

**GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE No 3
BUDGET ESTIMATES 2009-10
SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Questions relating to Primary Industries

Questions from Mr Cohen

QUESTION 1

1. Does the NSW Government intend to take a whole-of-government approach and adopt an integrated NSW food policy in response to the food security challenges ahead?

ANSWER

Yes.

Food security is defined to exist when all people at all times have physical and economic access to enough safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy lifestyle (World Food Summit 1996).

Food security and sustainability issues have recently been prominent in the media and public debate. While NSW has no immediate threat to domestic food supply, as is currently happening in developing countries, it will continue to face a number of challenges that will impact on its ongoing food production capacity.

These challenges include maintaining access to natural (land, water) and agricultural resources (fuel, fertiliser, labour) required to grow the food and dealing with the need to change production systems to address climate change impacts.

The current focus of the public debate in NSW has been on the State's ability to maintain its food production capacity, in particular within the Sydney Basin.

A supportive planning and environmental regulatory environment are key elements of an effective Government approach to maintaining food production opportunities for NSW. This approach will help avoid land use conflict, attract investment and promote employment.

A Senior Officers Group has recently been established to examine at issues surrounding the security of food production in NSW. This group, chaired by Department of Premier and Cabinet, will have representatives from Industry & Investment NSW, Department of Planning, and Department of Environment, Climate Change & Water. This group will be developing a whole of Government plan in coming months.

QUESTION 2

2. Could you provide a break down of the distribution of grants for 2009-10 financial year and any grant provided to local authorities this year to date?

ANSWER

SUMMARY OF THE NOXIOUS WEEDS GRANT ALLOCATIONS 2009-10

	\$
Continuing Projects	
Fireweed Initiative	100,000
Weed Control Coordination	5,314,662
Administration of Counties	349,670
Crown Lands	150,000
Advisory Committee Administration	40,500
Total Continuing Projects	5,954,832
Education, Training, Extension and Liaison	
Weed Awareness Plan	370,000
Total Education, Training, Extension and Liaison	370,000
Regional Weed Management Projects	
Continuing Weed Management Projects	1,405,000
New Projects	457,000
Total Regional Weed Management Projects	1,862,000
State Projects	
Parthenium Weed Western NSW	46,000
Aquatic Weeds Coordination Project	115,000
Strategic Coordination of Serrated Tussock Stage 1 2009-2012	155,000
Other State Priority Projects	124,000
Weed Strategy & Planning; New Weed Identification	236,000
Total State Projects	676,000
Total Allocation	8,862,832
Less carryover	307,832
TOTAL GRANT	8,555,000

LOCAL CONTROL COORDINATION

Under the funding arrangements, NSW Government provides assistance of up to a dollar for each dollar contributed by councils for the coordination of weed control; for conducting surveys, and for inspections of land within the control area. These funds are known as "Weed Control Coordination Grants". For 2009-10, Weed Control Coordination has been increased by 2.4%.

This assistance is for local control authorities to employ a weed control coordinator or weeds officer.

The coordinator/officer's role is to:

- Plan strategic weed management programs for the control area;
- Integrate control programs with other activities within the region;
- Conduct systematic surveys and inspections of land within the control area;
- Maintain records and report on the distribution and abundance of noxious weeds;
- Delivery communication, education, extension and publicity programs;
- Coordinate the implementation of weed management plans, including control programs for private landholders, the council and government agencies;
- Implement the *Noxious Weeds Act 1993*.

For 2009-10 \$5,314,662 has been allocated for weed control coordination.

A further \$370,000 has been allocated for Communication, Coordination and Education programs.

Schedule 1 - Weed Control Coordination Assistance

Organisation	\$
Albury City Council	22,000
Bega Valley Shire Council	66,000
Bellingen Shire Council	31,500
Bland Shire Council	41,000
Blue Mountains City Council	36,500
Bogan Shire Council	26,000
Bombala Shire Council	36,500
Bourke Shire Council	40,500
Brewarrina Shire Council	26,000
Broken Hill City Council	7,500
Cabonne Shire Council	73,000
Campbelltown City Council	15,500
Camden Council	14,000
Canterbury City Council	21,000
Carrathool Shire Council	30,500
Castlereagh Macquarie County Council	243,000
Central Murray County Council	124,500
Cessnock City Council	36,500
Clarence Valley Council	139,000
City of Ryde	15,000
Cobar Shire Council	44,000
Coffs Harbour City Council	73,000
Cooma-Monaro Shire Council	99,500
Cootamundra Shire Council	17,500
Corowa Shire Council	46,000

Cowra Shire Council	36,500
Dubbo City Council	47,500
Dungog Shire Council	36,500
Eastern Riverina Noxious Weeds Authority	85,500
Eurobodalla Council	44,000
Far North Coast Weeds	219,000

Schedule 1 - Weed Control Coordination Assistance

Organisation	\$
Forbes Shire Council	36,500
Glen Innes Severn Municipal Council	38,500
Gloucester Shire Council	36,500
Gosford City Council	36,500
Goulburn Mulwaree Council	73,000
Great Lakes Shire Council	44,000
Greater Hume Shire Council	72,000
Greater Taree City Council	73,000
Griffith City Council	109,500
Gundagai Shire Council	26,000
Gunnedah Shire Council	58,500
Gwydir Shire Council	55,000
Hawkesbury River County Council	107,500
Hay Shire Council	26,000
Hornsby Shire Council	26,000
Illawarra District Weeds Authority	58,500
Inverell Shire Council	55,000
Jerilderie Shire Council	18,581
Kempsey Shire Council	44,000
Ku Ring Gai Municipal Council	7,000
Lachlan Shire Council	42,081
Lake Macquarie City Council	26,000
Leeton Shire Council	24,000
Liverpool Plains Shire Council	62,500
Lockhart Shire Council	36,500
Lord Howe Island Board	4,000
Maitland City Council	26,000
Manly Council	7,500
Mid-Western Regional Council	91,500
Moree Plains Shire Council	74,500
Murrumbidgee Shire Council	19,000
Nambucca Shire Council	36,500
Narrabri Shire Council	109,500
Narrandera Shire Council	36,500
Narromine Shire Council	47,500
New England Weeds Authority	160,000
Newcastle City Council	13,500
Orange City Council	33,000
Palerang Council	88,500
Parkes Shire Council	44,000
Pittwater Council	13,500
Port Macquarie-Hastings Council	53,000
Port Stephens Council	30,000

Queanbeyan City Council	18,500
Randwick City Council	7,500
Shoalhaven City Council	94,000
Snowy River Shire Council	115,000
Southern Slopes County Council	159,500
Sutherland Shire Council	40,500
Tamworth Regional Council	91,500
Tenterfield Shire Council	27,500
Tumbarumba Shire Council	26,000
Tumut Shire Council	33,000

Schedule 1 - Weed Control Coordination Assistance

Organisation	\$
Upper Hunter County Council	165,500
Upper Lachlan Council	117,000
Upper Macquarie County Council	167,500
Urana Shire Council	26,000
Wagga Wagga City Council	73,000
Wakool Shire Council	55,000
Warringah Council	15,000
Weddin Shire Council	20,000
Wellington Council	41,000
Western Region Department of Lands	32,000
Wingecarrabee Shire Council	48,500
Wollondilly Shire Council	36,500
Wyong Shire Council	29,500
Total	5,314,662

Regional advisory committees and groups are designed to help coordinate control of weeds, assist in training weed officers and to develop regional weed management plans.

A total of \$349,670 has been allocated to county councils for administration support and \$40,500 has been allocated for regional committee administrative support.

COUNTY COUNCIL ADMINISTRATION SUPPORT 2009-10	\$
Castlereagh Macquarie County Council	60,110
Central Murray County Council	35,648
Far North Coast Weeds	59,182
Hawkesbury River County Council	36,210
Illawarra District Noxious Weeds Advisory Authority	14,200
New England Weeds Authority	36,000
Eastern Riverina Noxious Weeds Authority	30,000
Southern Slopes County Council	20,000
Upper Hunter County Council	21,720
Upper Macquarie County Council	36,600
Total	349,670

REGIONAL COMMITTEE ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT 2009-10	\$
Eastern Riverina Noxious Weeds Advisory Group	3,000
Lachlan Valley Noxious Plants Advisory Committee	3,000
Hunter and Central Coast Noxious Plants Advisory Committee	3,000
Macquarie Valley Noxious Weeds Advisory Committee	3,000
Mid North Coast Weeds Advisory Committee	3,000

Monaro Regional Weeds Committee	2,500
Northern Inland Weeds Advisory Group	3,000
NSW North Coast Weeds Advisory Committee	3,000
South West Sydney Regional Weeds Committee	3,000
Southern Tablelands & South Coast Noxious Plants Committee	3,000
Sydney Central Regional Weeds Committee	3,000
Sydney North Weeds Committee	3,000
Sydney West - Blue Mountains Weeds Committee	3,000
Western Riverina Noxious Weeds Advisory Group	2,000
Total	40,500

HIGH PRIORITY WEEDS

For 2009-10 the NSW Government has provided \$10,000 for Hymenachne, \$24,000 for Water Lettuce, \$50,000 for Alligator weed, \$100,000 for Industry & Investment Weeds Strategy and Planning, \$115,000 for Industry & Investment NSW Aquatic Weed Coordination Project, \$100,00 for Industry & Investment NSW Fireweed Initiative; \$136,000 for Industry & Investment NSW Weed Identification Project; \$15,000 for Industry & Investment NSW Parthenium Weed Washdown Facilities, \$370,000 for Industry & Investment NSW Communication Coordination & Education Program, \$226,000 for Other High Priority weed projects. Details of funds allocated for all high priority weeds and regional group projects for 2009-10 are listed below.

NEW AND CONTINUING GROUP PROJECTS

	\$	\$
Eastern & Western Riverina		
Eastern & Western Riverina Chilean Needlegrass 2006-11	7,000	
Eastern & Western Riverina Coolatai Grass 2005-10	19,000	
Eastern & Western Riverina Management of Hardhead Thistles 2009-10	8,000	
Eastern & Western Riverina Management of Spiny Burrgrass 2009-10	104,000	
Eastern & Western Riverina Noxious Weeds Project Officer 2007-10	35,000	
Eastern & Western Riverina Prairie Ground Cherry 2006-11	13,000	
Eastern & Western Riverina Rare and Isolated St Johns Wort 2006-11	61,000	
Eastern & Western Riverina Serrated Tussock 2006-11	5,000	
	<u>5,000</u>	252,000
Hunter & Central Coast		
Hunter & Central Coast Regional Weeds Management Strategy 2009-10	27,000	
Hunter & Central Coast Regional Program to Control Alligator Weed 2009-10	60,000	
Hunter & Central Coast Regional Plan to Control Aquatic Weed Species 2009-10	31,000	
	<u>31,000</u>	118,000
Lachlan Valley		
Lachlan Valley Grasses 2009-10	8,000	
Lachlan Valley Green Cestrum 2009-10	4,000	
Lachlan Valley Spiny Burrgrass 2009-10	14,000	
	<u>14,000</u>	26,000
Macquarie Valley		
Macquarie Valley African Boxthorn 2008-13	70,000	
Macquarie Valley Blue Heliotrope 2008-13	26,000	
Macquarie Valley English Broom 2008-13	7,000	

Macquarie Valley Grasses 2008-13	23,000	
Macquarie Valley Green Cestrum 2008-13	18,000	
Macquarie Valley Prickly Pear & Harrisia Cactus 2008-13	30,000	
Macquarie Valley Scotch Thistle 2008-13	4,000	
Macquarie and Lachlan Valley Weed Coordination for Lachlan and Macquarie Valleys 2007-10	35,000	213,000
Mid North Coast		
Mid North Coast Bird Lolly Weeds 2009-10	31,000	
Mid North Coast Bitou Bush 2006-11	35,000	
Mid North Coast Regional Weed Management Officer 2009-10	30,000	
Mid North Coast Alligator Weed 2009-10	6,000	
Mid North Coast Groundsel Bush 2009-10	14,000	
Mid North Coast Floating Aquatic Weeds 2009-10	11,000	
Mid North Coast St Johns Wort 2009-10	5,000	132,000
Northern Inland		
Northern Inland Blackberry Management 2006-11	19,000	
Northern Inland Blue Heliotrope 2006-10	14,000	
Northern Inland Chilean Needle Grass 2007-11	14,000	
Northern Inland Green Cestrum 2006-10	22,000	
Northern Inland Mother of Millions 2006-10	29,000	
Northern Inland Regional Coordinator and Planning 2007-11	18,000	
Northern Inland Serrated Tussock 2006-11	4,000	
Northern Inland Silverleaf Nightshade 2006-10	14,000	
Northern Inland St Johns Wort - Class 3 2006-11	17,000	
Northern Inland St Johns Wort - Class 4 2006-11	34,000	185,000
NSW North Coast		
NSW North Coast Alligator Weed 2007-11	25,000	
NSW North Coast Bitou Bush 2006-11	48,000	
NSW North Coast Broad Leaf Pepper Tree 2008-12	14,000	
NSW North Coast Camphor Laurel 2008-13	31,000	
NSW North Coast Celtis 2006-11	14,000	
NSW North Coast Giant Rats Tail Grass 2006-11	8,000	
NSW North Coast Green Cestrum 2006-11	5,000	
NSW North Coast Groundsel Bush 2006-11	42,000	
NSW North Coast Privets 2008-13	5,000	
NSW North Coast Red Lantana 2006-11	19,000	
NSW North Coast Riparian Vine Weeds 2009-10	16,000	
NSW North Coast Water Hyacinth & Salvinia 2006-11	19,000	
NSW North Coast Weed Planning Support 2007-11	16,000	262,000
Sydney Basin		
South West Sydney Ludwigia 2008-13	22,000	
South West Sydney Aquatic Weeds 2008-13	129,000	151,000
Sydney Central Alligator Weed 2008-13	12,000	
Sydney Central Project Officer 2007-13	10,000	22,000
Sydney North Project Officer 2007-11	10,000	10,000

Sydney North / Sydney West Tussock Paspalum 2006-11	16,000	16,000
South West Sydney and Sydney West Blue Mountains Project Officer 2007-11	20,000	
Sydney Wide Control of highest priority infestations of Green Cestrum to prevent spread and reduce impacts in Western Sydney 2009-10	26,000	
Sydney Wide Protection of Mature Canopy Trees from Vine Weeds in Critically Endangered Habitats 2009-10	49,000	
Sydney West Blue Mountains Aquatic Weeds 2006- 11	144,000	239,000

Southern Tablelands & South Coast

South Coast African Lovegrass Management Project 2007-11	25,000	
South Coast Aquatic Weeds 2006-11	9,000	
South Coast Bitou Bush and Boneseed Management Plan 2007-11	51,000	
South Coast Broom Gorse 2008-13	9,000	
South Coast Fireweed Management Plan 2007-11	29,000	
South Coast Lantana Management Plan 2005-10	16,000	
South Coast Serrated Tussock Management Project 2009-10	13,000	
Southern Tablelands (Monaro) Regional Weeds Coordinator 2007-12	6,000	158,000

Western Riverina

Western Riverina Alligator Weed Project Officer 2009-10	27,000	
Western Riverina Implementation of Lower Murray Darling Catchment Regional Weed Strategy 2005-10	51,000	78,000

1,862,000

Other High Priority Projects

		\$
Brewarrina Shire Council	Parkinsonia	1,000
Brewarrina Shire Council	Parthenium Weed	3,000
Bourke Shire Council	Parkinsonia	2,000
Bourke Shire Council	Mesquite	2,000
Bourke Shire Council	Parthenium Weed	2,000
Castlereagh Macquarie County Council	Parthenium Weed	13,000
Castlereagh Macquarie County Council	Mesquite	3,000
Castlereagh Macquarie County Council	Parkinsonia	2,000
Castlereagh Macquarie County Council	Hudson Pear	30,000
Far North Coast Weeds	Hymenachne	10,000
Far North Coast Weeds	Water Lettuce	5,000
Far North Coast Weeds	Alligator Weed	50,000
Inverell Shire Council	Water Lettuce	19,000
Mid Western Regional	Strategic Coordination of the Serrated	155,000

Tussock		
Council	Battle in NSW - 2009 to 2014 Stage 1	
Northern Inland Weeds Advisory Committee	Parthenium Weed	13,000
Industry & Investment NSW	Parthenium Weed Washdown Facilities	15,000
Industry & Investment NSW	Weeds Strategy & Planning	100,000
Industry & Investment NSW	Communication Coordination & Education program	370,000
Industry & Investment NSW	Aquatic Weed Coordination Project	115,000
Industry & Investment NSW	Weed Identification Project 2009-10	136,000
Industry & Investment NSW	Fireweed Initiative 2009-10	100,000
Total		<u>1,146,000</u>

2010-11 Grant allocations have not been distributed as yet. Funding totalling \$8.769M has been approved. Payment of the grants will commence late October 2010.

QUESTION 3

3. 91 weeds are declared as noxious in NSW and are known to have some form of impact on primary production yet only 51 are completely banned from sale in NSW. Would it be possible to reduce the required funding needed for weed control programs through banning all weed declared noxious?

ANSWER

The banning of noxious weeds is only implemented where the continued sale of a specified plant or seed is having a measurable impact on its distribution or abundance. In many cases noxious weeds are already widespread, or are distributed by other effective vectors (such as wind, insects and birds) such that a ban from sale is not warranted. Inappropriate banning from sale could possibly cost more for enforcement and administration with no discernable benefits.

QUESTION 4

4. How much funding is provided for research of control and eradication methods for noxious weeds?

ANSWER

The NSW Government has contributed over \$7.5 million towards weed control and eradication research over the last five years through Industry & Investment NSW. There are many other agencies and non government organisations in NSW who also contribute.

QUESTION 5

5. How much has the Department already spent on managing the quarantine area in Gosford and Wyong LGA to contain Myrtle Rust?

ANSWER

\$683,275

QUESTION 6

6. I have some questions relating to the Science and Research Division of I&I NSW. Service measures for this Group have generally been progressively falling since 2007-2008. Given the role this Service Group has in improving the competitiveness of the State, why has their performance continued to decline?

a) What intervention will the Government take to improve their performance and increase benefit to the State?

ANSWER

In part the reduction in service measure numbers reflects a refocussing of the science and research group. In addition:

- the changes in numbers of journal publications reflects a change in methodology in tracking publications;
- the change in number of samples processed by NSW laboratories reflects a return to more normal sample numbers after the high through-put required for the NSW response to Equine Influenza; and
- the decrease in the number of pre-commercial lines and varieties delivered for uptake for private breeding and seed companies reflects a change in the Department's role relative to the private sector. We are expecting to see numbers return to higher levels in future years.

I&I NSW is refocusing its work into four key theme areas of: productivity and food security; climate and water; fisheries and ecosystems; and, biosecurity.

In addition, I&I NSW maintains systems to manage research quality, develop the future research workforce and ensure that results are disseminated effectively through peer reviewed publications as well as by articulating effectively to extension programs, policy and legislation.

QUESTION 7

7. Of the farm debt disputes that reached agreement, how many of these agreements went on to be honoured by both parties?

ANSWER

Since the commencement of the *Farm Debt Mediation Act* in February 1995 the NSW Rural Assistance Authority has issued 1,044 Section 11 Certificates where the parties reached an agreement at mediation.

The role of the Authority as determined by the Act is to provide for the efficient and equitable resolution of farm debt disputes. Once the mediation process has been completed as defined by the Act, the Authority has no further involvement in the dealings between the farmer and creditor.

The agreement reached at mediation becomes a new contractual agreement between the parties. Litigation can only then occur if either party breaks the mediated agreement. The Authority has no knowledge of how often this occurs, but it is considered to be small.

QUESTION 8

8. What are the total numbers, not percentages, of farm debts mediated under the Farm Debt Mediation Act?

ANSWER

The Authority has issued 1,908 section 11 certificates since February 1995 with satisfactory mediation taking place on 1,173 occasions and in 129 of these cases the parties failed to reach an agreement.

There were 413 cases where the farmer indicated in writing that they did not wish to enter into or proceed with mediation in respect to the farm debt concerned and an additional 322 instances where the farmer failed to respond to, or to mediate in 'good faith', or unreasonably delayed entering into or proceeding with mediation.

QUESTION 9

9. The Government is predicting 50 applications for Farm Debt Mediation. How is this figure worked out? Is it based on existing knowledge of 50 farms that are currently in difficulty?

ANSWER

The 50 applications estimated for the 2010-11 financial year is based on historical figures over the previous 5-6 years.

However, it is anticipated that this may increase due to significant improvement in farming conditions State wide and lending institutions reviewing the special financial consideration given to producers who were suffering financial difficulties over a prolonged period due to the exceptional circumstances drought conditions.

QUESTION 10

10. How may Farm Debt Mediation applications involve parties that have previously applied for this?

ANSWER

Number of farmers that have previously been involved in mediation:-

152	on two occasions
22	on three occasions
8	on four occasions, and
2	on six occasions

QUESTION 11

11. What is the total number of applicants, eligible or not, that applied for both the Natural Disaster Relief Scheme and Exceptional Circumstances assistance?

ANSWER

Total number of applications received by the NSW Rural Assistance Authority for 2009-10 financial year:-

1.	Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Grant Assistance -	2 447
	a. Primary Producer -	2 115
	b. Small Business -	332
		2 447
2.	Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Loan Assistance -	359
	a. Primary Producer -	335
	b. Small Business -	21
	c. Not-for-Profit Organisations -	3
3.	Exceptional Circumstances Interest Rate Subsidy -	5 464
	a. Primary Producer -	4 920
	b. Small Business -	544
		5 464

QUESTION 12

12. How many unauthorised hunters were identified and fined by either NSW Game Council officers or the NSW Police for hunting without permission in NSW State Forests?

ANSWER

Fifteen.

QUESTION 13

13. How many unauthorised hunters were identified and given a warning by either NSW Game Council officers or the NSW Police for hunting without permission in NSW State Forests?

ANSWER

Game Council eleven.

Questions regarding Police activity are best directed to the Minister for Police.

QUESTION 14

14. What proportion of the NSW Game Council budget is assigned for monitoring hunting activities (both authorised and unauthorised) in State Forests?

ANSWER

Twenty-two percent.

QUESTION 15

15. How many equivalent full time staff are employed by the Game Council to monitor hunting operations and enforce licence conditions?

ANSWER

Five. NSW police officers are also inspectors under the *Game and Feral Animal Control Act 2002* in accordance with section 34 of the act. The Game Council has a strong working relationship with Police Rural Crime Investigators.

QUESTION 16

16. How many equivalent full time staff are employed by the Game Council in public relations and publicity?

ANSWER

Two.

QUESTION 17

17. How many incidents involving hunting have been recorded as 'risk items' in the NSW Forest Risk Assessment during the past two years? What levels of risk were recorded for these incidents?

ANSWER

There were 5 recorded incidents over the past 2 years. All of these incidences were rated low risk.

QUESTION 18

18. Has the Department investigated claims that NSW Game Council staff were inappropriately assisting licence applicants with licensing tests?

a) If yes, what was the result of this investigation?

ANSWER

No.

a) Not applicable.

QUESTION 19

19. Has NSW Workcover investigated the arrangements for recreational hunting to occur concurrently with other recreational activities in State Forests during the past year?

a) If so, what conclusions were made?

ANSWER

Forests NSW is not aware of any such investigation. However Workcover NSW did participate as an observer in a risk assessment project on hunting carried out by Forests NSW and the Game Council.

QUESTION 20

20. What was the cost of NSW Shark Meshing program last financial year? What is the projected cost for 2010-11?

ANSWER

I am advised that Treasury provided funding of \$831,000 in 2009/10 and \$852,000 in 2010/11.

QUESTION 21

21. Will the Minister provide details on the level of by-catch caused by the shark meshing nets recorded to date?

ANSWER

Details of bycatch from the shark meshing program over the years is available on the Department's website. I am advised that the annual 2009/10 performance report for the Shark Meshing (Bather Protection) Program should be made publicly available shortly in accordance with the Joint Management Agreements.

QUESTION 22

22. What is this year's compliance and enforcement budget for commercial and recreational fisheries and how does this compare with previous years?

ANSWER

The budget for Fisheries compliance (for all fisheries compliance activities – specific allocations are not made for recreational and commercial fisheries) in 2010/11 is approximately \$10.7M. This is comparable to the previous years budget.

QUESTION 23

23. How many full time equivalent fisheries officers are currently employed by the department?

ANSWER

The current fisheries officer establishment in Industry & Investment NSW (I&I NSW) is 92 positions. Two of these positions are currently vacant, but recruitment action is underway.

Questions from Mr Gay

QUESTION 24

In regards to Agricultural Research Stations;

24. Can you confirm the status and provide an update of your plans for each of the following Agricultural Research Stations that were earmarked for closure in your 2008 mini-budget;

- a) Gaden Trout Hatchery
- b) Gosford
- c) Berry
- d) Condobolin
- e) Glenn Innes
- f) Temora
- g) Alstonville
- h) Griffith

ANSWER

- a) Gaden Trout Hatchery

The recreational fishing industry has agreed to take responsibility for most of the operating costs and the Gaden Hatchery will no longer be sold.

- b) Gosford

The site on which the Gosford Horticultural Institute is located is to be sold as a result of the staff and operations relocating to purpose built facilities at Ourimbah Campus of Newcastle University.

- c) Berry

The Berry Office will be retained and a portion of surplus land which is not required for the Department's operations will be sold.

- d) Condobolin

The Condobolin Research Station has been retained following an agreement with industry to work with the department to attract additional research projects and support funding to the facility.

- e) Glenn Innes

As a result of negotiations with the community and industry bodies it has been agreed that Glen Innes will be retained and a research

director appointed to improve research funding opportunities and outcomes.

f) Temora

The Department is working with the Land and Property Management Authority (LPMA) and Temora Shire Council to facilitate the transfer of management of this facility to a council sponsored trust which is proposing to manage it as a community research facility.

g) Alstonville

The Department is redeveloping under utilised facilities at Wollongbar to rehouse the research, extension and regulatory operations from Alstonville. Access to existing research plantings at Alstonville will be retained.

h) Griffith

The Griffith site is to be retained following successful negotiations with two industry bodies to relocate their operations to the centre and which will result in cost sharing and lowering the operating burden on the NSW Taxpayers.

QUESTION 25

25. Can you provide a guarantee that the Trangie Agricultural Research Station will remain open?

a) Are there any plans to close it?

b) Are there any plans to reconfigure the service? In what ways?

ANSWER

Yes.

a) Are there any plans to close it?

No.

b) Are there any plans to reconfigure the service? In what ways?

The research carried out at Trangie will continue to evolve to meet emerging agricultural challenges as it has done over past years.

QUESTION 26

26. Given the uncertainty at Alstonville, can you provide an update to the Government's plans/situation there?

a) Is it set to be co-located with Southern Cross Uni?

ANSWER

The Department is redeveloping under utilised facilities at Wollongbar to rehouse the research, extension and regulatory operations from Alstonville.

Access to existing research plantings at Alstonville will be retained regardless of future ownership of the site.

a) Is it set to be co-located with Southern Cross Uni?

Discussions are proceeding about the future use of the site.

QUESTION 27

27. Can the Government give a guarantee that it will not close the Primary Industry resource centre in Berry?

ANSWER

Yes

QUESTION 28

28. Former Minister Ian Macdonald also said at the time that Griffith research station would be closed. I understand there was a back flip on that decision also, is that the case?

ANSWER

The Griffith site is to be retained following successful negotiations with two industry bodies to relocate their operations to the centre and which will result in cost sharing and lowering the operating burden on NSW taxpayers.

QUESTION 29

29. In the 2010/11 State budget papers (Budge Estimates budget paper No. 3 – Volume 1) it is indicated that major projects within the Department's capital program include the \$4.1 million for the relocation of Gosford Horticultural Institute.

- a) If the Institute is being relocated is it not just a cost of transfer without a capital improvement?
- b) If so would this cost be met by the revenue raised through the sale of the previous site?
- c) Could you give a full list of all I&I property that has been sold in the last 12 months and give the price achieved?

ANSWER

a) The new facilities at Ourimbah represent a significant improvement on the aging facilities at Gosford and will be constructed and fitted out using state of

the art technologies and equipment. Collocation on the Ourimbah Campus of the University of Newcastle will be of benefit to researchers, industries and communities which they serve.

b) The Ourimbah facility is being funded from the sale of surplus land as a result of the closure of the Gosford facility.

c) I&I NSW sold four former Cattle Tick Dip Sites on the NSW North Coast and the former Fisheries Office at Taree in the last 12 months:

Site	Amount \$
59 Pitt St, Taree	215,000
15 Federation Dr, Terranora	190,000
20 James Rd, Goonellabah	207,000
22 James Rd, Goonellabah	246,000
231 Ballina Rd, Goonellabah	257,000

QUESTION 30

30. Minister are you aware that fishermen face maximum fines of up to \$11,000 for fishing in a sanctuary zone?

ANSWER

I am advised that under Marine Parks legislation, the maximum penalty for fishing in a sanctuary zone is \$55,000 for an individual. However, most offenders are issued with a penalty notice of \$500 or in some circumstances given a written caution.

QUESTION 31

31. Minister given this I refer you to the Port Stephens Great Lakes Marine Park zoning plan maps. Are you aware there are currently two different maps being distributed to fishermen?

ANSWER

I am aware that there are two different maps that identify the Little Beach Habitat Protection Zone, in Port Stephens-Great Lakes Marine Park.

This area in question is part of what was formally Fly Point – Halifax Park Aquatic Reserve which was declared in 1983.

Line fishing from the two jetties and while standing on the beach between the jetties has been allowed. All other fishing has not been allowed in this area for some 26 years.

This area north of the jetty is Habitat Protection Zone but it has the further restriction of a ban on fishing from the shore. A recent map was produced in an attempt to better reflect these arrangements; unfortunately I am not sure that this has been achieved.

I have asked the Marine Park Authority to review this map and see if we cannot better represent fishing arrangements in this area to ensure that the public understand these long standing rules.

QUESTION 32

32. Minister are you aware that these maps - contain no dates to show which is the most up to date – and, in the case of Little Beach, have different sanctuary zone boundaries?

ANSWER

See answer to Question 31.

QUESTION 33

33. It seems that in the most recent map the sanctuary zone has been extended.

ANSWER

See answer to Question 31

QUESTION 34

34. Minister how are fishermen with the original map supposed to know that they are now fishing in a sanctuary zone and where did the decision come from to extend the current sanctuary zone?

ANSWER

See answer to Question 31

QUESTION 35

35. Is this fair given the huge fines that fishermen can face if they unsuspectingly drift into a sanctuary area and if this is the case in one set of maps we've analysed – how many more cases have gone under the radar??

ANSWER

I am advised that no person has been booked fishing in the area in question; however people have been fined for fishing in the adjacent sanctuary zone further north.

QUESTION 36

36. Minister are you aware that in the year the rec fishing licence came in, in 2001, there were around 110 fisheries officers?

ANSWER

I am advised that in 2001 there were 101 fisheries officer positions.

QUESTION 37

37. Minister we now have enhanced funding, is it correct that currently the number of fisheries officers is down to 94 and up until recently only 84 bodies were actually on the ground?

ANSWER

The current fisheries officer establishment in Industry & Investment NSW (I&I NSW) is 92 positions. Two of these positions are currently vacant, but recruitment action is underway. I am advised that an external recruitment process has recently been completed aimed at filling vacant positions. I am advised that total number of filled fisheries officer positions fluctuates continuously subject to factors that include resignations, transfers to other parts of I&I NSW and staff being on long service leave and maternity leave.

QUESTION 38

38. Minister how many officers are currently on the ground?

ANSWER

Refer to answer to Question 37.

QUESTION 39

39. Minister are you aware that a vast amount of fishermen who recently gave evidence at the recreational fishing inquiry spoke of their serious concerns over illegal activities going on in NSW waters – and these people not being caught?

ANSWER

I am aware that some fishers have given evidence at the inquiry and expressed some concerns but I am confident that comprehensive systems are in place to address illegal fishing activity.

The Fisheries Compliance Unit (FCU) within Industry & Investment NSW (I&I NSW) has 25 district fisheries offices located along the coast and on the inland with a total of 92 established fisheries officer positions undertaking compliance activities. In addition to these fisheries officer positions, there are now 10 Marine Parks Officers employed by the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water who undertake patrol activities within Marine Parks, and adjacent waters. Marine park officers enforce both the Marine Parks Act and the Fisheries Management Act, thereby complementing the work of I&I NSW fisheries officers.

I am advised that within the FCU, the State wide Operations and Investigations Group use advanced intelligence systems and equipment to target high-level fisheries crime. There are also three recreational fishing mobile squads checking recreational fishers along the coast and targeting high-risk offenders. A dedicated abalone squad on the south coast has produced excellent results in the fight against organised criminal activity threatening the abalone stocks. Another group of dedicated officers work on habitat protection issues and investigate any illegal habitat destruction. I&I NSW also has two large offshore fisheries patrol vessels involved in surveillance and checking commercial and recreational fishers.

I am advised that fisheries officers undertake patrol duties both overtly and covertly depending on the compliance targets. I understand that there are around 50,000 direct contacts each year where fisheries officers use their powers under the *Fisheries Management Act 1994* to check activities in the commercial, recreational, conservation and aquaculture programs.

I am advised that in 2009-10 around 1900 penalty notices were issued for illegal fishing activity and 291 matters were successfully prosecuted in court. Over 3900 items of illegal fishing gear and 48,000 fish were seized, of which over 9000 were prohibited sized fish.

I am advised that compliance rates are close to 90% for both the commercial and recreational fishing industries.

QUESTION 40

40. Minister given one of the key ways the rec licence was originally sold to the public was that it would provide for 'extra' officers on the water, why are there now less? What are you doing to fix this situation?

ANSWER

I am advised that the commitment to increase fisheries officer numbers after the introduction of the recreational fishing licence actually related to the re-introduction of the freshwater licence which took effect in 1998. I am advised that this commitment was honoured, moreover, and that 6 additional fisheries officer positions were recruited and located across the inland.

I am advised that there was no commitment to increase the number of fisheries officers at the time the freshwater licence was broadened into an all-waters licence in 2001

QUESTION 41

41. Minister are you aware one of the recommendations from the Richard Stevens report of October 2007 was for Government to allocate \$20 - \$22 million in financial assistance for industry structural adjustment to take place?

ANSWER

I am aware that one of the recommendations of this report was that a large amount of Government funding be made available for buyouts of commercial fishers.

QUESTION 42

42. Minister, following this recommendation, how much did your Government allocate?

ANSWER

To date, the Government has committed over \$1 million through in-kind support in addition to the \$1.5 million it allocated through the Commercial Fishing Trust.

QUESTION 43

43. Minister has there ever been any Primary Industries structural adjustment that has taken place without (or with so little) Government financial assistance?

ANSWER

With respect to the commercial fishing industry in NSW, the introduction of share management allows fishers to buy additional shares and access, or to sell their shares and leave the industry. This enables restructuring to occur in an ongoing way. A specific industry restructuring program is currently underway that provides an exit grant of up to \$15,000 for fishers wanting to leave the industry. The Government has allocated \$1.5m for this process from the commercial fishing trust fund. I am aware that there have been a number of other fisheries structural adjustment processes both within Australia and overseas in the past. These programs typically vary greatly in the amount of Government subsidy.

QUESTION 44

44. Minister why have you left the fishing industry to pay for this on its own?

ANSWER

The fishing industry is not being left to pay for this on its own, please refer to the answer to question 42.

QUESTION 45

45. While I welcome the \$20 million you are spending on a well overdue upgrade to the Sydney Fish Markets – what about also looking after the fishermen who supply that seafood?

ANSWER

The Pymont Pact package of reforms contains a range of programs to assist commercial fishers, including promoting locally caught and fresh NSW seafood as a viable alternative to other seafood products. Assisting the commercial fishing industry involves much more than just providing funding for buyouts.

QUESTION 46

46. What is the current financial status of the Commercial Trust?
a) Is it in surplus or deficit?

ANSWER

a) It is in surplus.

QUESTION 47

47. When did the \$1.5M for structural adjustment first appear in the Commercial Trust?

a) Is it still there now?

b) How did it get there(?), was a levy imposed on industry to raise these funds?

ANSWER

One of my predecessors first made the commitment to allocate \$1.5M from the commercial Fishing Trust Fund for industry restructuring in 2009.

a) Yes

b) Funds are paid into the Trust by commercial fishers for services provided by the Department (e.g. Licensing). The \$1.5M commitment was made from funds that had not yet been fully drawn down by the Department. It was not the result of a levy imposed on industry.

QUESTION 48

48. What was the Commercial Trust balance in 08/09?

ANSWER

The balance of the Commercial Fishing Trust Fund at 30 June 2009 and 2010 was approximately \$4.8M and \$5.5M respectively. The 2010 balance however, included commitments for approximately \$2M that have not yet been drawn down.

QUESTION 49

49. How did the figure of '\$200K Interest' appear in the income column in 08/09?

ANSWER

Interest is received (at normal Treasury rates) on the outstanding balance in the Trust each year. The interest earned in 2008/09 and 2009/10 was \$0.31M and \$0.22M respectively.

QUESTION 50

50. What is the principle and interest rate that brings about '\$200K interest' into the Commercial Trust?

a) Is that principle amount shown in the Commercial Trust?

b) If not why not?

ANSWER

See answer to question 49.

a) Yes, the balance.

b) N/A.

QUESTION 51

51. Have previous years Commercial Trust shown interest?

ANSWER

Yes

QUESTION 52

52. Is the industry being told all the facts about its Commercial Trust or is the Commercial Trust being used as a slush fund?

ANSWER

Financial status of the Commercial Fisheries Trust Fund is discussed with the Seafood Industry Advisory Council and its budget working group. The Seafood Industry Advisory Council is consulted on draw downs from the commercial trust.

QUESTION 53

53. Minister are you familiar with the recently completed report, "Socio-economic evaluation of the commercial fishing industry in the Ballina,

Clarence and Coffs Harbour regions” and its findings which indicate the enormous contribution the commercial fishing industry makes to these regions, including generating more than 930 jobs and pumping \$216 million into the local economy?

ANSWER

Yes, I am aware of this report.

QUESTION 54

54. As Minister for Fisheries do you share fishermen's serious concerns that the proposals to increase the sanctuary zones in the Solitary Island Marine Park from 12 – 20 per cent and ban prawn trawling threaten the local economy, tourism in the area and the livelihood of many prawn fishermen?

ANSWER

I am aware that some stakeholders have raised concerns regarding some of the proposed changes.

The recent public consultation period has allowed for a range of stakeholders to put forward their views. I look forward to reviewing these submissions and other relevant information, in consultation with my colleague, the Minister for Climate Change and the Environment, before a decision is made.

The NSW Government is committed to the viability of the commercial fishing sector, and to providing quality recreational fishing opportunities for recreational fishers.

QUESTION 55

55. Minister have you spoken to your colleague Frank Sartor about these concerns and were you aware that in the Environment Estimates this morning the DG of DECC confirmed your Government will be going ahead with the increased sanctuary zone and 'phasing out' of prawn trawling?

ANSWER

See answer to question 54.

QUESTION 56

56. Minister given you released a media release on July 5 this year calling on the public to buy NSW seafood. I quote, "Buying local seafood helps maintain this important industry and supports regional economies and employment."

a) Can you tell us - how have you supported Ballina Clarence and Coffs Harbour fishermen?

b) Have you spoken to them and have you voiced your opposition to these proposals to Frank Sartor?

ANSWER

a) The buying fresh seafood campaign, the sustainable management of fish stocks and the commercial fisheries reform program benefit all commercial fishers in NSW, and co-operatives, not just those based on the north coast.

b) The proposals for zoning changes in the Solitary Island Marine Park are just that – proposals. The recent public consultation period has allowed for a range of stakeholders to put forward their views. I look forward to reviewing these submissions and other relevant information, in consultation with my colleague, the Minister for Climate Change and the Environment, before a decision is made.

QUESTION 57

57. Minister can you detail what action you propose taking to focus the attention of fishing inspectors on The Entrance and The Entrance North, where 35% of all fishing offences on the Central Coast and 49% of all bag and size limit offences have occurred since January, 2008?

ANSWER

Fisheries officers strategically plan enforcement operations in all parts of the State, not only on the Central Coast. The resources of the Central Coast Fisheries Office are boosted at times of high activity at The Entrance and planned operations take place with additional officers from the metropolitan stations as well as the Recreational Mobile Squad officers and NSW Police.

Questions from Mr Brown

QUESTION 58

58. Given the devastating locust plague that is about to erupt in inland parts of the State, how prepared is the Department to cope with this event, and what measures has it already undertaken in preparation for the outbreak?

ANSWER

The NSW Government has provided an \$18.5 million emergency grant to help farmers across the State protect their valuable crops and pastures from a spring locust plague. Past campaigns have shown that for every \$1,000 spent controlling locusts, at least \$20,000 worth of crops and pastures have been saved. It is estimated that this funding could help farmers save up to \$370 million worth of crops and pastures.

The improvement in climatic conditions across many parts of NSW provided plague locusts with the ideal season in autumn. Despite control efforts, as a result of continual breeding, a large amount of egg-laying occurred, with nymphs hatching this spring.

Strategic planning by a number of key agencies including Industry & Investment NSW (I&I NSW), Livestock Health and Pest Authorities (LHPA), Australian Plague Locust Commission and the NSW Farmers' Association has been underway since the autumn to ensure an efficient and effective control program is conducted this spring.

Since autumn, locust activity has been mapped so hot spots can be monitored, insecticide stocks have been replenished, extra spray equipment has been purchased and ground and aerial contractors have been engaged. The LHPAs and I&I NSW have conducted in excess of 50 community meetings in locust affected areas and there has been an extensive TV and media advertising campaign.

All landholders in NSW are encouraged to watch out for locust activity and report this to their local Livestock Health and Pest Authority. Local rangers are available to assist all land managers with expert advice on plague locust control.

QUESTION 59

59. What is the Government doing to assist farmers cope with the huge increase in feral animals, particularly pigs, in the wake of the good rains throughout much of this year?

ANSWER

The NSW Government is continuing its strategic control of pigs through its Feral Animal Aerial Shooting Team (FAST) program. This program has achieved good results this season with an increase in numbers taken. It is anticipated that this program may retard pig population response and ensure that numbers do not dramatically increase over the next 5 years.

Government agencies, in cooperation with the Livestock Health and Pest Authorities participate extensively in strategic pest control programs for pigs,

rabbits, foxes and wild dogs. Industry and Investment NSW provide technical expertise in the development of pest management plans and has recently made major contributions through research including:

- Improvements to rabbit control practices through development of safe and species-specific baiting practices, and biological control through enhanced deployment of rabbit haemorrhagic disease.
- Major contributions to national best practice guidelines, animal welfare, training packages and exotic disease contingency plans for pest animal management.
- Defining the ecological principles underpinning effective control of fox, pest bird, rabbit, wild dog and wild pig populations.
- Improved recommendations for kangaroo harvesting to allow long-term sustainable yield.
- Field surveillance of avian influenza in wild bird populations.
- Proponent of the 'Australasian Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre' (CRC) which started in July 2005 with 40 national and international partners, including a number of industry funding bodies. A major node of this CRC is based at the Vertebrate Pest Research Unit in Orange.

QUESTION 60

60. In many cases, these pests are coming from National Parks. Are there any specific programs DPI is involved with to reduce feral animal numbers, and if so, what financial input does it involve?

ANSWER

Under the Rural Lands Protection Act 1998 land managers are responsible for controlling declared pest animals on their land including feral pigs, rabbits and wild dogs. NSW National Parks are responsible operationally for controlling declared pests animals on their lands. Industry and Investment NSW provide technical expertise in developing strategic control programs and liaise extensively with LHPA's and NSW National Parks to ensure programs are implemented effectively. Industry and Investment NSW also provides a grant of \$60,000 per annum to LHPA's for assistance in wild dog management.

Questions from Mr Colless

QUESTION 61

61. Your Government has previously promised to rationalise access to Western Land Lease and National Parks lands by the commercial inland fishermen – a process which began nine years ago. When will you finally complete this rationalisation process?

ANSWER

I&I NSW has held ongoing discussions with both the Western Lands Commission and DECCW relating to both general access issues and specific issues to facilitate access by commercial and recreational fishers to rivers and lakes in the Western Division area. I&I NSW has also worked with commercial fishers to develop a code of practice for accessing waters through western leasehold and NPWS lands.

QUESTION 62

62. What protocols are in place to ensure the safety of commercial inland fishermen with respect to access arrangements?

ANSWER

I&I NSW manages the sustainability of fish stocks and is not directly responsible for the safety of private individuals or businesses. Matters of conflict between individuals are a matter for Police. Where requested we have provided advice on legal access rights to relevant authorities.

QUESTION 63

63. Are you, as a matter of course, advised if there is a breach of safety protocols?

ANSWER

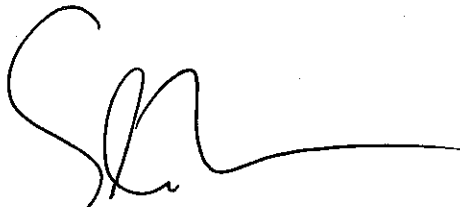
Not as a matter of course although we are in regular contact with commercial fishers and are generally made aware of issues of concern.

QUESTION 64

64. What is the spatial and temporal allocation of the yabby and carp permits throughout the commercial inland fishery?

ANSWER

There are no spatial or temporal allocations within the fishery with all endorsed fishers having equal rights to access the resource. There are some general spatial limitations which apply across the fishery, such as restrictions on using carp nets in waters where there is a risk of by-catch of native fish and a prohibition on using yabby traps in waters containing platypus, namely east of the Newell Highway.



Steve Whan MP

Minister for Primary Industries
Minister for Emergency Services
Minister for Rural Affairs