

GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO.5
QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE DURING THE HEARING
17 SEPTEMBER 2010

QUESTION 1

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: How much radioactive waste is there in New South Wales?

Mr SULLIVAN: I will take that on notice.

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: Is it notified to and licensed by the Environment Protection Authority [EPA]?

Mr SULLIVAN: We have a facility but I will have to take the detail of that on notice.

ANSWER

Premises where radioactive materials are used or stored must be registered under the requirements of the *Radiation Control Act 1990*. Currently, 267 premises with radioactive material are registered by the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water in NSW. Operators of registered premises must, under the conditions of registration, keep an inventory of all radioactive material that is kept at the premises.

QUESTION 2

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: I understand that. Is radioactive waste being stored elsewhere around the State?

Mr SULLIVAN: I need to take that on notice.

Ms CORBYN: We have significantly upgraded over the past three or four years the storage facilities associated with radioactive waste and have a good centralised function for most of that waste, but we would have to take on notice the question about materials that might be elsewhere.

ANSWER

The Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water (DECCW) maintains a storage facility for disused radioactive material that was collected decades ago or is from an orphaned source.

Radioactive material is stored on premises registered by DECCW across NSW. There are 267 registered premises that store radioactive material in NSW.

The Commonwealth facility at Lucas Heights is not regulated by DECCW. Information relating to that facility would need to be sourced from ANSTO.

QUESTION 3

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: Do you know how much radioactive waste there is in New South Wales?

Ms CORBYN: I do not have that figure off the top of my head. I will have to take that on notice.

ANSWER

The *Radiation Control Act 1990* requires organisations to obtain a licence to possess radioactive substances and register with the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water (DECCW) those premises where radioactive substances are kept or used. The registration does not distinguish between stored material that is currently in use or is considered waste.

Over a threshold, DECCW requires licensees to report details of material kept or used on the premises. Below that threshold, facilities must maintain an inventory of material, which is auditable by DECCW. DECCW has an active audit program as part of the Council of Australian Government's Security Strategy.

There are 267 registered premises that store radioactive material in NSW.

QUESTION 4

Mr SMITH: It is probably worth noting that some years ago the storage arrangements for the materials from the Department of Health at Lidcombe were quite poor. I think the Government provided \$20 million to build a purpose-built facility, a laboratory and a storage facility that is excellent and that has all the bells and whistles you would want to be sure it was safely secured. It is my understanding that there is plenty of capacity there for dealing with it. It was designed to be able to cope with us coming across additional orphan materials and needing a safe place to put them. That is now in place.

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: Would all the radioactive hospital waste be stored in that facility?

Mr SMITH: There are arrangements for the acceptance of materials that have nowhere else to go to be put into that facility.

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: Are you confident that the material is being sent there?

Mr SMITH: Yes, because there is a detailed system of licensing. You need a licence to hold all radioactive materials with a currently useful or past useful life. Generally,

suppliers of materials take back materials that are past their useful life. If you buy a device that relies on a radioactive source being inside it, as is used for road building or density measurement in manufacturing and so forth, once that source is no longer emitting at the level that is useful for that function you are able to return it and go back to the supplier who deals with it. Our facility is there to take it. We had examples of where previously licensed people had abandoned sources, or material turned up with no legal owner, or whatever. Our facility is there to be able to look after that material safely.

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: The question is whether the material is in there. I understand that that question has been taken on notice.

ANSWER

The Environmental Science Facility at Lidcombe, managed by the Department of Environment Climate Change and Water, contains disused radioactive material that was either collected decades ago and/or is from orphan sources, where previous owners could not be identified. The material in this facility is safely stored.

The facility is not used to store radioactive hospital waste currently being generated. Hospitals are responsible for storing this waste until appropriate disposal is arranged.

In general, sealed source devices are returned to the manufacturer, while short-lived radioactive materials, such as those used for diagnostic purposes, decay within a couple of days and can then be disposed of safely as non-radioactive waste.

QUESTION 5

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: The question is whether the material is in there. I understand that that question has been taken on notice. Minister, are you aware that 668 spent fuel rods that were sent to France for reprocessing were reprocessed by companies in France and effectively have been embedded in a type of glass? However, the French Government will not allow long-term storage of that material and it must be returned to Australia by 2015. At this stage Lucas Heights is the only place to which that material can be sent.

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The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: Are you not aware that the agreement required those rods to come back by 2015?

Ms CORBYN: As I said, it is a Commonwealth responsibility.

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: Does the Commonwealth not notify you of that?

Ms CORBYN: I was not aware of it. It might have notified the department. I will have to take that question on notice.

ANSWER

The Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water (DECCW) can confirm that management of spent fuel rods is entirely a Commonwealth matter. DECCW has not been notified by Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (ANSTO) of any impending shipment of reprocessed fuel rods back to NSW. For further information, the Honourable Member may wish to contact ANSTO.

QUESTION 6

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: Has the waste in Sydney Harbour been investigated?

Mr SULLIVAN: I will need to take that on notice.

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ANSWER

Yes, the waste in Sydney Harbour associated with the Hunters Hill remediation has been investigated.

QUESTION 7

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: Does the EPA have a thorough knowledge of the extent of the radioactivity in that waste? Are those investigations concluded?

Ms CORBYN: I am not sure. We will have to take the timing of that on notice, but I know that we have had significant involvement in trying to make sure that we have a coordinated remediation process because my recollection is that from the parliamentary inquiry, which we presented at, the sediments actually were being dealt with through Maritime Services. We have oversight of that. I do not have the details on the actual Sydney Harbour process but I know we were very coordinated to make sure there was a plan, if you will.

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: I understand, director general, but this has been going on for decades.

Ms CORBYN: It has.

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: Does the EPA know the extent of the contamination?

Ms CORBYN: Yes, we do.

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: You are confident that you know what is in Sydney Harbour?

Ms CORBYN: Yes. From the examination over the last few years and now the plans to actually remediate, there is a fantastic program in place that is progressing the

remediation of the land and the sediments. But I will have to take on notice the actual timing because I do not have it off the top of my head.

ANSWER

The EPA has a sound knowledge base of the extent of radioactive contamination in the sediments of Sydney Harbour adjacent to Nelson Parade Hunters Hill.

The investigations into radioactive waste in Sydney Harbour are concluded. Based on the information gathered, remediation is to be undertaken in relation to other compounds such as polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, but not as a result of radioactive waste.

ANSTO conducted a radiation survey of the marine sediments. In its report dated 31 March 2010, it states that remediation of the sediments is not warranted because whatever radioactive material that may be present is not having an effect on the surrounding environment by migrating physically or through the food chain.

The EPA is regulating foreshore land at 7-9 Nelson Parade under the *Contaminated Land Management Act 1997* for polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbon contamination. NSW Maritime will conduct the remediation of this site. This remediation will be carried out concurrently with the remediation of 7, 9 and 11 Nelson Parade which is being conducted by the State Property Authority.

QUESTION 8

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. You did mention earlier that the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water has investigated various alleged breaches across New South Wales. How many alleged breaches has the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water investigated in relation to harm of Aboriginal objects or places by Forests NSW in 2009-10?

Mr FRANK SARTOR: I suspect that we might have to take it on notice. I think we will have to take that one on notice.

ANSWER

Three.

QUESTION 9

CHAIR: Just on that point, Ms Corbyn, was the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Advisory Committee provided with regulations that it was being asked to evaluate and consider 30 days in advance, which is specified in the terms of reference and meeting procedures for the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Advisory Committee?

Ms CORBYN: We certainly provided the regulations. I am sorry; I do not have the dates specifically here.

CHAIR: Perhaps you could take it on notice.

Ms CORBYN: Yes.

ANSWER

The Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Advisory Committee was provided with a copy of the drafts of the *National Parks and Wildlife Amendment Regulation 2010* for its consideration on the following dates:

- 2 and 3 June 2010;
- 15 July 2010;
- 11 and 12 August 2010; and
- 31 August 2010.

The Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Advisory Committee Meeting Procedures state that the Committee's Secretariat should send meeting papers to the Committee members at least 10 working days before the meeting. Special late distribution may be arranged where a critical paper on the agenda has not been able to meet this deadline.

QUESTION 10

CHAIR: Was the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Advisory Committee provided with the opportunity to gain independent advice on the regulations?

Ms CORBYN: I would have to take it on notice. I believe that we provided the material to the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Advisory Committee, as I said, in two stages so that it could seek further comments from people that it represents. But, again, this was a consultation program that was not necessarily for it to just seek independent advice: it was to seek their views and the communities' views about the proposals that we have.

ANSWER

The Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Advisory Committee was provided with the draft regulations and was entitled to seek any advice to assist it to form an opinion on the regulations. However, the Committee as a whole did not request independent advice on the regulations.

QUESTION 11

CHAIR: Also you might want to take on notice making public the minutes and other papers associated with the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Advisory Committee's consideration of the National Parks and Wildlife Amendment (Aboriginal Objects and Aboriginal Places) Regulation 2010? Would you be prepared to do that?

Ms CORBYN: Yes. We would need to consult with the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Advisory Committee about that: they are its minutes. But it certainly would be on the record. I know also that the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Advisory Committee has written to the Minister for his consideration as well on the regulations and codes.

ANSWER

Copies of the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Advisory Committee minutes are available for public inspection once they have been signed by the Chairperson.

It is expected that copies of all Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Advisory Committee minutes will be placed on the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water's website at www.environment.nsw.gov.au by November 2010.

QUESTION 12

CHAIR: What examples of unauthorised destruction of Aboriginal heritage by the forestry industry are you, Minister, or the department aware of?

Mr FRANK SARTOR: Look, from time to time breaches of various sorts come to my attention. I am not particularly aware of any in relation to Aboriginal cultural heritage.

CHAIR: But you could take that on notice.

Mr FRANK SARTOR: I will take it on notice.

CHAIR: Ms Corbyn, do you have further information?

Ms CORBYN: I will take it on notice.

ANSWER

In 2009/10, the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water (DECCW) received reports alleging Forests NSW had impacted Aboriginal Cultural Heritage items in Mumbulla, Bago and Maragle State Forests.

DECCW has completed its investigations into the allegations in relation to Mumbulla State Forest and has concluded that, although six hectares of the Biamanga Aboriginal Place was inappropriately logged, DECCW was informed that Forests NSW did consult with the local Aboriginal community and took steps to meet their due diligence requirements with regard to cultural heritage. There was confusion surrounding the boundaries of the Aboriginal place, particularly as the general understanding was that the Aboriginal place was contained in the national park. Information in relation to boundaries of Aboriginal places is currently being reviewed to ensure accurate information on boundaries is easily accessible.

DECCW is currently investigating the allegations received in relation to Forests NSW logging operations in Bago and Maragle State Forests and therefore it would be appropriate to comment further on these allegations at this time.

QUESTION 13

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: The budget for your portfolio of Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water is about \$1.5 billion and it is all laid out in broad scale. What cost savings or efficiency dividend is the Government expecting to get particularly from the National Parks and Wildlife Service? Have you made any cost savings or efficiencies from last year in relation to the elimination of duplication of management in the National Parks and Wildlife Service?

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The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: Perhaps you could give me the detail as a question on notice rather than doing it now as I have more questions.

Ms BARNES: It is probably worth going through the principle just in terms of how we did it because you mentioned duplication. There certainly was not an issue of duplication. But as the National Parks and Wildlife Service has taken on more land to manage, particularly in North Coast and South Coast areas, we had a management structure that had 18 regions, which was very appropriate in those days of establishing new parks and developing management plans, fire plans and pest plans. The majority of that work has been done, so we could then start to rationalise some of those management structures.

So instead of having 18 regions across the State, we went to 14 regions. The regions coordinate the onground action. We took out that middle management, 18 to 14. As the Minister said, it meant that some regions had a larger space to manage, which is fine, but the important thing is the on-ground works in parks happen at the area office, where you have the area managers, the rangers, the field officers, the firefighters. There were no changes at that on-ground level; the same people who were managing parks previously are actually doing the on-ground work in parks now. What we have done is streamline that next layer up, the regional management structure. As Ms Corbyn said, we offered a voluntary redundancy program and 33 people put up their hands.

ANSWER

There are two requirements for budget savings required of agencies by Treasury:

1. Award related salary savings to cover the 1.5% unfunded component of the 4% wage rise provided each year over the years 2008/09, 2009/10 and 2010/11 (and known as the Savings Implementation Plan – SiP).
2. Efficiency Savings – 1% savings per to achieve reforms and public sector efficiencies in service.

For the Parks and Wildlife Group (PWG) of the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water, these saving requirements in 2010/11 are \$6.2 million for SiP and \$2.5 million for the efficiency savings.

In 2009/10, the PWG implemented structural changes to make efficiency savings.

33 Staff (28.6 EFT) accepted a voluntary redundancy which resulted in savings of \$2.4 million in 2010/11.

A decision of the Industrial Relations Commission required that the savings from PWG structural changes be directed towards the unfunded salary shortfall. This amounted to \$2.9 million (including on-costs).

Central reforms savings have contributed a further \$1.36 million towards this target.

Negotiations between the Department and the public sector unions led to an agreement being reached on 25 August 2010 on a series of award-related provisions which are designed to also contribute to the savings requirements.

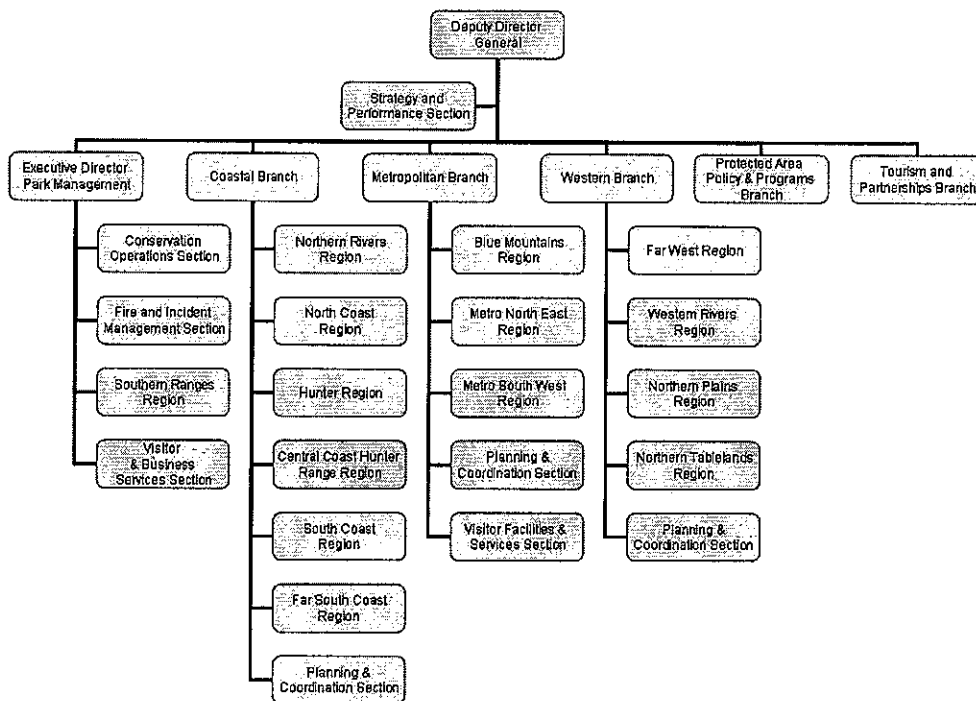
QUESTION 14

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: Perhaps you can take this on notice, but can you provide the Committee with an organisation chart for the National Parks and Wildlife Service to show how it all works?

Ms BARNES: Certainly. The other thing I need to say, though—I know you are interested in the budget for National Parks and Wildlife Service—is that with those efficiencies and also with predicted increased revenue this year the actual total expenses for the parks and wildlife group within the department has risen by \$17 million from 2009-10 to this financial year, and that is through a variety of things, including money for river red gums, additional money for the lower Hunter lands, additional revenue for parks. So there has been an increase.

ANSWER

Parks and Wildlife Group of the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water



QUESTION 15

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: I could not find anywhere in the breakdown of the sub-groupings the actual budgets for the Marine Parks Authority and its sub-branches. Can you provide that? You can do it on notice.

Mr FRANK SARTOR: I do not think we were trying to keep it a secret, but I am happy to elucidate.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: I understand that. Maybe you could provide that information on notice—

Mr FRANK SARTOR: Yes.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: —rather than take up time now.

Ms CORBYN: Okay but I could just give you—

Mr FRANK SARTOR: We will give you an overview now.

Ms CORBYN: The budget was allocated \$5.7 million for marine parks.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: Overall?

Ms CORBYN: Overall. With some revenue and other things, we have a projected expenditure of \$6.2 million this year overall in marine parks.

ANSWER

The Marine Parks Authority projects expenditure of \$6.2 million in 2010/11 to manage the system of six marine parks. This expenditure supports on-ground management, research and monitoring, education and community programs, and compliance, and it represents an increase of \$0.9 million from 2009/10.

The funds allocated to the six marine parks includes anticipated funds from the Australian Government to manage Commonwealth Marine Reserves at Solitary Islands and Lord Howe Island, which are estimated at around \$0.118 million in 2010/11 and subject to service level agreements.

Remaining expenditure contributes to research and monitoring, communications, planning and projects, Aboriginal liaison, compliance and operation of the Marine Parks Advisory Council, as indicated below.

Marine Park	Budget 2010/11
Batemans	906,518
Cape Byron	680,585
Jervis Bay	850,627
Lord Howe Island	359,674
Port Stephens - Great Lakes	1,091,488
Solitary Islands	977,300
Total	4,866,192

Marine Park System	Budget 2010/11
State-wide research and monitoring	445,867
Projects, planning and support	378,984
Communications	227,665
Aboriginal liaison	107,040
GIS and data management	103,988
Compliance and permits system	55,000
Marine Parks Advisory Council	16,000
Total	1,263,615

QUESTION 16

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: In previous budget estimates there was a bit of a breakdown under the Environment Trust of the amounts that the Government paid to certain non-government organisations for their administrative costs. I think it was about \$300,000 a year for three years. Has that grant program been finalised? Will it be renewed? How much is it?

CHAIR: How does it compare to the Game Council?

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: That is not a non-government organisation; it is a government authority.

Ms CORBYN: The Environment Trust has a program that provides an opportunity for what we call lead environment groups to access a base level of money and this year it was \$600,000 spread across a number of non-government organisations. I do not have the number off the top of my head.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: Is that \$600,000 part of a three-year program or a two-year program or is it done every year?

Ms CORBYN: Grants are done every year, but I recollect that we had made it predictable so that the non-government organisations could do their budgets.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: When does that \$600,000 regime finalise or finish?

Ms CORBYN: I will have to take that on notice because it is a rolling program and I am not exactly sure of the dates.

ANSWER

The Lead Environment Community Group Program is an ongoing program which provides administrative funds to assist eligible lead environmental community organisations in NSW to protect the natural environment.

The NSW Environmental Trust has committed \$600,000 per year to this program for the periods 2009/10 – 2011/12. The latest round of applications was called for in 2009.

On 29 September 2009, the Trust awarded 21 grants totalling \$1.8 million. Recipients were able to apply for grants for one, two or three years, and all grants awarded for this current period will be completed by 2012.

QUESTION 17

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: Do you recall receiving a letter from the combined fishing clubs of Camden Haven asking for written confirmation of those comments?

Mr FRANK SARTOR: I do not recall receiving the letter but it is possible my office did and I probably would have said to them what I have just said to you.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: Has a response gone out to that request?

Mr FRANK SARTOR: I do not know. I will have to check.

ANSWER

I am advised that the Member for Port Macquarie, Mr Peter Besseling MP, has made numerous representations on behalf of his constituents about marine park issues in recent years.

Ministerial responses to Mr Besseling have confirmed that the Government has no plans to establish additional marine parks.

A search of Ministerial correspondence did not locate a letter received from the 'Combined Fishing Clubs of Camden Haven'.

QUESTIONS 18 AND 19

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: My time is very limited. I am happy to debate this issue later. Minister, the Auditor-General, on page 21 of his report which was released yesterday, criticised the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water for taking three years to acquire a premises to comply with laws concerning odours in spite of 170 reports. Is this the Jacks Gully Alternative Waste Technology facility, a facility owned and operated by the Government itself, constructed at a cost of \$16.4 million?

Mr FRANK SARTOR: I do not know whether it is Jacks Gully. However, I have visited Jacks Gully and I am aware of a reduction in complaints in recent months. Significant investment is taking place to try to address those issues. Greg Sullivan might be able to answer your question.

Mr SULLIVAN: I will take that question on notice. What specific property was the Auditor-General talking about?

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: On page 21 of his report the Auditor General criticises the department for taking three years to require it to comply with laws concerning odours. The Auditor-General's 2010 report on WSN Environmental Solutions states that WSN overspent its budget for legal disputes by \$4.6 million. Altogether there was a \$6.5 million loss of funds on legal costs. It also overspent its budget by \$3.8 million due to delays in the commencement of Jacks Gully facility. Are these chronic problems relating to Jacks Gully in particular finally being solved?

Mr FRANK SARTOR: I have visited many of these waste treatment plants. If you visit these facilities all around the world you find that waste technology is diverse. When we are talking about alternative waste technologies, including sludge and anaerobic treatments, it should be noted there are complications due to the fact that

they are not the normal anaerobic treatments that apply when you have very homogenous sludge. The nature of waste is not that homogenous. There are always teething and start-up problems with these sorts of facilities, not just those owned by WSN. Five years ago we introduced a waste levy to encourage many more of these facilities to reduce landfill, so it is not unusual that there will be transitional problems. Some of those problems might continue for some years yet.

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: At Jacks Gully?

Mr FRANK SARTOR: No. The Jacks Gully facility is taking significant steps to address those issues.

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: My question is: Have the odour problems at Jacks Gully been solved? You said that they would be going on for a number of years. I want to clarify that we are talking about Jacks Gully.

The Hon. HELEN WESTWOOD: The member is aware that there are other sources of odour at Jacks Gully.

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: Residents are concerned about the fact that, with the proposed sale of WSN, the Treasurer can grant a whole lot of immunities in relation to himself, the Government and that facility. I am concerned to ensure that those immunities are not used to absolve Jacks Gully of its responsibility to deal with its odour problems.

Mr FRANK SARTOR: To my knowledge there is no immunity from controls under the Protection of the Environment Operations Act. That will continue to apply to everyone without fear or favour. I understand that significant investment has been proposed to address those issues.

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: For Jacks Gully?

Mr FRANK SARTOR: For Jacks Gully.

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: How much investment?

Mr FRANK SARTOR: I would have to take that question on notice. A lot of work has been done over the past six months to address those issues. I have visited the site but I will take that question on notice and provide you with the latest information on that issue.

ANSWER

I am advised that the reference identified by Ms Cusack in the Auditor General's report does not relate to WSN's alternative waste treatment (AWT) plant or any of WSN's facilities at the Macarthur Resource Recovery Park (formerly Jacks Gully).

In relation to the Macarthur Resource Recovery Park, which comprises the AWT, a landfill and a composting facility, the Department of Environment, Climate Change

and Water places great emphasis on ensuring WSN adheres to strict environmental controls so that odour impacts are reduced.

DECCW has directed WSN to improve conditions at all three of its facilities. All waste processed at the AWT facility must be processed within its buildings and measures to improve the containment of odours within those buildings are required. DECCW has also limited the operating hours for activities which may cause odour impacts at the AWT facility and the composting facility.

In addition, WSN has been directed to assess its facilities for potentially odorous activities and recommend solutions to DECCW, along with proposed timelines to implement further significant improvements, by late 2010.

Significant investment has been made in WSN's facilities and it has agreed to take additional action to reduce the odour impacts. Approximately \$1,000,000 of works will be carried out at the landfill site to improve landfill gas extraction. The AWT facility has improved its waste processing methods, contained odorous components of the waste water treatment plant and installed an odour neutralising spray system at the site's boundary.

DECCW will continue to conduct announced and unannounced inspections of WSN's facilities and its operations will be closely monitored. It will also monitor community concern to ensure WSN continues to reduce any potential odour impacts from its facilities.

QUESTION 20

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: During the course of the current recreational fishing inquiry quite a bit of emphasis was placed on the interrelationship between terrestrial pollution, for want of a better word, and the marine parks and oceans generally. In addition to that \$1 million and the 45 projects, or as part of it, is any Catchment Management Authority's money dedicated to joint works related to pollution in marine parks from terrestrial environments?

Ms CORBYN: The Catchment Management Authority has identified additional money for which it has set up projects with the Marine Parks Authority and/or some of our scientists within the department to focus on land-based pollution, as people would call it.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: Are they in addition to the 45 projects?

Ms CORBYN: I believe so, yes.

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: Could you provide a list of the projects the CMA will undertake?

Ms CORBYN: I do not have that with me, but certainly I can provide that.

ANSWER

The Draft Marine Parks Strategic Research Framework 2010-2015 lists current projects undertaken within marine parks. A wide range of research projects are conducted within marine parks by organisations external to the Marine Parks Authority such as other NSW Government agencies, the CSIRO, non-government organisations, community groups, universities and consultants. This research plays an important role in delivering information from projects that are beyond the resources and expertise immediately available through the Authority.

A total of 54 research projects are underway in marine parks in 2010/11, in partnership with 22 research institutions, consultants and external funding bodies. These are supported by a Marine Parks Authority budget of about \$1,000,000. A copy of the Draft Marine Parks Strategic Research Framework 2010-2015 can be downloaded from www.mpa.nsw.gov.au/review.html.

The NSW Diffuse Source Water Pollution Strategy was released in 2009 to coordinate the NSW Government's approach to the management of diffuse water pollution, including through the actions of Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs).

Over the last few years, the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water has worked in partnership with CMAs to better understand the effects of pollution from terrestrial sources:

- A newly released package of estuary management tools including the Coastal Eutrophication Risk Assessment Tool (CERAT) provides guidance about the effects of catchment land use on the health of NSW estuaries in marine parks and throughout the state. CERAT provides an assessment of the sensitivity and potential for excessive algal growth in 184 NSW estuaries and identifies likely sources of nutrient generation in all coastal catchments.
- The NSW Monitoring Evaluation and Reporting program is collecting data and producing State of Catchment Reports for each coastal CMA region including marine parks. These reports assess progress towards State Plan targets for the condition of NSW estuarine and marine environments as well as reporting on the pressures on these ecosystems.

Coastal CMAs have commissioned projects to determine the distribution of marine and estuarine habitats and their conservation value. An example is the Marine and Estuarine Habitat Mapping project undertaken by DECCW and Industry & Investment NSW under contract to the Hunter Central Rivers CMA for all coastal CMAs. The CMAs have Catchment Action Plans that outline their priorities and targets and these are currently being revised. The Catchment Action Plans are available on the CMA websites.

In addition to CMA programs, DECCW continues to regulate pollutant point sources such as sewage treatment plants that discharge to coastal waters.

Discharge is subject to pollution control licences issued by DECCW and subject to monitoring. If the monitoring or any other information suggests there are

environmental effects from the discharge, pollution reduction programs are implemented in conjunction with the operators and these reduce the amount of pollution over time.

QUESTION 21

CHAIR: In the last three years the department has approved 7,898 hectares of mapped old growth forests for logging through the so-called reassessment process. On top of this there is an estimated 7,787 hectares of mapped old growth forests that have been approved for logging without any assessment. Are you satisfied that the private native forestry code of practice is providing satisfactory protection of these old growth forests?

Mr FRANK SARTOR: I will ask Simon Smith to answer that question.

Mr SMITH: I should start at the beginning. In former years, logging on private forests was largely unregulated and then the Native Vegetation Act was introduced. A code of practice also was introduced that provides a regulatory framework. Now private forestry operations can occur only if the activities are consistent with this code of practice. We have a property vegetation plan that is issued to each property owner for that property which sets out where and what type of logging may occur.

CHAIR: Are you disagreeing or agreeing with the area in hectares of old growth forests being logged through those reassessment processes?

Mr SMITH: I would have to take the figures on notice.

CHAIR: But if that is the case, is that satisfactory protection of old growth forests in this State on private property?

Mr SMITH: There is satisfactory protection of old growth forests.

CHAIR: What do you have to prove that? I have seen myself that there is significant old growth forest being logged through private forestry. I have given you hectare estimates. But just in general, how can you say that that is satisfactory protection of old growth forests? I ask the Minister that. I am really deeply concerned about what is happening under the private native forestry regime.

ANSWER

The Private Native Forestry Code of Practice (PNF Code) provides protection of old growth forests on private land. No mapped old growth forest, as shown on a Private Native Forestry Property Vegetation Plan, is permitted to be logged.

When applying for a Property Vegetation Plan, a landowner has a choice to accept the "candidate old growth" and rainforest map layer from the Comprehensive Regional Assessment Photo Interpretation (CRAFTI), or apply to the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water (DECCW) for the property to be assessed. The assessment process is not about changing a classification but confirming the

presence of old growth and/or rainforest. To date, approximately half of the landholders who own land identified in "candidate old growth mapping" have asked for an assessment of their properties.

A DECCW assessment follows the Old Growth and Rainforest Assessment Protocols published by DECCW when the PNF Code was introduced and involves a combination of aerial photo interpretation and field verification. The whole property is assessed for the presence of old growth and rainforest by DECCW officers or a contractor working under their supervision.

The CRAFTI map layer was designed for Crown Land, not freehold properties.

These resulting data uncertainties were recognised in the development of the PNF Code.

To address the limitations of the existing mapping information, DECCW developed and implemented a protocol to systematically document the current presence or absence of old growth and rainforest on a whole property on a property-by-property basis.

The protocol applies a risk based approach that recognises landholders can help identify and provide some evidence of where the mapping could be out of date.

In implementing the PNF Code, some 7,898 hectares of potential old growth forest mapped under the CRAFTI process has been confirmed as not being old growth forest. Some 1,620 hectares has been confirmed as old growth and a further 1,210 hectares of old growth forest has been identified and protected.

QUESTION 22

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: The green lease guide was launched by the Department of Environment and Climate Change in partnership with Investa, the City of Sydney, the city of Melbourne and the Institute for Sustainable Futures in December of 2006. How many New South Wales government department offices are occupied under a green lease?

Mr FRANK SARTOR: I might have to take that on notice—unless Simon has a better update?

Mr SMITH: No.

Mr FRANK SARTOR: We will take it on notice.

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: Do you have any advice at all on green leases?

Mr FRANK SARTOR: No.

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: So any question I ask about green leases you will not know the answer to?

Mr FRANK SARTOR: That is possible.

Mr SMITH: The decision on procurement of government leases is under management of the State Property Authority. We have information about the performance of our own buildings.

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: It was a fantastic launch in 2006; it is just that there are no government buildings occupied under green leases. But, given that DECC launched it, I thought I would ask DECC why it is not working. But it sounds like nobody knows anything about it beyond the launch.

Mr SMITH: No, we do work with the SPA. But they are the ones who sign on the line about what leases are provided for each agency.

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: But you are the environment department, so maybe you would know whether there are any green leases. Will you be monitoring the performance of that program?

Mr SMITH: Yes, and we will take it on notice.

ANSWER

The State Property Authority is responsible for negotiating all NSW Government leases.

I am advised that there are currently no NSW Government offices occupied under a green lease.

However, DECCW has provided and will continue to provide as necessary assistance to the Authority to develop Green Leases Schedules and the necessary supporting materials to implement Green Leases in NSW.

QUESTION 23

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: For children aged 9 to 15 years the State asthma rate is 28.3 per cent and for boys in western Sydney it is 34.3 per cent—more than a third of boys aged 9 to 15.

Mr FRANK SARTOR: We will have to take that question on notice. It is not something we can answer without reference to Health.

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: For children aged 9 to 15 years the State asthma rate is 28.3 per cent and for boys in western Sydney it is 34.3 per cent—more than a third of boys aged 9 to 15.

Mr FRANK SARTOR: We will have to take that question on notice. It is not something we can answer without reference to Health.

.....

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: Do you accept that the asthma rates are higher in western Sydney?

Mr FRANK SARTOR: You have quoted figures, Catherine, but I am never sure that I will ipso facto always rely on your figures as gospel.

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: That is okay. That is why I was asking whether you had talked to the Department of Health because I was hoping you would have the same figures.

Mr FRANK SARTOR: Not on that particular information, no. I have had discussions with Health, but more about the Hunter and other areas.

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: What are they telling you about asthma rates and air quality?

Mr FRANK SARTOR: We have not discussed the sorts of numbers you are talking about.

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: Anything about asthma?

Mr FRANK SARTOR: I need to refer this to the Health department.

ANSWER

The Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water has sought advice from NSW Health on the questions raised by the Honourable Member.

The figures quoted by the Honourable Member are from the *2007-2008 NSW Health Biennial Report on Child Health in NSW* and are available at: www.health.nsw.gov.au/publichealth/surveys/hsc/0708/i_asthma1/i_asthma1_hilo.asp.

As noted in NSW Health's report, the 95 per cent confidence interval provides a range of values that should contain the actual value 95 per cent of the time. In general, a wider confidence interval reflects less certainty in the estimate for that indicator. The width of the confidence interval relates to the differing sample size for each indicator. A wider confidence interval reflects less certainty in the estimate.

The asthma rate for boys aged 9-15 years in Sydney West was 34.3%. The asthma rate for boys aged 9-15 in the whole of NSW was 33.1%. Therefore, there is no significant difference between the rates of asthma for boys aged 9-15 in Sydney West when compared to boys aged 9-15 in all of NSW.

For children aged 2-4 years, the confidence interval is wide, which suggests less certainty in the estimate figure. Further, the confidence intervals for boys 2-4 in Sydney West and all of NSW overlap significantly, which suggests that

the two groups were largely similar. This lends weight to the proposition that there is no significant difference between the asthma rates for boys aged 2-4 in Sydney West compared with boys from all of NSW.

	Area	2-4 years % (95% confidence interval)	9-15 years % (95% confidence interval)
Males	Sydney West	26.3 (15.9-36.7)	34.3 (26.6-41.9)
Males	NSW	20.3 (16.4-24.2)	33.1 (30.1-36.2)
Persons (male and female)	NSW	17.2 (14.5-19.9)	28.3 (26.2-30.4)

QUESTION 24

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: Every day you issue SMSs and emails saying what Sydney's air quality will be like tomorrow.

Ms CORBYN: If there is a health alert—

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: I get them every day by email and by SMS. They come from your department. What is the cost of that program?

Ms CORBYN: I do not know the answer but I can get it on notice.

ANSWER

For 2009/10, the total cost of sending 18,268 SMS messages to subscribers to the air quality forecasts (Sydney only), forecast health alerts (Sydney only) and poor regional air quality (all areas) was \$4,241.37 (excluding GST).

QUESTION 25

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: Why are you not including pollen counts in that monitoring? I agree with you that it is a significant issue for air quality, particularly for asthmatics.

Ms CORBYN: We have traditionally focused our monitoring program on emissions and pollutants. That has been our job. Pollens are not something that we have expertise in so we would not be the body with the capacity to do pollen counting. I believe that that is more in the Agriculture and Health world.

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: You issued an SMS for today saying the air quality today will be good, as if the pollen count does not—

Ms CORBYN: Pollen is a completely different issue in terms of when it happens. I am not an expert on pollens.

Mr FRANK SARTOR: I am not aware of any jurisdiction that does pollen counts on a daily basis.

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: The United Kingdom does and they publish information about pollen counts in their weather reports.

Mr FRANK SARTOR: Does it? We will get back to you and give you an answer.

ANSWER

The Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water's (DECCW's) air quality monitoring program is primarily aimed at human-caused pollutants that have specific health-based standards set under the Ambient Air Quality National Environment Protection Measure. These standards cover six common pollutants: particles, ozone, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, carbon monoxide and lead. These pollutants were selected because they are widely spread in the air environment and arise from many sources, and are therefore considered to broadly describe ambient air quality.

DECCW does not have the expertise to conduct pollen counts as allergic reaction to pollens is primarily a health related issue. Although pollens could be considered to be particulate matter, they are larger in size than the particles measured under the air quality standards (i.e., particles of 10 micrograms or less). DECCW's monitoring equipment is not configured to measure larger sized particles.

Pollen counts, indicative of the Sydney Basin, are currently conducted by Campbelltown Hospital during the pollen season and reported on the NSW Asthma Foundation website (www.asthmafoundation.org.au/seasonal_Info.aspx). Similarly in Victoria, a university provides a pollen count to the Victorian Asthma Foundation. There are also private sector weather services in Australia that provide pollen count forecasts.

In countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom, daily city-specific pollen counts are often published by weather services and health-based organisations using data collected by allergists, educational institutions, private physicians and commercial research companies, where the primary interest is in pollen types that cause allergy symptoms. Government agencies and volunteer networks also collect this data. A pollen forecast of up to four days, and corresponding allergy alerts, are produced based on actual and historical counts and current and forecasted weather conditions.

DECCW will however investigate providing information to its Air Quality SMS subscribers noting that pollen levels are not included in the daily forecasts.

QUESTION 26

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: Perhaps the information you issue to the public should say that Sydney's air quality in relation to pollution levels is forecast to be good, but this does not take other factors into account. Would you consider including the pollen count?

Mr FRANK SARTOR: We will see how significant it is, Catherine. It is obviously important to you but I want to see how important it is to the Health people, by region.

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: A warning has just been issued specifically about the problem with pollens that are in the air this season, particularly in relation to grass.

Mr FRANK SARTOR: It may be that pollens are only an issue for a month of the year around spring. We will take that on notice.

ANSWER

NSW Health has advised that it participates in a pollen alert program for the Wagga Wagga region. The program operates as a collaborative venture between the Greater Southern Area Health Service, Charles Sturt University and the Wagga Wagga Asthma Collaborative Committee of Health Professionals. The public can register on a Charles Sturt University webpage to be notified by email and/or mobile phone SMS on days with high-risk conditions for asthma. These alerts typically only occur on a handful of days in spring each year.

Pollen counts for the Sydney Basin are conducted by Campbelltown Hospital during the pollen season of spring and summer and are reported on the NSW Asthma Foundation website (www.asthmafoundation.org.au/seasonal_Info.aspx).

DECCW will however investigate providing information to its SMS subscribers noting that pollen levels are not included in the daily forecasts.

QUESTION 27

CHAIR: I am interested in some of those studies. Have you looked at biodiesel and its emission reduction potential?

Ms CORBYN: We have done some studies on ethanol.

CHAIR: I am referring specifically to biodiesel and particulate emission reduction.

Mr SMITH: We have not, but I know that the CSIRO has done so.

CHAIR: Would you take that question on notice and obtain information for the Committee?

Mr SMITH: We will take that question on notice.

ANSWER

The use of biodiesel blended fuel, as a replacement for low sulfur mineral diesel fuel, will generally result in reduced exhaust particle emissions when used in a diesel engine.

Biodiesel is usually blended with mineral diesel. Common blends include B5 which consists of a 5% biodiesel and 95% mineral diesel mixture, and B20 which consists of a 20% biodiesel and 80% mineral diesel mixture.

A 2007 CSIRO study, entitled 'The Greenhouse and Air Quality Emissions of Biodiesel blends in Australia', reports on the particle tailpipe emission reductions relating to the use of biodiesel blended fuel, and the lifecycle emissions associated with the use of different biodiesel feed stocks.

The CSIRO study reports a 4% reduction in tailpipe particle emissions when using a B5 blended fuel, and a 16% reduction in tailpipe particle emissions when using a B20 blended fuel, as compared to using standard low sulfur mineral diesel.

Similar reductions in exhaust particle emissions were found for biodiesel sourced from canola, tallow, palm or used cooking oil.

The CSIRO report can be obtained from:
www.csiro.au/resources/greenhouse-air-quality-emissions-biodiesel-blends.html.

QUESTION 28

CHAIR: How many households to date have joined the Home Power Savings Program, which is part of the New South Wales energy efficiency strategy?

Mr FRANK SARTOR: I am not sure whether it is the low-income program or the other one.

Mr SMITH: Are you referring to the one where people subscribe through our website to participate in the power saving program?

CHAIR: Yes.

Mr SMITH: I will have to take that on notice and get you an update.

ANSWER

5,276 households have joined the Home Power Savings Program which is part of the NSW Energy Efficiency Strategy.

1,775 homes have been assessed since the statewide launch in May 2010. 2,653 homes have requested an appointment and 848 homes were assessed as part of the pilot program.

QUESTION 29

CHAIR: What is the cost-effectiveness of greenhouse gas reduction and energy savings under the Sustainability Advantage program?

Mr SMITH: That would vary from company to company. We are happy to provide some information for you. It is important to note that the funding we provide through Sustainability Advantage is only to subsidise audits. The actual implementation of energy savings measures is fully funded by the companies involved.

ANSWER

The Sustainability Advantage program is an integrated sustainability program that assists companies to manage all of their energy, water and waste resources efficiently, and assists them to undertake sustainability planning, supply chain, staff and stakeholder engagement.

To date, Sustainability Advantage program members have saved 116,400 megawatt-hours (MWh) of electricity.

The cost of achieving these savings was \$1,923,661. So, for every \$1 invested by the Government in the program, \$4 in savings was leveraged by Sustainability Advantage partner companies, making these NSW-based companies more competitive and efficient.

In addition, more than 1320 megalitres of water and 82,000 tonnes of waste have been saved through the Sustainability Advantage program.

QUESTION 30

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: How many animals escape from the zoo each year?

Mr FRANK SARTOR: Apart from the ones that end up in Parliament House?

Mr KERR: I could not tell you the exact number, but it is very low.

The Hon. LUKE FOLEY: Donkeys

The Hon. ROBERT BROWN: Sloths

Mr KERR: I will take that on notice.

ANSWER

Taronga Zoo has more than 4,000 animals in its care.

In 2009/10, three individual animals escaped from Taronga Zoo - a short-beaked echidna, a red-tailed black cockatoo and a golden pheasant.

QUESTION 31

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: Minister, there are 5,170 energy audits with only 180 businesses applying for rebates. That is a really pathetic performance, is it not?

Mr SMITH: No. I think it is just an indication of the start of the program. It is a longer-term multiyear program. I am happy to get you more up-to-date statistics because, as you say, we noticed that the conversion rate was lower than we would like it to be, so we made some changes in how the program is administered.

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: For the Sustainability Advantage Energy Saver Program, you indicated that 60 audits have been completed or are under way. Sixty is a very small number, considering that that included the ones in progress. Can you tell me how many actually have been completed?

Mr SMITH: I can and I think it is probably best to give you up-to-date figures.

ANSWER

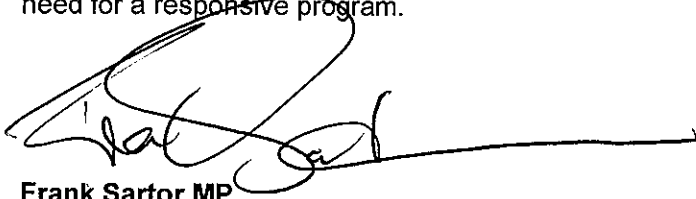
The Energy Efficiency for Small Business program enables a range of energy efficiency improvements, including no-cost and low-cost actions. Only those with a payback of more than two years are eligible for rebate support.

At least 1,550 Small to Medium Enterprises have implemented energy efficiency savings after receiving their Energy Action Plan. This is 30 per cent of the 5,170 businesses that have undertaken energy audits. An average business can save up to \$1,400 per annum. A total of \$491,000 has been paid to 240 businesses for installing energy efficient equipment with a greater than two-year payback period.

Program improvements to help more businesses take up the rebate have been implemented. Businesses now receive up to four hours free coordinated assistance to help them do retrofits, including engaging tradespeople, overseeing work and completing paperwork. These changes continue to increase the take up rates.

As at September 2010, 86 energy audits have commenced under the Sustainability Advantage Energy Saver Program. 39 of these have been completed. The audits being undertaken are comprehensive, providing a strong business case and greater potential for company implementation of energy saving measures.

Energy Saver audits require a minimum of four months to complete. At large, complex sites audits can take up to six months from initial scoping to final report. The Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water has consistently worked to streamline the audit process to balance the need for a comprehensive audit with the need for a responsive program.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Frank Sartor', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Frank Sartor MP