

BUDGET ESTIMATES 2021-2022
Questions Taken on Notice

Portfolio Committee No. 5 – Regional NSW and Stronger Communities

Paul Toole MP
Deputy Premier
Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Police

Hearing: Wednesday 4 May 2022

Answers due by: Tuesday, 31 May 2022

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE

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The Hon. WALT SECORD:..... I will start with Opposition questions. Minister, or through you to the police commissioner, what is the definition of an urgent call in relation to police response times?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Commissioner?

KAREN WEBB: I will have to take that on notice in terms of priority one or two, and that is captured in those calls and response times. They are categorised one, two, three and four. One and two are those urgent and pressing that require a code red response. But in terms of the actual definition, I will take that one on notice.

Answer:

Calls for service are assigned with one of five priorities when entered by police employees into the NSW Police Force (NSWPF) Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system.

Priority 1 calls require an “urgent response” and Priority 2 calls require an “immediate response”.

Both Priority 1 and Priority 2 calls would likely be considered “urgent” for the purpose of this question.

Priority 1:

- Respond Immediately: The matter is life threatening and the actual danger still present. There is a genuine belief that any person, will suffer grievous bodily harm or death.

Priority 2:

- Respond immediately, unless responding to a Priority 1. This includes incidents where there is a serious threat to life or property occurring now, requiring an immediate Police response, i.e. armed robbery, violent domestics, serious assaults, a person trapped in a motor vehicle etc., or urgent action is required to apprehend offenders.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Parramatta has the worst response times in New South Wales, followed by Campsie, Liverpool, Leichhardt, Cumberland, Ryde, Blacktown, Blue Mountains, Campbelltown, Fairfield, Hawkesbury, Nepean, Riverstone and Auburn. I could continue, but all of those areas do not have construction.

KAREN WEBB: No.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: This data relates to the period 2020-21. It was actually taken during the COVID period. I remember during that time the streets were virtually deserted in Sydney for long periods of time. Can you enlighten me why western Sydney—is it resourcing, is it staffing? Times jumped from six minutes to eight minutes in Parramatta.

KAREN WEBB: As I said, sir, I have asked for some further analysis of that. However, you may also recall that police played a critical role during COVID in terms of reinforcing public health orders et cetera in highly populous areas in western Sydney, in particular the health order that was specific to 12 LGAs in western Sydney. So that may be a factor, but I will undertake to understand those commands more specifically.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: You would be aware that response times in Sydney's east and the North Shore are half of western Sydney, and Sydney's east was not the subject of similar lockdowns. Is there any other reason? Because this is not simply COVID; this is a long-term—I have looked at the data over the last 10 years, and it has been creeping up slowly. Is it a resourcing issue?

KAREN WEBB: As I said, sir, I have undertaken to have that reviewed. I can take that on notice to get some better data. I do not want to mislead you today, so I will undertake to understand that better.

Answer:

The NSW Police Force is currently undertaking data analysis in relation to this request.

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The CHAIR: Thank you. Commissioner, just some questions to you relating to officers who have been terminated due to COVID-19 vaccine mandates. Is the NSW Police Force intending to remove the vaccine mandates?

KAREN WEBB: Not at this stage, sir. We actually, instead of relying on a public health order at the beginning of the pandemic and in September last year when we made the announcement it was based on our own health and safety risk assessment, which is very thorough. So we required that officers had doses one and two and would strongly encourage dose three because at the time we were faced with Delta. We have since been dealing with Omicron and, whilst it has obviously affected our workforce, it has not caused the level of illness that previous variants have done. So we have adjusted the risk assessment according to the variant and the conditions of the time. Other than removing the requirement, as is our duty, we have a big requirement—a public-facing duty—and I would hate to think that a police officer who was unvaccinated passed on corona to my elderly mother and led to her death. Certainly, we have a responsibility as officers and as a community.

The CHAIR: I assume you have this under review all the time?

KAREN WEBB: I do.

The CHAIR: You do. Okay. Thank you. How many vaccine contraindications were submitted to the NSW Police Force? Of those, how many did the NSW Police Force accept as valid?

KAREN WEBB: Yes. I will just get that data for you. I actually do not have it in front of me but I know it is a small number.

The CHAIR: Would you like to take it on notice?

KAREN WEBB: I will take it on notice, yes.

Answer:

As at 21 April 2022, there were 29 Police Officers and 16 administration staff who were exempted.

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The CHAIR: Okay. All right. What has the NSW Police Force done to support the mental health of officers who have been stood down, Commissioner?

KAREN WEBB: The officers have the opportunity to—the officers are not stood down; they have taken leave; availed themselves of leave that has been available while they go through the process, and they have a right of appeal to the IRC. Many of those matters are still in the throes of those decisions, so they are still current.

The CHAIR: I am sorry. I do not think that answers the question, does it? I mean, what are the police actually doing to support them?

KAREN WEBB: So all the services that are available to our officers normally are still available to these officers that are at the workplace. Whether it is corona leave or any leave, there are support services always available to the officers.

The CHAIR: Is it leave without pay? Do they get paid while they are going through this?

KAREN WEBB: There would be a variety of different cases at different times. Some officers would have quite a bank of sick leave that they have availed themselves of. I would have to take that on notice whether there is any—

The CHAIR: Can you tell me please what happens when they have run out of all forms of leave, where they go after that if they are still in the process of being exited from the police? Given that in March 2021 both the New South Wales Police Association and the NSW Police Force stated that vaccines would not be made mandatory, who made the decision to mandate vaccines?

KAREN WEBB: That was a decision of the former commissioner based on the risk assessment conducted at the time. When I was the Deputy Commissioner of Corporate Services and in charge of HR and other areas of the organisation, I reaffirmed the need for mandating the second dose based on the change in circumstances, and before the introduction of that there was consultation with the workplace through the union.

The CHAIR: How many New South Wales police staff members have been stood down and/or terminated due to mandates, and how many years of experience are estimated to have been lost due to mandates?

KAREN WEBB: I do not have the number of years lost, but the number of officers removed was 17 under that removal process. In addition to that, 19 have filed an appeal at the IRC. Others I have just given letters to, and six have resigned.

The CHAIR: How much is it estimated to be costing the New South Wales Government in legal costs given that most of those who are terminated are fighting their termination?

KAREN WEBB: I will have to take that on notice.

Answer:

The external legal costs on these matters to date have been approximately \$130,000 (with most of the conciliations, responses to summons and drafting conducted internally).

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The CHAIR: Minister, the structure of the Firearms Registry has changed again recently following the major structural change in August 2019. I understand the organisation chart in April 2022 shows 84 employees, yet the organisation chart in 2020 showed 83 plus 10 Policelink employees. Has there been a net reduction in the registry staff levels?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I might ask Mr Hudson if he is able to provide an answer to that question, if that is all right.

DAVID HUDSON: The staffing has not reduced. The Policelink personnel were previously temporary positions. They are now permanent. They are permanently engaged at Policelink dealing with firearms issues. There was one additional staff out of the last allocation to the registry, so the numbers there are now 84.

The CHAIR: It appears that the dedicated dealers and clubs unit at the registry has disappeared when we look at the organisation chart. Is that correct?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I might ask Mr Hudson if he can comment on that one.

DAVID HUDSON: Without the organisational chart in front of me, I did see it some time ago when it was reviewed. The second review you refer to, Mr Borsak, was conducted at my request in conjunction with the previous commander of police prosecutions Scott Cook. In my mind, even though it had only been changed on the cusp of us taking it over, it was not functioning and it was not aligned and the delegations that were in place were not appropriate to make appropriate decision-making. We had an expert, in my mind, who used to run Policelink come down and defer his retirement temporarily to conduct that review. He is very good at functional alignment and functional analysis. He did that review. That is the current structure we had. I am not too sure if Mr Whyte has the current organisational structure in front of him. I would be surprised if he did. But I cannot tell you.

The CHAIR: We have had one made available on request. That is where the questioning comes from.

DAVID HUDSON: I know there is one, sir, but I am not too sure if I have got it here.

The CHAIR: There is a specialty requirement, in our view, to deal with firearms dealers and also clubs, especially in relation to ranges and things like that. That just does not appear as a unit on your organisation chart.

DAVID HUDSON: It may have been renamed. Yes, sir, I am not sure.

The CHAIR: Do you want to take it on notice?

SCOTT WHYTE: It is the case that it is a different name, but it still remains a team that is dedicated to dealers' and clubs' requirements, and it remains in place. There is also an additional upgrade of a range officer position that falls within that team. It is a naming convention, I understand, but it still remains in place.

The CHAIR: I think the reality is that at this stage the range governance area is massively undermanned, understaffed or whatever you want to call it. There are a lot of issues in

relation to that, as far as I understand. Can the Committee get a copy of the registry's current organisation chart, showing all the positions and work groups? I will hand this up to you—this is a copy of the one I have. I can see Mr Secord is interested in it, so I will organise for you to get a copy too. This is public information; it is not something that is being hidden by anybody. Certainly the police are not hiding it.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Yes, we can provide that.

Answer:

Refer to TAB 1 – Firearms Registry Organisation Chart

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The CHAIR: Regarding prohibited weapon suppressor permits, how many permits for firearm suppressors—they are called silencers in the Act—have been issued since 2015 for business purposes or employment as a genuine reason?

KAREN WEBB: I will defer to Mr Whyte on that. We have that data available.

SCOTT WHYTE: There was a total of six suppressor permits for 2022 and in 2021 there was a total of 58. That is calendar years.

The CHAIR: What changed in administration for it to drop from 58 to six?

KAREN WEBB: We are only counting up to the end of April, so it is only part way through the year. It is a calendar year—January to December.

The CHAIR: You still have a long way to go.

KAREN WEBB: Yes.

SCOTT WHYTE: Yes, there are still a number of applications that are being processed. But again, they are adjudicated from the stance that each application is assessed on its individual merits under the legitimate reason test. There are still a number to be assessed for this year.

The CHAIR: How long are those permits issued for—12 months, two years, three years?

SCOTT WHYTE: I will take that on notice unless the commissioner knows.

Answer:

These particular permits are issued for a period of five years and remain valid whilst the permit holder continues to hold a valid firearms licence for the genuine reason of Vertebrate Pest Animal Control (VPAC).

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The CHAIR: How many have been issued for the purposes of recreational hunting and vermin control, as permitted by law as a genuine reason?

SCOTT WHYTE: I will take that on notice too, if I could, Mr Borsak.

The CHAIR: Of all suppressor permit holders, how many have been charged with criminal offences involving the use of suppressors?

SCOTT WHYTE: I will take it on notice.

Answer:

Nil issued within past two years for the genuine reason of recreational hunting and vermin control.

Of the current suppressor permit holders, no one has been charged with a prescribed offence.

Historical records to establish if there has ever been a permit holder charged with any offence would require substantial analysis of records.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Minister, just a quick question to take on notice for me for this afternoon, if it is possible: Flowing on from the special disaster grants at the RAA, how many applications have been received as of today? How many have been approved as of today.

GARY BARNES: We can do that. Scott Hansen has got back to me and said at the moment the applications are rolling out or being resolved, on average, 18 days after they are received. He has put an extra 15 people on and is hoping to get it down to below two weeks.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: If you get those numbers, that would be handy.

GARY BARNES: Yes.

Answer:

I refer you to p56 of the transcript.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Minister, I want to go on to a series of questions about Eraring Power Station. When did you first learn that Eraring Power Station was going to close?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I do not quite recall but, obviously, there were some issues raised—I do not know if it was early in my tenure as the Deputy Premier or certainly at the end of last year that there were some rumours in relation to the future of Eraring.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Were you aware that the Treasurer was conducting an eight-month modelling exercise regarding the closure of Eraring?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I have had discussions with the Treasurer, obviously, around the fact that this is a large employer in regional New South Wales and that we also need to be looking at what the future is for those communities as they move away from those jobs, and how we can ensure that those communities are going to be given jobs of the future for those workers. We do not want to see them packing up and leaving without being given an opportunity in whatever that future industry might look like within the area, if they are to close as well.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: That is the power workers. Does that also include the workers in the mines?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Yes, absolutely, and I have met with both. I have met with the mining guys as well. I have met with them, and they have obviously raised concerns. We have been talking about the power station, but we also know that there is the flow-on impact of needing both the coal and the coalmining activities to take place to actually feed to the power station. There are a significant number of jobs that are associated with the mine as well.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Do we have an idea or a bit of a picture of just how many of the jobs in the mining sector might be—

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I did. When I spoke to the company they did indicate how many, but I cannot recall exactly what the number was.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Do you want to take that on notice and come back to us about that? Not today, but I just want to get a picture of what it will look like.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Yes.

Answer:

Two mines are key sources of coal to Eraring. Myuna colliery has an estimated 192 FTE for FY21, while Mandalong mine has 575 FTE for the same period.

Both mines have the capacity to pivot to export and take advantage of overseas demand for thermal coal.

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The Hon. WALT SECORD: I would like to ask a few questions to the NSW Crimes Commissioner. Earlier today we asked a number of questions about criminal gangs, international gangs. What work is being undertaken that you can share with us in relation to unexplained wealth and international gangs?

MICHAEL BARNES: Whenever the Crime Commission receives a reference from its management committee, which is a prerequisite to it exercising its coercive powers, the opportunity for proceeds confiscation is one of the matters that is addressed. All of the crimes that the commission investigates are serious and/or organised crime. The opportunity to seize assets is always considered as part of that process.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: There was mention earlier today of following unexplained wealth. How much of your activity is in that area?

MICHAEL BARNES: "Unexplained wealth" is a generic term that might apply to any of the orders sought under the CARA Act under which we bring proceedings. There is also a specific order for unexplained wealth. I have not got the breakdown with me today of which ones were activated in the last 12 months or within that period.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Could you take that on notice and provide it for the last calendar year?

MICHAEL BARNES: Certainly.

Answer:

Type of order		Calendar year ended 31 Dec 2021		Financial year ended 30 June 2021		1 July 2021 to 30 April 2022	
Number	Est realisable value \$	Number		Est realisable value	Number	Est realisable value	
Unexplained wealth orders	30	10,545,551	26	17,805,229	26	8,455,498	
Proceeds assessment orders	1	126,900	7*	1,998,595*	2	665,000	
Assets forfeiture orders	52	33,223,038	58	29,898,631	44	13,631,189	
Total	83	43,895,489	91	49,702,455	72	22,751,687	

*One PAO that was made 28/10/2020 for \$170,000 (and set aside on 23/03/2022), has been removed from the figures above for FY2021. The FY2021 figures were initially 8 PAOs totalling \$2,168,595.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: In April last year for Coroner made 24 recommendations as part of the inquest into the murders of Jack and Jennifer Edwards, all of which were supported or supported in principle by the New South Wales police. I note that there was the announcement yesterday of the review into the Firearm Registry's processes around the licensing of firearms. Will that review consider those Coroner's recommendations as part of that process?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: First of all, let me just say that this is more about the operations of the Firearms Registry itself, so this is about looking at practices that are undertaken at the Firearms Registry. As I said, there have been a number of changes that have been made that have actually worked. Can we do it differently? That is exactly what the McKechnie review is going to be undertaking over the next three months. This will, again as I said, look at whether we can streamline it. We will be looking at our IT systems. It will be actually looking at what controls and safeguards are also in place when handling sensitive information. In relation to the coronial inquest, that is outside of the terms of reference that have been put forward for the McKechnie review into the Firearms Registry. But in relation to that, I might just see if the commissioner has some comments to make in relation to those recommendations that were made at the time.

KAREN WEBB: Thank you, Minister. As you mentioned, there were a number of recommendations made—24, in fact—relating to that very tragic death of those two children at the hands of their father. The recommendations for police related around operations, training and resources, which have already been or are being implemented, as reported, and reporting back to the Coroner. There has been a discussion already around the Firearms Registry and the improvements made there, including the improvements in IT. We have been engaging with the Family Court in relation to better enabling us to share information where there are family law court orders, et cetera, to be passed on to the registry. There has been some additional training for the registry staff around adjudication and decision-making. The first of those training sessions were held in May last year and they continue, and we established—

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I am sorry to cut you off because we might come back to this this afternoon. **KAREN WEBB:** Right.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Would it be perhaps easier if you could provide on notice a list of the recommendations and then where we are up to?

KAREN WEBB: Yes.

Answer:

A copy of the Government Response to the Recommendations of this Inquiry is available online on the Department of Communities and Justice website at <https://www.justice.nsw.gov.au/lrb/Pages/coronial-recommendations.aspx>

A number of the Government's response to the recommendations have been completed, with others partially completed and responses to recommendations that are ongoing.

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The Hon. WALT SECORD: On that point, during the Bega by-election the Premier went to Bega and did a sod turning on the Bega police station. What work has taken place other than the sod turning and putting up a fence around the site?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I would have to come back to exactly what the status of that is, Mr Secord. There are a number of police stations across the State.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: No, I am asking about the Bega police station.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I know the one you are talking about, yes. I remember I spent a lot of time there in the electorate of Monaro, right next door.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I am not asking about Monaro, I am asking about Bega police station. The CHAIR: Why don't you take it on notice?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I will take it on notice.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: I will ask Commissioner Webb, have you updated yourself on the status of the Bega police station and has any construction work actually begun?

KAREN WEBB: I am certainly aware that the sod turn happened. There was an arrangement with the occupier of that land to lease back to maintain employment of that employer and while we were gearing up ready to start construction. Again, I will take on notice how far construction is away.

Answer:

The construction work for Bega Police Station redevelopment is currently underway.

The project is scheduled for completion in December 2023.

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The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Okay, so that would be that one. How is a strike force established? What are the mechanics?

DAVID HUDSON: Depending upon the resources deployed to a particular matter, it is normally within the State Crime Command or the counterterrorism command. Strike forces are created on the current investigation management platform that we call Eagle Eye so that all documents and records can be captured in that IT system. As part of that process, a strike force name is allocated.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: In relation to this particular strike force—if you cannot say, obviously you can take questions on notice—what were the resources allocated to this? How many officers?

DAVID HUDSON: I would have to take that on notice. I think the team is five detectives, with Detective Sergeant McQueen in charge, but I will take that on notice.

Answer:

A Strike Force is an investigation where significant amounts of information are likely to be obtained. To manage the amount of information, investigators use the E@glei investigation management system to record the information obtained during the investigation and to assign tasks and record progress, notes, etc.

The investigation shell is created by an officer with appropriate E@glei access and permissions, usually a Detective Sergeant or above. The strike force name, in this case WYARGINE, is automatically generated when a new investigation shell is created.

Two Detective Sergeants and seven Detective Senior Constables were assigned to this investigation. These officers were available for use on the investigation. However, none were engaged full-time on this investigation.

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The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Were you aware whether or not the police Minister at the time was briefed about the existence of that strike force? Or are these things not usually briefed to the Minister?

DAVID HUDSON: I would be surprised, sir, because I did not know about it.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Again, I am happy for you to take that on notice. Do you know whether or not the strike force engaged in any in-person surveillance or phone tapping?

DAVID HUDSON: I do not know. Not that I am aware of. I would be surprised.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Could you take that on notice?

DAVID HUDSON: Yes.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Was the former police commissioner aware of it? Was the commissioner at the time aware of all strike forces, and this one in particular?

DAVID HUDSON: Before the point of charge?

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: At any point?

DAVID HUDSON: He would have been aware, as I became aware at the time, that the charges against Kristo Langker were preferred. Prior to that, I am unsure. I would be surprised.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Is approval of strike forces at the deputy commissioner level or lower than that?

DAVID HUDSON: Approval of strike forces is normally at the superintendent level.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Commissioner, I am happy for you to take this on notice about the reasons why very few documents relating to the strike force were returned to the Legislative Council, if you could take that on notice.

KAREN WEBB: I will take that on notice, thank you.

Answer:

It is not standard process or protocol to brief the Minister for Police about the existence of a strike force.

The Minister for Police was not briefed about the existence of this particular strike force.

No physical surveillance was conducted as part of the investigation. In respect of telephone intercepts, it is unlawful to disclose information about telephone intercepts, including the existence or non-existence of them except in accordance with the *Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Act 1979 (Cth)*.

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The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Commissioner, I am happy for you to take this on notice about the reasons why very few documents relating to the strike force were returned to the Legislative Council, if you could take that on notice.

KAREN WEBB: I will take that on notice, thank you.

Answer:

The scope of the order was potentially very broad and required Police Commands to identify and review documents across a 27-month period.

Legal advice was sought from the Crown Solicitor. The advice was received on 12 April and tabled on 13 April as a partial response to the order, with a letter advising that the NSW Police Force was reviewing and collating further documents.

Those documents were subsequently produced to the Department of Premier and Cabinet on 10 May 2022.

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The Hon. WALT SECORD: I hope memory serves me correctly. Deputy Commissioner Hudson, this morning you mentioned that there were 11 homicides in relation to gang-on-gang violence in western Sydney. Is that correct?

DAVID HUDSON: That was my evidence, yes, sir.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Those 11 homicides were over what period?

DAVID HUDSON: I think they began at the end of 2020.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: And this includes the homicide last week?

DAVID HUDSON: Yes.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: What is the status of the investigation of those 11?

DAVID HUDSON: They are all at varying stages of investigation. Charges have been preferred in a number of them. I think five are being investigated by the Homicide Squad and I think six by the criminal group squad at the State Crime Command. They have all been taken over by State Crime Command, but they are at varying stages of investigation.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Just to get this accurate, five have involved charges being laid?

DAVID HUDSON: Five are being investigated by Homicide. Many of those task forces have charges laid within them, not for the actual homicide. I think all of them have had charges preferred against individuals under those strike force names for possession of weapons, drug supply and a number of other criminal matters. But I think three of them have—I will have to take it on notice. Three of them have actually been cleared by a charge.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: If you could take on notice—of the 11 homicides, without going into specific details, give me a number of how many involved charges involving the homicides.

DAVID HUDSON: Specific to the homicide?

The Hon. WALT SECORD: Yes.

DAVID HUDSON: Yes.

Answer:

From 14 January 2020 to 14 May 2022, there have been 15 homicides across NSW involving criminal groups. There have been 12 murder charges issued in relation to these homicides.

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The Hon. WALT SECORD: Commissioner Webb, these questions will probably all be taken on notice unless you have any information at hand. This morning you will be aware I asked about the Bega police station. What is the status of the Goulburn police station being built at the academy and when will it start operating?

KAREN WEBB: I will answer the Bega question because I have that information. The tenants who were permitted to stay because of employment in the town have vacated, and construction is about to commence in three weeks. Similarly for Jindabyne, Goulburn is currently, through the planning process, at the planning and design and development application approval process.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: What is the targeted operational date?

KAREN WEBB: I will take that one on notice.

Answer:

The project is scheduled for completion in December 2023.
Operations will commence at the completion of the construction.

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The Hon. WALT SECORD: You mentioned the Jindabyne one. That is on my list. The first sod was turned in Jindabyne. I think it was on the same visit as the Bega visit. When will that police station begin operating? This is Jindabyne.

KAREN WEBB: Yes. So 2023, as I understand, but I can firm up those dates.

Answer:

The project is scheduled for completion in June 2023.

Operations will commence at the completion of the construction.

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The Hon. WALT SECORD: Now, a similar question on the Singleton police station.

KAREN WEBB: Yes, Singleton. I will take that one on notice.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: A commitment was made in 2007, and in 2019 it was reaffirmed, to have a 24/7 police station at Murwillumbah. What is the status of making Murwillumbah police station a 24/7 police station?

Answer:

The project is scheduled for completion in June 2024.

Operations will commence at the completion of the construction.

In relation to Murwillumbah operations, refer to answer on page 17 below.

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KAREN WEBB: To go to Goulburn—due for completion December 2023. Jindabyne, due for completion in June 2023. I do not have a position on Mullumbimby or Murwillumbah as you asked, so I will take that one on notice.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: If you could also tell me about the Gunnedah police station. What are the plans to have 24-hour policing at Gunnedah?

KAREN WEBB: I will take that one on notice.

Answer:

All police stations attached to Police Districts (PDs) and Police Area Commands (PACs) have flexible resources available to respond to incidents across PDs/PACs.

All local resources are also supplemented by specialist police (such as highway patrol, major crime squads, and covert resources), who are managed centrally but can be deployed across boundaries to meet changing community needs and respond to changing crime patterns and emerging issues.

The staffing distribution across PACs and PDs must be considered holistically rather than solely focussed on the head station within the District.

Gunnedah

Gunnedah has a 24-hour policing response consisting of 19-20 hours rostered coverage, as well as receiving support from other Commands within the NSW Police Force.

Murwillumbah

The Tweed/Byron PD utilises all of its current staffing to maintain a policing response across all sectors of the PD, including Murwillumbah. It should be noted that the Murwillumbah sector as with all parts of the District has a 24-hour response available.

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The CHAIR: On 22 March 2022 Illawarra Feral Animal Control sent an email to the registry requesting assistance for obtaining an employee authority permit for an employee to use a prohibited weapon—in this case a silencer. He received an automated response referring him to all manner of issues, but nothing regarding what he had asked for. He sent another email on 31 March 2022 and received the same automated, non-helpful response. Given that this is a small business owner who relies on timely advice from the registry to keep his business running, what is he to do to get the assistance he requires? How do you get on to someone or get a response from someone?

SCOTT WHYTE: I will take that on notice, sir, if I may, to delve into it because I agree that customer service is a priority for us, and especially those people who are being held up on adjudication or issuing permits and who require them for employment. We certainly are prioritising that as part of our day-to-day business. I will look into the specific circumstances of this one on notice.

Answer:

On 18 May 2022, the Firearms Registry contacted Mr Slattery of Illawarra Feral Animal Control by phone, advising him of the requirement for employees to lodge individual applications to the Registry supported by evidence of their employment.

Individuals can contact the Firearms Registry by calling 1300 362 562 between 9am and 4pm Monday to Friday, excluding Public Holidays or by emailing firearms@nsw.police.gov.au.

Firearms Club Officials and Dealers can also contact the Firearms Registry by calling 1800 411 844 on a dedicated line between 9am and 4pm Monday to Friday, excluding Public Holidays.

This information is available online at

https://www.police.nsw.gov.au/online_services/firearms/contact_us.

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The CHAIR: Can I have an update on what is happening with the Firearms Registry Consultative Council, please?

SCOTT WHYTE: Yes. Sir, if this is sufficient—otherwise I will get further detail on notice—the Firearms Registry Consultative Council has been formed and met twice—I believe in April and September last year. That is my information. It is continuing to meet. I have started to go around and meet with the individual members of the council. In the two weeks that I have been in the role, I have already met with two of them. It will be an ongoing consultative body that will assist in myself taking a full briefing to the commissioner on issues pertaining to the management or the administration of the Firearms Act.

Answer:

This information is available online at

https://www.police.nsw.gov.au/online_services/firearms/firearms_registry_consultative_council

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The CHAIR: They do not have a requirement to make a declaration of conflict of interest; it is a voluntary one. Is that what you are saying?

KAREN WEBB: The declaration of conflict of interest is upon the individual to make the declaration, rather than the organisation checking the homework. Whether or not there is a different process in place for the Firearms Registry, there is a different process for senior executives.

The CHAIR: Mr Whyte, maybe you could take that on notice. We have had an ongoing issue with certain employees at the registry who, we believe, are demonstrating anti-firearms, anti-hunting and anti-shooting sentiments, and these people have been acting as adjudicators in the past. I am not going to quote any names, but I think people with those sorts of sentiments should not be employed at the registry at all, if the registry is going to offer fair and proper service to the customers of the registry. Can you explain to me the role of principal strategy and policy manager at the Firearms Registry? That is probably to you, Mr Whyte. After two weeks you should be across all of this.

SCOTT WHYTE: I will not be able to provide it verbatim, but I certainly will on notice, sir.

The CHAIR: I will leave that question then for you to answer on notice.

Answer:

The NSW Police Force has a Conflicts of Interest Policy Statement, which is available online at

https://www.police.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/508304/19_COI_Policy Stmt_437416_19Feb2020_-_external.pdf.

The role of Principal Strategy and Policy Manager is to provide high level strategy and policy advice to help charter the strategic direction of the Firearms Registry in-line with NSW Police Force policy, government objectives and legislation.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I have a few questions for you, Ms Beattie, if I may, picking up on some of the questions that Mr Field was asking earlier in relation to the expert panel overseeing the Hunter region's diversification away from coal. I know that there was some discussion about the transparency over their proceedings, but I am also interested in whether there was a fit and proper person test conducted at the time that these people were appointed to the panel.

GARY BARNES: I might kick that off because it actually does not sit in Georgina's area.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Apologies.

GARY BARNES: Firstly, a Hunter expert panel is an interim panel. The reason for that is we cannot confer status to that until the legislation passes through the upper House. Mr Hanger, who looks after regional development and has been working on transition arrangements from one economic reality to another, might be able to provide some additional advice.

CHRIS HANGER: That panel is meant to be representative of the community in the Hunter. It draws from a range of different community groups that have an interest in what is occurring in the Hunter.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Is there a fit and proper person test applied to the applicants for that panel? Have the people on that panel passed some sort of fit and proper person test?

CHRIS HANGER: They were reviewed by the department and recommendations were put up to the Deputy Premier.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: If there was a person who had been subject to an ICAC investigation and had had adverse findings made against them, would they be allowed to sit on the panel?

CHRIS HANGER: I am not aware of anyone that meets that criteria, but if you have got those details—

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Perhaps you could take it on notice to have a look. My understanding is that there is one person. Out of fairness, I will not name them here. But I have been informed, and I have done my own research, that a person with adverse findings having been made against her by ICAC is sitting on that panel.

CHRIS HANGER: I will investigate and come back.

ANSWER

The appointment of members to the Interim Hunter Expert Panel was guided by the Appointment Standards for Boards and Committees in the NSW Public Sector as issued by the Public Service Commissioner.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: In the budget update there was an announcement of \$110 million over 10 years for the Legacy Mines Program. Are you able to tell me how much of that money has been allocated so far?

GEORGINA BEATTIE: If you just bear with me for a second, please. In the budget there was \$107.7 million allocated over 10 years. The work that the department has been doing since then has been working out a program to remediate the highest risk sites. There are 10 sites that have been identified as part of that new budget allocation. I should add that the Legacy Mines Program tracks over 600 legacy and abandoned mine sites. This new mining is significant to allow us to focus on the highest risk sites, both for safety and for environmental risks. Of that \$107 million, there is \$47.7 million over the first four years. In terms of the works, we have currently been undertaking works at the Ottery Mine site. Those works concluded in March this year. I am just trying to find the details. I might have to take it on notice and come back. The exact answer to the amounts is here somewhere, so I might just find that and come back.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Thank you, that would be very useful. If you could tell us the list of the 10 sites that have been identified as being the most urgent for rehabilitation as well.

GEORGINA BEATTIE: Absolutely.

ANSWER

I refer you to p51 of the transcript.

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Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I will go now to you, Commissioner Webb, in relation to the anti-protest laws that were passed at the end of the last sitting week. I did ask the Minister but I will also ask you, were you personally consulted during the drafting of that bill and how it might apply from an operational perspective

KAREN WEBB: I had some conversation with the Deputy Premier about it. Obviously it moved very quickly at that time, so I would have to take on notice whether there was actually written correspondence. But I certainly had a conversation with him in the lead-up to that going before Parliament.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Once the laws had come into place and we had the regulations passed in order to give it full effect, what happened internally within the Police Force in terms of briefing people and making sure that officers knew what the new laws meant?

KAREN WEBB: I will take that on advice, just to make sure.

Answer:

A "New Law" article was published on 5 April 2022 via a statewide message to all members of the NSW Police Force, advising of the commencement of amendments to the *Roads Act 1993* and *Crimes Act 1900*.

An updated "New Law" article was published on 7 April 2022 via a statewide message to all members of the NSW Police Force, advising of the commencement of amendments to the *Roads Regulation 2018* and the *Crimes Regulation 2020*. The updated article was also published on 5 May 2022 in the May 2022 edition of the internal Police magazine.

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Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I understand that some parts of that legislation are potentially unclear, and that understanding is based on the responses from the Attorney General during the debate. The main area where there was some concern was over the interpretation of the need to get police approval, basically, in order to protect yourself from the consequences of that new offence, and how that overlapped with the process now with putting a form in to the police to notify that you are doing a protest. I think that the Attorney General expressed that he was not 100 per cent sure on that, is my recollection. But the majority of the lawyers I have spoken to have said that they believe that the need for express approval from the police sort of trumps that form in this respect. Is that your interpretation?

KAREN WEBB: I will take that on notice. My understanding is that the Form 1 process is still a requirement, and the new Act gives more effect to the punishment for breaching the form or not submitting a form et cetera. But I do not want to mislead you, so let me take that on notice.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: The question really is, if you have gone through the usual process of putting your form in, whether that gives you protection from the consequences of the bill given that the legislation itself refers to the need for express approval rather than just having notified. It would be great if you could come back on notice. I have also heard from a number of people who have been organising these sorts of protests that there has been some confusion from some police officers as to what these laws actually mean, with some unusual responses in relation to wanting to limit numbers of people or locations et cetera, which is not necessarily everybody's interpretation of the law. If you could come back with information on that, that would be fantastic.

KAREN WEBB: Sure.

Answer:

The new laws do not amend part 4 of the *Summary Offences Act 1988* - the process to hold an authorised public assembly is unchanged.

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Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Are you able to tell me how many people have been charged under the new laws?

KAREN WEBB: No, I will take that on notice.

Answer:

Five people have been charged under the *Roads Act 1993* - section 144G (*Damage, disruption or obstruction of Sydney Harbour Bridge and other major bridges, tunnels and roads*)

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Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Also, how many people were charged during those violent anti-lockdown protests on 24 July? I think we all remember the police horse being struck.

KAREN WEBB: Last year?

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Yes.

KAREN WEBB: Okay.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: If you could let me know how many people were charged during that and what their sentence was, that would be very useful.

Answer:

66 people were charged for COVID related offences that occurred on 24 July 2021.

COVID charges for incidents that occurred on 24/7/21
in Sydney City PAC, Inner West PAC, or South Sydney PAC

Sentence*	Total persons**
Monetary	23
S10A Conviction With No Other Penalty	4
Ico With Conditions	2
Community Correction Order	2
Taken Into Account On Form 1	2
Custodial	2
Sentence Appeal Upheld	1
Conditional Release Order W/O Conviction	1
Cco With Conditions	1
Dismissals/Withdrawals/Discharged	1

**This is only including the court results: conviction proved, non conviction proved and without conviction proved*

*** This is counting the number of persons with this outcome. One person could have more than one offence with different outcomes so they could appear on multiple rows.*

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The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Mr Hudson, turning briefly back to Operation Wigan, my understanding is that it was established to investigate 17 officers, not just one. I will ask my questions to Commissioner Webb, and if no-one can answer them then I am happy for them to be taken on notice. Why was it established? What did it investigate? What findings were made? Have there been any efforts by New South Wales police to prevent any stories about Strike Force Wigan being discussed in the media? In particular, has any arrangement been reached with any media organisation to not publish any articles about the matter? I am happy for them to be taken on notice.

KAREN WEBB: Sure.

Answer:

As this matter relates to a historical professional standards investigation with no adverse findings, it should be treated with the appropriate sensitivity and confidentiality.

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The Hon. WALT SECORD: What has happened in the area? Has, as you said, service returned to normal so to speak, unfortunately, to coin a phrase? What has happened to crime levels, particularly in western Sydney, south-western Sydney and across New South Wales now that COVID is still here but we are carrying on as normally as we can?

KAREN WEBB: Most of the crime categories in the property violence space have gone down across all areas of New South Wales. There has been a steady increase in the domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse type responses. At most of the local area commands and police districts that I visit and talk to staff, domestic violence, for a number of reasons, takes up quite a bit of police time. We respond to over 140,000 calls for service a year, or around 400 matters per day, across New South Wales. There is plenty of work to do out there.

The Hon. WALT SECORD: What about reports of low-level theft, robbery and things like that that, with the lifting of Federal Government support and State Government support and that, there has been an increase in low-level crime, robbery, theft, shoplifting and things like that?

KAREN WEBB: I would have to come back to you with the hard data. I have not seen systemic widespread change in those categories, but I certainly can take on notice whether we are seeing it in particular areas.

Answer:

This information is available online on the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR) website at:

https://www.bocsar.nsw.gov.au/Pages/bocsar_crime_stats/bocsar_latest_quarterly_and_annual_reports.aspx

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: As a former resident of the North Coast and a former shadow Minister for the area, I am very keen on this being a successful innovation. Just in relation to the issue of mobile homes, I know there was a lot of talk with 3,000 homes being rendered uninhabitable and many others being very badly damaged. There was talk of providing mobile homes and places where mobile homes could be established. Is that a role for Regional NSW and this corporation?

GARY BARNES: So, again, it would be us working in collaboration with the planning department and in some cases the Department of Communities and Justice. And just on what we might call interim housing, which might be there for three to five years, David's crew at the moment, public works, are the ones that will go to market, and have gone to market, to get transportable housing flowing. The planning department is looking at identifying suitable sites with local government, and they have done that. They have identified five sites that are fit for purpose across the relevant LGAs. Then it is Justice that will look at the mix and balance of affordable and social housing and how that plays into maybe an opportunity to potentially keep that housing in play as we move forward.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Just to be clear, you have identified five sites where this temporary housing, portable housing, could be located?

GARY BARNES: Yes. Planning has done that.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Have any of those sites been made operational? Do any of them currently have such housing with people in it operating now?

DAVID WITHERDIN: Wallamba, the sort of sports field there, is in the process of that at the moment. I note that the North Coast Community Housing group, as a sort of community housing coordinator, was appointed yesterday to manage that—the allocation of residents to those and so on.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Okay. I am not being critical but, just to be very clear, at the moment no residents are living in portable housing on site, but you are in the process of establishing that.

DAVID WITHERDIN: Yes, but residents are certainly in caravans that have been procured, in sort of mobile homes and then in the Minderoo pods, which are quite a minimalist thing in terms of a shipping container type of design used after the bushfires. Then there is quite an array of housing up to two- or three-bedroom homes that will facilitate full disability access and so on. But that is happening at a great pace there.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: How many of those housing units, if I can use that term, have been acquired so far?

DAVID WITHERDIN: I will take the absolute detail of that on notice. But it is certainly in excess of 60 at the moment—well in excess of that.

ANSWER

The NSW Government to date has procured more than 650 temporary dwellings, with 1,036 bedrooms and capacity for more than 2,000 people impacted by the February-March floods.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: I am happy for you to take this on notice: How many people are needing housing across those seven LGAs?

GARY BARNES: We will take that on notice.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: It is in the thousands, isn't it?

DAVID WITHERDIN: It is in the order. We will take it on notice but certainly in the order of about 2,000 people.

GARY BARNES: As Public Works, through a third-party provider, are going in and doing the assessments—and we have had nearly 1,500 people volunteer to have their premises both commercial and residential assessed—we will get a greater notion of whether those people can build back their existing home or whether they might need to rethink the value of doing that. But as that work is unfolding—and it is happening right now—we will be able to scale up quite quickly the number of homes that we make available to people, as I said, for that three- to five-year-type window.

ANSWER

As of 17 May 2022, there are 1363 people in emergency accommodation in the seven Northern Rivers LGAs. The procurement of temporary dwellings will accommodate this number, as well as have capacity for additional people who may be staying with family or friends or not in emergency accommodation who still require housing.

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The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: This is my last question. We have got 2,000 people needing housing. You have acquired about 60 of these pods or portable homes. How many more will you acquire and what is the time frame for that? And, outside of that housing type, what other mixes of housing are you going to try and use to make sure that everybody gets a roof over their head? Again, I am happy for you to take that on notice.

GARY BARNES: I will take it on notice. The one thing with the housing money that has been made available is that there was an acknowledgement and an assumption that maybe there was already a deficit of social housing up in the North Coast. So that has been factored in as well, and that might impact on the overall number of new housings in the mix and type of them, as we put that alongside of the houses that we put in there to accommodate people who have lost their homes and cannot move back quickly. But we will get that for you. We will talk to our colleagues in DCJ and get that information.

DAVID WITHERDIN: There has been some sort of detailed modelling around that, so we would be happy to produce that.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Happy to see that.

ANSWER

I refer you to p53 of the transcript.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: The Williamtown SAP—as I understand it, the Government is looking at a State-significant development for the SAP. When you said it is a bit different to the other SAPs, is that what you were referring to?

REBECCA FOX: Yes, that is right. A delivery plan by itself removes sufficient constraints in order to facilitate economic development in Williamtown. So we will do a State-significant development process at the same time simultaneously with a delivery plan so that we are removing as many barriers and providing as many opportunities as we can for good development in Williamtown.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Have we done this with any other SAP or is Williamtown the lead SAP for this situation?

REBECCA FOX: Williamtown will be the only special activation precinct where we run a State-significant development process as well, and that is because of the additional constraints that exist in Williamtown.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: There is obviously going to be infrastructure development in Williamtown SAP. How much of that will be private as opposed to how much will be public spend? Do we have those numbers?

REBECCA FOX: No, I do not yet, but that is what we need to determine as we build our business case, which we are doing at the moment for that development. Our aim in all special activation precincts is to promote both private investment and government investment and get as much economic development and jobs as we can into those locations.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: How much have we the taxpayers spent on the Williamtown SAP to date?

REBECCA FOX: I might take that one on notice. I am sure it is in my notes somewhere.

ANSWER

I refer you to p56 of the transcript.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Is there a budget cost for Williamstown SAP as a part of this process? Have we actually created a funding envelope?

GARY BARNES: The money that comes for all of the special activation precincts is an allocation between the \$4.2 billion Snowy Hydro Legacy Fund. Rebecca is right: Government cannot attach money to the provision of economic enabling infrastructure in the SAP until it gets through the gate process of INSW, which means that it needs to have a final business case that determines that it will generate a benefit. To date all of the SAPs that have been through the process have delivered a benefit and money is in the process of being attached, if not been attached, to all of them. The three projects or SAPs that are up and underway are Parkes, as you know, Wagga Wagga and Moree, and we are very close on the Snowys. Then the next cab off the rank will be Williamstown, followed by Narrabri.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I want to finish with the Williamstown SAP, Ms Fox. How much of the Williamstown SAP do we expect will be privately owned?

REBECCA FOX: I cannot answer that at the moment. What we will do as we work through the business case is identify economic activation opportunities and then we will put together a commercial strategy with all key stakeholders to determine the best way to take that to market. Sometimes that might be government-led development and more investment from the Government, and sometimes it might be an open market process whereby a private developer undertakes that. That is the same process that we are undertaking in all the special activation precincts.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Thank you for that. Really my last question on SAPs follows on from Mr Barnes' most recent statement. Is it possible to get a status report on each of the SAPs, essentially where they are up to in their process, how much money has been spent? If I can get a status report, because there is clearly movement in different places, that would be good.

GARY BARNES: Yes.

ANSWER

- Parkes SAP is in delivery phase. The Snowy Hydro Legacy Fund spend as at 31 March 2022 is \$70.9m.
- Wagga SAP is in delivery phase. The Snowy Hydro Legacy Fund spend as at 31 March 2022 is \$13.3m.
- Moree SAP is in delivery phase. The Snowy Hydro Legacy Fund spend as at 31 March 2022 is \$9.7m.
- Snowy Mountains SAP is in development phase, with the master plan expected in Q2 2022. The Snowy Hydro Legacy Fund spend as at 31 March 2022 is \$10.7m.
- Williamtown SAP is in development phase, with the master plan currently on exhibition until 8 June. The Snowy Hydro Legacy Fund spend as at 31 March 2022 is \$4.4m.
- Narrabri SAP is in development phase, with the master plan expected in 2023. The Snowy Hydro Legacy Fund spend as at 31 March 2022 is \$1.2m.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: You also took a question on notice in our previous exchange. I asked whether or not the department had a process for reimbursement being sought for any legal costs. You answered on notice that the department complies with the Premier's memorandum M2019-01, *Guidelines for the Provision of Ex-Gratia Legal Assistance for Ministers, Public Officials and Crown Employees*. Are you aware whether or not former Deputy Premier John Barilaro made a request for ex gratia legal assistance?

GARY BARNES: I am not aware of that, no.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: So I could take it that the department has not paid any monies to Mr Barilaro as a result of any application for ex gratia legal assistance under those guidelines. Would that be correct?

GARY BARNES: That would be correct. I am sure that my general counsel would have made me aware if that were the case. To the best of my knowledge, no. As I said previously, no financial assistance was provided. In fact, our department did not have an active part to play.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: No, I am not suggesting that. You provided that answer on notice. Having read that guideline now myself, it is clear that in the event that an application was made and if it was approved, it would be required to be paid by the department that that Minister was responsible for. I am sure if it was, you would have been aware of it. I am just asking you if that had happened. If I hear you correctly, you are saying that no such money has been paid and you are not aware of any application having been made at this point.

GARY BARNES: Correct.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Could you take on notice whether or not there is a limitation? It is not clear to me in the guidelines whether or not there are limitations on timing. Obviously these matters have not been finalised in the courts. Can you take on notice whether or not there are any limitations on Mr Barilaro making such an application at some stage in the future relating to these matters?

GARY BARNES: I can take that on notice.

ANSWER

I refer you to p. 62 of the transcript.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: The decision to no longer take Resources for Regions funding allocations or projects to ERC arises from a recent review of that program. Is that what happened?

GARY BARNES: It is probably more to the point that the decision-making powers around the expenditure of those funds sit within the gift, I guess, of the Deputy Premier. He has the appropriation for the expenditure of those funds. The guidelines were taken, I believe, through ERC. Therefore, I think there was a determination made, not just for that fund but for a number of others, that if the guidelines were followed and good governance was applied then Ministers could make those determinations.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: So essentially there is a global allocation, usually as part of the budget, and then a number of projects against that allocation.

GARY BARNES: Yes.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: In the past, if I am correct, those individual projects would also go to ERC for approval. What happens now is that for some funds that will not be the case. It will be upon your recommendation to the Minister.

GARY BARNES: Yes.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: So that process for your developing the brief and then recommendations—is that an overly burdensome process within the department?

CHRIS HANGER: It will depend on the volume of applications that you get. Across the Regional Growth Fund we have over 2,700 projects that are currently being managed. I would have said in excess of probably 5,000 to 6,000 applications will have gone through. Obviously they are at various scales, from relatively small grants in the tens to low hundreds of thousands of dollars right up to, in some instances, tens of millions of dollars. The resourcing required to analyse a project of the scale of several millions of dollars or more is clearly going to be a lot more intense than it would be for relatively straightforward payments that are going out at relatively low values. We are building, and have got, quite a significant regional programs team to facilitate those assessments and the administration of the grants once they have been awarded.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Mr Barnes, that was the Resources for Regions fund, but you said there may be other funds that have moved away from an ERC approval process to the new process.

GARY BARNES: Yes.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Are you able to provide on notice to the Committee which funds they are?

ANSWER

Programs that moved away from Expenditure Review Committee approval to Deputy Premier or Departmental approval in 2021 were as follows:

- Regional Jobs Creation Fund
- Regional Events Acceleration Fund
- Regional Tourism Activation Fund
- Stronger Country Communities Fund
- Resources for Regions

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Are you able to provide a list of the probity advisers and/or probity auditors that the department may have used in the last couple of years?

CHRIS HANGER: Yes.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: And, if you can, which programs they were used for. I do not want to know all the dollars; I just want to know who they were for.

CHRIS HANGER: Who oversaw what or who was involved in which programs, yes.

ANSWER:

In May 2021, the Department's Regional Programs Branch established a Panel of Probity Advisors to undertake probity services across its suite of programs. The Panel comprises three providers: Procure Group, Nexia and Centium.

The following list outlines the probity advisors assigned to Regional Growth Fund programs and the Regional Job Creation Fund since the Panel was established:

- Resources for Regions - Round Eight: Procure Group
- Stronger Country Communities Fund - Round Four: Procure Group
- Regional Events Acceleration Fund Round One and Two: Centium
- Regional Tourism Activation Fund: Centium
- Regional Jobs Creation Fund Round One and Two: Nexia

Prior to the establishment of the Panel, the services of Clayton Utz were engaged for the Regional Job Creation Fund Round One.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: That would be really good. I want to go to the Snowy fund, which was originally \$4.2 billion. Trying to get a track of just how much has been spent and committed against the Snowy fund is becoming a bit problematic. I dare say the next State budget will make it even more difficult. Is it possible for the department to provide us, again, not all of the projects but—

GARY BARNES: Yes. In fact, Rebecca, who was on earlier, has oversight of all of the funding as well as the profile for the Snowy Hydro Legacy Fund. I am more than happy to (a) get a breakdown and (b) invite her to brief you during sittings in the next couple of weeks.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: That would be fantastic.

ANSWER

From the Snowy Hydro Legacy Fund as at 30 April 2022:

- \$112.1m has been spent on the precinct priority, from \$617.2m announced.
- \$14.6m has been spent on the digital priority, from \$445.0m announced.
- \$12.3m has been spent on the water priority, from \$15.7m announced.
- \$1.8m has been spent on the freight priority, from \$1.8m announced.
- \$5.0m has been spent on the rail priority, from \$5.0m announced.

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The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I go now to fraud investigation. It was raised this morning in regard to a number of the grants, in particular the North Coast flooding grants. Mr Barnes, the RAA, do they have their own internal fraud investigation unit?

GARY BARNES: I would have to take that on notice. Scott Hansen is obviously listening and he will probably text me the answer in 35 seconds.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: No pressure.

ANSWER

I refer you to p62 of the transcript.

CHRIS HANGER: Yes.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: There was a review for the Resources for Regions program. When was that review conducted, Mr Barnes or Mr Hanger?

CHRIS HANGER: That was before round seven. I am going to say 2019 or 2020. Maybe 2019. I can get the exact date.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: That is okay.

CHRIS HANGER: The review is on the website. I might even be able to find it while—

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: No, that is okay. After every couple of rounds or thereabouts there is a bit of a review of the process and often the criteria changes as to how it is going to be allocated. It has been my experience that from where the criteria started out to where it is now it is quite different. We have explored at previous estimates that where councils have missed out, they are considered in the next round and they do not have to reapply—they get brought in. For this next round—which is going to be, as you said, in the next budget—is that going to be the same process after that review, that councils that have missed out in the previous round will be brought forward?

GARY BARNES: The latest iteration of Resources for Regions that came out of the review has a formula that we liaised with LGAs on and others and it allocates money to an LGA that is mining impacted. So that money is known to the LGA and, as long as they bring forward projects that meet the criteria, they can undertake those projects. There is no particular—as I understand it, Chris—reason why if they do not expend all of their money out of one allocation that they cannot put it with the next allocation to do a bigger project. I talked to all of the people, including Pete Vlatko from Cobar and other impacted folk, at that conference at Western Division, including the new mayor, Tom, out at Broken Hill as well—

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Yes, Tom Kennedy.

GARY BARNES: —and they are delighted with the new arrangements because it takes all of that stuff out of it. One of the reasons that we were able to do this is that the money that we allocated for the last couple of rounds has come out of ConFund, not out of Restart. We still apply a cost-benefit analysis but not a BCR—a benefit-cost ratio. Because the money had previously come from Restart, it needed a BCR. In some of these very small communities you just cannot get a BCR unless you build a road, and they had finished building the roads and bridges that they needed to repair.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: It is the bane of their existence, the BCR. The regional councils raise it on a very regular basis with all of us, I think.

CHRIS HANGER: That review was completed in 2019. It is available online.

ANSWER

I refer you to p61 of the transcript.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I think it has been captured in a set of documents in an SO 52 here as well. I will keep going. Deloitte conducted a review into the Mine Safety Technology Centre, I think, in about 2018 or thereabouts. Can I just ask: How much did that report cost to produce? Do we know?

GEORGINA BEATTIE: Sorry, the review?

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Yes, into the Mine Safety Technology Centre.

GEORGINA BEATTIE: I will have to take that on notice, Mr Veitch.

ANSWER

I refer you to Supplementary Question 221.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: So Coal Services is now essentially doing the safety and technical testing that was previously done by MSTC.

GEORGINA BEATTIE: Most of the services, yes.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Previously, as I understand it, MSTC was funded through the coal levy. Will Coal Services now also receive that coal levy equivalent for that work?

GEORGINA BEATTIE: No, it was funded by the mine safety levy.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Sorry, the mine safety levy.

GEORGINA BEATTIE: Yes, that is right. Given that they are commercial services, Coal Services will be running most of those testing services and the mine safety levy will be staying within the department.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: As a matter of interest, how much of the mine safety levy was actually going to the MSTC?

GEORGINA BEATTIE: I will have to take that on notice. It was around \$2 million. I should say that since the closure of the mine safety levy, it will result in an annual reduction of \$2 million. Obviously it was a commercial service, so that is the amount that—with the closure, that will no longer be required to draw on from the mine safety levy.

ANSWER

Approximately \$2 million.

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The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Mr Barnes, you might want to take this question on notice. It relates to the bushfire recovery. How many people do we still have in temporary accommodation?

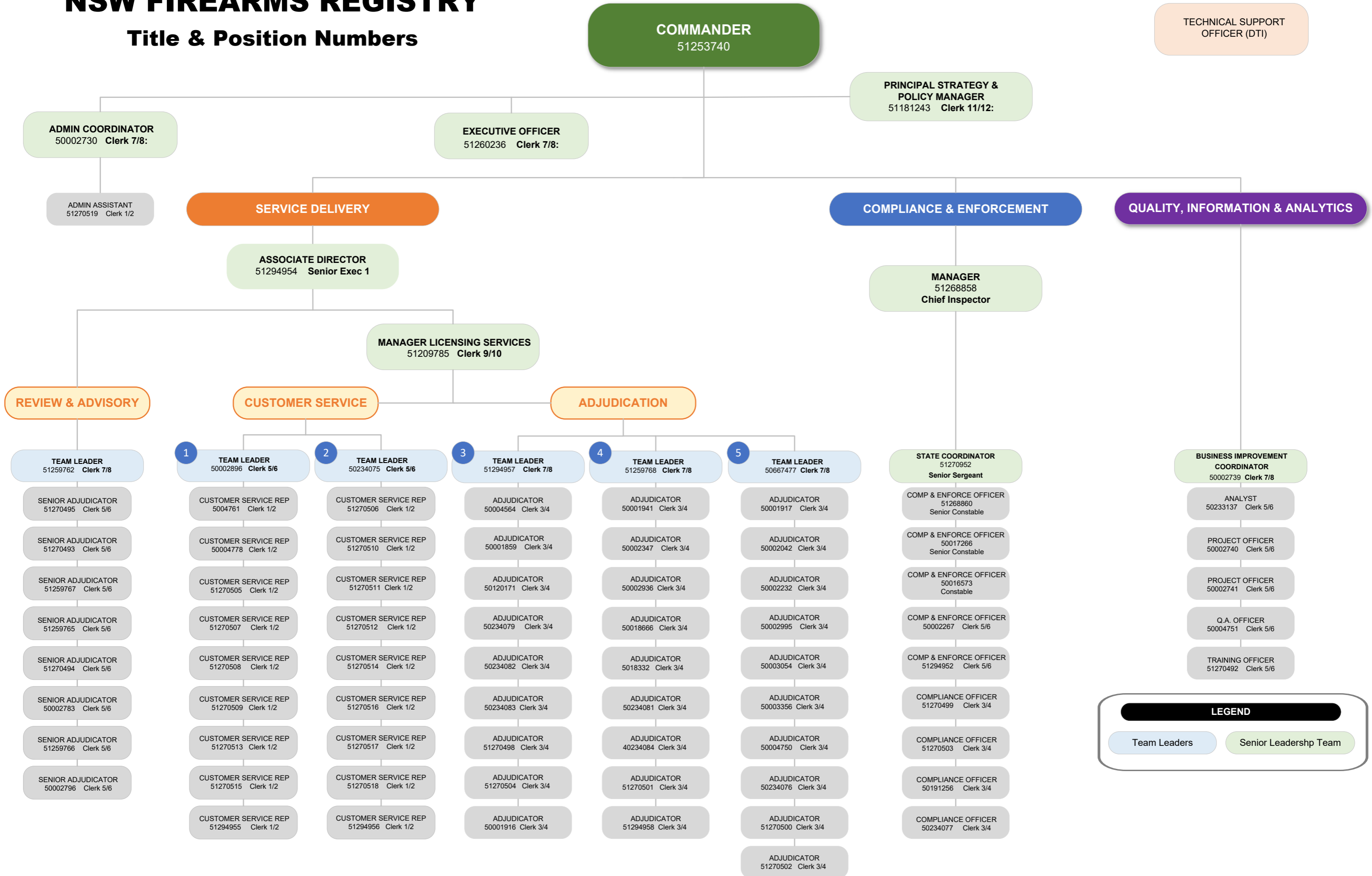
GARY BARNES: That is one that I can find out for you, but that is a Resilience question. Happy to take that on notice.

ANSWER

This is a matter for the Minister for Emergency Services and Resilience.

NSW FIREARMS REGISTRY

Title & Position Numbers



LEGEND

- Team Leaders
- Senior Leadership Team