

**GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO.5**  
**QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE PORTFOLIOS OF**  
**ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE**  
**27 OCTOBER 2011, 9:00am – 1:00pm**

**Questions from the Hon Robert Brown MLC**

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**QUESTION 1**

Environment and Heritage will spend \$68 million this year to manage pest animals and weeds and to improve fire management in National Parks. By what measures are these efforts judged? Is there any way you can tell if you are controlling the weeds and the feral animals?

**ANSWER**

The Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) has developed key performance indicators for fire management in consultation with key stakeholder groups. The indicators are consistent with 2021 Plan targets and include:

- Achievement of conservation objectives for different vegetation formations;
- Number and area of hazard reduction treatments completed;
- Response effectiveness in suppressing wildfires; and
- Success in preventing the escape of wildfires from park boundaries.

The effectiveness of the OEH's pest animal and weed management programs is measured in a number of ways:

- For key priority programs, OEH conducts scientific monitoring to evaluate the recovery of native species in response to pest control.
- Output information is captured for individual pest and weed programs. For example, the number of goats removed, the number of fox baits laid, the number of hectares of weeds sprayed.
- Every 3 years, systematic and standardised survey information is collected across all national parks and reserves; and
- Direct feedback between our Regional staff, our neighbours, other landholders, Livestock Health and Pest Authorities and other stakeholders on the progress and outcomes from OEH pest management activities.

**QUESTION 2**

How will the allocation of \$28 million be spent on maintaining essential infrastructure for the Reserve System "so it can be managed effectively and the community can access and enjoy it"?

**ANSWER**

National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) manages and maintains a significant portfolio of essential park infrastructure, for the benefit of the community and visitors to our parks, including:

- Visitor facilities, including 472 camping areas and 660 lookouts;
- 2,500 km of footpaths and walking tracks;
- 38,000 km of roads and vehicle trails;
- Depots and offices;
- Plant and equipment; and
- Buildings.

The 2011/12 budget is allocated across these different types of infrastructure by Regional Managers on a needs basis.

**QUESTION 3**

There is an allocation of \$4.3 million to manage the River Red Gum parks in the Riverina and Murray Region. How many staff will be employed in the parks this year, what work will they be doing and what support equipment will they have? Will the majority of those "managing" the River Red Gum parks actually live in the area, or will it be "remote" management?

**ANSWER**

35 staff have been employed specifically to manage the new Red Gum reserves. In addition to this, five existing Office of the Environment and Heritage (OEH) staff have been seconded to work solely on Red Gum reserve establishment projects.

The majority of the newly-created positions are field-based and are working within the reserves to deliver fire, pest management and maintenance programs. Other positions include Project Officers, Rangers, Administration Officers and two management positions.

Red Gum funding has allowed for the establishment of an Adaptive Management Unit to initiate and manage forest health programs such as ecological thinning, firewood collection, and environmental watering.

Support equipment and facilities provided to staff include:

- a new office in Moama;
- an office expansion in Griffith;
- a new workshop in Mathoura; and
- expansion of existing workshops in Buronga, Hay and Barooga.

Heavy plant, such as trucks and bushfire units, have been purchased together with minor plant items (tools), materials and personal protective equipment. The National Parks and Wildlife Service has not, however, purchased mechanical harvesting machinery or transportation equipment specifically for the purpose of undertaking thinning in red gum forests.

All staff recruited live in towns near the Red Gum reserves: namely, Moama, Mathoura, Barooga, Griffith, Hay, Booligal and Buronga.

**QUESTION 4**

With a \$1.2 million upgrade planned for the NSW Parks and Wildlife website, and the online booking system, how many "on-line bookings" were made in the last 12 months, and how does that compare to the previous year?

**ANSWER**

National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) website does not have a permanent online booking system but is implementing a three-year plan to deliver a visitor-focused website, which includes the development of a new, integrated online booking system.

As an interim measure, NPWS has been trialling an externally-hosted online booking system for the sale of tickets to events. The results of the trial are encouraging and include:

- New Years Eve, 3,240 out of 4,000 (81%) of all 2010/11 and 2010 Boxing Day tickets were sold via the online booking system;
- Fort Denison tours tickets, with 4405 tickets sold in the first 12 months of the trial, and;
- A new online reservation system by Lane Cove River Tourist Park, with 2,313 reservations made via this system in the last 12 months, which represents a 50% increase on the previous year.

**QUESTION 5**

One of the key achievements in the last year includes the "designing and starting to roll out the new network of 14 air quality monitoring stations in the Upper Hunter, providing access to real-time air quality data – 24 hours a day". How many of these stations are now operating, and where are they?

**ANSWER**

As of 3 November 2011, there are 7 of the 14 sites operational at the following locations:

- Singleton Central
- Muswellbrook Central
- Maison Dieu
- Camberwell
- Mt Thorley
- Singleton North-West
- Bulga

Their locations, including map co-ordinates and pollutants monitored, can be viewed on the Office of Environment and Heritage website at [www.environment.nsw.gov.au](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au)

**QUESTION 6**

Another achievement of last year was the managing of "a further 111,617 hectares of land under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*" – which makes a grand total now of 7 million hectares or 8.83 per cent of the State. What and where were those additions?

**ANSWER**

The following areas were gazetted in 2010-11:

Name of Reserve	Reserve category	Date	Hectares
Adelyne	Community Conservation Area (State Conservation Area)	1/01/2011	147.7
Back Arm	Nature Reserve	13/08/2010	91.05
Balowra	State Conservation Area	1/01/2011	1718
Bango	Nature Reserve	13/08/2010	409

Name of Reserve	Reserve category	Date	Hectares
Barwon	Nature Reserve	6/08/2010	4,048.00
Barwon	State Conservation Area	6/08/2010	3,009.00
Bedooba	State Conservation Area	1/01/2011	1720
Belmont	State Conservation Area	13/08/2010	209.8
Bendick Murrell	National Park	1/01/2011	1784
Brigalow	State Conservation Area	25/02/2011	252.7
Bubalahla	Nature Reserve	13/08/2010	417.6
Burwood Creek	Nature Reserve	13/08/2010	33.5
Chambigne	State Conservation Area	18/02/2011	760
Cobbora	Community Conservation Area (State Conservation Area)	24/12/2010	2261
Columbey	State Conservation Area	25/02/2011	250
Combaning	State Conservation Area	1/01/2011	741
Cookbundoon	Nature Reserve	13/08/2010	527
Cooleburba	State Conservation Area	17/12/2010	434.6
Crooked Creek	Community Conservation Area (National Park)	1/01/2011	735.7
Doodle Comer Swamp	Nature Reserve	21/01/2011	890.7
Euston	Regional Park	1/07/2010	3,274.00
Gandangara	State Conservation Area	3/03/2011	6.945
Gillindich	Nature Reserve	13/08/2010	1253
Gilwarny	Nature Reserve	1/01/2011	1221
Ginghet	Nature Reserve	6/08/2010	6,239.00
Goulburn River	State Conservation Area	1/01/2011	359.4
Gwydir Wetlands	State Conservation Area	25/02/2011	4292
Hobden Hill	Community Conservation Area (National Park)	1/01/2011	830.4
Jimberoo	National Park	1/01/2011	1161
Jinangong	Nature Reserve	22/10/2010	49.26
Jindalee	National Park	1/01/2011	1076
Kemendok	Nature Reserve	1/07/2010	9,874.00
Kerraway	Nature Reserve	13/08/2010	368.7
Keverstone	State Conservation Area	25/02/2011	1164
Lachlan Valley	National Park	1/07/2010	3,465.00
Lachlan Valley	Regional Park	1/07/2010	1,564.00
Lachlan Valley	State Conservation Area	1/07/2010	5,089.00
Macquarie Marshes	State Conservation Area	3/03/2011	2392
Mares Forest	National Park	13/08/2010	700
McClouds Creek	Nature Reserve	13/08/2010	204.4
Mount Davies	State Conservation Area	13/08/2010	340.2
Mugii Murum-ban	State Conservation Area	3/03/2011	3650
Mungo	State Conservation Area	1/01/2011	5700
Murray Valley	National Park	1/07/2010	41,601.00
Murray Valley	Regional Park	1/07/2010	9,224.00
Murrumbidgee Valley	National Park	1/07/2010	11,299.00
Murrumbidgee Valley	Regional Park	1/07/2010	1,197.00
Narrangarril	Nature Reserve	13/08/2010	104.6
Nuggety	State Conservation Area	13/08/2010	1148
Oakdale	Nature Reserve	13/08/2010	14
Paddington	Nature Reserve	1/01/2011	6682
Pomaderris	Nature Reserve	13/08/2010	99.7
Rocky Glen	Community Conservation Area (National Park)	1/01/2011	483.3
Sappa Bulga	Community Conservation Area (National Park)	1/01/2011	120.9
Serpentine Ridge	Community Conservation Area (National Park)	1/01/2011	354.4
South Solitary Is	Historic Site	6/08/2010	11.07
South West Woodland	Nature Reserve	1/01/2011	13716
Thalaba	State Conservation Area	13/08/2010	30.96

Name of Reserve	Reserve category	Date	Hectares
Tingha Plateau	Community Conservation Area (State Conservation Area)	1/01/2011	3414
Ti-Tree Lake	Aboriginal Area	9/07/2010	10.44
Toorale	National Park	26/11/2010	30,866
Toorale	State Conservation Area	26/11/2010	54,385
Ukerbarley	Aboriginal Area	25/02/2011	1483
Wallabadah	Community Conservation Area (National Park)	1/01/2011	5.82
Watsons Creek	Community Conservation Area (National Park)	1/01/2011	334.8
Wingadee	Nature Reserve	1/01/2011	304
Woodsreef	Community Conservation Area (State Conservation Area)	1/01/2011	330.6
Young	Nature Reserve	1/01/2011	453

### Additions to reserves

Reserve name	Reserve category	Date	Hectares
Abercrombie River	National Park	13/08/2010	402
Barton	Nature Reserve	25/02/2011	17
Barwon	State Conservation Area	11/02/2011	2234
Billinudgel	Nature Reserve	17/12/2010	7.92
Bingara	Community Conservation Area (State Conservation Area)	1/01/2011	14.72
Blue Mountains	National Park	13/08/2010	190
Blue Mountains	National Park	11/02/2011	130
Blue Mountains	National Park	25/02/2011	25
Bongil Bongil	National Park	25/02/2011	83
Boonalla	Community Conservation Area (Aboriginal Area)	1/01/2011	43.41
Boonoo Boonoo	National Park	17/12/2010	390
Breelong	Community Conservation Area (National Park)	1/01/2011	118.7
Bullala	Community Conservation Area (National Park)	24/12/2010	3276
Bundjalung	National Park	21/01/2011	86
Burrinjuck	Nature Reserve	18/02/2011	131.8
Clarence Estuary	Nature Reserve	25/02/2011	0.33
Crowdy Bay	National Park	3/03/2011	11.6
Curracabundi	National Park	6/08/2010	872.00
Darawahl	State Conservation Area	3/03/2011	303.7
Darawank	Nature Reserve	18/02/2011	616
Durridgere	Community Conservation Area (State Conservation Area)	1/01/2011	34.2
Garawarra	State Conservation Area	26/11/2010	16.7
Garawarra	State Conservation Area	21/01/2011	33
Glenrock	State Conservation Area	24/12/2010	0.469
Goolawah	National Park	17/06/2011	12
Goonoo	Community Conservation Area (State Conservation Area)	1/01/2011	770
Goorooyarroo	Nature Reserve	6/08/2010	24.07
Goulburn River	National Park	25/02/2011	203
Gwydir River	Community Conservation Area (State Conservation Area)	24/12/2010	1048
Hunter Wetlands	National Park	18/02/2011	626
Illawarra	State Conservation Area	3/03/2011	14.89
Innes Ruins	Historic Site	17/12/2010	16.3
Kanangra-Boyd	National Park	13/08/2010	2152
Kemps Creek	Nature Reserve	17/12/2010	68.03
Keverstone	National Park	25/02/2011	860.7
Kings Plain	National Park	20/08/2010	1318
Kosciuszko	National Park	21/01/2011	162
Kwiambal	National Park	20/08/2010	472
Kwiamble	National Park	1/01/2011	28.16
Lachlan Valley	National Park	1/01/2011	1094
Lachlan Valley	State Conservation Area	3/03/2011	17754

Reserve name	Reserve category	Date	Hectares
Lake Macquarie	State Conservation Area	14/01/2011	164
Livingstone	State Conservation Area	25/02/2011	63
Mares Forest	National Park	18/02/2011	1859
Meroo	National Park	1/01/2011	85
Minimbah	Nature Reserve	4/02/2011	210.54
Mother of Ducks	Nature Reserve	24/12/2010	5.24
Mt Yarrowyck	Nature Reserve	3/03/2011	1.73
Mungo	National Park	1/01/2011	10040
Munmorah	State Conservation Area	14/01/2011	105
Murrumbidgee Valley	National Park	3/12/2010	3204
Murrumbidgee Valley	National Park	1/01/2011	1972
Murrumbidgee Valley	State Conservation Area	3/12/2010	689.1
Nattai	National Park	25/02/2011	78
Pilliga	Nature Reserve	1/01/2011	47.44
Pilliga West	Community Conservation Area (State Conservation Area)	24/12/2010	805
South East Forest	National Park	3/03/2011	50.4
Tarlo River	National Park	13/08/2010	0.5
Towarri	National Park	1/01/2011	25.14
Towarri	National Park	21/01/2011	442.73
Tuggerah	State Conservation Area	3/12/2010	65
Warrabah	National Park	17/12/2010	749.1
Warrumbungle	National Park	1/01/2011	248
Werekata	State Conservation Area	3/03/2011	22.92
Wianamatta	Regional Park	11/02/2011	181.1
Wiarborough	Nature Reserve	17/12/2010	204.2
Wollemi	National Park	17/12/2010	4.8
Wollemi	National Park	3/03/2011	639.8
Wollemi	National Park	24/12/2010	24.3
Wolli Creek	Regional Park	1/10/2010	10.84
Wolli Creek	Regional Park	18/02/2011	1.085
Wollondilly River	Nature Reserve	13/08/2010	109.3
Yathong	Nature Reserve	1/01/2011	4212

### **QUESTION 7**

The Department in the last year also implemented the National Park Estate (Riverina Red Gum Reservations) Act 2010, and initiated adaptive management and ecological thinning scientific trials. Can you tell us about these trials – what they are, where they are, how extensive are they and what benefits will the local community get from them?

### **ANSWER**

The aim of the proposed adaptive management and ecological thinning trial is to determine the effects of thinning on the development of habitat features which are essential for the maintenance of native species. Past management practices and drought have created large areas of stunted near monoculture 'regrowth' trees which provide limited habitat value. The trial aims to reduce the number of 'stems per hectare' to a level where tree growth variation occurs over time and a broad array of habitat values are established.

A cross border Scientific Advisory Committee has been established, together with the Victorian Government, to advise both the NSW and Victorian Governments on adaptive management programs. The Committee consists of experts with academic, commercial and management experience with red gum forests.

The Scientific Advisory Committee is reviewing all proposals and is to consider and provide advice on the proposed thinning trial in December 2011.

An environmental monitoring program has also been established with the aim of producing results which can then be reported.

Planned and commenced improvements to water distribution structures within the reserves, together with improved opportunities to obtain environmental flows, will result in improved environmental watering of all treatment plots. Such outcomes will be monitored to form part of the trial results.

It is expected that once OEH establishes a demonstration site, all remaining thinning works within NSW will be undertaken by commercial operators under contract following an open tender process. Community benefit will therefore be achieved from contracted services being provided by commercial operators.

### **QUESTION 8**

Under Future Directions – I note the Department plans to "reduce the exposure of the community and the environment to chemicals, radiation, dust, waste and odour as well as industrial, construction, road and rail noise and vibration". Just how is the Department intending to do all these things?

### **ANSWER**

As set out in NSW 2021, the NSW Government is committed to protecting the environment and local communities. The Office of Environment and Heritage will reduce hazardous exposure to the community by:

- providing robust and transparent identification, regulation and oversight of land and groundwater remediation
- combating illegal dumping and littering. This will be done by proactively taking action to find and punish illegal dumpers and litterers and by implementing littering and illegal dumping campaigns across the state. In 2011, five major surveillance campaigns have been completed.
- undertaking dangerous goods compliance campaigns at Kooragang Island, Port Botany, Western Sydney and Sydney road tunnels.
- implementing recommendations by the Auditor General to improve the integrity of the dangerous goods licensing system and increase industry awareness of its obligations through an upgraded website and direct negotiations with major transport companies.
- developing and implementing a series of compliance campaigns targeting pesticide usage at various locations throughout NSW during the first half of 2012.
- implementing new radiation control legislation which includes strengthened investigation powers and security measures, including a security background checking scheme for people accessing the more dangerous sources of radiation.

### **QUESTION 9**

The Department wants to expand tourism opportunities in the States National Parks. What steps have been taken in the last 12 months to achieve this aim?

### **ANSWER**

The O'Farrell Government is committed to improving access to, and expanding tourism opportunities in, our State's magnificent national parks and reserves. It is through attracting visitors to our parks that we can encourage healthier lifestyles, and also contribute to economic growth in regional areas.

Over the past 12 months, the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) has embarked on a program to realise new opportunities for visitors. Project highlights include:

- Launch and rollout of a number of tailored marketing campaigns, including the:
  - *Wild About Whales* campaign to promote the 2011 whale-watching season and drive visitation to NSW's coastal regions during the low season;
  - Outback Campaign, from April to August 2011, aimed at increasing tourism in western NSW;
  - Cooperative campaign with Destination NSW and News Ltd to raise awareness of the many great opportunities in our parks – resulting in a *Naturescapes* travel supplement with interstate distribution to Melbourne and Brisbane, and throughout NSW.
  
- Development of a number of new on-park experiences, including:
  - Opening of the new multi-day Green Gully Track in the Oxley Wild Rivers National Park, and subsequent promotion through nature media;
  - Call for potential partners for recreation and business opportunities (including low-impact accommodation facilities) associated with the Light to Light Walk in Ben Boyd National Park;
  - Upgrading the Sea Acres Rainforest Visitor and Information Centre in Port Macquarie;
  - Upgrading the interpretation site at Mungo National Park, which includes the Meet Place and replica of the fossil track-way;
  - Upgrading the entrance to the popular Muttonbird Island Nature Reserve at Coffs Harbour, providing an education space where many visiting schools can conduct outdoor classes as well as providing a space for *Discovery Tours*; and
  - Opening of the Yuraygir multi-day walking track, offering a unique four-day walk through Yuraygir National Park – the longest stretch of protected coastline in NSW.
  
- Release of NPWS Mountain Biking Strategy, comprising improvement initiatives to tracks and other facilities for cyclists and mountain bikers, to make it easier for more people of all ages and abilities to explore our parks on two wheels. Work on one of the priority initiatives – the development of a network of purpose-built tracks in appropriate locations – is underway in Northern Sydney.
  
- The organisation and hosting of a range of community events and activities, including:
  - World Parks Day events held at Cape Byron, Worimi Conservation Lands, Wingham Brush Nature Reserve, Tomaree National Park, Ben Boyd National Park, Minnamurra, Sea Acres and Dorrigo Rainforest; and
  - International Year of Forest activities to celebrate and raise awareness of sustainable management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests.
  
- On-going investment in the development of a new visitor-friendly national parks website, incorporating new technologies, to better meet the needs of visitors. The building blocks are now in place from which to develop new applications, introduce interactive mapping, create online booking capability and incorporate social media.

## **QUESTION 10**

At the Budget Estimates hearings last year, we were told that under the "efficiency" requirements, about 33 staff within NSW Parks and Wildlife Service were offered redundancy. Did these positions disappear and what is the target for the "efficiency" requirement in this financial year?

**ANSWER**

33 National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) staff accepted voluntary redundancies during 2009/10. Each position held by a staff member who accepted a VR was deleted. NPWS has no target to delete positions in 2011/12 as a result of efficiency savings.

**QUESTION 11**

Did the Department meet its efficiency dividend for the last financial year? Ms Corban [sic] told the Committee last year the 2010-11 dividend was to be \$14.9 million.

**ANSWER**

Yes. In 2010-11 the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) met its efficiency dividend and delivered its total program within the 2010-11 approved budget.

**QUESTION 12**

During the year, how many National Parks and Wildlife Service hazard reduction burns got out of control, and how much land was inadvertently burnt as a result of these fires?

**ANSWER**

During 2010/11, National Parks and Wildlife Service conducted 159 prescribed burns, treating 56,060 hectares. No hazard reduction burns got out of control.

**QUESTION 13**

I refer to a media release of 29 September 2011 relating to a National Parks hazard reduction burn in Hat Head National Park. The release says that "despite howling winds on Thursday evening threatening to carry embers further south, fire crews worked extremely hard to keep the fire inside containment lines". Did anyone check with the weather bureau before lighting the fire because they were predicting wind gusts of 25 to 35 km/h for the burn area?

**ANSWER**

The hazard reduction burn at Hat Head village was undertaken to enhance the protection of Hat Head village from wildfires. The area burnt is a strategic fire management zone and included both National Park and private property.

The burn was completed over two days and involved National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) staff and Rural Fire Service (RFS) volunteer crews working closely together. The NPWS has a thorough and detailed hazard reduction burn planning process which sets out clear parameters for the implementation of all hazard reduction burns. These parameters, which are set out in the relevant burn plan, include specific weather criteria which need to be met prior to all burns proceeding and identification of potential fallback options if conditions change unexpectedly.

To assist in undertaking hazard reduction burns, the NPWS accesses a Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) registered user's website, which provides detailed forecasts not available to the general public. The BoM's registered user's website was utilised during the planning and operational phase of the hazard reduction burn in Hat Head National Park.

The hazard reduction burn at Hat Head village was implemented successfully and within the weather criteria set out in the burn plan. Although a stronger than expected breeze picked up for a few hours during the evening of 22 September 2011, the NPWS and RFS crews contained the hazard reduction burn within its control lines.

At no time during the hazard reduction burn, including during the stronger than expected breeze, were assets under threat as the wind was blowing away from the private properties on the northern containment line. The local community, including local RFS volunteers, have provided positive feedback regarding the Hat Head village hazard reduction burn.

Hazard reduction burning is a complex activity with limited 'windows' of suitable weather conditions available to enable the objectives of a planned burn to be met in a safe and effective manner. Consequently, the NPWS and RFS have highly trained and experienced crews who plan and conduct the hazard reduction burn program as safely and effectively as possible.

#### **QUESTION 14**

When will construction start on a series of dedicated mountain bike tracks in National Parks around Sydney as the Government recently promised?

#### **ANSWER**

Dedicated mountain biking tracks are already operating in Yellowmundee Regional Park and Royal National Park.

The Government proposes to construct a new dedicated mountain biking track in Northern Sydney, arising from the recently launched NPWS Mountain Bike Strategy.

Investigation of potential sites has begun for a mountain bike loop track in Garigal National Park and Berowra Valley Regional Park. Onsite public consultation sessions were recently held on 29 October and 5 November.

Once the preferred site has been identified, planning, detailed environmental assessment and design phases will commence. An amendment to the relevant Plan of Management will also be prepared for public exhibition at this time. Subject to these processes, it is anticipated that construction will commence in 2013.

### **Questions from the Hon Cate Faerhmann MLC**

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#### **QUESTION 15**

In relation to park use fees

- a) Given that NSW is alone amongst the three states on the eastern seaboard in charging a park entry fee, is the income of only \$7 per vehicle charged for entry to most popular parks, plus any camping fees, worth the disgruntlement and discouragement amongst potential visitors?
- b) Does the Minister agree that it would be better to charge no park fees if the NSW Government wishes to best achieve its objective of increased park visitor use?

#### **ANSWER**

- a) Fees collected by National Parks and Wildlife Service are reinvested into the State's national parks and reserves. Park entry fees fund both new and existing facilities and

services for use by park visitors, as well as contributing to pest and weed management and threatened species conservation. An important consideration in relation to camping fees is the Government's commitment to the principles of competitive neutrality.

- b) No.

### **QUESTION 16**

In relation to wilderness management

- a) Can the Minister advise if any funds are specifically allocated to undertake wilderness assessment, wilderness management or wilderness administration?
- b) Does the Office of Environment and Heritage have any full time wilderness officer specifically dedicated to wilderness policy, administration and management for the two million hectare wilderness estate in NSW?
- c) If yes, how many staff are exclusively allocated to wilderness duties?

### **ANSWER**

- a) Wilderness responsibilities and functions are carried out across the State with existing Departmental resources. There is no separate funding allocated to the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) to meet its obligations under the *Wilderness Act 1987*.
- b) Wilderness responsibilities and functions are integrated with OEH's management of the entire National Parks and reserves estate. OEH has 1 officer specifically allocated to wilderness work who coordinates this agency-wide effort.
- c) Staff are allocated to wilderness duties as specific projects and tasks require.

### **QUESTION 17**

In relation to wilderness and commercial hut operation

- a) Now that the National Parks and Wildlife (Visitors and Tourists) Act permits commercial use of wilderness areas, can the Minister please explain how renting out renovated huts for use in wilderness areas, such as in the Green Gully area, meets the self-reliant recreation test in the management principles under the *Wilderness Act 1987*, especially when the Office of Environment and Heritage recommends to these hut visitors that it is unnecessary to carry either a tent or cooking gear?
- b) In the Green Gully Track Business Plan 2010-2015 is it correct that Office of Environment and Heritage staff time is not factored into the costs of running these commercial huts, where fees are charged by the Office and Environment and Heritage for staying at the renovated huts in the Macleay Gorges Wilderness Area.
- c) If staff time was factored into the costs of running the Green Gully Track, is it not correct that expenses would significantly exceed income for this wilderness development?
- d) Why didn't the Office of Environment and Heritage factor into the Green Gully Track business plan the increased cost in accident risk to park visitors of encouraging paying guests not to carry tents and cooking utensils with long days between huts, a practice that is contrary to bush safety practice?
- e) Is it correct that the Green Gully Track is just the first of several iconic walks planned by the Office and Environment and Heritage, such as those walks outlined in the Gorge Huts Walking Strategy that seeks to develop a system of medium-long distance walking routes utilising wilderness huts in the Northern Tablelands region?

**ANSWER**

- a) The Green Gully Track is a long distance, four day, 63 kilometre walking track. The unique and culturally significant remote old pastoral huts on the Green Gully Track are managed for their heritage values. The area around each hut has been modified by past use (for example clearing, stock yards, loading ramps and fencing) and are maintained as a cultural landscape.

Groups of walkers are issued with a permit to undertake the track, staying in one of the huts each night. Approximately 75 per cent of the walk is along existing management trails. For the other 25 per cent, walkers navigate along creek beds and down ridges.

Prior to opening the Track, each hut had minor stabilisation work completed. Facilities in each of the one room huts are very basic and are consistent with the cultural values of the huts.

Use of the Green Gully Track under the permit system provides visitors with an opportunity for solitude and an appropriate level of self-reliance including the use of the very basic old pastoral huts.

- b) The Green Gully Track Business Plan 2010-2015 does factor in staff time. The permit fee charged is for the use of not only the simple pastoral huts, but also the accommodation at Cedar Creek House, which is not in Wilderness, and an information package detailing wilderness values and the cultural history of the area.
- c) The 2011-12 running expenses for the Green Gully Track are currently estimated to be approximately \$35,000 and revenue of \$37,000 is predicted on current use. The business objectives for the Green Gully Track project are to provide a unique visitor experience without compromising the natural and cultural values of the park, and to offset the costs of maintaining heritage assets.
- d) The risk analysis for walkers using the track indicated that there would be a low probability of accident risk. Safety information is provided to the groups of walkers (maximum of six in a group) including detailed maps and emergency contact information (for example mobile phone coverage is available for approximately 50% of the track). While basic cooking equipment is provided at each hut, walkers are encouraged to bring their own for emergency use and tents are optional.
- e) The Gorge Huts Walking Strategy was an early draft planning document. As part of planning for the Green Gully Track, a number of feasibility investigations were undertaken to assess options for a multi-day walk in Oxley Wild Rivers National Park. The Green Gully Track was identified as the most suitable and was opened for general use in April 2011. There are no plans for other walks of this type. However, visitors are free to, and are encouraged to, visit and enjoy the park, including enjoying various possible multi-day walks that are regularly used by bushwalkers and school groups.

**QUESTION 18**

In relation to grey-headed flying foxes

- a) What is the cost to-date of the Royal Botanic Gardens dispersal project and the estimated spend for next year?
- b) On 30th June 2011, the Botanic Gardens Trust (BGT) wrote to you requesting that the Steering Committee, formed to oversee the dispersal of grey-headed flying-foxes from Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney, be disbanded and replaced by the "Expert

Panel" formed under the auspices of the Federal government's conditional approval of this project. Are you agreeing to this request?

- c) If so, how will you meet the requirement and need for stakeholders to be represented on such an advisory body, including stakeholders representing animal welfare interests and local land managers with other flying-fox camps expected to be affected by the dispersal?

**ANSWER**

- a) 2006-2010: \$1,226,069 (excluding 2011/2012),  
2011/12: \$687,000  
2012/13: \$331,000
- b) No decision has been made at this time.
- c) Not applicable.

**QUESTION 19**

In relation to the Karst Management Advisory Committee

- a) The Karst Management Advisory Committee has reached the end of its current term. When will the Committee be reappointed?
- b) Is consideration being given to establishing a dedicated speleo advisory committee in relation to the management of key areas such as Jenolan Caves?

**ANSWER**

- a) The appointment of new members to the Karst Management Advisory Committee (KMAC) is currently being considered by Government.
- b) The Karst Management Advisory Committee was established under the *National Parks and Wildlife Amendment (Jenolan Caves Reserve) Act 2005*, to advise the National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council and the Minister for the Environment on issues relating to the management and conservation of NSW karst environments.

The Karst Management Advisory Committee has been highly effective in assisting the Office of Environment and Heritage with the sustainable management of NSW karst areas. The committee is comprised of experts from a variety of disciplines and representatives of key interest groups, including the Australian Speleological Federation.

The establishment of local (or area-specific) speleological advisory committees is generally considered during the preparation of plans of management for reserves with significant karst values. The establishment of a group for the Jenolan Karst Conservation Reserve is currently under consideration as part of the development of a new plan of management for the reserve.

**QUESTION 20**

In relation to NSW Sugar Milling Co-operative Limited (SMC)

- a) The NSW Sugar Milling Co-Operative Limited has been granted an Exemption Order under Section 284 of the POEO Act, 1997 to use native forest bio-material as fuel to generate electricity. The order contains conditions that require SMC to notify the EPA, in advance, of each proposed source and the predicted volumes of native forest bio-

material to be received from that source and to report at monthly intervals on actual volumes. Please can the Minister provide that information.

**ANSWER**

The NSW Sugar Milling Co-operative Limited does notify the EPA of the proposed sources of native forest bio-material to be used as fuel in its co-generation energy plants. The Co-operative submits records to the EPA of the actual volume, source and type of native forest biomaterial received as well as the energy generated by each source of fuel.

Spreadsheets are attached summarising this information ([Attachment 2](#)) and further detailed information can be provided on request. Copies of the approvals for the various fuel sources are also attached ([Attachment 3](#)).

**QUESTION 21**

In relation to Coopers Paddock at Warwick Farm

- a) The Australian Turf Club is seeking to develop Cooper's Paddock at Warwick Farm and a rezoning application is currently on exhibition at Liverpool Council. Has the Government considered purchasing Cooper's Paddock from the ATC in order to conserve the site as a nature reserve in perpetuity?

**ANSWER**

Cooper's Paddock is owned by the Australian Turf Club within the Liverpool Local Government area and is the subject of a rezoning proposal. I am advised that the Australian Turf Club Ltd has given a public commitment to transfer approximately 17 hectares of the public recreation and conservation lands to Liverpool City Council by means of a Voluntary Planning Agreement.

The Government acknowledges the high local biodiversity values of Cooper's Paddock, however, priorities for land acquisition, reserve establishment and conservation investment in Western Sydney are based on land parcels identified in the Cumberland Plain Recovery Plan. Cooper's Paddock is not identified as priority land for State acquisition in this Plan.

**QUESTION 22**

In relation to Private Native Forestry Oldgrowth [sic]

- a) DECCW made a commitment to the North Coast Environment Council that they would: *'Review the 48 PVPs where the area of change in old growth is greater than 50 hectares and if the result of the new assessment (including field investigation) warrants write to the PVP holder setting out the requirement of the PNF Code to protect old growth forests and that DECCW seeks to renegotiate the PVP to ensure protection of these areas'*. Has this been done and, if so, what are the results?

**ANSWER**

The Office of Environment and Heritage has commenced the review of all 48 properties. New staff required to complete the project have been recruited. Background information and new digital imagery has been assembled.

The status of logging operations, based on annual reports and feedback from regional staff, has also been determined. There are no results to report at this time. The review is expected to be completed by the end of June 2012.

**QUESTION 23**

In relation to core koala habitat and private native forestry:

- a. Coffs Harbour City Council stated in January that DECCW were approving Private Native Forestry PVPs in mapped core koala habitat illegally. DECCW promised in the local media to resolve the issue. What has been done to address the issue? How many PNF PVPs have been issued in core koala habitat under the Coffs Harbour Koala Management Plan since January 2011?

**ANSWER**

The Office of Environment and Heritage has been working directly with the Coffs Harbour City Council and the Department of Planning and Infrastructure to identify amendments to regulatory instruments to enhance the protection of koalas. This includes amendment of the Private Native Forestry Code and adoption of the Coffs Harbour Council Koala Plan of Management under State Environment Planning Policy (SEPP44).

In the Coffs Harbour Local Government Area, the Coffs Harbour Koala Plan of Management maps koala habitat according to primary, secondary and tertiary preferred koala habitat. Since January 2011, there have been 15 Private Native Forestry Property Vegetation Plans issued in the Coffs Harbour Local Government Area, including across primary, secondary and tertiary preferred koala habitat and other lands.

**QUESTION 24**

In relation to the former ADI site at St Mary's, Western Sydney

- a. Is the Minister aware that the recent Development Applications from Lend Lease and the subsequent approvals by Penrith Council would mean that their election promise to protect an additional 100 hectares on the former ADI site is jeopardised and that, furthermore, Penrith City Council's obligations under the Cumberland Plain Recovery Plan would be jeopardized.
- b. Did the Minister or the Department advise Penrith Council or Lend Lease of their obligations under the Recovery Plan in relation to this development application?
- c. Is the Minister aware of the qualifications of the consultant that conducted the Species Impact Statement for this development application? If so, what are they? Is it appropriate for environmental consultants to be able to submit SISs and to be relied upon to assess SIS when they have no botanical qualifications and when they have inadequate knowledge of the law as it pertains to endangered ecological communities such as Cumberland Plain Woodland?

**ANSWER**

- a. The regional environmental plan identifies approximately 900 ha of the 1538 ha ADI site will be protected within the regional park. Penrith Council's obligations are to meet the threatened species requirements under the relevant planning legislation for further development in the Penrith Local Government Area, and specific to the Recovery Plan, to also consider best management practice for the protection and management of Cumberland Plain Woodland remnants.
- b. The draft recovery plan was referred to Penrith City Council for endorsement in 2009. Comments on the draft were received from Penrith City Council in December 2009. Lend Lease does not have obligations under the recovery plan.
- c. The Minister is not aware of this person's qualifications. There are no statutory requirements for the author or reviewer of a species impact statement to have any specific qualifications. It is the role of the consent authority, Penrith Council in this instance, to appoint an appropriate reviewer and to review the SIS and determine its adequacy.

**QUESTION 25**

Budget for the Country, Culture and Heritage Division with OEH

- a. What was the actual budget for the Country, Culture and Heritage Division in 2010/11?
- b. What is the total budget for the Country, Culture and Heritage Division in 2011/12?
- c. How much of this is forecast to be spent specifically on:
  - i. Delivering programs to Aboriginal communities?
  - ii. Delivering Aboriginal culture and heritage /sites training courses?
  - iii. Staffing costs?
  - iv. Promoting Aboriginal heritage?
  - v. Increasing the number of Aboriginal 'objects' and 'places' protected?
  - vi. 'Providing Aboriginal people with opportunities to protect their culture and heritage and access traditional lands by increasing the number of Aboriginal co-management arrangement over national parks and other conservation areas' (Goal 26, NSW 2021)?
- d. How many Aboriginal staff are currently employed in the Country, Culture and Heritage division?
- e. How many Aboriginal environment/ heritage projects were undertaken with Aboriginal communities, supported by the NSW Government, in 2009-2010? What was the total amount of funding provided?
- f. The forecast for Aboriginal environment/ heritage projects under the Culture and Heritage in the 2011-12 budget papers is significantly reduced from previous years – by how much is the reduction in terms of numbers of projects and total budget? What is the cause of this budget reduction? Is there a reduction in the number or amount of grants available to support Aboriginal heritage projects?

**ANSWER**

- a. \$9.366 million (not including a proportion of agency-wide, shared/corporate service costs as per Budget Paper 3)
- b. \$9.085 million (not including a proportion of agency-wide, shared/corporate service costs as per Budget Paper 3)
- c.
  - i. Delivery of programs to Aboriginal communities includes both staffing costs and program allocations and is calculated at \$8.082 million in 2011/12. This includes programs to increase the number of Aboriginal 'objects' and 'places' protected.
  - ii. Delivering Aboriginal culture and heritage/sites training courses includes both staffing costs and program allocations and is estimated at \$0.065 million.
  - iii. Total staffing costs for Aboriginal cultural heritage are \$8.356 million.
  - iv. Promoting Aboriginal culture and heritage is core work for the Country, Culture and Heritage Division (CCHD). Staff and budget is not allocated separately.
  - v. Staffing costs and program allocations to increase the number of Aboriginal 'objects' and 'places' protected is \$3.160 million (approximately 40 per cent of the CCHD budget).
  - vi. The Parks and Wildlife Group manage the Aboriginal Co-management Program and has allocated \$7.2 million to co-management initiatives. CCHD contributes \$500,000 (mainly in staff activities) to co-management initiatives
- d. The Country, Culture and Heritage Division (CCHD) employs 58 Aboriginal staff.
- e. In 2009-10, CCHD completed 36 projects undertaken with Aboriginal communities. The total funding for these was \$2.015 million. This includes salaries of staff and operating budget for implementation of those culture and heritage projects.
- f. In 2011-12, CCHD is scheduled to complete 15 projects. The focus for CCHD will be managing the broad reform of Aboriginal culture and heritage legislation in NSW. CCHD staff and resources have been re-allocated and re-prioritised accordingly. Other CCHD

priorities include the declaration and management of Aboriginal Places under s. 84 of the NPW Act. There has also been a reduction in external funding received by CCHD for completion of projects.

**QUESTION 26**

Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System (AHIMS)

- a) How much money has been allocated in 2011/12 to improve the information contained in AHIMS? What specifically is this money intended to be spent on?
- b) What was the actual budget for managing and operating AHIMS in 2010/11?
- c) What is the forecast expenditure for operating the AHIMS database in 2011/12?
- d) How much revenue did the OEH (formerly DECCW) receive from operating the AHIMS (eg. Conducting searches for external clients) in 2010/11? What is the forecast revenue for operating AHIMS in 2011/12?
- e) How much money is allocated in the 2011/12 budget for delivering AHIMS services and related Aboriginal heritage information to Aboriginal communities?

**ANSWER**

- a) \$200,000 of capital funding has been allocated in 2011/2012 to enhance the functionality of the AHIMS system, including system and information improvements to AHIMS Web Services (AWS) and the recording of Aboriginal sites, Aboriginal places and Aboriginal conservation projects.
- b) \$0.496 million
- c) \$0.513 million
- d) The revenue received from AHIMS services in 2010-11 was \$0.176 million and the revenue forecast for 2011-12 is \$0.220 million.
- e) \$0.491 million

**QUESTION 27**

Investigations and prosecutions for Aboriginal heritage

- a) How many breaches related to Aboriginal heritage were reported to the OEH in 2010/11?
- b) How many incidents of unauthorised harm to Aboriginal heritage is OEH aware of, for the 2010- 2011 financial year, and 2011-2012 (to date)?
- c) How many of these incidents were investigated? If suspected harm to Aboriginal heritage was not investigated, why not (in each case)?
- d) What were the causes of the breaches or unauthorised harm to Aboriginal heritage that became known to the Department, in each case (for example vandalism, approved development, vehicle use near site)?
- e) How many incidents related to breaches of the 'due diligence' code/regulations were reported, or is the Department aware of, for 2011-12?
- f) What is the Office of Environment and Heritage's budget for responding to threats to or examples of possible unlawful destruction of Aboriginal heritage?
- g) What is the OEH's budget for specifically enforcing the laws relating to Aboriginal 'objects' and 'places'?
- h) How many staff currently employed by the Office of Environment are responsible for responding to possible unlawful destruction of Aboriginal heritage?
- i) How many incidents/reports related to harming Aboriginal heritage has the Office of Environment and Heritage in the forestry sector?

- j) What examples of unauthorised destruction of Aboriginal heritage by the forestry industry is the Minister or the Department aware of?
- k) How many alleged breaches have OEH, and its predecessor investigated in relation to Forests NSW in 2010 and 2011 in relation to Aboriginal cultural heritage?

**ANSWER**

- a) 73
- b) For the 2010-2011 financial year – 55 breaches.  
For the 2011-2012 financial year (to date) -26 breaches.
- c) All 81
- d) The causes of breaches known to OEH vary widely and it would be a significant task to develop a specific response to each reported case. The reported causes include:
- construction of fencing, roads, bridges, buildings and approved development;
  - general mine related activities, including geotechnical drilling and sand extraction;
  - trampling by trail bikes, bulldozers, trucks and pedestrians;
  - vegetation clearing, including private native forestry activities and general forestry practices;
  - earth moving and excavation;
  - water and electricity infrastructure, including council infrastructure works such as trenching and erection of signage;
  - rehabilitation works, salvage excavations and community collection; and
  - rabbit warren poisoning.
- e) The *Due Diligence Code of Practice for the Protection of Aboriginal Objects in New South Wales (2010)* assists individuals and organisations to exercise due diligence when carrying out activities that may harm Aboriginal objects and determine whether to apply for an Aboriginal Heritage Impact Permit (AHIP). The *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* provides that if due diligence has been exercised in accordance with the *Due Diligence Code of Practice for the Protection of Aboriginal Objects in New South Wales (2010)* and other codes as prescribed by the *National Parks and Wildlife Regulation 2009*, then that is a defence against prosecution for the strict liability offence if they later unknowingly harm an object without an AHIP. The exercise of due diligence outside of the process set out by the prescribed codes can constitute a defence if it is determined by a Court that due diligence had been exercised in the circumstance. In 2011-12, there have been no cases before Court involving due diligence as a defence against prosecution.
- f) The regulatory budget is not broken down by subject matter or statute, but staff and related costs, estimated to be \$900,000, were allocated to these activities.
- g) The regulatory budget is not broken down by subject matter or statute, but staff and related costs, estimated to be approximately \$1 million, were allocated to these activities.
- h) The regulatory effort is carried out by a number of staff, with about 8 EFT in total being allocated.
- i) For the 2010-2011 financial year –1  
For the 2011-2012 financial year (to date) -0

- j) In April 2010, OEH (then DECCW) investigated the alleged logging by Forests NSW within the Biamanga Aboriginal Place without consent. While it was determined that such harvesting did occur, it was concluded that it was not knowingly done and therefore, prosecution was not possible under the legislation in place at that time (the strict liability offence commenced in October 2010).
- k) For the 2010-2011 financial year –1 alleged breach.  
For the 2011-2012 financial year (to date) -0

**QUESTION 28**

Permits issued by the Office of Environment and Heritage to harm Aboriginal heritage/ AHIPs

- a) Has the number of Aboriginal heritage impact permits (AHIPs) issued by the Office of Environment and Heritage increased or decreased since the Aboriginal heritage amendments to the National Parks and Wildlife Act commenced in October 2010?
- b) Can the Office of Environment and Heritage provide reasons for any increases or decreases?

**ANSWER**

- a) The number of AHIPs issued by the Office of Environment and Heritage has decreased since the commencement of the of the new Aboriginal heritage provisions in the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*.

The number of AHIPs issued for the 12 months from:

- October 2009 to October 2010 was 137 permits;
  - October 2010 to October 2011 was 82 permits.
- b) Before the changes to the NPW Act on 1 October 2010, two permits were required for the majority of activities: one for the initial survey work and another for the impact on known (and likely) Aboriginal objects due to the activity itself. The new provisions collapse these requirements into a single regulatory provision.

**QUESTION 29**

Aboriginal involvement in natural resource management (NRM)

- a) How much funding has been allocated to 'increasing Aboriginal participation in natural resource management' in 2011/12?
- b) How is this funding to be distributed between Green Teams and other Aboriginal groups?
- c) In February 2011 the Government closed public consultation and submission processes in relation the NSW Biodiversity Strategy. Has the Strategy been finalized yet? If not, when is it expected to be finalized?

**ANSWER**

- a) In 2011/12, the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) allocates staff time to develop initiatives to increase Aboriginal participation in natural resource management and providing a chair and secretariat to the Working Group for Indigenous Participation in NRM and Primary Industries, although there is not a separate budget for this area.
- b) OEH contributes \$75,000 to the Many Rivers Regional Partnership (Green Team Alliance).

- c) I am advised that the OEH is reviewing submissions from the consultation on the draft NSW Biodiversity Strategy and expects to finalise a submission to Government in early 2012. The OEH has been reviewing the 88 submissions received on the draft Strategy and revising the document to address these issues for consideration by Government.

## **Questions from the Hon Amanda Fazio MLC**

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### **QUESTION 30**

Do you agree that the remaining 62 timber truss road bridges are a significant part of the State's heritage?

### **ANSWER**

The process for determining whether or not an item is of State heritage significance requires:

- a formal nomination;
- the Heritage Council of NSW's assessment of the identified significance values; and
- a public and stakeholder consultation process.

The Heritage Council's independent advice is then provided to me, as Minister for Heritage, to make the final determination of an item's value.

29 of the remaining 62 bridges of this class in NSW are already listed on the Register. The standard assessment process set-out above would need to be followed to determine if any of the other bridges also warrant State Heritage Register protection.

### **QUESTION 31**

Why are only 29 on the State Heritage Register?

### **ANSWER**

The current 29 listed timber truss bridges were added to the State Heritage Register in 1999, following endorsement by the Heritage Council of the former Roads and Traffic Authority's (RTA) Heritage and Conservation Register. These 29 bridges had, at that time, been identified to have State heritage value.

There have been no additional bridges nominated for listing on the State Heritage Register.

### **QUESTION 32**

Given the increased use of B-doubles and B-triples on rural and regional roads, what action will you take to protect these bridges that you acknowledge are part of our heritage?

### **ANSWER**

I am advised that Roads and Maritime Services are currently developing a strategy to address this issue and are liaising with the Heritage Council regarding this strategy.

My role under the *NSW Heritage Act 1977* is to consider recommendations that might come from the Heritage Council in relation to this matter. There are already heritage protections in place for the 29 bridges currently listed on the State Heritage register.

### **QUESTION 33**

Will you delist a bridge from the State Heritage Register if it cannot cope with the transport loadings and traffic that is using it?

**ANSWER**

There is a rigorous process to be followed for a delisting. If the Roads and Maritime Services determines that a bridge listed on the State Heritage Register cannot cope with the transport loadings and traffic using it, they will be obliged to make a formal submission to the Heritage Council to justify why it should be delisted. The Heritage Council will then consider the submission and seek public comment on the proposal. After considering public submissions, the Heritage Council would make its recommendation to me.

The Heritage Council may consider a range of factors in recommending the delisting of an item from the State Heritage Register, which include:

- A) If the Council is of the opinion that the item is not of State heritage significance, or
- B) there is an opinion that the long-term conservation of the item is not necessary, and that either or both of the following apply to the item:
  - (i) State listing renders the item incapable of reasonable or economic use,
  - (ii) State listing causes undue financial hardship to the owner, mortgagee or lessee of the item or the land on which the item is situated.

**QUESTION 34**

Do you endorse the RTA's preservation plans for these remaining 62 timber truss road bridges?

**ANSWER**

My role is not to endorse Roads and Maritime Service's strategy. My role under the *Heritage Act* will be to determine any formal requests for delisting under the Act.

**QUESTION 35**

Can you detail what those plans are?

**ANSWER**

I am aware that details of the strategy are under discussion between Roads and Maritime Services and the Heritage Council

**QUESTION 36**

What is the indexation of funding to the Heritage Council? Has it matched inflation?

**ANSWER**

The Heritage Council is not a budget reporting entity. The Heritage Council is a not-for-profit entity constituted under the *Heritage Act 1977*.

**QUESTION 37**

What is happening with the grants program?

- a) Is it the case, as indicated on the website, that most of the grants applications closed in December 2010?
- b) Have the successful grants been announced? If not, when?
- c) When is the next round of grants funding opening?

- d) Will the funding be maintained for each of the programs until 2013?

**ANSWER**

- a) Competitively bid applications for the current two year 2011-2013 NSW Heritage Grants funding program closed in December 2010. However, two other programs, the Aboriginal heritage projects and Special Projects programs, are open all year to receive applications.
- b) All of the successful grants approved by the former Minister for Planning under the 2011-2013 NSW Heritage Grants program have been announced and are available on the heritage website.
- c) The next round of funding for the 2013-2015 NSW Heritage Grants program will open in October 2012.
- d) Yes.

**QUESTION 38**

Given the announcement by the NSW National Trust that they will have to "mothball" a number of heritage properties due to a funding shortfall, what assistance will you give to the National Trust so that they can avoid this course of action and continue to conserve these important properties?

**ANSWER**

The Government acknowledges the critical role played by the National Trust of NSW in conserving the State's heritage. The Trust is a community based charity, independent of government, addressing all aspects of heritage through advocacy, conservation and education programs.

The NSW Government has traditionally recognised the contribution of the National Trust through grant funding. Eight National Trust projects totalling \$481,000 were approved under the 2011-2013 NSW Heritage Grants and Hunter Region Heritage Grants funding programs.

In recognition of the value of the National Trust to the community of NSW and its current financial difficulties, I invited the Trust to submit to me a proposal which would outline ways the National Trust can continue into the long term in a sustainable manner.

I would like to be satisfied the Trust has the capacity to manage an increased budget and that such an increased budget would remedy the Trust's financial situation. I have therefore asked the Office of Environment and Heritage to organise a performance review of the Trust.

**QUESTION 39**

Phones

- a) How many blackberries does DPC assign to your Ministerial staff and to whom have they been issued?
- b) How many iPads does DPC assign to your Ministerial office and to whom have they been issued?
- c) How many iPads have you purchased for your office and to whom have they been issued?
- d) How many iPhones does DPC assign to your Ministerial office and to whom have they been issued?
- e) How many iPhones have you purchased for your office and to whom have they been issued?
- f) For each phone or device, how much was each bill from April to October?
- g) How many phones or devices have been lost in your office?
- h) What is the cost of replacing those phones or devices?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

a. to e. For all Ministerial Offices, there is a total of:

- i. BlackBerry devices – 151
- ii. iPads – 19
- iii iPhones - 3

f. Ministerial Offices in the NSW Government from April 2011 to October 2011 spent a total of \$88,902. This compares with \$238,567 spent under the previous NSW Government from October 2010 to March 2011.

g. to h. For all Ministerial Offices in the NSW Government, there has been one stolen phone, which cost \$577 (ex GST) to replace.

**QUESTION 40**

Media/public relations

- a) How many media or public relations advisers are employed for each of your portfolio agencies?
- b) What is the forecast for 2011-12 for the number of media or public relations advisers to be employed and their total cost?
- c) How many media or public relations advisers are employed in your ministerial office?

**ANSWER**

Office of Environment and Heritage	<p>As at 9 November 2011,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) employed 10.8 equivalent full time staff in its Public Affairs Branch, 4 of which are regional, with responsibility for significant and diverse programs including, but not limited to, National Parks, environmental regulation including the Environment Protection Authority, waste, chemicals, air and water quality radiation control, Heritage including Aboriginal cultural heritage, and internal staff and external stakeholder communications.</li> <li>b) The forecast for 2011-12 for the number of OEH Public Affairs staff was 11.8 equivalent full time positions. The total 2011-12 forecast salary related cost for OEH Public Affairs staff as at November 2011 is \$1.4 million.</li> </ul>
Historic Houses Trust	<p>As at 9 November 2011,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) HHT has a total of 2 whose titles are Media Relations Manager and a Publicity Assistant who raise awareness of HHT's 12 properties as well as our exhibitions, public programs and education programs. These employees and exhibition activities generate self funding revenue for HHT.</li> <li>b) HHT's Media is forecast to remain the same during 2011/12 with 2 employees at a total cost of \$138,156.</li> </ul>
Western Sydney Parklands Trust	<p>As at 9 November 2011,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The Trust employs one part time staff member with some</li> </ul>

	<p>media and public relations functions.</p> <p>b) In 2011-12 the Trust will employ one part time staff member with some media or public relations functions at a cost for the year of \$15,037.</p>
Parramatta Parklands	<p>As at 9 November 2011,</p> <p>a) Nil</p> <p>b) Nil</p>
Lord Howe Island	<p>As at 9 November 2011,</p> <p>a) Nil</p> <p>b) Nil</p>
Taronga Conservation Society Australia	<p>As at 9 November 2011,</p> <p>a) The Taronga Conservation Society Australia has 4 Media Relations positions at Taronga Zoo and 0.5 positions at Taronga Western Plains Zoo. They fill critical roles in providing public information, promoting community conservation initiatives and generating public interest in wildlife issues and the zoos.</p> <p>b) It is forecast that the number of Media Relations officers will remain at 4.5 across both zoos during 2011-12 with total wage costs of \$408,931. Total wages including on-costs will be \$503,405.</p>
Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust	<p>As at 9 November 2011,</p> <p>a) One</p> <p>b) One, the total cost for this employee is forecast for 2011-12 at \$80,096.</p>
Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain Trust	<p>As at 9 November 2011,</p> <p>a) RBGDT employs one full-time Public Affairs and Community Relations Manager, and one part-time Public Relations Coordinator (FTE 0.6).</p> <p>b) Total FTE of 1.6 for 2011-12 at \$161,940</p>

- c) I am advised that Ministerial staff numbers and salary bands are available on the Department of Premier and Cabinet website.

#### **QUESTION 41**

##### Overseas trips

- a) Have any of your overseas trips in the past year been paid for in part or in full by using public money?
- b) If so, did any of your relatives or friends accompany you on these trips?

#### **ANSWER**

I am advised:

a. to b. Information regarding Ministerial travel is available on the relevant Minister's appropriate agency website, in accordance with Ministerial Memorandum M2009-10 'Release of Overseas Travel Information'.

#### **QUESTION 42**

Office costs

- a) What is the annual remuneration package for your chief of staff?
- b) What is the annual remuneration package for your head media advisor?
- c) What is the annual remuneration package for each of your staff?
- d) What is the estimated expenditure for your office budget in 2011-12?
- e) Have any office renovations or fit outs been undertaken in your ministerial office since April?
- f) If so, could you give details of contracted costs?
- g) What is your office budget?
- h) How many political advisors are in your office?
- i) How many administration staff?
- j) How many Department Liaison officers are assigned to your office?
- k) How many staff in the Department are assigned to Ministerial support duties?

#### **ANSWER**

I am advised:

a. to c. and h. to i. Ministerial staff numbers and salary bands are available on the Department of Premier and Cabinet website.

d. and g. Based on actual expenditure patterns, total forecast expenditures for all Ministerial offices are set out to be \$36,900,000 in 2011/12. This compares to \$47,046,453 spent by the former NSW Government from April 2010 to March 2011.

e. and f. Expenditure of \$100 (ex GST) was attributable to office fitout costs. This information is sourced from contractor invoices. This does not include cleaning costs or electronic items purchased or replaced, such as televisions, digital radios, small appliances and whitegoods.

j. Two

k. Within the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH), there are staff located in the Ministerial and Parliamentary Services Branch of the Policy, Economics and Governance Division. As the main conduit between the Minister's Office and the OEH, this Branch is responsible for a broad range of coordination services both internally, across all seven key functional areas of OEH and the Parks Gardens Houses and Zoos Cluster, and to the Office of the Minister. Staff are therefore not individually assigned to Ministerial support duties. While the Branch plays a key role in supporting the Minister (responding to correspondence, parliamentary and Cabinet processes etc), its 16.4 EFT positions have broader responsibilities that enable the OEH to respond to many service delivery functions.

#### **QUESTION 43**

Cabcharge

- a) In terms of your ministerial office, how much did your office spend on taxi fares, including Cabcharge since April?

#### **ANSWER**

I am advised:

- a. For all Ministerial offices, the cost of Cabcharge was \$38,806.38 over 6 months from April 2011 to September 2011. This is compared with the cost of \$78,023.11 in the 6 months of the previous NSW Government from October 2010 to March 2011.

**QUESTION 44**

## Restructure

- a) Are any of your portfolio agencies undergoing a restructure?
- b) How many jobs are expected to be cut as a result of that restructure?
- c) How many people are expected to have their wages cut as a result of that restructure?
- d) How many voluntary redundancies are expected to be offered as a result of that restructure?

**ANSWER**

Office of Environment & Heritage	As at 9 November 2011, a) Yes. b) This has not yet been determined. c) This has not yet been determined. d) This has not yet been determined.
Western Sydney Parklands Trust	As at 9 November 2011, a) Yes b) Nil c) 1 position has been reclassified. d) Nil
Parramatta Park Trust	As at 9 November 2011, a) Nil b) Nil c) Nil d) Nil
Lord Howe Island	As at 9 November 2011, a) Nil b) Nil c) Nil d) Nil
The Royal Botanic Gardens & Domain Trust	As at 9 November 2011, a) Nil b) Nil c) Nil d) Nil
Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust	As at 9 November 2011, a) Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust is undergoing an organisational review. This commenced in June 2011 following the appointment of a new Director and Chief Executive and the development a new 5 year business strategy.

	<p>b) It is not intended to cut any jobs as part of this organisational review.</p> <p>c) It is not expected that employees will have their wages cut as part of this organisational review.</p> <p>d) It is not intended to provide any voluntary redundancies as part of this organisational review.</p>
Historic Houses Trust	<p>As at 9 November 2011,</p> <p>a) Yes</p> <p>b) On completion of the entire restructure process the HHT will have reduced its FTE positions by 10.4.</p> <p>c) There will be no significant wage cuts for staff members unless they choose to accept a lower graded position than they are currently in.</p> <p>d) This has not yet been determined.</p>
Taronga Conservation Society Australia	<p>As at 9 November 2011,</p> <p>a) Yes</p> <p>b) Two</p> <p>c) None</p> <p>d) Two</p>

**QUESTION 45**

Agency costs

- a) What is your agency's catering budget?
- b) Since April, has the agency changed its [sic] branding?
- c) How much was spent on re-branding the agency?
- d) How much has been spent on stationary [sic]?

**ANSWER**

- a) The Office of Environment & Heritage catering expenditure has been at stable levels over the past 5 years ranging from \$1.1m to \$1.5m per year (approximately 0.1% of the Budget in 2010-11). The majority of the catering is associated with PWG community consultation activities, including Aboriginal Co-management, Fire management and Parks Services and Tourism.
- b) Yes. Because of the Administrative Order of 4 April 2011, there was a transition from the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water (DECCW) to the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) within the Department of Premier and Cabinet. Most DECCW functions were transferred to OEH.
- c) The total cost of the change of name from DECCW to OEH is estimated at \$29,650 as at 30 June 2011. OEH has worked to keep costs incurred to a modest level by continuing, to the extent possible, to use existing branded resources and stationery until stocks are exhausted.
- d) Of the \$29,650, approximately \$19,000 has been spent on OEH stationery re-branding.

**QUESTION 46**

Correspondence

- a) How long is the average turnaround for responding to correspondence in your agency?
- b) How many pieces of correspondence have been outstanding for more than 60 days?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

a. and b. The Department of Premier and Cabinet's recommended time frame for completing responses to correspondence from Ministers, Members of Parliament and members of the public is 20 working days from the Department's receipt of the correspondence. However, it is not always possible to comply with this time frame for any number of reasons including: the nature and complexity of the matter; stakeholder consultation; or further information required from other Departments and sources.

**QUESTION 47**

Paying bills on time

- a) Since April, on how many occasions has the agency not paid a supplier or contractor for more than 30 days?
- b) How many bills have been outstanding for longer than that period?

**ANSWER**

- a) Since April 2011, 87% of payments were made to suppliers within 30 days and 13% were not paid in that timeframe.
- b) Since April 2011 81% of invoices were paid within 30 days and 19% of invoices were outstanding for longer than 30 days

Some suppliers may have payments terms that are longer than 30 days.

The main reasons for accounts being paid outside the due date period were:

- invoices raised for large capital works are only paid on satisfactory review of the work;
- invoices raised for large capital purchases may include items not yet received but expected to be received in the near future;
- some short payment terms are not necessarily appropriate in more remote settings where the documentation may take time to be collected and matched for payment.

**QUESTION 48**

In relation to Grants to Non-Government Organisations

- a) Does your department provide recurrent grant funds to non-government organisations? If yes,
  - i. What are the names of all organisations in receipt of funding?
  - ii. What is the total amount of funding received by each organisation, including goods and services tax?
  - iii. On what date was the funding advanced?
  - iv. What was the purpose for each grant or funding advance?
  - v. Was any funding withheld or returned?
  - vi. If so, what were the reasons for withholding or requiring the funding to be returned?
- b) What is the indexation rate applied to non recurrent grant funds in 2011/2012?

**ANSWER**

I am advised as follows:

a. i. - vi. Relevant information will be available in the Department of Premier and Cabinet annual report, the Environmental Trust annual report, and the Climate Change Fund annual report. Details of NSW Heritage Grants for 2010/11 are available at [www.heritage.nsw.gov.au](http://www.heritage.nsw.gov.au).

**QUESTION 49**

In relation to feasibility studies, audits, taskforces and reviews:

- a) Is your department currently undertaking any feasibility studies, audits, taskforces or reviews, If so;
- i. What are the terms of reference or details of each study, audit, taskforce or review?
  - ii. Who is conducting the study, audit, taskforce or review?
  - iii. Was each study, audit, taskforce or review was publically advertised seeking expression of interest or competitive tenders?
  - iv. Is there a contract in place detailing terms of engagement for the study, audit, taskforce or review?
  - v. What is the timeline of each study, audit, taskforce or review?
  - vi. What are the details of any costs involved in each study, audit, taskforce or review?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

As with previous NSW Governments, the Government undertakes feasibility studies, audits, taskforces and reviews to inform government decision making. A number of feasibility studies, audits, taskforces and reviews are currently being undertaken across the NSW Government.