



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 13 December 2023

Answers due by: Wednesday 24 January 2024

Budget Estimates secretariat

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Questions from the Hon Sarah Mitchell MLC

Local Land Services

1. What was the travel budget for Local Land Services in the 2022/23 Financial Year?
2. What is the travel budget for Local Land Services in the 2023/24 Financial Year?
3. If the 2023/24 travel budget for Local Land Services is less than the 2022/23 travel budget for Local Land Services, what are the reasons for the cut?
4. Does the Minister stand by her decision to reduce the remuneration of Local Land Services board chairs and board members from May, 2024?

Regional Development Roadmap Roundtables

5. As of December 14, 2023, how many roundtable events have been held across NSW to discuss the new Regional Development Roadmap?
6. Where have these roundtable events been held?
7. Has the Minister attended each of the Regional Development Roadmap roundtable events in-person?
8. How many roundtable events are scheduled post December 14, 2023?
9. If there are future roundtables scheduled, will the Minister be attending these events in-person?
10. When were formal invitations issued for attendees at the round table events attended by the Minister in Bourke (December 12) and Broken Hill (December 13)?
11. When was the Department of Regional NSW notified that the Minister would be attending the roundtables in Bourke and Broken Hill in-person?
12. When was the Department of Regional NSW notified that the Premier would be attending the roundtables in Bourke and Broken Hill in-person?
13. Who were the attendees at the Regional Development Roadmap roundtable in Bourke on December 12?
14. Who were the attendees at the Regional Development Roadmap roundtable in Broken Hill on December 13?
15. Were these events in Bourke and Broken Hill “invitation-only”, and if so, who was responsible for compiling the list of attendees and issuing invitations?
16. What modes of travel did the Minister utilise to attend these events in Bourke and Broken Hill, as well as other events in Walgett and Brewarrina on December 12?
17. If the Minister utilised charter flights, who were the other passengers on these flights?
18. If the Minister utilised charter flights, who booked the flights and when were the flights booked?

19. If the Minister utilised charter flights, were other MPs on those flights? If so, did they contribute to the cost of those flights?
20. If other MPs were on those flights and contributed to the cost, how much did they contribute?
21. If other MPs were on those flights and did not contribute to the cost, why did they not contribute?
22. When was the venue booked for the roundtable event held in Bourke?
23. When was the venue booked for the roundtable event held in Broken Hill?

Rural Assistance Authority

24. As of December 13, 2023, how many claims does the Rural Assistance Authority have that are unprocessed?
25. How many of these claims are for figures of \$75,000 or higher?
26. As of December 13, 2023, what is the total value of the unprocessed claims?
27. As of December 13, 2023, what is the average time taken by the Rural Assistance Authority to process and approve claims, and reimburse applicants?
28. As of December 13, 2023, how many full-time equivalent staff are employed by the Rural Assistance Authority?
29. As of March 25, 2023, how many full-time equivalent staff were employed by the Rural Assistance Authority?

Regional Funding Programs

30. The NSW Government has allocated \$350 million to its Regional Development Trust Fund. Is this correct?
31. If so, is this \$350 million Regional Development Trust Fund comprised of “new money” or is it reallocated from the previous government’s Regional Growth Fund, which had in excess of \$600 million unallocated as of March 25, 2023?
32. The NSW Government has also allocated \$250 million to its Working Regions Fund. Is this correct?
33. If so, is the \$250 million Working Regions Fund comprised of “new money” or is it reallocated from the previous government’s Regional Growth Fund, which had in excess of \$600 million unallocated as of March 25, 2023?
34. In relation to the Regional Development Trust Fund, will that \$350 million worth of funding be rolled out over the course of the 2023/24 financial year?
35. If not, over what period of time will the \$350 million be rolled out?
36. How much of the Regional Development Trust Fund is budgeted for distribution in the 2023/24 financial year?

37. How much of the Regional Development Trust Fund is budgeted for distribution in the 2024/25 financial year?
38. How much of the Regional Development Trust Fund is budgeted for distribution in the 2025/26 financial year?
39. How much of the Regional Development Trust Fund is budgeted for distribution in the 2026/27 financial year?
40. In relation to the Working Regions Fund, will that \$250 million worth of funding be rolled out over the course of the 2023/24 financial year?
41. If not, over what period of time will the \$350 million be rolled out?
42. How much of the Working Regions Fund is budgeted for distribution in the 2023/24 financial year?
43. How much of the Working Regions Fund is budgeted for distribution in the 2024/25 financial year?
44. How much of the Working Regions Fund is budgeted for distribution in the 2025/26 financial year?
45. How much of the Working Regions Fund is budgeted for distribution in the 2026/27 financial year?

Forestry

46. Has work commenced on a five-year statutory review of Coastal Integrated Forestry Operations Approvals?
47. If not, when will that review start and who is/will be the lead agency on that body of work?
48. What portion of state forest operations on the South Coast have now been impacted by Stop Work Orders?
49. What is the status of new Wood Supply Agreements on the South Coast?
50. What role does Forestry Corporation have in the consultation process on the development of the proposed Great Koala National Park?
51. Has Forestry Corporation been invited to participate in this process? If not, why not?
52. Have you met with Dr Brad Law to discuss his work on the impact of selective harvesting on koala populations?
53. Do you accept that his work shows there to be no impact on koala populations from timber harvesting in NSW?
54. Have you made other Ministers aware of Dr Law's body of peer-reviewed work?
55. Which agency will be the lead agency in the development of the next iteration of the Forest Industry Road Map?

56. Have you advocated for the Department of Primary Industries to deliver that work, as it has done previously?
57. Do you believe it should be the Department of Primary Industries that delivers that work, as it has done previously?

Cross-Border Commissioner

58. On what date did James McTavish cease being the NSW Cross-Border Commissioner?
59. On what date was Kalina Koloff appointed as the NSW Cross-Border Commissioner?
60. Was there a directive from the Minister, or her office, for Mr McTavish to be released from the role of Cross-Border Commissioner?
61. Is Ms Koloff acting in this role, or has her full-time appointment been confirmed?
62. If Ms Koloff has been appointed full-time to the role, was there a recruitment process to fill the role?
63. If not, why not?
64. Who selected Ms Koloff to fill the vacancy?
65. Was there any correspondence between the Department of Regional NSW and the Minister, or her office, in relation to Mr McTavish no longer being the NSW Cross-Border Commissioner?
66. Was there any correspondence between the Department of Regional NSW and the Minister, or her office, in relation to Ms Koloff being appointed to the role of NSW Cross-Border Commissioner?

Senior Executive Roles

67. How many senior executive roles have been downgraded within the Department of Regional NSW since March 25, 2023?
68. What was the budget for senior executive roles within the Department of Regional NSW in the 2022/23 Financial Year?
69. What is the budget for senior executive roles within the Department of Regional NSW in the 2023/24 Financial Year?
70. What has been the overall financial saving to the NSW Government as a result of those roles being downgraded?
71. Which agencies within the Department of Regional NSW had senior executive roles downgraded, and how many in each agency?
72. What were the localities of the senior executives whose roles were downgraded within the Department of Regional NSW?
73. How many of the senior executives whose roles were downgraded remained employed by the Department of Regional NSW?
74. How many vacancies were created as a result of the senior executive roles being downgraded?

75. How many of the vacancies created as a result of the senior executive roles being downgraded have been filled?
76. How many of the vacancies created as a result of the senior executive roles being downgraded remain to be filled?