File ref. no: D24/81738

Mr Jason Li
Chair, Public Accounts Committee
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

16 July 2024

Dear Mr Li,

Re: Public Accounts Committee Inquiry into accountability measures for decision-making for the delivery of major infrastructure, contracting of public services and/or the privatisation of public assets in NSW.

I refer to the Public Accounts Committee Inquiry into accountability measures for decision-making for the delivery of major infrastructure, contracting of public services and/or the privatisation of public assets in NSW and the hearing conducted on 11 June 2024.

Please find enclosed Fire and Rescue NSW's (FRNSW) responses to the Committee's supplementary questions following the hearing.

Should the Committee require further information, please contact ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ or the FRNSW Government Relations team at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮.

Yours sincerely,

Jeremy Fewtrell AFSM
Commissioner

Encl

Accountability Measures for decision-making for the delivery of the Critical Communications Enhancement Program (CCEP)

Supplementary Questions

Question	Answer
Time delay 1. How does Fire and Rescue NSW monitor and report on the impacts of the delayed implementation of the Critical Communications Enhancement Program (CCEP)?	**Answer:** Fire and Rescue NSW (FRNSW) obtains and reports information regarding CCEP delivery from/to the following external forums: • CCEP Program Steering Committee • CCEP Projects Control Group • Monthly Executive Customer Forum meetings • Monthly Customer Account Management meetings • Infrastructure NSW quarterly Health Checks and audit interviews
ESO costs 2. How has the delivery of the CCEP reduced Fire and Rescue NSW's costs to maintain its own communications system?	**Answer:** With the delivery of the CCEP, Fire and Rescue NSW (FRNSW) has decommissioned approximately 40 sites along the North Coast with another 25 planned for decommissioning over the next six months. FRNSW has further realised other savings: • Modifications to network management and planning • Reallocation of internal resources (On-site support and maintenance)

Question	Answer
3. What additional costs has your agency incurred to maintain its own system due to the delayed delivery of the CCEP?	**Answer:** As the majority of FRNSW equipment is within its serviceable life, there have been no significant increases in costs to manage/maintain the remaining Private Mobile Radio (PMR) equipment. Under the Stay Safe and Keep Operational (SSKO) Program, FRNSW has deployed a solution for the areas outside Public Safety Network (PSN) coverage to enable firefighters to be always connected through Vehicle as a Node (VaaN). This work has an associated increase in the capital replacement and recurrent costs including service and maintenance of the units, licence fees for software, and carriage costs.
4. Since the start of the CCEP, have your agency's core user charges increased? If so, are these increases matched by enhanced service?	**Answer:** Yes – the increases reflect the increased quantity and capacity of Public Safety Network (PSN) sites. The PSN provides enhanced services over Fire and Rescue NSW's Private Mobile Radio network, such as: • better interoperability • authentication • increased density of coverage • 24x7 service desk • fully managed network; and • real-time dashboard.
Benefits realisation 5. Does Fire and Rescue NSW measure and report on whether the proposed benefits of the CCEP have been realised?	**Answer:** Fire and Rescue NSW provided input into a NSW Telco Authority requirements document in 2018-19. Some items were listed as either not achievable or partially achievable, which was formally accepted.
6. What is Fire and Rescue NSW's view on the public reporting on the benefits realisation for the CCEP?	**Answer:** Fire and Rescue NSW continues to work with Infrastructure NSW who is responsible for gathering feedback on whether the proposed benefits are being realised through the Gate 6 Benefits Realisation Report.

Question	Answer
7. Is there anything that is not currently reported to the public or to your agency, that Fire and Rescue NSW think should be reported?	**Answer:** No.
In-building coverage 8. How important is in-building coverage for Fire and Rescue NSW's operations?	**Answer:** In-building coverage is critical to Fire and Rescue (FRNSW) operations. FRNSW is legally responsible for the provision of fire, rescue and hazmat services in cities and regional and outer metropolitan areas across the State. Firefighters require effective communication systems to maintain firefighter accountability and safety. The Public Safety Network (PSN) is ideal for firefighting operations as it provides greater flexibility and structure in communication plans, adapted to suit the specific needs of the incident. It was a FRNSW requirement in the scope of the CCEP that in-building coverage be provided for all buildings in fire districts. Until this is achieved, FRNSW is using alternative ad-hoc communication options.
9. The Committee understands that when the CCEP concludes and funding ends, new or refurbished buildings, particularly in the private sector, may not have in-building coverage. How would this affect Fire and Rescue NSW's operations and how can this risk be addressed?	**Answer:** Fire and Rescue NSW (FRNSW) will continue to operate ad-hoc, bring-your-own-coverage (BYOC) radio communications to incidents until effective, comprehensive in-building coverage is made available (PSN or otherwise). FRNSW operations remain unaffected by the lack of coverage as the agency continues to use BYOC for incident ground communications as its communication strategy. PSN will continue to be used as the primary method of wide area communications, including for information transfer from the control point of in-building incidents to other locations such as Communications Centres and Command points.

Question	Answer
Authentication	**Answer:**
10. Page 6, of the Auditor-General's report to Parliament, Management of the Critical Communications Enhancement Program, noted that all ESOs required that the enhanced Public Safety Network should have the capability to authenticate terminals to prevent cloning of terminals. What risks or adverse outcomes could your operations face if unauthorised persons are able to clone terminals and access the Public Safety Network?	Fire and Rescue NSW (FRNSW) acknowledges the risks that the Public Safety Network (PSN) is open to external parties wanting to 'listen'. This includes the potential for cloned or unauthorised radio terminals. FRNSW's standard practices are to manage the content being transmitted on the PSN, ensuring private and secure information is transmitted via other mechanisms (e.g. Mobile Data Terminals, mobile phone etc). If a cloned radio appears on the network, there is a risk that the 'original' FRNSW radio is prevented from connecting to the network. This is addressed as FRNSW crews have multiple communication methods where the user can revert to an alternative means. FRNSW also works closely with the NSW Telco Authority to identify and remediate any cloned radio IDs to maximise unique device access and prevent users from being restricted in their ability to effectively access the PSN. Current fireground tactical operations are conducted on simplex or direct mode communications. This eliminates the risk of cloned radios being blocked, as they do not need the PSN to communicate. The risk primarily exists for vehicle mounted radios which are less susceptible to cloning as they are less likely to be stolen, accessed by members of the public, etc.

Question	Answer
Governance arrangements 11. Page 6, of the Auditor-General's report noted that ESOs will decommission their own radio communication networks and migrate entirely to the PSN. The Committee understand that this means Fire and Rescue NSW will depend entirely on the NSW Telco Authority to provide their primary mission critical communications. Does Fire and Rescue NSW have any concerns regarding governance arrangements after its radio networks are decommissioned and Fire and Rescue NSW completes its migration to the PSN?	**Answer:** Fire and Rescue (FRNSW) has decommissioned all FRNSW radio sites that are fully served by NSW PSN sites. FRNSW is unclear of the planned ongoing governance framework that will be implemented post-completion of the CCEP and its capacity to facilitate effective contributions from the ESOs. FRNSW supports the re-instatement of a NSW Telco Authority (NSWTA) led Working Group to engage collectively with ESOs and leverage the general expertise of the ESOs in the radio communications industry.

Question	Answer
Other 12. The Committee understands there is a self-service portal linked to the CCEP project schedule database that allows stakeholders to access project data at any point in time. Does your agency interact with this portal and what has been your experience with it?	**Answer:** Fire and Rescue NSW (FRNSW) has not interacted with the portal.
13. The Auditor-General made several recommendations to the NSW Telco Authority as outlined on page 8 of their report. Is Fire and Rescue NSW satisfied that these recommendations are being addressed?	**Answer:** Fire and Rescue NSW (FRNSW) continues to work with the NSW Telco Authority and other NSW Government agencies, and is satisfied the recommendations are currently being addressed and/or have been completed.