

Budget Estimates 2021-22 – Monday 1 November 2021

Portfolio Committee No. 4 – Agriculture and Western NSW

Responses to Questions on Notice

Question 1 (Page 5)

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Could you take it on notice and tell us how many of those other programs may have been run—instead of doing it through the Rural Assistance Authority [RAA] it goes through Service NSW instead? How much? I reckon the people who are looking for mice support would have been good at \$150 million.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: On that, Mr Veitch, I am not aware—if we have a program that fits within this portfolio it would be administered by the RAA. I do not know if Mr Hansen's view. If you are suggesting in the tone of your question that by Service NSW having a portion of that \$150 million package that farmers are somehow missing out, then I utterly reject that because the numbers simply do not support that.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: My argument is that Service NSW should be on top of, not a part of, because it is an internal government transfer. It is not \$150 million for people out there who are busting themselves trying to fight the mice plague—\$5.5 million went to your own government. That has got nothing to do with the mice plague. What I am saying is, you should have announced a \$145 million program. This is money that should have been on top of the \$150 million, and under your watch you have duded the people of Central West New South Wales over mice. Can I go on to—

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: No, you cannot because—

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I want to go back to this press release, Minister.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: —no-one has duded anything, Mr Veitch.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I want to clarify the press release. Those two statements that Mr Hansen has made, you are saying are incorrect?

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: That was not my evidence, Mr Veitch.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Mr Hansen is correct?

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: What I have said, if you can let me finish the answer to the previous question, was that of the \$95 million that is allocated for rebates for farmers, every single dollar of that goes to farmers. In fact, at the moment we have received 803

applications and 738 have been approved, and a bit over \$4 million is already in the pockets of farmers. Even of the money that has been set aside for rebates, we still have plenty of money in that program—plenty of money in that program. I understand your concern. I am happy to take that on notice with regard to Service NSW. We will get an answer to you. I do not know if we can provide it or if we will have to seek that from Regional NSW.

Mr HANSEN: For every program there is a cost for government about the actual grant amount and the actual administration of the grant amount. These programs actually get turned on and are in addition to business as usual. The Minister's portfolio within DPI is responsible for that zinc phosphide rebate assistance package, which is not being administered by Service NSW. Service NSW is administering the household and business rebate scheme; that is the \$50 million that you are talking about.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Yes.

Mr HANSEN: Across our business, there are a range of activities or programs that the Rural Assistance Authority gets asked to administer and to deliver, and we will include an—

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: They do that well.

Mr HANSEN: —overhead and admin because we will scale-up staffing to be able to respond to that. I expect that Service NSW would do the same. We deliver a number of programs on behalf of other agencies through the RAA, whether they be Commonwealth agencies or others. We add our costs of actually scaling up to deliver that into those costs. It does then reflect the actual total cost for government of doing that business. It is not just the grant. It is actually how many additional staff have they employed to make sure that assistance is delivered.

Mr BARNES: Mr Veitch, I just want to confirm what the Minister has said. In relation to the money that was for small business and also for households, that was being run by the Deputy Premier's office out of the Department of Regional NSW. We deliberately contract the folk over at Service NSW to ramp-up and deliver that service. Remember this is right in the middle of them also providing COVID relief payments. They did have to put on additional staff. The reason we did it out of Service NSW is because the customers had a pre-existing relationship—particularly small business—with Service NSW because they would have provided similar relief packages for bushfires and also for drought—particularly bushfires. I am happy to take that on notice.

ANSWER

Service NSW administers the \$45 million Mouse Control Household and Small Businesses Rebates program.

Question 2 (Page 6)

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: You had nine meetings on sitting days in the first three months, six meetings during Parliament in the second, and then Broken Hill made up for eight meetings. Have you met anyone outside of Parliament or Broken Hill in that six-month period? Have you travelled to anywhere else in the State where you have had a meeting with a stakeholder group?

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: I would have to take that on notice, but I have travelled extensively across the State as you know.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: You must not be meeting with people because your meetings are here in Sydney.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: As I said, I will take that on notice for you, but I actually—

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: This is the period that covers the mice plague, Minister.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: Yes, I actually meet with a range of stakeholders and a range of people as per my requests.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Are you putting them in your diary? Maybe you have just forgotten to disclose the meetings as per the arrangements that are required.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: As I said, I will take that on notice, Mr Veitch.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: You are going to check if you have fulfilled your obligations to disclose all meetings as per the ministerial diary arrangement.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: I believe I have, but I will check that for you. The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Do you think 32 meetings in 26 weeks is satisfactory for any Minister of the Crown?

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: I hold as many meetings as requests come in and many other meetings as well. As I said, I will take that on notice, Mr Veitch.

ANSWER

All Ministerial meetings and travel has been disclosed in accordance with Ministerial disclosure requirements.

Question 3 (Page 7)

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Are there stakeholders asking for meetings that you have not actually met?

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: Not that I am aware of, no.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I think you might want to take that on notice.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: As I said, I have taken your question on notice.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: How about you take on notice whether there have been approaches for meetings from stakeholders and you have not met with them.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: Yes, happy to take that on notice, Mr Veitch.

ANSWER

My office responds to all meeting requests received.

Question 4 (Page 16)

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: There was a promise when the reforms were put in that there would be a three-year review of Land Management (Native Vegetation) Code. We were told last week that the environment Minister has signed the terms of reference for the review and they are with you. Where is that up to?

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: I have written back to the environment Minister suggesting that given the five-year statutory review has to be undertaken at the start of next year, and the fact that we have had three separate reviews of the land management code in the last couple of years that staff from LLS and EES are still trying to implement, that it would actually make more sense to bring forward the five-year statutory review and do it all then rather than having—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: When did you write to the Minister about that?

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: —the three-year review—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: We will get to that.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: —running alongside the five-year review—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: When did you write to the Minister?

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: —while they are still trying to implement the recommendations of the previous three reviews.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: When did you write to the Minister about this issue?

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: Very recently.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: After the estimates last week?

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: It was recently. I am not sure of the exact date.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Can you take it on notice and tell us?

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: Absolutely, I can.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: You would know if it was after estimates last week though?

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: I would have to take it on notice.

ANSWER

28 October 2021

Question 5 (Page 21)

The Hon. EMMA HURST: I recently ran a confidential roundtable with people who are involved in the use of animals in experimentation. Two areas that they brought up were the use of smoking mice models and the forced drowning tests or forced swim tests that are still currently being used. Are you aware, Minister, how many smoking mice experiments and how many forced swim tests are currently occurring in New South Wales?

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: I pride myself on knowing a lot of details, but I must confess that you have got me there. No, I do not off the top of my head.

The Hon. EMMA HURST: Can you take the question on notice?

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: Yes. Before I do, has anyone in our team got the answer to that? Otherwise, we will take it on notice.

Mr HANSEN: I do not have the number for the forced swim tests or the smoking exposure tests in front of me at the moment. I am happy to get that number and come back to you.

ANSWER

Annual reporting to NSW DPI by animal research establishments does not identify the details of individual research projects. This information is dealt with by the responsible Animal Ethics Committee of the establishments.

However, the Animal Research Review Panel (ARRP) is currently considering smoking and swimming procedures, including seeking advice from animal research establishments about these procedures.

Smoke inhalation procedures

As of 11 November 2021, four establishments had indicated to ARRP that they conduct these experiments on mice and/or rats.

Swimming procedures

ARRP has requested information on all types of swimming procedures, not just the Forced Swim Test, such as the Morris Water Maze. As of 11 November 2021, seven establishments had indicated to ARRP that they conduct some type of swimming procedure.

Question 6 (Page 21)

The Hon. EMMA HURST: Minister, I also want to talk to you about animal hoarding. I noticed that also was not addressed in the discussion paper. Animal hoarding is a very complicated issue and something that the authorities—the RSPCA and Animal Welfare League—are constantly struggling with. It is something that the courts struggle with as well due to the complexity of these cases. The recidivism rate is almost 100 per cent. Obviously all the courts have got in front of them is the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, which is to give fines or jail time, which does nothing really to protect the animals. They often find it difficult because there are obviously psychological health issues involved in many of these cases. I know that overseas in various places there is specific legislation that recognises animal hoarding as a specific type of problem and offence, and there is mandatory psychological counselling involved in the sentencing for animal hoarding because it is quite a complex and difficult situation. Is that something that you are considering as well within the Animal Welfare Action Plan?

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: Ms Hurst, it is not something that is chief among the issues that are being considered. Since you have raised it, I am happy to have a conversation with Minister Hancock, who administers the companion animals legislation. It probably sounds more like a companion animals matter than a prevention of cruelty matter because a lot of—

The Hon. EMMA HURST: Mostly when people are charged for animal hoarding it will come under neglect under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: That is correct.

The Hon. EMMA HURST: So it does not come under the Companion Animals Act.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: What you are seeking, though, may best sit somewhere else. What I am saying is, you are right. At the moment, that is the only provision that I am aware of where people can be captured or fined, but that does not really address, as per the premise of your question, the root causes of what causes a person to be hoarding animals or hoarding any other materials. As the local member, in the little experience I have had with individuals who are hoarders, it tends to be that there are some deep psychological issues and that can manifest itself in the hoarding of animals or the hoarding of other items or material goods. Simply taking them to the courts to fine them for a breach of POCTAA might do something for the animals on a short-term basis, but longer term it does not address the significant issues that that person may be experiencing. It probably requires more attention than what animal cruelty laws can provide. It would actually relate to the treatment of the person.

The Hon. EMMA HURST: So I can leave that issue with you to take up with the Minister for Local Government to look further into it?

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: I will take it on notice. It may well be a mental health or health-related issue because the hoarding tendency might manifest itself in the hoarding of animals, but the problem is quite deeper than that.

ANSWER

Under the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979* (POCTAA), neglect of animals in hoarding situations may constitute an offence of failure to provide food, drink or shelter, depending on the facts of the case. In more severe cases, it may be considered a cruelty offence.

The Animal Welfare Reform - Discussion Paper proposed a similar approach under the new laws i.e. neglect of animals in hoarding situations would be captured under the proposed minimum care requirement. Cases that resulted in a more severe impact to the animal could be considered a cruelty offence.

Question 7 (Page 22)

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Thank you, Minister, and your team for your attendance today. Minister, I want to continue on the status of the LLS code review. In the March estimates, in answer to questions from me, you said at the time about the three-year review: ... that panel is just about to send to Minister Kean and myself a draft terms of reference for us to sign off on so that they can commence their work. That was in March 2021. When did you receive the terms of reference?

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: I am not sure of the exact date, Mr Field, but I can provide that to you on notice. What I do know is when those terms were received, they were referred to Local Land Services and LLS engaged in some discussions with EES, and that culminated in some advice provided to me recently. I cannot give you the exact date—unless Mr Witherdin has got the date there.

Mr WITHERDIN: No, I do not have the exact date.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: I am happy to receive that either directly from Mr Witherdin or on notice but before he does, can you make that advice available to the Committee, please?

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: Which advice is that, sorry, Mr Field?

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: You just said that LLS, after discussions with EES and other stakeholders, had provided you with some advice recently. I was just wondering if you could provide that on notice to the Committee.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: Yes, sure.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Thank you. Mr Witherdin, did you have that date?

Mr WITHERDIN: No, sorry, I do not have that date available. I may be able to provide that later in the course of proceedings.

ANSWER

The draft Terms of Reference were received by my Office on 4 March 2021.

Question 8 (Page 24)

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: That is okay, Justin. It was a good question. Minister, this is probably something you will have to take on notice. It is relating to the mice funding program. As at today's date, would it be possible for you to provide how many claims have been paid and how many funds have been expended for three categories: farmers, small business and households? Obviously you will not have those details as at today's date to hand.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: Mr Veitch, I can take on notice for—I can get the information for you about households and small business from Service NSW and Minister Dominello because that sits outside my portfolio.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I understand that. I appreciate that.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: Whilst I would love it to be in my portfolio, it is not, and I would love to be able to help you. In terms of farmers, in terms of 1 November, I can take that on notice. What I can share with the Committee is, as of close of business on Friday there were 803 applications received from primary producers and 738 applications have been processed and approved. They have an average payout, an average claim, of \$6,211.12 and are worth almost \$5 million. The average processing time by the RAA from the application being received to money hitting the bank account of the primary producer is currently five days.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Five working days?

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: Five days.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Five calendar days?

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: Five calendar days.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Okay.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: That is what it is at the moment from the RAA, but the other information I will get to you and on notice we can update those figures to be correct as of today.

ANSWER

There are two categories under the Mouse Control program, farmers were eligible for both programs. As of 1 November:

- Service NSW small business and household rebates has received 53,117 applications and paid out \$22.27 million.
- RAA Zinc Phosphide Rebate for Primary Producers has received 810 applications. A total of \$2.2 million has been paid out.

Question 9 (Page 24)

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Thank you. Minister, in the brief time before we break, I want to pick up on what Mr Field was saying. How do you respond to his last question regarding people talking about delays and obfuscation coming out of your office? Is it correct?

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: No. In terms of the marine estate management draft plan—

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I am talking in general terms. In general terms people are saying things are delayed out of your office or things are not being done in your office in a timely enough fashion. Do you refute that categorically? Do you not agree with Mr Field's question?

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: You are asking that as well. No. I will get you the exact dates.

Excerpt of earlier question from Justin Field, for context:

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Minister, I would love to move on to marine. A few months ago the Batemans— I think all of the community consultative bodies for the marine parks were told that the public consultation on the draft network management plan was imminent. I noticed this morning, just before estimates, you have now launched that consultation. What was the delay?

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: The delay was in finding—well, there really was not too much of a delay. I think I signed off on the final draft network plan some time ago. Minister Kean then signed off on it as well, and it was simply about picking a time to put it out for the required months of consultation, Mr Field.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: What I have been told, Minister, was that it was due months ago. That was what was said to the committees, and then it just did not come. Were you embarrassed by last week's estimates hearings with Minister Kean that so many of these reviews and processes seem to be held up in your office?

The CHAIR: I am going to have to—sorry. Justin, maybe you can pick that up with the Minister in the next round. I am going to throw to the Opposition because the bell had gone before you fired that one off.

ANSWER

The draft Management Plan for the NSW Mainland Marine Park Network (2021-2031) was considered by the Marine Estate Management Authority (MEMA) before the Chair of MEMA wrote to both Ministers responsible for the marine estate and submitted the draft Management Plan and associated draft Communications & Engagement Strategy

for the Ministers' consideration and endorsement for statutory public consultation, as required under s.49 of the *Marine Estate Management Act 2014*.

The draft Management Plan was released for public consultation on 1 November 2021.

Question 10 (Page 29)

The CHAIR: Minister, I will just pick up on some questions from the Hon. Mick Veitch and Mr Justin Field on the marine park draft management plans. You are aware that I asked you a series of questions on 7 September, totalling about 17, and you successfully answered two of them. The one that you did answer was that the marine park advisory committees were presented with some information about the draft management plans on 27 September and 1 August. When did you receive it across your desk for endorsement or approval?

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: The draft marine management plan? I would have to take that on notice, Chair.

ANSWER

I gave approval for the draft Network Management Plan in August 2021.

Question 11 (Page 29)

The CHAIR: One of the other questions I asked was about the vacancies within the marine park advisory committees. I was advised that there were approximately 41 vacancies, including alternate members. When I put the question to you, you did not answer it. As of 7 September, how many vacancies were there within those five marine park advisory committees?

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: There are not too many; there are a couple. Mr Hansen?

The CHAIR: How many vacancies were there as of 7 September when I asked, and then I will ask a follow-up about what the number is now.

Mr HANSEN: I do not have the number in front of me. I will get it for you for this afternoon. As you flagged, there are 19 members, but they are alternate members. Sometimes an alternate member role might be vacant because there is an active member, and that does not have an impact. We will get those numbers for you.

ANSWER

Mr Hansen provides the answer to this on page 63 of the transcript from the Hearing.

Question 12 (Page 31)

The Hon. EMMA HURST: Did people also want to remove the meshing? When you say you consulted with the community, what was the percentage of people that wanted them removed?

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: I cannot remember off the top of my head. Mr Hansen might, or we can take it on notice.

The Hon. EMMA HURST: Can you take that on notice?

ANSWER

The independent consultancy team from the University of Wollongong did not specifically ask the question about removal of shark nets and therefore DPI cannot comment on the percentage of respondents who want them removed.

Question 13 (Page 33)

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Minister, has the Marine Estate Management Authority or the expert knowledge panel provided any comment on the draft network management plan?

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: Yes, they have. They were the ones who considered the draft management plan, before providing it to both me and to Minister Keane with advice to approve its release for public comment.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: I understand they are required to provide their advice on the website. I cannot see it. Could you provide that on notice?

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: Yes, sure.

ANSWER

Advice from the Chair of the Marine Estate Management Authority is available [here](#).]

Question 14 (Page 35)

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: What are you doing as the agricultural Minister to try to address the shortfall in shearers and harvest operators?

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: One of the initiatives, which started in October last year, was the new AgSkilled 2.0, a \$15 million program. That provides funding through Training Services NSW and TAFE NSW, to a number of registered training organisations [RTOs], including Tocal College, which is operated by the DPI. Tocal on its own has graduated over 1,100 students in the past 12 months alone.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: In shearing?

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: In a variety of courses.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I am statistically looking at shearers and harvest operators.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: I will have to take that aspect on notice, because I do not have in front of me the details of the graduates from TAFE or the other training providers. That is there and it is able to be accessed by industry bodies as well as registered training providers to run those courses.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: If you can take that on notice. Also, of the funding that you have announced as at today's date, how much of that has been spent?

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: Yes, absolutely.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Can you take that on notice?

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: Yes.

ANSWER

Shearing question

Mr Hansen provides the answer to this question on pages 64-65 of the transcript.

Harvest operator question

The Introduction to Harvest Operations course delivered by Tocal College has been delivered six times in the 2021 calendar year with 54 people enrolled.

AgSkilled Funding expenditure

This is a matter for the Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education.

Question 15 (Page 35)

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: How many accredited shearing instructors are there in New South Wales that you would be using with those RTOs and TAFE?

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: I will have to take that on notice.

ANSWER

Mr Hansen provides the answer to this question on pages 64-65 of the transcript.

Question 16 (Page 37)

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Minister, issues around driver licences and learners in particular have been explored at a number of budgets estimates hearings. As the Minister for Western New South Wales, have you received any correspondence from anyone at all raising or flagging issues around the difficulties that people have been having in getting appointments for their Ls?

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: Off the top of my head, I cannot recall. I may have; I may not have. I would have to check and come back.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I am happy for you to take that on notice.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: I will take it on notice if you do not mind.

ANSWER

I have not received any formal correspondence relating to concerns about difficulties in getting appointments for Ls drivers tests.

Question 17 (Page 39)

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Did you look at financial incentives, Minister, as a part of this package of trying to encourage even our own domestic workforce into some of these industries?

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: Yes. We have got a skilled migration program, the \$10,000 grants. I also had a fairly lengthy—

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Do you know how many have taken those up?

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: I do not know. We do not administer those. Mr Barnes might be able to answer that—

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I am going to pursue that this afternoon.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: —or take it on notice.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Anyway, if you could take it on notice, it would be nice to have the numbers.

ANSWER

Since the Department of Regional NSW took over responsibility of this Grant in February 2021, 24 grants have been awarded, totaling \$124,733.

Question 18 (Page 42)

The CHAIR: The recreational fishing councils, the advisory councils, that you have sent them to, how many of them declared conflicts of interest? I am aware that the recreational fishing council has members on it that are both recreational fishing and charter operators. Obviously this proposal, particularly for the dusky flathead, will have significant benefits for them in their charter operations. How many of them declared a conflict of interest before discussing these issues?

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: I do not know, but I would expect any member on those committees to declare their interest in line with the policies and government requirements. Maybe Mr Sloan knows the answer.

The CHAIR: Perhaps they might need to take it on notice.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: Yes, happy to take it on notice.

ANSWER

All members of Advisory Councils declare their interests (e.g. in charter fishing or recreational fishing) in the RFNSW Register of Interests. At each meeting, members are requested to declare any required updates to their interests.

Question 19 (Page 44)

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: That would be great. Last year I asked you about annual reporting coming from PNF holders. There seemed to be concern or confusion around the email address that PNF approval holders were directed to send reports to. I believe you had received, or LLS had received, three reports. That was it in the entire year. Just to confirm, that 2,000 cubic metres you provided to me before, how many reports was that based on and what level of confidence do you have that that is the entire PNF harvest in New South Wales in the past 12 months?

Mr WITHERDIN: I will take on notice the number of reports

ANSWER

Over the past 12 months Local Land Services has received 10 annual reports. This includes:

- one annual report for the 2019 calendar year, reporting a volume of 500 cubic metres
- eight annual reports for the 2020 calendar year, reporting a volume of 4,985 cubic metres
- one annual report for the 2021 calendar year, reporting a total volume of 66.34 cubic metres.

The Environment Protection Authority is responsible for receiving annual reports under the PNF Code of Practice and may provide further information on the entire volume of timber harvested from PNF over the past 12 months. Local Land Services has requested that the EPA provide them with any additional reports provided under the PNF Codes of Practice.

Question 20 (Page 45)

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Minister, I have a few biosecurity questions in the short time that I have. I have been advised that we had a serious issue with one of our ports where some raccoons escaped from containers. Are you aware of this?

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: Vaguely, yes.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: It highlights the very serious issue of biosecurity in this State and the funding that is required to fight essentially incursions from weeds and pests from other hemispheres.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: Other countries.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: There was a Hendra virus outbreak at Newcastle recently. Minister, what work are you doing in regard to climate change and its impact on how weeds and pests will move in New South Wales?

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: Can I just say as an introductory comment, that the cheapest form of biosecurity is good quarantine at our borders. And it continues to be a frustration that I have with the Commonwealth about the fact that the States are continually dealing with more and more of this stuff that we do not have in the country getting into the country through quarantine and then it becomes an issue for our balance sheet.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Raccoons.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: Yes. Khapra beetle, and I could go on. To your substantive point, yes, the Department of Primary Industries within its research program is doing a lot of dedicated work on climate change. Indeed we have a funding program to work with a number of landholders and farming industries to look at innovation in that space, to reduce energy consumption and to increase productivity. We are working with universities around the reduction of methane in cattle production, and all that sort of stuff.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I am going to explore that this afternoon.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: Good.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: The raccoon issue, could you take that on notice and get the details for the Committee? All jokes aside, it is pretty serious.

ANSWER

Mr Hansen provides the answer to this question on page 56 of the transcript from the Hearing.

Question 21 (Page 46)

The CHAIR: I did. Just one quick question on notice before I pass to the Government for its questions. There was a tender for manufacturing insulation fish screens that closes tomorrow. On notice, what is the budget for it and will it be coming out of the Recreational Fishing Trust Fund?

Mr HANSEN: We will take that on notice, thanks.

ANSWER

Mr Sloane provides the answer to this question on page 81 of the transcript from the Hearing.

Question 22 (Page 48)

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: How much of the \$575,000 did we get back?

Dr TRACEY: I think that is still to be finalised, but the majority we probably will not get back. Part of the contingency for us is that we were looking to make sure we had that supply ready in the event of a successful APVMA application. So the good news on—

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: When will we know how much we are going to get back?

Dr TRACEY: I can follow up on that pretty quickly, I think. I can take that on notice for you.

ANSWER

The final expenditure of the Mouse Control Program is yet to be finalised.

Question 23 (Page 49)

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Thank you. With regard to the \$150 million program, how many rural LGAs were excluded from the program? Do we know? Maybe another way of asking is: How many rural LGAs were included in the program?

Mr HANSEN: We use Local Land Services regions for the descriptions, so we might have to come back to you.

ANSWER

The 65 LGAs chosen for the mouse rebate were those most heavily impacted by mice (of a total of 89 non-metropolitan LGAs).

Question 24 (Page 49)

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Speaking of FTEs—and this may be a question to Mr Barnes—how many FTEs are then engaged in your GIPAA department, all those responsible for processing the GIPAAAs and getting them off to the Minister's office?

Mr BARNES: I would have to come back to you on that, Mr Veitch, but it would be a small number of people in the governance area of the corporate part of my department that expressly look at Standing Order 52s, GIPAAAs and any other information with integrity agencies. I will take that on notice and come back to you.

ANSWER

Mr Barnes provides the answer to this question on page 59 of the transcript from the Hearing.

Question 25 (Page 53)

The Hon. EMMA HURST: I do not think the Minister answered this this morning about an exposure of the draft. Do you have a hard deadline that the Minister has asked at least for that draft from you, an actual date?

Mr HANSEN: We know, working backwards, when the Minister needs to have that, yes.

The Hon. EMMA HURST: When would that be? Working backwards from—

Mr HANSEN: Let us just say it is a very close date to this.

The Hon. EMMA HURST: One week? Two weeks? Tomorrow?

Mr HANSEN: I am not sure I can—obviously, the path from there then will revolve around how comfortable the Minister is with the draft that gets presented, about—

The Hon. EMMA HURST: I understand, obviously, that does not necessarily mean a date for when the legislation will go out for public consultation because there could be many other steps after that. But I am just trying to get a bit of an idea. Maybe it is something you can take on notice if you are not willing to give it.

Mr HANSEN: I would be a lot more comfortable taking that one on notice. Thank you very much.

ANSWER

The Department is currently reviewing feedback from public consultation and using this to develop a draft Bill. It is the Government's intention to publish draft legislation this year.

Question 26 (Page 54)

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I want to ask you a question about the Gwydir shire puppy farm. If you recall, this is a puppy farm that got quite a lot of media attention in 2015 because of the appalling conditions that had been exposed. In late 2020 the same puppy factory again received media attention when it was again attended by the RSPCA following some whistleblower allegations, and around 60 dogs were removed by the RSPCA on animal welfare grounds. Can you confirm how many interim inspections were undertaken by the relevant agencies between 2015 and 2020?

Mr HANSEN: I do not have that with me. I do not know whether either Kim Filmer or Suzanne Robinson has that. Otherwise it would actually be information that would be held by the relevant inspection agencies, which would be either the RSPCA or Animal Welfare League NSW. So we would have to take that on notice and try to get that information for you.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: If you could, that would be very useful.

Mr HANSEN: I might just make sure I am not taking on notice something if someone has got information to hand.

Ms ROBINSON: Yes, that would be held by those enforcement agencies. That case, I understand, is currently still before the courts.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: If you could find that for us, that would be fantastic. Also could you tell us the status of the dogs and puppies that were removed by the RSPCA in 2020 and the status of those who remain at the puppy factory? Thank you. I am aware that the RSPCA undertook an investigation into Bourke Shire Council shooting dogs and puppies. Are you able to advise the extent of the RSPCA investigation into Bourke Shire Council and whether it included an inspection of actual pound and noncompliance issues?

Mr HANSEN: I might go to Dr Filmer, if she has connection? And if not, to Ms Robinson. No? What I know is that the RSPCA's review was looking at whether there were any offences under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act. The advice that I have got is the fact that they did find no breach of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act. I also know that the Office of Local Government has been carrying out its own investigations and has issued updated advice and guidance to all New South Wales councils to assist in the operation of pounds. But I know that that does not specifically address the question you asked of how broad was that investigation by RSPCA, other than the fact that obviously it covered "Did the council meet all of its requirements under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act?" So that scope was as broad as what the Act allows them, as compliance agencies, to carry out.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I understand. Did they have the powers to inspect more generally to check whether the pound was in compliance with other rules?

Mr HANSEN: They do. Well, provided those rules are other rules within the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, yes, they have those powers.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Are you able to find out if they in fact did inspect the council's general compliance?

Mr HANSEN: I can.

ANSWER

Gwydir Shire puppy farm

6 inspections were undertaken between 2015-2020.

Of the 62 animals that were removed, 39 puppies were returned to the owner in November 2020 as they were not subject to any POCTA offences. The remaining 23 animals stayed in the care of RSPCA NSW until they were officially surrendered by the owner in July 2021. Of the surrendered animals, one died from health complications, while the remaining animals have been adopted or transferred to a rescue group for rehoming.

Council officers have inspected the property since the 39 puppies were returned to the owner.

Bourke Pound

The investigation into the matter at Bourke Pound focused on potential offences committed under the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979* (POCTA). After a review of the evidence collected, it was determined that no offences were committed under POCTA. Due to a surge in COVID-19 cases in Bourke at the time of the investigation, a broader compliance inspection of the pound was not undertaken at the same time.

Question 27 (Page 55)

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Mr Hansen, has any work been undertaken by the department on the annual cost of the impact of weeds and pests to the New South Wales economy?

Mr HANSEN: Yes, there has been. In fact, on weeds alone, the direct costs—so, to the New South Wales economy, weeds cost \$1.8 billion per annum in lost productivity and direct control costs. Of that \$1.8 billion per annum, \$1.3 billion is borne by the farming sector. So the remainder is, obviously, outside of the farming sector. Combine that with pests—and I do not have a rounded figure for all pests, both exotic and endemic. I do not know whether Dr Tracey has one. But just off the basis of that alone, I mean, it is almost a \$2 billion cost to the industry just out of weeds alone.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: But you do not have one for pests?

Mr HANSEN: Not that I am aware of. I do not know whether—

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: You can take that on notice.

Mr HANSEN: Dr Tracey?

Dr TRACEY: If I can take that on notice. We would have some information, I just do not have it on hand. I am sorry. But I can come back to you on that. The Hon. MICK VEITCH: If you take that on notice, I just want the current figures.

ANSWER

Mr Hansen provides an answer to this question on Page 65 of the transcript.

Question 28 (Page 55)

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Mr Hansen, are you able to break down then what the DPI itself spends on weeds and pests each year?

Mr HANSEN: I will start and then I will hand over to Dr Tracey. You would have seen the recent announcement by the Minister for a \$24.2 million funding boost?

Mr HANSEN: A key component of that is actually the Weeds Action Program, which is \$12.6 million of that. So that has 11 regional subprograms and, importantly, it is actually a partnership approach, which means that we leverage those dollars up to get a bigger bang for our buck. I might throw to Dr Tracey to run through some of the key pieces of that—a break up of that Weeds Action Program.

Mr HANSEN: Yes, so the money comes through us. But in terms of our expenditure, one of the largest recipients of funding is actually the boots on the ground teams that Mr Witherdin manages within LLS—also, local councils, as well as some research and biocontrol activities. We might distribute, but we do not necessarily spend it all ourselves.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I would not mind if you took that on notice because I would like to get the full list—

Mr HANSEN: Yes.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: —but also the funds spent to date, if I could, against those programs just so we have a clearer picture about what is being allocated.

ANSWER

Funding for the Weeds Action Program since 2015:

15-16 - \$10,794,999

16-17 - \$9,998,240

17-18 - \$11,733,600

18-19 - \$12,500,000

19-20 - \$12,662,500

20-21 - \$12,662,500

Funding for the Special Purpose Pest Management Rate (which has only existed since 2018):

18-19 - \$6m

19-20 - \$6m

20-21 - \$6m

Question 29 (Page 57)

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Mr Hansen, is the \$1.8 billion for weeds you spoke about the most current number that we have got with regard to impact is that like an annual number that has been in place? I remember reading a 2014 or 2015 report from one of the grain associations and they cited \$1.8 billion.

Mr HANSEN: That is a regularly quoted analysis piece of work in terms of costs to the New South Wales economy. Dr Tracey, do you know the year in which that work was done? Obviously when you look at that economic cost it comes down to what is the lost opportunity in terms of—what is the loss of productive capacity as well as what does the cost of sprays or treatment take? Whilst it would vary year on year, once you get to that \$1.8 billion stage it is sort of rounding at the edges in terms of it being a significant impact.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: You took that on notice but what is the most current amount, so I have an idea about the numbers you cite in the response? When were they first being used because I know there has been a bit of time that lapsed?

Mr HANSEN: Yes.

ANSWER

The most recent economic analysis of the cost of weeds in NSW was completed in 2014 during the NRC Weed Review. The NRC commissioned Cheryl Kalisch from Grain Growers Limited to produce the report “The economic cost of weeds in NSW” (May 2014).

Question 30 (Page 61)

The Hon. EMMA HURST: Thank you. I also have some follow-up questions about the shark nets. As we said, the DPI ran a survey for New South Wales residents and coastal councils earlier this year about the shark nets and other aspects of the shark management program. Do you know when the results of this survey will be made public?

Mr HANSEN: No, I will have to take that on notice.

The Hon. EMMA HURST: Do you know if it will be made public?

Mr HANSEN: I do not know.

The Hon. EMMA HURST: Will you take that on notice as well?

Mr HANSEN: Yes.

ANSWER

The “*Preferred shark mitigation measures of NSW Coastal Councils*” report authored by the University of Wollongong will be released on the DPI SharkSmart website this year.

Question 31 (Page 63)

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Thanks, Mr Hansen. My next set of questions is for Mr Witherdin. They relate to Budget Paper No. 4 for 2021-2022. At [6 - 11] Local Land Services, Mr Witherdin, the "employee related" costs in the revised budget for 2020-2021, \$123,242 million, and the budget allocations for 2021-2022, \$126, 280 million. What is the difference there? Why has the revised amount gone up? Is it that you are recruiting? The issue I have is that the actual budgeted allocation at the start of 2020-2021 was \$130,378 million. There is movement in the numbers there. What is causing that?

Mr WITHERDIN: Yes. Look, I imagine—I would need to take on notice the exact detail of it. We had a range of additional programs that come in. They sometimes have or generally will have a labour expense cap attached to them.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Yes.

Mr WITHERDIN: That is why you will get a progressive adjustment through the cycle in terms of that. But, you know, I can certainly go to our overall staff numbers which—

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I am happy for you to take it on notice and just get to it.

Mr WITHERDIN: Yes. Okay.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: It relates to the numbers that were in the budget so it is pretty easy to go back and have a look at.

Mr WITHERDIN: Yes.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: But I just want to know what the fluctuations are, why they happened and what is the story?

Mr WITHERDIN: There has certainly been no substantive movement in staff numbers from year to year.

ANSWER

Mr Witherdin provides the answer to this on page 66 of the transcript from the Hearing.

Question 32 (Page 64)

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Thank you. On the same page, if you go down to "Revenue: Retained Taxes, Fees and Fines", the budget allocation in 2020-2021 was \$526,000, and then the 2021-2022 budget is talking about \$47,237 million. That is a substantial increase: \$526,000 to \$47,237 million. Is that the reintroduction of LLS fees post-drought?

Mr WITHERDIN: That is what I suspect that will be because those rates will come back in in January 2022.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Okay.

Mr WITHERDIN: So, we have sort of had to—

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Do you just want to take that on notice—

Mr WITHERDIN: Yeah, but I will take it on notice—

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: —and check for sure that that is the case.

Mr WITHERDIN: —to ensure that exactly, yes.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: And if it is not, I would really like you to take it on notice and explain why there is a substantial difference in those retained taxes, fees and fines because I would hate to think it is fines.

Mr WITHERDIN: Well, I can assure you it is not that.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I am sort of hoping that is not where it is going to go

ANSWER

Mr Witherdin provides the answer to this on page 66 of the transcript from the Hearing.

Question 33 (Page 65)

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Mr Hansen, across other departments for weeds and pests, are you able to take on notice—I do not expect you to have this at hand—but do you have information on what other agencies within New South Wales spend on weeds and pests?

Mr HANSEN: No, not all of them but, obviously, with some of them such as Forestry Corp, we have visibility on them.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: How about you take that on notice whatever you can get, sort of a collect-all?

Mr HANSEN: Okay

ANSWER

Outside of specific programs such as the Weeds Action Program, total agency expenditure on weeds and pest animals is difficult to estimate as staff and equipment resources are often used across a range of natural resource management issues.

The Natural Resources Commission (NRC) attempted to compile such figures as part of its reviews of weed (2014) and pest animal management (2016) in NSW.

The NRC reported that the biggest government investors in weed management in NSW were NPWS (around \$18 million pa) and Local Control Authorities (around \$15 million pa). In addition, the Weeds Action Program administered by DPI has current funding of \$12.6 million.

The NRC estimated NSW Government expenditure on pest animals to be about \$39 million pa.

Question 34 (Page 66)

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Mr Hansen, how many workers did it bring in? Do you know what industries they came in for?

Mr HANSEN: In financial year 2020-21, which is the only completed set of numbers, it was 1,465 workers. I am not sure if I have immediately available what that split between horticulture or meat processing would be.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Is it possible to find that out?

Mr HANSEN: Yes

ANSWER

Mr Hansen provides the answer to this question on page 82 of the transcript from the Hearing.

Question 35 (Page 68)

The CHAIR: I am looking at some of the data collection on fishing fee receipts. When a person applies on line they are asked to say whether they fish for abalone or rock lobster. Do you have any data on that over the last, say, three years of how many people have answered that question? You can take that on notice, if needed.

Mr HANSEN: I might see if Mr Sloan has that available, otherwise I will take it on notice.

Mr SLOAN: I will have to take that on notice.

ANSWER

The number of people paying the recreational fishing fee that answered yes to the following questions were:

	Number of people	Number of people	Number of people
Question	2019	2020	2021 (as of 15/11/21)
Do you fish for Abalone?	16696	22025	24587
Do you fish for Rock Lobster?	17141	23564	27389

Question 36 (Page 68)

The CHAIR: Have you done any data collection on the age breakdown of our anglers? I have had several correspondence from the amateur fishing association concerned about fishing infrastructure that is suitable for the aged and fishing infrastructure suitable for the disabled, and they cannot seem to get any sense out of the three Ministers that potentially this intersects with. Has the department collected any data on those demographics of age and disability? Perhaps on notice you might be able to provide some.

Mr SLOAN: That is a good question. Our surveys that happen every two years do collect information on those sorts of details. When those reports are finalised are published and made public. We can provide that information

ANSWER**Preliminary demographic age information from the 2019/20 DPI Statewide Recreational Fishing Survey (unpublished)**

Note: information on persons with a disability is not collected as part of the current surveys.

Age group	Percentage of age group among people that fished (%)
18-29	13.6
30-44	30.9
45-59	36.3
60 and above	19.2

Demographic age information from the 2017/18 DPI Statewide Recreational Fishing Survey

Note: information on persons with a disability is not collected as part of the current surveys.

Age group	Percentage of age group among people that fished (%)
18-29	12.8
30-44	28.1
45-59	38.5
60 and above	20.6

Question 37 (Page 68)

The CHAIR: You will probably need to take this one on notice: The Eco huts, which seem to be a collaboration between DPI and national parks but it looks like DPI has primary responsibility, do you have any data about how well it is being patronised, particularly with the recreational anglers? I know that they can put in a code or they put in their fee receipt number and they get a discount. Can you provide any data on how well they are being utilised?

Mr SLOAN: We certainly can. I will have to take it on notice and give you the exact details

ANSWER

There are currently 21 Eco Hut sites throughout NSW which provide for wilderness fishing opportunities in National Parks and other areas.

In 2020, a total of 126 bookings were made as part of the NSW DPI Eco Huts program run in partnership with the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS).

Question 38 (Page 69)

The Hon. EMMA HURST: That is useful to know. Remaining on the topic of animal research, I obtained a document under a Standing Order 52 order that I would like to ask some questions about. The document talks about a course organised by the New South Wales DPI in 2017 called "Production animal pathology for New South Wales field veterinarians". It was running for many years without animal ethics approval. An investigation found the course involved killing 12 sheep by cutting their throats without prior stunning. The sheep were described by participants as being near death before the throat cutting and several of them had been used in smoke inhalation experiments earlier that day as well. Are you aware of this incident?

Mr HANSEN: That training course, whilst using our facility, was actually a training course that was jointly arranged and run by the University of Sydney and Charles Sturt University. The University of Sydney and Charles Sturt University were not only course content owners but also it was delivered by their staff. We provide facilities for them to utilise at the Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute [EMAI]. Our EMAI Animal Ethics Committee undertook an investigation. They reported that the veterinary pathology course had not been approved by our Animal Ethics Committee, so this came down to a University of Sydney animal ethics committee which commenced its own internal investigation into it. Its preliminary finding was that there appeared to be no animal ethics approval for the course. The course leader was immediately suspended and prevented from engaging in further animal research pending the outcome of the university's investigation.

Our investigation showed that there was a breakdown in internal systems with the University of Sydney and Charles Sturt University independently investigating and taking disciplinary action against their staff. They have given the Animal Research Review Panel the outcome of those investigations and the steps they have taken to prevent similar incidents from occurring in the future.

The Hon. EMMA HURST: On page 12 of the documents in regards to this incident there is a range of recommendations. The last one talks about a report on the response of the recommendations provided by 1 August 2018. Are we able to get a copy of that report?

Mr HANSEN: I do not see why not.

ANSWER

The report was in the form of a letter responding to the recommendations. The letter was supplied as part of the response to the Standing Order 52 and can be found at document reference '(b)480a'.

Question 39 (Page 70)

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Mr Hansen, I have some questions for you, if I could, about annuity hardwood plantations. How many annuity hardwood plantations are there in New South Wales?

Mr HANSEN: Chair, could I—is this a question for Wednesday, Mr Field?

The CHAIR: Potentially.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: It actually has to do with DPI's involvement. As I understand it, you effectively enforce the regulations and the code with regards to these private plantations which were established, sometimes 20 or 30 years ago.

Mr HANSEN: Yes. I might have to take that on notice.

ANSWER

This issue was discussed and answered by Anshul Chaudhary during the Budget Estimates hearing with the Deputy Premier on Wednesday 3 November (see transcript p44). The answer given by Mr Chaudhary was: two.

Question 40 (Page 72)

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: I have emails on the public GIPAA record from DPI staff to Forestry Corporation staff talking about how the plantation footprint on that site was remapped, Forestry Corporation staff asking for it to be remapped and DPI staff acknowledging that in order to effectively allow Forestry Corporation to use the plantation code to dictate how they operated on that property around drainage lines, creek lines, road movements and the like. Do you agree that it is the role of DPI staff to make those changes?

Mr HANSEN: The way you described it just there, no. But I would say that I am going to have to take that on notice, Mr Field, and be prepared for the conversation about forestry, Forestry Corporation and the forestry Minister's activities on Wednesday at his hearing.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: We will come back to it, then.

ANSWER

This issue was discussed and answered during the Budget Estimates hearing with the Deputy Premier on Wednesday 3 November (see transcript pp 43-48).

Question 41 (Page 72)

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Whilst we are doing that, Mr Hansen, I want to go back to the Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity. You kindly gave us the numbers for a number of financial years from DPI, but that agreement, I am certain, would involve a contribution from the Federal Government.

Mr HANSEN: Yes. It is meant to hold all States, Territories and the Federal Government to a base level of the 2016 financial year, to ensure that we built upon, not eroded away, our collective investment in biosecurity.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Okay, thank you. Would those Commonwealth contributions for those financial years be available somewhere? Do you have them?

Mr HANSEN: They would be, yes. I do not have them available here now, but they would be available.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Can you take it on notice and get them to us?

Mr HANSEN: Yes.

ANSWER

The compilation report of annual biosecurity expenditure by jurisdiction is currently being prepared by the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture and Water Resources (DAWE). This is expected to be tabled for discussion with Agricultural Ministers by the end of the year.

Question 42 (Page 73)

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Okay, thank you. Mr Hansen, the Recreational Fishing Trusts—is it possible to get a breakdown of the expenditure since 2016 for that particular fund? If I could get the total expenditure, specifically what I am after is how much of that funding goes towards departmental research or departmental programs.

Mr HANSEN: That should be available. I think we have prepared it for previous questions.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I waited all day. I thought Mr Banasiak might have been all over it.

The CHAIR: I have already asked a question on notice for the latest data.

Mr HANSEN: Yes.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Well, let's bundle it all together and get it in one go. That would be great.

Mr HANSEN: Fantastic.

ANSWER

Total expenditure relating to NSW DPI projects funded from the Recreational Fishing Trusts since 2016 (as published in the relevant cluster Annual Reports) is outlined below.

Financial year	Expenditure \$'000
2016/17	14,179
2017/18	12,894
2018/19	16,535
2019/20	16,070
2020/21*	16,008

*2020/21 DRNSW Annual Report not published yet

Question 43 (Page 75)

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: The repayment of the loans, particularly the no-interest loans through the Farm Innovation Fund—I would be keen to see the repayment processes there and whether people have started that process. Hopefully after this bumper season we can start getting some of those loans being repaid. Do we break those down into small farms, medium farms, large farms or very large farms? Is there a categorisation so that if you were to interrogate the data you would have an idea about farm size to better understand who has got the capacity to repay?

Mr HANSEN: I am not sure that we have an automatic categorisation. We would probably be able to go through the data and rework back out. The Drought Assistance Fund loans, which were the smaller loans and the interest-free, repayment-free, they kick back in in February next year. So the first of the repayments fall due then.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: They should start.

Mr HANSEN: I am not sure that we actually have categorised the client base at RAA into size of category. If we have, I will find out and get back to you before the end of today.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: If there were some categories, that would be interesting to find out what they were.

ANSWER

Upon receiving an application, the RAA reviews the historic and projected turnover of an applicant as it assesses the capacity to repay loans. However, the RAA does not aggregate this data and does not report against this metric.

Question 44 (Page 76)

The CHAIR: Okay, sure. In another written question regarding fines for fishing offences over the last three years, you came back and said there was close to \$3.2 million or \$3.1 million issued in fines via the Fisheries Management Act and the Marine Estate Management Act and that goes to consolidated revenue. Has the department done any work in better utilising that \$3.1 million and turning it towards investment in fishing infrastructure or greater fisher compliance, or anything like that? I am citing US models where they take those fines and reinvest them back into conservation and improve facilities for fishermen. Has the department done any work in that space?

Mr HANSEN: We are constantly looking into that space. I might get Mr Sloan to make some further comment.

Mr SLOAN: Yes. I agree with the comment from Mr Hansen. We are constantly looking at trying to improve what we are doing in this space but to give you some sort of specifics I think I will need to take it on notice and come back to you with some of the details.

ANSWER

The Marine Protected Areas Fund is established under s.74 of the *Marine Estate Management Act 2014*. Revenue paid into the Fund comes from fees, charges and other amounts payable (including penalty notices) under the Act in connection with marine parks or aquatic reserves, and any gifts or bequests of money made for payment into the Fund.

Under s.74 of the Act, funds can only be used for the administration of Part 5 (marine parks and aquatic reserves) and enforcement of Part 6 of the Act, the carrying out of research to inform the management of marine parks and aquatic reserves, the conduct of consultation and the operation of the Marine Estate Expert Knowledge Panel.

All Penalty Notices paid under the *Fisheries Management Act 1994* are Consolidated Revenue and are not accessed by the Regulatory Authority.

Where court imposed fines are issued under the *Fisheries Management Act 1994* the Regulatory Authority captures 50% of these fines as moiety, which are used to offset legal costs associated with the prosecution of the matters in question.

Question 45 (Page 76)

The CHAIR: I particularly want to ask some follow-ups on the cost of ammunition. Looking at the 2018 figures, I have worked this out based on a median price range for ammunition, it seems that it was costing you \$1.50 a shot in 2018. That quickly rose in 2019 to \$5 a shot. In 2020 it was \$6 per shot. If you are looking at the average price or median prices for the shotgun ammunition, which you utilise, it is around \$3 a shot. I just wanted some clarification as to what has happened over those years. Why in 2018 was it half the average price and then it jumped to \$5 and then in 2020 it was almost double, or close to double, the average price. You are either buying the ammunition at a really ridiculous price or your aerial cullers are taking too many shots.

Mr WITHERDIN: Look, I will have to take that one on notice.

ANSWER

The source of data referred to in this question is not clear and as such the specific figures quoted are unable to be clarified. Local Land Services procures ammunition in bulk quantities for aerial shooting operations. The average price paid since 2018 for a .308 round is \$1.20 and the average price for a 12ga round is \$0.85.

Question 46 (Page 76)

The Hon. EMMA HURST: Great. Thank you. I saw in the Local Land Services web page that there was a paddock shade and shelter project running in 2019 but I am not sure if that program is still ongoing.

Mr WITHERDIN: Yes. I would have to take that on notice as well, but I imagine what we are talking to is sort of a guide there, sort of a best practice guide there, for landholders. I will follow that up.

ANSWER

The Paddock Shade and Shelter program is a Riverina Local Land Services program that commenced in 19-20 Financial Year and is ongoing

Question 47 (Page 76)

The Hon. EMMA HURST: Could I also ask you to respond on notice how much funding was distributed as part of that program when it ran? Are there any other grant programs available to ensure that farmers can get shade for their animals on their property?

Mr WITHERDIN: Not that I am aware of directly. I mean, indirectly there would be a number through, like, the Catchment Action NSW Program and various sorts, and probably a national Landcare program as well, but it is more likely to be a by-product of revegetation rather than specifically about that.

The Hon. EMMA HURST: Okay.

Mr WITHERDIN: I will follow-up.

ANSWER

Grants were paid to landholders to establish larger Paddock trees for shade and establish small plantings for shelters/wind breaks:

- 2019-20 \$203k
- 2020-21 \$870k
- 2021-22 \$75k (estimated)

There are various other grant programs that involve revegetation or shelter belts across numerous Local Land Services regions. These generally run annually, and landholders are able to submit an Expression of Interest if they meet certain criteria

Question 48 (Page 77)

The Hon. EMMA HURST: Thank you. Mr Hansen, I previously asked you about calf roping which under the code was meant to be phased out by 1989 but still continues in New South Wales under the Ropersmate device. Are you able to point me to any independent studies that show that the Ropersmate device works on calves being roped and prevents the abrupt stopping of calves, as required by the code?

Mr HANSEN: I would have to take that on notice.

ANSWER

DPI is not aware of any studies into the Ropersmate device.

All rodeo events in NSW must comply with the provisions of the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979* (POCTA). It is also expected that rodeos will adhere to the NSW Code of Practice for animals used in rodeo events (the Code) which is recognised under POCTA. A rodeo operator who fails to comply with the Code may be committing an offence under POCTA.

Question 49 (Page 77)

The Hon. EMMA HURST: As the DPI itself ever carried out any research or studies on the Ropersmate device to determine the impact on the animals involved?

Mr HANSEN: Not that I am aware of.

The Hon. EMMA HURST: Could you take that one on notice as well, just to clarify?

Mr HANSEN: Sure.

ANSWER

DPI has not conducted research into the Ropersmate device.

Question 50 (Page 77)

The Hon. EMMA HURST: I wanted to ask you as well about the puppy farming task force—the RSPCA puppy farming task force.

Mr HANSEN: Yep.

The Hon. EMMA HURST: Are you able to advise how long the task force has been funded for?

Mr HANSEN: Sorry. Let me just—

The Hon. EMMA HURST: That is all right.

Mr HANSEN: I will see if I can find that. I do not know whether Dr Filmer or Ms Robinson has that ready to hand?

Dr FILMER: I have some statistics here that between 1 August and 30 September, audits were undertaken by the RSPCA task force. So the first records we have got are from 1 August 2020.

The Hon. EMMA HURST: And that program has completed?

Dr FILMER: No. It is an ongoing function of the RSPCA at the moment.

Mr HANSEN: In terms of the funding, I will have to take that on notice. I just cannot find it here in front of me in terms of when that supplementary funding for the program from government may finish. We will get an answer to that in a minute.

The Hon. EMMA HURST: Thank you. If you could, take that on notice.

ANSWER

The Puppy Factory Taskforce (the taskforce) was established on 22 October 2020 through the provision to RSPCA NSW of an additional \$400,000 above the existing annual funding arrangements, to employ four extra inspectors. The taskforce is still active as the total additional amount has not been fully expended yet.

Question 51 (Page 78)

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Excellent, thank you. Mr Hansen, the last time I was the shadow Minister for Primary Industries there was a fair bit of fanfare about the herpes virus being released for the carp populations in our waterways. You may recall. I wouldn't mind an update as to where that is that.

Mr HANSEN: That is a blast from the past. Maybe Dr Tracey might want to give you an update on where the Carpinator is up to.

Dr TRACEY: The Carpinator—I am just seeing if I can find my notes on that. That one was a national program that was funded through the Centre for Invasive Species Solutions. I am just trying to find a few more notes on it.

Mr SLOAN: Just while Dr Tracey is finding his notes, I can possibly provide a few details. My understanding is that there was some additional research that was being done that was being led by the Commonwealth, and that research, when it was finalised, was going to be made available to agencies to review. And then, from there, policy decisions would be made. To date, to my knowledge, we haven't seen the outcomes of that additional research.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: So we are still waiting, essentially, and we haven't released the herpes virus into our waterways?

Mr SLOAN: No.

Dr TRACEY: I am sorry. I will have to take that on notice—any additional info.

ANSWER

Dr Tracey provides the answer to this question on page 81 of the transcript from the Hearing.

Question 52 (Page 79)

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Staying with fish, the lessons that we learned from the massive fish kills in 2019—what are we doing now to replenish those fish stocks, particularly the Murray cod, in the Darling-Baaka?

Mr HANSEN: That is one I know that Mr Sloan would like to talk to, because it has been one of the really popular success stories of that fish rescue and recovery program.

Mr SLOAN: Thanks for the question. We are very fortunate that the system has returned to quite a good state of health. There is water flowing all the way down into Menindee Lakes at present. From what I understand, it is at 90 per cent capacity across those catchments, which is great news. We have seen not only the return of water but also some signs of natural fish spawning events in those systems, which is really what we want to see. The fish that we rescued from the system—we have returned a lot of the adult fish back into those waterways, but we have also been breeding those fish and releasing fingerlings back into the system as well. I can provide some specific details on the exact numbers, but essentially we have restocked the brood stock that we rescued. We have restocked fingerlings that we bred from those waterways. In terms of how we build resilience into the system for the future, as you are probably aware, we have a major fish passage infrastructure strategy. We are under constant progress to develop that infrastructure right across New South Wales, in partnership with WaterNSW.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I wouldn't mind you taking that on notice and providing a more detailed response, mainly because I did mention Murray cod, but there were other fish species as well. I think it was the Narrandera facility that did a lot of work around this, so I would be pretty keen to get that detail. With regard to the Narrandera facility, I know there was an expansion of that facility announced. Where is that up to? Is it completed? What were the total funds that have been expended on that expansion? What does it actually mean they will now be able to do?

Mr HANSEN: Just let me get the numbers on that, unless—Mr Sloan, have you got it

Mr SLOAN: Sorry, I do not have that information right at my fingertips but I can easily provide that in a few moments.

Mr HANSEN: Basically the upgrade is both for our breeding facility as well as for additional ponds. The earthwork is largely completed from what I have seen. I do not know, but I thought we were not too far off the completion of the breeding equipment. Again, I will try to find it for you.

ANSWER

Replenish fish stocks in the Lower Darling-Baaka River (LDBR) (particularly Murray Cod) question

Mr Sloane provides an answer to this question on page 80 of the transcript.

Narrandera facility question

Mr Hansen provides an answer to this question on page 81 of the transcript.

Question 53 (Page 79)

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Have there been any asset sales within DPI or in any of the arms of DPI, including LLS, in the last 12 months? What is the dollar value? How many parcels of land, in particular, of asset sales?

Mr HANSEN: Can we narrow that down? We have had a couple of clearing sales on farms to get rid of fence posts and strainers and so forth.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: No, I do not want to know that.

Mr HANSEN: So those assets are okay. In terms of land, none from us. Sorry, no, we might have one or two old houses in locations.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Will you take it on notice and come back to me with an answer?

Mr HANSEN: Yes.

ANSWER

There have been no asset sales of land by DPI or any of the arms of DPI in the last 12 months.

For the year end 30 June 2021 there were no land asset sales for Local Land Services