

PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 8 – QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

11 April 2025

QoN 1 – Transcript Page 3

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Commissioner, do you have any more detailed or accurate estimations of when that is going to arrive?

MIKE WASSING: I think, as the Minister has described, we work with both local knowledge and we've currently got estimates. We have reconnaissance flights constantly, on a daily basis, in terms of the different flood aspects. We're working, through the emergency operations centres and through our incident management teams, very closely with the local governments and the local community with respect to the progress of the floods. There's been lots of localised messaging with respect to the progress of those floods. As the Minister has described, it's not a normal river system; it's a multichannel aspect.

What we are aware of and what we have already seen in the Wanaaring area, in terms of the community that's currently isolated, is that the flood levels have been in excess of the 1990 flood levels. We're expecting that to continue down through the catchment. What we are seeing at the Wanaaring level—the peaks have now levelled out and we're starting to see a decrease in those peaks, but the isolation for that community, in particular, will continue to be there for several weeks. We continue to work with the local community and the local resupplier with regard to that. Now we're watching that water and working with the local communities as that water moves right through to the Barwon River and beyond. I do have a range of details in terms of a lot of different locations, but they're quite complex in terms of—
The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Perhaps we can get some of that taken on notice or maybe even explore it this afternoon.

MIKE WASSING: Absolutely.

Answer:

I am advised this was answered on page 21 of the uncorrected transcript.

QoN 2 Transcript Pages 4 and 5

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: As you talk about bringing it under control, how many fire stations have been offline in the past 12 months due to staffing shortages?

Mr JIHAD DIB: Are you talking about stations that are offline?

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: That are closed; that have been shut.

Mr JIHAD DIB: For different periods of time, yes. Again, this is not a new thing. My preference, of course, is to make sure that we've always got the firefighters there in that situation. Some of those stations have been offline for periods of things like five minutes and 20 minutes.

We're not talking about extended periods of time. But, again, fundamentally, we come down to that really key issue, which is about needing more firefighters.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Perhaps, then, to get the answer to that question, can you take on notice how many fire stations have been shut in the past 12 months for more half a day?

Mr JIHAD DIB: For more than half a day? So 12 hours?

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Yes.

Mr JIHAD DIB: Sure. When a station goes offline, other neighbouring stations are there. They work on what's called a dynamic, so they're constantly watching where the different stations are. So the communities are protected in different ways.

Answer:

I am advised:

Every truck and its crew form part of a mobile network of resources available to respond wherever needed. On occasions when stations experience temporary staffing shortages, Fire and Rescue NSW uses its dynamic coverage tools to maintain network coverage. For the

period 12/04/2024 to 11/04/2025, 20 Fire and Rescue NSW stations were taken offline for the nominated period.

QoN 3 Transcript Page 5

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: I will give it to the secretariat. But when we get to it, it is page 155 of the Department of Customer Service Annual Report 2023-2024. I will get a copy of that to you. I will move to different questions. Last month the Premier's Department was responsible for an alleged, it says, "accidental leak of highly sensitive personal information, including the home addresses of former Ministers responsible for Police and Counter-terrorism". Have the information and privacy commissioners been formally briefed on this breach?

Mr JIHAD DIB: Can I take that one on notice? I do know that we work with the Privacy Commissioner in terms of our work with the data and digital team. But I can take that one on notice and get back to you before the session is over.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: If you take that on notice, if the commissioner hasn't been briefed, can you give the Committee a date either way—if he was briefed or if he wasn't briefed—and what kind of information he was briefed on? This is quite serious, when you think that addresses of former Ministers for Police and Counter-terrorism—they would be cautious.

Mr JIHAD DIB: Of course. Any data breaches are a major concern for us. We've got Cyber Security NSW that we do work with. Obviously, it was through the Premier's Department, and the commission is an independent authority that I've got some responsibility for. But we will get that answer to you. I'm happy to take that one on notice, just so that I can give you a correct answer.

Answer:

I am advised this was answered on page 39 of the uncorrected transcript.

QoN 4 Transcript Page 20

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Have you ensured that every cell in New South Wales that holds a young person has telecommunications, allowing them access to their family wherever they need it?

Mr JIHAD DIB: I might take that one on notice. You've asked about every cell in New South Wales, so I might just take that one on notice, if that's okay.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Do you have an understanding of which may or which may not? Are you aware that some do and some don't?

Mr JIHAD DIB: I know there have been a lot of discussions. I just got a note. Do you mind if I just give you this note?

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Sure. We're running out of time.

Mr JIHAD DIB: I'm happy to go a couple of seconds over, if the Chair is okay.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Minister, I'm happy for you to take that on notice.

Mr JIHAD DIB: I can give you the answer on notice.

Answer:

I am advised:

All young people held in Youth Justice custody have access to the detainee telephone system, which makes physical telephones accessible from common areas in each accommodation unit.

QoN 5 Transcript Page 22

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Out of how many homes in that affected area that are eligible for buybacks?

Mr JIHAD DIB: These are the ones that were prioritised as buybacks, given the ones that we prioritise are the ones that are in most danger and most prospective danger. So that's 884 that have been approved. Also, keep in mind that some of the homes have different values as well, so it could be more than that. But if you're asking for an exact figure, we don't know the value

of every single home. We'll work through that, but 884 have been approved for buybacks. I will add that it is a voluntary scheme as well. There are some that were eligible but the families said, "We don't want it."

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: We're hearing that people are taking the buyback offer and then buying homes in the area that has been designated for buybacks. Can you assure me that's not happening?

Mr JIHAD DIB: That's the first I've heard of that. I don't think that would be the case, but can I get back to you on that?

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Sure.

Answer:

This question should be directed to the Minister for Recovery.

QoN 6 Transcript Page 23

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: In the Central West, how many buybacks have been completed in that area?

Mr JIHAD DIB: In the Central West specifically I might, for the latest—

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Can we get that on notice for this afternoon?

Mr JIHAD DIB: Maybe for the latest. But I do know that there have been people move back into homes. There are some retrofits that are going on and some raising. But the specific number—Mal will do it. It's \$100-odd million.

Answer:

This question should be directed to the Minister for Recovery.

QoN 7 Transcript Page 24

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: When you buy those houses back, who now owns that block of land?

Mr JIHAD DIB: It's owned by the State. Is that correct, Mr Lanyon?

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Which agency?

Mr JIHAD DIB: Can I take that specific—

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Well, I have a couple of follow-up questions to that then, Minister; you might have to take all these on notice. How much money has been allocated to manage the pests and weeds on those blocks of land? Who has the responsibility for managing those blocks of land? If someone dumps a fridge or asbestos on that land or a tree falls over, who has the responsibility for managing that block of land?

Mr JIHAD DIB: If that's okay, we'll take those on notice and maybe Mr Lanyon may have an answer in the afternoon for you. We're talking about 20-odd blocks of land in Eugowra. But it's a point that you make.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: There are 650 in Lismore.

Mr JIHAD DIB: But there won't be 560 blocks that are there for the buyback. But of course Minister Saffin, I'm sure, will follow that up. Mr Lanyon may have answers for you this afternoon; otherwise we'll take it on notice.

Answer:

This question should be directed to the Minister for Recovery.

QoN 8 Transcript Page 29

The CHAIR: If you could take on notice whether any dogs in the unit suffered any injury or died in the past five years due to heat stress, and the details of dogs that may have died and their cause of death.

JEREMY FEWTRELL: We can answer those questions now, if you'd like, Chair. Certainly for the heat stress one, we've had no animals die from heat stress. I'm also not aware of any of our dogs passing away in the last five years.

The CHAIR: Could you take that on notice?

JEREMY FEWTRELL: I'll take that on notice and confirm.

Answer:

I am advised that no FRNSW service dogs have sustained any injuries related to heat stress in the past 5 years.

QoN 9 Transcript Page 32

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: Minister, if I can ask you a question on notice—has the department undertaken any economic modelling on the opportunity cost of the increased expenditure on incarceration? For example, what would be the potential impact if these funds were redirected to education programs for disadvantaged children? That's a question on notice. It might not be for you.

Mr JIHAD DIB: What I would say is that the department is continuously looking at everything possible. There is a pretty clear direction set by the Minister that we'd love to see more diversion. But in terms of specifics, I couldn't answer it at the moment.

Answer:

I am advised this question was answered on page 43 of the uncorrected transcript.

QoN 10 Transcript Page 33

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Back to flood mitigation, can you tell me what mitigation has occurred in the Central West since those floods in 2022, particularly Eugowra and/or Molong?

Mr JIHAD DIB: For that one specifically, I'll take it on notice—also understanding that it will now fall within Minister Saffin's office. But I might take that one on notice in terms of the specific mitigation for those two areas. You'd appreciate I wouldn't know off the top of my head.

Answer:

This question should be directed to the Minister for Recovery.

QoN 11 Transcript Page 36

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I will come back to you this afternoon but, while I've got you there, I understand from icare that they do tell SIRA of the number of people who have suicided or self-harmed while they have been in the workers compensation system. I'm talking about people who have come to the workers compensation system with a claim but who have then gone on to suicide or self-harm. I asked icare for the current numbers of how many in the last five years and the answer was a little bit hard to understand, but I think they're saying that there were 50 suicides in the last five years. Are you able to tell me what the accurate number is?

MANDY YOUNG: We did get those reports up until January 2024, so we wouldn't have an accurate number for the last five years because we only received those reports up to January 2024, because it was part of a transitional arrangement from the previous legislation. So I couldn't give you an accurate figure for that period, but I could potentially, this afternoon, give you some numbers in terms of what we have got reported up until that date.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: That would be very useful.

Answer:

I am advised this question was answered on page 62 of the uncorrected transcript.

QoN 12 Transcript Page 36 and 37

The CHAIR: I'm not talking about the personal, one-on-one treatment; I'm talking about the heat stress of animals going out in 40-degree heat with just a misting system. Did Fire and Rescue NSW receive the full amount of funding that they requested for those fleet upgrades? I know you said that there's been an increase, but I'm just wondering if there was any kind of gap between the money that they said that they needed for the full upgrades and the amount actually allocated.

Mr JIHAD DIB: Look, the full upgrades are ongoing. I think we've got 741 trucks, for example. You're not going to keep upgrading and replacing them all of the time. We push as hard as we can in our budget and we're able to do this, but we'll continue to work with Fire and Rescue on the resourcing and provide that. The commissioner is champing at the bit to say something.

JEREMY FEWTRELL: Chair, I'm happy to take on notice the timeline of when those new vehicles are due to come in. It's part of our minor fleet.

The CHAIR: I think I'm probably more concerned about when the old vehicles are going to be removed and stop being used.

JEREMY FEWTRELL: That's the point when the new vehicles come in.

The CHAIR: So they're all going to be gone with these—

Mr JIHAD DIB: We're replacing them.

JEREMY FEWTRELL: Yes, as I say, we've got an old generation of vehicles, one of which was already replaced with one of the new dog-carrying pods. As those older vehicles that are still in service are due to be replaced, they'll be replaced with the current or the newer version as well. It's part of our regular minor fleet program, and we're happy to provide that on notice for you to give an indication of the expected timeline of those.

The CHAIR: Fantastic. Thank you. Minister, maybe that's something you can give me a bit of a briefing on as well in regards to timelines for when we'll be getting rid of those problematic vehicles.

Answer:

I am advised that additional vehicles with this capability are anticipated for delivery this year.

QoN 13 Transcript Page 41

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Were you involved formally in this trial enough to have numbers of how many people were involved and any outcomes from it?

ROB ROGERS: I don't know the actual numbers. I could take it on notice but, obviously, it would be with Transport. I do know people used it, but I'm not quite sure how many exactly used it. I think there was indication that there wasn't enough numbers; hence, why a second trial was engaged. I'll take that on notice, if I can.

Answer:

I am advised that Transport for NSW (TfNSW) has undertaken two trials: 211 vehicles took part in the first trial, from 20 December 2023 to 31 March 2024; 142 vehicles took part in the second trial, from 13 December 2024 to 31 March 2025.

QoN 14 Transcript Page 43

MAL LANYON: Sorry, just repeat that to me.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: If I personally bought a house in that area since the floods, am I still eligible for the buybacks?

MAL LANYON: If you've bought a house since the floods in one of those affected areas, no, you're not eligible for a buyback.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Has that happened on many occasions? Have we got the numbers around that?

MAL LANYON: Can I take that on notice and come back to you? There certainly would be some figures where people have made application and we've been able to say they weren't eligible.

Answer:

This question should be directed to the Minister for Recovery.

QoN 15 Transcript Page 44

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: Currently, how many Youth Justice staff are on leave due to workers compensation, and has that had any impact on the operational safety within the past 12 months?

PAUL O'REILLY: I can come back to you with the exact number of people currently on workers compensation leave. We have that data back at base camp but not here today.

Answer:

I am advised this question was answered on page 52 of the uncorrected transcript.

QoN 16 Transcript Page 45 and 46

Dr AMANDA COHN: Has the RFS denied non-essential overnight travel for employees, for staff members, because of budgetary constraints?

ROB ROGERS: Sorry, did you say non-essential?

Dr AMANDA COHN: Yes. Has overnight travel for employees, which they would otherwise be entitled to claim under the award, been denied because of budget constraints?

ROB ROGERS: No. Overnight travel? Not that I'm aware of. I'm happy to take that on notice. I can't say I know every instance, so I might take that on notice, if I can.

Dr AMANDA COHN: Are there any former employees who have been re-engaged as contractors or consultants by the RFS?

ROB ROGERS: Former employees who have been engaged as contractors?

Dr AMANDA COHN: As contractors or consultants.

ROB ROGERS: Not that I'm aware of. I don't think we have anybody who's a consultant or a contractor. No, I don't believe so, but I'll take that on notice just to be thorough.

Answer:

I am advised that the RFS assesses all travel claims in line with the relevant award provisions and operational requirements, with employees continuing to receive their entitlements where applicable.

Since 2011, 12 former staff members previously employed on an ongoing or temporary basis have been re-engaged as contractors or consultants.

QoN 17 Transcript Page 47

The CHAIR: I've got some questions probably best directed to Mr O'Reilly or Mr Tidball. We've been told in previous estimates that it costs around \$2,700 per day to keep a young person incarcerated in New South Wales. Are you able to provide a bit of a breakdown of the major costs contributing to that figure of 2,700?

MICHAEL TIDBALL: We would, I think, need to take that on notice. But most of that cost would be employee-related expense, by far. But we could take that on notice.

Answer:

I am advised the majority relates to employee-related expenses and associated costs.

QoN 18 Transcript Page 50

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: You mentioned those 36 programs. Are we able to see a list of those programs and where they're up to?

AMANDA LECK: Yes, I believe they're freely available on the RA website. I can tell you that I was actually in the Northern Rivers yesterday and had the opportunity to view six of those projects, some of which are now complete. For example, during TC Alfred the Dorothy Street pump was able to clear 1,000 litres of water per minute and was able to mitigate flood impacts for 120 homes and, importantly, a sporting field, so the community could get back into their community immediately. Some of those programs are underway and 14 are now complete.

MAL LANYON: We can provide that on notice, Mr Barrett. That's no problem whatsoever.

Answer:

This question should be directed to the Minister for Recovery.

QoN 19 Transcript Pages 51 and 52

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: Are you able to provide a breakdown of program funding across the six different centres?

PAUL O'REILLY: We can certainly try to do that, yes.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: On notice?

PAUL O'REILLY: Yes. It'll be a complicated answer, but we'll provide it.

Answer:

I am advised:

Programs in Youth Justice are incorporated into general operational expenses in each region.

This provides Centre Managers with the flexibility to allocate program resources based on feedback from staff and young people.

QoN 20 Transcript Page 52

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: In the last 12 months, how many children have been placed in isolation?

PAUL O'REILLY: There are three categories of restricted practice. There are segregation, separation and confinement.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: If we say confinement, then.

PAUL O'REILLY: Okay, I can get you confinement data. In 2023-24 there were 3,696 incidents of confinement. We'll have to come back to you to tell you how many individual children were involved in that, but it would be a smaller number, of course, because confinement can often happen multiple times. Over the last five years we've seen a steady reduction in confinement, so it's 29 per cent lower than it was five years ago.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: What is the average duration of an isolation period?

PAUL O'REILLY: I can dig that out for you if you wouldn't mind some shuffling.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: Sure.

MICHAEL TIDBALL: If I may just come back to your earlier question, Mrs MacDonald, in respect of workers comp, the number of staff on workers comp in Youth Justice as of December 2024 was 142. Of those, 72 were not at work and 70 were on restricted duties or returning to work.

PAUL O'REILLY: Average confinement time in 2023-24 was five hours and 10 minutes, which is very similar to the previous year.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: What was the highest duration?

PAUL O'REILLY: I'll have to look that up for you. This could take some shuffling too. There are particular regulations around confinement. For example, for children under 16 it can't be longer than 12 hours, and there were none at that level. For children over 16 it can't be more than 24 hours, and there were none at that level. The highest would have been between five hours and 12 hours for kids under 16, and between five and 24 for kids over 16, but we can provide more precision than that on notice.

Answer:

I am advised:

The shortest period was 10 minutes and the longest period was 23 hours.

QoN 21 Transcript Page 52

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: Can you confirm the total number of receptions into Youth Justice centres in the last financial year?

PAUL O'REILLY: Yes, I can.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: And then if you're able to break it down into how many were remand and how many were actually sentenced.

PAUL O'REILLY: Okay. That will take some analysis, because they don't come in sentenced. They all come in on remand and then there's a process, pretty much. It will take a bit of time to do that analysis, but we can do that.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: Let's do that one on notice, then.

PAUL O'REILLY: Yes, sure.

Answer:

I am advised this information is publicly reported at <https://www.nsw.gov.au/legal-and-justice/youth-justice/about/statistics/custody>

QoN 22 Transcript Page 53

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: So how many demolitions to date?

MAL LANYON: I will just check that. Forty-five demolitions, I've got here at the moment.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: In terms of the location of those 45, where are they? Is there somewhere that there's a register of what's been demolished to date?

MAL LANYON: There absolutely would be. I'd have to take that on notice. It wouldn't be a public record. It would be something that we would have as a record internally.

Answer:

This question should be directed to the Minister for Recovery.

QoN 23 Transcript Page 55

The CHAIR: Commissioner Rogers, I'd like to ask some questions about the use of fire retardant. There was research published by Griffith University that raised concerns about the impact of retardant on wildlife and waterways, particularly frogs and tadpoles. The researchers raised concerns that there is very little known about the environmental impacts of many of the commonly used formulations, including Phos-Chek, which I understand is used by the RFS. I'm wondering if there are any steps that have been taken to guard against these potential impacts on animals and the environment, and if that information has come across to you at the table.

ROB ROGERS: Certainly. We have on two occasions referred the fire retardant we use to the EPA and asked them to look at it and give us their views on whether it is safe to use. On both occasions they've said it is an appropriate product, but they reinforce what I guess was practice always—to try and avoid, as best we can, waterways. I think that comes back into the points that you made about, obviously, aquatic-type life being affected by it. There's no doubt that if you put—because it's based on a fertiliser, it'll change the content of water and it can promote things like algal bloom if you get it into waterways. We work pretty hard to try and keep it away from waterways. That's not always successful because, based on what the pilot thinks the wind's doing at the time it can change a little bit. We've had instances where it's fallen on homes, fire trucks and a number of things where it wasn't intended. I guess, in that sense, we can't absolutely guarantee it, but we certainly plan to keep it away from waterways just because of that specific known fact that it can adversely affect them.

The CHAIR: Are there ever any follow-ups or audits afterwards to see if there has been an impact like you mentioned where it has fallen on homes and things like that? Have there ever been any audits to check if there has been any falling into those waterways? Is there any action that can be taken if it has accidentally gone into those places?

ROB ROGERS: I'd probably have to check. Probably one of the best sources we'd have for that would be National Parks and Wildlife Service because obviously a number of fires occur in park. I'm happy to take that offline and see if we can find out if there are any records through National Parks about that and, if so, what was the impact. I'm happy to take that on notice if that's okay.

Answer:

I am advised:

Testing by the NSW Environmental Protection Authority after the 2019-20 bush fire season showed the retardants used by RFS had minimal environmental impacts. NSW has general requirements for a 100-metre product exclusion buffer from waterways.

Qon 24 Transcript Page 55

The CHAIR: Yes, definitely. I also have a question with regard to the RFS online disclosure log. It currently shows that there are no details of any GIPAA applications since February 2019, yet the annual report shows that there were more than 340 applications since that time. I'm wondering why there is that discrepancy and why the RFS hasn't necessarily updated its disclosure logs.

ROB ROGERS: Sorry, this is in GIPAA's in where, sorry?

The CHAIR: There are the online disclosure logs of the GIPAA applications and then there is the RFS annual report. They're showing different things.

ROB ROGERS: I'm not sure why there would be a discrepancy, to be honest. We regularly get GIPAA's.

The CHAIR: I might see if I can get someone to give you a copy of the disclosure log so that you can see what I'm talking about. That seems to be the latest disclosure log that I can find online.

ROB ROGERS: Yes, I agree. I don't know the answer but I'm happy to have it fixed.

The CHAIR: Thank you.

ROB ROGERS: It clearly seems to be a bit behind. With your indulgence, I'll have it fixed. I'm happy to give the numbers in a return on notice.

Answer:

I am advised:

The RFS reports on the number of applications it receives under the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* (GIPA Act) in its annual report, in accordance with the GIPA Regulation. In accordance with Section 26 of the GIPA Act, it also publishes a disclosure log recording access applications that result in the release of information and that the agency considers may be of interest to other members of the public. For example, applications for personal information are not published on the disclosure log.

QoN 25 Transcript Page 55

The CHAIR: I also have a number of questions about the 2019-20 bushfires that have come from community members, linked to the back-burning operations. I'm happy for you to take any of these on notice if they're a bit detailed. You've previously stated in the media that out of the more than 1,000 back-burns during 2019-20, only 4 per cent escaped containment. Are you able to provide the date, location and the cause of escapes associated with those fires and each of those back-burn escapes identified?

ROB ROGERS: Certainly, I can do that. Some of those back-burns would be that something hops out, it escapes, brigades wrap it up and it doesn't do anything else. We'll go through the records and see what we can come back with.

The CHAIR: I'm happy for you to provide any of those details as well, if it was just a small escape that was put out immediately. That would be really useful.

ROB ROGERS: Certainly.

Answer:

I am advised:

A review of backburns during the 2019/20 bush fire season conducted for the NSW Bushfire Inquiry found that of the 1,067 back burns identified, 4.2% broke their containment lines.

Incident Name	Date	Cause of containment breach
Captains Creek	02-Aug-19	Spot over
Racing Trk, Turners Flat	09-Aug-19	Spot over
Racing Trk, Turners Flat	09-Aug-19	Spot over
Putty Rd, Howes Valley	06-Sep-19	Spot over
Shark Creek 2	02-Sep-19	Small spot fire burning within containment in an un-burnt patch.
Raspberry Rd, Jeogla	07-Sep-19	Spot over
Long Gully Rd, Drake	22-Sep-19	Spot over
Kimbin Pikapene Rd, Alice	09-Aug-19	Spot over
Raspberry Rd, Jeogla	07-Sep-19	Spot over
Kingsgate, Red Range	09-Sep-19	Spot over
Carrai East	17-Oct-19	Spot over
Wardell Rd, Wardell	18-Oct-19	Spot over
Kian Road	17-Oct-19	Spot over
Carrai East	17-Oct-19	Spot over
Oil Rig Rd, Tullymorgan	27-Oct-19	Spot over
Stockyard Flat	27-Oct-19	Spot over

Gulf Rd	27-Oct-19	Spot over
Gospers Mountain	26-Oct-19	Small spot fire contained
Kaputar Fire	17-Oct-19	Spot over
Kaputar Fire	17-Oct-19	Spot over
Mt Nardi NP,	08-Nov-19	Spot over
Border Trail, Woodenbong	08-Nov-19	Spot over
Kaloe Mountain Trail	06-Sep-19	Spot over
Border Trail, Woodenbong	08-Nov-19	Spot over
Crown Mountain	02-Dec-19	Spot over
Rumba Complex	20-Oct-19	Spot over
Carrai Creek	17-Oct-19	Spot over
Gospers Mountain	26-Oct-19	Spot over
Little L Complex	25-Nov-19	Spot over
Pearson Trail Complex, Dungowan	11-Dec-19	Spot over
Green Wattle Creek	27-Nov-19	Spot over
Green Wattle Creek	27-Nov-19	Spot over
Green Wattle Creek	27-Nov-19	Spot over
Green Wattle Creek	27-Nov-19	Spot over
Bangala Creek	04-Dec-19	Spot over
Carrai East	17-Oct-19	Spot over
Green Wattle Creek	27-Nov-19	Spot over
Grose Valley	20-Dec-19	Spot over
Duckhole Creek, Upper Horton	12-Dec-19	Spot over
Green Wattle Creek	27-Nov-19	Spot over
Dunns Road	28-Dec-19	Spot over
Hyland Rd, Greystanes	31-Dec-19	Spot over
Border Fire	31-Dec-19	Spot over
Dunns Road	28-Dec-19	Spot over
Kydra Complex	29-Jan-20	Spot over

QoN 26 Transcript Pages 55 and 56

The CHAIR: The Stockyard Flat fire destroyed or damaged 40 buildings, and tragically there was a death in the Wallacia LGA. Can you confirm that none of the back-burn escapes contributed to those fires at all?

ROB ROGERS: I don't believe so, but let me check to be thorough.

The CHAIR: I would appreciate if you could take that one on notice.

Answer:

I am advised the NSW Coroner's inquiry to determine the cause and origin of the Stockyard Flat, Yarrowitch fire of October 2019 found that on the balance of probabilities it was likely caused by lightning strike.

QoN 27 Transcript Page 56

The CHAIR: The Stockyard Flat back-burns were also conducted a day before extreme fire conditions. I'm just wondering if you know if the approvals of those back-burns contravened any back-burning protocols in place at the time.

ROB ROGERS: Sorry, you're asking if the back-burn contravened what?

The CHAIR: The back-burn was conducted a day before extreme fire conditions.

ROB ROGERS: Do you mean a hazard reduction back-burn?

The CHAIR: It was the Stockyard Flat back-burn. There was a back-burn in that area that was conducted the day before there were extreme fire conditions. I'm not talking about the actual

fire but a back-burn that occurred. Because it was a day before extreme fire conditions, I'm wondering if that was within the current protocols at the time.

ROB ROGERS: The policy that we've had since 2019-20 is, basically, where there is going to be an elevated risk, it gets looked at by a more senior officer to examine it, but it doesn't mean it doesn't occur. Often, there's also a weighing up of the risk of not doing the back-burn and what the fire will potentially do. It's never quite neat because it's based on what's the best risk. Obviously, with the benefit of hindsight, you can look back and say, "Well, maybe we could've done X, Y and Z", but we also have to look at what the person understood at that time. That's very much how we look at those things: What were the facts available to them at the time? But I'm happy to have a look at it for you just to make sure I'm being correct.

The CHAIR: Great. I'd appreciate that.

Answer:

I am advised the RFS did not have a specific protocol in place in relation to backburning and fire danger ratings at the time. In response to Recommendation 47 of the NSW Bushfire Inquiry Report, the RFS published an Operational Protocol for Backburning on 26 February 2021.

QoN 28 Transcript Page 56

The CHAIR: I'll throw back to Mr O'Reilly. I just want to get an update on the response of the Inspection of Six Youth Justice Centres (2022) report. I know that report made 51 recommendations. I am wondering how many of those have been implemented.

PAUL O'REILLY: Sure. I just need to check that I have the right one because there have been a number of Inspector of Custodial Services reports. Bear with me, please, for a moment. All of the recommendations were supported, except for four which we were unable to support for operational reasons. We've been working through them. I don't have the list of recommendation by recommendation, but my recollection is that, of the ones that we supported, which is all except four, work was either completed or underway, and there were a couple that required more negotiation with other stakeholders—for example, Health—and we're working through those.

The CHAIR: On notice, if you don't have it in front of you, are you able to provide just a brief summary of what has been fully implemented?

PAUL O'REILLY: Yes, we can do that for each recommendation.

Answer:

I am advised:

Of the 51 recommendations, all have been fully or partially achieved, with the exception of 2 referred to Justice Health and 4 not accepted by Youth Justice.

QoN 29 Transcript Pages 56 and 57

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: How many children in youth detention have been formally assessed as having a disability?

PAUL O'REILLY: I don't have that number for you at the moment. Every child is screened, of course, and checked. Sometimes the process of diagnosis takes a long time. If they're with us for a day or two, we can't complete that process, but every single child is assessed. We know that the incidence of disability among our cohort of young people is high.

Answer:

I am advised this information is publicly reported and available in the 2023 BOCSAR report <https://bocsar.nsw.gov.au/documents/publications/bb/bb151-200/bb164-report-people-with-disability-and-offending-in-nsw.pdf>

QoN 30 Transcript Page 58

The CHAIR: Have there been any assessments of the program and how effective it's been in actually supporting small businesses in regional and rural New South Wales? And, if there have been assessments, can you give me a bit of detail?

GREG WELLS: Yes, there have. I haven't got the detail with me, but I'm happy to provide that on notice. Those assessments were provided by Treasury or in conjunction with Treasury, and they found it to be a very successful program. But I'd have to take that on notice as to the detail. I'm happy to provide that report to you, which is probably public as well.

Answer:

I am advised NSW Treasury commissioned Accenture to conduct an independent evaluation of the Business Connect program in 2021, which is publicly available.

QoN 31 Transcript Page 59

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: I will direct my questions to you, Mr Head, about the agency financial statements. Can you detail what specific services will be impacted by the department's \$287 million reduction in total expenditure from \$3.04 billion, which was revised down from 2023-24 to what it is now in 2024-25 at \$2.76 billion? That is on page 5-1. GRAEME HEAD: That's not something that I could just answer in the hearing. DCS includes both those functions that are responsible to Minister Dib, as well as functions that are responsible for other Ministers. It's an organisation of almost 13,000 people, so it has myriad programs. We would need to give you a general sense, on notice, of some of those adjustments, some of which have been discussed in previous hearings.

Answer:

I am advised:

The 2023-24 revised budget amount included a number of programs that had not received ongoing funding from the previous government, such as the EV Rebate and the Back to School Voucher program.

QoN 32 Transcript Page 59

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: What programs are being scaled back or discontinued as a result of the \$440 million reduction in grants and subsidies? Is that in the same basket? GRAEME HEAD: I'll take it on notice, but the Minister answered this morning that a number of grants initiatives, which were point-in-time support programs for natural disasters et cetera, of course finished, so we would need to give you a sense of some of those initiatives on notice. Any of those very detailed things, when the question is so broad, I'll need to take on notice.

Answer:

I am advised this was answered on page 12 of the uncorrected transcript.

QoN 33 Transcript Page 60

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: With employee-related expenses increasing by \$72.9 million, what roles or areas are being prioritised for staffing in contrast to overall cuts? That's at 5-2. GRAEME HEAD: Again, given the breadth of the portfolio and different ministerial accountabilities, we'll need to unpack that for you and do that on notice.

Answer:

I am advised:

Employee-related expenses increased in the 2024-25 budget to deliver Government policy priorities in DCS divisions including the Building Commission NSW, Digital NSW, Revenue NSW, Safework NSW and Fair Trading NSW.

QoN 34 Transcript Page 60

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: I'm not sure who is best to answer this question, but it's about the funding for our NGOs, both in the disaster recovery space and the youth justice space. We've touched on Resilient Lismore. In places like Lake Cargelligo, you've got Down the Track that are doing a great job as far as reducing crime and increasing engagement with school. One of the constant areas of feedback that I get is these people are often hampered or restricted a little bit in this constant reliance on short-term funding. How can we see a shift to some more longer term, secure funding so these organisations can continue to play that role? I'm not sure who's best to answer that question. It's probably across a few different spaces.

MAL LANYON: I'm happy to start, if you like, Mr Barrett, and then we can work around. Certainly, in terms of disaster recovery and disaster arrangements, by the very nature of it, unfortunately, the DRFA is program funded, so funding for NGOs and other agencies to provide a service is generally tied to a program. That is the way it's resourced. That's the way we're funded. That's the way that we provide for the purpose of delivering a program. We're very much in conversations with the Commonwealth at the moment about what disaster funding needs to look like going forward. I think probably the way we do it at the moment, we've found, is inefficient, but we're finding that out more and more probably over the last three to four years because of the nature and the recurring nature of disasters as well. I think all parts of the sector are looking at better ways to fund. We would like to give certainty to NGOs because they play such a pivotal role in supporting the community. They really are the backbone when we're looking to deliver services to the community. The NGOs play a remarkable role at this stage, but the funding arrangements really lead to the fact that it has to be program funded.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Specifically, with disaster recovery, though, it's so much more efficient to have an organisation already standing before an event than to try and build one up after the event.

MAL LANYON: There are a number of programs that we would work through with NGOs as part of the preparedness function. We would very much work with agencies to make sure they are in the space with community long before there's a disaster. That's our preference. Obviously, preparedness is much better than doing recovery. We are looking at how that is at this stage. But, as I've indicated, a lot of that work has to be program funded by virtue of the way that the arrangements work at the moment.

MICHAEL TIDBALL: In relation to DCJ, we're in the process of transitioning to five-year contracts for our NGOs. As I've said, that's a process of transition. It's consistent with an election commitment of Government. In terms of specific programs and some of those being subject to availability of funding, if there are specific NGOs that are at the heart of your inquiry, I'd be happy to take that on notice or for you to direct approach for me to follow that up.

Answer:

This question should be directed to the Minister for Recovery.

QoN 35 Transcript Page 62

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Those questions on notice that got returned to me from icare, which talk about the 50 suicides in five years from, I think, 2020 to 2024, were they all people who had already made a claim and were in the system and had then suicided?

MANDY YOUNG: I think you'd have to ask icare for the detail on those, and we can come back to you on notice. But from the data that I have, it's more likely that they have made a claim and then had a death resulting in suicide relating to that claim earlier. So it may not be that—

Answer:

I am advised this question should be directed to the Minister for Work, Health and Safety.

QoN 36 Transcript Page 63

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Sure, but in terms of a reform like that, where you've got at least three different Ministers involved—the Treasurer, the IR Minister and you've got Minister Dib—and you've also got SIRA, icare, and potentially SafeWork, presumably there was a working group established or something similar in relation to these reforms?

MANDY YOUNG: There's a working group that's been established now. I think the bulk of that work had started late last year but I'd have to come back to you on what date.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: All right. That's useful.

Answer:

I am advised that consideration of reform to the workers compensation system has involved ongoing interagency collaboration that has taken many forms as the Government has invited feedback on the operation of the scheme.

QoN 37 Transcript Page 66

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: On notice, would you be able to provide a list of the community organisations receiving the government funding? What percentage of those are Aboriginal-led organisations? You can take that on notice.

PAUL O'REILLY: I can give you a list of the programs and the amount, but to give you a list of the individual providers—that is a very long list, which will take more time. Should we take it on notice?

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: Yes. That's why I said take it on notice.

PAUL O'REILLY: It's a long list.

Answer:

I am advised Youth Justice funds 39 non-government providers including 22 Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.

QoN 38 Transcript page 67

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: Are you able to say—again, on notice—what programs have been effective at reducing youth reoffending?

PAUL O'REILLY: Yes. We'll give that to you on notice. There are a lot of complex assumptions in that answer. For example, effectiveness can be difficult to measure if it's a small sample size, and young offenders is a small sample size, particularly if it's place based. It's difficult to get a meaningful effect size in a randomised control trial, for example, when you only have a couple of hundred people. Secondly, the long history of year-to-year funding has a significant impact on service delivery and effectiveness because of staff instability. They are really important considerations when you review our answer on notice about effectiveness.

Answer:

I am advised a number of programs which are now funded through a four-year diversion investment package of \$66.9 million committed in the 2024-25 NSW Budget have been evaluated as effective at reducing the risk of youth reoffending, including Youth on Track and A Place to Go.

QoN 39 Transcript Page 68

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: Just on that, how many staff have completed training related to cultural safety or First Nations engagement?

MICHAEL TIDBALL: I would be happy to take that on notice.

Answer:

I am advised there have been more than 2,000 classroom and online training course completions during the past 12 months.

QoN 40 Transcript Page 69

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: I know Ms Higginson has asked about the buybacks and the demolition of houses. My question has got a very different motive, so to save conflating them I will ask specifically for the Central West. What kind of time frame are we expecting from when an offer has been accepted on a buyback home until that home is demolished?

MAL LANYON: I can refer this to Ms Leck for a question, as she runs the program. But what I can say is it will vary depending on the availability of contractors to do that, whether any other permit is required to work that through and whether there may be contaminated materials in a home. That will definitely determine how long it will take for that to occur. If you'd like further details, we absolutely can provide that either on notice or I can ask Ms Leck to come forward and talk about that process. She would have a better understanding of the timetable.

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Can I say on notice, depending how quickly we get through this next question of mine?

Answer:

This question should be directed to the Minister for Recovery.
QoN 41 Transcript Page 70
<p>The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: In my final bit of time, how many Starlink satellites do you think we'll have on trucks by the start of the next fire season? Can we give a broader timeline for the rollout for the remaining 4,000?</p> <p>ROB ROGERS: As I said before, it's a three-year program, but I will certainly, if I can, get that for you on notice because I just don't know that off the top of my head, I'm sorry.</p>
<p>Answer:</p> <p>I am advised that 700 Starlink units are expected to be installed by the start of the bush fire season in October 2025 as part of a multi-year project.</p>
QoN 42 Transcript Page 70
<p>Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I would love to just go back to some of the Reconstruction Authority questions. Can you provide the number of houses that you currently have on the list—it may be Ms Leck, I'm not sure—for demolition?</p> <p>MAL LANYON: Yes. I can put that on notice, yes.</p>
<p>Answer:</p> <p>This question should be directed to the Minister for Recovery.</p>
QoN 43 Transcript Page 71
<p>Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I spoke to the guy whose number that you call is on the website and whose trucks are removing all the material. Anyway, I think there is a lot of concern.</p> <p>MAL LANYON: What about?</p> <p>Ms SUE HIGGINSON: About what you think may be happening and what is in fact happening. It doesn't take much to question what is happening and get some really suspicious next steps. I think it would be good—</p> <p>MAL LANYON: We are in contractual arrangements. I'm more than happy to take that on notice and then we can come back to you.</p> <p>Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Thank you.</p>
<p>Answer:</p> <p>This question should be directed to the Minister for Recovery.</p>
QoN 44 Transcript Page 73
<p>Dr AMANDA COHN: I might come back to the Reconstruction Authority. Sorry, it's Friday afternoon and it's a real grab bag of questions. The modular housing program was discussed briefly this morning. Can you please update what the actual expenditure on that program has been to date?</p> <p>MAL LANYON: I'd have to take that on notice, Dr Cohn. I don't have that in front of me.</p>
<p>Answer:</p> <p>This question should be directed to the Minister for Recovery.</p>
QoN 45 Transcript Page 74
<p>Dr AMANDA COHN: I appreciate your commentary that complaints do mean that people feel comfortable making reports, which is a good thing. Are you satisfied that those complaints are being responded to appropriately?</p> <p>ROB ROGERS: That's part of what we want to do a review for. We've set notional time frames for these things. We want to see that they're being responded to, and then going back to the people that complained to check, "Do you believe you had a satisfactory outcome?"</p> <p>Dr AMANDA COHN: Is that review process internal? Is it something that's being provided to the Minister or the public? Where does it go?</p> <p>ROB ROGERS: As in, the process of it?</p> <p>Dr AMANDA COHN: The review that you're conducting at the moment.</p> <p>ROB ROGERS: The reporting of it?</p> <p>Dr AMANDA COHN: Yes.</p>

ROB ROGERS: I think we've done a report to the Minister on where we're at with it. I'll check that to be sure, though.

Answer:

I am advised:

The RFS expects an independent review of the RFS Workplace Complaints Resolution Framework to be completed by the end of June 2025 which is aimed at identifying any lessons from the implementation of the Framework in July 2024 to ensure it is operating effectively and as intended.

QoN 46 Transcript Page 74

Dr AMANDA COHN: I also have questions about the Chinook. Are you able to advise how much operational use that has had and the impacts of downtime for mechanical issues?

ROB ROGERS: For mechanical issues, I'd have to take that on notice. It's busy quite a lot. It's up in Queensland at the moment, helping Queensland to ship supplies into areas and carrying fuel into areas. It's been pretty busy, but I'm happy to give you that on notice, if that's okay?

Dr AMANDA COHN: I'm happy with an answer on that on notice

Answer:

I am advised:

As at 12 April 2025, the Chinook had been engaged for 111.33 hours this financial year. The Chinook has undergone maintenance on 34 days since November 2024.

QoN 47 Transcript Page 75

The Hon. SCOTT BARRETT: Can I ask you to take on notice for me, please, the usage of fuel over each of the last five years, and the bill for fuel over the last five years, broken down to a region that you think is appropriate?

ROB ROGERS: We will do our best, but given that the vehicles are still currently vested in councils, we may not have all the data. We'll see what we can do, but I don't think we'd have it. We probably have a global figure, but I'm not sure that we'll have it broken down.

Answer:

I am advised:

As stated by the Commissioner on page 75 of the uncorrected transcript, the RFS operational 'red' fleet is vested in local government under the *Rural Fires Act 1997* and the RFS does not have access to complete data on council fuel expenditure.