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Sure. Can you just confirm, though, the members of those panels are still being paid? The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: As I've said to you previously, we have no option, and we have pursued that option in order to cease that payment, but that's a legislative requirement. The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: How much is that costing the Government, to pay those panel members while they're effectively on ice? What's the cost to Government? The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I'd make this point: that as we wrap up the work of the expert panels, I think I made some requests to them about just wrapping up their work and how we can be making sure that we're making best use of that expertise. In relation to the specifics in how much we paid them and the like, I'd be happy to come back to you on notice. The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: Yes, if you could on notice that would be fantastic, and also just the last time that they formally met as panels. My understanding is it was August 2023, but you say you're instructing them to do some work at the moment. Is that right? The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: We've had some discussions — again, I might come back to you on notice. Or perhaps the deputy secretary can provide some further — The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: We can come back to that in the afternoon, maybe, if you've got anything on that, Ms Beattie. GEORGINA BEATTIE: Sure. I'm happy to provide information on that, Ms Mitchell.
This question was answered during the hearing (see page 51 of the transcript).

(30) The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: Congratulations. I asked some questions earlier to the Minister on this, but how much payroll tax was collected in 2023-24 from the 4,280 businesses that paid payroll tax that year with a total payroll between $1.2 million and $1.5 million?

PHIL MINNS: I'd have to take that on notice, I think. I've got a gross number for payroll tax close at hand. The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: But not for just that cohort between 1.2 and 1.5? CULLEN SMYTHE: We'll take that on notice. The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: What was the gross figure collected for 2024-25? PHIL MINNS: Let me find that for you. If we're talking about payroll tax for 2024-25, the revenue collected was $14,800,437,704. Have I got that right? CULLEN SMYTHE: That sounds about right. The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: And that was paid by how many businesses? PHIL MINNS: I'm not sure that I can directly answer that question. What I can tell you is that the number of current annual assessments in that year was 44,253. Some of those assessments might be people who have paid it in the past but are not paying it this year, so it might be a little bit less than that number. The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: Or it might be even more. PHIL MINNS: The number of active payroll customers is over 56,000. They're people who have perhaps paid it at some point in the past. CULLEN SMYTHE: That sounds right. The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: This goes back to my earlier question in relation to that amount. How many of those 44,000 businesses had a payroll of between $1.2 million and $1.5 million? CULLEN SMYTHE: I'll take that on notice as well.
This question is answered in supplementary question 19.

(31) he Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: A number of other businesses, no doubt, are waiting on that decision. How many audits have been conducted in the last 12 months by Revenue in relation to businesses who would colloquially be known as being in the gig economy? CULLEN SMYTHE: I'll need to take that on notice. We may also need to clarify what our understanding is of the gig economy. There are some obvious ones — for example, the rideshare economy and some of the delivery services that run on similar platforms — but I understand that as you get towards the edges, it becomes a little bit more difficult to determine. How about I take that one on notice and see what we can give you?

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: Can I widen it more generally? How many audits have been conducted in relation to payroll tax in the 2024-25 year? PHIL MINNS: I have that number. The number of audits in 2024-25 for payroll tax was 11,018. The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: Was that up from 2023-24? PHIL MINNS: It was slightly down. In 2023-24 it was 11,094. The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: In terms of the extra revenue which was obtained as a result of those audits, are you able to give us a figure in relation to the additional revenue which was collected? PHIL MINNS: I would need to request that from the team. They will probably be able to do that today. I know that the number of audits that were conducted that identified a tax liability was 8,567. The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: That indicated they had a liability. And then, from that, the total amount of extra tax collected from those 8,000 — PHIL MINNS: I'd have to get that sourced. The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: One of the issues relating to the identification of liability for payroll tax relies upon the definition contained in relation to what is a contractor and what is an employee. A resolution has been reached by the Government in relation to medical practices. In respect of the audits which have been conducted, how many of those audits were conducted in relation to businesses in circumstances where they were identified as conducting a business in the nature of a professional practice or a collective practice which is in the nature of medical practices? PHIL MINNS: I can't tell you at this point. I would need to check if it is, in fact, able to be sourced. The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: I might not have expressed that entirely correctly. PHIL MINNS: No, I think I understand. The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: I think you understand the notion that I'm getting at. CULLEN SMYTHE: Yes. The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: Is that information readily available? CULLEN SMYTHE: I believe so. I don't have it with me. We'll see what we can do to come up with something today.
I am advised: The ‘gig economy’ is not defined as a formal industry in Australia and therefore does not have its own ANZSIC code. Unlike sectors that are regulated or require licensing, the gig economy is more accurately described as a business model that

operated across many industry types. It refers to work arrangements where individuals provide services – often on a short-term, task-by-task basis – facilitated through digital platforms.

(32) The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: Have we increased the number of audits which are being done by Revenue which have been identified because the potential structure of their businesses falls into the category of so-called independent contractors or employees?

CULLEN SMYTHE: I'm not sure that's a question we'll be able to answer. The main reason behind that is that, in many circumstances, the full details of the structures aren't always available until after an audit commences. If I've understood your question — and please correct me if I've got this wrong — it almost seems to be coming from the other end of the perspective. So we understand the structure and we have then gone —

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: Is that a trigger for someone, where potentially you are able to say that the nature of this business is such that they should be paying payroll tax and they're not, because of the structure of their business? Are there red flags that your audit team could identify which would probably give rise to —

CULLEN SMYTHE: That would tip people off about their structuring activities and how they can best avoid tax? I'm not sure if that's —

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: Hopefully their accountants are giving them good advice these days.

CULLEN SMYTHE: I think it would be safe to assume — for example, in the light of particular cases that have come down where we understand that, say, there are practitioners with similar business models to those run by organisations that have been unsuccessful in their challenges. The gig economy is one that you pointed out, and potentially employment agent-related businesses.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: Mortgage brokers?

CULLEN SMYTHE: Potentially. I think the position has not changed on those, in that there's no coordinated focus on looking at mortgage brokers at the moment.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: The cleaning industry?

CULLEN SMYTHE: We're moving away, then, from business structures and more to industries that may need particular guidance or assistance understanding. That's, I think, a slightly different question or a different area of focus.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: Cleaning industry contractors — is that an area of focus?

CULLEN SMYTHE: I'd need to take that one on notice, at the moment.

I am advised:

Certain industries face unique payroll tax challenges due to the complexity of their workforce and employment arrangements. Some businesses fail to correctly apply the Employment Agency or Relevant Contractor provisions of the Payroll Tax Act when lodging their returns.

These complexities highlight the importance of Revenue NSW's efforts to increase customer education and provide improved resources available to companies to comply with their tax obligations. This has included updates to the specific cleaning industry webpage and customer mail-outs that addresses common errors found as a result of our compliance program.

(33) The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: In respect of the first home purchase stamp duty scheme, there are a number of aspects in relation to the declarations which are required to be completed by first home purchasers. One of those includes, of course, the provision that they reside in the property. How many audits have been conducted by Revenue to establish compliance with that obligation?

CULLEN SMYTHE: You are speaking about the First Home Buyers Assistance Scheme?

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: Yes.

CULLEN SMYTHE: For the First Home Buyers Assistance Scheme in the 2025-26 year — or which year are you after? The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: The 2024-25 year.

CULLEN SMYTHE: In 2024-25 there were 668 matters that were investigated.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: How many of those disclosed noncompliance with their obligations?

CULLEN SMYTHE: It was 403.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: Of the 600-odd?

CULLEN SMYTHE: Yes.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: I take it that the majority of those audits were conducted as a result of some sort of notification? Or were they random audits?

CULLEN SMYTHE: I don't have the details of that.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: Are those details of what triggers the audit available?

CULLEN SMYTHE: I'll take that on notice.

I am advised:

Revenue NSW utilises analytics and data matching with other relevant government agencies to identify matters for investigation. Revenue NSW also receives community referrals from the public and voluntary disclosures which are investigated.

(34) The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: That's fine. In respect of the previous Government's proposals for the abolition of stamp duty, there was in fact a land tax scheme which was introduced. How many purchasers who elected to participate in that scheme remain on the scheme?

PHIL MINNS: We do have that. We'll just need to find it, Mr Tudehope.

CULLEN SMYTHE: Could we possibly return to that question a little later?

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: I take it that a person who elected to go on that scheme automatically becomes disqualified from being a first home purchaser with any eligibility under the First Home Buyers Assistance Scheme if they are looking to purchase another property—because they've already been the owner of a property. A common complaint—and I don't know if you have received that complaint—is that cohort of taxpayers had to pay a land tax provision and never got the benefit of any exemption from the stamp duty. Unfortunately for a number of people, they don't get any benefit on the purchase of their potential second property.

CULLEN SMYTHE: Yes.

PHIL MINNS: Mr Tudehope, I have found the relevant note to answer your question. As at 31 July the number of properties that opted in for FHBC—I can't recall what the acronym stands for.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: First Home Buyer Choice.

PHIL MINNS: The number that opted in is 8,123. That is based on the number of transactions and excludes cancelled transactions. That's the number of properties. The number of individuals that opted in for FHBC is 13,844.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: Do you have any figures about how many remain?

PHIL MINNS: I think that's the same answer.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: Did they all remain?

PHIL MINNS: I think I just told you the ones that have opted in and the number of 8,123 was the number of transactions and excluded the cancelled transactions.

The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: Yes, but there might be some people who are now no longer on the scheme.

PHIL MINNS: That's at 31 July, so it's pretty current data. The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: That's how many remain on the scheme? PHIL MINNS: Yes. The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: It doesn't tell me the figure, though, for the number who actually took it up in the first instance — I anticipate it will be more — and potentially have sold a property and moved on to become a stamp duty payer. PHIL MINNS: I would take that one on notice. I'll keep trawling. I might be able to find it.
I am advised: On the previous Government's First Home Buyer Choice scheme, Mr Minns referenced the number of properties as 8,123 and the number of individuals as 13,844. The number of individuals properties that remain in the program is 7,365. (Pg 55) Please note, that 7,365 remaining in the program should be properties, not individuals as referenced on the day.

(35) The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: Does there still remain an opportunity for you to waive fines in certain circumstances? PHIL MINNS: Yes, that's my understanding. CULLEN SMYTHE: Yes, the legislative — The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: How many fines have been waived in the 2024-25 year? CULLEN SMYTHE: We'll take that on notice. Is the question you're asking how many fines have been withdrawn? The Hon. DAMIEN TUDEHOPE: In the commissioner's discretion. CULLEN SMYTHE: We'll take that on notice.
I am advised that: 2024-25: Withdrawn - Caution applied 93,372 Withdrawn - Insufficient Information 5,215 Withdrawn - Cancelled 41,646

(36) Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Turning to something a bit different, what are the terms of recovery by the State of the $10 million owed by Whitehaven Coal pursuant to the

May 2025 decision of the Chief Judge in Equity in the New South Wales Supreme Court?

CULLEN SMYTHE: In terms of recovery?

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Yes. I understand that they owe $10 million and this is as a result of some sort of negative royalty issue.

CULLEN SMYTHE: Absolutely.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: What are the terms of recovery?

CULLEN SMYTHE: Let me take that on limited notice. I expect I'll be able to come back to you within the — I think I know the answer, but I want to make sure I give you the right one.

I am advised that:

There is no current recovery action as the customer has paid the outstanding amount.

(37) Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Perhaps you could take on notice — could you let me know how much money has previously needed to be recouped because of this negative royalty issue? CULLEN SMYTHE: So we're talking about compliance related?

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Yes, and what the actions have been to make sure that we are getting more of it up-front and not coming up with this again.

CULLEN SMYTHE: Sure. Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I don't know if this is one for you or not, but I'm going to give it a whirl. The *Guidelines for the economic assessment of mining and coal seam gas proposals* currently in use by Treasury in cost-benefit analysis of coal projects is dated December 2015. Does anyone know if those guidelines are under review? Ms Beattie, maybe?

GERALDINE CARTER: I can take that on notice.

This question is best directed to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces.

(38) Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: What's the staffing allocation and budget allocation for Revenue NSW debt collection in relation to minor fines?

PHIL MINNS: I think I would need to take that on notice. I've got information about fines and debt. Let me see if I can break it down into minor fines. I'm not sure that I can.

CULLEN SMYTHE: While Mr Minns addresses that, Ms Boyd, I'll go back to the royalty question that you asked me. The specific issue that was the subject of that

case, I understand, we have not identified in another instance, and the assessments have been fully paid. PHIL MINNS: Ms Boyd, I won't be able to answer with respect to the minor fines activity, but I can say that, for the last financial year, the fines revenue was $750 million. Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: For revenue? PHIL MINNS: That's fines revenue, in total. Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: But in terms of budget allocation for the collection? PHIL MINNS: I'd need to take that on notice.
I am advised that: Revenue NSW cannot easily provide this breakdown as staff work on all fine types, not just fines for minors.

(39) Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I used the word "avoidance", which implies perhaps a greater level of seriousness. What about underpayment of payroll tax? Are you able to quantify in given years whether there has been underpayment of payroll tax and how that's trending over time? CULLEN SMYTHE: Not in the concept of, say, a tax gap such as some global economic agencies provide. We can provide detail of the revenue identified through compliance activity. Is that what you're after? Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Yes, that's probably where we're going. I note that a webpage was put up on Revenue's website in March called payroll tax and the mining industry. It talks about better supporting mining businesses in understanding the complexities of payroll tax. Were we seeing an underpayment in the mining industry of payroll tax? What provoked this explanation to be put up? CULLEN SMYTHE: I'll need to take that one on notice
I am advised: Revenue from payroll tax compliance measures (including significant investment in compliance systems undertaken by the previous Government) is as follows: 2024/2025 - $235,276,008 2023/2024 - $162,204,256 2022/2023 - $126,978,948

Note that these figures exclude lodgment enforcement. Revenue NSW's payroll tax webpages have recently undergone significant updates to provide more detailed information and education for our customers, especially those which have complex payroll tax obligations.

(40) Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Does Revenue NSW have any information-sharing arrangements with icare or SIRA in terms of total wages data in order to inform its compliance function? CULLEN SMYTHE: I will need to check on the particular datasets. We do have a very large number of datasets, both at the State and Federal level, that we're able to draw on when we're undertaking our compliance activity or to check information that taxpayers provide to us.
I am advised: Revenue NSW receives data from iCare and SIRA which includes Wages information.

(41) Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: That's very useful. Where are we concentrating our resources at the moment in terms of debt collection? I've just asked that and then I realised you probably don't want to tell me, because it might be compromising your investigations. But is there a particular focus at the moment on particular types of companies or particular individuals, in terms of compliance? CULLEN SMYTHE: For compliance? Let me take that on notice, and I'll come back to you with what I can.
I am advised: Revenue NSW takes a targeted, risk-based approach to its payroll tax activities to make the best use of resources and maximise public benefit. Revenue NSW's compliance focus varies due to areas where revenue leakage or non-compliance risk is highest and economic conditions.

(42) Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I understand that there was a change to the coal beneficiation. There was a change to the rate from 1 July. What's the expected economic impact of that? CULLEN SMYTHE: I believe that's something that's probably more of a Treasury question than us. Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Okay. Any takers? No. Maybe take that on notice.

GERALDINE CARTER: I'll take that.
This question was answered in the hearing (see page 49 of the transcript).

(43) GEORGINA BEATTIE: Ms Boyd, I can also answer on the beneficiation, Chair, if that's okay. That refers to the allowable deductions, and that was increased in line with CPI last year. That was at the same time that the Government introduced a new coal determination for royalties. Really, the benefit of that is it updates and outlines to provide clarity to the industry about calculating the value of the resource so that the correct royalty can be paid. Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: So if there are discounts — for example, for when coal is washed and that kind of thing — GEORGINA BEATTIE: That's right, yes. Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: — are you able to provide what that forgone revenue amount is? GEORGINA BEATTIE: I'll have to take the details on that on notice.
I am advised: Costs associated with beneficiation are an allowable deduction under the Value of Coal Recovered Ministerial Determination 2024. Following the decision in the 2023-24 Budget to increase coal royalty rates from 1 July 2024, royalty deduction rates for coal beneficiation are indexed to the annual change in the Sydney CPI over the next three years from 2024-25 to 2026-27. After 2026-27, coal beneficiation deduction rates will remain constant at their new, higher level. This increase in deduction rates will reduce revenue from coal royalties by $15.4 million over the four years to 2027-28. The increase in coal royalty rates in the 2023-24 Budget added $2.4 billion over the three years to 2026-27." Beneficiation rates are indexed in line with CPI and for 2025-26 are: • full cycle of washing - $3.71 per tonne • wet jigging - $2.12 per tonne • crushed and screened - $0.53 per tonne Beneficiation deductions reduced royalty revenue by about $50 million in 2024-25. Indexing of beneficiation deductions was forecast in the 2024-25 Budget to cost $2 million (Table 4.3, Budget Paper 1, 2024-25 Budget).

(44) The Hon. SARAH MITCHELL: I appreciate what you're saying for delimiting — it's odd terminology — but then five roles being created. How many staff are currently at that core library in Londonderry? GEORGINA BEATTIE: I'll have to confirm that. I'm sure the team will jump in with that any minute. It is more than five. There's minimal impact to the budget for us. The change plan is really making sure we can focus on that priority of delivering the strategy with a focus on skills. It's really about supporting education and training. It's repurposing to be more about education support. There are nine total staff there, and so four of those nine are impacted by the change plan, with a focus on five new roles, so an increase of one, to support that vision of education and training.
I am advised: This question was answered in the hearing (see page 52 of the transcript).

(45) Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Going back to the issue of the Broken Hill lead contamination, whose responsibility is it to clean up the lead contamination around Broken Hill to remediate the works? I think there's a strategy document or a plan in terms of part of the interagency Broken Hill lead response group. That is different strategies. I understand one of them is soil remediation. Who is responsible for that work and for monitoring it? JAMIE TRIPODI: Did you want to talk about the whole-of-government stuff? GEORGINA BEATTIE: Sure. I'm happy to kick off with that. There is a whole-of-government response to lead in Broken Hill. There are different agencies represented on that group, with different remits. Lead pollution and community levels of lead are overseen by the Environment Protection Authority. Jamie can talk to specifically the Resources Regulator, which is related to the rehabilitation of mine sites and also lead as it impacts workers. Obviously remediation and the rehabilitation of current mine sites is very relevant to any dust that is created and works alongside the Environment Protection Authority's licensing for dust. But the lead response group is chaired by the Premier's Department, and NSW Health and the EPA — there are a range of agencies involved. Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: The question more so is about the remediation of any sites by the mining companies. I assume it would be the regulator that does that. And I'm not talking about the EPA, what they would do. I'm not sure much is happening in terms of literally remediating the soil. So I'm just wondering what's going on with that. JAMIE TRIPODI: If it's on the mine sites and it's related to existing mining operations, then, yes, the regulator would investigate and work across agencies. We work very closely with the EPA. It would be both. EPA have a responsibility in regards to — which you're, obviously, aware of.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: It's very clear, from the reports, that the dust is not just on the mine site. The dust is being spread throughout the town, depending on how the wind blows and other things. And it's very clear from tests undertaken, for example, in public parks, that there are very high levels of lead in various places. Are you saying that the mining company — just wondering who is responsible for this in terms of payment as well. Do they not have to worry about that? JAMIE TRIPODI: It would depend, site by site, exactly what the issue is. Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: In Broken Hill? JAMIE TRIPODI: But those existing mines would have environmental protection licences if they were a large mine. The requirement for them in regards to pollution is — the EPA oversees that. Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: I'm talking about remediation. I understand. I'm talking about remediation, rehabilitation, the obligations on mining companies to clean up their mess. That's part of your responsibility, isn't it? JAMIE TRIPODI: Yes. If it's to do with the mine site, yes. If it's in relation to rehabilitation and remediation — but we do cross over very closely with EPA. Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Just to be clear, it sounds like — the community's asking me about this. It sounds like, when you're saying "if it's to do with the mine site", the dust with lead in it — once it leaves that mine site, makes its way into different areas like public parks and streets, residential streets and everywhere else, the mine doesn't have to do anything. JAMIE TRIPODI: No, it's not that the mine doesn't have to do anything. It's that it depends — Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: It becomes the responsibility of the EPA. JAMIE TRIPODI: It depends on the regulatory authority, but we would work with them to ascertain what was the causation of the issue. Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Are you working with them now? JAMIE TRIPODI: We are always working with the EPA. I can take on notice — Broken Hill specific — what actions have occurred or just the current status of that group.
I am advised: The Resources Regulator is part of the Broken Hill Environmental Lead Response Group, established by the Premier in 2023, to coordinate a long-term, whole-of-government approach to addressing environmental lead contamination in Broken Hill. The Resources Regulator is focused on rehabilitation of operating mines in Broken Hill.

(46) Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: We will come to that in a second, actually, because I am interested in that, just to finish this off. Ms Beattie, when did you become aware of — I raised this report before; I've raised it a little bit in this whole session of budget estimates, with different Ministers — the 2019 report by Mark Taylor, the "state of the science" report in relation to Broken Hill lead? When did you first become aware of that report? GEORGINA BEATTIE: Last week I learned that you were asking questions about this report, and I have since understood that it was published and made available in 2023. Am I aware of lead contamination in Broken Hill? Yes. And, as we've discussed, the role is a whole-of-government focus. Our focus is on mine sites, and rehabilitation is directly related, obviously, to the level of disturbed land, which creates dust. And the EPA licensed those operations as well. But levels of lead in Broken Hill are not a new thing. There is a high level of lead in the soil in Broken Hill. There is a very long history of mining and lots of exposed land in Broken Hill for dust to circulate. Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: I'll just map this out a little bit more. NSW Resources is a part of the Broken Hill lead response group. They got a presentation on this report years ago. It's also part of a subgroup of the response group, called the remediation working group, I understand. Is that correct? There's a remediation working group as part of — GEORGINA BEATTIE: Yes. That's correct. Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: So that group has to consider — do you know about that group, firstly, Ms Tripodi? JAMIE TRIPODI: I am aware of the group Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: That group has to consider the recommendations of Mark Taylor's "state of the science" report. I've seen the briefs that have the different recommendations. It's not just a random academic report I'm just obsessed with. It is key to the work, in terms of cleaning up lead in Broken Hill. There's a recommendation which is recommendation 4, which is: Identifying and reducing emissions: Determine and set an acceptable trigger value for Pb in deposited dust and introduce environmental licensing regulations limiting Pb in deposited dust. Is anything being done on that one, for example? And there's another one, just very clear, around needing to reduce the level of lead in the soil if there is any hope to reduce the blood lead levels in children's blood. Isn't that serious enough to know about this report and what the regulator is doing about it? I'll go to you, Ms Tripodi, actually, if you say you know about it. JAMIE TRIPODI: I'm aware of the different groups, yes. And I've become aware of that report this week and had a look at it. But I think we should take on notice existing work around that space, just because I'm not across that level of detail.
I am advised:

The Resources Regulator regulates rehabilitation on mine sites. Questions relating to the remediation of pollution on non-mine sites should be referred to the EPA.

(47) Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: I might put some more questions on notice in terms of some of the statistics around that. Does the Resources Regulator have a similar role for silicosis in mine workers? JAMIE TRIPODI: You'd be aware that there's a silicosis national register now, but we actually have our own framework through Coal Services. We have a specific one for mining, and it is a very robust framework. I'll just quickly find — Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: When you say Coal Services, is that also for — I have heard that there are at least a number of, in terms of the Cadia goldmine, workers with silicosis there. I don't know how public that is, but I hear from multiple people that that is an issue. Is that reported to you? JAMIE TRIPODI: It would be reported — we would be made aware of it, and we would investigate it. Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Have you been? JAMIE TRIPODI: Yes. Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: In terms of Cadia? JAMIE TRIPODI: In terms of Cadia specifically? I'll have to check for you. But just to outline — Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: If you haven't, I would advise you to.
This question was answered in the hearing (see page 64 of the transcript).

(48) Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: I was talking about the RZ Resources Copi mineral sands project out at Wentworth earlier. There are a couple of photos of what are called the sonic holes, exploration holes, on this constituent's property out at Wentworth. This is within this term of government that the Resources Regulator has been out to their place and investigated their concerns around noncompliance, dust on their property, these exploration holes that haven't been filled in and has basically not identified any noncompliances with the complaints. Firstly, why is that? Why did the Resources Regulator — I mean, the images in the documents show the holes. They should have been rehabilitated and not left like that on this person's property, where their dogs and kids and their goats which they farm can fall in. JAMIE TRIPODI: Absolutely. I'm very familiar with this site.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Yes, I'm sure you would be. JAMIE TRIPODI: We've spent a lot of time with the landholder as well through a range of different roles and things. We've conducted two previous investigations into complaints and, as you're saying, the complaints were unsustained. I'm not sure of the dating on these photos. I'm not questioning that they're not filled in or the veracity of the information that you've provided. I'm absolutely prepared to have a look at this and determine whether it is a new issue or something that has arisen of late. It's also difficult to tell whereabouts on the property these are. If this is leftover exploration, they should have been filled in. There were many, many alleged noncompliances. We've sent officers out multiple times. We've also worked with Planning because they had some other issues out there as well. We're working across government in relation to the site. I'm happy to look into these and have someone investigate these if they're new issues or they've not been looked at before. But it is hard to tell from these the location, the date, what are they actually from—
I am advised: The photos provided in the hearing do not have relevant information for the Resources Regulator to provide a response.