



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO. 5

BUDGET ESTIMATES 2008-2009

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5

Water, Rural Affairs and Regional Development

Friday 17 October 2008

Answers to be lodged by: Wednesday 12 November 2008

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Questions relating to the portfolios of Water, Rural Affairs and Regional Development

17 OCTOBER 2008, 2.00 pm – 4.15 pm

Questions from Mr Cohen

1. What is the Status of the Far North Coast Water Plan as required under the Far North Coast Regional Strategy?
2. If the Water Plan was developed could its implementation result in the deferral of significant capital expenditure by Councils on the Far North Coast?
3. If the Water Plan was developed could its implementation result in the reduction of stress on rivers such as the Richmond?
4. If the Water Plan was developed could its implementation result improved security for urban water supplies in the Far North Coast?
5. Why has there been delays of over a year in the development of the Water Plan?
6. Under the Water Management Act 2000 and the Water Act 1912 how many penalty notices have been issued for 2007-08? Would the previously low level of penalty notice issuance change under the proposed Water Management Amendment Bill or is it more of a on the ground enforcement capacity issue?
7. The Director General acknowledged in a letter to Mr Phil Thompson and Mrs Judi Thompson in relation to the construction and operation of a 600ML irrigation storage dam that “the filling of earthen water storages with groundwater and surface water is common practice across NSW”. Has the Department considered efficiency savings from requiring irrigation dams to use dam covers and associated measures?
 - a. Why is the Department spending \$137 million on piping stock and domestic water sources to reduce evaporation yet not requiring irrigation dams - from which much larger volume evaporates – to implement tarp dam covers or similar technologies?
8. In relation to the offtake structure – flow regulator/choke – at Nimbo Creek the Acting Deputy Director General, Mr Rob O'Neill stated in a letter that;

“Prior to the construction of the offtake in 2002, “cease-to-flow” conditions in Nimbo Creek occurred when the flows in the Tumut River were in the order of 500 ML/day. Some 5 years after construction of the offtake, cease to flow conditions now occur when the flows in the Tumut River are in the order of 300 ML/day. This indicates that the structure has improved the minimum flow conditions and reduced the number of cease-to-flow days in Nimbo Creek.”

Could the Minister provide evidence that establishes the cease-to-flow conditions in Nimbo Creek prior to the 2002 construction of the offtake structure?

Questions from Mr Colless

Desalination Plant – Kurnell

9.
 - a. What is the cost of the infrastructure required to increase the desalination plants output from 250 megalitres to 500 megalitres?
 - b. Was this included in the \$2 billion price tag for the desalination plant construction? If not, why not?
 - c. When will your department make a decision on whether the desalination plant will be upgraded from 250 to 500 megalitre capacity?

10.
 - a. Minister, what was the reason for a commitment to the expenditure required to build the Desalination Plant at Kurnell?
 - b. How much money has been expended on consultants for the project?
 - c. how much money is it anticipated will be expended on consultants?
 - d. Please table a list of all consultants and the amount expended on each to date?

11.
 - a. How much money has been spent on advertising for the project to date?
 - b. What is the projected future costs of advertising?
 - c. Has the advertising been paid by Sydney Water or your Department?
 - d. How much was expended on TV?
 - e. How much was expended on Radio?
 - f. How much was expended on metropolitan newspapers?
 - g. Were these ads cleared by the Auditor General?
 - h. Has the Auditor General made any comment upon them?
 - i. Will you supply on DVD to the Committee copies of all the ads, with the cost of each one?
 - j. Did the Minister approve the ads?
 - k. Who was the advertising agency?
 - l. How much was paid to the advertising agency?
 - m. Please list all advertising agencies consulted in relation to the Desalination Plant.

12. Last year the Minister denied that the desalination plant would have any impact on the migratory patterns of whales along the Eastern Coastline:
 - a. Do you agree with that?
 - b. What assurances will you give that the desalination plant will not affect migrating whales?
 - c. What research have you personally looked at in regard to feeding patterns of migrating whales off Kurnell?
 - d. You are aware of course that whale organisations say that it will affect migratory patterns and the wellbeing of whales, especially young whales? Do you say these groups are wrong?
 - e. How much money has been expended in investigating the impact of the desal plant on migratory whales? Will you table those reports?

Tillegra Dam

13. Minister, the Budget papers for 2008-2009 specifies the total estimated cost for the completion of Tillegra Dam would be \$379,006 million. Since the budget it is now said that the Dam will cost \$406 million. So far only \$74,025 million has been expended, with only \$25,964 million further allocated for 2008-2009.
14. How much money has been expended in the last 5 years in resuming land for the proposed Dam?
 - a. How much is it estimated will need to be expended in the future?
 - b. How is the figure of \$406 million made up?
15. Given that the great majority of Government public works programs are heavily over budget and this project has already increased by \$27 million in 4 months from \$379 to \$406 million, what guarantee can you give that the Dam will be built at this cost? What allowance has been made for Budget overrun in construction?
16. How many staff will be employed in the completed Dam?
17. What is the estimated operational cost of running the completed Dam?
18. How much money has been expended on consultants for the Dam project?
19. How much money is it anticipated will be expended on consultants?
20. Please table a list of all consultants and the amount expended on each to date?
21. What guarantees will you give the people of the Central Coast that you will not seek a contribution by them for the cost of the construction of Tillegra Dam or from Wyong and Gosford Councils?
22. What guarantees will you give the people of the Central Coast and Wyong and Gosford Councils that you will not seek, nor make representations to IPART that they contribute to payment for Tillegra or its continuing operation without their consent or request?

Mooney Mooney and Cheero Point sewerage connection

23. Minister, residents of Mooney Mooney and Cheero Point are facing a cost in excess of \$10,000 to \$30,000 plus connection costs for sewerage. Their neighbouring suburb of Brooklyn is paying only \$148 plus connection for the same service. In Brooklyn, Sydney Water and Hornsby Council subsidise the difference in cost, however the Mooney Mooney residents receive no such subsidy from Sydney Water or Gosford Council.
24. Representation has been made by the Shadow Minister to the previous Minister for Water, Nathan Rees, but is still awaiting a response. When do you intend to respond to this correspondence?
25. Why does it cost thousands of dollars more for homes in Mooney Mooney, some not more than a few hundred metres from their Brooklyn counterparts?

26. What funding will you offer the residents of Mooney Mooney to assist them in getting the sewerage connection at a reasonable cost?
27. Will you again review the Small Towns Water and Sewerage Scheme and provide a subsidy of a greater percentage of capital cost and change the guidelines?

Advertising

28. How much money was expended by Sydney Water on advertising from 1 July 2007 to 30 June 2008?
 - a. How much was expended on TV?
 - b. How much was expended on Radio?
 - c. How much was expended on metropolitan newspapers?
 - d. Were these ads cleared by the Auditor General?
 - e. Has the Auditor General made any comment upon them?
29. Will you supply on DVD to the Committee copies of all the TV ads, with the cost of each one?
 - a. Did the Minister approve the ads?
 - b. Who was the advertising agency?
 - c. How much was paid to the advertising agency?

Central Coast Water Corporation

30. The Central Coast Water Corporation Act 2006, which you administer, allows the Government to charge a licence fee to the Central Coast water corporation. The amount is unlimited. Minister, will you give an assurance to the people of the Central Coast that their supply system won't be used as a hidden tax to pay dividends to the Government, as is the case with Sydney water?
31. Minister, unlike your predecessor, will you give an assurance to the people of the Central Coast that they will retain ownership of the water and sewerage infrastructure in Gosford City and Wyong Shire?

Storm water & Recycling

32. What would be the cost in metropolitan Sydney of developing a program to catch storm water and use it for non-potable purposes?
33. The Minister implied in his recent *Stateline* debate with the Leader of the Opposition that he had all the figures for this and the amount of infrastructure that would be required?
 - a. Can these be tabled?
34. What plans are there for the future development of storm water harvesting?
 - a. What costing has been done?
 - b. Can this be tabled?
35. What improvements or works have you made in the last 12 months to increase recycling, especially from the Sydney outfalls?

36. In relation to the Liverpool to Ashfield recycled water pipe and associated works, when will the city-wide grid, of which it is a part, be completed?
- At what cost?
 - How much water will it supply upon completion?
 - How much will be charged to industrial users of the recycled water?

Maintenance

37. What is the total maintenance cost for all water pipes in the Sydney metropolitan area?
38. How much is currently spent on maintenance per year?
39. What percentage of water is being lost due to leaking pipes and how does that compare to international best practices?
40. Will you publish a table showing how Sydney compares to other major cities in NSW and the developed world relating to water loss through leakage?

Staffing in Department General from Papers

41. As stated in the Budget Papers, why has the number of employees with the Department of Water and Energy risen from 69 to 80?
- What role do the additional staff have?
 - What is their grading?

Fines

42. How many fines were issued for breaches of water restrictions?
- What was the total revenue?

Budget Support

43. Does Sydney Water give a budget support allocation by way of money, equipment (such as IT equipment) or staff to the Minister?
- If so, what is the nature and cost of this support?

Staffing Levels – Minister and Department

44. How many employees does the Department of Water and Energy have?
- How many staff at the Dept are on SES level?
 - Please list the number and the levels.
 - How many staff are supplied by the Dept to the Minister's office?
 - What is their grading?
 - Are staff supplied by the Dept to any other Minister's office?
 - If so, what is their grading?
45. What was the total 2007/08 catering bill for the Dept?
46. How many corporate credit cards are in your department?
- Is that more or less from last year?
 - What was the total bill for those cards in 2007 and so far this year in 2008?
47. How many Ministerial staff do you have?

- a. Is that more or less than the previous Minister?
- b. What is the total annual wages bill for your Ministerial staff?
- c. How does that compare with the last financial year?

Staffing Levels – Sydney Water

48. How many employees does Sydney Water have?
 - a. How many staff at Sydney Water are on SES level? Please list the number and the levels.
 - b. How many staff are employed as inspectors to enforce water restrictions?
 - c. How many staff are employed as maintenance?
 - d. How many staff are employed as clerical?
 - e. How many staff are supplied by Sydney Water to the Minister's office?
 - f. What is their grading?
 - g. Are staff supplied by Sydney Water to any other Minister's office?
 - h. If so, what is their grading?
49. What was the total 2007/08 catering bill for Sydney Water?
50. How many corporate credit cards are in Sydney Water?
 - a. Is that more or less from last year?
 - b. What was the total bill for those cards in 2007 and so far this year in 2008?
51. How many staff from Sydney Water are seconded to your Ministerial office?
 - a. Is that more or less than the previous Minister?
 - b. What is the annual cost of the seconded staff?
 - c. Is this more or less than the previous Minister had?

Staffing Levels – Hunter Water

52. How many employees does Hunter Water have?
 - a. How many staff at Hunter Water are on SES level?
 - b. Please list the number and the levels.
 - c. How many staff are supplied by Hunter Water to the Minister's office?
 - d. What is their grading?
 - e. Are staff supplied by Hunter Water to any other Minister's office?
 - f. If so, what is their grading?
53. What was the total 2007/08 catering bill for Hunter Water?
54. How many corporate credit cards are in Hunter Water?
 - a. Is that more or less from last year?
 - b. What was the total bill for those cards in 2007 and so far this year in 2008?
55. How many staff from Hunter Water are seconded to your Ministerial office?
 - a. Is that more or less than the previous Minister?
 - b. What is the annual cost of the seconded staff?
 - c. Is this more or less than the previous Minister had?

56. How many indigenous staff are employed by your Department, Sydney Water and Hunter Water? Please list separately.
 - a. What percentage does this represent of overall staffing for each?
 - b. Have you met your benchmarks for the employment of Indigenous staff levels for each?

57. How many people with disabilities does your Department, Sydney Water and Hunter Water employ? Please list separately.
 - a. What percentage does this represent of the overall staffing by each?
 - b. Have you met your benchmarks for the employment of people with disabilities for each?

Rebates & DIY Water Saving Kits

58. How many claimants have there been under the Rainwater Tank Rebate Scheme?
 - a. How much had been paid out?
 - b. How many Do It Yourself Water Savings Kits have been distributed by Sydney Water? At what cost?

Water Allocations

59. How much General/Low security water allocation does NSW now own through various Government agencies?
 - a. How much High security water does NSW now own through various Government agencies?
 - b. Do the various Government agencies that own this water pay fixed charges to State Water?

60. In July this year, former Premier Iemma announced a feasibility study into a proposal by CENTROC to build a water pipeline through the Orange region. Is this feasibility study underway?
 - a. If so, is it complete?
 - b. If not when will it be completed?

Regional development

61. What measures does the Government have in place, or have in development which will reduce the significant loss of population from inland NSW which has been experienced, particularly over the last three years due to the ongoing effects of drought?

62. What costs does the Government incur through funding the Country Embassy on level 13 of the MLC centre?
 - a. What revenue was returned to the Government through this venture?
 - b. What is the purpose of the Embassy?
 - c. When was it established?
 - d. How is it promoted to country business people for their use?
 - e. What feedback has been received from business people who have used it?
 - f. Who uses it?
 - g. When benefit is derived from having it located in the MLC Centre, and might another venue better suit its purpose?
 - h. How many staff are employed through this venture?
 - i. How often is it used?

63. What programs does the Government have in place to ensure the flow of skilled migrants to regional NSW to overcome specific skills shortages?