

INQUIRY INTO HEALTH IMPACTS OF EXPOSURE TO POOR LEVELS OF AIR QUALITY RESULTING FROM BUSHFIRES AND DROUGHT

[15 July 2020] Hearing

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

QUESTION

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: Does NSW Health therefore have a dedicated team assigned to researching the health impacts of bushfires and drought?

Dr BROOME: We support others in doing that. We do have dedicated staff who support the development of policy. I would say NSW Health's role in the broader government approach to air pollution is around the translation of epidemiological evidence into information that is useful to the actual agency or the policy-makers in the agencies with air quality management responsibilities. Yes, we have a small team of people who work on these sorts of issues. For example, at the moment, given this event, we are supporting research to do analysis essentially to work out what the effect of this bushfire actually was, based on the observed evidence that we have. So, yes, we support research by researchers.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: When you are saying it is a small team of people working on these issues, is it a smaller team than what it used to be? Have there been staff cuts in areas looking into—

Dr BROOME: No.

Ms CATE FAEHRMANN: So what is the small team and what are their positions?

Dr BROOME: I think we would have a team of—sorry, I might have to take it on notice.

The CHAIR: You can take it on notice if you need to.

Dr BROOME: It would be approximately five full-time equivalent.

ANSWER

NSW Health has four full time equivalent employees that work on health issues related to a range of environmental hazards including air pollution. These four employees are based in the Ministry of Health, but there are other staff in the Local Health Districts that support air quality related work. NSW Health supports NSW Government agencies through air quality management responsibilities in policy development and through the academic sector in conducting relevant research on the health effects of air pollution.