



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

PORTFOLIO COMMITTEES

BUDGET ESTIMATES 2023-2024

Supplementary questions

Portfolio Committee No. 8 – Customer Service

**Customer Service and Digital Government, Emergency Services, Youth
Justice**

Hearing: Wednesday, 28 February 2024

Answers due by: Tuesday, 26 March 2024

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BUDGET ESTIMATES 2023-2024

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS

Questions from Hon Emma Hurst MLC

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Backburn Escapes in 2019 / 2020

- (1) Has the Minister received any briefings from the NSW Rural Fire Service or other agencies relating to any of the fires involving backburn escapes or incidents identified in Appendix 1 below:
 - (a) If so, which ones?
 - (b) Has there been an internal investigation conducted by the NSW Rural Fire Service into the response and management relating to each of these backburn escapes or incidents?
 - (c) If so, can you please provide a copy (or a summary) of the findings of each of these investigations?

Recommendation 47D of the NSW Bushfire Inquiry

- (2) Has the NSW Rural Fire Service carried out meetings with communities affected by Backburns? If yes:
 - (a) How many meetings have occurred?
 - (b) Which communities were involved?
 - (c) On what dates did these meeting occur?
- (3) Is the NSW Rural Fire Service Commissioner aware of any communities that were affected by backburns during the 2019 / 2020 fire season that have not had a meeting as per the recommendation?
 - (a) If so, which communities?
 - (b) When will these meeting(s) be carried out?

Early suppression of fires in 2019 / 2020

- (4) What were the number of aerial resources requested, approved and actively engaged in the following fires for each date set out below? Please break down the figures into each category (requested, approved, engaged) and date:

- (a) Green Valley / Talmalmo (29-30 December 2019)
 - (b) Dunns Road (27-29 December 2019)
 - (c) Badja Forest Road (27-29 December 2019)
 - (d) Busbys Flat (4-7 October 2019)
 - (e) Stockyard Flat (including Stockyard East and Stockyard West 4-8 November 2019)
- (5) Is the NSW Rural Fire Service aware of any issues relating to the availability and/or commitment of aerial resources to early suppression of any of the above fires?

NSW BUSHFIRE INQUIRY 2020

- (6) What information, data and documents were supplied by the NSW Rural Fire Service to the NSW Bushfire Inquiry 2020 relating to each of the fires involving backburn escapes or incidents identified in *Appendix 1* below?
- (a) Was the RFS and other agencies response and management regarding backburns specifically examined for each of the fires identified in this list as part of the NSW Bushfire Inquiry 2020?
 - (b) Can the NSW Rural Fire Service provide a list and summary of the documents supplied to the Inquiry for each fire?
 - (c) Can the NSW Rural Fire Service produce the documents that were supplied to the 2020 Inquiry to the committee?

Legal Costs for NSW Bushfire Inquiry 2020 & Coronial Inquiry into the 2019/2020 Fires

- (7) What are the total costs to date incurred by the NSW Rural Fire Service and Fire and Rescue NSW relating to each agency's participation in the following inquiries:
- (a) The NSW Coronial Inquiry into the 2019 / 2020 Fires?
 - (b) The NSW Bushfire Inquiry 2020?

Appendix 1

- *Bees Nest (6 September 2019)*
- *Drake - Long Gully (11 Sep and 8 October 2019)*
- *Busby's Flat (8 October 2019)*
- *Carraai Creek (several escapes from backburns from 26 October, 2 November, and then 7 November)*

- *Liberation Trail and Old Glen Innes Road (containment and backburn escapes on 6-9 November; these caused major devastation to Nymboida valley attributed to the Liberation Trail backburn in Chaelundi SF)*
- *Stockyard Flat (7 November 2019)*
- *Stockyard East (7 November 2019)*
- *Gulf Road-Torrington (7 November 2019)*
- *Muck Creek (8 Nov 2019)*
- *Schultz Road (8-9 Nov 2019)*
- *Kian Road complex (8 November 2019)*
- *Myall Creek (11 Nov 2019 then major fire run on 15 Nov 201)*
- *Gospers Mountain (several escapes up the Putty Road and Colo Heights 14-19 November, Colo Heights (5 December 2019), Glow Worm Tunnel (7 December 2019); Blackfellows Hands Cave (12 Dec 2019); Mt Wilson backburn escape (14 December 2019), Wolgan Gap (15 December 2019)*
- *Mummel Road (17 November 2019)*
- *Currowan – Clyde River (01- 03 December 2019)*
- *Green Wattle-Kowmung River – Yerranderie Road (10 December 2019)*
- *Green Wattle-Kowmung River – Balmoral (19 December 2019)*
- *Currowan – Clyde Mountain (19 Dec 2019)*
- *Green Wattle -Kowmung River – Jenolan Caves (31 Dec 2019)*
- *Currowan – Conjola Park (31 Dec 2019)*
- *Green Valley – North Jingellic and Bogandyra Nature Reserve (4 Jan 2020)*
- *Dunns Road – around original ignition (29 Dec 2019)*

Questions submitted on behalf of the Opposition
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CUSTOMER SERVICE & DIGITAL GOVERNMENT

NSW Data Analytics

- (8) How much did the GovHack Platinum sponsorship cost this year?

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Fire & Rescue NSW Female Firefighter Facility Upgrades

- (9) In relation to the \$50 million commitment to upgrade female facilities at FRNSW stations:
- (a) How many upgrades have been committed to?
 - (b) What projects have been committed to?
 - (c) How many have been committed to since March 2023?
 - (d) How many projects have been completed?
 - (e) How much of the funding has been allocated?
 - (f) How much funding is still available?

Community Engagement Protocol

- (10) What is the protocol for Fire and Rescue should there be an incident while the crew is out conducting community engagement activities?
- (11) Are brigades short on firefighters during these times or is additional crew rostered on?
- (12) Is there always a crew available to respond to incidents?

Resilient Homes Program \$700m & Tranche 2

- (13) In relation to the resilient homes program in the Northern Rivers:
- (a) How many applications have now been received for a buy back?
 - (b) How many applications have now been received for a retrofit?
 - (c) How many applications have now been received for a house-raising?
 - (d) Have many houses have been retrofit or raised so far?
 - (e) How many homes have been bought back?
 - (f) How many homes have received a guarantee that they are eligible under the program?
 - (g) What is the average cost per buyback to the program?
 - (h) Can you provide a breakdown of that figure between admin costs and what goes directly to the homeowner?
 - (i) How much of the \$700m has been spent to date?

- (j) If the current rate of buy-back approvals continues, how long will this process take to be completed?
- (14) The timeline for the Resilient Homes Programs advises people in the Northern Rivers that this program will take 5 years to complete, given the current rate of recovery do you believe that to be an accurate timeframe?

Western Sydney Aerotropolis

- (15) Regarding the Western Sydney Aerotropolis, has any land been purchased by Fire and Rescue NSW?
- (16) Are there any plans currently in place to establish a fire station, in addition to the airport brigade, in the Aerotropolis?

Comsafe Training Services

- (17) How many employees are employed by ComSafe Training Services?
- (18) How many training courses have been provided by ComSafe Training Services in the last 12 months?
- (19) How much revenue has been generated by ComSafe Training Services in the last 12 months?
- (20) What is the cost to run ComSafe Training Services?
- (21) Are any cuts being made to ComSafe Training Services in the future?
- (22) If cuts are being made to ComSafe Training Services, will this results in less training being delivered to the community?
- (23) What other fire safety initiatives is the NSW Government considering if ComSafe Training Services are being cut?
- (24) What other programs have been cut in Fire + Rescue?

RFS & SES Volunteers

- (25) In relation to Rural Fire Service (RFS) Volunteers:
 - (a) How many new recruits have been onboarded in the last 12 months across NSW?
 - (b) How many volunteers have departed in the last 12 months?
 - (c) Are exit interviews conducted?
 - (d) What reason is cited most for departure?

In relation to the SES volunteers:

- (e) Minister, what is the total number of NSW SES volunteers?
- (f) How many new recruits have been onboarded in the last 12 months across NSW?
- (g) How many volunteers have departed the SES in the last 12 months?
- (h) Do you conduct exit interviews?
- (i) If yes, what reason is cited most for departure?
- (j) Is culture ever cited as a reason for departure?
- (k) How much funding has been allocated to drive recruitment of volunteers in the SES and RFS?
- (l) What programs have been implemented to increase numbers and improve retention of RFS and SES volunteers?

Fire and Rescue NSW Staffing

- (26) In regard to Fire and Rescue NSW (FRNSW):
- (a) How many firefighters are currently employed on a full-time basis?
 - (b) How many firefighters are on overtime each shift?
 - (c) How many full-time firefighters have resigned from FRNSW in the past 12 months?
 - (d) Do you conduct exit interviews upon departure?
 - (e) What is the reason most cited for departure?

YOUTH JUSTICE

Raising the Age

- (27) In regard to Raising the Age of Criminal Responsibility:
- (a) The Minister confirmed a meeting on 15 November 2023 with the Ministers for Youth, Aboriginal Affairs and the Attorney-General specifically about the minimum age of criminal responsibility. What is the government's position on raising the age?
 - (b) Were other topics canvassed such as intervention/programs and the expanding the Koori Court to other regional areas?

Remand

(28) In regard to Youth in Remand:

- (a) Minister, you confirmed that of the 174 people in youth detention, 45 had been sentenced and 129 were on remand. You said it was an issue for the courts and the Attorney-General, but you conceded it was an issue. Will you intervene and strengthen the bail assistance support service to lower the numbers?
- (b) What is the cost per day of keeping each of those 129 ten- to fourteen-year-olds on remand?
- (c) What is the average length of time these young people spend in remand?

Broadmeadow Pilot Scheme

- (29) Given the scheme had an independent evaluation which concluded it did address the immediate needs of young people coming before the court, will the Minister expand the program to other regional areas?
- (30) Did the Minister raise the expansion of the program to other areas in his meeting with other Ministers on 15 November?

Throughcare

- (31) Can the Minister inform what programs are in place with respect to setting youth up for success when they come out of the custodial setting?
- (32) Has the Minister met with Youth Action NSW to discuss improvements to 'Throughcare'?
- (33) Since having become Minister what has been done to improve support and services for young people in 'Throughcare'?
- (34) Has the Minister taken steps towards a whole of community approach when working with young people, e.g. working with family, care givers and service providers, can the Minister give examples?

Youth Justice Conferencing

- (35) Of the 17 areas that provide Youth Justice Conferencing, can the Minister provide an area by area breakdown of referrals to the scheme, actual conferences, and completions?
- (36) Is Youth Justice Conferencing more cost effective than Children's Court?

(37) Is there any evidence to show Youth Conferencing is more effective than the Children's Court in reducing re-offending?

(38) If so, will the Minister provide more resources to strengthen the scheme to assist young people from re-offending?

Asset Maintenance

(39) Are any of the current 6 detention centres for youth detention earmarked for closure?

(40) What maintenance measures are in place to ensure the centres are operating at best practice?

Closing the Gap

(41) Given the disproportionately high number of Indigenous youth in custody (59% as of 28 February 2024) what steps has the Minister taken towards reaching the Target 11 of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap ?(<https://www.niaa.gov.au/2023-commonwealth-closing-gap-implementation-plan/delivering-outcomes-and-targets/outcome-11-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-young-people>)

(42) What measures has the Minister taken to ensure that any initiative is culturally appropriate?

(43) When will the Minister update the NSW implementation plan for Closing the Gap especially in regard to target 11 (as above)?

(44) In the Minister's meeting on 15 November 2023 with the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs was there any discussion about Closing the Gap?

(45) If so, can the Minister provide detail on the nature of that discussion?

(46) Was it resolved to take any measures towards Closing the Gap with relation to Youth Justice?

Questions from Ms Abigail Boyd MLC

Accessibility NSW

(47) How much funding does Accessibility NSW receive?

(a) Please provide a funding breakdown for each financial year since its commencement.

(48) What is the progress to date of the Government's commitment to ensure all government documents relevant to people with intellectual disability are published in Easy Read by 2025?

(49) Will Accessibility NSW be funded beyond 30 June 2024?

- (a) If funding will not be provided past June 30, what agency or department will be responsible for making all of NSW Government websites and services available in Easy Read by 2025?

Questions from Ms Sue Higginson MLC
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YOUTH JUSTICE

Cost and scale of incarceration

(50) For FY 2022/2023 and the current financial year, please provide the total number of young people in custody

- (a) Of these young people, please provide:
- i. the number who were younger than 14
 - ii. the number who have a disability
 - iii. the number who identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
 - iv. the number who have previously lived in out-of-home care
 - v. the number of females
 - vi. the number of males

(51) For FY 2022/2023 and the current financial year, please provide the total number of young people in custody on remand

- (a) Of these young people, please provide:
- i. the number who were younger than 14
 - ii. the number who have a disability
 - iii. the number who identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
 - iv. the number who have previously lived in out-of-home care
 - v. the number of females
 - vi. the number of males

(52) For FY 2022/2023 and the current financial year, please provide the total number of young people in custody on remand who did not have access to an appropriate place to return to

- (a) Of these young people, please provide:
- i. the number who were younger than 14

- ii. the number who have a disability
- iii. the number who identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- iv. the number who have previously lived in out-of-home care
- v. the number of females
- vi. the number of males

(53) For FY 2022/2023 and the current financial year, please provide:

- (a) the cost of incarceration per young person
- (b) the total cost of keeping all young people in custody

Police engagements with young people

(54) For each of FY 2019/2020, FY 2020/2021, FY 2021/2022, FY 2022/2023, and the current financial year, please provide the number of police engagements with young people that involved the discharging of a firearm.

- (a) Of these incidents, please provide:
 - i. the number involving Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander young people.
 - ii. the number involving children under the age of 14.
 - iii. the number involving children with disabilities.
 - iv. the number involving male inmates
 - v. the number involving female inmates
 - vi. the number that resulted in an investigation into misconduct of the officer(s) involved
 - vii. the number into misconduct arising from these incidents that resulted in the disciplining of the officer(s) involved

(55) For each of FY 2019/2020, FY 2020/2021, FY 2021/2022, FY 2022/2023, and the current financial year, please provide the number of police engagements with young people that involved the discharging of a taser.

- (a) Of these incidents, please provide:
 - i. the number of incidents involving Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander young people.

- ii. the number of incidents involving children under the age of 14.
 - iii. the number of incidents involving male inmates
 - iv. the number of incidents involving female inmates
 - v. the number of incidents that resulted in an investigation into misconduct of the officer(s) involved
 - vi. the number of investigations into misconduct arising from these incidents that resulted in the disciplining of the officer(s) involved
- (56) For each of FY 2019/2020, FY 2020/2021, FY 2021/2022, FY 2022/2023, and the current financial year, please provide the number of police engagements with young people that involved the use of pepper spray.
- (a) Of these incidents, please provide:
- i. the number of incidents involving Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander young people.
 - ii. the number of incidents involving children under the age of 14.
 - iii. the number involving male inmates
 - iv. the number involving female inmates
 - v. the number of incidents that resulted in an investigation into misconduct of the officer(s) involved
 - vi. the number of investigations into misconduct arising from these incidents that resulted in the disciplining of the officer(s) involved

Access to computers, tablets, and live entertainment in the youth justice system

- (57) Provide an update and timeline on the “scoping process” to provide all young people in custody with tablets.
- (58) Identify any other measures undertaken to “increase the access to technology by young people in custody” as stated by Youth Justice at last year’s budget estimates hearings.

Rollout of body cameras in use-of-force incidents in youth corrections centres

- (59) For each of FY 2019/2020, FY 2020/2021, FY 2021/2022, FY 2022/2023, and the current financial year, please provide the number of use of force incidents that occurred between guards and inmates in youth corrections centres.

- (a) Of these periods, please provide
- i. the number of incidents that were recorded on body camera footage
 - ii. the number of incidents that resulted in investigations into misconduct of centre staff
 - iii. the number of those investigations that found misconduct on the part of centre staff
 - iv. the number of staff sanctioned or disciplined as a result of these misconduct findings

Behaviour Assistance Pathways

- (60) Provide a summary of the outcomes to date of the transition from Detainee Risk Management Plans to Behaviour Assistance Pathways

Recidivism

- (61) For each of FY 2020/2021, FY 2021/2022, FY 2022/2023, and the current financial year, please provide the number of young people who appeared before a court, having appeared before a court previously.

- (a) Of these young people, please provide:
- i. the number who were younger than 14
 - ii. the number who have a disability
 - iii. the number who identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
 - iv. the number who have previously lived in out-of-home care
 - v. the number of males
 - vi. the number of females

- (62) For each of FY 2020/2021, FY 2021/2022, FY 2022/2023, and the current financial year, please provide the number of young people who appeared before a court having previously participated in a Youth Justice Conference.

- (a) Of these young people, please provide:
- i. the number who were younger than 14
 - ii. the number who have a disability

- iii. the number who identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- iv. the number who have previously lived in out-of-home care
- v. the number of males
- vi. the number of females

(63) For each of FY 2020/2021, FY 2021/2022, FY 2022/2023, and the current financial year, please provide the number of young people who received a custodial sentence, having previously received a custodial sentence.

(a) Of these young people, please provide:

- i. i. the number who were younger than 14
- ii. the number who have a disability
- iii. the number who identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- iv. the number who have previously lived in out-of-home care
- v. the number of males
- vi. the number of females

Out-of-home-care

(64) For each of FY 2019/2020, FY 2020/2021, FY 2021/2022, FY 2022/2023, and the current financial year, please provide the number of children who appeared before a court who had previously lived in Out of Home Care.

(a) Of these young people, please provide:

- i. the number that were less than 14 years of age
- ii. the number who have a disability
- iii. the number that identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- iv. the number of males
- v. the number of females