



The Hon. John Ajaka MLC

Minister for Ageing

Minister for Disability Services

Minister for the Illawarra

Mr David Blunt
Clark of the Parliaments
Parliament House
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Dear Mr Blunt,

I write in relation to the Illawarra Budget Estimates Hearing held on Thursday 15 August 2013.

Please find attached answers to Questions taken on Notice during the Hearing, Supplementary Questions and corrections to the Proof Hansard.

Yours sincerely,



John Ajaka MLC

Illawarra Questions taken on Notice during Hearing

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: Minister, can you provide details of how many public housing properties there are in the Illawarra?

This question should be directed to the Minister for Family and Community Services. I am advised that information regarding Public Housing properties and waiting times is available at: <http://www.housingpathways.nsw.gov.au/>.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: Are you aware what the current level of demand is for public housing in the Illawarra?

This question should be directed to the Minister for Family and Community Services. I am advised that information regarding Public Housing properties and waiting times is available at: <http://www.housingpathways.nsw.gov.au/>.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: Approximately how many people in the Illawarra are currently on the Housing NSW waiting list?

This question should be directed to the Minister for Family and Community Services. I am advised that information regarding Public Housing properties and waiting times is available at: <http://www.housingpathways.nsw.gov.au/>.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: Given your own admission that there are a significant number of Illawarra families on the waiting list for Housing NSW, why did the O'Farrell Government cut \$22 million from the budget that would see these new homes built?

The premise of the question is invalid, according to the transcript there was no such comment.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: I refer to the recent \$37 million cut in the Housing NSW budget for maintenance. What proportion of those funds would have been allocated to the Illawarra and how will those cuts affect Illawarra residents living in Housing properties?

This is a matter for the Minister for Family and Community Services.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: Minister, given that the most adverse effects of the sale of Port Kembla will be felt by the people of Port Kembla, why have no projects been selected from the Port Kembla area to proceed based on the funding available from the long-term lease of the port?

There is no sale of Port Kembla.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: Minister, given your answer, will you publicly release the full applications of each of the groups who were unsuccessful?

This question should be directed to Infrastructure NSW as it is the lead agency for the Restart Illawarra Fund. I am advised that this information can be found at www.infrastructure.nsw.gov.au.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: Will you publicly release the assessments of each of the shortlisted projects?

This question should be directed to Infrastructure NSW as it is the lead agency for the Restart Illawarra Fund. I am advised that this information can be found at www.infrastructure.nsw.gov.au.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: Can you specifically indicate what instrument the assessment panel will be using to evaluate the projects? In particular, what cost benefit ratio and job creation figures will they be looking at?

This question should be directed to INSW.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: Minister, what will be the process for auditing the various outcomes of the projects such as job creation and economic impact as outlined by the proponents?

This question should be directed to INSW.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: Minister, what, if any, processes will there be to support local firms, contractors and businesses in the construction of these projects where applicable?

This question should be directed to INSW.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: But there is no preference for local contractors all local businesses to be involved in Restart the Illawarra?

This question should be directed to INSW.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: I understand that, but I am saying that as a matter of policy it seems that restart Illawarra does not have a preference for local contractors, suppliers, builders, et cetera, to get a foot on the ladder to be able to really reap the benefits for the Illawarra.

This question should be directed to INSW.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: Minister, do you believe that Newcastle and the Illawarra have similar economic bases?

The Illawarra is the third largest regional economy in NSW, worth in excess of \$16 billion in goods and services. It is home to a large manufacturing sector, supported by growing finance and business services, information and communication technology, health and community services, tertiary education, mining, defence and tourism industries.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: Seeing that you are so concerned about funding for the Illawarra, are you aware of staff shortages affecting case workers in the Coniston office of the Department of Family and Community Services?

This is a matter for the Minister for Family and Community Services.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: Is there, or has there been, a freeze on filling any caseworker positions?

This is a matter for the Minister for Family and Community Services.

The Hon. AMANDA FAZIO: I am sure that low staffing levels in a critical area like child protection would be of interest to you as the Minister for the Illawarra.

This is a matter for the Minister for Family and Community Services.

CHAIR: What is the level of unemployment in the Illawarra?

I am advised that ABS data for July 2013 showed that unemployment in the Illawarra was 8.9%.

CHAIR: I realise you have only been Minister for the Illawarra for a few days, but are there any plans to expand the movement of government departments to the Illawarra to provide jobs?

This question should be directed to the Deputy Premier, I am advised that The NSW Government is committed to policies that assist and encourage whole-of-state growth. We understand that when a government governs for the whole State and provides economic stimulus for regional NSW, city areas benefit, and vice versa. The Decade of Decentralisation policy supports regional communities by encouraging economic growth and delivering greater opportunities for regional NSW.

In November 2012 the Government appointed the NSW Decentralisation Taskforce to undertake a review of the Decade of Decentralisation strategy, and to consult and

report on the implementation of policies and programs initiated by the Government to advance the strategy. The Regional Relocation Grant was included in this review.

Following the Government's consideration of the Taskforce report and recommendation, the Government's response was released on 28 August 2013. The Government response can be found at <http://www.business.nsw.gov.au/doing-business-in-nsw/nsw-governments-decentralisation-efforts>.

Boosting regional economies and communities is a top priority for the NSW Government. Having a strong and diversified economy will better position NSW to adapt to challenges and capitalise on opportunities. The Regional Relocation grant supports regional communities by attracting more people, growth and investment into regional areas, driving economic growth and relieving congestion pressures within Sydney.

The NSW Government also recognises the importance of the Illawarra to the State, particularly as one of NSW's fastest growing regions. The NSW Government remains committed to supporting economic growth in the Illawarra through initiatives including the NSW Government's \$100 million Restart Illawarra Infrastructure Fund.

CHAIR: Definitely. I would like you to tell us what infrastructure developments are planned for the Illawarra that do not appear to have been highlighted in the material put out for New South Wales. It is not Sydney; it actually states "across the State", and the Illawarra is still part of the State.

The NSW Government is committed to delivering critical infrastructure for the Illawarra. For example, the proceeds of the lease of Port Kembla and Port Botany allowed the Government to commit an additional \$170 million for the upgrade of the Princes Highway and the \$100 million Restart Illawarra Fund. The Government in the last budget delivered funding for the expansion of the Wollongong Hospital Elective Surgery Unit, the Illawarra Cancer Care Centre, renovating the Wollongong Court House, a new headquarters for the SES and many other infrastructure projects.

CHAIR: Good. Another area where there has been some stress in relation to an industry is the fishing industry. That has been affected in recent years in Wollongong and Kiama. Are there any plans to invigorate or assist the fishing industry?

This question should be directed to the Minister for Primary Industries. I am advised that each year millions of dollars from the sale of fishing licences is reinvested into recreational fishing in NSW, so anglers can rest assured that the fees they pay for their licenses are used to fund worthwhile recreational fishing projects for their benefit. The money raised from the sale of the recreational fishing fee goes into two trust funds – the inland recreational fishing fund and the saltwater recreational fishing fund. The money from these funds can only be used on projects to enhance recreational fishing opportunities. The Recreational Fishing Trust to date has funded more than \$130 million worth of projects to improve recreational fishing for the

State's angling community. Recently, \$900,000 has been committed to the establishment of an Offshore Artificial Reef on the NSW south coast. The structure will be designed and built to withstand the South Coast conditions and will be located in around 30 metres of water within easy access to the entrance of the Shoalhaven River. This reef will be in addition to the first artificial reef deployed off the coast of Sydney's South Head in October 2011.

In the 2012/13 round of Recreational Fishing Trust funding, the NSW Government allocated about \$14 million to a wide variety of programs including fish stocking, fish aggregating devices, fishing facilities, Fishcare Volunteers, fishing clinics and essential research to improve recreational fishing.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: I think they are different. Can you advise the Committee of the exact terms of the SMS text you got from Mr Photios—what its precise terms were?

I advise that this information is not available as the phone has been disconnected.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Could you do the same from the SMS text you got from the other PremierState consultant?

I advise that this information is not available as the phone has been disconnected.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: What is your Government doing in respect of infrastructure investment to flood-proof that rail line?

This question should be directed to the Minister for Transport. I am advised that Sydney Trains is undertaking a hydrology study and drainage design for the Port Kembla Line. The project is in its early stages and is intended to improve the general drainage performance of the Port Kembla Line.

This line, especially at the Port Kembla end, is in a low lying area that can flood. The flooding issue is not specific to the rail corridor, but to the general local government area as well.

The hydrology study and drainage design is intended to provide relief if flooding does occur, and to minimise disruption to rail operations.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Indeed the transport links that particularly link the Illawarra and the southern parts of Sydney are vulnerable to flooding and interruptions. What are the other infrastructure plans your Government has?

This question should be directed to the Minister for Transport. I am advised that Transport for NSW will work with local government, stakeholders and local communities across NSW to ensure the unique future transport needs and requirements of their region are carefully considered.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: As the Minister for the Illawarra, what are you going to do to tackle that feral deer problem?

This question should be directed to the Minister for Primary Industries. I am advised that over the years, there has been an increase in the deer population in the Illawarra, causing agricultural, environmental and social problems, which includes serious safety issues when deer move out onto roadways.

As a consequence, in 2011, Wollongong City Council sought the LHPAs assistance in developing and managing a deer control program.

I am advised that the LHPA acceded to the request. There is a stakeholder management committee that guides the LHPA in its management of the program. About 120 landholders have requested that their properties be involved in the deer control program.

The Game Council had initiated various 'Ecological Deer Management' (EDM) programs in NSW, including an EDM program in the Illawarra area.

I am advised that the relevant provisions of the *Rural Lands Protection Act 1998* and the *Game and Feral Animal Control Act 2002* operate concurrently, and actions under either Act can be undertaken in the prescribed circumstances.

Further, I am advised that the deer control program being coordinated by the LHPA does not preclude licenced hunters from also hunting deer in the area, as long as all the protocols are followed.

Nevertheless, it would be ideal if a single, co-ordinated, co-operative deer control program was utilised in the Illawarra area, with the primary objective of controlling these animals.

I am advised that correspondence between Game Council and the Cumberland LHPA had been exchanged with a view to cooperatively establishing a region wide deer management strategy to assist the local community.

On Thursday 4 July 2013 the NSW Government announced it will implement the key changes to Game Council NSW recommended by the independent Governance Review of the Game Council of NSW by Mr Steve Dunn.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Minister, I refer to the criteria under which the short listed projects have come in from Kickstarting the Illawarra. Will those criteria be made publicly available?

This question should be directed to Infrastructure NSW as it is the lead agency for the Restart Illawarra Fund. I am advised that this information can be found at www.infrastructure.nsw.gov.au.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Will the personnel in the panels that will be assessing those projects be made publicly available?

The Assessment Panel consisted of Mr Colin Bloomfield, Professor Gerard Sutton and Mr Alex Darling and officers from Infrastructure NSW, NSW Treasury and the NSW Office of Finance.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: Your Government would not have upgraded the Princes Highway if you had not sold the port; is that what you are saying?

There is no sale of Port Kembla.