

**MINISTER FOR RURAL AFFAIRS,
MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT,
MINISTER FOR EMERGENCY SERVICES
AND MINISTER FOR LANDS**

OVERVIEW

<i>Agency</i>	<i>Budget 2004-05 \$m</i>	<i>Budget 2005-06 \$m</i>	<i>Variation %</i>
Department of Local Government			
Total Expenses	89.7	89.4	-0.4
Capital Expenditure	0.2	0.2	...
New South Wales Fire Brigades			
Total Expenses	430.1	453.7	5.5
Capital Expenditure	43.3	35.8	-17.2
Department of Rural Fire Service			
Total Expenses	150.2	162.0	7.9
Capital Expenditure	8.0	8.8	10.3
State Emergency Service			
Total Expenses	30.6	36.4	18.9
Capital Expenditure	3.7	4.2	13.8
Department of Lands			
Total Expenses	79.6	79.4	-0.2
Capital Expenditure	2.4	3.2	31.4
Land and Property Information New South Wales			
Total Expenses	127.8	134.8	5.5
Capital Expenditure	15.0	15.0	...
Total, Minister for Rural Affairs, Minister for Local Government, Minister for Emergency Services and Minister for Lands			
Total Expenses	908.0	955.7	5.3
Capital Expenditure	72.6	67.2	-7.4

DEPARTMENT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The Department of Local Government's primary functions are to:

- ◆ develop the legislative and policy framework within which local councils operate;
- ◆ monitor compliance and financial performance of councils;
- ◆ improve local government performance and sustainability; and
- ◆ shape and implement government policy and programs.

The Department provides a clear policy and legislative framework to local government to ensure councils are robust, sustainable, and able to deliver quality services to their communities. Major service delivery outputs are generally in the form of legislation, policies, programs, publications, training, mediation and strategic advice.

EXPENDITURE TRENDS AND RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

The Department of Local Government continues to adopt a proactive role in fostering improvements in the performance of the local government sector.

The local government reform program entered its second year in 2004-05. As a result of the reform process, the number of councils in New South Wales has reduced from 172 to 152. The Department continues to work closely with the newly formed councils.

A public inquiry, conducted under Section 740 of the *Local Government Act 1993*, was undertaken in 2004-05 to inquire, report, and provide recommendations on the efficiency and effectiveness of the governance of Tweed Shire Council. An investigation under Section 430 has now commenced.

The findings resulting from the Liverpool City Council Public Inquiry held in 2003-04 has lead to the amendment of the *Local Government Act 1993*, which now incorporates the participation of councils in Public Private Partnerships. The Local Government Project Review Committee, chaired by the Department, has been established and is intended to safeguard the community interest by reviewing large or high risk Public Private Partnership projects prior to Councils entering contractual arrangements with the private sector.

Other initiatives implemented during 2004-05 include an early intervention program of review entitled “Promoting Better Practice” to identify and remedy poor performance promptly, and identify and share examples of good practice with councils.

During the last five years rate rebates for pensioners increased by \$3 million to \$74 million. Other payments during the last two years included one-off increases totalling \$2 million for the local government reform program and \$1.2 million to conduct major inquiries into a number of councils.

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

The Department of Local Government provides a high-level analytical and intervention capacity, concentrating on:

- ◆ legislation and policy;
- ◆ finances of councils;
- ◆ major investigations and pecuniary interest matters; and
- ◆ performance management.

The Department is encouraging councils to develop strategic alliances, share resources and improve the transparency of governance arrangements to better meet the needs of their communities.

2005-06 BUDGET

Total Expenses

Estimated total expenses for the Department in 2005-06 are \$89.4 million, including:

- ◆ \$76 million for the pensioner council rates rebate scheme;
- ◆ \$0.5 million to review proposed projects under the Public-Private Partnership Program; and
- ◆ \$4.7 million for Companion Animals administration and payments to local councils.

Capital Expenditure

The capital allocation of \$0.2 million provides for replacing fully depreciated and obsolete computer and office equipment.

NEW SOUTH WALES FIRE BRIGADES

The New South Wales Fire Brigades (NSWFB) serves and works with the community to prevent fire and to respond to fire, hazardous material and rescue incidents in order to protect and preserve life, property and the environment. The NSWFB is responsible for providing fire protection to developed centres throughout the State. In times of emergency, such as bushfire crisis or other natural disaster, the NSWFB also supports the other emergency services in both urban and non-urban areas and maintains a significant capability to assist in the response to major structure collapse and counter terrorist incidents.

EXPENDITURE TRENDS AND RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

The NSW Fire Brigades is funded 73.7 percent by the insurance industry, 12.3 percent by local government with a net cost to the State of 14 percent.

Between 1999-2000 and 2004-05 there was a 10.4 percent growth in the number of incidents attended by the NSWFB. In 2005-06, the NSWFB is expected to respond to more than 135,000 incidents, representing a response, on average, every six minutes.

The NSWFB has received significant funding increases over recent years. The NSWFB's expenditure totalled \$330.7 million (including \$37.7 million capital) in 1999-2000. In 2005-06, expenditure is budgeted at \$489.5 million (including \$35.8 million capital), an increase of 48 percent over this period.

In 1997, the Government embarked on the first major fire station building program in 75 years. Strategic programs in the greater Sydney area, Central Coast, the Hunter Valley and regional New South Wales have to date seen 26 new stations built and made operational. Twenty seven stations have been significantly refurbished including a significant rebuild of No 1 Station in Sydney.

Since 1995, \$2.7 million has been spent on establishing new Community Fire Units bringing the total to 268 units. The units operate in residential areas with a high level of bushland nearby. To date, approximately 4,700 volunteers attached to the various units, of whom approximately 35 percent are women, have received training under the program. These units and volunteers are an integral part of the NSWFB's public education and fuel reduction strategies in bushfire prone areas.

In 2004-05, additional budget and other funding was provided to:

- ◆ increase funding for the Crown long service leave pool (\$5.1 million);
- ◆ continue payments of Death and Disability benefits (\$4 million);
- ◆ undertake additional induction, basic first-aid training, advanced gas detector and advanced life support training to retained firefighters (\$2.4 million);
- ◆ comply with the latest regulations and requirements of occupational health and safety (\$0.9 million); and
- ◆ upgrade health and fitness assessment and support (\$0.6 million).

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

The NSW Fire Brigades aims to minimise the impact of emergency incidents on the community. The NSWFB continues to develop initiatives to maximise the effectiveness and efficiency of core business processes, including incident prevention, fire suppression, management of hazardous material incidents, the provision of rescue services and response to natural hazards.

Over the next four years, the Brigades will also receive nearly \$72 million to purchase state of the art urban and rural fire engines and \$21 million for improved communications.

Since 1997, new stations have been completed at St Andrews, Blacktown, Kellyville, Horningsea Park, Rosemeadow, Narellan, Huntingwood, Regentville, Bonnyrigg Heights, Kariong, Bateau Bay, Berkeley Vale, Umina, Dubbo, Kelso, Doyalson, Toronto, Lawson, Schofields, East Maitland, Shellharbour, Portland, Mt Victoria, Nambucca Heads, Teralba and Wangi Wangi.

The NSWFB will receive \$12.5 million in recurrent funding over the next four years for firefighter safety and counter terrorism equipment, and sharing the operational costs of a helicopter with the NSW Police Service. An additional \$12 million will also be provided over the next four years for the replacement and maintenance of safety and counter terrorism equipment. This will significantly increase the NSWFB's capability for counter terrorism and hazardous materials response.

2005-06 BUDGET

Total Expenses

Total expenses in 2005-06 are estimated to be \$453.7 million. In 2005-06, the NSWFB will receive funding to:

- ◆ assist in the asset maintenance of properties (\$3.4 million) and the fleet (\$1.7 million);
- ◆ assist in the asset maintenance support for critical information systems (\$0.4 million);
- ◆ support the operational training program (\$0.8 million);
- ◆ improve the capability for firefighter safety and counter terrorism (\$2.5 million);
- ◆ meet the 4 percent wage increase effective from 1 July 2004 for Administrative and Trades employees and operational staff (\$4.3 million); and
- ◆ deploy an additional 52 permanent firefighters to various fire stations across the State (\$3.5 million).

Capital Expenditure

In 2005-06, the NSWFB's capital works program is \$35.8 million. This will fund capital works projects including:

- ◆ \$18 million for continuation of an ongoing program to acquire and replace firefighting appliances;
- ◆ \$4 million for continuation of the fire station building renovation program;
- ◆ \$3 million for the replacement and servicing program for firefighter safety and counter terrorism equipment; and
- ◆ \$5.7 million for upgrading information technology, communications and paging equipment.

This capital expenditure will benefit both city and rural areas of New South Wales and will continue to address the need for additional facilities in growth areas.

DEPARTMENT OF RURAL FIRE SERVICE

The Department of Rural Fire Service is responsible for the promotion of effective rural fire fighting services within the State, including the co-ordination of bushfire fighting and bushfire prevention activities.

The Rural Fire Service is also the host agency for the Office for Emergency Services. The Office is responsible for policy advice to the Minister and administrative support to the State Emergency Management Committee and the State Rescue Board. The Office also manages the Natural Disaster Mitigation Program.

The prevention and containment of bushfires would not be possible without the unpaid work of some 69,000 volunteers, who operate through 2,094 community based rural fire brigades attached to 122 local councils.

EXPENDITURE TRENDS AND RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Expenditure by the Rural Fire Service on bushfire fighting activities is financed by the Consolidated Fund (13 percent), local government (13.3 percent) and the insurance industry (73.7 percent).

The State's contribution towards fire fighting services is paid into the Rural Fire Fighting Fund along with the fire levies from insurances companies and councils. These funds are then dispersed in accordance with the advice of the Rural Fire Service Advisory Committee.

The level of funding provided to the Rural Fire Fighting Fund has increased significantly over recent financial years. The total amount provided to the Rural Fire Fighting Fund in 1999-2000 was \$80.4 million. In comparison, the total amount to be provided in 2005-06 will be \$140.2 million, which excludes a capital component of \$0.8 million, an increase of 74.3 percent over this period.

In 2004-05 additional funding was provided, largely enabling the Rural Fire Service to:

- ◆ provide an additional contribution to the Bushfire Fighters' Compensation Fund (\$2.2 million);
- ◆ increase funding to the emergency firefighting fund (\$2.2 million); and
- ◆ enhance operational communication networks (\$1.5 million).

Funds were also made available to the Office for Emergency Services for:

- ◆ Natural Disaster Mitigation Program administration and grants (\$12.5 million); and
- ◆ increased grants to volunteer rescue units (\$0.4 million).

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

The Department of Rural Fire Service is an integral part of a complex bushfire management infrastructure comprising volunteer rural fire brigades, local government councils, land management agencies and other fire authorities.

The Service continues to respond to a wide range of emerging priorities and issues generated through government and community expectations, developments in emergency sector technology and doctrine as well as through the initiative and contribution of staff and volunteers. The response is encapsulated in these main areas:

- ◆ improving the safety of the community by mitigating the impact of fire through the implementation of programs associated with raising community fire awareness, regulating land use and the management of fuel levels;
- ◆ establishing planning, management and information systems to improve the allocation of resources; and
- ◆ recognising the importance of the contribution of our volunteers, by improving their safety and identifying programs that will accommodate the demands of lifestyles as well as facilitating their involvement in Service activities.

The Service relocated to Homebush Bay in September 2004. A purpose-built Emergency Command Centre was provided to accommodate central personnel and essential facilities, equipment and state of the art fire, meteorological and mapping technology.

2005-06 BUDGET

Total Expenses

Department of Rural Fire Service 2005-06 expenses are estimated at \$162 million. This level of funding will allow the Rural Fire Service to:

- ◆ continue the tanker upgrade program for local brigades (\$27.4 million);

- ◆ fund maintenance and equipment grants to local councils (\$47.4 million);
- ◆ continue subsidies to local brigades for brigade stations (\$3.4 million); and
- ◆ continue to provide local councils with advice about appropriate bushfire safety measures for residential buildings and other developments in bushfire prone lands (\$1.2 million).

Funds have been made available to the Office for Emergency Services for grants to be made under the Natural Disaster Mitigation Program (\$12.1 million) and the Bushfire Mitigation Program (\$2.7 million).

Capital Expenditure

The Department of Rural Fire Service's \$8.8 million 2005-06 capital expenditure program includes provision for the following projects:

- ◆ acquisition of motor vehicles (\$6.5 million); and
- ◆ purchase of computers and other small items of equipment (\$2.3 million).

STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE

The State Emergency Service (SES) is a volunteer based organisation dedicated to providing timely assistance in times of natural or man-made incidents or emergencies. While its main responsibilities reflect its role as the combat agency for floods and storms, the SES is also the major provider of land and inland water search and rescue throughout the State. Additionally, the SES provides significant support to NSW Police, the Rural Fire Service and other emergency services in a wide range of emergency situations. Currently there are around 10,000 SES volunteers responding to over 30,000 incidents per year.

EXPENDITURE TRENDS AND RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

The SES has received significant funding increases over the past five financial years.

Since 1999-2000, funding provided to the SES has increased from \$22 million (including \$2.4 million capital) to \$40.6 million (including \$4.2 million capital) representing an increase of 84.5 percent. This additional funding has enabled the SES to address major priorities in the area of rescue equipment, improve protective clothing for all volunteers, provide nationally recognised competency based training, purchase and maintain communication equipment, construct new division headquarters, and employ paid divisional controllers, learning and development officers, flood planners and public education officers.

Additional funding in 2004-05 included:

- ◆ \$3.4 million for the upgrade and maintenance of radio communications equipment and paging services;
- ◆ \$1.4 million for information management and technology upgrades;
- ◆ \$1.1 million for the Hawkesbury/Nepean Floodplain Management program; and
- ◆ \$0.1 million for Critical Incident Stress program.

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

The State Emergency Service will continue to improve its capability to deal with floods, storms, other incidents and emergencies.

The organisational capability of the Service will be improved by: enhancing State and Division headquarters to better support the Volunteer Units; the implementation of a 24 x 7 Operations Communications Centre to ensure that the calls for help received are processed and dispatched in a more timely and efficient manner; improved mobilisation of out of area volunteer teams to respond to requests for assistance following floods and storms; and improved call out arrangements for SES Road Crash Rescue crews.

The Operations Communications Centre will also assist with the establishment of real time intelligence gathering of events to assist operational management. The development of public communication and flood planning programs to ensure that communities at risk are aware of the nature of the risks and how to protect themselves and their property is a key strategy that will continue to be addressed throughout 2005-06.

State Emergency Service volunteers will continue to be trained in emergency operation and rescue procedures which are of world class standard. The volunteers are also provided with protective clothing and equipment that meet Occupational Health and Safety requirements. These factors are essential in providing the community with a combat agency that will assist them during flood and storm operations.

2005-06 BUDGET

Total Expenses

The State Emergency Service's total expenses for 2005-06 are projected to be \$36.4 million.

Additional funding has been provided in the following areas:

- ◆ \$1.9 million to increase in the organisational capability of the Service by enhancing State and Division headquarters to better support the Volunteer Units;
- ◆ \$0.9 million to design, test, implement and operate a 24 x 7 Operations Communication Centre that will facilitate the enhanced and streamlined dispatch of SES Units to emergencies; and
- ◆ \$0.3 million for Risk Communication to maintain the Service's Creating Safer Communities program.

Capital Expenditure

In 2005-06 the total capital expenditure program is estimated at \$4.2 million.

Funding will continue for the provision of rescue equipment and radio systems, with \$2.6 million being allocated to install new radio systems in divisions as well as maintaining a repair pool for all radios across New South Wales.

An amount of \$1.3 million will be used to continue to purchase essential rescue equipment, including road rescue equipment, flood rescue boats, emergency lighting, vertical rescue equipment and rescue call out systems.

Volunteer units, division headquarters and state headquarters will receive \$0.2 million to purchase paging hardware and paging facilities to assist during emergency operations.

DEPARTMENT OF LANDS

The Department comprises Crown Lands management, Native Title and Aboriginal Land Claims management, Soil Conservation Service, the Office of Rural Affairs and Land and Property Information NSW, which is reported separately.

The Department's role covers the sustainable management of Crown lands, the provision of spatial information and land and property related information, the description, identification, and registration of ownership of land in New South Wales, provision of land management and conservation consulting services and assistance to rural New South Wales in developing sustainable communities.

Its land management responsibilities in respect to Crown land includes management and protection of the natural environment by active management facilitated through leases, licenses and trusts to ensure the optimal use of Crown land for use in agriculture, as natural reserves and for recreational pursuits.

EXPENDITURE TRENDS AND RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Expenditures over the last three years has increased with the growth in size of the Department following transfer of further activities from the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources.

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

The Government has announced a number of changes to enhance Crown Estate management by simplifying Crown leases and licences administration. These changes will result in divestment of some lands to their users on a permanent basis and also sale of other Crown land. This will give greater capacity to focus on core business activities to meet economic, social and environmental outcomes.

One aim of these changes is to improve the economic return from Crown Land, reduce contingent liabilities and more readily meet the diversified needs of the community for Crown Land. Similarly, work is continuing to refocus Soil Services to make it commercially viable whilst continuing to provide value added services to its rural and regional customers.

2005-06 BUDGET

Total Expenses

Total expenses for 2005-06 are \$79.4 million. This includes \$46.4 million for the maintenance and management of Crown Lands, \$19.8 million for soil conservation activity and \$13.2 million paid to Land and Property Information to continue community service programs such as maintenance of topographical data, survey marks, aerial photography and the Geographic Names Board.

Capital Expenditure

The total capital program for the Department for 2005-06 is \$3.2 million. This program includes \$0.3 million for replacement of computers, plant and equipment and \$0.3 million for building refurbishments to commence to address occupational health and safety issues.

Funding of \$0.2 million has also been provided within the Crown Lands capital works program to complete the development of the Land Direct information system. Remediation work to a number of dams on Crown Lands will continue at a cost of \$2.1 million. It is planned that \$0.3 million for equipment acquisition will be spent within the Soil Services program.

LAND AND PROPERTY INFORMATION NEW SOUTH WALES

The role of Land and Property Information (LPI) is to operate the State's land and property registration and information services, to provide land valuation and survey services, and to create value through the integration of land, spatial and property information.

LPI has offices throughout New South Wales with its principal offices located in Sydney and Bathurst. LPI offers customers convenient access to services irrespective of location through the innovative use of information and communications technology.

EXPENDITURE TRENDS AND RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

LPI's business activity continues to grow in line with the State economy generally and the level of property transactions in particular. LPI continues to invest in technological solutions to improve efficiency and create value for the convenience of its customers.

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

In 2005-06, LPI will continue to concentrate on its core activities. LPI will improve the integration of its data sets and the electronic delivery of its information to meet public and private sector needs. LPI is working with the other jurisdictions to develop a National Electronic Conveyancing System. When fully implemented this will change the way conveyancing is undertaken across Australia.

2005-06 BUDGET

Total Expenses

Total expenses for 2005-06 are estimated to be \$134.8 million. The majority of this expenditure is spent on statutory land valuations, land title creation and registration services, spatial information, survey and mapping services and technical support.

Capital Expenditure

The 2005-06 Budget for capital expenditure is \$15 million. The program for LPI includes improving land information systems, enhancing and developing electronic service delivery capabilities and the renewal of plant and equipment.

Specific projects include:

- ◆ development of E-Channel services;
- ◆ development toward electronic lodgement and registration of real property transactions;
- ◆ upgrade of rural addresses;
- ◆ improved regional service delivery;
- ◆ the conversion of old system and manual titles to Torrens title; and
- ◆ the conservation and digitisation of historical plans.