



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

PORTFOLIO COMMITTEES

## **BUDGET ESTIMATES 2022-2023 Supplementary Questions**

**Portfolio Committee No. 5 – Regional NSW and Stronger Communities**

**EMERGENCY SERVICES AND RESILIENCE, FLOOD RECOVERY**

Hearing: 2 September 2022

**Answers due by: 29 September 2022**

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## Emergency Services and Resilience, Flood Recovery

### Questions from the Hon. Mark Buttigieg MLC *(on behalf of the Opposition)*

#### **Recommendation 12 of the 2022 NSW Flood Inquiry - Merger of SES/RFS back-office functions**

1. What is meant by “back-office” functions of the SES?
  - (a) How has the government assessed who and what functions are “back-office”?
  - (b) How many staff meet this description?
    - i. Of these staff, how many would tip into an operational capacity during a disaster?
2. What is meant by “back-office” functions of the RFS?
  - (a) How has the government assessed who and what functions are “back-office”?
  - (b) How many staff meet this description?
    - i. Of these staff, how many would tip into an operational capacity during a disaster?
3. Can the Minister answer and identify who within the NSW SES is determined “back-office” staff using the staffing assigned across the following directorates:
  - (a) The Chief of Staff;
  - (b) Corporate Services;
  - (c) Deputy Commissioner Operations;
  - (d) Finance Asset Business Services;
  - (e) Information & Communications Technology;
  - (f) Metro Operations;
  - (g) Operational Capability and Training;
  - (h) People and Development; and,
  - (i) Regional Operations.
4. Will SES “back-office” staff be merged from Metro Operations which has roles such as Communication Officers, Coordinator Rescue Operations, Coordinator Duty Operations?
5. Will SES “back-office” staff be merged from Corporate Services including Business Analyst, Media & Communications, Planning & Research?

6. Will SES “back-office” staff be merged from People & Development including Work Health & Safety, Mental Health Services, Occupational Psychologists?
7. Will SES “back-office” staff be merged from Finance, Asset & Business Services including Asset & Facility, Property and Facilities Manager, Administration Support?
8. Will the NSW Government cut like for like roles across RFS and SES?

### **Workers Compensation for volunteer firefighters**

9. Does the Minister support equalising payments for non-economic loss regardless of whether the victim is a volunteer firefighter or a non-exempt worker?
10. What representations has the Minister made to Minister Dominello regarding this issue?

### **TOLing**

11. Has FRNSW considered alternatives to TOLing to address the resourcing and operational needs that TOLing purports to address?
  - (a) If yes, what are they?
    - i. Did the Department do any costings of these alternate policies or processes?

### **Rescue Coverage**

12. What requirements must be met for a volunteer to be assigned a rescue incident over an on-duty paid responder besides geographic proximity to the incident?

### **COVID-19 Vaccinations**

13. On December 17 2021, FRNSW implemented a COVID-19 vaccination mandate:
  - (a) If a firefighter is non-compliant with FRNSW’s current vaccination policy what work if any is a firefighter assigned?
  - (b) Does the Minister or FRNSW have any plans to change this vaccination policy?
  - (c) How do you reconcile this with any other government agencies that have now changed their policy such as the Department of Education?
14. How many hours of overtime were paid from 30 June 2021 to 17 December 2021?

15. How many hours of overtime were paid from 17 December 2021 to 30 June 2022?
- (a) Are these allocations statistically abnormal and if so, what do you believe should be done to remedy this situation?

### **Comparable service in Rural Fire Districts**

16. What capability does the RFS have to identify where vehicles are, how many crew are on board and the level of training including breath apparatuses to combat structure fires at a given time?
17. In a Rural Fire District (RFD), in what situation would an RFS appliance not be the fastest appliance to attend an incident?
18. How many incidents have FRNSW attended in a RFD to assist the RFS over the last 12 months?
- (a) How many times were they first arriving?
- (b) How many times has FRNSW been the sole agency to attend an incident in an RFD?
- i. How many times has FRNSW done the same for the SES or VRA?

### **Budget of FRNSW**

19. What is the labour expense cap and what is the impact it has on your portfolio?
- (a) What is the current amount for FRNSW related labour expenses?
- (b) What is the impact of the cap on day-to-day FRNSW operations?
- (c) What impact does it have on decisions to open new stations or determine whether existing stations are kept online?

### **FRNSW station upgrades**

20. Acting Commissioner Stiffler identified as a priority upgrading 128 facilities to provide appropriate privacy for female firefighters. Please provide an update on works completed since then?
- (a) Last year there was \$1.8 million allocated to interim measures. How much was spent?
- (b) How much has been allocated in the 2022-23 Budget?
21. Has KPMG completed its review to prioritise fire stations in order of need of repairs?
- (a) If so, can a copy be provided?
22. What is the standard or benchmark for a FRNSW station to be considered 'fit-for-purpose'?
- (a) How many FRNSW stations would currently be regarded as not 'fit-for-purpose'?

- (b) How many require remedial works to remain safe for workers?
  - (c) Is there adequate funding in FRNSW's capital works budget to perform these works?
  - (d) Has the Minister or Commissioner made submissions for additional safety remedial works that have been rejected by Treasury?
23. Has the Minister or Commissioner made submissions to Treasury to replace ageing appliances that present a WHS risk, which have been rejected?
24. Does FRNSW have plans to close any existing training facilities in the next twelve months?
25. At the Emergency Services Academy, FRNSW have systems for managing air filtration for live-burn scenarios, correct?
- (a) Do the same systems exist for regional training centres?
  - (b) If not, why not?
26. Based on the most recent audits performed by FRNSW, how many stations do not have access to hot water for decontamination?
- (a) Is this matter being identified through FRNSW's Asset Management arrangements?

#### **FRNSW fleet resources**

27. What assessment does FRNSW make to ensure fleet numbers are adequate to meet needs?
- (a) Has the Minister or Department received a request to increase fleet numbers?
  - (b) What arrangements have been made to ensure that appliances are fitted with adequate burn-over protections for bushfires?
28. How many times have the new Compressed Air Foam System (CAFS) Aerial Pumpers been delayed and pulled from active use due to safety issues?
- (a) What were the safety incidents?
  - (b) Where is the northernmost aerial appliance in NSW located?
  - (c) Where is the westernmost aerial appliance in NSW located?
29. What is the average age of FRNSW's Type 3 (normal urban fire truck)?
30. What is the average age of FRNSW's Type 2 (Retained urban fire truck)?
31. What is the average age of FRNSW's minor fleet?

32. How many vehicles does FRNSW own?

### **Solve Safety**

33. What was the development cost of the new Solve Safety solution for injury, illness, exposure and near miss notifications?

34. What is the ongoing cost of the Solve Safety software?

35. Has FRNSW investigated whether this software is providing better outcomes for firefighters as opposed to the old system?

36. Have FRNSW lost any historic injury reporting and/or medical reports throughout transitions to alternative injury reporting systems?

### **GARTAN Software**

37. Where is the company responsible for GARTAN based?

(a) What guidance is there in FRNSW's Procurement Policy on preferencing NSW or Australian suppliers?

38. How does FRNSW request changes to this software?

39. What was the development cost of GARTAN?

40. What are the ongoing costs of GARTAN?

41. How many retained staff are consulted on an ongoing basis about how well this software is running, and any improvements needed?

### **Respiratory protection, cancer & other illnesses**

42. What training or information is provided to RFS volunteers on the toxic nature of bushfire smoke and how exposure can be mitigated?

43. Does the RFS provide the following to volunteers:

(a) Face to face educational programs to inform and empower all firefighters?

(b) Clearly delineated and labelled 'living' and 'working' zones in fire stations?

(c) 'Post incident wash-down' to remove contaminants from PPC?

(d) Replacement set of PPE to avoid constant body exposure to contaminated uniforms?

- (e) Dedicated laundering systems for PPC including heat extraction systems to promote off-gassing?
  - (f) Appropriate station designs to promote healthy firefighter concepts.
44. FRNSW recently developed initiatives to deal with the issue of carcinogen exposure of firefighters. This included an approach to decontaminate and roll-out new laundry systems for PPC. How much funding has been allocated to address this?
45. Have you tested all current and previous training facilities and fire stations for PFAS contaminations?
- (a) If so, are those reports up to date and available?
46. Are FRNSW still burning particle chipboard at regional training centres as part of live-burn training?

#### **Reallocated budget of Resilience NSW**

47. How will Resilience NSW's budget be redistributed to other combat agencies?
- (a) What amount will be set aside for Recovery NSW?

#### **RFS Equipment**

48. What are the 'Cumberland Flyer' and the 'Macarthur Flyer'?
- (a) Would the RFS prioritise using one of these appliances over Fire and Rescue?
49. Is it correct that RFS Brigades have their own station bank accounts?
- (a) If so, what is the purpose of the money held in these accounts?
    - i. Who is responsible for these accounts?
    - ii. How is money deposited into these accounts?
    - iii. What governance applies to withdrawal of funds?
    - iv. Who, if anyone, would audit these funds?
    - v. Does expenditure from these funds get reported to a central location or body?
    - vi. Does gear or equipment purchased using these funds go through a central procurement and safety assessment process?

### **FRNSW wellbeing**

50. How many trained counsellors and psychologists are employed in FRNSW to provide services to frontline firefighters?
  - (a) How many FRNSW firefighters failed to pass these health checks?
51. How does the peer support program work?
52. Does FRNSW need increased funding to cope with the mental health workload coming from its workforce?

### **FRNSW capabilities**

53. How many swiftwater rescue operators does FRNSW have in its ranks?
54. On how many occasions has the State Emergency Service requested FRNSW assistance with swiftwater rescues?
  - (a) How many of those occasions were in campaign situations? (that is, major, ongoing large scale events)
  - (b) How many of those occasions were for individual callouts in smaller scale incidents?
55. How many Fire & Rescue NSW stations are primary (General Land) rescue stations?
56. How many Fire & Rescue NSW stations are secondary (Road Crash) rescue stations?
57. On how many occasions did an SES station go offline, requiring FRNSW stations to step up as the primary rescue station, in each year as follows:
  - (a) 2019
  - (b) 2020
  - (c) 2021
  - (d) 2022
58. Has the Minister or Department received a request for any FRNSW stations which are currently not rescue qualified, to become secondary or primary rescue qualified?
  - (a) If yes, which stations?



### **FRNSW Health Checks and light duties**

59. How many FRNSW firefighters have moved to medical retirement following a health check in each year as follows:
- (a) 2020
  - (b) 2021
  - (c) 2022
60. How many FRNSW firefighters have moved to medical retirement the year before a health check in each year as follows:
- (a) 2020
  - (b) 2021
  - (c) 2022
61. What is the total cost of administering health checks in each year as follows:
- (a) 2020
  - (b) 2021
  - (c) 2022
62. How many staff have been placed on light duties following a health check in each year as follows:
- (a) 2020
  - (b) 2021
  - (c) 2022

### **Professional Standards**

63. Given that in response to Recommendation 1 of the 2017 Inquiry into Emergency Services Agencies, the government claimed that “NSW has a suite of existing independent external complaints management and workplace oversight bodies available to scrutinise instances of workplace bullying, harassment and discrimination” please provide the respective number of complaints and investigations the below oversight bodies have conducted or obtained regarding Fire and Rescue NSW, NSW Rural Fire Service and NSW State Emergency Service in calendar years since 1 January 2019:
- (a) Bullying and harassment within these agencies

- (b) Maladministration matters
  - (c) Complaints relating to the Anti-Discrimination Act 1977
  - (d) Fraud or corruption matters
  - (e) Serious misconduct claims
64. Given that in response to Recommendation 23 of the 2017 Inquiry into Emergency Services Agencies, the government claimed that “Fire and Rescue NSW periodically reviews its practices and procedures in relation to bullying and harassment and has established consistent policies in place that guide the appropriate disciplinary action be taken” please provide information in respect of the following:
- (a) How many reviews Fire & Rescue NSW has undertaken in relation to bullying and harassment by calendar year since 2014?
  - (b) What changes have been made to Fire and Rescue NSW’s practices and procedures in relation to bullying and harassment since 2014?
  - (c) In how many instances have the practices and procedures for bullying and harassment not been followed in Fire and Rescue NSW since 2014?
  - (d) What remedial steps have been taken if practices and procedures for bullying and harassment in Fire and Rescue NSW have not been followed?
65. How often does FRNSW conduct a Behavioural insights survey?
- (a) What was the most recent date this was conducted?
  - (b) What were the results of the survey?
  - (c) What has been the trend of this?

#### **FRNSW training and qualifications**

66. What is the current headcount for rescue trainers in FRNSW?
67. What is FRNSW’s budget for the delivery of training in each year as follows:
- (a) 2017
  - (b) 2018
  - (c) 2019

- (d) 2020
  - (e) 2021
  - (f) 2022
68. How many individuals have been trained by FRNSW trainers in each year as follows:
- (a) 2017
  - (b) 2018
  - (c) 2019
  - (d) 2020
  - (e) 2021
  - (f) 2022
69. Does FRNSW provide a budget for training for each zone?
- (a) If yes, what percentage of that budget in each year is actually utilised for training?
  - (b) If not, how is training allocated to staff and zones if not through a high level allocation?
70. Is it true both professional and volunteer firefighters don't require Working With Children Checks?
- (a) If not, why not?
71. What proportion of current firefighters are up to date with their basic lifesaving training?
- (a) The FRNSW 'Plus Plan' refers to working with NSW Ambulance as the lead agency to increase capabilities in medical responses. What capabilities do these include?

**Financial support for northern rivers flood victims**

72. Of the \$7 million over three years announced to boost access to psychological and clinical support how much has been spent?
73. Of the \$5 million over three years announced to establish grants programs for NGOs to fund trauma-based programs, how much has been spent?
- (a) How many applications have been received?
74. Of the \$3.5 million over three years announced to appoint headspace and Lifeline to work with affected communities and to identify what each community needs, how much has been spent?

75. Of the \$3.5 million over three years announced to recruit 10 local recovery coordinators to work with communities on the ground to respond to emerging issues such as mental health and hospital activity, how much has been spent?
- (a) Have the positions been advertised yet?
76. Of the \$1 million announced to set up four pop-up Safe Havens to assist people in distress and/or experiencing suicidal thoughts how much has been spent?
- (a) What stage is the setup of these Safe Havens?

### **July Flood Grants**

77. Regarding the Flood Recovery Back Home Grant for July 2022 opened 5 August:
- (a) What is the average time to process an application?
- (b) How many outstanding applications are there?
78. Regarding the Flood Recovery Rental Support Payment for July 2022 opened 5 August:
- (a) What is the average time to process an application?
79. Regarding the June and July 2022 Storm and Flood Disaster Recovery Small Business grant opened 7 July:
- (a) What is the average time to process an application?

### **SES Job-log**

80. In instances where the 132 500 phone number is overwhelmed, is the SES considering or developing an online job log option similar to Queensland?

### **NSW Bushfire Inquiry**

81. Regarding the 'OP 1.2.20 Operational Protocol for Backburning' was it developed in consultation with the National Parks and Wildlife Services?
- (a) How was feedback from the National Parks and Wildlife Services integrated into the Protocol?
- (b) When the protocol is implemented during severe weather conditions, will any person independent of the RFS review the planned strategic backburn?

### **Third-party contractors or consultancies**

82. For every agency, department, or state-owned corporation within your portfolio, please provide the following:

- (a) A list of all third-party contractor or consultancies engaged in communications services, including:
  - i. Contractor name,
  - ii. Contractor ABN,
  - iii. Service provided,
  - iv. Total cost paid
- (b) A list of all third-party contractor or consultancies engaged in PR services, including:
  - i. Contractor name,
  - ii. Contractor ABN,
  - iii. Service provided,
  - iv. Total cost paid
- (c) A list of all third-party contractor or consultancies engaged in marketing services, including:
  - i. Contractor name,
  - ii. Contractor ABN,
  - iii. Service provided,
  - iv. Total cost paid
- (d) A list of all third-party contractor or consultancies engaged in Government relations or lobbying services, including:
  - i. Contractor name,
  - ii. Contractor ABN,
  - iii. Service provided,
  - iv. Total cost paid
- (e) A list of all third-party contractor or consultancies engaged in industry or peak body membership, including:
  - i. Contractor name,

- ii. Contractor ABN,
  - iii. Service provided,
  - iv. Total cost paid
- (f) A list of all third-party contractor or consultancies engaged in policy or strategy development, including:
- i. Contractor name,
  - ii. Contractor ABN,
  - iii. Service provided,
  - iv. Total cost paid
- (g) A list of all third-party contractor or consultancies engaged in project management, including:
- i. Contractor name,
  - ii. Contractor ABN,
  - iii. Service provided,
  - iv. Total cost paid
- (h) A list of all third-party contractor or consultancies engaged in accounting and audit, including:
- i. Contractor name,
  - ii. Contractor ABN,
  - iii. Service provided,
  - iv. Total cost paid
- (i) A list of all third-party contractor or consultancies engaged in legal services, including:
- i. Contractor name,
  - ii. Contractor ABN,
  - iii. Service provided,
  - iv. Total cost paid
- (j) A list of all third-party contractor or consultancies engaged in any other services, including:

- i. Contractor name,
- ii. Contractor ABN,
- iii. Service provided,
- iv. Total cost paid

### **Disability Employment**

83. What is the percentage and total number of people who identify as having a disability who are currently employed by:
- (a) NSW SES
  - (b) Fire and Rescue NSW
  - (c) Resilience NSW
84. What is the percentage and total number of people who identify as having a disability who are currently employed by:
- (a) NSW SES
  - (b) Fire and Rescue NSW
  - (c) Resilience NSW

## Questions from Sue Higginson MLC

### **Bushfires and Response**

85. Why did Commissioner Rogers conduct a pilot project of one Rural Fires Service station instead of implementing recommendation 17 of the Bushfire Inquiry 2020?
86. Can you provide any evaluation strategy and or plan for this pilot project trial you are conducting of Neighbourhood Safer Place?
87. Approximately 20 kilometres from Bell Rural Fire Station is Mt Tomah Rural Fire Station which had 10-15 community members sheltering in it during the Mt Wilson burn over event. Why hasn't Mt Tomah station been included in the pilot?
88. When will recommendation 17 be implemented in full?
89. Can you provide information on the name and number of Strategic backburns put in from November 2019 to February 2020 in the following Local Government Areas surrounding the Sydney basin:
  - (a) Hornsby
  - (b) The Hills
  - (c) Hawkesbury
  - (d) Blue Mountains
  - (e) Penrith
  - (f) Wollondilly
  - (g) Wingecarribee
  - (h) Lithgow
  - (i) Central Coast
90. Was planning for the Mt Wilson backburn done at RFS State Operations Centre?
  - (a) Was this plan implemented by the Hawkesbury Incident Controller?
91. Will the Incident Controller responsible for implementing the Mt Wilson backburn meet with the communities impacted by the Mt Wilson backburn?
92. Will the Commissioner be present at such a meeting?



93. On 2 September 2022 Commissioner Rob Rogers stated "Backburning, whilst obviously acknowledging that sometimes things go wrong, if we didn't do backburning, the losses we saw during the fire season would be considerably higher."
- (a) What evidence does the RFS have to support this claim?
  - (b) Can you provide the quantified losses caused by the backburning operations and estimated properties saved by them?
94. On 17 December 2019 then NSW Premier Berejiklian stated in relation to the Mt Wilson Backburn, "They are tragic circumstances but when you think of the number of homes that were saved because of that [the Mt Wilson Backburn] and potentially hundreds of lives."
- (a) Can you provide evidence to support this claim?
95. The NSW South Coast region has experienced an ongoing homelessness crisis since the impact of the 2019-20 bushfire season. Two years onwards, approximately 700 people in the Eurobodalla Shire are experiencing homelessness including sleeping rough with no shelter, which is more than four times the figure of 121 people experiencing homelessness in the area in the 2016 census.
- (a) How is the Government planning to invest in the South Coast region to support people experiencing homelessness to access housing with support and prevent continuing and longer-term homelessness?

### **Flood Response**

96. How is the Government planning to address the problems raised in the NSW Legislative Council Select Committee on the response to major flooding across New South Wales in 2022 with Resilience NSW and State Emergency Services flooding response such as the lack of collaboration with local organisations and assistance for people experiencing homelessness?
97. Services are reporting that people experiencing homelessness in the Northern Rivers region have no guaranteed access to temporary accommodation, and people have exited the limited pod accommodation due to a lack of funding for support services.
- (a) How is the Government planning to review and improve access to housing and homelessness support given the ongoing impact of the February-March 2022 floods?
98. What is the allocated budget for the Mullumbimby temporary housing pods?
99. What is the allocated budget for the Ballina temporary housing pods?

100. What was the cost of the Wollongbar temporary housing pods to date?
101. Resilience NSW have said in their fact sheets that the Mullumbimby Pod site on Prince and Station Streets was reviewed with consideration to flood risk and flood planning and goes on to describe raising of modular homes being level 1% flood levels:
- (a) Was any engineering or flood assessment conducted to ascertain the impact of putting 1 meter plus landfill on the site on surrounding properties in Prince and Station streets that were flooded this year?
  - (b) If so, can you provide a copy of these assessments?
  - (c) Was the site assessed for flood risk?
  - (d) Can you guarantee that the properties surrounding the development will not experience greater flood impact in any flood events that occur due to the development?
  - (e) Who do you consider financially responsible for any damage to the surrounding properties that does occur as a result of the development?
  - (f) Is the lease for 2 years only?
  - (g) Is there an option to renew?
  - (h) How much is being spent on these two-year leases?
  - (i) Can you provide a copy of the lease?
102. The NSW Government released a \$285 million Temporary Housing Support package:
- (a) How much of the \$285m was allocated to rent?
  - (b) What was left over from that budget and what was it spent on?
  - (c) Did the \$285 package consider residents that were already homeless and living in their caravans/cars?