



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO. 5

# **BUDGET ESTIMATES 2011-2012**

## **QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5**

Environment, Heritage

Thursday 27 October 2011

Answers to be lodged by: 22 November 2011

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<b>Hearing date</b>	<b>Portfolio</b>	<b>Answer to be lodged by</b>
27 October 2011	Environment, Heritage	22 November 2011 [21 days]

**Questions relating to the portfolio of Environment, Heritage**

**27 October 2011, 9.00am – 1.00pm**

**Question from the Hon Robert Brown MLC**

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

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

### Questions from the Hon Cate Faehrmann MLC

- 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?
- 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?
- 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?

- 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?
- 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 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?
- 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.
- 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?
- 22) In relation to Private Native Forestry Oldgrowth
- 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?
- 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?

- 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?
- 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?
- 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?

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?

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?

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 to the NSW Biodiversity Strategy. Has the Strategy been finalized yet? If not, when is it expected to be finalized?

**Questions from the Hon Amanda Fazio MLC**

- 30) Do you agree that the remaining 62 timber truss road bridges are a significant part of the State's heritage?
- 31) Why are only 29 on the State Heritage Register?
- 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?
- 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?
- 34) Do you endorse the RTA's preservation plans for these remaining 62 timber truss road bridges?
- 35) Can you detail what those plans are?
- 36) What is the indexation of funding to the Heritage Council? Has it matched inflation?
- 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?
- 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?
- 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 have phones or devices have been lost in your office?
  - h) What is the cost of replacing those phones or devices?
- 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?



- 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?
- 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?
- 43) Cabcharge
- a) In terms of your ministerial office, how much did your office spend on taxi fares, including Cabcharge since April?
- 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?
- 45) Agency costs
- a) What is your agency's catering budget?
  - b) Since April, has the agency changed its branding?
  - c) How much was spent on rebranding the agency?

- d) How much has been spent on stationary?
- 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?
- 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?
- 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?
- 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?

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**There were no additional questions on notice lodged by members relating to the portfolio of Environment, Heritage.**