

PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 8 – QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

09 September 2024

QoN1 – Transcript Pages 9-10

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I will come back to the commissioner this afternoon. One of the other issues that has been identified is that a lot of these emergency services don't have ongoing Working with Children Checks. In particular, the RFS—again, I understand there is one at the time of employment but then you can be in the service for 20, 30 years and never have to do another Working with Children Check. Is that something that concerns you, Minister?

Mr JIHAD DIB: Obviously my background is education. I have very much a strong interest in that sort of thing. I understand that there are people within the RFS with Working with Children Checks; it also depends on the role that they play. These are things that I'm happy to further explore. But people who supervise children, like when they go out to schools and do fetes and things like that, as we know volunteers do, they're expected to have Working with Children Checks, I'm advised.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: But not the RFS?

Mr JIHAD DIB: No, they're within the RFS.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I think you might need to check that.

Mr JIHAD DIB: I'll check that.

ANSWER

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

QoN2 – Transcript Page 12

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Minister, last year we had issues with multiple RFS volunteers having to refuel RFS trucks with their own money. How many times has this occurred since the last budget estimates?

Mr JIHAD DIB: Those fuel cards that we're talking about—and I remember that. I think Mr Fang gave me something. They're the responsibility of local government, and the commissioner could talk more to it. I don't have a specific number. But what I can say is that, if that does happen, then they're resolved usually within 24 hours. To give you one example—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: I don't need an example. You've told me the fact, Minister.

Mr JIHAD DIB: You give me an example, then.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: I know of an example where it took a few weeks for an MP to be repaid, let alone your average volunteer who's just volunteering their time. Minister, you got asked this at the last budget estimates. Did you not think to ask about this issue, on behalf of your volunteers, so that we could fix the problem?

Mr JIHAD DIB: Ms Munro, just on that point—and maybe we can get it clarified. You might want to check, with the MP, when they actually lodged the claim for reimbursement, because it may have been a couple of weeks, but I'm under the understanding that they may not have lodged that. I'm happy to stand corrected, but I'm reliably informed that normally, within a very short period of time—I'm talking about 24, 36 hours—there is reimbursement. Maybe you might want to check that with your MP. I'm happy to be corrected. I'm happy to find out the specifics. I'm happy, if that's the case and it has been a couple of weeks, to ask the commissioner to speak to them.

ANSWER

There was no undertaking to take the question on notice.

QoN3 – Transcript Page 12

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Is that what you would ask an average volunteer when they made a submission?

Mr JIHAD DIB: I want to know that this is actually a situation where somebody has made the claim and then they weren't rectified within a few days. I said I am going to give you one example, Madam Chair, if I can, at this point. There was one that I'm aware of where, in a very small remote town, the actual fuel card wasn't accepted by that servo. As a result of that, the person then had to pay using their card. That was reimbursed, I think, within a day, Commissioner? There are a very small number of cases—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Can I clarify, how much is that? How much does an RFS truck cost to refuel?

Mr JIHAD DIB: I'll have to take that on notice because, obviously, trucks are—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: You would imagine it's fairly substantial.

Mr JIHAD DIB: It depends on the size of the truck and it depends on how much fuel was there.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: It would be in the hundreds of dollars, Minister.

ANSWER

I am advised the average cost to fill a fire truck with diesel costing \$1.96 per litre would range from \$196.60 to \$393.20, depending on the type of truck.

QoN4 – Transcript Pages 13-14

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: At the previous budget estimates it has been clear that hazard reduction targets are falling behind. Out of a target of 313,000 hectares, 174,000 hectares were left untreated with hazard reductions last financial year. Given that the overall statewide targets have not been met, which areas of the State are most behind their targets?

Mr JIHAD DIB: I'm sure the Committee would be well aware of the amount of rain that we've been having in the past 12 months. Indeed, I think the last—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Sorry, Minister, that's not my question. I'm just wondering which places are the most behind.

The CHAIR: Do you want to clarify your question, Ms Munro?

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: I'm clarifying that I'm asking which places are most behind.

Mr JIHAD DIB: I'm giving a bit of context with that, Ms Munro. Hazard reduction can only occur at certain times, in certain windows and when the conditions are right. If anyone was around Sydney yesterday, you might have picked up a little bit of smoke in different parts of the State. There was also a bit of smoke because there was hazard reduction. What we've done is we've had a real focus on, whenever the opportunity arises, making sure that we get our RFS out there. We're also working with other agencies. There was a commitment of \$10 million to also employ hazard reduction crews so that we didn't also just rely on the volunteers, because there might be times when it comes up. Whilst we may have been less successful with those targets because we physically couldn't—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Minister, I appreciate the context. But I would really like an answer to the specific question that I asked.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: Point of order: If these are any more than flippant attempts at pointscoring—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: They are not.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: —then the Minister should be allowed to answer a question, provided it's relevant, in any way he chooses. The Minister is being directly relevant to the question that was asked by the member.

The CHAIR: The Minister may answer the question the way he chooses.

Mr JIHAD DIB: I'm answering that way. I'm giving that context because it's easy to say the targets haven't been met without understanding why and what we are doing about it. Yesterday the RFS and Fire and Rescue were both out there because the conditions were right. There was a \$10 million investment by this Government to be able to employ mitigation crews. We have focused on—

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: **Chair**, my question was quite specific. Which areas of the State are most behind their targets?

Mr JIHAD DIB: I can tell you that 78 per cent of targets, particularly around protecting homes, properties, businesses and communities, have been met. Indeed, there's a pilot, I believe—even with education at the moment—where we are using whatever opportunity we have to focus on the priority areas. We're looking at protecting people, property and infrastructure. I can come back to you with specific data.

ANSWER

Please refer to the answer provided to QON LC 2588 - Emergency Services - HAZARD REDUCTION.

QoN5 – Transcript Pages 19-20

The CHAIR: In respect to grants and funding currently made available by the NSW Reconstruction Authority, is any of that made available to animal rescue groups?

Mr JIHAD DIB: There are a number of different grants that groups can apply for. I dare say that if there was a particular group that applied for the grant, if they fit within those criteria—I don't know specifically if there's one off the top of my head.

JOANNA QUILTY: Certainly, under the Disaster Ready Fund, of which there were 19 projects worth \$68.9 million overall funded in the previous round, there would've been a number that were aimed at or there for animal rescue groups. I know that in round two there were a number of applications. We can certainly provide you with that information this afternoon.

The CHAIR: That would be really helpful.

Mr JIHAD DIB: That's the point. It depends on the applications. People might do it with that focus. That'd be really great, if we had one specific.

ANSWER

I am advised that NSW suitability screening for the Disaster Ready Fund reflects the Commonwealth assessment criteria, considering the risk/hazard being addressed (and potential to mitigate the risk), alignment with regional, state and federal plans and strategies, and likelihood of success (implementation capability). This may include, where applicable, animal rescue groups.

QoN6 – Transcript Pages 20-21

The CHAIR: I'm going to move on to RFS questions. I know that it was already raised with you this morning by Ms Abigail Boyd—the concerns that volunteers are not getting formal police checks or Working with Children Checks. Now that this is something that has been brought to your attention, is that something that you'll commit to looking further into?

Mr JIHAD DIB: I'm not 100 per cent sure about the police checks. I thought there had to be police checks. Is that right, Commissioner? I stand to be corrected, but I thought there had to be police checks.

ROB ROGERS: Yes, everybody that joins the RFS is required to do a police check, whether they're staff or volunteers. There are some historical members that wouldn't have gone through that process because of when it came in, but that process has been in for—I'd have to get the exact date—probably 15 or 20 years.

The CHAIR: Is there any way of retrospectively going back? I'm assuming that's what the concern is that has been brought to our office—that there are some that may be there from 15 or 20 years ago that have skipped that process.

ROB ROGERS: It's true that there may well be. We haven't done that retrospectively. The only trigger is when someone moves brigades. If they change brigades, they're then required to go through that process. With Working with Children Checks, anybody who has a role, be it staff or volunteer—so if they have a cadet group in that brigade and they have someone who coordinates that activity, they're required to have a Working with Children Check. We have quite a number of people that—

Mr JIHAD DIB: Adult members of cadet brigades, if they're doing activities with young people—

ROB ROGERS: Correct. I'll stand corrected, but I'm pretty sure anyone who has the potential to be alone with junior people is required to have a Working with Children Check.

ANSWER

There was no undertaking to take the question on notice.

QoN7 – Transcript Page 25

Dr AMANDA COHN: I'm glad to hear that that work's happening. For someone who's deaf or hard of hearing, can they access 000 outside of business hours yet?

Mr JIHAD DIB: I might just take that one on notice so I don't give you the incorrect—I'm just conscious that, with something as important as that, I don't give you the wrong answer. I'll give you the detail on that one, if it's okay, Dr Cohn.

Dr AMANDA COHN: Absolutely. I look forward to that answer on notice. It is obviously extremely important for that group of the community.

ANSWER

I am advised:

People who are deaf or have a hearing or speech impairment have 24/7 access to the Triple Zero Call Service via the National Relay Service (NRS).

People can use a Teletype Terminal (TTY) to call 106, a text-based emergency call service provided by the NRS.

Other options to reach Triple Zero 24/7 via the NRS include:

- Speak and Listen emergency calls - by ordinary phone or mobile phone – dial 1800 555 727 and ask for Triple Zero. This provides access for Speak and Listen callers who use an ordinary phone or mobile.
- By internet relay - <https://internet-relay.nrs.call.gov.au/> - where people can ask the relay officer to connect you to Triple Zero

The Triple Zero Emergency Call Service is delivered by Telstra and regulated by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA).

QoN8 – Transcript Page 26

Dr AMANDA COHN: I look forward to following up on that work. I'm just going to jump across to the RFS. I've got a lot to cover in 20 minutes. How much has the RFS spent on aerial fire retardant in the past financial year?

ROB ROGERS: I'll take that on notice, but I don't believe we have spent anything. We bought a huge amount in 2019-20, and we've had that stored around the State, and we've been depleting those stocks before we order more. I will confirm that with you, but I don't believe we would've spent—unless you mean how much have we used in a year versus how much we've spent on it.

ANSWER

I am advised that the RFS did not purchase aerial fire retardant in the 2023-24 financial year.

QoN9 – Transcript Pages 26-27

Dr AMANDA COHN: That's quite a comprehensive answer to the part about storage and disposal. In terms of the use, you mentioned the need to avoid sensitive waterways or organic farms et cetera. Have you done any audits to check that it actually is not being deployed on those areas?

ROB ROGERS: I will have to check. I know where there has been inadvertent, accidental discharge into watercourses there have been inquiries into what has happened from that. If it's okay with you, I'll take that on notice and get you a fulsome answer on it.

Dr AMANDA COHN: In taking it on notice, you mentioned those couple of inquiries about when it has been notified. I would be really interested to know what work has been done since then to make sure it doesn't happen again.

ROB ROGERS: Absolutely.

ANSWER

I am advised:

NSW has requirements for a 100-metre product exclusion buffer from waterways set out in guidance from WaterNSW and the EPA. Local RFS Operations Plans may contain details of specific areas where products are excluded or limited. This information is included in the Air Attack Supervisor (AAS) and Aircraft Officer Training Materials. The RFS is not aware of any incidents of retardant being dropped in waterways during the 2023-24 financial year.

QoN10 – Transcript Page 27

Dr AMANDA COHN: I've got some questions about the Aboriginal cultural landscapes project. Who is the right person to ask? Is that you, Commissioner?

ROB ROGERS: For cultural burning?

Dr AMANDA COHN: Yes, that's right. It was the \$4.5 million project that was announced for cultural burning to control roadside strips of native title-owned land.

ROB ROGERS: There is a cultural burn group which we're part of. I would have to check out the details. I can tell you what RFS is doing with regard to supporting cultural burning, but I would have to take on notice that specific group. I just don't know, I'm sorry.

Dr AMANDA COHN: That's all right. I'm happy for that one to be taken on notice. I'm also interested that there was a particular pilot on the South Coast that has been reported in the media as quite successful. This may be part of your on-notice answer. I'm interested in if there is any work being done to look at extending that to other areas.

ANSWER

I am advised that project is led by Transport for NSW (TfNSW). The RFS has been assisting the TfNSW Aboriginal Cultural Landscape Management Project to improve the resilience of the transport corridor network at locations throughout the state including the Northern Tablelands, Northern Rivers, Bega Valley and Merimbula.

QoN11 – Transcript Page 28

Dr AMANDA COHN: I was particularly interested to read about this particular project that has been taken on notice. It is proposing to control roadside strips of native title-owned land. Certainly under the previous Government huge amounts of roadside vegetation was cleared in the name of fire

prevention and some of that vegetation was key habitat corridors. I'm particularly interested if this is an alternative way of managing risk around roadsides.

Mr JIHAD DIB: I think it is certainly one of them. Correct me if I'm wrong, Commissioner—I do sometimes pay attention—but cultural burns also burn a little bit slower and lower and less hot, so it actually has a better and not as destructive impact, potentially, when it come to some of the wildlife. We'll look at all the different potential ways of conducting hazard reduction and use the one that is most appropriate. Certainly if this one is appropriate in particular parts, then that's what we'll do. We need to manage the risk of hazard reduction, but it shouldn't just be a complete slash and burn. Let's try and do it in a responsible way.

ROB ROGERS: Sorry, if I could, we might just check also with Transport. It might be a program with Transport as well, I think. We'll make sure we check that out as well and we'll include that in our response.

ANSWER

I am advised this question was answered on page 28 of the uncorrected transcript.

QoN12 – Transcript Page 28

Dr AMANDA COHN: I have a few questions about the State Rescue Board. I understand that they didn't produce annual reports for 2020-21 and 2021-22. I appreciate it is before your time, Minister, but are those annual reports available?

Mr JIHAD DIB: It is before my time. I'll be frank with you, I haven't really looked at that. The last report I looked at was 2022, I think.

JEREMY FEWTRELL: There has been work to finalise a report for that period.

Mr JIHAD DIB: Was that the COVID period?

Dr AMANDA COHN: I'm asking about 2020-21 and 2021-22. Commissioner, you just indicated that work is underway?

JEREMY FEWTRELL: Yes, there is work underway to produce those.

Dr AMANDA COHN: When can that data be expected to be publicly available?

JEREMY FEWTRELL: I'll take that one on notice.

Mr JIHAD DIB: I don't have a clear answer on that one but the Premier's Department is coordinating and putting it together and working on it, so there will be something. The Premier's Department is coordinating it all.

Dr AMANDA COHN: I understand that the State Rescue Board collects data on the number of rescues performed by various units, but I'm also interested to know if that includes road crash rescue performance and things like the actual outcomes or the response times.

Mr JIHAD DIB: I'm not sure. The collection of the data would be a whole range of data that's collected, not only in terms of the type of incident but also how that incident was resolved. I'd like to think that they would have a collection of all the available data. But it might be best with this one, Dr Cohn, that I confirm for you 100 per cent. I may even need to take it on notice, if it's okay with you. Sam, from the Premier's Department, do you have a clear answer on this one?

SAM TOOHEY: Yes, it collects incident data but not outcome data.

Mr JIHAD DIB: Incident data but not outcome data. What does that mean?

Dr AMANDA COHN: That's also my understanding. Do you not think outcome data would be useful in protecting human life?

Mr JIHAD DIB: Let me have a look at that one. Sam, if we put it on the agenda for a discussion in the Premier's Department, I'm happy to pursue that. That roadside program is with the transport department. My colleague Minister Aitchison is the lead on that one.

ANSWER

The SRB Annual Report from 2020-21 was tabled on 9 July 2024. I am advised that the State Rescue Board has recently finalised the 2021-22 Annual Report, which will be submitted to my office for consideration before being tabled in Parliament.

QoN13 – Transcript Page 31

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: I just want to put on the record, Minister, that the MP who had to submit a request to get reimbursed for fuel from the RFS, his application took 11 days to reimburse. I just wanted to make sure you understood that. It was not 24 hours; it was 11 days between his application. I presume you don't think that's acceptable.

Mr JIHAD DIB: Ms Munro, you are talking to me about something that I have no evidence of in front of me.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: You tried to present evidence earlier, and I'm correcting the record to ensure that you understand.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: How about you table it, if you have evidence?

The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE: Yes, table it.

Mr JIHAD DIB: What I said was, "Could you find for me whether that was the case." The overwhelming majority are within 24 hours. The commissioner then said there were five instances over a 12-month period for 7,000 trucks and over 2,000 brigades.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: I understand the commissioner gave that answer, which was very helpful. I'll move on to—

Mr JIHAD DIB: I want to go back to that.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: No, sorry.

Mr JIHAD DIB: Ms Munro, I'm sorry, but if you ask me a question you need to give me the courtesy of allowing me to answer.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: I asked you if you thought 11 days was appropriate and you haven't answered that.

Mr JIHAD DIB: I'm sorry. I'm going to let you talk over me.

The CHAIR: Order!

Mr JIHAD DIB: Keep talking, please.

The CHAIR: Order! I think it's probably time. If Ms Munro wants to move to another area of questioning, I think that's probably for the best.

Mr JIHAD DIB: Chair, I'm happy to look into it.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Minister, you can't cavil with the Chair's ruling.

Mr JIHAD DIB: If Ms Munro would like to give me the evidence—

The CHAIR: Perhaps Ms Munro would like to put that last question on notice and then the Minister can provide information on notice.

Mr JIHAD DIB: But provide me with the evidence, please, Ms Munro.

ANSWER

I am advised:

The RFS has no records to corroborate the claims made by Ms Munro. Without additional details it is not possible to provide further information.

QoN14 – Transcript Pages 36-37

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Do you know how well the NRL thing in Moree is going? It was touted as an incredible diversionary program of sorts.

Mr JIHAD DIB: It's another element that will assist. It's not going to be the panacea.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Do you know how it's going though? How many children are signed up? Do you know?

Mr JIHAD DIB: Signed up to?

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: To whatever this NRL thing is.

Mr JIHAD DIB: So it's a bit of a mentoring program?

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Yes.

Mr JIHAD DIB: I might get some further information later on, but we don't actually manage that program.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Are you interested in how well it's going and what it's doing?

Mr JIHAD DIB: Of course I'm interested. Whilst I might not be the Minister responsible for managing it, it doesn't mean that I don't have an interest in it or a desire to see it go well.

ANSWER

This question should be directed to the Minister for Police.

QoN15 – Transcript Page 39

The CHAIR: Yes, of consultants or contractors that are engaged. Is there any kind of public register where people can see what contractors—

ROB ROGERS: I'm not sure what you mean.

Mr JIHAD DIB: We do report, of course, in reports when there is a consultancy. One of the commitments of our Government was to reduce the amount of consultancies and bring them in house. But when there is a consultancy, the report is published. All of the information is published there, including the—

The CHAIR: But would that require people to go through each report to try to find that information, rather than there being an actual schedule of consultants in one place? Would it require somebody to go through each report to try to find that information?

Mr JIHAD DIB: Consultants would be reported in an annual report.

The CHAIR: So there's a whole schedule?

Mr JIHAD DIB: That would be the one place where it would go. Consultancies would be reported there. Is there a particular question or concern that you had?

The CHAIR: I haven't been able to find any sort of public register of consultants or contractors engaged specifically by the RFS in one notice of schedule. That's what I'm trying to understand. When you're saying it's in these reports, I'm wondering if it's in there somewhere, but you've got to go and find it in each report, or whether there is actually a schedule where you can go to one place and actually see.

ROB ROGERS: I know that we meet all the requirements that we are supposed to. I'm not sure whether other agencies have these reports that you're suggesting.

The CHAIR: Maybe a better way to put it is to ask whether it is possible to get on notice a schedule of the contractors and consultants engaged by the RFS over the past two financial years?

Mr JIHAD DIB: Sure. I'm advised that the RFS does not routinely engage with consultants. You want a schedule of the consultants that RFS has engaged—

The CHAIR: And contractors, in the last two financial years.

Mr JIHAD DIB: Contractors in terms of consultancies?

The CHAIR: Yes, not any kind of contractor.

Mr JIHAD DIB: Because we would have so many contractors for anything, from paperclips to whatever.

ANSWER

I am advised that the RFS reports on its use of consultants in its annual report, as required. Annual reports are available at www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/resources/publications/annual-reports.

The 2023-24 annual report will be published shortly.

QoN16 – Transcript Page 44

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: My first questions are to Commissioner Rogers. Thank you for returning. I'm sure you have fought many fires that are hotter than the ones we dished out this morning. I wanted to start with the community of Bilpin, where 70 homes were lost and nearly 70,000 hectares were burnt out. I'm wondering if the RFS has been engaging with the Bells Line of Road Business Council following that.

ROB ROGERS: At my level, I'm not sure. I would have to find out if locally we have been talking to them. I honestly don't know the answer to that. I will have to take it on notice.

ANSWER

I am advised that the RFS is unaware of any interactions with the Bells Line of Road Business Council. Discussions have been held with one of the Council's board members, who is also a member of the Hawkesbury-Blue Mountains Community Bushfire Alliance Group and the RFS.

QoN17 – Transcript Page 45

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Perhaps you will have to take this on notice. Do you know how far trucks are travelling to refill their water in that area or from that area?

ROB ROGERS: No, I couldn't tell you. The other thing I know that is part of the considerations is that the Federal member arranged some donation of money to individual brigades in the Blue Mountains and Hawkesbury area. I know some of the brigades are considering water tanks to be part of the things they want to do with that money because that's, again, money directed to what they see as important. Generally, I would have to find out and take on notice for you how far they have to go now. We do have some mobile tanks that we have gotten more of since those 2019-20 fires and we're looking at having the ability, not just in that area but across the State, to put water—so that trucks don't have to travel as far. After the fires have finished, we move those tanks out and take them somewhere else.

ANSWER

I am advised that no issues with water supply were reported in brigade or agency debriefs after the Gaspers Mountain Fire.

Within the Bilpin Area, fire trucks can fill with water at the following locations:

- Bilpin Rural Fire Brigade Station – 120,000 litre rainwater tank
- Water tanks at Bilpin Hall (500m from the Bilpin RFB) – in ground 120,000 litre water tank
- Kurrajong Heights Bowling Club (9km from the Bilpin RFB)– 120,000 litre water tank
- Hydrants at Kurrajong Village (17km from the Bilpin RFB)
- Mt Wilson Brigade Station – 100,000 litres
- Skyline Road, Mt Tomah – approx 100,000 litres
- Bells Line of Road at Mt Banks – two tanks of 120,000 litres each
- The Static Water Supply (SWS) Register contains information on water points in the Bilpin, Kurrajong Heights/Berambing area amounting to 875,000 litres, including tanks and dams.

Reticulated water is available through hydrants in numerous locations throughout Windsor, Richmond, North Richmond and along the Bells Line of Road westbound to and in Kurrajong Village.

QoN18 – Transcript Page 45

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: I asked the Minister earlier about the cuts to employee-related expenses and the wage increases. Are you aware of whether the wage increases that were promised by the Government— that 4.5 per cent—are included in this budget?

JEREMY FEWTRELL: I will take that on notice. I think we're waiting to see what the outcome is, though, of the arbitration to know what the final figure will be.

ANSWER

I am advised funding is included in this budget.

QoN19 – Transcript Page 47

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: What funding has been spent on fleet repair and maintenance in the past 12 months?

JEREMY FEWTRELL: I'll take that one on notice, if I could, please.

ANSWER

This question was answered on page 79 of the uncorrected transcript.

QoN20 – Transcript Pages 47-48

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Commissioner Fewtrell, could you please provide us with a list of stations that have been taken offline in the last financial year?

JEREMY FEWTRELL: No, not in a practical sense. It's a dynamic operational network that we run. There have been stations taken offline temporarily under settings that we've had in place since 2008 at different times. Sometimes they might be offline for an hour or two; they might be offline for training or other reasons. I don't know that we would be able to give you a consolidated list of all that.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: I would have thought that you'd have a dashboard or something somewhere that says which offices have been taken offline.

JEREMY FEWTRELL: On any given day we will know which stations may be offline.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: But there's not a record of all of them?

JEREMY FEWTRELL: I'll take it on notice, and we'll provide what we can.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: If you could also take on notice how many hours they were offline in the last 12 months.

JEREMY FEWTRELL: Yes.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: See how you go.

JEREMY FEWTRELL: We're happy to do what we can.

ANSWER

I am advised:

The list of Fire and Rescue NSW (FRNSW) stations that can be temporarily taken offline was prescribed in 2008 and outlined in the Commissioner's Order 2008/22. The only alterations to the list were as a result of station mergers and closures that occurred under the former government.

In the 2023-24 financial year, prescribed stations were taken offline for a total of 10,657 hours.

QoN21 – Transcript Pages 48

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Thank you. If you take it on notice, Commissioner Rogers, the number of members over 50, 60 and 70 years of age in the RFS and under 40, please.

ROB ROGERS: Yes, no problem.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: And also in the SES, if that's—

DEBBIE PLATZ: Yes.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Thank you, Acting Commissioner Platz.

ANSWER

Please refer to the answer to Supplementary Question 62.

QoN22 – Transcript Pages 48

The CHAIR: I might start with a conversation with Mr O'Reilly. Continuing on from the questions I was also asking the Minister this morning, do you know what the longest period of segregation of a young person that was subject to, in the last financial year?

PAUL O'REILLY: No, I don't have that figure.

The CHAIR: Is that ever recorded?

PAUL O'REILLY: It would be, yes.

The CHAIR: Is it something that you could take on notice for me, then?

PAUL O'REILLY: Absolutely.

ANSWER

I am advised:

Segregation is a risk management strategy used to protect the safety of a detainee, other detainees and staff. Segregation is a different response to Confinement. Segregation can occur in response to high profile offences to prevent retaliation, manage young people with different gang affiliations, and deescalate conflicts between detainees to prevent major incidents.

In 2023-24, the longest period of segregation of a young person was 23.6 days. This decision was applied in the interest of safety for the young person and other young people in the centre. While segregated, the young person had a median of 6 hours of time out of room each day and had access to visits, cultural programs, case work, health services, program and education packs, and a minimum of 2 hours of TV each day. The young person also had access to psychologists throughout this period to address factors that contributed to high-risk behaviours.

QoN23 – Transcript Page 49

The CHAIR: I'm curious why in the 2022 survey Youth Justice made the decision to replace the physical and pathological testing components with a self-report physical health questionnaire. Do you know what was behind that decision?

PAUL O'REILLY: I probably should get advice before I answer that, because the senior psychologist leading that work would prefer that I take advice, I think, and they're probably right.

The CHAIR: Yes, if you could take that on notice, and maybe they can give me some information. That would be great.

PAUL O'REILLY: Yes.

ANSWER

I am advised:

A change in survey participants led to Youth Justice NSW administering a revised version of the physical health questionnaire. Most of the self-reported physical health questions were retained,

minor revisions were made to reflect current terminology and some sections were expanded to provide a broader snapshot of health and wellbeing.

QoN24 – Transcript Pages 51-52

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I have got a lot more on Youth Justice, but I'm going to ask some questions in relation to Service NSW. I don't know if anybody asked the Minister any of these questions earlier. I apologise if they have been asked; I missed some of this morning's session. My understanding is that \$170 million has been taken out of the budget and that there are three waves of restructuring. I'm wondering how many regional jobs are being cut in wave one and if you could tell me the location of those.

GREG WELLS: That's correct. It'd probably be more correct to say that we've been overspending our budget by \$170 million, not that \$170 million has been taken out of the budget. A lot of what's been confirmed in the budget is to sustain things that didn't have funding, just to clarify that. Specifically in terms of regional jobs, it's certainly not disproportionate in terms of the regional impact.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: So how many jobs in round one?

GREG WELLS: I'll take that on notice specifically. We have just communicated the end of the consultation for wave one. We're in the process of assigning people to roles in those divisions. I can take on notice, as we get to the end of that phase, as to what that impact is. Specifically, though, about one-quarter of our team is based in regional New South Wales. I'll get the figures for you, but it's a lot less people that are going through restructure and management processes in general for regional jobs. The exception to that is in our contact centres, where we are doing some reorganisation. There are some contact centres in places like Lithgow, Maitland, Gosford et cetera where there might be a slightly higher impact in our leadership positions.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Would you be able to take it on notice? I'm specifically interested in if we can quantify the number of jobs in wave one and what locations they will come from.

GREG WELLS: Absolutely. The only caveat I'll put on that is that we've got a time frame and a process to work through, so we just need to make sure we assign those people to roles in that process. If that coincides with the question on notice, we can certainly provide that.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I'm interested in how many staff in regional locations whose jobs may be in a metropolitan team will be cut.

GREG WELLS: If we can get that breakdown, we certainly will.

ANSWER

I am advised that following consultation with staff and unions, Service NSW is currently considering feedback and once this is completed staff will be appointed to roles, at which time the breakdown will be known. Staff will also have the opportunity to be redeployed through the NSW Government mobility program.

QoN25 – Transcript Pages 52-53

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: If I have any employees who are in regional locations such as Taree, Lismore or Tweed Heads, have any of them been told that they would need to travel to Sydney on a regular basis, even a weekly basis, so that they can maintain their position in the region where they are?

GREG WELLS: Not that I'm aware of, but let me take that on notice. Again, it really comes down to the sort of business we are doing. Some teams have to be on site, obviously, all the time. Other teams will have a flexible arrangement based on the sort of work they do. A lot of regional teams—whether they are doing driver testing compliance or support for front office—have regional locations. It really will depend on the sort of business and the team that it is. But I can take that on notice.

ANSWER

I am advised:

In line with the recent announcement of the Premier's Circular regarding Workplace Presence, Service NSW are working through the mapping of staff locations and the most appropriate workplace presence for business needs and each person's circumstances.

QoN26 – Transcript Pages 52-53

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Can you also take on notice whether any staff have been told that they do have to travel to Sydney from regional locations and with no extra money or compensation to do that? If that is the case, has there been any cost analysis of what this would mean and how it would impact?

GREG WELLS: Sure.

ANSWER

Please refer to the answer to QoN25.

QoN27 – Transcript Pages 52-53

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: Mr O'Reilly, you may have to take this on notice, but what does the latest data from each New South Wales Youth Justice centre show as to the amount of time in each 24 hours that children spend locked in their rooms?

PAUL O'REILLY: For each centre?

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: Yes. You might take that on notice.

PAUL O'REILLY: Yes. I would also add that in some of the metro centres there are different programs with different routines because of risk. That would skew the average in those centres. But we can certainly provide a report on notice that deals with that.

ANSWER

I am advised:

On average, young people spend approximately 14 hours in their rooms each day, which includes 8 to 10 hours for sleeping. They spend approximately 10 hours out of their rooms each day to attend school, programs and activities. Young people can obtain later bedtimes under the incentive scheme for good behaviour which can further decrease the time spent in their rooms.

QoN28 – Transcript Pages 52-53

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: As a follow up, probably again on notice, are you able to advise of the number and duration of lockdowns in each of the Youth Justice centres over the past 12 months?

PAUL O'REILLY: Do you mind explaining what you mean by lockdowns?

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Security lockdowns.

PAUL O'REILLY: Where the whole centre is locked down, you mean, apart from when people are asleep?

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: Yes.

PAUL O'REILLY: Yes, we will take that notice. It's pretty rare that we would do that.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: That would be good.

ANSWER

I am advised that within the last financial year two Youth Justice Centres reported one occasion each where a whole of centre lockdown occurred for a duration of three hours in each centre.

QoN29 – Transcript Pages 52-53

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Normally when we refer to lockdowns it's any non-scheduled—out-of-ordinary period.

PAUL O'REILLY: For the whole centre, you are talking about?

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: Yes, for the whole State. This morning I asked the Minister a question with regard to the disability royal commission. Do you know what percentage of young people are currently screened in relation to cognitive disability?

PAUL O'REILLY: You mean in detention?

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: Yes.

PAUL O'REILLY: It's low because, as I said earlier, 57 per cent of kids are in for less than 24 hours and around 68 or 69 per cent are in for less than 72 hours. There is not really the opportunity to do a proper screen during that period. But when they're there for longer, part of our job is to ensure that they are not only screened but also connected to NDIA.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: So for the young people who are there for longer than the 24-hour period, can you provide that on notice?

PAUL O'REILLY: Yes, I'm just conscious of not misleading the Committee. It will be a longwinded answer on notice to explain some of that. There are very few kids who are there long enough for a proper process of testing, screening, assessment, referral and connection to the NDIA.

ANSWER

I am advised:

When young people are admitted to custody they are allocated a Youth Justice Custodial Case Worker. Case workers use the Youth Justice assessment guide which prompts staff to look for disability indicators during interviews with young people, as well as any observations made or feedback from other staff in the centre. If indicators are present, the Case Worker will make a referral to a Youth Justice Psychologist for a full assessment and subsequent connection to the NDIA.

In 2023-24, 57% of all young people admitted to custody were released less than 24 hours later. For young people in custody for less than 24 hours, it is not possible to undertake disability screening and assessment, because they are discharged before allocation to a Case Worker can occur.

QoN30 – Transcript Page 53

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: Are staff satisfaction surveys regularly conducted in the Youth Justice system?

PAUL O'REILLY: There are probably three things that we do. We participate in the PMES—the same survey as the rest of government—every year. We also do targeted surveys in centres where we think there is a particular need or in response to a particular risk or concern. We've just started doing psychosocial safety wellbeing surveys in response to changes in legislation around positive duty for psychological safety. There is a number of ways we test that.

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: Are you able to provide the results of those?

PAUL O'REILLY: The PMES data should be available publicly, but if not we can give you the PMES data. We can find that for you, certainly. The other data is specific to particular issues. With the kinds of things that come out of those surveys, we're testing for quality of leadership and we're testing for the existence of sexual harassment, racist conduct, perceptions of fairness in decision-making and we're trying to assess staff perceptions of the way young people are treated.

ANSWER

I am advised the NSW People Matter Employee Survey, including results for Youth Justice, is available at www.psc.nsw.gov.au/reports-and-data/people-matter-employee-survey.

QoN31 – Transcript Pages 55-56

The Hon. AILEEN MacDONALD: You might have to take this on notice. Do you know how many staff are suspended at the moment?

PAUL O'REILLY: I might have that figure, actually, if you give me a moment for a bit of minor shuffling. I might have that figure or my colleague might have it. No. I'll take that on notice. It will take too long.

ANSWER

I am advised:

On 9 September 2024, there were six Youth Justice NSW employees suspended.

QoN32 – Transcript Page 57

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I should've called. That's right. The Ministers just didn't seem to have the same brief, I might say. I think it's realistic to understand that it is a small group of people. Can you give an indication on, maybe, how many kids have already entered or been identified as potential—

PAUL O'REILLY: No. I'd have to check with police.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Is that something you can take on notice for the purpose of this?

PAUL O'REILLY: Absolutely.

ANSWER

This question should be directed to the Minister for Police.

QoN33 – Transcript Page 58

The CHAIR: I might go back to the questions we were talking about in regards to back-burning. You said that you often get advice from experts prior to doing any back-burns around wild animals that might be in the area. Can I ask who those experts are? Is it a particular organisation that you go to for that advice?

ROB ROGERS: For example, there has to be an environmental approval that's done for a burn. At the simplest level, it is what they call a hazard reduction certificate. Part of that is looking at, for example, if there are endangered species—flora or fauna—in the area. If it's on a national park, then National Parks would obviously provide that information, or another landowner because it might be on council land. It is either captured by the landowner or by the environmental approval. If it can't be done, for example, we use the hazard reduction certificate as a streamlined approach. But, if there is, say, a native species in there that's endangered, then that has to go to a review of environmental factors. Obviously, part of that needs to consider the impact on them.

The CHAIR: And so it only gets flagged if it's an endangered species? If it was another native animal, what would happen there?

ROB ROGERS: Endangered species or if it's, say, for example, koalas and things like that or anything that's—

The CHAIR: But what if it's a native species that is not endangered? What would be the process?

ROB ROGERS: It would then rely on whether there is—and I think I gave this before—birds nesting in spring and things like that. Those sorts of things come to the fore in those environmental checks. I can't give you an absolute answer. I can take it on notice and give you a more fulsome response.

The CHAIR: That would be useful.

ANSWER

I am advised:

Environmental assessments prior to any hazard reduction take into consideration threatened species specific to that location.

National Parks and Wildlife Services (NPWS) and local councils can be consulted, along with other members of Bush Fire Management Committees, such as the Nature Conservation Council. Complex Burn Plans are developed to implement environmental measures and ensure the fire is low intensity and slow burning to reduce ground fuel only and preserve biodiversity values on site. Spotters can be positioned to minimise the risk of injury or entrapment of mammals, including koalas and macropods, during the fire activity.

A comprehensive briefing for all firefighters taking part in the activity includes environmental information and the processes to follow if wildlife, including koalas, is sighted or injured during the burn. Standard RFS procedure is that if koalas are sighted further burning is halted if safe to do so until the animals are able to safely leave the area

An NPWS Technical Wildlife Officer can be available to assist if needed.

As part of the RFS commitment to wildlife and biodiversity protection, all RFS firefighters are able to undertake the Wildlife First Response course providing training in assisting and reporting injured wildlife on a fireground.

Wildlife response during emergencies is managed by the State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC) Environmental Services Functional Area. Assistance from WIRES can be sought to help rescue injured wildlife.

QoN34 – Transcript Pages 59-60

The CHAIR: I think these questions are best directed to Acting Commissioner Platz. At the last estimates Commissioner York referred to an upcoming meeting with the head of the RSPCA to discuss improving communication between the RSPCA and emergency services. Are you aware if that meeting went ahead?

DEBBIE PLATZ: Yes, Chair, I understand it did.

The CHAIR: Do you know what the outcome of that meeting was?

DEBBIE PLATZ: I would have to take the outcome on notice. Certainly, we are endeavouring to work with all agencies and all non-government organisations to ensure that we are doing our very best to protect animals and wildlife. In fact, our agency does have large animal rescue training. In the last two years we have managed to train 300 people from our organisation to be able to rescue both large animals and small animals, including domestic animals.

The CHAIR: Who was that done with?

DEBBIE PLATZ: We have that expertise within our agency.

The CHAIR: Do you know if there were any action items or current issues with communications with the RSPCA or any other organisations that came up as a pathway forward?

DEBBIE PLATZ: I would have to take that on notice, Chair.

ANSWER

I am advised that:

NSW SES met with the RSPCA CEO and General Managers of Regulation and Business Services, Animal Operations, and Fundraising and Community Engagement in March 2024. Outcomes of the meeting included sharing contacts between the agencies to facilitate contact by SES Units regarding the welfare of animals during events. RSPCA participation during major weather events was also discussed, including the potential of having an RSPCA liaison officer located within a

NSW SES Incident Control Centre or State Command Centre. The RSPCA also expressed interest in observing the SES's large animal rescue capability.

QoN35 – Transcript Pages 59-60

The CHAIR: This one might also be taken on notice, but how can communication between the emergency services and the RSPCA and the Animal Welfare League, for example, be improved?

DEBBIE PLATZ: There are always opportunities for improvement, absolutely. Particularly after any event, we would look at the lessons learnt and determine what actions we could do to improve any communication. If an event is occurring we do have liaison officers from many different organisations come into our ICCs, our incident control centres, so that we can get the best advice on how to look after, in this instance, animals during the course of an event.

The CHAIR: We have talked about a meeting with the RSPCA, but do you know if that meeting was also attended by the Animal Welfare League, or if there are going to be efforts to reach out to the Animal Welfare League, who is another enforcement agency? I understand they have emergency veterinary vehicles and things like that. Is that another group that you have been engaging with, or will you be, as part of this process?

DEBBIE PLATZ: Chair, I would have to take that on notice. However, I can inform the Committee that, at a local level, we have seven zones right throughout the State, and each of those zones has a headquarters in it. At those zones there are community engagement officers who would be reaching out and consulting with and working with various animal welfare groups.

ANSWER

I am advised that:

The Animal Welfare League did not attend a meeting with NSW SES and RSPCA in March 2024.

Department of Primary Industries is the lead combat agency under the NSW State Emergency Management Plan for biosecurity (animal and plant) emergencies and also a support agency as the Agriculture and Animal Service Functional Area in natural disasters and other emergencies.

NSW SES is open to establishing additional relationships to support further consideration of the care and protection of animals during weather events as part of community members' disaster management plans.

QoN36 – Transcript Pages 59-60

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: This is to Ms Quilty from the Reconstruction Authority. I asked the Minister earlier about the amount of people who are employed from Queensland. Do you have numbers that you could provide the Committee about that?

JOANNA QUILTY: We think it is about five staff, but we do need to crosscheck that with payroll information and also look into what the travel and accommodation arrangements might be. We will come back to you on that.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: That includes how much money is being spent on travel and accommodation to get these people into New South Wales for the work?

JOANNA QUILTY: If any, we need to check what those arrangements are.

ANSWER

I am advised that:

As at 9 September 2024 there are 7 employees. Travel costs are reflected in Operating Expenses which are provided in the agency's annual report.

QoN37 – Transcript Pages 59-60

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: You may have to take this on notice, but could you please tell the Committee the money that has been spent on bushfire recovery and preparedness by the Reconstruction Authority?

JOANNA QUILTY: I can certainly refer to what was allocated from the 2019-20 fires, where \$4.5 billion has been committed since then to support recovery, response and preparedness initiatives in local communities.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: That was over the forward estimates?

JOANNA QUILTY: That was in response to the 2019-20 bushfires. Much of that would have already been expended. Obviously there have been other bushfires and other funding arrangements activated as a result of that, so that would not be the total picture.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: It would be good to get the figure for this year's 2024-25 budget and also over the forward estimates, if possible, please.

JOANNA QUILTY: We will come back to you on that.

ANSWER

I am advised that bushfire recovery, response and preparedness expenditure is spread across multiple programs and agencies within a number of ministerial portfolios. Agency expenditure is reported in the Budget Papers.

QoN38 – Transcript Page 62

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: There was a survey that the New South Wales Government did of customers in Victoria and Queensland, as well as people from other countries, to compare and understand how satisfied New South Wales customers are with government services. These results also haven't been updated, it appears, since the Labor Government came in. I'm just wondering if there is any intention to update that.

SARAH CRUICKSHANK: Yes, I can take that question, Ms Munro. The short answer is yes, there is. That's called the Customer Experience Survey, and that is ongoing. That continues to monitor the service lines across New South Wales government and how customers are experiencing them, and then there is a subset connected to that, which is how does what New South Wales does compare with other jurisdictions. To be clear, it's not compared with every single Australian jurisdiction. It's a selection of Australian jurisdictions. I would have to check which ones they are. In the past, there has also been a comparison with international jurisdictions and, again, I would have to take on notice whether we are doing that again. As you would appreciate, that costs quite a considerable amount of money to do that.

ANSWER

I am advised:

The Customer Experience Survey continues to measure people's experience of government services. The Survey incorporates comparisons with other Australian jurisdictions including Victoria, Queensland and the Commonwealth.

QoN39 – Transcript Page 62

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: On the Digital Restart Fund, I directed the Minister to Budget Paper No. 01, page A5-15, which referred to the allocation of money, or appropriation of money. I want to clarify. Do you know how much is being released this year?

LAURA CHRISTIE: Yes, I can confirm that \$240 million has been released from the Digital Restart Fund for use on ICT and digital priorities in the 2024-25 budget.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Is there a budget allocation for the forward estimates?

LAURA CHRISTIE: That is for this financial year. I'd have to take the forward estimates number on notice.

ANSWER

I am advised that the budget allocation for the forward estimates will be subject to the usual budget processes.

QoN40 – Transcript Page 63

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Do you know how much Accessibility NSW had under the DRF?

LAURA CHRISTIE: It was approximately \$2.9 million.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: How much are you putting aside within your budget for the continuation of—

LAURA CHRISTIE: I'd have to take the specifics on notice. It's less than that, though.

ANSWER

I am advised:

The Accessibility NSW program was funded for \$2.75 million over 2 years from the Digital Restart Fund, with no ongoing funding allocated by the former government. Following delivery of the Accessibility and Inclusion Toolkit for NSW Government agencies, digital accessibility policy and services will continue to be provided by Digital NSW with \$668,000 allocated in FY25.

QoN41 – Transcript Page 66

Dr AMANDA COHN: I'm also interested in the use of standby firefighters at on-call stations. I understand that this practice is sending crews from permanent fire stations to on-call stations to cover understaffed smaller units. Do you have any figures on the cost of that service over the last financial year?

JEREMY FEWTRELL: I'll take that on notice just to give you the exact figure. At times we do have different stations in different locations that might not have a crew that is fully available. In those cases we will often send staff from other locations, whether it be permanent firefighters or other retained firefighters, to those locations to fill in on a temporary basis.

ANSWER

I am advised:

Personnel costs to cover retained firefighter shortages in the 2023-24 financial year are reflected in the Employee Related Expenses in the agency's annual report.

QoN42 – Transcript Page 68

Dr AMANDA COHN: I appreciate it may well be too early if it only launched in July. But have there been any meaningful trends in that data identified at this stage?

ROB ROGERS: I don't know. I'm not sure. I can take on notice to look at whether there is particularly— if it's bullying or what the nature of the complaints are. I could probably break it down by category if that's helpful. I don't have that on hand. But I'm happy to take that on notice.

Dr AMANDA COHN: I'd be very interested in that answer on notice—and if we can compare that as well to the previous financial year or previous data that you've got.

ANSWER

I am advised that due to the recent introduction of the changes it is not yet possible for the RFS to identify any meaningful data trends or comparisons.

QoN43 – Transcript Pages 68-69

Dr AMANDA COHN: That's very helpful. I also have some questions about the contract that I understand has been signed with Coulson Aviation. My understanding is that that is a 10-year contract worth \$400 million. It's difficult to find any information about that tender. My understanding is that it doesn't appear on eTendering. What was the process for that tender and why is that information not public?

ROB ROGERS: It was a public tender. It went through the standard tender portal. It was on there. It's a five-year contract with a five-year option to extend, so it's a five plus five. It's not a straight 10-year contract. Government has the right after five years to opt out or continue on if it works for us. At the time the government of the day will make the call on that. But it went through standard protocols because of the value of the tender. It was looked at by the Justice cluster also, because of, as I say, that value. It has been through an absolute appropriate—it's met all government requirements, independence on the evaluation panel. Everything that is required to be done was done.

Dr AMANDA COHN: Given that I had some trouble finding it, would it be possible to provide the Committee with a copy of the tender?

ROB ROGERS: Absolutely.

Dr AMANDA COHN: Have you been made aware of any concerns about the tendering process?

ROB ROGERS: No, I haven't. I've been asked about what was the process, but I've not been made aware of—I think the only thing I heard was the Treasurer was asked in his estimates session. I was made aware of that, but that's the first that I've heard of any concerns about it. But I would say that it was a public tender available to any company that wished to put in for it.

Dr AMANDA COHN: Can you provide us with a breakdown of that \$400 million and what's been purchased with that?

ROB ROGERS: Sure, absolutely. No problem.

Dr AMANDA COHN: You're taking that on notice, I assume?

ROB ROGERS: Yes, absolutely.

ANSWER

I am advised that this question was answered by the Treasurer in response to Question on Notice 5.

QoN44 – Transcript Page 69

The CHAIR: Thank you. So you're open to external. But, at the moment, you mostly rely on the expert that's within the team already?

DANUSIA CAMERON: He also conducts Train the Trainer programs. We have a number of trainers and assessors within the organisation, so we're not reliant on one person. But we do have an, as I said, almost world-renowned expert in our organisation, which we're very lucky to have.

The CHAIR: Can I just ask what their background and experience is? I don't want to identify them or put them on the spot, but I'm just curious genuinely.

DANUSIA CAMERON: I would have to take that on notice. I'm not exactly sure of his background.

The CHAIR: I guess, if we're talking about him being an expert, I'm just wondering what those qualifications are or what experience there is to make him an expert would be useful—and if possible, as well, just a bit of an understanding about that role, as well, that he takes on, whether he's involved in pre-emergency training or if he's involved during the actual provision of the emergency services themselves, just to get a bit of understanding of how he takes that role on and what's involved within it.

DANUSIA CAMERON: If I understand your question correctly, Chair, this member is actually a volunteer of our Hawkesbury unit, is very active in this role and does attend conferences as a speaker, has won awards internationally in relation to his work in large animal rescue.

The CHAIR: Is he involved in the provision of the emergency services themselves or is he more just involved in training and that aspect of it?

DANUSIA CAMERON: He can do both and does do both.

ANSWER

I am advised:

The NSW SES expert is recognised as a world leading authority in Large Animal Rescue Operations (LARO). The member is a general land rescue operator and has spent almost 39 years rescuing horses and cattle from mud, creeks, dams, floats, and buildings. He holds a Graduate Certificate in Adult Education and actively trains rescue agencies throughout the State in all aspects of large animal rescue and relocation. He has authored numerous NSW SES training resources including Large Animal Rescue, which has been rolled out across other Australian jurisdictions and recently adopted in New Zealand. In 2022, he led the development of the Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council Large Animal Rescue Operations Guidelines to help emergency services build a large animal rescue capability and to ensure the safety of responders working in close proximity to a trapped or isolated large animals.

In 2015 the member was awarded the Emergency Services Medal (ESM) for outstanding commitment, professionalism and dedication to building the operational capability of the NSW SES.

The efforts of this member have supported the NSW SES to become a leader in animal rescue operations in Australasia, applying this training to rescue more than 66,000 animals from flood waters across NSW during flooding events in 2022.

QoN45 – Transcript Page 71

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Will the updated scope be made public?

DANUSIA CAMERON: At the end of last year, ARNECC, which is the group of registrars, did publish a set of principles for the scope. Beyond that, the scope becomes a list of APIs that are delivered. It may be, to be honest, too specific for me in my situation. It's very specific deliverables that occur under an ELNO workspace. I'm not sure whether the scope, as we call it in the program, would be made public, but the principles are published on ARNECC's website at the moment.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: If you could take on notice whether they will be made public or not, that would be helpful.

DANUSIA CAMERON: Yes.

ANSWER

I am advised:

The scope describes the functional requirements that Electronic Lodgement Network Operators (ELNOs) are required to use to design, build, test and implement to deliver eConveyancing services as part of an interoperable transaction.

The Australian Registrars National Electronic Conveyancing Council (ARNECC) has published a set of principles which underpin the detailed technical scope, and are available at:

<https://www.arnecc.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Key-Guiding-principles-as-approved-by-ARNECC-002.pdf>).

QoN46 – Transcript Page 71

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: How much of the Service NSW budget is allocated to technology investments like upgrading digital infrastructure, improving cybersecurity and integrating AI?

GREG WELLS: I might need to take that on notice because that would be a number that would be across a number of divisions. Obviously there's a specific digital division that maintains all of our

digital services but there's also, in front line, a lot of frontline technology we use. There's also a cybersecurity division. Fraud management is part of the risk and strategy division. Technology is a part of the fabric of all of New South Wales. I can try, on notice, to get a figure for you.

ANSWER

I am advised:

Service NSW strategically invests in digital infrastructure across all divisions of the agency for several reasons, including enhancing customer experience, optimisation of operational efficiency, strengthening data security and driving innovation to better meet customer needs.

QoN47 – Transcript Page 72

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: This is a question about the COVID-19 microbusiness grants, I think to Mr Wells. Is there a floor amount for recovery or attempted recovery of funds from microbusinesses? What is the lowest amount that is being sought in terms of repayments for possible fraudulent claims or if people just aren't responding with the documentation that Service NSW is requiring of them through compliance?

GREG WELLS: I don't think there's specifically a floor amount. I might take that on notice. As we talked about last week, again, the only reason we're getting in contact with customers is if we don't yet have proof of their eligibility for the programs. That's the reason we're getting in contact. I don't think there's specifically a floor amount. It's more about eligibility or potentially fraud.

ANSWER

I am advised:

The COVID-19 Micro-business Grant compliance program commenced in 2022 and is focused on confirming the correct funds were released to applicants who were paid the grant after self-assessing their eligibility. To date, the compliance program has detected or prevented more than \$52 million in fraudulent payments and referred over 14,000 applications to police, leading to 206 people being convicted of fraud.

Service NSW considers hardship factors to support customers participating in compliance processes and has removed businesses from the audit process due to hardship factors; it has not set a minimum repayment amount in relation to completing compliance processes for grants paid to ineligible applicants.

QoN48 – Transcript Page 74

Dr AMANDA COHN: I appreciate the issues with mobile blackspots, even in my own region. In your annual report there was the figure provided that just over 28,000 members have logged into ACTIV and 15,000 have updated their availability. What proportion do you estimate of the available volunteers that is? I'm trying to work out what proportion are accurately reflected by putting their availability into ACTIV and what proportion are still manually registering availability with people using pagers?

ROB ROGERS: I will take that on notice because I think it depends on if we are talking about the percentage of people in the area covered by ACTIV or the percentage across the whole State, which is limited, as I mentioned before, by mobile phone coverage. I'm not quite sure, to be honest. I will take that on notice.

ANSWER

I am advised:

The RFS continues to use a paging network as a vital communications tool to ensure turn out messages can be received:

- by members who may not have reliable internet or suitable carrier coverage at home / work
- in the event of a local carrier tower failure
- during major events, when it is common for local commercial coverage to be impacted or degraded.

Forecast availability is not possible within the paging system as it is a one-way message service to notify members of incidents requiring a response. The RFS issues approximately 40,000 pagers for use by members.

The RFS Activ app relies on a connection to the internet, either via a member's internet connection or their paid carrier service, and thus cannot be used as a guide to numbers of available volunteers.

QoN49 – Transcript Pages 74-75

The CHAIR: I have some final questions for Ms Neilsen in regard to the sheep shearing program at the Riverina Youth Justice Centre. I'm wondering why that particular program was selected specifically for the Riverina Youth Justice Centre.

CANDICE NEILSON: There are a range of programs that get selected for each of the six Youth Justice centres, largely based on the demographic of the young people in the centres, and particularly on what employment pathways are most likely to be viable for those young people in the communities that they return to. I don't have specific information in front of me about that sheep shearing program, but I can certainly get some more information on notice.

The CHAIR: Wonderful. I might put these questions to you, and they might end up going on notice, but please jump in if there's anything that you might be aware of. I was wanting to try to get some information about what evidence was used to consider this program. Did somebody specifically request it or was there something that was considered particularly therapeutic? I also want to get an understanding of who supplies the sheep for the program and what welfare oversights there are and—this one you may know—whether or not the sheep live full time on the site of the Riverina Youth Justice Centre or if they're just brought in and out as part of the program.

CANDICE NEILSON: I can take that on notice about how often they are there. I was out at Riverina a few weeks ago and did see sheep on the periphery of the centre. So perhaps they do stay there, but I will confirm definitely for you.

The CHAIR: Great. Thanks for that. I also want to know if the sheep that are part of the program are subject to live lamb cutting as well, which is also known as mulesing, and then also what happens to the wool shorn as part of the program—if it's sold or used in any specific way. What happens to the sheep after the program concludes? This one you may know: Do you know if the program itself is mandatory or is it voluntary for youth to participate in?

CANDICE NEILSON: Any programs would be voluntary for youth to participate in and also on the basis of what stage of their incarceration period that they're up to, any risk assessment factors that need to be considered—there are a whole range of factors that are considered. The other questions I will have to take on notice, please.

The CHAIR: When you say "risk factors are considered", does that also include a previous history of animal cruelty, things like that?

CANDICE NEILSON: There'd be a range of factors considered, and I can also find that out specifically in the context of that program.

The CHAIR: Thank you. This is probably one to take on notice, but how many young people have participated in the program so far and how much funding has gone into the program as well? That would be fantastic.

CANDICE NEILSON: I will take it all on notice, thank you.

ANSWER

I am advised:

The course was selected because it is evidence-based and has therapeutic elements, focusing on skill enhancement as well as building confidence and self-esteem. There is a vocational need for this training in the Riverina region as there is a skill shortage in this industry specific to the Riverina. Engagement in this course provided upskilling for young people while introducing them to a potential career pathway.

A Statement of Attainment in Basic Wool Harvesting Skills course was offered at Riverina Youth Justice Centre from 27 to 31 May 2024 in partnership with the NSW Department of Education External VET Provision (EVET). In this course students learnt safe shearing techniques, the importance of animal welfare, and how to maintain equipment. The course was offered following interest expressed by the young people at the centre and using EVET resources.

The sheep used in the course were sourced externally from a local primary producer who has a pre-existing relationship with the course facilitators. Young people were taught basic sheep handling skills in line with industry standards and according to the requirements of the Statement of Attainment in Basic Wool Harvesting Skills course offered by EVET.

There were approximately 20 sheep per day involved in the program. The sheep were transported to and from the farm daily. There are also a small number of sheep located at the centre to control the grass on the main oval and these sheep were also shorn during the program.

Youth Justice NSW can confirm that there was no live lamb cutting involved in the program. At the completion of the course the sheep and wool were returned to the owner as per the agreement.

Students were approved to participate in the program based on assessed risk and classification level. That includes considerations for their offending behaviour risks which is a standard process for any programs run in Youth Justice Centres and helps ensure safety and wellbeing for all participating, including any animals. Behaviour at school and on the units was also taken into consideration. Participant approval was discussed and supported at Client Services Meetings at Riverina Youth Justice Centre. Participation in this course was voluntary.

There were eight students from Riverina Youth Justice Centre who started the program, with seven students completing the course. These seven students achieved their Statement of Attainment in Basic Wool Harvesting Skills and are now employable in this industry.

The program was funded through EVET funding that was accessed through the Department of Education Training Unit at Riverina Youth Justice Centre.

QoN50 – Transcript Page 76

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Was there money put aside in the budget for not just the business case but actually the program itself?

DEBBIE PLATZ: I'd have to take that on notice. In relation to our budget, there was only funding for the business case.

ANSWER

I am advised:

Following consideration of the business case the matter will be subject to normal budget processes.

QoN51 – Transcript Page 77

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: I'm very excited to see this work on the 24-hour economy published. Do you have KPIs around increasing the depth of the data that is made publicly available?

SARAH CRUICKSHANK: That's a very good question. I would have to take that on notice. I don't think we have specific KPIs. It's more that my team sits down on a regular basis and works through where it's going to prioritise its efforts. We all know how important data is and there's so much you

could do, but you've only got limited resources that you can do it in. I've got some figures here. We added some 2,500 datasets just in the last 12 months for the public to be able to access. We just keep trying to do as much as we can.

ANSWER

I am advised:

The Department works with agencies to help make their datasets available on the Data.NSW open data portal. In addition to number of datasets published, the success of those efforts are tracked in terms of:

- Range of data sources
- Number of dataset access sessions
- Number times datasets are downloaded
- Engagement rate with open data platform