

PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 8 – QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

28 February 2024

QoN1 – Transcript Pages 6-7

The Hon. WES FANG: Minister, how many Fire and Rescue NSW trucks are currently in operation?

Mr JIHAD DIB: There are 726 appliances that we do have—Fire and Rescue trucks, and there is a variety of trucks across the State. They're positioned all over the State. We also have—

The Hon. WES FANG: I'm going to redirect. How many of those are over 20 years of age?

Mr JIHAD DIB: When you include the service replacement vehicles, so what they're called—the SEVs. I might just seek a bit of clarification but I think there might be about 25 or 26. I can get a clarification for that if you like.

The Hon. WES FANG: How many RFS trucks—

Mr JIHAD DIB: I will add to that—

The Hon. WES FANG: Minister, I'm going to redirect because I've got plenty of questions and you've wasted a lot of my time. How many RFS trucks do you have currently in operation?

Mr JIHAD DIB: Again, I just want to make sure so I don't give you the wrong figure. But would the commissioner—I believe it's about 4,000 appliances across the board.

ROB ROGERS: The RFS fleet is a total of 6,393 vehicles.

Mr JIHAD DIB: There you go.

ROB ROGERS: That's of all types, not just fire trucks.

Mr JIHAD DIB: They're not just fire trucks. They're all the appliances.

The Hon. WES FANG: How many of those are over 20 years old?

Mr JIHAD DIB: I'll have to take that on notice. If you like, I'll come back to you later with the answer.

ANSWER

I am advised that the Rural Fire Service (RFS) has 3037 firefighting appliances which are more than 20 years old. The RFS is spending more money on its fleet now than at any other time in its history, with more than \$100 million currently committed to fleet investment and renewal.

QoN2 – Transcript Pages 15-16

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Hi, mum. Minister, have you fixed the Hazards Near Me app?

Mr JIHAD DIB: You're talking about the—

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: The Hazards Near Me app. Is it fixed?

Mr JIHAD DIB: Yes. What you're talking about there is that there was an unintended consequence when we did an update. I think it had an impact on people with vision issues. As soon as we became aware of that, RFS worked with customer service and the issue was resolved. I'll apologise that that actually happened, but it was an unintended consequence of the upgrade that was required. It's been resolved.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: I welcome that acknowledgement and that you've fixed it, but you would also acknowledge, would you not, that it was broken for several months? Given the importance of an app like this, why did it take so long to resolve the issue?

Mr JIHAD DIB: I'm sorry, Ms Ward. I stand corrected, but I think it was when the upgrade happened and when we became aware of it we got onto it straightaway. I think it might have only been a matter of a couple of weeks or a few weeks. But from the moment that we became aware of it—

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: You might want to check that and come back to us. Nonetheless we're interested in why, with such an important app, that might have taken so long and whether it was a result of the upgrade or whether it was previously part of the structure of the app.

ANSWER

I am advised:

The Hazards Near Me app was jointly developed by the Department of Customer Service (DCS), the Rural Fire Service (RFS) and the State Emergency Service (SES), based on the RFS Fires Near Me app. The Government is committed to ensuring the Hazards Near Me app is accessible to our diverse NSW communities, particularly our most vulnerable residents.

DCS tested the app upon its release and verified it met appropriate standards. An error for members of the low-vision and blind community using screen readers occurred during a

subsequent update. After the issue was raised in two complaints, the RFS, DCS and an independent developer undertook a review of the app in November and identified that the error had occurred in August. RFS and DCS worked with the app developer to identify the cause and restore accessibility as quickly as possible, while minimising the risk of interrupting service on the app during a period of considerable bush fire activity. The app's screen reader functionality was restored via a new release on 10 January 2024.

A schedule of regular testing of the app's functionality, including for screen readers, is now in place with the app developer. DCS is also performing periodic testing. The RFS has committed to including an individual with lived experience to assist with User Acceptance Testing for all further updates, supported by ongoing engagement with Guide Dogs NSW and accessibility experts within DCS.

QoN3 – Transcript Page 18

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Thank you, Minister. Are you aware that the Auditor-General in New South Wales will be undertaking a review into the management of AI by the New South Wales Government?

Mr JIHAD DIB: I know that the Auditor-General undertakes a lot of reviews at different times.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Are you aware of this one specifically?

Mr JIHAD DIB: I might have to take that one on notice, whether it's come across my desk or not.

ANSWER

I am advised that the Department of Customer Service has not received correspondence from the Auditor General in relation to an AI review, and that terms of reference have not been finalised.

QoN4 – Transcript Page 20

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: I'll move on. Are you aware that artificial intelligence currently is being used by New South Wales government agencies in the management of critical infrastructure like dams and emergency services capabilities?

Mr JIHAD DIB: I know that we are using artificial intelligence within that framework and in a practical way. One of the examples too, and one of our focuses, was to see how we could also potentially use it in terms of assisting government in terms of the amount of paperwork—it's not necessarily paperwork because it's not really paperwork given that its digital, but it's effectively like that. An incident-driven artificial intelligence system that provides situational awareness to the RFS, for example, is one that we use—Athena. We use Athena to basically use all of the information that we have—all of the historical information—to be able to better predict where fires might be heading, which actually allows us to better direct resources. That's what I mean by being able to direct resources.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: You might provide further information on notice of those details. That's great.

Mr JIHAD DIB: On Athena?

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Yes, on the groups that are used for emergency services.

Mr JIHAD DIB: Sure, I can—

ANSWER

I am advised that the emergency services use Artificial Intelligence (AI) in several ways, including in:

The NSW State Emergency Service (SES), which is undertaking an innovative Flood and Storm Intelligence research & development project with the University of Technology Sydney to explore the application of the 5G network as a sensor to capture rainfall and water data. This project is exploring the use of AI and machine learning to correlate real-time data with historical and predictive data sources with the aim of determining whether contemporary technologies and AI can enhance the situational awareness and decision-making process relating to floods and storms in real-time.

The NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS), which has developed Athena, an incident-driven artificial intelligence system being used to help improve responses to bush fires and reduce their social and economic impact. The system provides greater situational awareness to RFS operational decision

makers (such as Incident Management Teams and State Operations Controllers) through reliable, timely and scalable intelligence.

Fire and Rescue NSW (FRNSW), which is working with the Department of Customer Service on a proof of concept to triage Fire Engineering Brief Questionnaires and Fire Safety Reports.

QoN5 – Transcript Page 21

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: The Service NSW app of the Government—has usage increased or decreased over the past 12 months?

Mr JIHAD DIB: Can I take that one on notice? I couldn't give you a specific answer on that one.

ANSWER

I am advised that mobile app usage has normalised following the COVID-19 pandemic and the removal of the QR code check-in requirement, with the monthly average of active Service NSW App users over the last 12 months at 3,137,273.

QoN6 – Transcript on Page 21

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: I'll redirect to the department. Under your Government, what improvements have been made to the app?

Mr JIHAD DIB: Ms Ward, if I could just answer that. We finished the app. We've put it onto the other thing. There are also other things that we have included. I'm happy to take any of those on notice.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Can anyone assist? Can anyone who's responsible for the app talk about the improvements that have been made under this Government?

Mr JIHAD DIB: I can come back to you with that, if you like.

ANSWER

Please note this question was answered by Greg Wells on page 74 of the Uncorrected Transcript.

QoN7 – Transcript on Page 23

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Can I just ask you how many audits of agencies—so how many audits of the agency's self-assessments on cyber preparedness—has Cyber Security NSW done in the last year?

Mr JIHAD DIB: Can I take that one on notice? I will answer it, but I'll also then give you a correct answer further if I'm not sure. I know that Cyber Security NSW has been working with all the agencies in terms of, where there is effectively an audit, where they're at—where their potential weak spots are, and how we can improve it. And also looking at how do we make sure that everybody, as well, has got an equal level of at least high protection. That's a really key point for us.

ANSWER

I am advised that Cyber Security NSW does not have an auditing function. It delivers a wide range of products and services to assist NSW Government entities with cyber security uplift. As part of this role, and in response to a recommendation from the NSW Auditor-General, Cyber Security NSW has introduced an assurance methodology in the updated NSW Cyber Security Policy. The assurance methodology ensures government agencies, and their internal audit and risk committees, can consistently interpret, assess, and report against their compliance with the mandatory requirements in the Policy.

QoN8 – Transcript on Page 23

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Does Cyber Security NSW track cybersecurity incidents across the whole of government?

Mr JIHAD DIB: They do. All agencies have to report. There's mandatory reporting not only of government but also mandatory reporting, in general, of breaches so that we can also keep an eye on what's happening around the whole place and what support we could provide.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Does it track those numbers of security incidents over time? Is that something that you're able to give to us so we can look at how things are progressing?

Mr JIHAD DIB: In terms of the tracking, or in terms of the number of cyber incidents?

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: If they're tracking those numbers of incidences. One of the issues that the

Auditor-General identified is that a lot of agencies just simply weren't even reporting those incidents. Obviously, that was before your time. I'm curious, now, if that sort of oversight is being done. Presumably there is a register somewhere of those incidents.

Mr JIHAD DIB: Yes.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Are we able to see at least numbers over time or tracking over time?

Mr JIHAD DIB: Sure, Ms Boyd. There is that reporting, and I'm happy to take that one on notice. I'm confident that we'll be able to give you—off the top of my head, though, I can't. But I'm more than happy to provide you with information.

ANSWER

I am advised that all entities within scope of the NSW Cyber Security Policy must report their cyber security incidents to Cyber Security NSW. Cyber Security NSW tracks all incidents reported directly to them from across NSW Government, including local government, and from stakeholders including the Australian Cyber Security Centre, NSW Police Force, and other states and territories, with details included in a classified report.

QoN9 – Transcript on Page 23

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Perhaps you could also take on notice—there were, I think, four major recommendations from the Auditor-General in that February 2023 report. If you could provide us with a progress statement against those.

Mr JIHAD DIB: Sorry, an update on those four recommendations?

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Yes, where we are at.

Mr JIHAD DIB: I'm more than happy to.

ANSWER

Please note this question was answered by Minister Dib on page 51 of the Uncorrected Transcript.

QoN10 – Transcript on Pages 24-25

The CHAIR: Minister, I want to ask some questions about the Wildlife in Emergencies Sub Plan that the Government published last month. Are you aware that the largest responders to wildlife rescues and disasters in New South Wales, including WIRES, were not consulted about this plan or given any opportunity to provide feedback before it was finalised?

Mr JIHAD DIB: I'm not aware of that but I'll find out for you if that is the case.

The CHAIR: Does it concern you, if that is correct?

Mr JIHAD DIB: I always like to think that we should consult with as many people as we can to try to get things done better. I'll find out a few more details about that particular sub plan and get back to you to see who was consulted and whether there was a way that we could change it—again, more than happy to be able to improve it if we can. I might get back to you, if that's okay.

The CHAIR: Can you also find out if there'll be any public briefings for the wildlife rescue and rehabilitation sector on the new wildlife sub plan to actually explain how it will operate to improve wildlife emergency responses in New South Wales?

Mr JIHAD DIB: I will and I'd be surprised if we didn't have some sort of a public briefing or maybe an information session. I'm more than happy to give you an update on that. Even a work-together at how we might even proceed with that one—more than happy to. With that, though, even though it's the emergency sub plan, it also falls under Minister Sharpe.

The CHAIR: I understand that.

ANSWER

Please note this question was answered by Minister Dib on page 51 of the Uncorrected Transcript.

QoN11 – Transcript on Page 25

The CHAIR: Obviously this is information that my office has received from organisations such as WIRES—that they weren't actually included in any consultation or part of the development of the plan, which seems quite alarming. I also previously asked you in a question on notice if you would support having a wildlife representative on the State Emergency Management Committee. In your answer you indicated that it wasn't needed as the sector was represented by the EPA. On notice can you please advise who that representative is and what role they have within the EPA?

Mr JIHAD DIB: Sure.

The CHAIR: Again, are you aware if this representative has consulted the wildlife sector about their needs and concerns?

Mr JIHAD DIB: Madam Chair, I'll take that—because the first one is on notice, I don't know the person off the top of my head. I don't know what they've done, but we can include that if you like within the context of the answer. Would you like that? We'll include those into the one answer if you like. But certainly we'd be interested to know.

The CHAIR: Organisations that we have spoken to, again, such as WIRES, say that they don't even know who the representative is. I'm just wondering how that person can represent the needs of the wildlife sector if the EPA is not actually consulting or engaging with the sector about their needs.

Mr JIHAD DIB: I would be concerned about it, but the EPA also falls under Minister Sharpe, and she would be able to talk about the EPA specifically. I'm happy to take those other questions on notice, in terms of the committee and advocate for whatever. I'm happy to seek further information for you. But, also, the EPA specifically does fall under Minister Sharpe.

ANSWER

Please note this question was answered by Minister Dib on page 51 of the Uncorrected Transcript.

QoN12 – Transcript on Pages 25-26

The CHAIR: In an answer to a question on notice, you told me that the environment sector is actually represented by the EPA. Again, we're still talking about this management plan that falls under your portfolio, but it sounds like the wildlife sector has actually been cut out of the process.

Mr JIHAD DIB: Let me seek a bit of further information about that. I'm happy to provide you with an answer. I'm happy to also facilitate something with Ms Sharpe. You're right, the plan falls under my portfolio, but there are people who are recommended to that. But let me find out more info rather than give you the wrong information inadvertently.

The CHAIR: Another specific issue of concern for the sector is that the wildlife sub plan, while it claims to be an all-hazards approach, specifically leaves out heat stress events, which are increasingly affecting wildlife, particularly threatened species like flying foxes. Do you know why heat stress was actually left out of the plan?

Mr JIHAD DIB: No, I don't. I can say that I know that heat is part of our other sub plans, but I don't actually know that one specifically, and I'm sorry.

The CHAIR: States like Victoria have specific plans to address extreme heat stress, and it's not omitted from a wildlife sub plan equivalent like it is here. I don't know if it's part of the fact that there wasn't consultation with the wildlife sector around that plan. Do you agree that there needs to then be, perhaps, a review of that sub plan and to include wildlife organisations into that review so that we can make sure that the sub plan actually works for wildlife rescue organisations, given they're the main ones on the ground dealing with emergencies?

Mr JIHAD DIB: The EPA is responsible for that, but if we can look at improving it, then I'd certainly be asking for where we can have improvements and have more consultation, and work out where things can be made better. It would be hard for me and wrong for me to commit to something that I don't have a specific responsibility—I've got a responsibility for it, being as part of the larger plan, but I'm more than happy to support and to advocate, I suppose, towards Minister Sharpe. The truth is that part of the sub plan there rests, really, with her. Whether it's an opportunity—

The CHAIR: So you're saying that the sub plan falls under you, but that particular section suddenly falls under her, without it being at least a combined effort?

Mr JIHAD DIB: There will be the combined effort in the sense of the one big plan, and there are different—think about it as sections within the plan.

The CHAIR: And you're the primary Minister responsible for the overall plan?

Mr JIHAD DIB: Yes, I am. Obviously these are things that I'm just becoming aware of now. We took that one on notice last time. There has been some additional information there. I can't commit to a review of another Minister, but what I can commit to is saying that I'll find out more details.

ANSWER

Please note this question was answered by Minister Dib on page 51 of the Uncorrected Transcript.

QoN13 – Transcript on Page 26

The CHAIR: Can I ask you to speak with the Minister about the sections and the concerns?
Mr JIHAD DIB: Sure. If there are specific concerns—we've got the concerns that you've noted, and we'll find out about those. I give you my word that I'll raise them with her.

ANSWER

Please note this is not a question on notice.

QoN14 – Transcript on Page 27

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Minister, we were talking about the Service NSW app. You're going to come back to us with what new improvements you've asked for during your time. You agreed that?
Mr JIHAD DIB: I said I would, yes.

ANSWER

Please note this question was answered by Greg Wells on page 74 of the Uncorrected Transcript.

QoN15 – Transcript on Page 27

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: —to ask the question that the community wants asked of you. Has the headcount of Service NSW frontline staff remained the same?
Mr JIHAD DIB: I will take that on notice. I believe it has. Obviously the frontline staff is a really key—

ANSWER

I am advised that Service NSW frontline staff numbers have been reduced over the past 12 months through natural attrition in response to demand trends, including as a consequence of contracts for a number of temporary staff engaged through skill hire agencies coming to an end.

QoN16 – Transcript on Page 31

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: Safety action meetings are mandated and go a long way to combating domestic and family violence, yet youth action meetings aren't mandated. They could be a way of identifying children at risk of either reoffending, at harm—a multitude. Would you commit to mandating youth action meetings or advocating that these meetings—

Mr JIHAD DIB: I'd certainly advocate for them. I can't commit to mandating them. But it's a good suggestion and I'm happy to take it on notice.

ANSWER

I am advised:

Youth Justice participates in NSW Police Youth Action Meetings across the state. The NSW Government has announced it will expand the program to 9 additional locations as part of a \$12.9 million investment in state-wide regional crime prevention initiatives, including Wollongong/Lake Illawarra, Tuggerah Lakes/Brisbane Waters, Cessnock, Dubbo, Kempsey, Orange, Newcastle, Port Stephens Hunter Valley, and Lake Macquarie.

Any operational decisions relating to Youth Action Meetings are a matter for NSW Police and the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism.

QoN17 – Transcript on Page 33

The CHAIR: The question was: The New South Wales bushfire inquiry reported that there were 43 section 44 declarations made in the 2019 and 2020 bushfires. I'm wondering what the final operation costs were for each of these section 44 declarations.

ROB ROGERS: I don't have that, but I could get that.
 The CHAIR: Can you take that one on notice for me?
 ROB ROGERS: Yes, absolutely.

ANSWER

I am advised:

- Fire and Rescue NSW has provided a response at Attachment A
- Rural Fire Service (RFS) has provided a response at Attachment B

QoN18 – Transcript on Pages 33-34

The CHAIR: Correct. This one is probably another one on notice: What were the total operational costs for the NSW Rural Fire Service, Fire and Rescue NSW and any other government entity involved in fire operations relating to each of these fires? I actually have a list here, which I will ask to be handed up. Essentially it's a long list of back-burning escapes and incidents as well. If I could ask for that to be taken on notice as well.

JEREMY FEWTRELL: Yes, we will take that one on notice for both agencies.

The CHAIR: The other one is: What was the total cost of fire retardant drops during the 2019-20 season? If you're able to break that down into the cost for retardant per load, the hourly operational cost for each aircraft type and the total number of retardant drops for each aircraft type.

ROB ROGERS: I'm sure you would understand I wouldn't have that on hand. I wish I did.

The CHAIR: Yes, exactly, but I just need you to take it on notice, if that is okay.

Mr JIHAD DIB: I can't believe you don't know that.

ROB ROGERS: We will try our best.

The CHAIR: Are you happy to take than on notice?

ROB ROGERS: Absolutely.

ANSWER

Operational costs for the NSW Rural Fire Service and Fire and Rescue NSW are provided in answer to QoN17.

I am advised that:

Firefighting aircraft deployed in the 2019-20 bush fires dropped various loads of water, gel and retardant to support fire crews in extinguishing fires. The cost of each aircraft's deployments throughout the entirety of the season is not readily available data, noting that the aircraft operating costs remain subject to commercial in confidence.

I am advised that the cost of fire retardant used during the season was approximately \$27 million representing approximately 24 million litres of retardant dispensed across the season.

QoN19 – Transcript on Pages 34-35

The CHAIR: Commissioner, I'm assuming that you're aware of the Busbys Flat fire in 2019? It was a fire that commenced in October as a result of back-burning that got out of control.

ROB ROGERS: Which fire, sorry?

The CHAIR: The Busbys Flat fire. I might ask for this to be handed over to you as well just so that you're aware of what I'm talking about.

ROB ROGERS: I know the name but I can't remember the fire. What area was that in, sorry?

The CHAIR: I might just hand you this so then you have some more information in front of you. Do you know if there has been an investigation into that fire, regarding the response and management issues, regarding back-burning escapes?

ROB ROGERS: There has been a number of fires that have been looked at—certainly the Gaspers Mountain fire, the fire at Conjola. I will have to check if this one was subject to a separate—where we've done an internal look and said, "What worked? What didn't?" Indeed, the coroner has looked

at any of those fires of concern. That has certainly been something being looked at. I would have to come back to you on that, as to whether that—

The CHAIR: Yes, if you could take that one on notice and provide any information around that, if there was an investigation as well, that would be really useful.

ROB ROGERS: Certainly. As a routine, there's always a fire investigation that's done into those.

ANSWER

I am advised:

An investigation was undertaken into the cause and origin of the Busbys Flat Fire as part of Phase 1 of the Coronial Inquiry. The Coroner is due to hand down findings and recommendations on 27 March.

An investigation was also undertaken into the cause of the fire, indicating the cause to be an unintentional human act, possibly from steel belting from a piece of shredded tyre igniting dry crisp grass and leaf matter at the scene.

There is no mention of concerns regarding backburns or property damage in the Incident Controller's Report or from the multi-agency After Action Review.

QoN20 – Transcript on Page 35

The CHAIR: Obviously, fires—obviously, you're a Minister with the emergency response, but then it's also going to affect the portfolios of health. It's also going to affect the portfolios of environment. I guess what I'm trying to understand is this: Is there a whole-of-government approach amongst the Ministers to make sure that there is oversight on this? Because, obviously, we could end up with a situation where the departments are quite disjointed in doing their own work, but when they're working in separation, it's great to have the Ministers making sure there's a whole-of-government approach.

Mr JIHAD DIB: We do have a whole-of-government approach, and I meet quite regularly with Minister Sharpe. We've discussed bushfire recommendations, progress on them, what we could do. I have met with the health Minister. We've had a bit of a conversation, particularly around—and it happened after the last estimates—the issue of smoke as a result of hazard reduction or bushfires themselves. We have got a Cabinet that really works well together and a number of Ministers who will inform me.

The CHAIR: Are there any specific meetings to deal with this, or is it more when something comes up that you'll meet with those Ministers about it?

Mr JIHAD DIB: A bit of a combination of both. So I will meet specifically—if I meet with another Minister, for example, this might be one of the topics that we discuss. Well, I can't say I meet specifically—

The CHAIR: But there's no formal process of saying, "Every now and then, we have a specific meeting for any relevant portfolios to deal with bushfire emergencies"?

Mr JIHAD DIB: No, but the Premier's department does a lot of the work around this. Mr Draper is here, and he could talk about it, from the Premier's department. They then have that overarching view and overarching way of connecting everybody together. So we will meet. But they are also the coordinators of the emergency services and help us out by ensuring that where particular connections need to be made, they can see it. The good thing about having that is when you've got something, effectively, of a bird's-eye view or a helicopter view, you can see where people are, where there are potential gaps. As much as we try not to, as Ministers, get caught up only in our own portfolios, there are sometimes some things that we don't see in that formal sense. So the Premier's department does a fair bit of work there. I don't know whether you want to ask later of Mr Draper or not. I will come back to you later also about the wildlife thing, if we get a chance.

ANSWER

Please note this exchange refers to an earlier undertaking and was answered by Minister Dib on page 51 of the Uncorrected Transcript.

QoN21 – Transcript on Page 37

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Thank you, that's great. Do you know what it costs to run FuelCheck?
Mr JIHAD DIB: Off the top of my head—let me just make sure I give you the correct answer, but I think—

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: You can take that on notice. Also in terms of cost of living, with FuelCheck the average saving is \$800 a year and the cost to run the application per customer is about 3¢. Do you agree that it makes sense from a cost-of-living perspective that it would be a priority?

ANSWER

I am advised the annual operational cost for FuelCheck is \$1.3 million.

QoN22 – Transcript on Page 39

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Why hasn't Data.NSW issued a press release or public update since June 2023?

Mr JIHAD DIB: I'm going to take that on notice.

ANSWER

I am advised Data.NSW has published six updates since June 2023.

QoN23 – Transcript on Pages 42-43

The Hon. WES FANG: Minister, I want to redirect because I want to confirm whether your residents living in the pods are going to be soon charged rent.

Mr JIHAD DIB: When I visited the community out at—

The Hon. WES FANG: So when you said it was free—

Mr JIHAD DIB: Well, you asked me, "Are they free?" I said it's covered free of charge.

The Hon. WES FANG: Are you now going to consider charging them rent?

Mr JIHAD DIB: Mr Fang, when I visited the community—

The Hon. WES FANG: Are you going to charge these people in vulnerable situations rent?

Mr JIHAD DIB: When I visited the community of Coraki—

The Hon. WES FANG: Just answer the question. Yes or no?

Mr JIHAD DIB: —one of the things they were really appreciative of was how we—

The Hon. WES FANG: Yes or no?

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: Point of order—

The Hon. WES FANG: Why won't you answer the question, Minister?

The CHAIR: There has been a point of order taken.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: My point of order, Chair—

The Hon. WES FANG: Obfuscating. He doesn't want to answer.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: The time has expired, but yet again the Minister was asked a question and he can barely get an answer out before the Hon. Wes Fang talks over him with a statement rather than another question.

The Hon. WES FANG: You're misleading us again. There were no answers.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: It's not relevant. He's not answering. He's talking about a visit.

The CHAIR: We're now moving on to crossbench time anyway. If the Hon. Wes Fang wants to put the question on notice, he may.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: We'd like an answer.

The Hon. WES FANG: I did get it out before the bell.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Are they going to pay rent?

The Hon. WES FANG: I would like to know whether they are going to pay rent or not. Are you going to force these people to pay rent?

The CHAIR: You can answer the question briefly, Minister.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: Which one? There were about 10 questions after the bell.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Are they going to pay rent?

Mr JIHAD DIB: There were a number of questions there.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Are they going to pay rent?

The Hon. WES FANG: Are they going to have to pay rent?

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: It's really simple.

Mr JIHAD DIB: We will get back to you with that one.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: You just won't answer if they will pay rent.

The Hon. WES FANG: You're taking it on notice? You don't even know. You don't know if you're going to charge these vulnerable people in pod villages rent.

ANSWER

Please note this question was answered by Minister Dib on page 51 of the Uncorrected Transcript.

QoN24 – Transcript on Page 44

Dr AMANDA COHN: I'm pleased to hear about their inclusion in the planning, but let's talk about funding. I understand the Social Sector Transformation Fund has funded some really excellent projects like the Women's Cottage and the Eden Community Access Centre for about 18 months. Are there any plans for longer term funding like this?

Mr JIHAD DIB: I don't know that specifically. Did you say Eden—as in, in the south?

Dr AMANDA COHN: Yes.

Mr JIHAD DIB: I don't know about that one specifically, but we have also made a commitment in terms of funding agreements. We look at five-year funding agreements to be able to better support community centres, to give them a bit of surety and things like that. But I'm sorry, Dr Cohn, I don't know of that one specifically. I don't know the group.

Dr AMANDA COHN: Those two community centres were just examples, but I was particularly talking about the Social Sector Transformation Fund, which you're welcome to take on notice.

Mr JIHAD DIB: If that's okay.

ANSWER

This question should be referred to the Minister for Families and Communities.

QoN25 – Transcript on Page 44

Dr AMANDA COHN: Have you met with the Local Community Services Association, on the same note?

Mr JIHAD DIB: I don't think I have, but if I have I will take that on notice. There are so many meetings that I have, but I don't recall that one and I don't want to mislead you.

ANSWER

I met the Local Community Services Association on 28 July 2023 in my capacity as the Member for Bankstown about a local matter related to the Greenacre Area Community Centre.

QoN26 – Transcript on Page 51

Mr JIHAD DIB: The other one, if I can add, was the wildlife one. I am advised that the EPA undertook listening tours around the State with wildlife carer groups prior to developing a sub-plan. When the State emergency management centre endorsed the plan in December, it also requested

that a review be undertaken within 12 months to confirm that the plan is fit for purpose, which kind of goes to the point that I made a bit earlier: If we can make it better, we will. The feedback that you have added will certainly be included in that.

The CHAIR: Could I ask you to take on notice when they did the listening tours and spoke to different wildlife groups? Could I get a list of the wildlife groups they met with?

Mr JIHAD DIB: Sure. I think the key point there is that it will be reviewed with a view to improve things.

ANSWER

I am advised that:

The Environment Protection Authority, as lead for the Environmental Services Functional Area, held independently facilitated workshops on the following dates:

- 10 February 2023 – Dubbo
- 13 February 2023 – Sydney
- 20 February 2023 – Grafton.

Representatives of the following organisations attended:

Animal Services Australia, Animal Welfare Unit, Australian Veterinary Association, Byron Bay Wildlife Hospital, Department of Primary Industries, Friends of Koala, Hunter Wildlife Rescue, International Fund for Animal Welfare, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, Northern Tablelands Wildlife Centre, Local Land Services, Odonata Foundation, RSPCA, Sydney Wildlife Rescue, Taronga Western Plains Zoo, Taronga Zoo, Total Fauna Solutions, Vets Beyond Borders, Wildlife Rescue South Coast, WIRES.

QoN27 – Transcript on Pages 53-54

The Hon. WES FANG: Thank you very much for that detail, Commissioner. Obviously the member wasn't seeking to politicise it, which is why they didn't raise it at the time, but I do believe it took two months to get the reimbursements, so that's probably why it wasn't raised.

ROB ROGERS: I'll check on that.

The Hon. WES FANG: Commissioner Fewtrell, how many times has Fire and Rescue been called out to the new Coffs Harbour council building since it was completed?

JEREMY FEWTRELL: I don't have that information to hand, so I'm happy to take that on notice.

The Hon. WES FANG: Are you aware if they are all false alarms? Are you able to take that on notice as well?

JEREMY FEWTRELL: I do have some stats for the Coffs Harbour LGA. So that is more generally, obviously, than just the Coffs council building. There were 176 automatic fire alarms in the Coffs council area in 2023 and 171 of those were false alarms and there were five actual fires reported by those.

ANSWER

I am advised Rural Fire Service (RFS) members were reimbursed within six days of providing receipts for the costs they incurred on behalf of the RFS, as required.

Please note the question to Commissioner Fewtrell was answered on page 91 of the Uncorrected Transcript.

QoN28 – Transcript on Page 56

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Hello. Thank you, Ms Christie. I was interested in the AED Register. It was obviously set up under the previous Government and a lifesaving program. Can you tell us what it costs to run that program annually?

LAURA CHRISTIE: I might have to come back to you on the specific cost of the AED Register—apologies.

ANSWER

I am advised the annual operational cost for the AED Register is \$87,000.

QoN29 – Transcript on Pages 57-58

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: I would be interested in whether that will continue to be funded. Can I coming back to Park'nPay? Are you also dealing with that, Ms Christie?

LAURA CHRISTIE: Yes.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Thank you very much. Can I ask what engagement has been held with councils, mayors, around that program?

LAURA CHRISTIE: Yes, sure. There was a round table that was held with councils and also the disability community—

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: I will get to that.

LAURA CHRISTIE: —earlier this year, and there have been ongoing discussions with councils, who are users of Park'nPay on a regular basis.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: What's the outcome of those? Round tables are lovely and lots of discussions are lovely, but what is the outcome of the round table and what are the next steps?

LAURA CHRISTIE: We are preparing options for the Government's consideration on the future of Park'nPay, and the positions from councils and the disability community are informing those options.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: What's the time line for preparing those options and putting them to the Minister?

LAURA CHRISTIE: They are imminent. Those options are under consideration, so, yes, they will be with the Minister shortly.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: In this quarter?

LAURA CHRISTIE: Before the second half of the year is over, yes.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Given the budgetary process—budget bids—I would've thought that's a necessity. You mentioned the Physical Disability Council—so engagement has been undertaken with the council or with advocates?

LAURA CHRISTIE: Yes. I can get you a list of those attendees to the round table, if you would like. I can take that on notice.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Is that just the one round table or is that ongoing?

LAURA CHRISTIE: I couldn't talk to all of our engagements with various advocates and councils, but I could take that on notice and give you a sense of that, if that would be helpful.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Thank you. That would be helpful. It's obviously imperative to seek their views in the lead-up to a decision about whether to continue this program. Can I ask about the situation with parking sensors and the way in which they help someone with a disability, in the two minutes I have left? Can you perhaps take on notice how many parking sensors have been installed across Sydney? I'm sure that's something that's important. But also, how many are in disability parking places?

LAURA CHRISTIE: Will do.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: I understand disability advocates have lost access to this data. Is that correct?

LAURA CHRISTIE: I would have to take that on notice. I'm not aware of that.

ANSWER

I am advised:

Consultation on the Park'nPay app has been conducted with People With Disabilities Australia and the Physical Disability Council, including council staff and its members; and interested councils across NSW. This included a roundtable with People With Disabilities Australia and the Physical Disability Council, and a roundtable with council representatives. Further ongoing engagement has been undertaken via direct communications including emails, meetings and online surveys.

Access to data about accessible parking spaces remains available from within the Park'nPay app and its website. The app covers 1380 accessible parking spaces with sensors across greater Sydney.

QoN30 – Transcript on Page 58

The CHAIR: I noticed the website confirms that Youth Justice NSW has given funding to various NGOs. I wonder if you are able to provide any information around the services that are being funded and how many are funded within the last financial year.

PAUL O'REILLY: I can, absolutely. We fund a number, and I'll give you a list.

ANSWER

Please note this question was answered by Mr O'Reilly on pages 58 and 59 of the Uncorrected Transcript.

QoN31 – Transcript on Page 60

The CHAIR: I have some questions around emergency services, so I'll put these questions to the variety of commissioners we have. Thank you for your time today. At the last estimates the Minister mentioned that 700 firefighters will be trained in wildlife first aid. I would just like to ask a little bit more about this. I'm wondering if that training, to your knowledge, is optional or mandatory for firefighters?

ROB ROGERS: It was an optional thing for RFS firefighters. We gave the option for them to do it. I'm not sure if I have the numbers. Let me just check if I have the numbers.

The CHAIR: Of how many people took it up?

ROB ROGERS: Yes.

The CHAIR: That would be great.

ROB ROGERS: I'm not sure if I have the numbers on how many did it or whether I have the actual—

The CHAIR: While you are looking for that, as well, it would be interesting to know if you know who actually conducted the training. Was it someone external that was employed in for it?

ROB ROGERS: It was a wildlife first response course developed by the Department of Planning and Environment and the Taronga Conservation Society Australia. It aims to improve the coordination and capability for wildlife response and, particularly for our firefighters who are on the scene, they can maybe assess and provide better information for people like WIRES so that they can do that. The other thing that was done is there was some bushfire awareness training given to WIRES people themselves so that there was more confidence in allowing them into firegrounds earlier, so that they could look after animals earlier rather than waiting for the whole thing to be out, because obviously it's a bit time critical for them to be able to get their job done.

The CHAIR: If you could take on notice how many firefighters did take up that training, that would be useful.

ROB ROGERS: Yes, I will.

The CHAIR: I am wondering as well if there are any records of the number of yearly firefighter interactions with injured wildlife. Is that something that is recorded or kept?

ROB ROGERS: I will check. I don't think it is, to be honest, but I will check for you. If they've called for, say, WIRES to attend, then that probably would be recorded. But if they did it themselves, they knew WIRES—sometimes there are those connections locally that they might do it. It might not be a complete answer, but I'll see what I can find for you.

The CHAIR: If you could find out and then, whatever you do find out, if you're also able to provide those statistics based on the parameters of that as well, that would be great.

ANSWER

Please note this question was answered by Commissioner Rogers on page 91 of the Uncorrected Transcript.

I am advised there are no records of firefighter interactions with injured wildlife. Firefighters may contact animal welfare groups directly or place a request through their chain of command to the Incident Management Team (IMT).

QoN32 – Transcript on Page 61

The CHAIR: I can put it on notice to the Minister directly. I just wanted to ask, around the recent fires, in a media statement regarding the fires in Cessnock and also Narrabri in late 2023, the Government said that freight subsidies for primary producers to help transport animals and food would be provided. Is that run in isolation by the DPI only, or is that something that other agencies have information on as well?

ROB ROGERS: I certainly don't have any. I don't know whether that's the Reconstruction Authority—

JOANNA QUILTY: I can say that those freight subsidies are available under the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements that are in place with the Commonwealth and State governments. They are activated when a natural disaster declaration is made, as happened with that Cessnock fire. The freight subsidy provisions are category A provisions, which means they are stood up once that natural disaster declaration is made. They are administered not by the Reconstruction Authority but by another agency, and I am not sure if we have information—are you wanting to know the quantum of the subsidies?

The CHAIR: I was actually just wondering whether it was done by the DPI in isolation or whether other agencies had involvement in that as well.

JOANNA QUILTY: It is certainly under the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements.

The CHAIR: I might put those questions on notice, if that's easier.

ANSWER

I am advised the Rural Assistance Authority is the administering agency for primary producer freight subsidies related to natural disasters.

QoN33 – Transcript on Pages 64-65

The Hon. WES FANG: I'm going to ask my last question before I hand over to one of my colleagues. It's sort of a tangential link, but a question I'm desperate to ask you, Mr Draper. Obviously, today part of covering the estimates process—and there have been a number of media articles in relation to the questions I've asked the Minister. Not that I'd know, because our media summaries haven't been delivered, so tangentially I'm linking it to the estimates process here. When are we going to get our media summaries back?

SIMON DRAPER: We did get that question. I think it was at the end of the Premier's—another committee.

The Hon. WES FANG: Yes, and it wasn't answered then either.

SIMON DRAPER: Well, I think a pretty good answer was provided. I think we'd offered time to get more information on notice, but the background is that the contract that provided the service of parliamentarians was never linked to the contract that we had in place for government.

The Hon. WES FANG: Yet they disappeared at the same time.

SIMON DRAPER: Yes, that's right. So when the service providers changed over, the previous service provider who had been providing that service—not under our contract, but they stopped providing it to parliamentarians, as I understand it. Anyway, we've agreed to on notice provide more information about that and provide support. I understand the needs. I think it was raised by the Hon. Sarah Mitchell the other day.

The Hon. WES FANG: Yes.

SIMON DRAPER: We've offered to provide some more information and support that process as much as we can.

The Hon. WES FANG: Can we just get our media summaries back? You're probably getting them. As parliamentarians, we need them, and it's now been three months. That's not an answer. I noted the nodding. I will indicate that you nodded, for Hansard.

SIMON DRAPER: The answer was that we will take it on notice. We've already agreed to do that, having discussed it with another committee.

ANSWER

Please refer to pages 35-36 of Answers to questions on notice provided to Portfolio Committee 1 – Premier and Finance from the Budget Estimates hearing on 21 February 2024.

QoN34 – Transcript on Pages 65-66

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: That may be so, but the question from me, Mr Head, is: What preparation is being done by the department into the Auditor General's review into AI?

GRAEME HEAD: The audit is on the forward program, as I understand it. It's described on the Audit Office's website. When the audit itself is initiated, the Audit Office would communicate formally with department heads and agency heads to discuss the scope of the audit and how they're expecting the agencies that they choose to involve in that process. I checked quickly at lunchtime. I am not aware that we have received any such correspondence at this stage, but I will take it on notice to ensure that we give you an accurate response.

ANSWER

Please refer to the answer to Question on Notice 3.

QoN35 – Transcript on Page 67

Dr AMANDA COHN: I'm going to come back to Commissioner Rogers. Last estimates I was advised of fire trail upgrade and maintenance work that was conducted over the 2022-23 period, including the investment figures by the State Government and National Parks and Wildlife Service as well as where trails were upgraded. Can I get an update on where that's up to for 2023-24?

ROB ROGERS: There is a fair bit of info on fire trails. Is it okay if I give you that on notice?

Dr AMANDA COHN: Absolutely.

ROB ROGERS: I can read through a fair bit of stuff, but there is—

Dr AMANDA COHN: No, that's all right. If you've got it to—

ROB ROGERS: I do. There are quite a number of trails that there is work on in different areas and different money being spent. If you're happy, I'll give you that on notice.

ANSWER

I am advised that:

Over the past three years, the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) has allocated and delivered works valued at approximately \$39.7 million covering approximately 1462km of fire trails. This includes planning and delivering upgrades to 52 fire trails, and maintenance or other works across another 31 projects.

Work continues to be undertaken, with \$14.3 million committed to upgrade works this financial year. An additional \$1.1 million will be used for ongoing functional maintenance. In the 2023-24 financial year, 11 fire trails have been completed, 7 are in planning and development, and another 11 are under construction. A total of 36 trails have now been certified to the NSW Fire Trail Standards released in 2023. The list of certified fire trails can be found on the RFS Website -

www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/plan-and-prepare/fire-trails/fire-trail-register

QoN36 – Transcript on Pages 67-68

Dr AMANDA COHN: I just had one particular example to try to understand this better. I've heard that because of a landslide near Bellingen, the shortcut fire trail has been rendered inaccessible to emergency services. The local community sees that as crucial for both flood and fire access to the nearby valley, which only has one road in and out otherwise. The local council has costed that at less than \$10,000 to fix, which really seems astonishingly cheap for this level of work, but I understand it hasn't been done yet. What specific support can be offered when there are these really very localised, short-term priorities while that broader strategy is being rolled out?

ROB ROGERS: Again, it really depends on what the classification of the fire trail is that you're talking about. I would have to look into the particular one, what it is classified as and have we had any request for funding for it. But, in theory, if it's not a deemed strategic fire trail by the local bushfire management committee, then it's not to say that it wouldn't get funding, but it's more unlikely for us to give funding, because our priority has to be to those trails that people deem are

really important for that local area. Now, how they do the consultation locally, I would have to look at the particular one. I'm not trying to be evasive.

Dr AMANDA COHN: Are you able to take that specific one on notice as well as that broader list?

ROB ROGERS: Yes, absolutely. I just don't know the details of that one, I'm sorry.

Dr AMANDA COHN: Moving onto back-burns, which my colleague the Hon. Emma Hurst raised this morning, my understanding is that the University of Wollongong was commissioned to carry out research into back-burning as recommended by the 2020 bushfire inquiry. The latest progress report states: The NSW Bushfire and Natural Hazards Research Centre ... is conducting an evaluation of backburning and firebreak operations to build guidance for assessing risks associated with future backburns. Will that research be utilised to inform the revision of the operational protocols that were released in 2021?

ROB ROGERS: Yes, of course. Whenever there is new research carried out and new guidance that becomes useful, then of course we would look at it. I think it's important to contextualise back-burning operations. Indeed, even in the coronial inquiries that are still underway, it was actually even accepted by expert witnesses of the court—not just RFS—that back-burning was a critical method in containing fires. Of the more than a thousand back-burns that were done in that 2019-20 fire season, less than 4 per cent of them escaped. In saying that, it's not an exact science. I mean, you're introducing fire at not necessarily the ideal time, but it's a balancing act between what the fire could do and what you're trying to prevent it from doing.

Dr AMANDA COHN: Absolutely. My specific question is just about this research that I understand has been funded and is underway. I appreciate your comment that it will be taken into account. Is there a time line for a revision of those operational protocols to be able to take into account that new research?

ROB ROGERS: Let me just see if I've got something in my notes about back-burns. No, I don't have specific on that research. I'll have to take that on notice if I can please.

Dr AMANDA COHN: While you're taking that on notice, I expect this one will be as well, which is how much funding was put towards the University of Wollongong research and how much is now going towards that further research by the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Research Centre.

ROB ROGERS: I will take that on notice, because I'm not sure that that's RFS funding versus more general government funding. I'll have to just check that out for you.

ANSWER

I am advised that:

The Short Cut Fire Trail is located in the Bellingen Local Government Area and is listed in the Coffs Coast Fire Access and Fire Trail (FAFT) plan as a Tactical Category 7 Trail. This trail runs across both private and Crown land. The Rural Fire Service (RFS) has been advised Bellingen Shire Council has received a quote of \$400,000 for potential earthwork repairs. The Coffs Coast Bush Fire Management Committee is focused on Strategic Fire Trails and any available funding is being used to upgrade priority trails. As the Short Cut Trail is a tactical trail, it is considered a lower priority. In the event of a bush fire in the area, fire crews are able to use other trails to gain access to the Scotchman Range area.

The RFS, particularly through its Community Risk section, has a long history of involvement with the research community through direct engagement and participation in programs at a local and national level. This includes RFS involvement in the previous NSW Bush Fire Risk Management Research Hub and previous iterations of the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre, now replaced by Natural Hazards Research Australia, which steers national research partnerships. Any research provided by Natural Hazards Research Australia will be considered as part of any future updates to operational protocols.

The investigation of backburning effectiveness was conducted under the Black Summer-Response research. This research was funded by the Commonwealth Government through the 10-year extension of funding into natural hazard research in Australia. The research leader is Dr Owen Price of the University of Wollongong. The report into backburning was provided as evidence to the Coronial Inquiry into the 2019/20 fires and has not yet been publicly released.

QoN37 – Transcript on Page 69

Dr AMANDA COHN: I can be more specific, if that helps. The Bushfire and Natural Hazards

Cooperative Research Centre is recommending that fire management agencies should create an evaluation database that summarises objectives, outcomes, the number and type of aircraft, drops, type and litres, and ancillary observations such as weather, resources available et cetera. It sounds from your answer that that information exists or that it's kept in your databases. Is the issue, therefore, about the availability of that data for independent research?

ROB ROGERS: Yes, and it wouldn't be in one particular system. There are probably about three or four different systems that data would be in because you've got the strategies that are being employed, which are kept in a system, and the deployment of the actual aircraft and the tracking of that aircraft in a different system. I think we would be able to make data available. I think we just need to understand exactly what's needed. Are you suggesting they've asked us for data and we haven't given it?

Dr AMANDA COHN: I can't speak to whether they had contacted you directly or not, but they were recommending that these databases existed and be either made public or made available on request for research purposes.

ROB ROGERS: If I can get some more detail of what they are looking for, I'm happy to try and give you an answer on that on notice.

ANSWER

I am advised:

The NSW Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre undertook a research project investigating the suitability of aviation tracking data for use in bush fire suppression effectiveness. The report was published in April 2022. The NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) provided fire bombing event data for the 2019/2020 bush fire season in NSW from the National Aerial Firefighting Centre (NAFC) Arena database. This data included 70,000 aircraft suppression drop locations and times from aircraft including helicopters, Single-engine air tankers and Large Air Tankers.

Building on this research, the NAFC is progressing research through Natural Hazards Research Australia to understand how aircraft are used in Australia for firefighting and where they are most effective.

The RFS is involved as an end user and will work with the research team and AFAC to provide the information required to support improved national collation of data.

QoN38 – Transcript on Page 71

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: Mr O'Reilly, again, if I can focus on Youth Justice conferencing. How many conference administrators are there in New South Wales?

PAUL O'REILLY: I'd have to get back to you on that exact number. We have them all over the place.

ANSWER

I am advised that, as of 28 February 2024, there are 190 Youth Justice Conference convenors.

QoN39 – Transcript on Page 75

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Can you share any further new improvements in that work plan other than completing what was—aside from the toll, you mentioned the business aspects. That would be helpful.

GREG WELLS: I think it's important—and the Minister was talking about this also—that the products that we have are constantly enhanced. That's the approach we take to digital development. We have products and there are a range of those products. We continue to enhance those. I've mentioned a bunch of enhancements already, but we've also added odometer checks. We've added in-app payment experiences for getting your driving record, for example. We have added conversational AI to the account and the app to help customers navigate to things they need to find. We've also started to integrate some of the Tell Your Story Once and grants as service capabilities from our learnings from the disaster process into the account and app as well, so those have happened as well.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: In terms of that, there was consideration at one stage—particularly in the Tell Your Story Once space, in relation to women's safety—for the ability to upload documents

and identity, given the challenges around proving identity if you have to flee in circumstances where you're not able to gather your papers let alone anything else. Is that progressing?

GREG WELLS: I'll take that on notice and check specifically on that example, but that sort of model that we're taking with Tell Your Story Once that has been proven in disaster is one we would like to apply to a lot of scenarios. It is more of that holistic care for a customer. I'll come back on notice as to the status of exactly—

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: If you could come back to us on that, that would be very helpful, if there are any steps and what they are and what the time line might be for those. That would be very helpful for a lot of women out there and for providers and supporters who have to deal with that issue on a daily basis.

GREG WELLS: Understood, yes.

ANSWER

I am advised the current focus of the Tell Your Story Once eco-system is to support the use-case of individuals and business requiring disaster support. Service NSW has processes in place to ensure that appropriate support is sourced and provided to vulnerable individuals, regardless of identity documentation.

QoN40 – Transcript on Page 76

Dr AMANDA COHN: I'm interested in recommendation 6 of the flood inquiry. I'm not sure if this question will be for Commissioner York or for the Reconstruction Authority. That was a recommendation for an Indigenous first responders program. Has there been any work done to progress that?

CARLENE YORK: I will just have to check my papers, sorry. Recommendation 6 I have noted as a community first responders program, which might have taken that into account as well. We have made significant progress on the SES spontaneous volunteering program and developed all hazards educational resources that we've placed out to communities as well. We have been working a lot on liaising with communities, getting feedback and putting accurate information out to them in relation to how they can be spontaneous volunteers, what the risks are when they come in, because there is an issue with the safety element as well—

Dr AMANDA COHN: I have seen some of that work on spontaneous volunteers, which is great.

CARLENE YORK: I think you know a lot about it.

Dr AMANDA COHN: I am specifically interested in any work with local Aboriginal communities in flood-affected regions or how that program is interacting—

CARLENE YORK: I know our community capability groups do work with local Aboriginal communities out there, so if I can take that on notice I will be able to give you some more accurate information, but we're certainly reaching out to those communities because of the different risks that they have where they are located.

ANSWER

I am advised that:

\$3.4 million in funding was allocated in 2022 to expand the Aboriginal Communities Emergency Management Pilot (ACEMP) from four to eight communities as part of a package to address Recommendation 6 from the 2022 Independent Flood Inquiry.

The ACEMP, led by Aboriginal Affairs NSW, is providing Aboriginal communities with increased capability to prepare, respond to, and recover from emergencies through building sustainable relationships and access to training, resources, funding, and employment opportunities.

QoN41 – Transcript on Page 79

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: You may need to take this on notice, although typically you actually may know this: How many use-of-force incidents in the past 12 months?

PAUL O'REILLY: Yes, I do have that information.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Yes, I thought you would.

The Hon. WES FANG: It doesn't surprise me that he's got it.

PAUL O'REILLY: It's a really important issue.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: It is, and the numbers really matter. How many use-of-force incidents last year were on those body cams?

PAUL O'REILLY: Sorry, I don't have that.

ANSWER

I am advised that in 2022-23, 367 use-of-force incidents were captured on body-worn cameras.

QoN42 – Transcript on Pages 80-81

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: E-conveyancing, Mr Head. I understand the Government has mandated dates for competition in e-conveyancing. What are the consequences for companies like PEXA and Sympli if the dates are not met, and will the dates be enforced?

GRAEME HEAD: There's a range of discussions happening with stakeholders at the moment including both of the ELNO, PEXA and Sympli, around the implementation process. I should say that—I'm not sure if we have the registrar here with us today but, as the New South Wales member on ARNECC, the registrar would be able to give you more specific questions.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: I will do the questions if I can just get the answers.

GRAEME HEAD: Give you more specific answers, I'm sorry.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: It's this time of day, I understand.

GRAEME HEAD: There is a process. I've met with both of the ELNOs and also with other stakeholders including the Australian Banking Association. As you would expect with a complex reform like this, there are concerns about time frames and whether or not those time frames can be met. ARNECC itself has published those time frames. ARNECC regulates the system that's been put into place. My understanding is that we're working through the issues that are being raised by stakeholders in that process.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Is it on track for those dates, to the best of your knowledge?

GRAEME HEAD: As far as I understand at this point.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Could you take on notice and ask perhaps the registrar what the consequences are if they're not met?

GRAEME HEAD: Yes.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: I'm hoping they are and it won't be an issue—as we all are—but if they're not, specifically will those dates be enforced? That would be helpful. Does New South Wales intend on placing interim milestones in the program to ensure the December 2025 dates are on track?

GRAEME HEAD: I'd have to take that on notice, I'm sorry, because the program rollout is governed by the arrangements that were put in place by all of the governments who participated. ARNECC plays the key role in that. On any question of detail around the rollout of this, I'll need to take that on notice.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Which is why I'm asking about New South Wales' intention for milestones in the event that it's not. That would be helpful. New South Wales has an enforcement regime that it has yet to use. If necessary take it on notice, but do you or the Registrar General intend on using the legislation to hold the participants to account on that, particularly PEXA?

GRAEME HEAD: Again, I would need to take that on notice in respect of the general approach that ARNECC is taking to these matters.

ANSWER

I am advised that:

Dates for implementing the interoperability competition reform in NSW have been established in regulation, with Electronic Lodgement Network Operators (ELNOs) required to design, build and test interoperability by December 2025. The design, build and test processes are currently on track and require ongoing and constructive participation from participants,

There are a range of potential consequences if ELNOs fail to meet the timeframes in the regulation, and the NSW Registrar General has powers under the *Electronic Conveyancing Enforcement Act 2022*, including to issue binding directions and seek financial penalties up to \$10,000,000.

The NSW Registrar General is considering the need for interim milestones to ensure ELNOs remain on track to deliver the reform by December 2025.

QoN43 – Transcript on Page 81

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: In December 2023 the New South Wales Government released the

connectivity index, which gives a statewide view of connectivity across New South Wales. We can see there are huge disparities in the—I can see somebody smiling. If anyone needs to be coming forward while I'm asking this. Thank you, Ms Christie.

The Hon. WES FANG: Usually it's dread.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: We can see there are huge disparities between the CBD, Western Sydney, and regional and rural areas. For example, I'm reliably informed that Randwick has a connectivity ranking of 83 out of 100—100 being the best—and Canterbury Bankstown has a rating of 48. Can we understand some of the initiatives that are being undertaken to close that connectivity gap?

LAURA CHRISTIE: I'll just clarify why Digital.NSW and the NSW Telco Authority developed that connectivity index. The NSW Telco Authority runs the Public Safety Network that the ESOs rely upon for communication.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: For Hansard, you might elaborate on ESOs, just so we're making sure—

LAURA CHRISTIE: Sorry. Emergency service organisations. No acronyms—apologies.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: All good.

LAURA CHRISTIE: With the information that the NSW Telco Authority has from connectivity in relation to the PSN, the Public Safety Network, they have used that information to pull together the Digital Connectivity Index, along with some data that they receive from telcos as well as the Commonwealth. We don't have policy responsibility for connectivity per se, but we use the insights that we have to put that information together and put that on the public register through the Digital Connectivity Index.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: It seems that there is a gap, though—and I'm not asking you to talk policy—but given that, is there any move or preparation to try and feed in solutions to that or is it really we're just aware of it and that's the way it is?

LAURA CHRISTIE: Yes. A lot of it is about having clarity on where there are gaps, because there is no obligation on the telcos to make those connectivity issues known. So, in this sense, information is powerful. That is part of the strategy behind the Digital Connectivity Index.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: If you need to, take it on notice: what steps, if any, might the Government be considering taking? It might be a question for the Minister.

LAURA CHRISTIE: Sure. I'll take that on notice.

ANSWER

I am advised:

The NSW Government is continuing to partner with industry to deliver improved mobile, internet and digital services, such as the large-scale investment under the Regional Digital Connectivity Program led by the Department of Regional NSW which prioritises enhancing connectivity to the most underserved areas of the state.

NSW Telco Authority, in partnership with Regional NSW, is supporting delivery of the NSW Government's \$50 million Connecting Country Communities Fund which invests in communications infrastructure to improve voice and data connectivity in regional NSW. This includes a \$39 million investment to deliver more than 140 new or enhanced mobile base stations across the state and \$11.5 million to deliver high-speed fixed-wireless broadband to about 4,000 premises in the Monaro and Kangaroo Valley regions.

The NSW Connectivity Strategy aims to align and optimise government digital connectivity initiatives to ensure communities have meaningful connectivity across the state. As part of the Strategy, the state's first NSW Digital Connectivity Index has been created to identify connectivity gaps across NSW. By pinpointing areas with low scores, the index supports prioritised investment in digital initiatives in areas that need improvement, helping to ensure resources and assets are directed where they are needed most.

NSW Telco Authority is also supporting delivery of the \$3.6 million Community Connectivity Project which aims to improve digital connectivity and address safety and wellbeing risks for communities impacted by natural disasters. This includes a research study to help inform long-term investment in digital connectivity as well as the development of 20 'connectivity first-aid kits', portable technology solutions which can be deployed quickly during and after disasters to provide immediate connectivity support for communities.

The Government has also introduced new principles that establish obligations to ensure that new NSW Government-funded infrastructure over \$10 million, as well as major upgrade and renewal projects, include up-front consideration, planning and funding for the appropriate digital connectivity infrastructure to meet customers' needs now and into the future. The new principles came into effect on 1 March 2024.

QoN44 – Transcript on Page 82

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: On those pilots, just to get a feel for timing—obviously I don't want to lock in anything—what are the end dates for those and then the review dates after that? What are the next steps once they're done?

LAURA CHRISTIE: We're currently working on a pilot for a digital first aid certificate. I don't have the exact time line for that, because it's still under development, but I'm happy to take that on notice and come back to you.

ANSWER

I am advised that:

The digital First Aid Certificate has successfully completed a technical proof of concept and is progressing to a pilot. The pilot is anticipated by the end of this financial year, dependent on successful completion of testing and assurance.

QoN45 – Transcript on Page 82

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Just on conveyancing—sorry, back to conveyancing again, Mr Head. In relation to—this is a random one—the preparation of contracts for sale of a house or duplex with a swimming pool, presently it requires two certificates. One is a compliance or noncompliance certificate from a private certifier at the council level, and a registration certificate from the New South Wales government level. In Victoria this is one certificate. Is there any move to consider lessening regulation and making it easier to do conveyancing in New South Wales by combining those, as Victoria has done?

GRAEME HEAD: I can't comment on the specifics of that, but I can take it on notice. As a general proposition, this entire exercise has been about simplifying and making these processes easier. But, as I indicated before, as to the specifics of any element of eConveyancing, they're really matters that I'll need to discuss with the registrar and take on notice.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: I probably should have phrased it that way. Given that the intent is to reduce red tape, will that be a consideration? If you could take that on notice, that would be great, thank you.

ANSWER

I am advised that:

In most cases, sellers will only need to include one swimming pool certificate in the sale contract, either a valid certificate of compliance issued under the *Swimming Pools Act 1992* or a valid certificate of non-compliance issued under the *Swimming Pools Regulation 2018* following an inspection under the *Swimming Pools Act 1992*.

For newly constructed pools, the vendor can include an occupation certificate issued under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* that is less than 3 years old and authorises the use of a swimming pool. They must also include evidence that the swimming pool is registered on the Swimming Pools Register to show a nexus with the works covered by the occupation certificate. This option reduces the administrative and cost burden to sellers because sellers who already have an occupation certificate do not also need to arrange a separate swimming pool compliance inspection, and there is no fee for vendors to register the swimming pool.

QoN46 – Transcript on Pages 82-83

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: I'm just wanting to understand why the two of those are standalone, understanding that in other areas there is one. This is getting to better regulation, I suppose, and less red tape and duplication, which is, after all, one of the benefits of Service. It seems that you

have to go and get the RSA certificate and then take that to Service and apply for a competency card. Is there a reason for the duplication? Is there any opportunity to reduce that duplication?
 LAURA CHRISTIE: Sorry, that's not a question for me. It might be a question for the Minister for liquor and gaming because of the process that sits under that.
 The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Potentially, but given that the RSA runs through Service—
 GRAEME HEAD: We can look into that for you. We don't have the answer at hand, I'm sorry.
 The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Thank you.

ANSWER

This question should be directed to the Minister for Gaming and Racing.

QoN47 – Transcript on Page 86

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I was told about one called Stand As One, and it was at Frank Baxter, and that it saw three of the 16 participants that were released from custody go on to reoffend in that next 12 months. I'm trying to think of where I get the information from now, but even though the sample number was small, there was evidence suggesting that it was a very good program. Do you think it's a similar program to the one you're referring to?
 PAUL O'REILLY: I'll need to check that. It could just be referred to as something different, but I'll check.
 Ms SUE HIGGINSON: If you wouldn't mind.
 PAUL O'REILLY: Of course.

ANSWER

I am advised this is the same mentoring program Mr O'Reilly was referring to on page 85.

QoN48 – Transcript on Page 89

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Have there been any allegations of a sexual assault nature across any of the centres over the past 12 months?
 PAUL O'REILLY: Sexual assault—there have been allegations of sexual harassment between staff and there has been certainly allegations of behaviour that resembles grooming behaviour in the centre and that has gone through the misconduct process. I am not aware of sexual assault allegations against staff on young people, but I will double-check that because I was away from the system for a while doing another role, so I'll check that.

ANSWER

I am advised there have been three allegations relating to sexual assault in NSW Youth Justice Centres over the past 12 months. These allegations were referred to the Department of Communities and Justice Conduct and Professional Standards which has a process to refer matters to Police.

Attachment A

	S44 FRNSW Reference Number and Initial Short Name Area of Declaration	FRNSW Cost \$
1	S44 19-20002 CLARENCE VALLEY & RICHMOND	724,517.69
2	S44 19-20001 KEMPSEY NAMBUCCA LGAs	121,641.83
3	S44 19-20003 RICHMOND, KYOGLE & LISMORE	176,871.67
4	S44 19-20004 PORT MACQUARIE HASTINGS	71,935.52
5	S44 19-20005 ARMIDALE REGIONAL COUNCIL	59,582.08
6	S44 19-20006 GLEN INNES, INVERELL+4 LGAs	189,104.49
7	S44 19-20007 LITHGOW LGA	93,006.63
8	S44 19-20008 PARTS OF CLARENCE VALLEY	84,121.81
9	S44 19-20009 RICHMOND VALLEY LGA	182,964.39
10	S44 19-20009 RICHMOND VALLEY LGA (OPERATIONAL COMMS RAPPVILLE DEPLOYMENT)	-
11	S44 19-20010 NARRABRI, GWYDIR, TAMWORTH	11,596.62
12	S44 19-20011 PORT MACQUARIE HASTINGS	206,058.63
13	S44 19-20012 KEMPSEY & NAMBUCCA SHIRE	83,616.33
14	S44 19-20014 NUNDLE FIRE TAMWORTH LGA	62,221.25
15	S44 19-20013 CLARENCE VALLEY-GLEN INNES	78,742.55
16	S44 19-20015 BALLINA SHIRE + 5 LGAs	90,179.68
17	S44 19-20018 MID-WESTERN REGIONAL	18.34
18	S44 19-20020 NARRABRI GWYDIR & MOREE	10,367.86
19	S44 19-20021 TAMWORTH UPPER HUNTER	11,685.08
20	S44 19-20024 SNOWY MONARO REGIONAL LGA	230.92
21	S44 19-20025 GEORGES RIVER CANTERBURY	28,605.18
22	S44 19-20026 SINGLETON & MUSWELLBROOK	3,098.37
23	S44 19-20027 CENTRAL COAST LAKE MACQUARI	26,616.85
24	S44 19-20028 MAITLAND CESSNOCK DUNGOG	47,131.02
25	S44 19-20029 HORNSBY KU-RING-GAI	2,553.87
26	S44 19-20030 BLUE MOUNTAINS BATHURST	27,223.12
27	S44 19-20031 HAWKESBURY LGA	68,082.72

28	S44 19-20032 SHOALHAVEN WOLLONGONG	360,531.66
29	S44 19-20033 SHOALHAVEN + EUROBODALLA	225,884.29
30	S44 19-20034 WOLLONDILLY LGA	53,337.53
31	S44 19-20035 QUEANBEYAN-PALERANG LGA	22,083.67
32	S44 19-20036 CESSNOCK & PART SINGLETON	76,215.77
33	S44 19-20037 MIDWESTERN LGA	5,010.70
34	S44 19-20038 BLUE MOUNTAINS LGA	155,453.74
35	S44 19-20039 CENTRAL COAST & HAWKESBURY	54,183.96
36	S44 19--20041 EUROBODALLA & BEGA VALLEY	118,239.22
37	S44 19-200040 SNOWY VALLEYS&WAGGA WAGGA	55,105.70
38	S44 19/20042 the Greater Hume Local Gov	15.79
39	S44 19/20043 Snowy Monaro Regional	77,200.85

Attachment B

	S44 RFS Reference Number and Initial Short Name Area of Declaration	RFS Cost \$	Duration (days)
1	S44-19/20001 Kempsey and Nambucca LGA	2,147,003.23	12
2	S44-19/20002 Clarence Valley LGA	3,345,019.86	21
3	S44-19/20003 Richmond Vallee, Kyogle and Lismore LGAs	2,016,767.10	11
4	S44-19/20004 Port Macquarie Hastings and Mid-Coast LGAs	6,634,347.57	39
5	S44-19/20005 Armidale Regional Council and Glen Innes, Inverell, Tenterfield, Uralla and Walcha LGAs	50,657,097.87	132
6	S44-19/20006 Glen Innes, Inverell, Tenterfield, Uralla, Walcha and Part of Clarence Valley	15,315,233.91	131
7	S44-19/20007 Lithgow LGA	343,814.20	4
8	S44-19/20008 Part of Clarence Valley LGA	1,419,177.83	6
9	S44-19/20009 Richmond Valley LGA	5,626,431.83	23
10	S44-19/20010 Narrabri, Tamworth and parts of Gwydir LGAs	3,290,683.76	15
11	S44-19/20011 Port Macquarie Hastings and Mid-Coast LGAs	34,889,094.36	86
12	S44-19/20012 Kempsey & Nambucca Shire Council LGAs	14,585,275.02	84
13	S44-19/20013 Clarence Valley LGA excluding the area where the Clarence River meets the Clarence Valley LGA boundary	31,519,144.87	68
14	S44-19/20014 Tamworth LGA	1,183,093.31	6
15	S44-19/20015 Ballina, Byron, Kyogle, Lismore, Richmond Valley and Tweed Shire LGAs	18,758,149.47	59
16	S44-19/20016 Blayney, Cabonne, Cowra, Orange, Parkes, Forbes, Weddin and Lachlan LGAs	50,650.08	2
17	S44-19/20017 Dubbo Regional and Narromine LGAs	62,035.23	2
18	S44-19/20018 Mid Western Regional LGA	74,773.06	2
19	S44-19/20019 Warrumbungle and Gilgandra LGAs	1,321.16	2
20	S44-19/20020 Narrabri, Gwydir and Moree Plains LGAs	314,499.59	2
21	S44-19/20021 Tamworth LGA	8,407,752.76	69
22	S44-19/20022 Eurobodalla and Bega Valley LGAs	100,050.39	2
23	S44-19/20023 Yass Valley, Upper Lachlan, Goulburn Mulwaree and Queanbeyan Palerang Regional LGAs	47,360.18	2
24	S44-19/20024 Snowy Monaro Regional LGA	149,530.02	2
25	S44-19/20025 Georges River, Canterbury Bankstown, Liverpool, Camden, Campbelltown, Wollondilly, Wingecarribee, Penrith, Blacktown and Fairfield LGAs	120,994.71	2
26	S44-19/20026 Singleton and Muswellbrook LGAs	67,797.65	2
27	S44-19/20027 Central Coast, Lake Macquarie and Newcastle LGAs	117,790.29	2
28	S44-19/20028 Maitland, Cessnock, Dungog, Port Stephens LGA	678,177.93	5
29	S44-19/20029 Hornsby, Ku-ring-gai, Northern Beaches, Lane Cove, Mosman, The Hills and Parramatta LGAs	51,887.76	2

30	S44-19/20030 Blue Mountains, Bathurst, Oberon and part Lithgow LGAs	350,923.59	2
31	S44-19/20031 Hawkesbury and part Lithgow LGAs	25,855,762.72	74
32	S44-19/20032 Shoalhaven, Wollongong, Shellharbour, Kiama and Sutherland LGAs	249,119.63	2
33	S44-19/20033 Shoalhaven LGA plus part of Eurobodalla LGA	26,873,272.33	74
34	S44-19/20034 Wollondilly LGA	41,858,916.93	70
35	S44-19/20035 Queanbeyan-Palerang LGA	13,711,635.90	77
36	S44-19/20036 Cessnock and part Singleton LGAs	8,547,387.35	55
37	S44-19/20037 Mid-Western, Part Upper Hunter and Part Muswellbrook LGAs	12,827,879.08	52
38	S44-19/20038 Blue Mountains LGA	8,768,338.31	49
39	S44-19/20039 Central Coast LGA and part of Hawkesbury LGAs	5,287,566.94	34
40	S44-19/20040 Snowy Valleys & part Wagga Wagga LGAs	38,095,219.29	48
41	S44-19/20041 Eurobodalla & Bega Valley LGAs	30,604,707.55	65
42	S44-19/20042 Greater Hume LGA	4,217,178.82	23
43	S44-19/20043 The Snowy Monaro Regional Council	33,193,766.18	56