

ENVIRONMENT

Questions on Notice

Question 1

Danny O'BRIEN: So the 22 sites – they were all children's playgrounds or parks and reserves?

Lee MIEZIS: They were all parks and reserves.

Danny O'BRIEN: How many other public land sites has asbestos been found in in the last 12 months?

Lee MIEZIS: I would have to take that on notice.

Answer:

Over the 12 months between 21 May 2023 and 21 May 2024, Environment Protection Authority Victoria (EPA) received 109 pollution reports about suspected asbestos on public land. Of these, EPA confirmed 20 sites with asbestos contamination, in addition to the 22 parks and reserves that were part of EPA's investigations into suspected contamination in mulch. None of these sites were children's playgrounds and all were remediated by the public land manager.

Question 2

Danny O'BRIEN: Thank you, Mrs McArthur. Minister, how much does Lisa Neville get paid as chair of the Great Outdoors Taskforce?

Steve DIMOPOULOS: I cannot tell you off the top of my head, but it is –

Danny O'BRIEN: Does the Secretary or someone from the department know?

Steve DIMOPOULOS: Yes, but just quickly – I am happy to throw to the Secretary –

Danny O'BRIEN: I am just after a figure, Minister.

Steve DIMOPOULOS: But I think context matters too, Mr O'Brien.

Danny O'BRIEN: Well, context does matter, but context is nice when I have time, and I do not have time.

Steve DIMOPOULOS: Okay, but if you just give me 10 seconds – DPC puts out guidelines in terms of board appointments and who gets paid what. It is not a decision that is made because it is Lisa; it could be John, it could be Mavis, it could be anybody.

Danny O'BRIEN: Whoever.

Steve DIMOPOULOS: There is a framework that is followed through DPC.

Danny O'BRIEN: I get that. Secretary.

John BRADLEY: I am sorry, Minister, I do not have the number with me, but it is classified –

Steve DIMOPOULOS: Okay, sure.

Danny O'BRIEN: Ms Jackson, have you got the number there? Could you take it a notice for me?

Steve DIMOPOULOS: We can come back to you.

Answer:

The Great Outdoors Taskforce is established under the Victorian Appointment and Remuneration Guidelines.

The Great Outdoors Taskforce Chair's annual fee is \$62,677 plus superannuation obligations.

This remuneration reflects remuneration for similar entities considering the expected workload for the Taskforce, the high-profile nature of its work, and expectation for working with stakeholders and communities.

Question 3

Danny O'BRIEN: In my electorate you have both Wellington and South Gippsland shires' waste transfer stations. The contractors there have dumped it. They have got out because it is just too hard. They have been saying that they are not getting regular enough pick-ups and they are getting robberies and vandalism, people trying to break in and steal stuff, so they have actually dropped it at, I think it is, about 16 sites. How many sites have been established and then closed since the CDS started?

Steve DIMOPOULOS: Thanks, Mr O'Brien. I mean, I appreciate the question. Just to start with the first one first, it is a shame that those two withdrew, but I have been advised by Return-It, the scheme operator in Gippsland, that they have secured a new site in Yarram and it is currently scheduled to open in June or July. Your broader question about how many: effectively what happens is because we partner with businesses – IGAs, other businesses, NGOs – there are a whole range of 'Let's suck it and see' type of how much demand. Some businesses decided they did not expect that amount of returns –

Danny O'BRIEN: Well, the issue has also been that it has been extremely frustrating for them. They thought it would be a good outcome. Yarram is a classic example where the hardware store just found that they spent so much time dealing with that and did not get a reward for it, but they lost business with other customers in the hardware store.

Steve DIMOPOULOS: I understand that.

Danny O'BRIEN: The question still remains, though: how many have actually closed since you started?

Steve DIMOPOULOS: It is a strange question, because I think –

Danny O'BRIEN: Well, you can tell me how many have opened. How many opened and then subsequently closed?

Steve DIMOPOULOS: My point is our aspiration and our commitment to the Victorian community is 600 sites. We are at 550. We still have got four months of the rollout.

Danny O'BRIEN: The question is: did we get to 580 and then we have dropped back because so many close? That is what I am after.

Steve DIMOPOULOS: No. The teething problems were early on. There are a couple now, but they were early on exactly for the reasons you say: people decided that it was not compatible with their business or the demand was too high and it took over the normal operation of their business or the demand was too low. It is hard to predict what part of Victoria is going to take up the scheme in greater numbers, but –

Danny O'BRIEN: I understand all that. Can you tell me how many opened and then subsequently closed or had contracted but never actually –

Steve DIMOPOULOS: Not to hand.

Danny O'BRIEN: Can you take that on notice for me then?

Steve DIMOPOULOS: If I have got that information, you will have it, Mr O'Brien.

Danny O'BRIEN: Well, you must have that information surely. You would know how many have opened. You have told us how many have opened, so you must know how many have opened and then subsequently closed.

Steve DIMOPOULOS: If the department has that information, we will give it to you.

Answer:

Since scheme commencement the total number of outlets available to the community has exceeded targets with more than 550 now open, notwithstanding a limited number (76 collection points) initially opened but have since closed.

Some sites have not proved suitable, for example some small business owners have found that participating in the CDS is not a good fit for their business, with higher-than-expected patronage impacting their primary business operations. This is expected, particularly in the early stages of a scheme roll out and is consistent with experiences in other jurisdictions.

Zone Operators are continuing to establish new collection points across Victoria according to their community access requirements. By August 2024, CDS Vic will be fully operationalised with a network of around 600 refund points across the state, making the scheme convenient and accessible to all Victorians.

Question 4

Danny O'BRIEN: Thank you. Why are there no collection points in Melbourne's CBD?

Steve DIMOPOULOS: There are.

Danny O'BRIEN: Well, in the area within Spencer and Spring, Flinders and La Trobe?

Steve DIMOPOULOS: There are.

Danny O'BRIEN: Where are they?

Steve DIMOPOULOS: Off memory, and the Deputy Secretary might be able to furnish me with more information, there is one in Lonsdale Street, I think, or Queen Street.

Carolyn JACKSON: I am not sure.

Steve DIMOPOULOS: We will come back to you, but there are sites in the CBD.

Answer:

Visy is the Zone Operator responsible for providing collection points in the City of Melbourne (CoM). There are currently nine collection points operating in the CoM, one of which is in the CBD (Cellarbrations, Queen Street).

Site selection is a commercial decision for Zone Operators. Visy continues to work to identify and establish new collection points in the CoM. It is anticipated that additional sites will be located in the CBD.

By August 2024, CDS Vic will have a network of around 600 refund points across the state, making the scheme convenient and accessible to all Victorians.

Question 5

Danny O'BRIEN: Okay. Very quick one, Minister, what is the government's spend per hectare on the national park estate?

Steve DIMOPOULOS: Say again?

Danny O'BRIEN: What does the government spend per hectare on the national park estate?

Steve DIMOPOULOS: We do not work on hectares, we work on different things like pest control and forest care and seed management.

Danny O'BRIEN: What is the budget for the entire national park estate? Can you take that on notice?

Steve DIMOPOULOS: Yes, if we have got that, I will give it to you.

Answer:

The Victorian State Budget allocates funding for land management (2024-25 Budget, Budget Paper No. 3, p. 102) which includes Victoria's national and state parks, state forests, Crown land reserves, coasts and waterways.

As an example, the outputs of Management of Public Land and Forests and Parks Victoria provide funding of over \$500 million to deliver effective management and governance of Victoria's public land to protect its social, economic and environmental values and maximise its use by all Victorians.

The Management of Public Land and Forests output contributes to this objective by providing stewardship of Victoria's forests, coasts and Crown land reserves, to ensure that natural, built and historic assets are managed responsibly.

The Parks Victoria output contributes to this objective by managing the development and protection of Victoria's natural, cultural and community assets.