

Questions on Notice – Portfolio Committee No. 5 – Emergency Services and Resilience

QoN1 - Transcript Page 1

What has changed since then, given what we have seen in the last few weeks?

Ms STEPH COOKE: Thank you very much. As you have quite rightly identified, that was in 2017, which not only predates my time as Minister but even my time in this place. What I would say is that the SES continues to be funded by the Government. We have increased our funding to the organisation over the past several years. There is no doubt that—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: By how much, Minister?

Ms STEPH COOKE: The budget for the 2021-22 year was \$193.1 million for recurrent and \$47.3 million for capital, which is a total of \$240.4 million. This is a record budget for the SES.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Okay. That is great. What was it in 2017?

Ms STEPH COOKE: I will just take that on notice, thank you.

Answer: The NSW State Emergency Service budget figures for FY2016-17 are as follows:

- Recurrent - \$109 million; and
- Capital - \$36.8 million (includes \$15.8 million that was carried forward from the previous financial year into the 2016-17 Budget).

QoN2 - Transcript Page 3

DANIEL AUSTIN: Thank you, Minister. The New South Wales SES had all of its units across the Northern Rivers as well as additional resources that had been moved—not only SES resources but other agency resources as well—and also had brought in additional instant management personnel to support local decision-making and the like. That was supported across the State by the regimes that sit behind that to support and coordinate. So, numerous additional personnel were moved on the days—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Are you able to give us some figures? You can take them on notice.

DANIEL AUSTIN: I will provide that to you shortly.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: We can come back to it in detail in the afternoon. We will have time this afternoon. That would be great. I also want to know how many volunteers—clearly, so many volunteers were actually impacted themselves, so it was a huge impact. If you could provide that information as well, that would be great.

Answer: On 25 February 2022, NSW State Emergency Service had an established Incident Management Team and volunteer units preparing to and responding to requests for assistance within the Northern Rivers. The Incident Management Team had 18 members (staff). There were 870 active members (volunteers) throughout Northern Rivers during the entire flood response. There were 12 volunteers active on jobs on the 25 February with other members ready to respond if required.

QoN3 - Transcript Page 8

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I will ask the Minister the same question then. This is just an example of an area where it is known that it is vulnerable in a flood and it has been asking for funding to protect infrastructure. Why hasn't that been done to date?

Ms STEPH COOKE: I will take that question on notice, if I could, Ms Boyd.

Answer: Central Coast Council has received funding for nine projects since 2016 under the NSW Government Coastal and Estuary Grants Program to manage risks from coastal hazards, and restore and maintain coastal habitats.

Under the Increasing Resilience to Climate Change grants program, the Department of Planning and Environment has also provided \$3.48 million in grant funding to NSW councils and community

groups to address climate change. Further questions regarding this program should be referred to the Treasurer and Minister for Energy.

The NSW and Commonwealth governments have also established the \$200 million Infrastructure Betterment Fund to support the reconstruction and improved disaster resilience of public assets damaged by natural disasters from the 2019-20 bush fires onwards. This program is administered by the Department of Regional NSW.

QoN4 - Transcript Page 8

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Minister, are you aware that New South Wales is the only State or Territory in Australia not to have conducted a climate risk assessment of its State assets?

Ms STEPH COOKE: I think I would prefer to take that on notice, if I may, and provide the Committee with a comprehensive response.

Answer: This question should be directed to the Treasurer and Minister for Energy.

QoN5 - Transcript Page 9

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: That is a lot of words and promises, but your Government has not even done the work of working out which train lines will go underwater with sea level rise. It has done none of that work yet. How can the community look to the Government and think that it is going to take this climate emergency seriously enough?

Ms STEPH COOKE: I will take the specifics of your question on notice. However, it is incumbent upon us as government to keep learning and to keep doing what we can to make sure that our communities are prepared and that we do respond and ensure recovery happens in the best way, with the heart of our communities firmly in our focus.

Answer: This question should be directed to the Treasurer and Minister for Energy.

QoN6 - Transcript Page 9

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I find it is very difficult to learn a lesson if you do not accept that you have done the wrong thing in the first place. Do you accept that the Government has been woefully underprepared when it has come to these climate-driven crises over the past three to five years?

Ms STEPH COOKE: Ms Boyd, with all due respect, I have been in the portfolio now for just over 100 days. I will take your questions on notice and provide the Committee with some answers.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Thank you. How regularly does your department review climate projections?

Ms STEPH COOKE: I will take that question on notice.

Answer: Emergency Management Australia and the NSW State Emergency Management Committee coordinate an annual preparedness briefing, which includes a climate outlook from the Bureau of Meteorology, for all committee members and other representatives from the emergency management sector in NSW.

QoN7 - Transcript Page 11

DANIEL AUSTIN: I am aware from the Bureau of Meteorology that all the gauges were online. That is a conversation that I had because I was told that potentially a gauge was offline.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: When were you told that?

DANIEL AUSTIN: I would have to take that on notice and find the specifics, but—

Answer: NSW State Emergency Service was advised on the night of 29 March 2022 during a briefing with the Bureau of Meteorology that the gauge was working correctly.

QoN8 - Transcript Page 12

SHANE FITZSIMMONS: I think it was a city power supply issue. I think it was a supply issue to the general city area, was it not?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: But is it just the power issue that is the malfunction or are there other issues with it?

MEGAN STIFFLER: I will take that on notice because I would like to get the current status of that siren for you.

Answer: Advice provided later in the hearing (transcript page 37).

QoN9 - Transcript Page 12/13

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Sorry, ma'am, you do not know the current status of the siren?

MEGAN STIFFLER: I know that at the time it was spoken about in that tweet you referred to, we currently did not have power. I will confirm for you on notice, before the close of this session, its current status, if I could, Mr Secord.

Answer: The Lismore Fire Station and siren are out of service due to flood damage.

QoN10 - Transcript Page 13

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Minister, it is our understanding—and maybe Acting Commissioner Austin can answer this—that the SES did actually make a request at some point that the siren be operational. Did that occur?

Ms STEPH COOKE: I will ask Acting Commissioner Austin to answer that question.

DANIEL AUSTIN: I would have to take that on notice as to what the specific local conversations were.

Answer: NSW State Emergency Service spoke with Fire and Rescue NSW and were advised the siren at Lismore Fire Station could not be activated as there was no power after the first flood.

QoN11 - Transcript Page 13

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Minister, were you ever formally told that the sirens were not working, that the gauges were misreading and not giving the correct levels or that there were pumps that were not working? In any of that process, were you ever actually formally involved? Given that your role is to bring everyone together, and it is clear, even from today, that it is very delineated—very siloed some would suggest—in terms of who deals with what, your job is to come over the top of that, is it not? Were you ever told about these particular problems?

Ms STEPH COOKE: I will take that on notice, Ms Sharpe.

Answer: The siren was raised during a conversation between the Minister's Chief of Staff and Acting Commissioner Daniel Austin at the State Emergency Operations Centre on 30 March 2022. The Minister's Chief of Staff then relayed that information to the Minister during a conversation shortly after.

QoN12 - Transcript Page 20

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Thank you. Minister, I want to ask you about accommodation. How many people in the Northern Rivers are being ordered out of their emergency accommodation to make way for Easter tourists?

Ms STEPH COOKE: The specific number I will take on notice.

Answer: 323 disaster-affected people have been provided emergency accommodation in Queensland due to vacancy shortages in NSW. Not all disaster affected people initially flagged for

relocation were accommodated in Queensland, as emergency accommodation providers worked with the Department of Communities and Justice to make use of last-minute tourist cancellations in their accommodation stock.

QoN13 - Transcript Page 21

Ms STEPH COOKE: That is correct. The emergency accommodation is where we, as a Government, look to place individuals and families in appropriate short-term accommodation, such as hotels, motels, executive apartments and the like. The last—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: That is great but this is the point, even the people that have been able to secure that—I understand there are a lot of people at the Mantra in Ballina and other places—but they are all being moved out, aren't they? You can take it on notice.

Ms STEPH COOKE: Yes.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I really just want to know how many people are in this situation and for how long and what is going to happen to them.

Answer: Please refer to the previous response.

QoN14 - Transcript Page 21

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Thank you. Have all of the 40 motorhomes destined for Ballina made it there yet?

SHANE FITZSIMMONS: I understood that all the motorhomes have been—I think there were 120 of them across a number of geographic areas. Did you say Casino then?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I am particularly asking about the 40 in Ballina.

SHANE FITZSIMMONS: Yes. I will take it on notice, but I am pretty sure Ballina did get the 40. We have also gone into another arrangement, in partnership with Red Cross and Camplify, where we can actually access further mobile home, motorhome, campervan sort of accommodation arrangements as well to support people in the interim.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Can you take on notice how many of those you have accessed? Surely they will have the same problem in terms of Easter and the holidays and the—

Answer: This question was answered on the day of the hearing (see page 36 of the uncorrected transcript).

QoN15 - Transcript Page 22

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: What has the actual expenditure been spent on? You were mentioning helmets.

ROB ROGERS: Yes, helmets. There are brigade grants, so \$20 million was to our brigades around the State, where they could apply for money for things around their station and equipment they thought they needed. There are district grants—another \$20 million—for the collective of brigades in local government areas or groups of local government areas for training facilities and things like that. I mentioned the helmets, and there is a scholarship fund. There is leadership training for volunteers. There are mobile data terminals for trucks to give them more live information in their fire trucks, so they can get better data to make sure they can keep safe. There is a whole range of that, and I am happy to put all that on notice, if you wish, to give you a fulsome answer.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: That would be very useful, thank you.

Answer: The NSW Rural Fire Service and Brigades Donations Fund is a public fund which was established by Deed on 10 April 2012. It is a separate entity from the NSW Rural Fire Service. At the request of the Trustees of the Fund, the NSW Rural Fire Service recently published the Donated Funds Update at: www.rfs.nsw.gov.au.

QoN16 - Transcript Page 23

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Are you able to please take on notice how many complaints are currently being investigated by the police and what the general nature of the complaint is?

ROB ROGERS: What, the category of them?

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Yes, please.

ROB ROGERS: Certainly.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Thank you.

ROB ROGERS: For what I am aware of, yes.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Could you also tell me how many complaints or grievances from RFS members in relation to those matters—bullying, sexual harassment, discrimination or other misconduct—have previously been investigated by the police, and what were the findings or action taken in respect of those?

ROB ROGERS: Okay. If we have that information, I will give you what I can.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Regarding the Speak Up independent review process, which provides for members to seek an independent review of serious misconduct matters that they have reported in the past, can you tell me how many reviews have been requested? Do you have that data?

ROB ROGERS: I will get you the exact number, but I think it is in the order of between 30 and 40.

That is my recollection of the last time I was given an update, unless something has come through since then.

Answer: The NSW Rural Fire Service has four ongoing matters that have been referred to the NSW Police Force. These matters relate to Fraud and Corruption (3) and Impersonating an Officer/Emergency Services (1).

As at 26 April 2022, 22 applications have met the eligibility criteria for review under the Speak Up process. 16 of these have been finalised. The majority relate to bullying, harassment and/or discrimination, and three cases relate to sexual harassment.

QoN17 - Transcript Page 23

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Thank you. Could you take it on notice to check how many have been undertaken and what systemic findings have been made?

ROB ROGERS: Certainly.

Answer: 22 applications have met the eligibility criteria for the Speak Up review. Once the review is complete, the NSW Rural Fire Service has committed to publishing the outcomes in a de-identified manner, including any systemic findings.

QoN18 - Transcript Page 24

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Has Clayton Utz been advising on that aspect of things? I know that they were paid close to \$3 million over a five-year period in relation to an independent review process. Was that in relation to that?

ROB ROGERS: No, that is not in relation to paying for that. Clayton Utz, along with other companies, will advise us on employment law, contractual law and a whole range of different legal processes. I do not believe that that would be accurate for that process at all. I am happy to get you the actual figures on what they have been paid for it.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: That would be very useful.

ROB ROGERS: But we have a range of people assisting us to develop a new system. I guess the outputs of what Clayton Utz are going through with that Speak Up process has to factor into that. If we did not look at that and take lessons from things that historically we may have got wrong, then we might miss something.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: If you could come back to me on notice with how much of that Clayton Utz

spend, in total since it began, has been in relation to that process, that would be very useful, thank you.

ROB ROGERS: No problem.

Answer: As at 26 April 2022, the NSW Rural Fire Service has been issued invoices totalling \$126,979.64 for the Speak Up review.

QoN19 - Transcript Page 24

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: What is the total compensation that has been paid to RFS volunteers for complaints and grievances upheld? Are you able to give me that figure?

ROB ROGERS: I do not know that figure. I will just add on that issue, if I might, that the Clayton Utz process that they are going through also is quite independent. I actually wrote to Clayton Utz making sure that they understood that it is a completely independent process and no-one in the RFS can change that. I wanted to give that level of confidence to people that they could come through that process and feel confident that it is not just a proxy for RFS, if you know what I mean. As I say, I do have a letter to that end that I am happy to provide also, if that would give the Committee confidence.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: That would be very useful.

Answer: The Speak Up review process does not consider compensation for complaints or grievances upheld. Findings and recommendations from the process will be used to inform improvements to the NSW Rural Fire Service grievance and discipline processes, and appropriate remedial actions will be taken. (Engagement letter from the NSW Rural Fire Service to Clayton Utz provided as a separate attachment.)

QoN20 - Transcript Page 24

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I will go back to you, Commissioner Fitzsimmons. I have a few questions on the structure of Resilience NSW. What is the total number of staff members that you have now?

SHANE FITZSIMMONS: Our agency headcount that was approved is just over 230. I will double check that. Our total agency headcount as at 4 April is 245.

Answer: Resilience NSW's total agency headcount as at 20 April 2022 is 240.

QoN21 - Transcript Page 25

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: What is the total staffing cost per year?

SHANE FITZSIMMONS: We have a budget allocation of labour and expenses and employee-related matters of \$38.5 million.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: How much of that is in relation to those 26 executives?

SHANE FITZSIMMONS: I will take that on notice.

Answer: The budgeted cost for Public Service Senior Executive positions within Resilience NSW is \$7,087,915 plus on-costs.

QoN22 - Transcript Page 25

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Minister, are you aware of the average response time to incidents for the fire brigade service?

Ms STEPH COOKE: That is an operational question, thank you, Mr Buttigieg. I will ask Acting Commissioner Stiffler to respond to your question.

MEGAN STIFFLER: Thank you, Mr Buttigieg. I will take that on notice. I am just getting our latest figures sent through to me. I will be able to give you a fulsome answer as soon as that comes through.

Answer: Fire and Rescue NSW response times for the 2020/21 financial year for all incidents at 50th percentile is 7.44 minutes and the 90th percentile is 13.20 minutes. These response times include incidents outside Fire Districts.

QoN23 - Transcript Page 25

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Sure. But you could say here definitively that there is a goal that you set that you target for those. Given all those dynamics and the various circumstances and incidents, you do actually

have goals that you target for responding to incidents?

MEGAN STIFFLER: There will be goals, sir. I do not have those—

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: There will be or there is?

MEGAN STIFFLER: There are. If you give me a moment to confirm those, I will make sure I give you a correct answer.

Answer: Fire and Rescue NSW is committed to responding to all incidents as quickly and safely as possible. Fire and Rescue NSW uses the nationally agreed reporting structure that measures the 50th and 90th percentile response times to structural fires; as reported in the Australian Government Productivity Commission Report on Government Services.

QoN24 - Transcript Page 25

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Can you tell me historically what those goals might have been going back, say, 15 or 20 years? Do you have any recollection of what we used to adhere to compared to what we are doing now?

MEGAN STIFFLER: Having joined New South Wales Fire and Rescue six months ago, I do not have that historical history, but again I will take that on notice.

Answer: A response time guarantee has not been referenced in Fire and Rescue NSW annual reports since 2002/03. Fire and Rescue NSW uses the nationally agreed reporting structure that measures the 50th and 90th percentile response times to structural fires.

QoN25 - Transcript Page 27

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: No. You said that was specifically for structural. What about just general response, medical or that sort of thing. Have you got those?

MEGAN STIFFLER: No, I do not, sir. I will have to take that on notice.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Okay. What about 2022?

MEGAN STIFFLER: That was the 2022 report which looks respectively on the year before. The next published report will be in February of 2023 which will address the 2022 response times.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: That was the actual or the lived experience, if you like. What about targets? We do not have those?

MEGAN STIFFLER: I do not have those before me, sir. I will take that on notice.

Answer: Please refer to previous response.

QoN26 - Transcript Page 27

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Okay. Minister, could I put to you that the Victorian targets are as follows, and I just want to get your response as to whether or not you think we should be looking to live up to those sorts of targets. They have a 7.7-minute deadline for structural fires; medical response is 9.2 minutes; fires in medium-density areas is 8 minutes; fires in low-density areas is 10 minutes; and fires in rural areas is 20 minutes. Do you think that would be an aspirational goal for New South Wales?

Ms STEPH COOKE: I will take that on notice, Mr Buttigieg.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: I am asking you as the Minister of the Crown responsible now for this area whether or not you think that the New South Wales jurisdiction should be at least living up to those sorts of standards. You do not have an opinion on that?

Ms STEPH COOKE: I would like to have all of the information in front of me before I provide an answer to you. That is why I am taking it on notice, thank you, Mr Buttigieg.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Would you be able to give us an answer some time today?

Ms STEPH COOKE: I will endeavour to do so.

Answer: Please refer to the response to QoN 25.

QoN27 - Transcript Page 27

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Do you think as Minister that there should be a minimum response time that the service guarantees or aspires to?

Ms STEPH COOKE: Once again I would like the opportunity to have all of the information in front of me, and I will take that question, along with the others, on notice.

Answer: Please refer to the response to QoN 25.

QoN28 - Transcript Page 29

MEGAN STIFFLER: We have calculated an estimated savings of approximately \$9.4 million over the life of the TOLing. That is based on several assumptions, including average figures for relief staffing of firefighters, firefighter ranks. This does not provide an accurate depiction of budgetary savings though, and the approximate comparative costs for salaries and wages for the same period does not provide the answer that you are looking for, I do not believe.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: So \$9.4 million over what period would that be? You said over the life. Is that since TOLing was introduced or FY?

MEGAN STIFFLER: One moment, please.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: That is okay. You can take that on notice if you like.

MEGAN STIFFLER: Thank you, Mr Buttigieg.

Answer: TOLing forms part of Fire and Rescue NSW's operational systems designed to support resourcing and operational decision making. FRNSW advises that financial costs are not considered in the decision-making process. From April 2020 to October 2021, TOLing saved an estimated \$9.2 million which is less than 1.5% of the \$626 million for salaries and wages for the same period.

QoN29 - Transcript Page 29

We have had evidence given to us that suggests that had Carrington got there, it could well have contributed significantly to the quelling of that fire much earlier. Do you accept that that is a practical problem of where TOLing just does not work?

MEGAN STIFFLER: Mr Buttigieg, if I could, firstly, a station may go offline for many reasons, whether it be training, operational deployment to other areas, injury, illness. There are a myriad of reasons a station is not available, including TOLing. With our dynamic dispatch, we constantly reassess where appliances are to provide coverage. I will take on notice this particular instance. However, I will suggest to look at a complex building site, such as the one that you have mentioned, with historical risks, it is very difficult to judge different actions having impact, so I will take it on notice.

Answer: No. Carrington Fire Station is an on-call station with retained firefighters that must travel to the station before responding. In the last 12 months, Carrington required over 6 minutes (344

seconds) to become mobile and commence responding to an incident and took an average of 10 minutes to arrive on scene (587 seconds).

QoN30 - Transcript Page 29

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: But I am giving you a practical example of where Carrington was taken offline and a resource that could have been deployed in three minutes was not deployed because of TOLing, and this lady, this businessperson, has lost \$40,000 worth of stock. That is just one example of the fallout. Minister, as a Minister of the Crown, does TOLing concern you as an ongoing policy, given what we have just heard?

Ms STEPH COOKE: Thank you, Mr Buttigieg. Firstly, I would like to acknowledge any businessperson who loses their stock, their fittings, their premises or any part of their business due to a fire or any other event, it is really difficult. As a former small business person myself, I can understand how heartbreaking that would be. I think in relation to TOLing, I would again refer back to Acting Commissioner Stiffler, who was endeavouring to answer your questions, and anything that she is unable to answer I am more than happy to take on notice and provide you with a comprehensive answer.

Answer: Please refer to previous response.

QoN31 - Transcript Page 30

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Can I ask you, in terms of Teralba, was that offline as well?

MEGAN STIFFLER: I would have to take that on notice, sir. I do not have that before me.

Answer: Teralba Fire Station was not taken offline (TOLed) at the time of the Wickham fire.

QoN32 - Transcript Page 30

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Okay. My understanding is it is. Do we know what the average response time would be if Glenbrook fire station were called out to respond to a fire in its area?

MEGAN STIFFLER: Again, with such a complex network of resourcing I would have to take that on notice to see what the average response times are. I think when you are posing a question about whether it is a safe process, the independent IRC looked at this process and Commissioner Sloan stated: I am not persuaded that to the extent that the Proposed In Order might increase response times, it would have a material bearing on public safety, either in terms of lives or property lost. And that is from an independent body where we gave hours of evidence detailing all the sorts of questions that you are putting before us, and, independently, Commissioner Sloan has made that finding. I can provide the full report to you, sir.

Answer: The 50th percentile response time for Glenbrook Fire Station over the past 3 years is 13 minutes and 20 seconds. The response time captures incidents attended to in the local area as well as any call that it may have been dispatched under the dynamic resource allocation system.

QoN33 - Transcript Page 31

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: So there would never be a situation where you would actually under-resource the area where you are taking the appliance from as a result?

MEGAN STIFFLER: What I would say to you is the risk analysis that is done looks at the frequency of jobs for an area, the response capability within that area.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: The risk analysis is an interesting word because it implies you have done a risk analysis and there is some downside risk but the risk is acceptable. Is that the position, Minister?

Ms STEPH COOKE: I have been listening to the exchange that has occurred, and, Mr Buttigieg, I do not have all of the details of the individual cases that you have raised today—and there has been a series of them. On that basis, without all of the information in front of me, I cannot comment on

specific examples, but I am happy to take any of your specific questions on notice and come back to you with a fulsome answer.

Answer: TOLing is a pre-existing practice implemented by Fire and Rescue NSW since 2008. Fire and Rescue NSW uses a risk-based approach to manage the readiness of its emergency service delivery. TOLing is not used by Fire and Rescue NSW when it would place the community at risk. Fire and Rescue NSW's network of coverage is managed centrally from Communication Centres and provides rapid emergency response based on the fastest available resource, independent of a fixed fire station location. This means emergency coverage is always provided to the community irrespective of fixed station locations.

QoN34 - Transcript Page 32

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Can you tell me how many retained firefighters there are in New South Wales?

MEGAN STIFFLER: Just one moment. I am just getting those figures for you now. Currently we have 3,317 on-call or retained firefighters, and that is an increase of 20 from the 2019-20 figures.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Can you tell us how much they are paid or what their retainer is?

MEGAN STIFFLER: I do not have that before me, sir.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: That is okay. Take it on notice.

MEGAN STIFFLER: On notice.

Answer: Retained firefighter remuneration is set out in the Crown Employees (Fire and Rescue NSW Retained Firefighting Staff) Award 2021.

QoN35 - Transcript Page 34

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: My question is whether you asked for other help from Ausgrid or Endeavour in relation to getting energy back online?

SHANE FITZSIMMONS: Through what we call the Energy and Utility Services Functional Area Coordinator—the EUSFAC—power companies routinely, in disasters and post-disasters, utilise resources from one another, particularly where there is a concentration of effort required somewhere geographically in New South Wales.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Did that happen in this situation?

SHANE FITZSIMMONS: I can take that on notice, but I am—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: You do not know?

SHANE FITZSIMMONS: I am pretty confident that that would have occurred.

Answer: The Energy and Utilities Functional Area have advised that Essential Energy did not request assistance from AusGrid or Endeavour Energy during the flood response in regional NSW. As Essential Energy operate across all of regional NSW, they were able to move their teams from other areas to bolster the number of teams in flood-impacted regions.

QoN36 - Transcript Page 34

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: But, Commissioner, are you aware of whether or not Essential requested Ausgrid or Endeavour?

SHANE FITZSIMMONS: I will clarify that for you and get you some information back to you

Answer: Please refer to the previous response.

QoN37 - Transcript Page 36

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: But again, if we are talking about the architecture of government, my

understanding is that in the machinery of government you share Flood Recovery with the Deputy Premier. Is that correct?

Ms STEPH COOKE:

There are some elements of the SERM Act for which he and I share responsibility.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Which elements are they?

Ms STEPH COOKE: I will take that on notice and come back to you specifically with the sections.

Answer: In accordance with the Allocation of the Administration of Acts (2001 SI 338), the Minister for Regional NSW and the Minister for Emergency Services and Resilience jointly administer the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989 (SERM Act) as it relates to emergency recovery. The remainder of the Act is administered by the Minister for Emergency Services and Resilience. Provisions relating to emergency recovery are found throughout the SERM Act, and are not exclusively contained in a discrete Part or Division of the Act. The Allocation of the Administration of Acts and the SERM Act can be found at www.legislation.nsw.gov.au

QoN38 - Transcript Page 37

DAMIEN JOHNSTON: There was an earlier question that the Minister took on notice regarding the budget for NSW SES for 2017. In the financial year 2016-2017, the opex was \$109 million and the capex was \$21 million—so a total of \$130 million for that year. In the 2017-2018 financial year, opex was \$107 million, capex was \$13.6 million, for a total of \$120.6 million.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Did you get me the figures on the number of SES people on the ground? If you have not been able to, that is okay.

DANIEL AUSTIN: I believe—the note that I am looking at—there were 363, but I do need to confirm that.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Could you give us the breakdown of the number of volunteers versus others? Are they all volunteers?

DANIEL AUSTIN: They would be both volunteers and paid staff.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: If you could give us the breakdown when you give us that information, that would be great.

Answer: Please refer to response to QoN2.

QoN39 - Transcript Page 39

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: If we can go back to the recommendations of the Owens review, there was a requirement to do handover documents that clearly identify who the incident controller is. Was this document in place on 28 February?

DANIEL AUSTIN: Yes, we document the incident controller and the appointment-maker.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Who was that?

DANIEL AUSTIN: I would have to double-check my records. I will take that on notice.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: But you will take it on notice?

DANIEL AUSTIN: Yes, I will take that on notice.

Answer: The Incident Controller was Chief Superintendent Stephen Patterson. The appointment was issued by Assistant Commissioner Sean Kearns.

QoN40 - Transcript Page 39

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Take me through that process. When an incident is occurring, there is a document that identifies who is the controller and this goes to the whole point of who is in charge.

DANIEL AUSTIN: Yes.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Who would it have been? Who is it most likely to have been?

DANIEL AUSTIN: It could have been a number of staff, but it would be a level 3 identified incident controller for that particular incident. As I said, I would need to confirm the exact time frame that you are asking about to confirm who it might have been.

Answer: Please refer to previous response.

QoN41 - Transcript Page 39

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: The Incident Management Toolbox, which was recommendation 8 of the review, is that operational?

DANIEL AUSTIN: It is. It has undergone a number of iterations of development over time and it continues to be developed as we move forward.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Is it not finalised?

DANIEL AUSTIN: Like any of those things, they are a work in progress at all times to actually continue to improve the way you do things and to implement learnings out of the next job and so on and so forth. It was used; it was there. It was used by both staff and volunteers. But, as I say, we continue to develop it. We are trying to make it better and better each time.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Obviously massive communications went down because of the severity of the thing. Does that make the management toolbox not really able to be used?

DANIEL AUSTIN: I would have to take on notice whether or not there was any impact on the Incident Management Toolbox, but certainly not from my memory.

Answer: The 'Incident Management Toolbox', now known as the 'Incident Management Gateway', was operational and accessible to all NSW State Emergency Service Incident Command Centres during weather events in February and March 2022. There were no outages of the IM Gateway during that time.

QoN42 - Transcript Page 40

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: There were faulty gauges, though, that the Bureau of Meteorology may or may not have owned, but there does not seem to be any process where that could be addressed. I mean, the gauge is off by 400 millimetres. You said you have an MOU, but this is a recommendation from 2017. I am trying to understand where is the gap. It gets to this point where we have had a second event, possibly a third event, and the gauge is not fixed. This is five years after the review said that you needed to have an official notification system. How is that possible? Are you saying to me that the Bureau of Meteorology was never notified about this faulty gauge?

DANIEL AUSTIN: I need to check the particular gauge that you are talking about because I am not aware as to whether it is an automatic reading gauge or a manual reading gauge.

Answer: NSW State Emergency Service advises that the Browns Creek pump station gauge was confirmed to be working correctly by Lismore City Council on 27 March 2022. NSW SES took regular manual readings of this gauge during the flood and noted the automatic reporting was out by 400mm. This was reported directly to the Bureau of Meteorology via teleconference. This did not impact the official key warning gauge or forecasts at Lismore. Additional questions on the repair and status of gauges should be directed to the Bureau of Meteorology and Lismore Council.

QoN43 - Transcript Page 41

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Since 2017 how much more money has been invested in modelling?

DANIEL AUSTIN: That is a question I would have to take on notice. I do not know. That would be either the research agencies or the bureau that would need to provide those answers.

Answer: This questions is better directed to the Department of Planning and Environment which supports local councils to undertake floodplain modelling as part of the Floodplain Management Program.

QoN44 - Transcript Page 42

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Are they reviewed on a regular basis?

DANIEL AUSTIN: Yes. I will confirm, but I believe every five years is the aim of what we go for. However, we are currently reviewing that because there are some that, because of lack of development or other things, really do not change so probably do not warrant being done every five years. There might be others that actually need to be reviewed more often.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: What would be the status of the Lismore flood emergency sub-plan?

DANIEL AUSTIN: I would have to take that particular one and check that.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Can you tell me the last time it was reviewed?

DANIEL AUSTIN: I would have to check that for you.

Answer: The last major version of the Lismore Local Flood Plan was reviewed in March 2018 and is due for review by March 2023.

QoN45 - Transcript Page 42

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Do you think that, in fact, the one that was currently in place was within its five-year life span?

DANIEL AUSTIN: I need to confirm. But I do believe so because I believe it may have been reviewed in only the last few years.

Answer: Please see previous response.

QoN46 - Transcript Page 42

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I assume that you will take this on notice. Could you provide the flood emergency sub-plans across the North Coast, when were they last reviewed and when were they due to be reviewed.

Answer: The Ballina Shire Local Flood Plan was endorsed in July 2013. A draft was current to early February 2022 but was delayed due to the flood event.

The Byron Bay Local Flood Plan was endorsed in July 2013. A draft was current to early August 2021 and has been delayed by substantial consultation.

The Kyogle Local Flood Plan was endorsed in July 2013. A draft is current to early November 2021 and consultation with the LEMC is still occurring.

The Richmond Valley Local Flood Plan was endorsed in July 2013. A draft is current to early November 2021 and consultation with the LEMC is still occurring.

QoN47 - Transcript Page 44

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: When the people came over, how many people were made redundant from OEM and how much did that cost?

SHANE FITZSIMMONS: I will take that on notice. It was only a couple that were made redundant. We were able to—

Answer: There were no redundancies of non-executive staff during the transition of staff from the Office of Emergency Management to Resilience NSW. Two senior executives from the former Office of Emergency Management received redundancy payments.

QoN48 - Transcript Page 44

*The Hon. WALT SECORD: How many Resilience NSW staff are currently based on the North Coast?
SHANE FITZSIMMONS: In terms of operations?
The Hon. WALT SECORD: I just want to know the figure and then I will ask follow-up questions.
SHANE FITZSIMMONS: I will take that on notice.*

Answer: This question was answered on the day of the hearing (see page 45 of the uncorrected transcript).

QoN49 - Transcript Page 44

*The Hon. WALT SECORD: Of the 245 staff, how many would be on the North Coast at this moment? I would like an exact figure. Maybe your staff behind you could get it to me.
SHANE FITZSIMMONS: I am happy to get a figure, but I would qualify that figure by saying there are people going up there and coming back, so there are actually personal rotations that are occurring on deployments.
The Hon. WALT SECORD: You must know what is in a deployment.
SHANE FITZSIMMONS: Yes, but it varies, Mr Secord.
The Hon. WALT SECORD: You do not know?
SHANE FITZSIMMONS: There are a number of recovery centres. There is the regional coordination centre. I will be able to get you a number indicatively of what is up there. As I say, the number varies depending on the roles and functions that are being filled.*

Answer: This question was answered by Commissioner Fitzsimmons on the day of the hearing (see page 45 of the uncorrected transcript).

QoN50 - Transcript Page 44

*The Hon. WALT SECORD: Of the 26 SES people, how many SES people are on the North Coast? Are there two, three, four, five, 26?
SHANE FITZSIMMONS: Again, I will take that on notice, but as we speak I would expect there would be about—at any given time there is probably more than half a dozen up there.*

Answer: As at 6 April 2022, there were a total of three senior executives from Resilience NSW supporting operations on the ground on the NSW north coast. Two senior executives were dedicated to the flood operations in the Hawkesbury region and the Hunter-Central Coast region. All other senior executives were involved in supporting the agency's overall operational response from the State Emergency Operations Centre in Sydney.

QoN51 - Transcript Page 45

*The Hon. WALT SECORD: Mr Austin, earlier I asked you about the flood emergency sub-plans. I have just checked the website, and it says the Ballina one was drafted in 2013 and should be reviewed no later than July 2018—not reviewed. The Byron one was drafted in 2013 and should be reviewed by 2018—not reviewed. The Kyogle plan was set up in July 2013 and should be reviewed no later than July 2018. Richmond Valley—one after another. Why have none of the sub-management plans across the North Coast been reviewed or updated?
DANIEL AUSTIN: The information that I have just got in response to your earlier question is that the Lismore city one was actually 2018.
The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Yes, you would expect so after 2017.
DANIEL AUSTIN: Correct. I would need to have a look at all of those and take them on notice. If you can provide the specific examples, I am happy to follow through on them.*

Answer: There has been a significant amount of LEMC consultation undertaken regarding the review of these flood emergency sub-plans prior to endorsement. Since October 2021, obtaining

final endorsement has been delayed due to significant flood operations. There has been ongoing work on all of these plans.

QoN52 - Transcript Page 46

The Hon. WALT SECORD: All of the flood sub-plans in all of the council areas across the North Coast. The Lismore one was reviewed in 2018, so that is four years ago.

DANIEL AUSTIN: And it is due again in 2023.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: You do not do it on the last day; there is a bit of lead-up. You said you consult and things like that, so was there work underway involving the Lismore plan?

DANIEL AUSTIN: I would have to find out where the progress was, but you are right that they do not wait until the day they are due to expire.

Answer: Yes. Significant work was undertaken in 2021 to review and update the plan.

QoN53 - Transcript Page 47

The Hon. WALT SECORD: As of today, can you give me a breakdown of people applying for business grants—the number of applications and the number that have been successful?

SHANE FITZSIMMONS: I can get you that on notice.

Answer: Service NSW publish statistics regarding applications and approvals of the flood recovery grant for small business on their website: www.service.nsw.gov.au

QoN54 - Transcript Page 47

The Hon. WALT SECORD: How many people from the ADF, the Australian Defence Force, are still on the North Coast?

SHANE FITZSIMMONS: I will take that on notice specifically, but the numbers would be in the thousands still.

Answer: As at 6 April 2022, approximately 3,200 Australian Defence Force personnel were deployed to support flood recovery and clean-up. More than 2,600 were stationed in the Northern Rivers region.

QoN55 Transcript Page 48

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: That is what I was going to get to. Aside from the fact that every five years they are supposed to be done and they have not been done, there are a number of things that trigger a review. There is obviously the five-year period, which has not been done, but there is also when new flood data becomes available. Obviously the Lismore floods in 2017 triggered Lismore's review. Was there an active decision not to take into account the other surrounding LGAs as a result of that flood?

DANIEL AUSTIN: Not that I am aware of, but that predates my position. I cannot give you an honest answer.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: No, but can you take it on notice and let me know?

DANIEL AUSTIN: Sure.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Presumably there was other flood data as a result of that event that was not just in Lismore.

DANIEL AUSTIN: Yes. It depends whether, I guess, the data actually did change for that area or whether or not the data remained current and the catchment reacted as it was meant to. But we will take that on notice.

Answer: There was not an active decision not to take into account the surrounding LGAs after the 2017 flood. Following the 2017 Lismore floods, Rous County Council reviewed modelling for the

floods based on past survey data and commissioned the Lismore Floodplain Risk Management Flood study.

QoN56 - Transcript Page 49

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Have you put on any consultants for the current floods in response to the north and north-west Sydney floods?

SHANE FITZSIMMONS: Not that I am aware of in relation to the floods. Let me take that on notice and I will just double-check that I have not—as I have said openly before, we have hired a couple of additional contractors to help close some gaps. But I will just double-check on consultants.

Answer: As at 6 April 2022, Resilience NSW has not engaged consultants in relation to the February-March 2022 floods.

QoN57 - Transcript Page 49

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I would like to go back to the lessons learnt project from the bushfires. What was the result of that review?

SHANE FITZSIMMONS: I do not know that I have got that with me today. I am happy to take that on notice. I will get that back to you.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Do you know generally what it was about? Did it relate to your activity?

SHANE FITZSIMMONS: It is like everything, yes. It is concerning things like recovery efforts and coordination across the sector. I just did not bring that note with me. I will take that on notice and I will get a response back to you.

Answer: Resilience NSW engaged McKinsey & Co to undertake a review of relief and recovery service delivery by the former Office of Emergency Management, Disaster Recovery Office, and Resilience NSW. Recommendations were made in relation to improving communication flows, data sharing and surge capacity. The review and other regular 'lessons learned' reviews have helped inform the State Lessons Review, provided to and considered by the State Emergency Management Committee as part of its legislative function to promote the continuous improvement of emergency management policy and practice at a State level.

QoN58 - Transcript Page 53

MEGAN STIFFLER: I currently know that in order from one to 334 is what we should be focusing on. I have been in the organisation for six months and believe in order for me, hand on heart, to say this priority list is 100 per cent correct—

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Are you able to provide that priority list?

MEGAN STIFFLER: I will take that on notice and make sure that there is no reason why I cannot provide that. I will get some advice on that for you.

Answer: No. The preliminary fire station priority list is Cabinet in Confidence.

QoN59 - Transcript Page 54

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Can I take you back to that sort of time line you gave us where there was this decision back in 2016 to defer, I think you said based on population growth, which was not projected to justify it. Can you bring us up to speed on what that population projection growth is now and whether or not that station is well overdue or not, given the population growth out there?

MEGAN STIFFLER: I will have to take that on notice to give you specifics about the population growth. I would say we would have started the project based on it meeting the expectations of population to proceed. But I will take that on notice to confirm it.

Answer: The decision to construct a new station is determined through a risk analysis that considers population growth, existing and proposed infrastructure, and service coverage. The population of Oran Park has increased, which was considered as part of the broader risk analysis prior to the commencement of construction.

QoN60 - Transcript Page 54

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Acting Commissioner, can I ask you, if we were to go out to the site now, what would we see?

MEGAN STIFFLER: I have not got that before me. Again, on notice, I can give you the exact stage of the development.

Answer: Oran Park site works are complete, including site establishment, site clearing, and commencement of bulk excavations. Construction work continues to progress.

QoN61 - Transcript Page 54

MEGAN STIFFLER: Which includes \$4.5 million in station construction; what we call a CAFS pumper, which is a compressed air foam pumper—because you like acronyms—and that was \$994,000; also a heavy hazardous material vehicle for \$750,000. So that totals your \$6.2 million.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: And when was that \$6.2 million allocated? In which budget?

MEGAN STIFFLER: We procured land in 2015-16. I will have to take that on notice. But part of that budget was spent in that year. I will take that on notice to confirm for you.

Answer: The \$6.2 million funding allocated in 2021-22 Budget was for the construction of the station and two new fire appliances.

QoN62 - Transcript Page 54

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: So does that fall into that \$6.2 million envelope or is that a precursor to the \$6.2 million?

MEGAN STIFFLER: Can I take that on notice, please?

Answer: A total of \$1.5 million was allocated for land purchase in 2015-16 and was not part of the \$6.2 million allocated in 2021-22.

QoN63 - Transcript Page 55

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Acting Commissioner, can I just take you back to that previous line of questioning where we were on Oran Park and you mentioned the vandalising of the sign, which has been raised in previous rounds of budget estimates. Could you just talk us through that? The implication was, I think, that someone vandalised the sign, which gave the public or anyone looking at the sign presumably a false impression that it was going to be completed earlier than it was otherwise planned. Could you just talk us through that again?

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I was miles away from it.

MEGAN STIFFLER: Mr Buttigieg, I was not here at that time of the signage. I do not have the full history of it. I do know that it misrepresented—my understanding is it had the incorrect commencement and completion date. For a full backstory, I will have to take that on notice and provide it to you at another time.

Answer: The developer erected a sign on the site of the Oran Park station in October 2019 to inform residents of future development. An unapproved label was later affixed to this sign quoting an incorrect completion date of 2018.

QoN64 - Transcript Page 55

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: I have the infrastructure statement here in Budget Paper No. 2 from 2015-16 and it has "Oran Park land and new station" and the start date is 2015 with a completion of 2018 and it is for \$4.4 million. The allocation for 2015-16 was, as we pointed out, \$1.5 million, but for the out years—that is, 2016-17 and 2017-18—the total was \$4.4 million. There was a specific start and completion date here. This is in the Government's own infrastructure statement in Budget Paper No. 2 saying it would be completed by 2018 and the money was allocated. It makes that sign vandalising proposition a little bit dubious, does it not, if the money was allocated in that three-year envelope and there was a promised finish date of 2018. Can you see how people would be a bit suspicious of that excuse?

MEGAN STIFFLER: Again, I was not here at the time. I am not sure how you concluded it was suspicious if there was a sign tampered with. What I can confirm for you is that in 2015 and 2016, as I have previously said, \$1.5 million was used to procure the land. In July 2016, we sought, with the Minister's approval, to defer construction due to the population growth that was not commensurate with the proposal and costs. I would also like to point out—you asked me earlier to clarify whether the \$1.5 million was separate to the \$4.5 million construction or the \$6.2 million total we spoke about. I can confirm that the \$6.2 million is in addition to the \$1.5 million land acquisition, and all others I will have to take on notice, again, as I was not here.

Answer: The construction of Oran Park was deferred in 2016 as the amount, nature and proposed development did not equate to the population growth in the area at the time. The decision to defer construction supersedes the advice provided in the 2015-16 Budget.

QoN65 Transcript Page 56

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Your implication was that because the date was changed, then the original completion date before the sign was vandalised was much later than 2019. It was not because it is here in the budget papers saying it would be completed in 2018.

MEGAN STIFFLER: The line I read out to you, Mr Buttigieg, was, "In October 2019, the developer erected a sign to inform residents of future developments. In June 2020, it was confirmed that the sign had been tampered with, which included incorrect commencement and completion dates." That is what I said and I read from my notes. I am not sure what you are implying but I will have to get back to you.

Answer: Please refer to the previous response.

QoN66 - Transcript Page 57

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: That is why I am wondering why there is this shroud of secrecy. Because you would think for \$110,000—it is a lot of money, superficially. The taxpayers paid for this report, indirectly, and the report goes directly to what you have just outlined, Commissioner Rogers, that it is about coordinating appliances better and how we could get more efficient use of resources. Do you not think the public has a right to know what was in that report and whether or not what came out of that report has actually been implemented?

ROB ROGERS: Obviously I cannot talk to that and that is not under my responsibility. What I can suggest would be useful to provide on notice is the work that is being done between Fire and Rescue NSW and RFS on making sure we have got good synergy between the agencies, good visibility of appliances, and a clear, demonstrable body of work that will end up culminating with integrated CAD dispatch systems and that full visibility. So I think there is some really good work that has been done and I am quite comfortable that we could provide that in written format for you, so you would have confidence to see—

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: That would be helpful.

Answer: Following the Tathra fire, the NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) and Fire and Rescue NSW (FRNSW) Commissioners established a Joint Operations Taskforce to enhance the services'

operational interoperability, including the primary principle that the fastest and most appropriate resource is dispatched. The RFS and FRNSW have implemented 7 of the 12 recommendations arising from the Keelty review, including no offers of assistance by one agency to the other in combating a fire is rejected or delayed if what is being offered is appropriate (rec 4).

The RFS has introduced Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD Vision 5) over the past two years, with 26 of its 45 Districts now using the system. The Government has invested \$8.3 million to fast-track the extension of CAD to all Districts, including 16 that will be on-boarded ahead of the 2022/23 bush fire season. All Districts are scheduled to be on CAD by the end of 2023.

FRNSW is upgrading its CAD to Vision 5, which will then allow for significantly enhanced, real-time interoperability, helping both fire agencies ensure the community is provided with the fastest, most appropriate response to a fire emergency.

In the interim, NSW RFS continues to communicate with FRNSW using InterCAD Electronic Messaging System (ICEMS), which will be expanded to allow NSW RFS to communicate with other emergency services over coming months.

CAD also incorporates the use of Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL), installed within fire appliances, which allows for the vehicle's location and other operating details to be monitored live. The NSW RFS continues to work with the NSW Telco Authority to ensure AVL capability is available across the State.

QoN67 - Transcript Page 57

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: What do they actually mean when they say "low maturity" in Fire and Rescue NSW asset management systems?

MEGAN STIFFLER: As I did not read the report—write the report rather, I will take that on notice and I will provide a proper summary of any area that they articulate what they mean by that statement.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Have you read the report?

MEGAN STIFFLER: I have read the report.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: So you did not have an interpretation on what they meant by "low maturity" when you read the report?

MEGAN STIFFLER: If I take that on notice, I can provide you actual quotes out of that report to best explain the author's intent of that statement.

Answer: Asset management maturity is a reporting standard for periodic assessments conducted in accordance with the Treasury NSW Asset Management Policy for the NSW Public Sector - TPP19-07. Since 2021, Fire and Rescue NSW has lifted its maturity by formalising its asset management framework and policy, strengthened asset management plans, and is implementing performance monitoring and planning process integration.

QoN68 - Transcript Page 57

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Okay. The Fire and Rescue NSW plan establishes a 30 June 2022 deadline for Fire and Rescue NSW to have 100 per cent awareness of maintenance backlogs in work sites. How are Fire and Rescue NSW capturing workplace health and safety concerns in this process? Are you consulting firefighters and their representatives for the full picture? I know I asked you this before, but apparently there is a 30 June 2022 deadline for capturing WHS and safety concerns and having 100 per cent awareness of the maintenance backlog. How are we dealing with that?

MEGAN STIFFLER: I think when you first posed the question, it was how are we tracking for that delivery, is that correct?

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: That would certainly be helpful, yes.

Answer: Fire and Rescue NSW is committed to completing the identification of maintenance backlogs by 30 June 2022, noting the impact of persistent operational demands upon available resources.

QoN69 - Transcript Page 58

MEGAN STIFFLER: It is currently a target of the project team to achieve that. You can imagine the level of energy that we have been putting into the Northern Rivers events.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Yes.

MEGAN STIFFLER: So all of our projects are being reviewed to make sure that they are still on track. Being an operational organisation with 90 per cent of our staff being firefighters, we are agile to respond to those large events. So I will have to take it on notice, once that has been reviewed, to make sure we are still on track for that deliverable.

Answer: Please refer to the previous response.

QoN70 - Transcript Page 58

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: How often do they meet?

MEGAN STIFFLER: One moment, I will have to take that on notice. I am not on the committee

Answer: The State Health and Safety Committee meets quarterly to consider organisation-wide health and safety risks.

QoN71 - Transcript Page 58

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Well, this is the Junee station apparently, and it is—

MEGAN STIFFLER: It is a working shower which is the issue?

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: It says it has not got a working shower to adhere to the post-incident decontamination policy. This was one of the things I think you gave in your examples, so would that bump it up that priority list?

MEGAN STIFFLER: I think when I gave you the answer about all the different factors, as I said, every year every station is assessed on their current facilities and, taking into consideration all the other aspects of the assessment, it could bump it up and it might not; I am not sure. But if there is a WH&S outstanding issue, it is a priority for this organisation that we address those issues. With Junee, again it is a specific item for a specific station and I will need to get further information and take it on notice for you.

Answer: Station deficiencies are examined within Fire and Rescue NSW's existing systems and processes to determine any works, level of investment required and their positioning on a priority list balanced by costs and risks.

QoN72 - Transcript Page 58

MEGAN STIFFLER: I think, leading this section of work, my role as an executive is to make sure it is a robust, unquestionable process, which is exactly the process I am undertaking at the moment with KPMG. I want to provide assurance, not only for myself as the accountable officer but also to the commissioner in his normal role, that we are addressing issues in a timely manner and addressing critical workplace health and safety outstanding items. So I believe that the work I have undertaken in the time I have been in the organisation is testament to the focus I have in this area.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: How much are you paying KPMG to do this review?

MEGAN STIFFLER: An exact figure—I will take that on notice.

Answer: The cost of the engagement is \$87,125 (ex. GST).

QoN73 - Transcript Page 59

*The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Can you take that cost for the KPMG analysis on notice?
MEGAN STIFFLER: Of course*

Answer: Please refer to the response to QoN72.

QoN74 - Transcript Page 60

*MEGAN STIFFLER: I have stated previously that there have been historical shortfalls of funding. What I cannot give you is the answer that you are looking for on why that is. I do not have a historical experience with those budget processes.
The ACTING CHAIR: Just on that, is there correspondence held by your agency where Treasury discloses the reasons why certain enhancements of funding were not acceptable? Can you take that on notice. MEGAN STIFFLER: I will have to take on notice with regard to historical business cases and why they were not progressed through the budget process.*

Answer: No correspondence has been received by Fire and Rescue NSW from NSW Treasury in regards to this question.

QoN75 - Transcript Page 61

*The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Instead of retrofitting, you ordered 33 new and, of those, 18 have been delivered. Is that correct?
MEGAN STIFFLER: Thirty-three were recommended. The first 18 have been completed.
The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Is the difference on track to be delivered? And by what FY?
MEGAN STIFFLER: I will have to take that on notice.*

Answer: Bush fire funding was allocated to build 18 replacement tankers, which are currently being introduced into service.

QoN76 - Transcript Page 61

*ROB ROGERS: It is a body of work to continue going in the years to come. That is obviously something we are very focused on: Making sure our people have the safest appliances.
The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Of those 2,000, do we have a number on what was required for that turnover cabin protection?
ROB ROGERS: I would have to get that for you on notice, Mr Buttigieg.*

Answer: The NSW Government has committed more than \$100 million in additional funding over three years for new and refurbished firefighting appliances. The NSW Rural Fire Service advises that 1,184 of the 2,244 trucks have been refurbished to date with enhancements to crew protection. The remaining trucks will be upgraded as part of the ongoing NSW Rural Fire Service fleet enhancement program.

QoN77 - Transcript Page 62

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Thank you. I might just wind up with a set of questions to you, Commissioner Rogers, just to round out the day. We will put the rest on notice. Can you tell us how many staff vacancies there are across RFS that remain unfilled?

ROB ROGERS: I will have to give you that on notice if I could. I do not know off the top of my head. Sorry.

Answer: There are approximately 76 ongoing positions vacant across the NSW Rural Fire Service, with another 104 temporary mitigation crew vacancies.

QoN78 - Transcript Page 62

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: Do you have any idea of the ballpark ratio of frontline positions to back-office positions that would be unfilled?

ROB ROGERS: No. I am sorry. I do not have that. I would have to get that on notice.

Answer: The approximate ratio of frontline to back office vacancies is 2:1, with 70% of frontline vacancies associated with temporary roles, largely Mitigation Crew roles, which are difficult to fill under competitive employment market conditions.

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The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: We will leave it at this. Of the \$700 million that was allocated to RFS from the bushfire initiative inquiry, how much of that has been spent on staff recruitment? Do we know?

ROB ROGERS: I would have the figures. I do not think I have them here, but I can certainly give you— there are specific allocations for staffing. I probably can give you some of that. For example, there was \$16 million over five years for mental health recruitment for psychologists to assist us do better with our mental health. There was \$42 million over three years for mitigation crews, additional people to help prepare and carry out burns. There was \$24 million over five years for people to do audit and compliance of risk plans and hazard complaints on managed land, things like government land. There were some additional fire behaviour specialists in area commands. I think there was two additional where we did not have them. We have put those in. There were some people to help with fire trails. I can give you a proper response to it. These things, I am sure you imagine, are very closely tracked.

The Hon. MARK BUTTIGIEG: That would be helpful. Thanks, Chair

Answer: The NSW Government has allocated more than \$510 million to implement recommendations from the NSW Bushfire Inquiry. Of this, the NSW Rural Fire Service is spending \$90.2 million for new staff positions over five years. This is comprised of \$59.6 million for new ongoing RFS staff positions and \$30.6 million for temporary NSW Rural Fire Service positions.