



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO. 4

MEMORANDUM

To	Ms Jan Burnswoods MLC Hon Eric Roozendaal MLC Hon David Clarke MLC Hon Jenny Gardiner MLC Hon Kayee Griffin MLC Hon Sylvia Hale MLC Hon David Oldfield MLC	cc:	Hon Peter Primrose MLC Hon Don Harwin MLC Hon Ian West MLC Hon Eddie Obeid MLC
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From Budget Estimates Secretariat

Subject Answers to questions on notice – Roads and Housing

Date 29 October 2004

Reference

Please find attached a copy of the answers provided to the questions taken on notice by the Hon Carl Scully MP, Minister for Roads and Housing, at the Budget Estimates hearing on Wednesday 15 September 2004.

Tanya Bosch
Director, Budget Estimates



NEW SOUTH WALES

*Minister for Roads
Minister for Housing
Leader of the House*

To whom it may concern:

The following are the answers to the questions taken on notice during the Budget Estimate General Purpose Standing Committee No. 4 hearing on 15 September 2004.

In accordance with the usual procedure a list of answers are included.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'C. Scully'.

CARL SCULLY
Minister for Roads
Minister for Housing

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
COMMITTEES**

29 OCT 2004

RECEIVED

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
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2004 BUDGET ESTIMATES**

QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE DURING HEARING

HOUSING PORTFOLIO

QUESTION No. 1

Ms Hale asked:

- (a) What measures are being taken by the Department to address properties known to contain asbestos? (p1)
- (b) Are we aware of the allegations re asbestos at a property in Wauhope Crescent, South Coogee and what are we doing about this? (p1)

ANSWER:

- (a) Advice provided by the NSW Department of Health and WorkCover NSW, is used to guide Department measures that address properties known to contain asbestos.

Department contractors repairing dwellings are bound by WorkCover requirements, OH&S regulations and their Safe Work Method Statements when dealing with materials containing asbestos.

Department technical staff are trained in OH&S issues related to asbestos, and are issued with Workplace Construction Induction Certificates.

- (b) An independent expert consultant has concluded that the fibre cement sheeting in the Wauhope Crescent property may contain asbestos, but if left undisturbed is considered safe.

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QUESTION No. 2

Ms Hale asked what has been done to investigate concerns about disturbed asbestos in public housing across the State, particularly at sites including Bulli, Bellambi, Woonona, Maroubra, Chifley, Coogee and Malabar? (p1)

ANSWER:

Where disturbed asbestos is present in public housing properties it is dealt with in accordance with the contract requirements for asbestos related works, including WorkCover requirements, Occupational Health and Safety Regulations and Safe Work Method Statements.

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QUESTION No. 3

Ms Hale asked how much money has the Department spent since 1 July 2003 in litigation regarding complaints about asbestos? (p5)

ANSWER:

In the 2003/2004 financial year, the Department spent a total of \$524,509 in litigation concerning complaints about asbestos.

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HOUSING PORTFOLIO

QUESTION No. 4

Ms Hale asked does the Department post warning notices where asbestos is present, as required under OH&S legislation? (p1)

ANSWER:

The Department requires maintenance contractors to advise tenants prior to performing any work on properties that may contain asbestos products. All contractors employed by the Department of Housing are required to observe the WorkCover requirements, the Occupational Health and Safety Act and Regulations and their Safe Work Method Statements.

All contractors (and their subcontractors) are required to be licensed in accordance with all statutory requirements, and all head contractors are required to obtain asbestos disease liability insurance cover.

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QUESTION No. 5

Mr Harwin asked given that the sale of public housing units to the public must be done by public auction, can you confirm that nine three-bedroom and four-bedroom townhouses, located at Kista Dan Avenue, Tregear, did not go to public auction earlier this year? Can you confirm that those townhouses were sold for \$930,000 or an average of \$103,000 each over dinner in the Log Cabin Restaurant in Penrith? Why were those townhouses not publicly auctioned? Did the Director-General approve this one-on-one sale? Did they sell by private treaty when the Department's policy is that they must go to auction? Did they sell for significantly under market value? (p5)

ANSWER:

The properties in question were the subject of a public auction held at the Log Cabin Motor Inn, Penrith on the evening of 17 March 2004. When the properties did not reach the reserve at public auction, a sale within the range of the valuation was negotiated with the highest bidder. Departmental policy and procedure was followed. The townhouses were sold for \$930,000 or an average of \$103,000, which was within the valuation range. The Director-General is only required to approve the sale of properties where sale is to be through private treaty. The selling agent regularly uses premises at the Log Cabin Motor Inn to hold property auctions.

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QUESTION No. 6

Mr Harwin asked is it true that the Department of Housing began renovations in a block of 40 townhouse villas at 30-32 Winsford Avenue, Hebersham, late last year? Can you confirm that renovations done on that block of 40 townhouse villas were done approximately six months before the demolition of those 40 properties. (p6)

ANSWER:

No major renovation or upgrading work was carried out at 30-32 Winsford Avenue, Hebersham in the 6 months prior to demolition. The Department continued to meet its obligations under the Residential Tenancies Act to carry out any health and safety related maintenance required during this period.

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QUESTION No. 7

Mr Harwin asked how many public housing tenants are currently serving a gaol sentence? In the case of each of those tenants how long has each of them been in gaol?

ANSWER:

As at 30 September 2004, there were 39 tenants in gaol. 33 tenants have been in gaol for less than 3 months. The Department is terminating the tenancies of the remaining 6 tenants who have been in gaol for more than 3 months.

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QUESTION No. 8

Mr Harwin asked has the Department done a review of maintenance backlog and, if so, what is the current level of maintenance backlog? What is the Government's timeframe for the eradication of the backlog? (p 8)

ANSWER:

The Department constantly updates the maintenance backlog data using information from its Property Assessment Surveys. Maintenance is carried out based on availability and necessity.

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QUESTION No. 9

Mr Harwin asked how many tenants have been convicted of criminal offences? (p11)

ANSWER:

I refer you to my colleague the Minister for Justice.

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QUESTION No. 10

Mr Harwin asked how many complaints did the Department received regarding tenants subletting their properties in 2003/04? How many people have been investigated for subletting in 2003/04? (p11)

ANSWER:

In 2003-2004, the Department received 28 complaints regarding tenants subletting their properties. The Department conducted investigations into all of the complaints.

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QUESTION No. 11

Ms Hale asked given that NSW has a comparatively lower proportion of public housing stock in regional areas than other States, for example 19.4% compared to 28.2% in Victoria or a national average of 26.6%, can you please advise how many of the 1413 public housing stock reductions in 2004/05 will occur in regional NSW? (p11)

ANSWER:

610

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QUESTION No. 12

Mr Harwin asked can you tell me how many households are on the public housing waiting list register in regional NSW? (p11)

ANSWER:

Waiting lists fluctuate depending on demand.

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QUESTION No. 13

Ms Hale asked how many of the community housing and Aboriginal housing stock leasing or management additions will be provided in regional NSW? (p12)

ANSWER:

A total of 288 additional dwellings will be allocated during 2004/05.

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QUESTION No. 14

Ms Hale asked can you inform the Committee what the budget is for the Crisis Accommodation Program in 2004/05? Of the \$17.154 million available for the Crisis Accommodation Program in 2004/05, will any allocations be made to non-capital expenditure under the Crisis Accommodation Program in 2004/05? If so, what are the specific activities, costs and amounts allocated? (p14)

ANSWER:

- (a) \$17.154 million
- (b) Yes
- (c) \$1.54 million for recurrent maintenance
 - \$1.62 million in subsidies for new and existing leases
 - \$1.50 million for Council and Water rates
 - \$0.45 million for the Homelessness Action Team Support and Outreach Service
 - \$0.50 million for other residential and tenancy expenses such as insurance and lease costs.

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QUESTION No. 15

Mr Oldfield asked what is the range in property value of Department dwellings? How often are the properties valued? Can you provide a more specific understanding of how many high value properties the Department has and what type of property they are eg unit, house etc? Can you provide a bit of a cross-section of the upper end, style and location? (p14)

ANSWER:

- (a) Property values range from \$5,000 to \$2.1million.
- (b) Since December 2002, properties have been valued every six months.
- (c) & (d)
Of a total portfolio of over 130,000 properties, as at 31 December 2003, the Department of Housing had 15 properties valued at over \$1million. These properties are located in the inner city and North Shore. They range from cottages, townhouses and units.

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QUESTION No. 14

The Hon Don Harwin asked the Minister for Roads and Minister for Housing -
How much has been spent maintaining Pambula Bridge during 2003-04?

ANSWER:

\$250,000 has been programmed in 2004/05 for maintenance of Pambula River Bridge. In addition, the 2004/2005 budget allocates \$5 Million for the State contribution to a new bridge and approaches over the Pambula Bridge.

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ROADS PORTFOLIO

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QUESTION No. 15

The Hon Don Harwin asked the Minister for Roads and Minister for Housing -

What funding has been allocated this year specifically to upgrading the roadside safety guardrails on the Princes Highway?

ANSWER:

The provision of funding for guardrails is being considered in conjunction with the major road safety review of the Princes Highway that I announced on 27 May 2004.

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ROADS PORTFOLIO

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QUESTION No. 16

The Hon Don Harwin asked the Minister for Roads and Minister for Housing -
What are the key projects for 2004-05 on the Princes Highway south of Nowra?

ANSWER:

State funded projects include:

- . Construction of a roundabout at Brown's Road, South Nowra.
- . Replace bridge over Croobyar Creek, north of Milton.
- . Auxiliary lane between Milton and Ulladulla.
- . Investigation and planning for a new Pambula River Bridge.
- . Pavement rehabilitation at selected locations of the Highway between South Nowra and Wombyn.

Other projects will be considered in conjunction with the major road safety review of the Princes Highway that I announced on 27 May 2004.

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QUESTION No. 17

The Hon Don Harwin asked the Minister for Roads and Minister for Housing -

In relation to the installation and operation of a roundabout on the Princes Highway and the effects of road traffic noise on the Northside Motel at Bega, will a noise wall be erected?

ANSWER:

I am advised the issue of traffic noise associated with the installation and operation of a roundabout on the Princes Highway north of Bega in 2002 has been the subject of ongoing discussions between the owners of the Northside Motel and the RTA. The owners subsequently referred the matter to the NSW Ombudsman.

A meeting was held in 2004 between the owners of the Motel, the RTA and the representatives of the NSW Ombudsman to seek to find a mutually acceptable solution to the concerns raised by the owners. At this meeting, the RTA indicated that it was prepared to undertake noise attenuation works on the owners property with a view to mitigating their concerns in relation to noise impact.

Following further correspondence from the Ombudsman the RTA made a further without prejudice offer to the owners. Following this offer the NSW Ombudsman's Office indicated that they did not propose to pursue the matter further.

The RTA has subsequently received correspondence from solicitors acting for the owners of the motel. The solicitors have, on a without prejudice basis, requested further information from the RTA. The RTA will respond to this correspondence and remains prepared to consider alternatives for resolving this matter including, subject to cost and design issues, the erection of a noise wall.