



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO. 5

BUDGET ESTIMATES 2010-2011

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5

Primary Industries, Emergency Services and Rural Affairs

Friday 17 September 2010

Answers to be lodged by: Tuesday 12 October 2010

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Hearing date	Portfolio	Answer to be lodged by
16 September 2010	Industrial Relations	12 October 2010 [21 days]
16 September 2010	Commerce	12 October 2010 [21 days]
16 September 2010	Energy	12 October 2010 [21 days]
16 September 2010	Public Sector Reform	12 October 2010 [21 days]
16 September 2010	Aboriginal Affairs	12 October 2010 [21 days]
16 September 2010	Water	12 October 2010 [21 days]
16 September 2010	Corrective Services	12 October 2010 [21 days]
17 September 2010	Climate Change and Environment	13 October 2010 [21 days]
17 September 2010	Cancer	13 October 2010 [21 days]
17 September 2010	Primary Industries	13 October 2010 [21 days]
17 September 2010	Emergency Services	13 October 2010 [21 days]
17 September 2010	Rural Affairs	13 October 2010 [21 days]

Questions relating to the portfolio of Primary Industries

17 September 2010, 2:00 pm – 6:00 pm

Questions from Mr Cohen

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?

Biosecurity

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?
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?
4. How much funding is provided for research of control and eradication methods for noxious weeds?
5. How much has the Department already spent on managing the quarantine area in Gosford and Wyong LGA to contain Mrytle Rust?
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?
7. Of the farm debt disputes that reached agreement, how many of these agreements went on to be honoured by both parties?
8. What are the total numbers, not percentages, of farm debts mediated under the Farm Debt Mediation Act?
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?
10. How may Farm Debt Mediation applications involve parties that have previously applied for this?
11. What is the total number of applicants, eligible or not, that applied for both the Natural Disaster Relief Scheme and Exceptional Circumstances assistance?
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?
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?
14. What proportion of the NSW Game Council budget is assigned for monitoring hunting activities (both authorised and unauthorised) in State Forests?
15. How many equivalent full time staff are employed by the Game Council to monitor hunting operations and enforce licence conditions?
16. How many equivalent full time staff are employed by the Game Council in public relations and publicity?
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?

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?
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?
20. What was the cost of NSW Shark Meshing program last financial year? What is the projected cost for 2010-11?
21. Will the Minister provide details on the level of by-catch caused by the shark meshing nets recorded to date?
22. What is this year's compliance and enforcement budget for commercial and recreational fisheries and how does this compare with previous years?
23. How many full time equivalent fisheries officers are currently employed by the department?

Questions from Mr Gay

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
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?
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?
27. Can the Government give a guarantee that it will not close the Primary Industry resource centre in Berry?
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?
29. In the 2010/11 State budget papers (Budget 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?
30. Minister are you aware that fishermen face maximum fines of up to \$11,000 for fishing in a sanctuary zone?
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?

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?
33. It seems that in the most recent map the sanctuary zone has been extended.
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?
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??
36. Minister are you aware that in the year the rec fishing licence came in, in 2001, there were around 110 fisheries officers?
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?
38. Minister how many officers are currently on the ground?
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?
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?
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?
42. Minister, following this recommendation, how much did your Government allocate?
43. Minister has there ever been any Primary Industries structural adjustment that has taken place without (or with so little) Government financial assistance?
44. Minister why have you left the fishing industry to pay for this on its own?
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?
46. What is the current financial status of the Commercial Trust?
 - a) Is it in surplus or deficit?
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?
48. What was the Commercial Trust balance in 08/09?
49. How did the figure of '\$200K Interest' appear in the income column in 08/09?
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?
51. Have previous years Commercial Trust shown interest?
52. Is the industry being told all the facts about its Commercial Trust or is the Commercial Trust being used as a slush fund?
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?
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?

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?
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?
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?

Questions from Mr Brown

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?
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?
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?

Questions from Mr Colless

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?
62. What protocols are in place to ensure the safety of commercial inland fishermen with respect to access arrangements?
63. Are you, as a matter of course, advised if there is a breach of safety protocols?
64. What is the spatial and temporal allocation of the yabby and carp permits throughout the commercial inland fishery?

Questions relating to the portfolio of Emergency Services

17 September 2010, 2:00 pm – 6:00 pm

Questions from Ms Pavey

NSW Fire Brigades (NSWFB)

NSWFB – response times

I refer to various figures given for Response Times to Structure Fires in a number of separate government documents:

- 2010-11 Budget Paper No 3 – Volume 2, page 10-27
- 2009-10 Budget Paper No 3 – Volume 1, page 9-7
- Productivity Commission Report on Government Services 2010 – Emergency Management Table 9A.13

The response times provided by the Government appear to differ in these documents. For example, the 2010-11 Budget Papers list the actual figure for 2008-09 (50th percentile) as 6.5 minutes, the 2009-10 papers give the figure as 7.0 minutes and the Productivity Commission lists the figure as 7.4 minutes.

1. Please provide actual response time for structural fires for each of the past five years for both 50th and 90th percentile. Please explain the reasons for the apparent discrepancies in the various documents listed above. Please provide details as to how these figures are recorded and reported.

NSWFB and NSWRFSS - fire service organisations' expenditure per person – interstate comparisons

2. I refer to the Productivity Commission Report on Government Services 2010 – Emergency Management Table 9A.17. The figures provided for total expenditure on fire services in NSW appear to not be the sum of the figures provided in NSW Budget Papers for the expenditure of NSWFB and NSWRFSS. Please provide the derivation of the figures provided for the Productivity Commission report.

NSWFB - Charges for false alarms

3. I refer to the 2008-09 NSWFB Annual Report Financial Statements, Revenue. What is the actual figure for charges for false alarms for 2009-10 and the estimated figure for 2010-11? What is the view of the NSWFB in relation to the number and frequency of false alarms? What is NSWFB doing to reduce the number and frequency of these false alarms? Is NSWFB trialling in metropolitan areas the use of advance motorbike crews to minimise the need for tanker/pumper response to false alarms?
 - a) If so what has been the result of these trials?

NSWFB – uniforms

4. I refer to 2008-09 NSWFB Annual Report, Financial Statements, Expenses page 112, Uniforms. What was the actual expenditure on uniforms for 2009-10 and what is the estimated expenditure in 2010-11?
 - a) What is the country of origin of each current piece of fire fighter uniform?

NSWFB – fire stations

5. For each of the past five financial years, please provide details of fire stations with retained crews which have become stations staffed by full-time staff. On what basis are the decisions made to move from retained to full-time stations?

NSWFB – fire engines

6. For each financial year since 2007/08 what funds have been allocated and expended on purchasing new fire engines and other specialist fire fighting appliances?
- a) Where have these additional resources been allocated?

NSWFB – high volume pumps

7. I refer to 2008-09 NSWFB Annual Report Appendix 22, Type and Distribution of Fire Appliances, pages 184-187.
- a) What is the current maximum litre/minute pumping capacity of any of the NSWFB fleet?
- b) Has NSWFB identified the need for mobile high volume pumps to deal with major hazards, including refineries and tank farms?
- c) How would the NSWFB currently deal with large scale fires, such as the Buncefield tank farm fire in the UK in 2005, which require high volume pumping capacity over long distances?

NSWFB – Community Fire Units

8. What funds have been allocated and expended establishing Community Fire Units in each year since 2007-08?
- a) How many CFUs have been established in each year and in what locations?
- b) How many CFUs are currently active?
- c) How do CFUs register their availability for action and how do they demonstrate their proficiency?

NSWFB – employment opportunities

I refer to Budget Paper No 3 Volume 2, pages 10-28 and 10-29, employee numbers, and 2008-09 NSWFB Annual Report Appendix 5 – Employee Classification.

9. For each of the past five financial years, please provide the number of employees who have left the NSWFB and please provide the reasons for them leaving.
10. What was the employee classification (as listed in Appendix 5 of the Annual Report) for the departing employees for each of the past five financial years? (That is, please provide employee turnover figures for each employee category for each of the past five financial years.)
- a) Please provide the number of new employees for each of the employee category in each of the past five financial years.
- b) For each of the past five financial years, how many of these new employee positions were filled by internal applicants?
- c) For each of the past five financial years, how many of these positions were filled by external applicants?
- d) For each of the past five financial years, how many applicants were there for each new position?

NSWFB - assaults

I note the Commissioner's comments to the Estimates Committee hearing on 17 September 2010 wherein he stated:

"...I do not know of any current cases where there have been workplace assaults. In my 32 years in the Fire Brigades I know of one other, and it was probably in 1979. It was a minor issue, but I do not know what other people's experiences have been..."

11. How many NSWFB members have been assaulted since 1995?
- a) How many of these assaults occurred at the workplace involving other NSWFB members?
- b) How many assaults occurred out of the workplace involving NSWFB members?

- c) What records does the NSWFB hold of the NSW Police arriving at fire stations or other NSWFB workplaces?
- 12. In relation to Workcover claims with the NSWFB, do any relate to physical assaults in the workplace?
- 13. Noting the KPMG Report which found that 14% of respondents had encountered some form of bullying of a physical nature, is NSWFB in receipt of any other reports or inquiries into physical abuse?

NSWFB – PSCO inquiries

- 14. In each of the past four years, how many preliminary inquiries conducted by PSCOs have progressed to formal inquiries?
 - a) In each of these years, how many of these inquiries were suspended due to the resignation of those being investigated?
 - b) How many fact-finding missions have been conducted as a form of complaint resolution within NSWFB in each of the past four financial years?
 - c) How many people have faced disciplinary action and what were the penalties applied?

NSWFB - zone conferences

- 15. For each of the past four financial years, please provide details of NSWFB conferences held in each zone?
 - a) What was the location of each of these conferences?
 - b) How many NSWFB members attended each of these conferences?
 - c) How many NSWFB partners or spouses attended each of these conferences?
 - d) What was the cost of each of these conferences?
 - e) What were the costs of meals at each of these conferences?
 - f) What was the cost of alcohol at each of these conferences?
 - g) What was the cost of entertainment at each of these conferences?

NSWFB – motor vehicle personalised number plates

- 16. How many NSWFB motor vehicles currently have personalised number plates?
 - a) What are they?
 - b) When were these personalised number plates purchased and why?
 - c) Does the government have any estimate of the current market value of these number plates?

NSW Rural Fire Service (NSWRFS)

NSWRFS – Bushfire mitigation and hazard reduction

I note a media release from the Rural Fire Service Association (16 August 2010) which refers to "the current \$6.5 million funds allocated for hazard reduction". I note also the various claims by the Minister for Emergency Service that the Government spends at least \$17 million on 'bushfire mitigation' per annum – see for example the Minister's answer to a question without notice in the Legislative Assembly on 12 May 2010.

- 17. Please provide details of the various bushfire mitigation programs currently in place, how much has been spent on those programs in each of the past four financial years and the source of the funds expended.
- 18. For each NSW electorate for each of the past four financial years, please provide details of:
 - a) total amount spent on bushfire mitigation (as per the Minister's definition above);
 - b) completed hazard reduction works by hectare;
 - c) number of works completed;
 - d) number of properties covered by completed works; and
 - e) value of properties covered by completed works.

19. For each NSW local government area for each of the past four financial years, please provide details of:
- total amount spent on bushfire mitigation (as per the Minister's definition above);
 - completed hazard reduction works by tenure;
 - number of works completed;
 - number of properties covered by completed works; and
 - value of properties covered by completed works.

NSWRFS – fuel loads

I refer to comments made by the Rural Fire Service Commissioner during hearings where it was stated: "...But in the typical forested environment like the Blue Mountains, you reach a state of equilibrium between decomposition and accumulation rates....They typically peter out at around about 15 to 25 tonnes per hectare, depending upon the conditions and bark types and that sort of thing around the forest.... "

20. Does the RFS have current estimates of fuel loads per hectare around the state? How is this information collected and analysed – that is, what systems are used? Please cite any peer-reviewed articles in which an equilibrium point of between 15 to 25 tonnes per hectare is discussed.

NSWRFS – yellow shirts

21. Please provide a full timeline of key dates in the roll-out of the RFS yellow shirt for RFS staff and volunteers. Please include details of consultation with affected stakeholders.
- Please provide details of all funds expended so far on rolling out yellow shirts. Please provide estimated total expenditure on yellow shirts.
 - Please advise why the colour yellow was chosen?
 - How many versions of the yellow shirt have been produced to date?
 - How many shirts were produced in each version?
 - How much was spent on each version?
 - What is the current location of all the shirts that have been manufactured to date?
 - What is the government doing to roll out the latest version of the yellow shirt to staff and volunteers?

NSWRFS – provision of tankers

Refer to the 2008-09 RFS Annual Report, Year at a Glance, page 2.

22. Please provide details on the amount spent on the provision of new or refurbished tankers in each of the past four financial years.
- How many tankers were purchased in each of these financial years?
 - What is the estimated expenditure on new or refurbished tankers in 2010-11?
 - How many tankers are expected to be provided?
 - Does each brigade in the state have an operational tanker?
 - If not please advise which brigades do not have a tanker and the reason for this.

NSWRFS – state mitigation crews

23. What funds have been expended on state mitigation crews in each of the past four financial years?
- What funds are estimated to be expended in 2010-11?
 - For each of the past four financial years how many people were employed in state mitigation crews? How many of these employed people were also RFS volunteers?

NSWRFS – upgrade of stations

24. What funds have been allocated and expended in each year since 2007-08 on upgrading RFS stations and fire control stations?
- How many stations have been upgraded?
 - How many 20,000 litre rainwater tanks have been installed in each year since 2007-08 and in what locations?

NSWRFS – brigade annual returns

25. In each of the past four financial years, what percentage of brigades have provided annual returns as specified by RFS service standards?

NSWRFS – employee distribution

26. For each of the past four financial years, please list the number of RFS staff based at the Homebush headquarters?
- For each of the past four financial years, please list the number of RFS staff based in each regional and/or district office?

NSWFB – volunteers and their qualifications

I refer to the 2008-09 RFS Annual Report, Year at a Glance, page 2 and I note the figures for volunteer qualifications for 2008-09.

27. Does the government have figures for previous years?
- If so please provide them for at least the previous three years?
 - If not, why not?

NSWRFS – Co-operative Research Centre

28. What funds have been allocated and expended on supporting the work of the Australian Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre in each year since 2007-08?
29. What funds have been allocated by the government to the HighFires project in each year since 2007-08?

NSWRFS – Illawarra bushfire preparation

30. What work has been done along the Illawarra Escarpment to prepare for the coming bushfire season? What work has been undertaken to maintain the fire trails in the Illawarra escarpment?
- Has the RFS, Minister or other NSW Government agency received any correspondence relating to the fire trails on the Illawarra Escarpment being overgrown?
 - If so, what remediation works have been undertaken to date?

NSW State Emergency Service (SES)

SES and flood gauges

31. I am advised that during the recent flooding events in the state's south, there were issues with lack of sandbags and also faulty river gauges. Please outline how widespread these issues were?
- Given this issue was raised in previous years' Estimates Committee, are there any systemic problems with river gauges?

SES rescue equipment

32. What funds have been allocated and expended for rescue equipment, including emergency lighting, motor vehicle accident hydraulic and air-operated rescue gear and vertical rescue equipment, for the SES in each year since 2007-08?
- What is this equipment and to what locations has it been allocated?
 - Please provide reasons for your answer.

SES fleet

33. What funds have been allocated in each year since 2007-08 purchasing new flood boats for the SES? How many flood boats have been purchased in each of those years and to what locations were they allocated?
- a) What funds have been allocated to upgrading the SES operation vehicle fleet in each year since 2007-08?
 - b) How many vehicles have been purchased in each of those years?
 - c) What type of vehicle were they and to where have they been allocated?

SES expenses

34. What funds have been allocated in each year since 2007-08 to day-to-day SES expenses such as fuel, utilities and equipment maintenance? What were these expenses in each of the above years?

Emergency Management NSW (EMNSW)

EMNSW/NSWFB – proposed super ministry

35. In answers on the matter of the proposed super ministry in 2009, Commissioner Mullins indicated there would be significant savings as a result of shared corporate services. Now that the super ministry has been abandoned, what funds were spent in total on the proposed super ministry?
- a) What savings have been achieved as a result of the expenditure on the super ministry?
 - b) What legacies are there from the proposed super ministry?

EMNSW – employee numbers

36. For each of the past four financial years, please provide the number of employees (FTE) at Emergency Management NSW and their location. For each of the past four financial years, please provide details of staff turnover and from which area of EMNSW the staff have left.

EMNSW – annual reporting

37. Is EMNSW required to publish an annual report?
- a) If not, why not?
 - b) Please provide details of revenues and expenses, estimated and actual, for each of the past four financial years.

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There were no additional questions on notice lodged by members relating to the portfolio of Rural Affairs.

Questions relating to the portfolio of Rural Affairs

17 September 2010, 2:00 pm – 6:00 pm

Questions from XX