



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

PORTFOLIO COMMITTEES

**BUDGET ESTIMATES 2023-2024**

**Supplementary questions**

Portfolio Committee No. 4 – Regional NSW

**Agriculture, Regional New South Wales, Western New South Wales**

Hearing: Wednesday 25 October 2023

**Answers due by:** Wednesday 22 November 2023

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**Agriculture, Regional New South Wales, Western New South Wales****Questions from the Hon Chris Rath *(on behalf of the Opposition)*****Biosecurity Funding**

1.

- (a) Last year the former government announced \$5.8 million to fast-track development of mRNA vaccines for Lumpy Skin Disease and Foot And Mouth Disease. How much of this funding has been spent?
- (b) Is there additional funding available once the \$5.8 million has been fully exhausted?
- (c) Does the government have an aspirational timeline for development of these vaccines?
- (d) What is the current situation in relation to the threat posed to Australia by Lumpy Skin Disease and Foot And Mouth Disease?
- (e) Is NSW in a position to respond to an incursion of these diseases?

**ANSWER**

- (a) The NSW Government has invested \$10.8 million in this program of works, which includes the \$5.8 million announced last year.
- (b) NSW Government investment is being supplemented with both industry, commercial and other State Government funding.
- (c) Deadlines on the creation of a vaccine were set by the former Government. While the project is breaking new ground, it is not productive to provide a definitive timetable to research outcomes. DPI hopes to understand if the LSD vaccine is effective, based on the progression of research over the coming year.
- (d) Australia remains at a heightened risk for both of these diseases due to their proximity in the Oceania region – primarily Indonesia but also now South Korea.
- (e) NSW DPI has been actively preparing for an FMD incursion since the outbreak in the UK in 2001. The preparations are reviewed and refined after every response (Equine influenza in 2007; Avian influenza in 2012, 2013 and 2020 - VIC, Salmonella enteritidis, Abalone Viral Ganglioneuritis, QX disease, Japanese encephalitis) to improve the planning and take advantage of any learnings or new methods that could be used. In addition, NSW DPI actively participates at the national level to share learnings and enhance national arrangements through AUSVETPLAN and the Animal Health Committee.

**Drought Preparedness**

2.

- (a) At the peak of the last drought, how much funding was being drawn out of the Farm Innovation Fund on a monthly basis?
- (b) What will be the difference between the former Farm Innovation Fund and the incoming Drought Infrastructure Fund?
- (c) What will be the interest rate charged to farmers who access loans through the Drought Infrastructure Fund?
- (d) From an agriculture industry perspective, is it more beneficial for farmers to be able to build drought resilience prior to a drought or be providing with subsidies and fee waivers during a drought?
- (e) From a financial perspective, is it more beneficial for government to provide resilience building programs prior to a drought, freight subsidies during a drought, or waiving rates and fees during a drought?
- (f) What was the dollar-for-dollar breakdown of resilience-building, freight subsidies and rates and fees waiving during the last drought?

**ANSWER**

- (a) – (f) Information regarding disbursements from the Farm Innovation Fund is available on the Rural Assistance Authority website.

**Hudson Pear**

3. In December 2022, \$2.6 million was allocated to a Hudson Pear program in the Walgett and Lightning Ridge area;
- (a) How much of the \$2.6 million was spent between March 25, 2023 and June 30, 2023?
  - (b) How many staff have been employed as part of this program?
  - (c)
    - i. How much of the \$2.6 million is budgeted to be spent this financial year?
    - ii. How much of the \$2.6 million is budgeted to be spent in the 2024/25 financial year?
    - iii. How much of the \$2.6 million is budgeted to be spent in the 2025/26 financial year?
    - iv. How much of the \$2.6 million is budgeted to be spent in the 2026/27 financial year?

**ANSWER**

- (a) Of the approved \$670,000 budget for that year, \$589,621.41 (ex GST) was expended between 25 March and 30 June 2023.
- (b) Two full time employees based at the Walgett Local Land Services office.
- (c) Money will be allocated as and when required.

**Forestry**

4.

- (a) Was any consultation done with the timber industry before announcing a halt to harvesting operations in 8400 hectares of State Forest on September 12?
- (b)
- i. How many illegal protests have been held in State Forests in the seven months post March 25, 2023, in comparison to the seven months prior to March 25, 2023?
  - ii. What impact have these protests had on timber harvesting operations in terms of output?
  - iii. What, if any, mental health services are you providing to timber workers impacted by protests, harassment from activists and the uncertainty that has been created about the future of the native hardwood industry?
  - iv. Has Forestry Corporation been required to delay harvesting operations in State Forests due to a lack of security to keep workers safe?

**ANSWER**

- (a) The process to establish the Great Koala National Park will include:
- An independent economic and social assessment which will consider the impacts on local jobs and communities;
  - The establishment of industry, community and Aboriginal advisory panels to provide input to the creation of the park; and
  - An expert environmental and cultural heritage assessment to safeguard the unique environmental and cultural heritage of the region and ensure the Park aligns with the highest standards of environmental protection and respect for cultural heritage.

The NSW Government aims to strike the right balance between jobs and the environment and commits to working closely with industry to develop a blueprint for the future timber sector that accommodates both the park and the production of timber products.

- (b)
- i. This information is not recorded.
  - ii. This information is not recorded.
  - iii. Forestry Corporation recognises that a range of stresses may be experienced by staff and contractors working in any roles within the organisation and has a range of support for all employees around mental health and wellbeing in the workplace. Forestry

Corporation has an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) that is available to all staff, provides resources to advise staff about other community mental health support services available that they may wish to connect with, and has delivered mental health first aid training to a range of staff. The EAP is also extended to contractors in some circumstances.

- iv. Decisions about operational scheduling are made having regard to a range of factors including markets and weather. Protests may also be a consideration.

### Red Fire Ants

5.

- (a) On October 21, 2023, the Federal Government announced funding of \$268 million to combat Red Fire Ants. Did the NSW Government discuss this figure with the Federal Government prior to the announcement?
- (b) The Invasive Species Council described this figure as a “significant downpayment but not enough”. Will the NSW Government lobby other states to contribute to the funding required to provide a national approach to this issue?
- (c)
  - i. The most recent update provided by the NSW Government stated fire ants had been detected in Queensland 5km from the NSW/Qld border. Is this still the most accurate information?
  - ii. If not, what is the most accurate information in relation to detections of fire ants in Queensland.
  - iii. Have there been any reports of fire ant infestations in NSW?
  - iv. If so, were these reports investigated and found to be false?

### ANSWER

- (a) The \$268 million is the Commonwealth commitment to the National Program. This commitment was formally discussed at Agriculture Minister’s Meeting on 13 July 2023.
- (b) The NSW Minister for Agriculture has written to other jurisdictions to stress the importance of the Response and to encourage them to expedite their respective approval processes.
- (c)
  - i. Yes (noting the detection was 5.2 km from the border, which was rounded down to 5km)
  - ii. The closest fire ant detections are 5.2 km from the NSW border (at Tallebudgera, QLD). This and other southern infestations amount to around 140 nests within 18 kms of the NSW border. These nests have been successfully treated by the National Program.

- iii. While NSW receives multiple reports of suspected fire ant infestations and illegal movement of potentially infested materials each year, there has only been one incursion in NSW at Port Botany in 2016 which was eradicated.
- iv. Other than Port Botany in 2016, all reports have been investigated and found to be negative for fire ants.

### Sheep and Goat Electronic Identification

6.

(a)

- i. Is the timeline for NSW's roll out of mandatory sheep and goat electronic identification the same as the timeline announced by the former government in December 2022?
- ii. Has there been any discussions with Ministers or departments from other states seeking NSW to fall into line with the timeline established by those states?

(b)

- i. How much funding is available in the program announced on August 29, 2023, which allows for producers to apply for funding for EID readers, software, auto drafters and goat-handling equipment?
- ii. How much of this funding has already been allocated?
- iii. Where is this funding being sourced from?

(c)

- i. What, if any, stakeholder consultation has been undertaken in relation to the roll-out of mandatory sheep and goat electronic identification since March 25, 2023?
- ii. How much of this has been done by the Department of Primary Industries, and how much has been undertaken in person by the Minister?

### ANSWER

(a)

- i. Yes.
- ii. No.

(b)

- i. For the Producer eID Rebate Scheme, there is \$14.4 million of funding available.
- ii. As at 1 November 2023 \$7.28 million of this funding has been requested via applications to the Rural Assistance Authority.
- iii. The funding comprises \$7.2 million from the Commonwealth Government and \$7.2 million from the NSW Government.

(c)

- i. The NSW DPI Sheep and Goat Traceability team has been engaging with stakeholders across the sheep and goat supply chain since September 2022. Since 25 March 2023, the Sheep and Goat Traceability team have;
  - had 3346 direct interactions with stakeholders;
  - delivered 68 presentations;
  - staffed 22 field day trade stands;
  - attended 130 industry events;
  - conducted 32 saleyard and 18 processor meetings; and
  - visited 68 locations in 29 LGAs in NSW
- ii. Ministerial stakeholder meetings can be viewed via the Ministerial diary disclosure, which is published on the cabinet Office website.

### **Varroa Mite**

7.

- (a) You announced a plan to transition from eradication to management on Sept 20. When was the actual decision made?
- (b) What information have you been given in relation to an investigation being undertaken as to how Varroa Mite got into Australia?
- (c) What is the value of the bee pollination industry to agriculture in NSW?
- (d) How many hives had been exterminated between March and when you made the decision to move to a management program in September?
- (e)
  - i. Why did a beekeeper, Jon Lockwood from near Orange, have to send his own team of people to a property near Balranald to euthanise the 2500 hives he had pollinating an almond crop?
  - ii. A report on the ABC website outlined that Mr Lockwood's bees were some of the last ones to be euthanised before the removal of the eradication program. They didn't have varroa mite. Will you provide any level of compensation to Mr Lockwood?

### **ANSWER**

- (a) On 19 September, National Management Group (NMG) agreed to transition from eradication to management.

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- (b) As the agency responsible for biosecurity at Australia's borders, investigations into the entry of Varroa mite into Australia are being led by the Commonwealth. While NSW has supported the Commonwealth's ongoing investigation, any information that has been provided is confidential. Investigations linked with this entry that indicate any potential breaches of the NSW Biosecurity Act will be investigated by NSW DPI.
- (c) European honeybees (*Apis mellifera*) provide an average pollination value to Australia's food production sector of \$14.2 billion per annum. The average economic value of the bee pollination industry to agriculture in NSW is valued at around \$2.5 billion per annum.
- (d) Over 59,000 hives have been euthanised since the start of the response in July 2022.
- (e)
  - i. The Varroa mite Emergency response worked with beekeepers to euthanise hives within eradication zones associated with the IP located near Balranald. This work has now been completed. Beekeepers were given the option to euthanise their own bees to assist the response. Mr Lockwood chose this option.
  - ii. Mr Lockwood is subject to the same requirements as all other beekeepers whose bees were euthanised as part of the response. His Owner Reimbursement Costs (ORC) application will be assessed by the Rural Assistance Authority (RAA) and payments for which he is eligible will be made.

**Feral Pig Management**

8.

- (a) Can you provide an update on what programs are being rolled out in relation to feral pig management, and how much of the \$13 million being spent this financial year has been allocated to each program?
- (b) Riverina, Western NSW and the North-West have been identified as “hot spots”. Why hasn’t the Upper Hunter region, which has a significant pig problem also been singled out for significant investment?
- (c) Will additional staff be employed by Local Land Services as part of the \$13 million program, or will staff be redirected from other projects?
- (d) Is there any funding available to deal with the feral pig issue beyond the 2023/24 financial year?

**ANSWER**

- (a) Program expenditure breakdown is:

<b>Program</b>	<b>Allocation</b>
Control and monitoring	\$8,466,663.00
Extension activities	\$455,336.00
Labour to deliver program	\$4,078,001.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$13,000,000.00</b>

Control, monitoring and extension activities include coordinated landholder driven trapping and baiting programs, contractor led coordinated ground control programs and FFAST aerial control programs, with funding allocated across regions to deliver control programs in priority target areas, as determined by each region.

In addition, three new Landscape Scale Projects have been allocated \$1.1 million each (total \$3.3m) for monitoring, control, capacity building and extension. Other capacity building and communication activities are funded with the remaining FPP budget comprising labour and project management costs.

- (b) Hunter LLS has received \$449,782 to deliver coordinated control and capacity building programs within the region.
- (c) Additional roles have been created.
- (d) Yes.

**DRNSW Budget**

9.

- (a) Why has the Department of Regional NSW's budget for grants and subsidies decreased from \$2,166,121,000 in the 2022/23 financial year to \$1,348,142,000 in the 2023/24 financial year, according to p10-2 of Budget Paper 2?
- (b) On Page A5-10 of Budget Paper 1, under the heading "Material Measures" it is noted that the Regional Growth Fund will be redirected to fund other government priorities and election commitments;
  - i. How much funding was remaining in the Regional Growth Fund on March 25, 2023?
  - ii. What specific government priorities and election commitments will this funding be redirected towards?
- (c)
  - i. When was the decision made not to proceed with Round 3 of the Regional Job Creation Fund?
  - ii. What specific date/s were applicants notified the program had been cancelled and their applications for funding would not be proceeding?
  - iii. Will the government be replacing the Regional Job Creation fund with a similar program aimed at specifically creating employment opportunities in regional NSW?
- (d)
  - i. What was the travel budget for DRNSW staff in the 2022/23 financial year?
  - ii. What is the travel budget for DRNSW staff in the 2023/24 financial year?

**ANSWER**

(a) The NSW Government took to the election a better way to manage regional grants. This involves the establishment of the Regional Development Trust, an update of the Regional Development Act and creation of the Regional Advisory Council. Investment decisions will be guided by expert knowledge, and experience to ensure money is allocated where it is needed.

- (b)
  - i. Uncontracted and uncommitted Funding within the Regional Growth Fund at 28 March 2023 was \$607.9 million.
  - ii. The NSW Government took a package to the people of New South Wales that we would spend money in a better way, to ensure that services are being delivered for people in regional communities. The NSW Government plans to spend money in the regions in a way that is of most benefit and where and when it is needed.

- (c)
  - i. Decisions regarding funding programs were finalised in the 2023 / 24 NSW Budget,

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following the completion of the comprehensive expenditure review.

- ii. Following the delivery of the 2023 / 24 NSW Budget.
- iii. The NSW Government took a package to the people of New South Wales that we would spend money in a better way, to ensure that services are being delivered for people in regional communities. The NSW Government plans to spend money in the regions in a way that is of most benefit and where and when it is needed.

(d)

- i. For FY 2022/23 the Department of Regional NSW managed travel costs within the Other Operating Expenses budget allocation, detailed in 10.2 Financial Statements of Budget Paper No. 2.
- ii. I am advised that for the FY 2023/24 the Department of Regional NSW will manage travel costs within the Other Operating Expenses budget allocation.

### **Farms Of The Future Program**

- 10. On the Department of Primary Industries website, it states the Farms Of The Future grant program closed on August 31, 2023. Has this program been discontinued?

### **ANSWER**

The initial grant phase of the program is closed. The program's education and extension activities continue.

### **Agricultural Drains Coordinator**

11.

- (a) Has John Cullerton handed down a report he was commissioned to do in relation to finding solutions to drains in the norther parts of NSW, in the wake of flooding?
- (b) Is John Cullerton still employed as the Agricultural Drains Coordinator?
- (c) If not, why not?

### **ANSWER**

- (a) Yes.
- (b) John Culleton was commissioned to review the issues and opportunities associated with the management of agricultural drains on coastal floodplains. He was contracted to complete a separate activity, and was not an employee of NSW DRNSW.
- (c) N/A

### **Regional Events Acceleration Fund**

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12. Will there be any future rounds of the Regional Events Acceleration Fund?

**ANSWER**

The NSW Government is taking a fresh approach to how it invests in regional NSW to help ensure the needs of all communities are met. More information on this approach is available at <https://www.nsw.gov.au/regional-development-roadmap>.

13. If not, please outline the NSW Government's plan to attract these events in the regions.

**ANSWER**

Refer to Question 12.

14. What is your plan to bring sporting matches like the Women's International Rugby Tens Tournament to regional NSW?

**ANSWER**

Refer to Question 12.

### **Regional Tourism Activation Fund**

15. Are you committed to attracting domestic and international tourism to regional NSW?

#### **ANSWER**

Yes.

16. The Regional Tourism Activation Fund was delivering new and enhanced tourism infrastructure; a significant part of this program was to improve accessibility to attractions.

(a) Is this another example of infrastructure you are stripping from the regions to fund metro-based projects?

17. Can you please outline your plan to deliver these projects, especially those that improve accessibility?

#### **ANSWER**

16. – 17.

The NSW Government has announced \$1.8 billion in new regional investments over the NSW State Budget 23/24 to rebuild essential services, create new infrastructure and grow regional economies.

### **Stronger Country Communities Fund**

18. How much correspondence has your office received regarding the Stronger Country Communities Fund Round 6?

#### **ANSWER**

Two.

19. How much correspondence has the Department of Regional NSW received regarding the Stronger Country Communities Fund Round 6?

#### **ANSWER**

Twenty.

### **Minister for the Western NSW**

20. What are your primary responsibilities as the Minister for Western NSW?

#### **ANSWER**

I refer you to my answer to a question asked by the Hon. Bronnie Taylor on the matter on page 32 -33 of the transcript.

21. What Department supports these responsibilities?

**ANSWER**

The Department of Regional NSW.

22. How many departmental staff are allocated to the Western NSW portfolio?

**ANSWER**

The Department of Regional NSW currently has 20 staff based in Western NSW who assist in delivering the Government's regional priorities and support the delivery of place-based outcomes in the Western NSW region.

23. How many staff in your office are dedicated to the Western NSW portfolio?

**ANSWER**

All Members of the Ministerial Policy Team are dedicated to advancing the regional New South Wales.

24. Do these staff have other portfolio responsibilities?

**ANSWER**

Refer to Question 23.

25. Do you have any staff solely responsible for the portfolio of Western NSW?

**ANSWER**

Refer to Question 23.

26. How many hours per week would you spend on the Western NSW portfolio?

**ANSWER**

Work within the Ministerial Office is not categorised on an hour per week basis.

27. How many briefs as Minister for Western NSW would your office receive per week, on average?

**ANSWER**

As Minister for Western NSW, my office receives advice as required on a range of matters relevant to Western NSW.

This comes in a variety of forms, such as written briefs and correspondence, verbal updates and in person meetings and visits.

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**Regional Job Creation Fund**

28. When was the decision made to axe the \$100 million Regional Job Creation Fund (RJCF) Round **Three** even though applications had already been received?

**ANSWER**

Decisions regarding funding programs were finalised in the 2023/24 NSW Budget, following the completion of the comprehensive expenditure review.

29. Had the Department provided successful project recommendations to the Ministerial Office?

**ANSWER**

No.

30. Why has the number of rejected businesses not been published?

**ANSWER**

There were no project funding decisions made for RJCF Round Three.

31. When will the Department of Regional NSW website be updated to reflect the discontinuation of the RJCF Round Three?

**ANSWER**

RJCF Round 3 is showing as closed on the NSW Government Grant Finder website.

32. Have applicants for RJCF Round Three been made aware of the program's discontinuation rather than just being informed they were unsuccessful?

**ANSWER**

Yes.

33. Where has the money been redirected to?

**ANSWER**

The NSW Budget 2023-24 - Our plan for Regional NSW details funding for regional NSW including investment in a new \$350 million Regional Development Trust.

34. Why did it take the Minister more than five months to make this decision and notify applicants?

**ANSWER**

Decisions regarding funding programs were finalised in the 2023/24 NSW Budget released by the NSW Treasurer on 20 September 2023. Applicants were advised Regional Jobs Creation Fund Round 3 would not proceed via email on 22 September 2023.

35. What are the risks in holding notifications of success for several months?

**ANSWER**

There were no project funding decisions made for RJCF Round Three.

36. Please outline the reasons why you cut this funding from the regions.

**ANSWER**

The NSW Government is taking a fresh approach to how it invests in regional NSW to help ensure the needs of all communities are met. More information on this approach is available at <https://www.nsw.gov.au/regional-development-roadmap>.

**OPERATIONAL QUESTIONS**

**Agency Invoices**

37. How many invoices to suppliers or contactors from your portfolio agency were not paid on time since 28 March 2023, broken down by agency?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

<b>Portfolio agency</b>	<b>Paid after the due date</b>
Department of Regional NSW	6,227
Local Land Services	1,511
NSW Food Authority	40
Other Funds and Trusts	1
Regional Growth NSW Development Corporation	18
Rural Assistance Authority	51
Forestry Corporation of NSW	1,833 (for April – June 2023)

\*It should be noted that Regional NSW portfolio agencies transitioned to a new enterprise resource platform in April 2023, resulting in a pause to paying invoices during this period.

38. How many invoices to suppliers or contactors from your portfolio agency were paid over 30 days

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late on time since 28 March 2023, broken down by agency?

## ANSWER

I am advised:

Portfolio agency	Paid 30 days after the due date
Department of Regional NSW	3,602
Local Land Services	679
NSW Food Authority	2
Regional Growth NSW Development Corporation	4
Rural Assistance Authority	13
Forestry Corporation of NSW	558 (for April – June 2023)

39. How many invoices to suppliers or contactors from your portfolio agency were paid over 60 days late on time since 28 March 2023, broken down by agency?

(a) What was the penalty for paying suppliers or contactors late, broken down by agency?

## ANSWER

I am advised:

Portfolio agency	Paid 60 days after the due date
Department of Regional NSW	2,912
Local Land Services	276
Regional Growth NSW Development Corporation	4
Rural Assistance Authority	2
Forestry Corporation of NSW	281 (for April – June 2023)

(a) There are no financial penalties for late payment.

## Car/Driver

40. Has your Ministerial car been subject to any traffic or parking fines?

(a) If so, please provide details of each fine?

(b) Who was driving the car at the time of each incident?

(c) Who paid any of the fines?

## ANSWER

I am advised:

This matter is the subject of a Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (GIPA) (Cross-14) release, reference number PD\_A5881802 that can be found on the Premier's Department disclosure log.

Where a fine is incurred the payment of the fine is the responsibility of the driver of the vehicle.

41. Has your Ministerial Car been pulled over by the police?  
(a) If so, who was driving the car?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

The Premier's Department does not record these types of events.

**Complaints**

42. Has the Minister been the subject of any workplace complaints, including bullying, harassment, and sexual harassment?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

Any complaint or disclosure made under the Respectful Workplace Policy is confidential. The Respectful Workplace Policy applies to all Ministerial Offices and staff and is published on the Cabinet Office's Website.

As noted in the Goward review, a key aspect of effective workplace complaint policies is confidentiality in the complaint and investigation process. Confidentiality ensures that staff feel safe about raising concerns and confident that action will be taken in response.

**Consultants**

43. How much did the Department/agencies within your portfolio responsibilities spend in legal costs since 28 March 2023?  
(a) For what specific purposes or matters was legal advice sought?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

Legal costs are contained within the fees for services rendered category disclosed in the Other Operating Expenses note of the audited financial statements within the Department / Agency's Annual Report.

Details for the period 28 March 2023 to 30 June 2023 form part of the Department / Agency Annual Report 2022-23. These reports are due to be released shortly.

Details for the period 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024 will form part of the Department / Agency Annual Report 2023-24.

44. Have any Department/agencies within your portfolio responsibilities engaged any consultants to *Agriculture, Regional New South Wales, Western New South Wales*

provide the following services or advice since 28 March 2023:

- (a) Social media?
  - i. What were the cost of these services?
- (b) Photography?
  - ii. What were the cost of these services?
- (c) Videography?
  - iii. What were the cost of these services?
- (d) Acting training?
  - iv. What were the cost of these services?
- (e) Ergonomics?
  - v. What were the cost of these services?

## ANSWER

I am advised:

Costs were incurred and are contained within the fees for services rendered category disclosed in the Other Operating Expenses note of the audited financial statements within the Department's Annual Report 2022-23, including for the period 28 March 2023 to 30 June 2023. These reports are due to be released shortly.

The period 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024 will form part of the Department Annual Report 2023-24.

45. Since 28 March 2023, how many consultancy contracts have been signed in your portfolio agencies, broken down by agency?
- (a) What was the individual amount of each contract?
  - (b) What is the purpose of each contract?
  - (c) Who was the contract with?
  - (d) Did the contract go to a competitive tender?

## ANSWER

I am advised:

Consultancy expenditure, including details of consulting engagements over \$50,000, are included in the annual reports of agencies and departments in accordance with the NSW Treasury Policy and Guidelines TPG23-10 - Annual Reporting Requirements.

Details for the period 28 March 2023 to 30 June 2023 form part of the Department / Agency Annual Report 2022-23. These reports are due to be released shortly.

Details for the period 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024 will form part of the Department / Agency Annual Report 2023-24.

### Departmental Credit Cards

46. For each department, statutory agency and/or other body in the Minister's portfolio please report:

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- (a) How many credit cards are currently on issue for staff?
  - i. Please provide a break-down of this information by grade.
- (b) What was the value of the largest reported purchase on a credit card for the last year?
- (c) What was each largest reported purchase for?
- (d) What was the largest amount outstanding on a single card at the end of a payment period and what was the card holder's employment grade?
- (e) How many credit cards have been reported lost or stolen?
  - i. What was the cost to replace them?
- (f) How many credit card purchases were deemed to be illegitimate or contrary to agency policy?
  - i. What was the total value of those purchases?
  - ii. How many purchases were asked to be repaid on the basis that they were illegitimate or contrary to agency policy and what was the total value thereof?
  - iii. Were all those amounts repaid?
  - iv. If no, how many were not repaid, and what was the total value thereof?
  - v. What was the largest purchase that was deemed illegitimate or contrary to agency policy and asked to be repaid, and what was the cardholder's employment grade?
  - vi. What amount was repaid, in full?
  - vii. What amount was left unpaid?
- (g) Are any credit cards currently on issue connected to rewards schemes?
  - i. Do staff receive any personal benefit as a result of those reward schemes?
- (h) Can a copy of the staff credit card policy please be provided?

## ANSWER

I am advised:

The use and management of purchasing (credit) cards for official purposes is in accordance with standard procurement arrangements of the NSW Government.

Further, each Department / Agency within the portfolio have a specified policy, these are attached.

### Department/Agency Staffing

47. How many senior executive service employees were employed by each Department/agency within your portfolio responsibilities on:
- (a) 28 March 2023?
  - (b) 23 October 2023?

## ANSWER

I am advised:

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Numbers of senior executives are publicly reported within Annual Reports as per standard practice. The Department of Regional NSW Annual Report for FY2022-23 will be tabled towards the end of the year.

48. What is the expenditure on senior executive service employees employed by each Department/agency within your portfolio responsibilities since 28 March 2023?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

Numbers and remuneration of senior executives are published in Annual Reports. Salaries and wages are included under employee related expenses in the Financial Statements of the Annual Report.

49. How many individuals were employed as internal legal counsel by each Department/agency within your portfolio responsibilities on:
- (a) 28 March 2023?
  - (b) 23 October 2023?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

The legal branch within the Cabinet Office provides legal support to the Department of Regional NSW.

50. What is the expenditure on internal legal counsel employees employed by each Department/agency within your portfolio responsibilities 28 March 2023?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

Salaries and wages are included in the Department /Agency Annual Reports.

51. How many redundancies were processed by each Department/agency within your portfolio responsibilities since 28 March 2023?
- (a) Of these redundancies, how many were:
    - i. Voluntary
    - ii. Forced
  - (b) What was the total cost of all redundancies in each Department/agency within your portfolio responsibilities?

**ANSWER**

*Agriculture, Regional New South Wales, Western New South Wales*

I am advised:

Information relating to redundancies are published in the Annual Report under employee related expenses.

52. Is any former employee from your ministerial office now employed by any Department/agency within your portfolio responsibilities?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

The employment of former Ministerial office staff is not tracked.

Ministerial office staff must comply with their ethical obligations under the NSW Office Holder's Staff Code of Conduct, including after the cessation of the employment.

53. How many staff were dismissed from each Department/agency under your portfolio responsibilities since 28 March 2023?
- (a) Without identifying individuals, what were the reason(s) for each dismissal?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

The termination of an employee is treated confidentially and is managed in accordance with the Government Sector Employment Act 2013 and relevant accompanying policies.

54. What was the total amount each of the Departments/agencies under your portfolio responsibilities spent on stationery since 28 March 2023?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

Stationery costs are contained within the printing, stationery and postage category in the Other Operating Expenses note of the audited financial statements within the Department / Agency's Annual Report.

The costs for the period 28 March 2023 to 30 June 2023 form part of the Department / Agency Annual Report 2022-23. These reports are due to be released shortly.

Costs for the period 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024 will form part of the Department / Agency Annual Report 2023-24.

55. How many employees in each Department/agency within your portfolio responsibilities are working in an 'acting' capacity?

**ANSWER**

*Agriculture, Regional New South Wales, Western New South Wales*

I am advised:

The Government Sector Employment Act 2013 provides the statutory framework for NSW government sector employment and workforce management.

The Act provides the foundations of a modern and effective public sector workforce, attracting and retaining talented people who want rewarding careers and who are well-equipped to deliver the best service to the people of NSW.

56. What is the average number of days worked from home by employees in each Department/Agency within your portfolio responsibilities?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

Flexible working arrangements are tailored on an individual basis and are discussed as part of ongoing conversations which are embedded in the departments' Flexible Working Policy.

57. What was the total expenditure since 28 March 2023 by each Department/agency within your portfolio responsibilities on:
- (a) Taxi hire?
  - (b) Ridesharing services?
  - (c) Limousine/private car hire?
  - (d) Hire car rental?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

The items are contained within the travel costs category in the Other Operating Expenses note of the audited financial statements within the Department / Agency's Annual Report.

This is in accordance with the Treasury Direction TD23-11 Annual reporting requirements.

58. Do any senior executive service employees in any of the Departments/agencies under your portfolio responsibilities have a driver that is paid for by the Department/agency?
- (a) If so, what is the number of senior executive service employees that have a driver, and which senior executive service employees have a driver?
  - (b) How much was spent on these drivers since 28 March 2023?

**ANSWER**

*Agriculture, Regional New South Wales, Western New South Wales*

I am advised:

No senior executive employed by the Department or Agencies within the portfolio have a driver.

59. Since 28 March 2023, how much has been spent on charter air flights by your portfolio agencies, broken down by agency?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

Charter air flights are contained within the travel costs category in the Other Operating Expenses note of the audited financial statements within the Department / Agency's Annual Report. This is in accordance with the Treasury Direction TD23-11 Annual reporting requirements.

The travel costs for the period 28 March 2023 to 30 June 2023 form part of the Department / Agency Annual Report 2022-23. These reports are due to be released shortly.

Travel costs for the period 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024 will form part of the Department / Agency Annual Report 2023-24.

60. Since 28 March 2023, how much has been spent on domestic flights by your portfolio agencies, broken down by agency?
- (a) Of these, how many flights were taken in business class?
  - (b) Of these, how many flights were taken in first class?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

Domestic travel is contained within the travel costs category in the Other Operating Expenses note of the audited financial statements within the Department / Agency's Annual Report. This is in accordance with the Treasury Direction TD23-11 Annual reporting requirements.

The travel costs for the period 28 March 2023 to 30 June 2023 form part of the Department / Agency Annual Report 2022-23. These reports are due to be released shortly.

Travel costs for the period 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024 will form part of the Department / Agency Annual Report 2023-24.

Official travel is taken in accordance with the NSW government travel policy.

61. Since 28 March 2023, how much has been spent on overseas flights by your portfolio agencies, broken down by agency?
- (a) Of these, how many flights were taken in business class?
  - (b) Of these, how many flights were taken in first class?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

The travel costs for the period 28 March 2023 to 30 June 2023 form part of the Department / Agency Annual Report 2022-23. These reports are due to be released shortly.

Travel costs for the period 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024 will form part of the Department / Agency Annual Report 2023-24.

### **Efficiency Dividends**

62. Was an efficiency dividend applied to any Department/agency within your portfolio responsibilities in the 2023-24 NSW Budget?
- (a) If so, what was the efficiency dividend applied to each Department/agency?
  - (b) What measures are being considered to achieve this efficiency dividend?

### **ANSWER**

The budget papers include detailed information on budgeted expenses, revenue and capital expenditure. This includes detailed financial statements for individual agencies as well as for government as a whole. The budget papers also outline the financial impact of measures in the budget on individual portfolios as well as for government as a whole.

### **GIPA Applications**

63. How many GIPA Applications have been received by your ministerial office since 28 March 2023?
- (a) How many of these Applications have been accepted?
  - (b) How many of these Applications have been rejected?
  - (c) If so, what were the reasons provided?
  - (d) How many of these Applications were re-assigned?
  - (e) How many of these Applications had fees waived/reduced?
  - (f) Please provide in table form the following details of each Application received by your office:
    - i. Date received.
    - ii. Date acknowledged.
    - iii. Date responded.
    - iv. The description provided for the information sought.

### **ANSWER**

I am advised:

Information concerning the obligations of a Minister's office as an agency under the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (the Act) is required to be submitted to the Attorney General in accordance with section 125(2) of the Act.

The information is included in the annual report of the Department of Communities and Justice in accordance with sections 125(3) and (5) of the Act.

*Agriculture, Regional New South Wales, Western New South Wales*

64. How many GIPA Applications have been received by each Department/agency within your portfolio responsibilities since 28 March 2023?
- (a) How many of these Applications have been accepted?
  - (b) How many of these Applications have been rejected?
    - i. If so, what were the reasons provided?
  - (c) How many of these Applications were re-assigned
  - (d) How many of these Applications had fees waived/reduced?
  - (e) Please provide in table form the following details of each Application received by your office:
    - i. Date received.
    - ii. Date acknowledged.
    - iii. Date responded.
    - iv. The description provided for the information sought.

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

Information concerning an agency's obligations under the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (the Act) is included in the relevant agency annual report in accordance with section 125(1) of the Act.

Further information about applications received by the Department and agencies within the portfolio are available on the disclosure log for each Department/agency on their respective websites.

**Hospitality**

65. How much has your ministerial office spent on hospitality, including catering and beverages, since 28 March 2023?

**ANSWER**

I am advised the following:

Catering provided for official purposes may be funded from the Ministerial office budget.

As Members of Parliament, Ministers have credit facilities extended to them for dining and hospitality at Parliament House. The facilities may be used for business or private purposes.

66. How much have Departments/agencies within your portfolio responsibilities spent on hospitality, including catering and beverages, since 28 March 2023?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

Hospitality costs, including catering and beverages are contained within the other expenses category in the *Agriculture, Regional New South Wales, Western New South Wales*

Other Operating Expenses note of the audited financial statements within the Department / Agency's Annual Report.

The costs for the period 28 March 2023 to 30 June 2023 form part of the Department / Agency Annual Report 2022-23. These reports are due to be released shortly.

Costs for the period 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024 will form part of the Department / Agency Annual Report 2023-24.

67. Have you been the recipient of any free hospitality?  
 (a) What was the total value of the hospitality received?

### ANSWER

Ministers are required to declare to the Secretary of TCO certain gifts and hospitality with a market value of more than \$500 under Part 4 of the Schedule to the Ministerial Code. This is a continuous obligation for which Ministers are personally responsible.

I comply with my obligations under Part 4 of the Schedule to the Ministerial Code.

68. Have any staff members in your office been the recipient of any free hospitality?  
 (a) What was the total value of the hospitality received?  
 (b) Are these gifts of hospitality declared publicly?  
 (c) Do staff declare their gifts publicly?

### ANSWER

All Ministerial staff are required to comply with their disclosure obligations under the Gifts, Hospitality and Benefits Policy for Office Holder Staff and I expect them to do so.

I am advised:

A breach of the Policy may be a breach of the Office Holder's Staff Code of Conduct.

The Policy includes disclosure obligations for Ministerial staff in respect of gifts, hospitality and benefits over \$150. These disclosures are kept on the Office Holder's Register of Gifts and Benefits.

If a Ministerial staff member is required by their role to accompany their Office Holder at an event that the Office Holder is attending as the State's representative, or where the Office Holder has asked the staff member to attend, then attendance at that event would not constitute a gift or benefit for the purposes of the Policy.

### Labour Hire Firms

69. Have any Departments/agencies within your portfolio responsibilities utilised the services of Labour Hire Firms since 28 March 2023? If yes, please advise in table form:  
 (a) The names of the firms utilised.  
 (b) The total amount paid to each firm engaged.  
 (c) The average tenure period for an employee provided by a labour hire company.  
 (d) The longest tenure for an employee provided by a labour hire company.

- (e) The duties conducted by employees engaged through a labour hire company.
- (f) The office locations of employees engaged through a labour hire company.
- (g) The highest hourly or daily rate paid to an employee provided by a labour hire company.

## ANSWER

I am advised:

Portfolio agencies make use of the vendor management system (VMS) Contractor Central in accordance with the mandatory whole-of-government Contingent Workforce Scheme. Information on Contractor Central and the Scheme, including registered suppliers, can be found on the NSW Procurement *buy.nsw* website.

Contractor costs are contained in either “agency contractors” within Employee Related Expenses for a standard labour hire contractor or “contractor – projects” category disclosed in the Other Operating Expenses for project related contractors. Both form part of the audited financial statements within the Department / Agency’s Annual Report.

Details for the period 28 March 2023 to 30 June 2023 form part of the Department / Agency Annual Report 2022-23. These reports are due to be released shortly.

Details for the period 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024 will form part of the Department / Agency Annual Report 2023-24.

## Media and Public Relations

70. How much has your ministerial office spent on advertising or sponsored posts since 28 March 2023 on the following social media platforms:

- (a) Facebook
- (b) Instagram
- (c) LinkedIn
- (d) TikTok
- (e) YouTube
- (f) WhatsApp
- (g) X (formerly known as Twitter)

## ANSWER

I am advised:

No money has been spent from the Ministerial office on advertising or sponsored posts on the social media platforms.

71. How much has each Department/agency within your portfolio responsibilities spent on advertising or sponsored posts since 28 March 2023 on the following social media platforms:

- (a) Facebook

- (b) Instagram
- (c) LinkedIn
- (d) TikTok
- (e) YouTube
- (f) WhatsApp
- (g) X (formerly known as Twitter)

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

Department and agency expenditure is published in Annual Reports and on OpenGov NSW.

72. Have you had media training or public speaking training?
- (a) If yes, who paid for it?
  - (b) If paid by taxpayers, what was the amount paid since 28 March 2023?

**ANSWER**

I am advised that any expenditure incurred in the Minister's Office is done in accordance with the Funding and Expenditure guidelines contained within the Ministers Office Handbook.

Expenditure from the Minister's office budgets must be approved by a financial delegate operating in accordance with the Premier's delegations and complying with the Government Sector Finance Act 2018, the Government Sector Finance Regulations 2018 and the Government Sector Audit Act 1983.

73. How many media or public relations advisers are employed for each of your portfolio agencies and what is the total cost to employ these advisers?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

Staff numbers are included in the relevant Department / Agencies Annual Report. Staff salaries are set by the Crown Employees (Public Sector – Salaries) Award.

74. What is the forecast for the current financial year for the number of media or public relations advisers to be employed in each Department/agency within your portfolio responsibilities and their total cost?

**ANSWER**

Refer to Question 73.

75. What is the total cost of media monitoring services used by each Department/agency within your portfolio responsibilities?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

- Media monitoring services are procured under a whole-of-government contract.
- A whole-of-Government contract reduces administration costs on individual Departments and Agencies, takes advantage of economies of scale, and avoids duplication in services (and costs) across NSW Government.
- Isentia have recently secured the whole-of-government contract for the next three years, at a savings for more than \$2 million compared to the previous contract.
- Details of the three-year contract are available at <https://www.tenders.nsw.gov.au/?event=public.cn.view&CNUUID=E99BBB53-FC12-DC94-57E7E126B8321F73>

**Merchant fees**

76. Please provide a list of all transactions where customers need to pay a merchant fee on credit and/or debit card payments in each Department/agency within your portfolio responsibilities.

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

Merchant Fees are payable on a range of transactions with the Department of Regional NSW where the customer pays via a Credit or Debit Card. These include transactions with the NSW Food Authority, various Fisheries licensing or permit fees and various Mining application and Title fees.

For Forestry Corporation of NSW, all transactions over the value of \$5000.00 including but not limited to access permits, licenses, timber purchased attract a merchant fee.

77. Please provide the percentage and/or amount of the merchant fees applied to all credit and/or debit card payments/transactions payments in each Department/agency within your portfolio responsibilities.

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

Merchant fees are embedded in individual credit card payments. The Percentages will vary by supplier and the nature of the transaction.

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78. What was the total amount paid in merchant fees on credit and/or debit card payments made by each Department/agency within your portfolio responsibilities since 28 March 2023?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

Merchant Fees are not recorded separately for the Department of Regional NSW.

For Forestry Corporation of NSW, total merchant fees for the period from 28 March 2023 to 1 November 2023 were \$4,495.49

**Ministerial disclosures**

79. Did you make any updates to your Ministerial disclosure on or after 2 August 2023?  
(a) If yes, what prompted this update to your disclosure?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

Disclosure obligations for Ministers under Part 2 (Standing disclosure of interests), Part 3 (Conflicts of Interest) and Part 4 (Gifts and Hospitality) of the Schedule to the Ministerial Code are continuous. Ministers are required to:

- notify the Premier of a change to their pecuniary and other interests as soon as practicable after the change has occurred
- notify the Premier of a change to pecuniary and other interests held by their immediate family members, as soon as practicable after the change has occurred
- notify the Premier promptly of conflicts of interest
- disclose gifts and hospitality promptly to the TCO Secretary.

I make continuous disclosures of the matters that are covered by the Ministerial Code.

**Office Administration**

80. How many staff members were employed in your ministerial office at the MS6 grade for the following months:
- (a) April
  - (b) May
  - (c) June
  - (d) July
  - (e) August
  - (f) September

- (g) October

**ANSWER**

I am advised that Ministerial staff numbers and grades are published on the NSW Government Website:

<https://www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/the-cabinet-office/access-to-information/premier-and-ministers-staff-numbers>.

81. How many staff members were employed in your ministerial office at the MS5 grade for the following months:
- (a) April
  - (b) May
  - (c) June
  - (d) July
  - (e) August
  - (f) September
  - (g) October

**ANSWER**

Refer to Question 80.

82. How many staff members were employed in your ministerial office at the MS4 grade for the following months:
- (a) April
  - (b) May
  - (c) June
  - (d) July
  - (e) August
  - (f) September
  - (g) October

**ANSWER**

Refer to Question 80.

83. How many staff members were employed in your ministerial office at the MS3 grade for the following months:
- (a) April
  - (b) May
  - (c) June

- (d) July
- (e) August
- (f) September
- (g) October

**ANSWER**

Refer to Question 80.

84. How many staff members were employed in your ministerial office at the MS2 grade for the following months:
- (a) April
  - (b) May
  - (c) June
  - (d) July
  - (e) August
  - (f) September
  - (g) October

**ANSWER**

Refer to Question 80.

85. How many staff members were employed in your ministerial office at the MS1 grade for the following months:
- (a) April
  - (b) May
  - (c) June
  - (d) July
  - (e) August
  - (f) September
  - (g) October

**ANSWER**

Refer to Question 80.

86. What is the average salary for staff members in your ministerial office since 28 March 2023?

**ANSWER**

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Refer to Question 80.

87. How many DLOs were seconded to your ministerial office for the following months:

- (a) April
- (b) May
- (c) June
- (d) July
- (e) August
- (f) September
- (g) October

**ANSWER**

I am advised that information relating to Department Liaison Officers is available on the Disclosure Log: Government (Public Access) Act 2009 (the GIPA Act), Reference number PD\_A5833715.

<https://www.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-09/PD%20A5833715%20-%20Disclosure%20log%20-%2020230913.pdf>.

88. How many people are employed in your ministerial office as at 1 October 2023?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

The Ministerial staff numbers and grades are published on the NSW Government Website:

<https://www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/the-cabinet-office/access-to-information/premier-and-ministers-staff-numbers>.

89. How many women are employed in your Ministerial office as at 1 October 2023?

**ANSWER**

We aim for an inclusive and diverse workforce across Ministerial offices that reflects the communities that we serve.

90. How many staff employed in your ministerial office identify as culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) as at 1 October 2023?

**ANSWER**

We aim for an inclusive and diverse workforce across Ministerial offices that reflects the communities that we serve.

91. How many staff employed in your ministerial office identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander as at 1 October 2023?

**ANSWER**

We aim for an inclusive and diverse workforce across Ministerial offices that reflects the communities that we serve.

92. How many staff in your office are employed as media advisers or have responsibility for media/social media/communications?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

All staff are employed to assist the Minister in accordance with the Members of Parliament Staff Act 2013.

I am advised that Ministerial staff numbers and grades are published on the NSW Government Website: <https://www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/the-cabinet-office/access-to-information/premier-and-ministers-staff-numbers>.

93. How many staff in your office are employed as policy advisers or have responsibility for policy work?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

All staff are employed to assist the Minister in accordance with the Members of Parliament Staff Act 2013.

I am advised that Ministerial staff numbers and grades are published on the NSW Government Website: <https://www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/the-cabinet-office/access-to-information/premier-and-ministers-staff-numbers>.

94. How many staff in your office are employed as 'caucus liaison officers'?
- (a) What are the responsibilities allocated to 'caucus liaison officers'?
  - (b) Have 'caucus liaison officers' been directed to only work with Government MPs?
  - (c) Do 'caucus liaison officers' contact members of the Australian Labor Party as part of their regular work duties?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

All staff are employed to assist the Premier in accordance with the Members of Parliament Staff Act 2013 and staff are expected to comply with the NSW Office Holder's Staff Code of Conduct.

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95. How many staff members employed in your office under the Members of Parliament Staff Act 2013 have been seconded from a NSW Government Department/agency?

(a) Please list each Department/agency staff members have been seconded from.

#### ANSWER

I am advised:

NSW Government sector employees may be seconded from agencies to Ministers' offices in accordance with clause 35 of the Government Sector Employment Regulation 2014 (GSE Regulation).

Ministerial staff numbers and grades are published on the NSW Government Website:

<https://www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/the-cabinet-office/access-to-information/premier-and-ministers-staff-numbers>.

96. What is your ministerial office budget for 2023-24?

(a) How much of this budget is allocated to staff?

#### ANSWER

I am advised that Minister's office budgets are drawn from the Premier's Department annual financial allocation to cover employee related expenses, accommodation, and other operating expenses. Further information relating to Ministers' Office Budgets is available in the Ministers Office Handbook.

97. How many iPhones/Smart Phones are assigned to staff in your ministerial office?

(a) For each phone, how much was each bill in 2022-23?

(b) How many phones have been lost or replaced due to damage in your office?

i. What is the cost of replacing those phones?

#### ANSWER

I am advised:

Ministers' Staff Acceptable Use of Communication Devices Policy provides guidance on the use, loss, theft, and return of communication devices provided for business purposes.

Minister's staff may use mobile telephones for business and (reasonable use) private purposes.

Under the current mobile plans all local and Australia-wide calls to land lines/mobiles and texts are included in the plan. Premium service calls, international calls and global roaming services are outside of the plan and may be still chargeable based on the principles below.

Ministers' staff mobile phone charges are paid from the Ministers' office budget except for the items listed below, which need to be paid as a private expense:

- Personal international calls from within Australia
- Personal travel related global roaming charges

- Personal premium number service calls

Any personal calls which are outside the plan need to be declared and paid for monthly.

Declarations are not required otherwise.

The purchasing of technology items is in accordance with standard procurement arrangements.

The costs for the period 28 March 2023 to 30 June 2023 form part of the Department of Premier and Cabinet Annual Report 2022-23.

98. How many iPads or tablets are assigned to your ministerial office and to whom have they been issued?
- (a) What was the cost of providing iPads or tablets to your ministerial office in 2022-23?
  - (b) How many iPads or tablets have been replaced due to lost or damage in 2022-23?
    - i. What was the cost of replacing these devices?

## ANSWER

I am advised:

Ministers' Staff Acceptable Use of Communication Devices Policy provides guidance on the use, loss, theft, and return of communication devices provided for business purposes.

The purchasing of technology items is in accordance with standard procurement arrangements.

The costs for the period 28 March 2023 to 30 June 2023 form part of the Department of Premier and Cabinet Annual Report 2022-23.

99. How many laptops has the Premier's Department or The Cabinet Office assigned to your ministerial office and to whom have they been issued?
- (a) What was the cost of providing laptops to your ministerial office in 2022-23?
  - (b) How many laptops have been replaced due to lost or damage in 2022-23?
    - i. What was the cost of replacing these devices?

## ANSWER

I am advised the following:

Ministers' Staff Acceptable Use of Communication Devices Policy provides guidance on the use, loss, theft, and return of communication devices provided for business purposes.

The purchasing of technology items is in accordance with standard procurement arrangements.

The costs for the period 28 March 2023 to 30 June 2023 form part of the Department of Premier and Cabinet Annual Report 2022-23.

100. Has any artwork been purchased or leased for display in your ministerial office since 28 March 2023?
- (a) What is the cost of this?

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**ANSWER**

I am advised:

Purchase or lease of artwork for official purposes is in accordance with standard procurement arrangements.

The costs of purchasing or leasing artwork for official purposes are contained within the other expenses category in the Other Operating Expenses note of the audited financial statements within the Premier's Department Annual Report.

The costs for the period 28 March 2023 to 30 June 2023 form part of the Department of Premier and Cabinet 2022-23.

101. Have any floral displays or indoor plants been hired or leased for display in your ministerial office since 28 March 2023?
- (a) If so, what was the cost of these items?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

Any hire or lease of floral displays or indoor plants must be in accordance with standard procurement arrangements.

102. What was the total amount your office spent on stationery since 28 March 2023?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

Spending on office stationery is in accordance with standard procurement arrangements.

The costs of stationery are contained within the other expenses category in the Other Operating Expenses note of the audited financial statements within the Premier's Department Annual Report. The costs for the period 28 March 2023 to 30 June 2023 form part of the Department of Premier and Cabinet Annual Report 2022-23.

103. What brand of paper is used in your office?
- (a) Is it recycled paper?
- (b) Is it Australian made paper?

**ANSWER**

I am advised office supplies are purchased in accordance with standard procurement arrangements.

104. What was the total cost of all subscriptions by you and your staff to online news services, *Agriculture, Regional New South Wales, Western New South Wales*

newspapers, magazines, journals, and periodicals since 28 March 2023?

- (a) What are these services/newspapers/magazines/journals/periodicals?

**ANSWER**

The total cost of all subscriptions is in accordance with standard procurement arrangements.

The costs of subscriptions are contained within the other expenses category in the Other Operating Expenses note of the audited financial statements within the Premier's Department Annual Report. The costs for the period 28 March 2023 to 30 June 2023 form part of the Department of Premier and Cabinet Annual Report 2022-23.

105. What was the total value of all gifts purchased for use by you and your office since 28 March 2023?

- (a) What were the gifts purchased?  
i. Who were they gifted to?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

The Ministers' Office Handbook outlines that the decision to present a gift is at the discretion of the Minister, having regard to both appropriateness and economy. Gifts may be appropriate, for example, where given as a memento of an official visit or as a small token of appreciation. However, gifts should not be given with the purpose, or in circumstances where they could be perceived as having the purpose, of inducing favourable treatment.

In accordance with the Premier's Department and The Cabinet Office's Gifts and Hospitality Policy, a register of official gifts presented by the Minister will be reported by the Premier's Department at the end of each financial year as required under the provisions of Treasurer's Direction TD21-04 and TD22-27.

106. What non-standard features are fitted to your ministerial vehicle?

- (a) What is the cost of each non-standard feature?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

Non-standard accessories fitted to Ministerial vehicles are for business, security, and safety related reasons, in accordance with the NSW Government Motor Vehicle Operational guidelines.

107. What is the total spend for your office since 28 March 2023 for:

- (a) Taxi hire?  
(b) Ridesharing services?  
(c) Hire car rental?  
(d) Limousine/private car hire?

**ANSWER**

I am advised the following:

The Ministers' Office Handbook outlines that taxis or ride share services are an option for business trips, including trips:

- Home after evening duty (e.g., when Parliament is sitting, when required to perform the duties of the job, etc.) where public transport is not reasonably available or where it may be unsafe to use public transport. Generally, use of taxis for these purposes would occur after 8:00pm.
- To or from the airport in connection with early morning or late-night flights on official trips.
- To meetings when it would be unsafe or uneconomical to use public transport.

Costs are managed within Ministerial office budgets.

108. Were any planes or helicopters chartered by you or your office and paid for with public money since 28 March 2023?

- (a) If yes, please provide details of the trip including the date of the trip, purpose of the trip, the method of transport and the cost?

**ANSWER**

I am advised the following:

All domestic and international travel bookings for official business must be made through the NSW Government's approved travel management supplier, this is currently FCM Travel Solutions.

Travel covered by the NSW Government contract includes:

- commercial and charter air travel,
- accommodation,
- ground transport (car hire, rail, coach, and ferry).

Financial commitments for travel expenditure from the Ministers' office budget need to be made within office arrangements approved by the Chief of Staff as an authorised financial delegate.

Where a Minister, or employee of the Minister's office undertakes travel, travel is taken in accordance with the NSW government travel policy and the Ministers' Office Handbook.

The Premier's Department website also details PD\_A5842315, "Domestic and international travel of NSW Ministers and their offices" that has been released under the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009*.

**Overseas Trips**

109. Have you had any overseas trips paid for using public funds since 28 March 2023?

- (a) If yes, did any of your relatives or friends accompany you on these trips?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

In line with M2015-05-Publication of Ministerial Diaries and Release of Overseas Travel Information, Minister's overseas travel is published on the Premier's Department Website.

110. Have you undertaken any official overseas travel that was privately funded since 28 March 2023?
- (a) If yes, what was the nature of these trips?
  - (b) Who paid for these trips?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

In accordance with M2014-02 Ministerial Arrangements During Absences, Ministers who travel overseas are generally required to seek the Governor's authorisation for another Minister to act on their behalf. All acting arrangements approved by the Governor are published in the NSW Government Gazette.

Gifts and Hospitality, including contributions to travel are managed in accordance with the NSW Ministerial Code of Conduct.

**Parliamentary Secretary**

111. Does your Parliamentary Secretary have pass access to your ministerial office?

**ANSWER**

Not applicable, as there is no Parliamentary Secretary for the portfolio responsibilities of the Minister for Agriculture, Regional New South Wales and Western New South Wales.

112. Does your Parliamentary Secretary have a desk in your ministerial office?

**ANSWER**

Refer to Question 111.

113. Has your Parliamentary Secretary spoken on any pieces of legislation on your behalf? If so which legislation?

**ANSWER**

Refer to Question 111.

114. What event/meetings has your Parliamentary Secretary attended on your behalf?
- (a) Please provide in table form the date and the purpose of the event/meeting.

**ANSWER**

Refer to Question 111.

115. How often do you meet with your Parliamentary Secretary?

**ANSWER**

Refer to Question 111.

116. Has your Parliamentary Secretary travelled overseas since 28 March 2023?
- (a) If so, when, and where?
  - (b) If so, what was the cost of:
    - i. Airfares?
    - ii. Accommodation?
    - iii. Food and beverage?
    - iv. Transportation?
    - v. Entertainment?

**ANSWER**

Refer to Question 111.

117. Has your Parliamentary Secretary travelled domestically since 28 March 2023?
- (a) If so, when, and where?
  - (b) If so, what was the cost of:
    - i. Airfares?
    - ii. Accommodation?
    - iii. Food and beverage?
    - iv. Transportation?
    - v. Entertainment?

**ANSWER**

Refer to Question 111.

118. Has your Parliamentary Secretary received training?
- (a) If so, was it speech, voice, or media training?
    - i. If yes, who provided this training, on what date and at what cost?

**ANSWER**

Refer to Question 111.

**Probity Auditor**

119. Has your office or department used a Probity Auditor or Probity Advisors, or similar, since 28 March 2023?
- (a) If so please list the company and/or individual, the project, the engagement dates, and their total remuneration in tabular format.

**ANSWER**

*Agriculture, Regional New South Wales, Western New South Wales*

I am advised:

The Department engages probity advisors in line with the requirements set out in the Grants Administration Guide as referenced in the Government Sector Finance Act 2018.

### **Qantas**

120. Are you a Member of the Qantas Chairmans Club?

- (a) Have you ever previously been a member? When did you cease to be a member?
- (b) When did you initially become a member?
- (c) When was this declared on the Ministerial gifts register?

### **ANSWER**

I am advised:

A copy of my most recent Ordinary return dated 21 September 2023 for the period 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023 disclosing receipt of Qantas Chairman's Lounge membership is publicly available on the NSW Parliament's website.

A copy of my disclosure under Part 4 of the Schedule to the Ministerial Code dated 9 June 2023 disclosing receipt of Qantas Chairman's Lounge membership is publicly available on TCO's disclosure log on TCO's website.

### **Training**

121. Have you received any training since becoming a Minister?

- (a) If yes, please provide the details of what the training was.

### **ANSWER**

I am advised:

All Cabinet Ministers have undertaken a program of Ministerial induction training.

Ministers will undertake Respectful Workplace Policy Training that will commence in December.

Members of Parliament have a Skills Development Allowance that may be used in a manner consistent with the Parliamentary Remuneration Tribunal.

122. Have you received any speech, vocal or performance training?

- (a) If so, what was the cost?
- (b) Was this cost covered by the taxpayer?

### **ANSWER**

Refer to Question 72.

### **Website Usage**

123. What were the top 20 most utilised (by data sent and received) unique domain names accessed by *Agriculture, Regional New South Wales, Western New South Wales*

your ministerial office since 28 March 2023?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

All acceptable use of network services must be lawful, appropriate, and ethical.

The Ministers' Staff Acceptable Use of Network Services Policy is available in the Ministers' Office Handbook.

124. What were the top 20 most accessed (by number of times accessed) unique domain names accessed by your ministerial office since 28 March 2023?

**ANSWER**

I am advised:

All acceptable use of Network Services must be lawful, appropriate, and ethical.

The Ministers' Staff Acceptable Use of Network Services Policy is available in the Ministers' Office Handbook.

<b>Questions from Ms Abigail Boyd MLC</b>
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**Animal Welfare Action Plan**

125. According to the 2018 Animal Welfare Action Plan, what progress is the Department making on:

- (a) Introducing revised standards and guidelines for animals in pet shops and breeding dogs and cats?
- (b) Reviewing the adequacy of penalties for non-compliance under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979?
- (c) amending legislation to improve the effectiveness of compliance and enforcement activities?
- (d) supporting the development and implementation of evidence based national standards and guidelines for medical research by representing the NSW Government on the Animal Welfare Task Group?

**ANSWER**

- (a) A revision was made to the Animal Welfare Code of Practice – Breeding dogs and cats in August 2021. A review of NSW standards, guidelines and codes of practice supporting POCTA will be considered during the legislative reform process.
- (b) Penalties for non-compliance with the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979 were reviewed and revised via the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment Act 2021*.

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- (c) The NSW Government has committed to reviewing the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979*, including the review of the consultation conducted to date in determining the animal welfare framework to be legislated.
- (d) NSW DPI is a member of Animal Welfare Task Group (AWTG). The AWTG promotes national consistency of farm animal welfare regulations across jurisdictions and oversees the development and review of standards and guidelines for farm animals. Reviews of the Australian Code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes (the Code) are undertaken by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC). Past Code reviews have included representatives of the NSW DPI on the expert working committees, as the agency responsible for the administration and regulation of the *Animal Research Act 1985*.

### Mulesing

126. In both Victoria and Tasmania pain relief when mulesing is now mandatory. How will NSW be responding?
- (a) Will the Department be increasing producer awareness and promoting the use of pain relief while mulesing lambs?

### ANSWER

The NSW Government has committed to reviewing the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979*, including the review of the consultation conducted to date in determining the animal welfare framework to be legislated. This review is underway.

- (a) The Department will continue to promote the use of pain relief when mulesing lambs.

127. Do you consider mulesing without pain relief to meet the objectives of the *Prevention to Cruelty to Animals Act*?

### ANSWER

The phrase “in a manner that inflicts no unnecessary pain upon an animal” is written in multiple sections of *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979*. Where it is observed that relevant activities are not conducted in accordance with POCTA, reports should be made to an enforcement authority under the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979* (e.g. RSPCA NSW, Animal Welfare League NSW, NSW Police Force).

128. If pain relief is readily available and affordable but is not used, how is the department making sure landholders are compliant?

### ANSWER

The Department is not an enforcement authority under the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979* and *Agriculture, Regional New South Wales, Western New South Wales*

therefore has no powers to enforce compliance. However, the Department continues to promote and advocate for the use of pain relief when mulesing lambs.

### **Election Commitments**

129. What is the timeline for the implementation of the Independent Office of Animal Welfare?

### **ANSWER**

The election commitments around animal welfare are NSW Government priorities. They are election commitments that I am committed to delivering. I have started the work on considerations for what the Office of Animal Welfare the appropriate model.

130. What is the timeline for the review of animal welfare legislation?

### **ANSWER**

The NSW Government has committed to reviewing the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979*, including the review of the consultation conducted to date in determining the animal welfare framework to be legislated. I have started consultation with stakeholders on the introduction of a new animal welfare framework.

131. What is the timeline to ban puppy farms in NSW?

### **ANSWER**

Legislation to ban puppy farms in New South Wales will happen in this term of Government.

132. What is the timeline for the implementation of the *Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Poultry*?

### **ANSWER**

The Department is in the process of working with key stakeholders to consider outstanding issues on the Poultry Standards & Guidelines. The timeline for implementation will be considered after the outstanding issues are worked through.

### **Moruya Rodeo**

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133. Following the two breaches of POCTA issued by RSPCA, will the Department be instructing the Council to terminate the licence for Moruya NYD Rodeo Event, in line with their conditions?

**ANSWER**

The two penalty infringement notices issued by the RSPCA were issued to the owner of the steer, not to the licensee of the Moruya Rodeo. The licensing of rodeos is in the remit of local councils.

**Medical Research**

134. What progress is being made to implement the recommendations made by the NSW Government in response to the Inquiry into the Use of Primates and Other Animals in Medical Research, including:
- (a) the publication of an annual list of accredited animal research establishments, and the species of animals they use in medical research reporting on the total numbers of animals bred (but not ultimately used) for medical research?
  - (b) requiring the fate of all species used in research to be reported?
  - (c) the separate reporting of animals used in observational studies?
  - (d) overbreeding of animals?
  - (e) pre-registration and publication of negative results of medical research involving animals?
  - (f) issues concerning honours students undertaking medical research using animals?
  - (g) the housing and care of animals used in medical research?
  - (h) whistleblower protections?

**ANSWER**

- (a) There is comprehensive annual reporting on the use of animals in research, including categories for breeding, published on the Animal Ethics Infolink website.
  - (b) There is mandatory annual reporting on the fate of domestic cats and dogs and voluntary reporting on the fate of other animals used in research.
  - (c) There is separate annual reporting on animals used in observation studies, published on the Animal Ethics Infolink website.
  - (d) The breeding of animals used for research is under the approval and monitoring of research establishments' Animal Ethics Committees.
  - (e) This is a matter for the NSW Department of Health.
  - (f) This is a matter for the NSW Department of Health.
  - (g) All ARRP housing guidelines are undergoing review and updates during FY23/24.
  - (h) This is a matter for the NSW Department of Health.
135. What is the status of the following funding commitments made by former Minister for Science, Innovation and Technology Alister Henskens in March 2023?
- (a) Replacing Animals in Medical Research Grants - \$4.5 million to support science-based research that replaces or significantly reduces the use of animals in experimentation?
  - (b) Rehoming Animals who have been used in Medical Research Grants Program - \$2.5 million for charitable or rescue organisations who are rehoming animals who have been used in medical experimentation?

**ANSWER**

- (a) The allocated \$4.5 million is being administered by the NSW Office of Health and Medical Research.
- (b) The allocated \$2.5 million is being administered by NSW DPI. Details of the grants program will be available shortly.

136. Will the Minister be supporting the revision of the NHRMC Code and request the National Health and Medical Research Council initiate a review?

**ANSWER**

This issue is currently under consideration.

**Complaints at Dog Breeding Facilities**

137. For each of the financial years ended:

- (a) 30 June 2018,
- (b) 30 June 2019,
- (c) 30 June 2020,
- (d) 30 June 2021,
- (e) 30 June 2022, and
- (f) 30 June 2023
  - i. How many complaints were received regarding licensed dog breeding facilities?
  - ii. How many of those complaints related to animal cruelty?
  - iii. How many of those complaints resulted in on-site inspections taking place?

- iv. How many of those complaints resulted in investigations where no site visit was conducted?
- v. How many of those complaints resulted in action being taken against owners and/or operators and/or workers?
- vi. How many complaints were received in relation to unlicensed and/or suspected dog breeding facilities including facilities reported to be "puppy farms", "puppy mills", and the like?
- vii. How many of those complaints related to animal cruelty?
- viii. How many of those complaints resulted in on-site inspections taking place?
- ix. How many of those complaints resulted in investigations where no site visit was conducted?
- x. How many of those cases resulted in action being taken against owners and/or operators and/or workers?

**ANSWER**

(a) - (f) See below for FY data where available.

i – v) Dog breeding facilities in NSW are not licensed so this data is not available. Questions vi) - x) are a repeat of these questions and answers are provided below.

vi – x) Data below has been provided by RSPCA NSW and Animal Welfare League (AWL) NSW as enforcement agencies under the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979*.

**RSPCA NSW**

vi) The following table comprises complaints received in relation to breeders and routine inspections conducted by the Breeding Compliance Unit (BCU):

Cruelty Complaints Received in relation to Breeders						
	FY23	FY22	FY21	FY20	FY19	FY18
Complaints Received	1618	1279	1202	619	76	Not available
BCU (Routine Inspections)	322	441	279	The BCU did not exist at this time.		

\*BCU figures include original attendances and revisits

vii) All the above complaints received relate to animal cruelty.

viii) All complaints are investigated and attended.

ix) None, all complaints are investigated and attended.

x) This information can only be provided for the BCU (Routine) investigations, table below:

BCU – Routine Inspections conducted on breeding establishments						
	FY23	FY22	FY21	FY20	FY19	FY18
BCU (Routine)	322	441	279	The BCU did not exist at this time.		

Inspections)			
24N	97	132	101
PIN	15	34	38
Prosecution	0	0	3

Provisions have been included in our cruelty complaint management system to be able to acquire this type of information for general cruelty complaints however, this is only available for the current financial year (FY24).

RSPCA NSW Breeder Compliance Unit (BCU/'Puppy factory taskforce') data added at the end of this document.

### AWL NSW

NB: All complaints received were reactive.

	vi)	vii)	viii)	ix)	x)
30 June 2018					
30 June 2019	4	4	4	0	0
30 June 2020	12	10	12	0	0
30 June 2021	15	12	15	0	0
30 June 2022	10	10	10	0	0
30 June 2023	6	6	6	0	1

### Duck Hunting

138. What is the Department doing to close the gap in allowing recreational duck hunting to occur on private land on properties that are covered by a [Native Game Bird Management \(Owner/Occupier\) Licence](#)?

### ANSWER

The Native Game Bird Management Program provides assistance for primary producers to engage licensed recreational hunters to assist in mitigating damage from duck populations on properties covered by a Native Game Bird Management Owner/Occupier Licence.

The program reflects the legislative requirements for native game bird hunting in NSW, as set out in the *Game and Feral Animal Control Act 2002* and *Game and Feral Animal Control Regulation 2012*. The Program, administered by the NSW Department of Primary Industries Hunting (DPI Hunting), allows landholders to sustainably manage native game birds that are impacting their agricultural land with the assistance of volunteer licensed hunters who hold a current NSW Game Hunting Licence and have passed the Waterfowl Identification Test (WIT).

139. What is the Department doing to ensure that hunters can correctly identify the 10 species of duck permitted to be hunted on private property, beyond the waterfowl identification test?

**ANSWER**

The Department promotes safe, responsible and sustainable hunting practices through educational and awareness campaigns – such as *Don't Wing It – be an effective game bird hunter*.

In addition to hunters having to pass the stringent waterfowl identification test and have their Game Hunting Licence endorsed for Game Birds prior to being able to participate in the Program, the Department communicates regularly with licensed hunters who are endorsed for the NSW Native Game Bird Management Program. There is a list of huntable species on the DPI website and in the information booklet sent to licence holders. Each year, website information is updated and targeted SMS and email campaigns are sent regularly. Using the Native Game Bird Hunter Diary is a mandatory requirement of the program. Each diary page lists each huntable species, with licence holders required to record the available allocation numbers per species and the number of birds harvested by species.

140. How does the Department monitor if hunters are targeting the correct species of duck?

**ANSWER**

Hunters participating in the Native Game Bird Management Program must first pass the Waterfowl Identification Test which assesses the hunter's ability to identify bird species in flight. Compliance and enforcement activities are used to monitor ongoing compliance with the program and in 2022-23 DPI Hunting conducted 7 compliance operations targeting private properties licensed under the Native Game Bird Management Program for the purpose of ensuring hunters and landowners were adhering to the special conditions of the Native Game Bird Management Program. Across these 7 targeted operations over 600 properties were observed and/or patrolled.

141. What are the penalties if a hunter is found to have intentionally shot ducks not listed in the 10 species?

**ANSWER**

Duck species outside the 10 listed species are covered under the *Biodiversity and Conservation Act 2016*. DPI Hunting Inspectors are not authorised under this Act and would refer the offences to the Department of Planning & Environment for compliance actions. The penalty for harming a protected/threatened/vulnerable species under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* varies from \$300 to \$3300 and/or up to 2 years imprisonment.

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Under the *Game and Feral Animal Control Act 2002* there are fines of \$550 for breaching licence conditions (which include shooting of ducks outside of the approved property allocation). Another condition of the Game Hunting Licence is adhering to the NSW Game Hunting Licence Code of Practice which includes animal welfare conditions. Breaches of this code of practice can lead to penalties of up to \$5500 for each offence and mandatory licence suspension or cancellation.

142. Is the department aware of how many ducks are being non-fatally injured or maimed?

#### ANSWER

The Department does not have any data associated with non-fatally injured or maimed ducks.

143. For each of the financial years ended:

- (a) 30 June 2018,
  - (b) 30 June 2019,
  - (c) 30 June 2020,
  - (d) 30 June 2021,
  - (e) 30 June 2022, and
  - (f) 30 June 2023
- i. please provide the numbers of ducks shot and non-fatally injured

#### ANSWER

Below are the figures of species harvested as per the harvest returns for the periods identified:

Duck Species	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
<b>Black Duck</b>	3986	695	378	1926	2663	3924
<b>Blue-winged Shoveler</b>	7	0	0	1	0	0
<b>Chestnut Teal</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Grass Whistling Duck</b>	95	2	3	26	119	481
<b>Grey Teal</b>	3580	396	165	2424	3327	5854
<b>Hardhead</b>	86	18	5	2	43	231
<b>Mountain Duck</b>	2	10	0	7	47	64
<b>Pink-eared Duck</b>	63	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Water Whistling Duck</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Wood Duck</b>	3692	433	161	2019	2331	4398
<b>Total</b>	11511	1554	712	6405	8530	14952

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From the hunter interactions and compliance checks in 22-23, there were no observed or detected breaches in the licence conditions and code of conduct provisions related to animal welfare.

**Review into Approved Charitable Organisations**

144. When will the Government be resuming the annual inquiry and reporting into the approved charitable organisations under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979?

**ANSWER**

The establishment of committees and inquiries is a matter for Parliament.

<b>Title</b>	FCNSW Card and Employee Expense	<b>Version</b>	3
<b>Policy No.</b>	P 2019/11	<b>Effective date</b>	27/11/2019

## 1. OVERVIEW

This policy is to manage Forestry Corporation (FCNSW) Credit Card (Card) use and employee expenses (such as out-of-pocket expenses and limited allowances) for FCNSW.

## 2. SCOPE

This policy applies to all FCNSW employees (including casual staff where relevant) and should be read in conjunction with FCNSW Card and Employee Expense Procedures.

## 3. POLICY

### 3.1. Cards

#### 3.1.1. Issue of Credit Cards

Cards will be issued to pre-approved employees based on their roles and business requirements for purchasing of goods and services within approved limits. All Cards are managed by Finance and reviewed by the Chief Financial Officer. All Cardholders will need to sign a Cardholder Agreement.

#### 3.1.2. Limits

Credit limits will be set to balance risk and effective use. Limits will be determined by roles and responsibilities.

There are two types of limits. Total monthly limit and per transaction limit.

### 3.2. Allowances

FCNSW has a number of allowances in accordance with the Forestry Corporation of NSW Enterprise Agreement (EA). Some allowances are processed through FCNSW Expense Management System (EMS), whilst others are processed through payroll.

### 3.3. Out-of-pocket (OOP) Claims

Purchases using personal finances will be reimbursed via EMS. Where expenses are a direct debit e.g. top up of public transport account, or a mixture of business and personal, claims should be processed as an OOP.

## 4. BUSINESS EXPENSE CRITERIA

The expenditure must be:

- necessary to perform a valid business purpose; and
- reasonable expense that is not excessive; and
- appropriate expense for purchasing on a Card or via OOP; and
- comply with the eligible expenditure table in the Credit Card & Employee Expense procedure document.

## 5. KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

### 5.1. Common to Cardholder and OOP Expenses

- All claims are to be acquitted within one month after the purchase date.
- For all transactions (excluding allowances), a compliant tax invoice must be obtained at the time of the purchase.

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## 5.2. Cardholder

- All expenditure is the responsibility of the Cardholder
- The physical security of the card is the Cardholder's personal responsibility. Under no circumstances should the PIN (personal identity number) be shared with a third party.

## 5.3. FCNSW

Business approvers must:

- Check validity of claim
- Check transaction fields have been entered correctly including costing and GST.
- Check appropriate document is attached
- All claims are to be actioned within one month after the claim has been submitted in EMS.

Finance will:

- ensure there are appropriate administrative procedures in place to support the EMS users and approvers.
- monitor unreconciled and unapproved claims.
- review and approve business approved claims on an appropriate basis.
- assist periodic compliance audits with the EMS policy and procedures.

The Chief Financial Officer has the responsibility to ensure appropriate procedures are in place to support the Credit Card and Employee Expense Policy.

## 6. FINANCIAL DELEGATIONS

The FCNSW Financial & Administrative Delegations Authority provides approval to purchase and approve expenditure on behalf of FCNSW. However, if cardholders and business approvers do not have financial delegation under the current authority:

- Cardholders are hereby granted financial delegation as per their relevant transaction limit.
- Business approvers are hereby granted delegation to approve claims up to their direct report's transaction limit.

Claims outside this delegation will need to be forwarded to a business approver with appropriate delegation.

## 7. LATE ACQUITTAL OF CLAIMS

### 7.1. OOP & Allowances

Any claim that is submitted more than one month after the event may be rejected. Any claim older than six months will be rejected unless there a justifiable reason.

### 7.2. Cardholders

Any claim that is outstanding for two months from transaction date will have their Card suspended unless a justifiable reason is supplied.

## 8. BREACH OF POLICY

Any employee who becomes aware of a breach of this Policy must immediately report the breach to their supervisor. A breach of this Policy will be considered in the context of the FCNSW Code of Conduct and action may be taken in accordance with relevant policies.

Fraudulent use of Cards will be subject to investigation and may result in one or more of the following outcomes; cancellation of the card, disciplinary action, legal action, dismissal, criminal prosecution.

## 9. RELATED LEGISLATION

- A New Tax System (Goods and Services Tax) Act 1999 (the GST Act)
- Government Sector Finance Act 2018
- NSW Treasury Policy - TPP 17-19 Use and Management of NSW Government Purchasing Cards

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## 10. RELATED POLICIES

- BP2018/01 FCNSW Code of Conduct
- P2017/24 FCNSW Procurement Policy
- B2019/06 FCNSW Travel Policy
- P2019/01 FCNSW Mobile Phones & Mobile Devices Policy
- P2016/05 FCNSW Alcohol and Other Drugs
- P2019/08 FCNSW Motor Vehicle Policy
- P2017/11 FCNSW Travel for Staff on Common Law Contracts

## 11. RELATED DELEGATIONS

- FCNSW Financial and Administrative Delegations of Authority

## 12. RELATED DOCUMENTS

- FCNSW Procurement Manual
- FCNSW Card and Employee Expense Procedures

## 13. POLICIES REPLACED

This policy replaces and supersedes the following documents:

- P2016/03 – Credit Card & Employee Management Policy

## 14. CONTACT OFFICER

Account Payable

Anshul Chaudhary – Chief Financial Officer

Chief Executive Officer

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# Purchasing Card (PCard) Policy

Department of Regional NSW



## Policy details

<b>Policy Number:</b>	PO21/28	<b>Version</b>	1.0
<b>Authorised by:</b>	Chief Financial Officer	<b>Authorised Date:</b>	16/08/2021
<b>Issued by:</b>	Finance, Procurement, Property, and Fleet	<b>Review Date</b>	31/10/2024

## Policy statement

This policy specifies the requirements for using purchasing card (PCards) and virtual purchasing cards (VCards) within the Department of Regional NSW (DRNSW) and the cluster to ensure that resources are used efficiently and maintains public trust, as required by the department's Code of Ethics and Conduct.

For this document, references to PCards includes VCards.

This policy takes a risk-based approach and is intended to meet the requirements for the Use and Management of NSW Government Purchasing Cards set out in Treasury Policy Paper TPP21-02.

## Scope

Only permanent and temporary employees are eligible for a PCard. Casuals, contractors and volunteers are not eligible for a PCard.

This policy applies to all employees of the department who hold a PCard. It also applies to employees of all cluster entities that have people employed in or through the Department.

## Policy

The key requirements for the use and management of PCards are:

### 1. Use of Pcards

- 1.1. Personal use of PCards is not permitted under any circumstance.
- 1.2. Use of PCards is the preferred method on all business purchases (i.e. not for employee entitlements) under \$10,000 (inclusive of GST) where practicable and where the card limit permits.

### 2. Issuing PCards

- 2.1. PCards will only be issued by an officer with appropriate financial delegation.
- 2.2. Purchase card transaction limits will be approved to align with the officers general financial delegation, special delegations held, and other business needs.
- 2.3. PCards are issued to individual employees, but the ownership of the PCard and the responsibility for payment to the card issuer is the agency's responsibility.
- 2.4. Staff should only be provided with a PCard where a legitimate ongoing business requirement can be demonstrated.
- 2.5. PCards are individually issued personally to the officer in the role that they are employed to undertake at the time of issue. Any changes to the officers attendance, role or division of employment within the department or cluster agency may require the return and closure of the PCard and, where appropriate, re-issuing of a new PCard.

2.6. Employees must enter into an agreement (Appendix 1) with both the department and the card issuer about the use of that PCard.

2.7. Merchant types are restricted, based on advice from Citibank and NSW Treasury.

### 3. Approvals

3.1. A register of PCards will be maintained to allow oversight of all PCards in use by the department and cluster agencies.

3.2. An audit of the PCard register will be undertaken, at minimum, on an annual basis.

3.3. Assurance processes must be developed to detect inappropriate card use.

3.4. Cardholders are expected to acquit and approve cardholder transactions within a month of the transaction using Expense8.

3.5. Cardholders who fail to acquit their transactions within 28 days will be sent reminders with their manager notified. After 3 months failure can result in the card limit being set to zero and their executive director notified. Ethical and behavioural standards staff are expected to demonstrate while working with the department are set out in the Code of Ethics and Conduct. If those standards are not met, corrective action may be taken in accordance with the Code of Ethics and Conduct.

## Procedures

- None

## Roles and responsibilities

Role	Responsibilities
Agency head (Secretary of DRNSW)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ultimately responsible for the proper management and administration of Pcards within the Regional NSW (Mandatory Core Requirement TPP21-02).</li><li>• Ensuring that an effective and appropriate PCard policy and associated procedures for the use and management of PCards are developed and implemented by DRNSW Corporate.</li></ul>

Role	Responsibilities
Cardholder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding this policy and being accountable for the responsible use of their PCard (Mandatory Core Requirement TPP21-02).</li> <li>• Completing a short quiz to demonstrate familiarity with this policy as part of the application process.</li> <li>• Complying with the terms and conditions of the PCard issuers.</li> <li>• Understanding and acknowledging the cardholder Statement of Responsibility (Appendix 3).</li> <li>• Ensuring the security of their PCard and account details, including storage of the PCard when not required for official business, such as when the employee is on leave.</li> <li>• Knowing the administrative conditions of their PCard and account, including relevant limits, thresholds and restrictions.</li> <li>• Ensuring that credit limits and delegation authorities are not exceeded (purchases must not be split to negate the credit transaction limits).</li> <li>• Familiarising themselves with user guides for the card expense management system.</li> <li>• Obtaining and retaining relevant documentation relating to all transactions over \$30. Transactions under \$30 should have a receipt where practical to assist managers with approval of transactions. Expense8 will allow exceptions to ensure acquittal of all transactions. This should not be done on a regular basis.</li> <li>• Acquitting transactions within 28 days, otherwise the PCard limit may set to zero.</li> <li>• Reporting lost or stolen PCards to the card issuer and Finance Shared Services.</li> <li>• Timely reporting of unauthorised transactions.</li> </ul>
Finance Shared Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintaining a central register of purchasing cards.</li> <li>• Ensuring a quality assurance process is in place that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– analyses PCard uptake and usage patterns and</li> <li>– detects inappropriate PCard use.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Managing the relationship with the card issuer, including interactions between the cardholder and the card issuer.</li> </ul>

Role	Responsibilities
PCard Program administrator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring that responsibilities allocated to the Finance Shared Services team are discharged appropriately.</li> <li>• Collating and confirming card accounts for the Secretary and executive members (senior executives reporting directly to the Secretary), as delegated by the executive director – business services.</li> <li>• Preparation of regular credit card expenditure reports for the Secretary or Secretary’s delegate, detailing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– the oversight of credit card expenditure and usage for levels and types of use</li> <li>– any known or identified instances of inappropriate or fraudulent use and</li> <li>– the appropriateness of credit limits.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Providing advice and instructions on action required where there is evidence of misuse or concerns about the appropriate use of a PCard.</li> <li>• Ensuring the effective implementation of controls and oversight mechanisms for the PCard Program across the department and cluster agencies.</li> </ul>
Supervisor/manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring PCard use.</li> <li>• Reviewing and approving reconciliation procedures as well as ensuring compliance with the processes detailed in this policy and the associated procedure.</li> <li>• Supporting increased use of purchasing cards through procurement processes to ensure more timely payment of small business vendors.</li> <li>• Assessing the business need for the retention of a PCard for an existing cardholder who is commencing a new role within their business unit.</li> <li>• Arranging cancellation of the card with Finance Shared Services if the PCard is no longer applicable for the employee.</li> <li>• Exercising their duties in accordance with this policy. In the event of a breach by a supervisor, the department or the cluster agency may choose to withdraw the supervisors’ delegation or commence internal disciplinary action.</li> <li>• Notifying Finance Shared Services of the need to change a cardholder’s existing credit limit and facility if required.</li> </ul>

## Delegations

- Regional NSW financial delegations for purchase card use and Local Lands Services financial delegations apply to all cardholders. The purchase card may only be used for the purpose for which it is issued in accordance with Regional NSW and NSW Government Policy or Direction of the Treasurer.
- Issue of purchase cards requires the approval of a delegate level 3 or higher in the financial delegations.

## Definitions

Term	Definitions
Cardholder	Employee who has been issued with a purchasing card.
Card issuer	The government-nominated service provider for the administration and provision of purchasing cards.
Employee/staff	Includes 'government officers' as defined at s. 2.9 <i>Government Sector Finance Act 2018</i>
Financial services	Financial services as defined at s. 6.6 <i>Government Sector Finance Act 2018</i> .
Internal controls (also controls)	Refers to the systems, policies, procedures, and processes that are designed to provide reasonable assurance regarding the achievement of objectives in the following categories: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>effectiveness and efficiency of operations</li> <li>reliability of financial reporting and</li> <li>compliance with laws and regulations.</li> </ul>
Legitimate ongoing business requirement	Expenditure has been undertaken for a purpose that is in direct connection with, or as a direct consequence of, the cardholder's role and responsibilities.
PCard register	Register referred to in section 3.2 – Key requirements
Purchasing card (PCard)	A credit card issued by a bank, building society or credit union which is used by cardholders to engage in transactions relating to the purchase of goods and services on behalf of the agency. Purchasing cards are also known as corporate cards, government cards, and procurement cards.
Virtual card (VCard)	Virtual version of a PCard, which works in the same way as a PCard without the physical card being issued. In this policy, the term PCard also denotes a reference to a VCard, for example the virtual PCard attached to the FCM travel booking system.

## Legislation

- Government Sector Finance Act 2018*

TPP17-09 Use and Management of NSW Government Purchasing Cards

## Related policies

- DRNSW Travel Policy
- DRNSW [Code of Ethics and Conduct](#)
- NSW TPP21-02 Use and Management of NSW Government Purchasing Cards

## Appendices

Appendix 1 – Cardholder Statement of Responsibility

Appendix 2 – Decision Tree to Approve PCard Limits

## Superseded documents

None. This is the first Purchasing card policy for the Department of Regional NSW

## Revision history

<b>Version</b>	<b>Date issued</b>	<b>Notes</b>	<b>By</b>
x.x	dd/mm/yyyy	List changes since the last version.	Position title

## Contact

*Finance, Procurement, Property, and Fleet*

*Manager Strategic Business Advisory*

*Matthew Nicholls*

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## Appendix 1 – Cardholder statement of responsibility

The Department of Regional NSW has approved the issue of a NSW Government purchasing card (PCard) to you (the cardholder). As a cardholder you are required to read and comply with this statement which outlines your responsibilities regarding the use and management of your PCard whilst employed by the department. You must understand and agree to the following terms and conditions:

### Safety and security

- I sign my PCard, which is only to be used by me.
- I understand that I am the only authorised user of this PCard.
- I am personally responsible for the security and safe keeping of my PCard and the relevant card account details, including my personal identification number (PIN) and card number.
- If my card is stolen or lost, I will immediately report it to the card issuer and Finance Shared Services.

### Official business use

- I will only use the PCard for business purposes in accordance with the guidelines detailed in this policy and associated policy documents and the card issuer's conditions of use. "business purposes" means that the expenditure has been undertaken for a purpose that is in direct connection with, or as a direct consequence of, my role/position responsibilities within the Department.
- I will comply with the department's policies, processes, and procedures for authorised expenditure.
- I understand that all expenditure charged to my PCard is subject to examination and approval by a delegated employee of the department.
- I understand the relevant expenditure categories which are authorised for PCard expenditure.
- I will collect and retain the required documentation to support all transactions made with the PCard. Where the required documentation to support a transaction has not been retained, I will complete a business declaration (MyExpenses) or a statutory declaration (Expense8) detailing the nature of the expense and confirming that the expense was for business purposes only.
- I will acquit and submit my card transactions to my manager in accordance with prescribed deadlines.
- I understand that I must not make cash withdrawals or seek cash advances using the PCard.
- I will not exceed my credit limit on the PCard unless I have obtained prior documented approval.
- I will not split transactions on the PCard to avoid exceeding transaction limits.
- I will not make deposits into the PCard account.

### Disciplinary sanctions

- I understand that if I use the PCard for purposes other than business purposes, or in a manner which is inconsistent with the conditions of use, I may have my PCard withdrawn, and/or suspended or cancelled. I understand that I may also be subject to the consequences as detailed in the breaches section of this policy and associated procedure.
- I understand that in the event of loss or theft through negligence or non-compliance with the conditions of use, I may be responsible for any liability incurred.

### Change of Employment Conditions and/or Extended Leave

- I agree to notify and return my PCard to the Director Finance Shared Services in the following circumstances:
  - if I leave my employment of my own accord.
  - if my employment is terminated.
  - if I am suspended pending an investigation into my conduct (whether related to PCard use or not).
  - if I go on extended leave for more than 60 days.
  - if I am reassigned to a role or position where a PCard is not necessary to the performance of my duties.

#### Privacy

- I am aware that my personal information has been collected and will be held by the department on an ongoing basis to meet the various requirements in relation to the administration of PCards. I understand that department may need to disclose my personal information to any party that is legally entitled to access the information.
- I am aware that any personal information related to the administration of PCards will be collected, retained, protected and disposed of by the department under the provisions of the *Privacy and Personal Information Act 1998*, and in line with the department's privacy management plan.

## Appendix 2 – Decision tree to approve PCard limits

