



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO. 5

MEMORANDUM

To	Hon Ian Cohen MLC Hon Richard Colless MLC Hon Kayee Griffin MLC Hon Sylvia Hale MLC Hon Don Harwin MLC Hon Henry Tsang MLC Hon Tony Catanzariti MLC	cc:	Hon Don Harwin MLC Hon Peter Primrose MLC Hon Duncan Gay MLC
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From Tanya Bosch

Subject Answers to Questions on Notice - Primary Industries

Date 27 October 2004

Reference

Please find attached a copy of the answers provided to the questions taken on notice by the Hon Ian McDonald MP, Minister for Primary Industries at the Budget Estimates hearing on Wednesday 15 September 2004.

Tanya Bosch
Director, Budget Estimates



NEW SOUTH WALES

MINISTER FOR PRIMARY INDUSTRIES

26 October 2004

The Director
General Purpose Standing Committees
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney 2000

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
COMMITTEES**

27 OCT 2004

RECEIVED

Dear Ms Bosch

Please find attached my answers to questions I took on notice during the General Purpose Standing Committee No.5 Hearing on 15 September 2004, in my capacity as Minister for Primary Industries. I understand an emailed version has been sent to you also.

Please arrange for the answers to be published in accordance with the procedures of the Legislative Council.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ian Macdonald'.

Ian Macdonald

**BUDGET QUESTIONS
QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE DURING THE HEARING**

QUESTIONS 1 TO 59

**QUESTION 1, PAGE 1
GAY TO MACDONALD**

Minister, according to the mini-budget and the budget papers, \$37 million is to be cut from the Department of Primary Industries [DPI]. Will you give the Committee a breakdown of exactly where that money will be cut from?

ANSWER

\$20m Forests NSW (DPI Trading)

\$17m DPI – from the other DPI divisions.

**QUESTION 2, PAGE 3.
GAY TO MACDONALD**

In The Land on 5 August 2004 you said that you would only have to cut \$17 million from the DPI because of the sale of an extra \$20 million worth of timber. How much is coming from the sale of timber?

ANSWER

Primary Industries Trading, which includes Forests NSW, will contribute to the \$37 million savings identified by Budget Committee for the whole of the Department of Primary Industries (DPI). This will initially be achieved by increasing the previously agreed dividends by \$20 million per annum for 2004/05.

Primary Industries Trading is implementing a challenging series of programs to achieve this increased dividend.

Initially, focus has been placed on achieving the improvements in trading performance by assessing opportunities to reduce fragmentation and duplication of corporate service support functions, increasing revenues from new business and achieving operational efficiencies across all operational and corporate sections of the business.

**QUESTION 3, PAGE 4.
COLLESS TO MACDONALD**

In relation to the proceeds of the sale of the Shannon Vale research station at Glen Innes, did the Minister give an undertaking that money from the sale of these facilities would be re-channelled into improving research facilities at other research stations?

ANSWER

The Minister gave an undertaking to follow Treasury guidelines.

**QUESTION 4, PAGE 6.
GAY TO MACDONALD**

Why and how were Grafton, Gosford, Temora and Deniliquin agricultural research facilities originally selected for closure? Could you give me the reasons for each of them?

ANSWER

In each case a proposal was put forward by the Department with the view to reducing the costs associated with underutilised research facilities.

**QUESTION 5, PAGE 7.
COHEN TO MACDONALD**

Minister, are you aware that the number of threatened fauna and flora species that Forests NSW are finding prior to logging is declining each year? Could that be due to poor survey effort or is reduction in threatened species due to ongoing loss of habitat in Forests NSW?

ANSWER

Records reported by Forests NSW in public documentation between 1998 and 2003 show variations in the sightings of threatened species and native species generally - with increases in some years and decreases in others. There are a number of reasons for this variation including:

- The types of surveys undertaken;
- Forest type planned for harvesting;
- Time of year that surveys are undertaken;
- Climatic conditions such as drought.

**QUESTION 9, PAGE 8
COHEN TO MACDONALD**

Does the analysis indicate that the cost of poisoning, logging and chipping camphor laurels for so-called green energy far exceed the financial return?

ANSWER

The introduction of mandatory emissions reductions targets for NSW electricity retailers since the camphor harvesting program started has made all forms of renewable biomass energy a more economic proposition. Nevertheless, it was never expected that harvesting for renewable energy alone was a viable economic proposition. Forests NSW is developing a packaged approach to the utilisation of camphor, comprising:

- development of complementary end markets such as craft log and sawlog for the better parts of each tree to enhance net returns and potentially increase regional employment from the value adding of craft logs and sawlogs;
- recognition of the significant greenhouse gas benefits arising from generating electricity from a species generally regarded as a noxious weed, in comparison to generation of electricity from coal;
- utilisation for energy production of the residues from this solid wood processing, where practical;
- poisoning of the camphor on site to enhance the natural drying process, thereby improving the energy efficiency of combustion and accelerating the decay of the stump and root system, which together prevent regeneration and improve land reclamation;
- reduction in the spread of an invasive noxious exotic weed;
- releasing of native species when competing camphor trees are removed;
- the development, where practical, of opportunities for replanting and rehabilitation of sites with native species;
- the reclamation of productive land which landowners were previously denied due to the prohibitive cost of clearing camphor.

The economic, social and environmental benefits derived from these outcomes are considered more valuable than the cost of poisoning, logging and chipping camphor laurel for green energy.

**QUESTION 10a, PAGE 8
COHEN TO MACDONALD**

Has Forests NSW undertaken an energy audit to determine whether the energy inputs into logging, chipping and transporting camphor laurels chips to Broadwater and Condong exceed the energy outputs?

The number of species recorded during pre-harvest surveys is neither an indication of quality of the survey effort nor of the quantity and quality of habitat in State forest. Different forest areas are planned for harvesting each year. Thus, the frequency of Forests NSW sightings and the species sighted in any year will differ simply because different forests are surveyed from one year to the next.

**QUESTION 6, PAGE 7.
COHEN TO MACDONALD**

How much money or indirect benefits such as travel expenses has Forests NSW provided to groups who are signatories of the Ourimbah protocol since its inception? Was there any sort of open tendering process for this money?

ANSWER

Forests NSW has not provided any money to groups who are signatories to the Ourimbah Protocol. However, during the formative stages in the development of the Protocol, Forests NSW met the costs of travel and accommodation (\$6,640) for representatives of the partner groups in the Protocol for study tours to visit and evaluate community partnership models for managing forests in southern NSW and northern Victoria.

**QUESTION 7, PAGE 8
COHEN TO MACDONALD**

Forests NSW estimates the area of camphor laurel in the Northern Rivers is about 70,000 hectares. How was that figure derived?

ANSWER

Studies of camphor laurel distribution have been made by Byron and Tweed Shires and the former Department of Land and Water Conservation, now the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources. These estimates were made using aerial photography. The 70,000 hectares figure would represent an "average" derived from these studies, taking into account that camphor laurel is distributed beyond Byron and Tweed Shires.

**QUESTION 8, PAGE 8
COHEN TO MACDONALD**

Has Forests New South Wales undertaken a cost-benefit analysis of the logging of camphor laurel forests in the Byron Bay region?

ANSWER

Yes.

ANSWER

Forests NSW has calculated that the energy used in harvesting, chipping and transport of the fuel is equivalent to less than 10 per cent of the energy contained in the delivered fuel.

**QUESTION 10b, PAGE 8
COHEN TO MACDONALD**

Is there any net gain in saving greenhouse causing pollution?

ANSWER

See response to question 10a.

**QUESTION 11, PAGE 8
COHEN TO MACDONALD**

Are you aware that the actual resolution agreed at the last Gene Technology Grains Committee meeting was not an acceptance of protocols but an acknowledgment that outstanding issues have been passed to the canola reference group, which has not yet met to resolve the outstanding issues? Is it wise to test co-existence principles that have not yet addressed the outstanding issues?

ANSWER

The minutes of the last Gene Technology Grains Committee meeting reflect the proposed establishment of a Canola Reference Group (CRG) that would be tasked to undertake a number of activities. The CRG has not been established because the lack of co-existence trials across canola-growing States does not warrant its immediate existence. I am confident that, if an application for co-existence trials were again submitted to my office, the NSW Agricultural Advisory Council would assess that application to ensure that any reasonable issues had been addressed.

**QUESTION 12, PAGE 9
COHEN TO MACDONALD**

Have you been advised by the committee that the coexistence plans that they intend to test use definitions that do not comply with law as contamination of up to 0.9 per cent is expected to be tolerated in non-GM crops, when it would not be legal?

ANSWER

The relevant levels of inadvertent presence of GM material in non-GM product, and the suitability of segregation protocols to meet such levels, will be negotiated between the product supplier and the purchaser.

QUESTION 13, PAGE 10 COHEN TO MACDONALD

What action have you or your department taken to rehabilitate the hundreds of old cattle dip sites in northern New South Wales that are threatening the water quality of countless streams and rivers?

ANSWER

The department has instituted a program of decommissioning dips, generally at the request of the owner. This involves:

- removing the outer yards;
- pumping and filtering out the dip fluid;
- composting the sludge in the dip bath to break down residual chemical;
- placing dip timbers and other potentially contaminated material in the bath;
- capping the bath with a concrete lid, complete with an identification plate and safety sign; and
- revegetating the site to reduce the risk of erosion.

Significant research and development was undertaken by NSW Agriculture to ensure the stages involving filtering the dip fluid and composting the sludge address environmental concerns.

Over 500 dip sites have been decommissioned to date.

Departmental staff assessed dip sites looking at such things as proximity to public areas and waterways, potential for erosion, etc. On-ground testing has indicated that migration of soil off-site is not a concern because the sites are generally well-vegetated. Staff identified a small number of sites which are potentially sensitive and are therefore carefully monitored, particularly after weather events which could assist erosion.

For those sites still active, staff and stockowners are required to have requisite training for pesticide use, which includes a requirement to consider environmental risks. All measures are directed to ensuring that dip sites do not pose a risk to water quality.

**QUESTION 14, PAGE 10
COHEN TO MACDONALD**

Could you tell the Committee what program the Department of Primary Industries has in place to reduce the runoff of sulphuric acid from acid sulfate soils?

ANSWER

The Department currently has research, extension and on-ground remediation programs to reduce acid runoff from acid sulfate soils. These programs are focussed on agricultural land management practices including drainage, land formation and floodgate controls as well as understanding the impact of acid on aquatic habitat and ecosystems.

The relationship between acid export, groundwater hydrology and land management practices continue to be monitored at Shark Creek, near Grafton on the NSW north coast. This builds upon previous research undertaken at the site, part of a major research project looking at floodplain hydrology and best management practice for acid sulfate soils. The site is now part of the Environmental Services Scheme being piloted by the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources. The Department is keen to further extend the results of this research such that it becomes adopted as standard practice.

The impact acid sulfate soil runoff has on aquatic ecosystems and fish species has been researched. This has provided valuable insight into the level of acidity fish and prawns prefer, can tolerate or will avoid if possible. This has helped establish water quality target levels. The Department also plays a major role in identifying causes of fish kills through its Veterinary Laboratory at Wollongbar.

At an advisory level the Department continues its role in disseminating the latest information on managing acid sulfate soils through its flagship publication, ASSAY. The ASSAY newsletter is now in its tenth year of publication, and has a national readership of nearly 2,000 people.

The Department continues to assist local government implement best management practice for the thousands of kilometres of publicly owned flood mitigation drains located on NSW's coastal floodplains. The Department has assisted local councils to improve tidal exchange in over 50 drainage systems. It also plays key supporting roles to initiatives such as the Clarence, Richmond and Macleay Floodplain Projects providing technical advice and advisory services.

On-farm the Department has active demonstration projects in the Richmond and Clarence floodplains. These projects in areas such as the Bungawalbyn, Rocky Mouth Creek and Little Broadwater demonstrate management options to improve

water quality, improve fish habitat and improve grazing production from wet pastures.

The Department of Primary Industries is also a partner in Wetland Care Australia's Fish Unlimited Project. The Project is piloting the use of incentives to assist in the implementation of best management practice in the lowest lying floodplain country.

**QUESTION 15, PAGE 11
HALE TO MACDONALD**

In relation to deliberations of the GM advisory council, will any parts of those reports ever be released?

ANSWER

No, the deliberations of the GM advisory council may contain commercially sensitive material.

**QUESTION 16, PAGES 12 AND 13
COLLESS TO MACDONALD**

In relation to the Glen Innes long-term rotation trial, will you give an undertaking that that trial will not be closed down?

ANSWER

There are no plans to cease the Glenn Innes long term rotation trial.

**QUESTION 17, PAGE 14
GAY TO MACDONALD**

In relation to the cost of voluntary redundancies, could you draw our attention, not at this stage but at some other stage, to where that sum of money appears in Treasury figures?

ANSWER

I am advised that it is too early in the financial year to determine the number of staff who might accept a voluntary redundancy in 2004-05. It is therefore impossible for NSW Treasury to estimate an exact cost.

**QUESTION 18, PAGE 15
COLLESS TO MACDONALD**

Are you expecting retirements or resignations from agronomists in Tamworth and Inverell later this year?

ANSWER

I am advised that no formal retirement or resignation has been received from Agronomists at Tamworth and Inverell.

**QUESTION 19, PAGE 16
COLLESS TO MACDONALD**

In relation to the comprehensive regional assessment of the Brigalow Belt South Bioregion, the Rt Hon. Ian Sinclair has prepared a report on behalf of the Government. Can you make that report public?

ANSWER

The report by the Rt Hon Ian Sinclair on the Brigalow Belt assessment options was commissioned by my colleague the Minister for Natural Resources.

**QUESTION 20, PAGE 17
GAY TO MACDONALD**

How many jobs have been cut or left unfilled within the Trangie Agricultural Research Station over the past nine years? The figures we would be interested in are those for the research offices.

ANSWER

The Department does not maintain records on this issue for the period in question.

**QUESTION 21, PAGE 17
GAY TO MACDONALD**

How many positions in the Dubbo Department of Primary Industries office have been cut or left unfilled over the past two years?

ANSWER

The Department does not maintain records on this issue for the period in question.

**QUESTION 22, PAGE 18
GAY TO MACDONALD**

How many jobs have been cut or positions left unfilled within the Deniliquin Agricultural Research and Advisory Station over the past nine years?

ANSWER

The Department does not maintain records on this issue for the period in question.

QUESTION 23, PAGE 18
GAY TO MACDONALD

How many jobs have been cut or left unfilled within the Gosford Agricultural Research and Advisory Station over the past nine years?

ANSWER

The Department does not maintain records on this issue for the period in question.

QUESTION 24, PAGE 18
GAY TO MACDONALD

What is the average salary range of the seven members of the executive management team?

ANSWER

The average SES level for the Executive Management team approximates SES Level 5. This Level has a current package range of \$190,551 to \$219,850.

QUESTION 25, PAGE 18
GAY TO MACDONALD

Was the \$657,350 New South Wales Ovine Johne's disease [OJD] abattoir surveillance program cut back to the generic animal disease management program budget of \$30,000 after the New South Wales OJD management program began on 1 July?

ANSWER

No.

QUESTION 26, PAGE 18
COLLESS TO MACDONALD

In relation to the issue of the softwood plantations and the ABN AMRO report, do you have any idea what the cost of that study was?

ANSWER

The ABN AMRO report in relation to the Plantations Scoping Study is being managed by NSW Treasury. Your question should be directed to the Treasurer.

**QUESTION 27, PAGE 18
COLLESS TO MACDONALD**

In relation to sale of the plantation assets, what is the estimated return to the Government if the sale proceeds?

ANSWER

See response to Question 26.

**QUESTION 28, PAGE 19
HALE TO MACDONALD**

In relation to the gazettal of public lands for hunting, you say that no land has been gazetted. Can you explain to the Committee what is the hold-up, and what land is being considered for gazettal?

ANSWER

As defined in the Act a thorough and systematic process must be followed prior to the declaration of public lands for hunting. Various tracts of public lands within the State are currently being assessed taking into consideration all necessary aspects including species and populations. There is no hold up.

**QUESTION 29, PAGES 19 AND 20
HALE TO MACDONALD**

In relation to ongoing talks with State Forests regarding the use of public land by shooters, when do you anticipate a decision being made?

ANSWER

A decision will only be made once the appropriate processes have been followed and when the respective agency heads are satisfied with the contents of the application and recommend declaration.

**QUESTION 30, PAGE 20
HALE TO MACDONALD**

When shooters are given access to State forests, who will cover the insurance for members of the public who could be injured by shooters?

ANSWER

No decision has yet been made to give game hunters access to State Forests. The issue of insurance will be determined prior to such access being granted.

QUESTION 31, PAGE 20
HALE TO MACDONALD

Could you provide the names of the 16 members of the Game Council? How many people are being employed by the Game Council? What are their positions?

ANSWER

Robert Borsak (Charman), Robert Brown, Roy Smith, Rod Drew, Eric Davis, David Leyonhjelm, George Court, Anthony English, Max King, Chris Lane, John Mumford, Cilla Kinross, Paul Wells. The remaining three Councillor positions are currently the subject of my consideration of nominees.

The current staff of the Game Council are the Chief Executive Officer, Operations Manager, Public Relations Manager, Executive Assistant, Trainee Administration Assistant, Casual Administration Assistant and five Game Managers.

QUESTION 32a, PAGE 20
HALE TO MACDONALD

How many people have applied for game licences?

ANSWER

710 as at close of business 15th September 2004

QUESTION 32b, PAGE 20
HALE TO MACDONALD

How many people have applied to become licence distributors?

ANSWER

24 as at close of business 15th September 2004

QUESTION 33, PAGE 21
HALE TO MACDONALD

Would you be able to provide the Committee with the projected revenue stream from game licences for the next five years and also indicate what the revenue will be used for?

ANSWER

It is estimated that in 5 years the number of licences will reach upwards of 50,000, bringing an estimated total revenue of \$1.8 million. The revenue will be used for

operational and administration activities of the Game Council as well as the functions prescribed within the Act.

**QUESTION 34, PAGE 21
HALE TO MACDONALD**

Finally, what wildfowl can be hunted by shooters who have game licences?

ANSWER

The *Game and Feral Animal Control Act 2002* lists the species that licensed game hunters are able to hunt.

**QUESTION 35, PAGE 22.
COHEN TO MACDONALD**

What investigations has New South Wales Agriculture undertaken on the relationship between the commonly used herbicide glyphosate and the increasing incidence of fusarium wilt, especially in genetically engineered Roundup Ready crops, such as cotton and canola, and also wheat in North America?

ANSWER

Non-target effects of pesticides are clearly of prime concern to farmers and their communities. However, the evaluation of such effects should be based on sound scientific research and testing, to ensure that any remedial measures are both effective and readily adopted by the community. The NSW Department of Primary Industries has maintained active research on pesticide use.

The Department monitors the incidence of Fusarium wilt of cotton in annual diseases surveys across NSW. In surveys to date, the incidence of Fusarium wilt has not been any greater in crops of the glyphosate-resistant cotton varieties (which can receive over-the-top sprays of glyphosate) than in conventional varieties. In a small-plot experiment conducted by plant pathologists from NSW DPI last summer, sequential application of glyphosate to a glyphosate-resistant variety had no effect on the incidence of Fusarium wilt.

**QUESTION 36, PAGE 22
COHEN TO MACDONALD**

Has overseas scientific research showed that glyphosate encourages progress of fusarium because its application can lead to a selection of some soil microflora over others, leading to a change in the balance of microflora in treated soils?

ANSWER

I am advised that overseas studies have indicated there may be a relationship between the use of glyphosate and incidence of Fusarium head blight in wheat. However, the study by Fernandez and co-workers did not establish a cause-effect relationship. Other studies in soy bean have indicated that resistance to sudden death syndrome in soybean, caused by Fusarium, is not influenced by glyphosate application.

QUESTION 37, PAGE 24 GAY TO MACDONALD

In relation to the noxious aquatic weed caulerpa, do you expect it to spread from St Georges Basin into Jervis Bay?

ANSWER

Caulerpa is easily spread from one area to another, given that even a small fragment caught in a net, anchor or chain can regrow into a new plant. Our south coast estuaries are popular sites for fishing and tourism, and no-one can guarantee that Caulerpa will not be spread from St Georges Basin or another south coast estuary into Jervis Bay. However, the NSW Department of Primary Industries has been working closely with the Marine Parks Authority and Shoalhaven Council to minimise this risk.

QUESTION 38, PAGE 26 GAY TO MACDONALD

Regarding New South Wales Fisheries offices at Albury, Batemans Bay, Bathurst, Yass, Coffs Harbour, Wellington, Grafton, Cooma, Eden, Broken Hill, Deniliquin, Narrandera, Taree, Inverell and Tamworth, how many staff were employed in each office on 31 March 2004?

ANSWER

Albury, 9 including 1 casual
Batemans Bay, 12
Bathurst, 2
Yass, 1
Coffs Harbour, 22 including 1 part-time and 9 casual
Wellington, 6 including 1 part-time
Grafton, 5 including 1 part-time
Cooma, 1
Eden, 4 including 1 part-time
Broken Hill, 1
Deniliquin, 2
Narrandera, 19 including 4 casual

Taree, 3
Inverell, 3
Tamworth, 3

QUESTION 39, PAGE 26
GAY TO MACDONALD

Following the completion of the restructure, how many staff will be employed in each of these offices?

ANSWER

The restructuring process is not complete and final staff numbers are not certain. Many of the temporary and casual staff at these offices are employed under research or other grants and staff numbers at these locations may decrease as current grant programs conclude or increase if new grants are obtained.

QUESTION 40, PAGE 26
GAY TO MACDONALD

Will there be cuts to the number of staff from each of these offices following the restructure? If so, how many? Will technical positions be cut from any of these offices? If so, how many? Will advisory positions be cut from any of these offices? If so, how many? Will research positions be cut from any of these offices? If so, how many? How many casual employees are currently employed in each of the offices? How many casual employees from each of the offices will not have their contracts renewed following the restructure? Under the new structure will any of these offices have media relations and/or public relations officers? If so, how many and what will be the salary of each of those officers?

ANSWER

Refer to responses to questions 38 and 39.

QUESTION 41, PAGE 26
GAY TO MACDONALD

Can you take the same questions on notice regarding NSW Agriculture departmental offices in Bathurst, Tumut, Yass, Coffs Harbour, Dubbo, Wellington, Grafton, Casino, Forbes, Cooma, Broken Hill, Cobar, Deniliquin, Taree, Armidale, Glen Innes, Inverell, Orange, Kempsey, Tamworth, Gunnedah, Wagga Wagga; the NSW Agriculture Beef Industry Centre in Armidale; the NSW Agriculture head office in Orange; the NSW Agriculture institute in Orange; the NSW Agriculture Centre for Excellence for pastures and weeds, deciduous fruits, wool and sheep meat products and vertebrate pests in Orange; and the NSW Agriculture Centre for Excellence for northern farming systems in Tamworth?

ANSWER

As at 31 March 2004 the total number of staff employed at these offices is outlined below.

Bathurst, 17
Tumut, 5
Yass, 4
Coffs Harbour, 7 including 4 casuals.
Dubbo, 39
Wellington, 1
Grafton, 37
Casino, 3
Forbes, 9
Cooma, 5
Broken Hill, 6
Cobar, 2
Deniliquin, 20 including 1 casual.
Taree, 8 including 1 casual.
Armidale (ABRI),
Armidale (AGBU), 2
Armidale (BIC), 19
Armidale (DO), 8
Glen Innes, 14
Inverell, 2
Orange - Head Office, 395 including 6 casuals.
Orange Agric Institute, 148 including 10 casuals. (Orange Agriculture Institute includes the NSW Agriculture institute in Orange; the NSW Agriculture Centre for Excellence for pastures and weeds, deciduous fruits, wool and sheep meat products and vertebrate pests in Orange).
Kempsey, 5
Tamworth, 156 including 5 casual. (the NSW Agriculture Centre for Excellence for northern farming systems is located in Tamworth)
Gunnedah, 16
Wagga Wagga, 192, includes 16 casuals.

The restructuring process is not complete and final staff numbers are not certain. Many of the temporary and casual staff at these offices are employed under research or other grants and staff numbers at these locations may decrease as current grant programs conclude or increase if new grants are obtained

QUESTION 42, PAGES 26 AND 27 COLLESS TO MACDONALD

In relation to revenue from the recreational fishing licence, how much of that money is allocated for restocking native fish in New South Wales?

ANSWER

Over \$529,000 from the Freshwater trust fund is spent directly on restocking with \$200,000 set aside for native fish.

QUESTION 43, PAGE 27 COLLESS TO MACDONALD

In relation to native fish stocking programs, could you give us a brief outline of what are those different programs?

ANSWER

There are three main stocking programs that the Department undertakes in conjunction with stakeholders: stocking of impoundments with native fish; dollar for dollar stocking and; stocking of salmonids in impoundments, rivers and streams.

Impoundments are stocked with native fish produced from the department's hatcheries at Narrandera, Port Stephens and Grafton. These fish are stocked in impoundments where natives breed poorly or not at all. Last year nearly 3 million golden perch, Murray cod, silver perch and Australian bass were stocked.

Under the dollar for dollar program, Murray cod, golden perch and Australian bass are released into rivers and impoundments. These fish are produced in private hatcheries and purchased for stocking in approved sites by matching contributions from the trust fund and angling and community groups (eg fishing clubs or local councils). This enables private hatchery infrastructure to be utilised to produce extra fish which can be stocked in rivers at approved sites nominated by anglers. Last year nearly 900,000 native fish were produced

Impoundments, rivers and streams are stocked with fish (trout and salmon) produced from the Department's hatcheries at Jindabyne and Ebor. Fish are stocked in conjunction with acclimatisation societies, with nominations for sites and numbers to be stocked taken annually. Nominated sites are assessed by the Department and fish are delivered to the sites by Departmental staff or volunteer acclimatisation members. Last year some 4 million trout and salmon were produced.

QUESTION 44, PAGES 27 AND 28 COLLESS TO MACDONALD

In relation to native fish stocking, is the money for fish restocking programs for non-native fish, such as trout and salmon species, allocated on a similar basis?

ANSWER

The NSW Government has been stocking trout and salmon for over fifty years in conjunction with Acclimatisation Societies. These societies provide advice on conditions of streams and assist in the transport and release of the fish. There has never been a charge for this service as the Department is maintaining trout fisheries which bring significant economic value to the regions. I am advised that trout fry are relatively easy to produce and we can produce the numbers that we need at our two government hatcheries.

The dollar for dollar program was introduced to allow for the use of private native hatchery infrastructure to produce native fish for the stocking of rivers and streams. Funds from angling and community groups are leveraged with matching trust funds. The program is well supported by angling groups.

QUESTION 45, PAGE 28
MR COLLESS TO MACDONALD

Do you purchase fingerlings from Queensland and Victoria?

ANSWER

The government has not purchased fish from Queensland or Victoria for several years and prefers that funds from the Dollar for Dollar program flow back to NSW hatcheries. In some cases NSW hatcheries may consider requests to purchase stock from other states provided genetic and disease issues are addressed.

QUESTION 46, PAGE 28
COLLESS TO MACDONALD

Do you have any plans to restock eel-tail catfish in rivers where they used to be common but they are now quite rare?

ANSWER

I understand that some eel tailed catfish were produced and stocked during the 1980's. However I am advised they are difficult to produce in large numbers as they only produce a small number of eggs. The Department is investigating alternate methods of protection for this species in rivers. The good news for this species is that they are one of the few native species to breed relatively well in our inland dams such as Wyangla.

QUESTION 47, PAGE 29
COHEN TO MACDONALD

What progress has been made in the removal of redundant dams and weeds to facilitate the migration and breeding of native freshwater fish?

ANSWER

The NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) continues to lead the way in restoring the free passage of native fish in NSW under the Aquatic Habitat Rehabilitation Program.

Since 2001 my Department has worked with State Water, local government, landholders, private industry and WWF to remove a total of 18 major redundant structures including 9 weirs and 9 large road crossings, restoring over 215km of fish passage in NSW. A further five major structures are currently under negotiation for removal.

QUESTION 48, PAGE 29
COHEN TO MACDONALD

In relation to the shark netting program, how many sharks are caught on the inside of the net going out as compared to sharks on the outside of the net coming in, that is in areas where there are bathers?

ANSWER

Approximately one third of sharks are caught on the beach side of the nets.

QUESTION 49, PAGE 29
COHEN TO MACDONALD

Given that whales are migrating now, that there has been quite a bit of media interest in whales trapped in nets, particularly on the North Coast and off south-east Queensland, and that this is not a peak swimming season in Sydney, would you consider extending the non-net season?

ANSWER

The government's shark netting program is designed to minimise the catch of non-target species. Acoustic devices are fitted to all nets to protect dolphins and whales from capture and beach safety nets are not in place during the main whale migration season of May to August. I am advised that there is no evidence to suggest that the beach safety nets from Newcastle to Wollongong interfere with migrating whales.

QUESTION 50, PAGE 30
COHEN TO MACDONALD

In relation to Fisheries compliance staff, how many are on the North Coast?

ANSWER

There are currently fifteen fisheries compliance staff on the North Coast from Port Macquarie to Tweed Heads.

**QUESTION 51, PAGE 31
COHEN TO MACDONALD**

How much of the DPI budget is allocated to supporting measures to increase protection of the grey nurse shark

ANSWER

Approximately \$300,000 has been spent on protecting the grey nurse shark over the past twelve months.

**QUESTION 52, PAGES 31 AND 32
COHEN TO MACDONALD**

An original NSW Fisheries budget of \$5.7 million in 2003-04 was slashed to predicted spending of \$1.7 million, which was nearly halved again to a DPI budget of \$900,000 for 2004-05. How is this justified in light of the fact that every fishery management strategy and environmental impact statement to date has identified excess active and latent effort as a threat to the viability of the New South Wales fishing industry?

ANSWER

Additional information regarding this question is required before a response can be provided.

**QUESTION 53, PAGE 32
HALE TO MACDONALD**

What was the budget for the Marine Parks Authority [MPA] in 2003-04 and what is its budget for 2004-05?

ANSWER

2003-04 \$2,927,000 plus capital \$348,000
2004/05 \$2,961,000 plus capital \$989,000

**QUESTION 54, PAGE 32
HALE TO MACDONALD**

Could you give us some indication of the likely costs involved in establishing one marine park in each bioregion by 2007?

ANSWER

Each marine park is different, with the costs depending upon the size and location. To date, while the average operational cost of a marine park is approximately \$500,000 per year, other associated costs are far greater. There is also a commitment to fund buying back enough commercial fishing licences to prevent any increase in commercial fishing pressure in the areas surrounding the waters receiving protection under a new marine park zone plan.

QUESTION 55, PAGE 32
HALE TO MACDONALD

During last year's estimates committee hearing you said that assessment for the Manning Shelf, the Hawkesbury Shelf and the Batemans Shelf were "more than substantially complete and they are now undergoing peer review." Could you explain why the assessments for the Hawkesbury and the Batemans shelves have not been released? Can you give any estimate of the time when those assessments might be released?

ANSWER

The Batemans Shelf and Hawkesbury Shelf Marine Bioregions have each been subject to a systematic assessment of biodiversity, similarly to the Manning Shelf Assessment, that was released earlier this year. We are currently finalising the review process for the Batemans and Hawkesbury Marine Shelf assessments.

The release of the Batemans and Hawkesbury bioregional assessment reports is a priority for the Marine Parks Authority. However, the Authority is not prepared to release the documents until the reference material has been properly checked and the documents thoroughly reviewed. This will ensure they can hold up to scrutiny and provide rigorous scientific information to be used in the development of marine protected areas.

QUESTION 56, PAGE 33
HALE TO MACDONALD

Is it true that in the past year only one recovery plan, the eastern cod recovery plan, has been gazetted?

ANSWER

Yes.

QUESTION 57, PAGE 33
HALE TO MACDONALD

Would you be able to give the Committee the time line for gazettal of the grey nurse shark recovery plan?

ANSWER

Results from recent research on grey nurse sharks have now been completed and incorporated into the final draft version of the grey nurse shark recovery plan. I understand the document will be presented for my approval in the near future.

**QUESTION 58, PAGE 33
HALE TO MACDONALD**

Is it true that, of the 11 recovery plans under development at the last estimates committee hearing, only one—the Oxleyan pygmy perch—has been released for public consultation?

ANSWER

Yes.

**QUESTION 59, PAGE 33
HALE TO MACDONALD**

How much was spent on recovery planning and threatened species conservation assessment in 2003-04?

ANSWER

Approximately 1 million dollars was spent in the last year on threatened aquatic species in NSW.