

Division 18: Fire and Emergency Services, \$22 240 000 —

Ms L.L. Baker, Chair.

Mr F.M. Logan, Minister for Emergency Services.

Mr D.T. Klemm, Commissioner.

Mr L.A. Bailey, Deputy Commissioner, Operations Command.

Mr S. Fewster, Deputy Commissioner, Capability Command.

Ms G. Camarda, Director, Business Services, Chief Finance Officer.

Mr F. Pasquale, Executive Director, Corporate Services.

Ms S. Paterson, Executive Director, Governance and Strategy.

Mr T. Palmer, Chief of Staff.

Miss M. Onorato-Sartari, Senior Policy Adviser.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIR: This estimates committee will be reported by Hansard. The daily proof *Hansard* will be available the following day.

It is the intention of the Chair to ensure that as many questions as possible are asked and answered and that both questions and answers are short and to the point. The estimates committee's consideration of the estimates will be restricted to discussion of those items for which a vote of money is proposed in the consolidated account. Questions must be clearly related to a page number, item, program or amount in the current division. Members should give these details in preface to their question. If a division or service is the responsibility of more than one minister, a minister shall only be examined in relation to their portfolio responsibilities.

The minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee rather than asking that the question be put on notice for the next sitting week. I ask the minister to clearly indicate what supplementary information he agrees to provide and I will then allocate a reference number. If supplementary information is to be provided, I seek the minister's cooperation in ensuring that it is delivered to the principal clerk by Friday, 29 September 2017. I caution members that if a minister asks that a matter be put on notice, it is up to the member to lodge the question on notice through the online questions system.

I give the call to the member for Geraldton.

Mr I.C. BLAYNEY: I refer to "Significant Issues Impacting the Agency" on page 320 of budget paper No 2. Dot point three refers to the Economic Regulation Authority's review. Can the minister explain why the government has chosen not to follow through with its election commitment to create a rural fire service?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: I will answer that. That is not quite correct, is it? I do not know how many times I have been in the media recently indicating that we are working on the process of creating a rural fire service, which is exactly what we are doing. We made a commitment to implement all the recommendations of the Ferguson report. As pointed out by the member for Geraldton, that commitment was a counter to the government of the day's position that it would implement them all. When the then opposition was questioned on it, our leader's response was that we would implement all those recommendations in line with the member's government. The first election commitment that was derived from that was to hold a bushfire summit, which was principally about mitigation but also about the establishment of a rural fire service. I insisted that we talk about that because I wanted people's opinions about what they believed should be formed as a rural fire service and how we would pay for it—what it should look like and how we would pay for it. That was discussed at the Bushfire Mitigation Summit, which was an election commitment. The service is currently under development by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, not by my department, although we obviously have input into the whole thing. I hope that it will come back to us soon. The objective was to announce the rural fire service structure before the bushfire season began, but I do not believe that we will be able to do that. The bushfire season will begin on 1 October. We are only a couple of weeks away from that, so we will not be able to do that in time. But very soon thereafter, we will announce the structure of the rural fire service. I can assure the member that it will not be up and running this year because it cannot be; it is impossible to do so.

Mr I.C. BLAYNEY: Is the minister prepared to provide supplementary information of any modelling that the government has done since the election on the cost of establishing a rural fire service?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: No; we do not have that information. That work has not been done and it will not be done until we have a structure that we can do costing on. As I explained, be it the structure of the Department of Fire and Emergency Services or whatever structure it is that may or may not include a fire service in or adjacent to it,

there were two recommendations in the Ferguson report. There was not one; there were two. One was for an independent rural fire service. As the member knows, I have ruled that out because we cannot afford to do it. The alternative is a structure within DFES, which is being looked at now. Even if a rural fire service structure were to be announced tomorrow, we would probably have only the structure and possibly the name of a person who may head it up, but that is about it. We will not know what it will ultimately look like until at least next year. At the time, I will provide the information to the member.

Mr I.C. BLAYNEY: Does the government agree with the Economic Regulation Authority's view that a volunteer-based structure could be established for as little as \$4.2 million annually?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: That was the ERA's idea of the minimum structure possible. We would not get the rural fire service that volunteers would think they would for \$4.2 million. The ERA indicated in the same report, as the member would probably be aware, that an independent fire service, which was one of the Ferguson report's recommendations, would cost between \$450 million and \$500 million. That has been raised in certain circles among volunteers. When I raised that publicly, I was chided by certain people who indicated that I had overstretched the costings. The costings that I quoted were for the annual running of the New South Wales Rural Fire Service. Bearing in mind that Western Australia is a much bigger state than New South Wales, I indicated that that was the sort of cost we would be looking at. I was criticised for coming up with that figure, but the ERA referred to exactly the same structure costing about the same amount of money. It has a number of views about what could or could not be done for a rural fire service. The minimum amount was \$4.2 million. Honestly, I do not know what we could get for \$4.2 million, but it would not be much—we just would not.

Mr I.C. BLAYNEY: Is the government looking at a volunteer-based fire service?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: No; remember how it is structured. Bushfire volunteers are employed by local governments. They have nothing to do with DFES. DFES funds the local governments for the equipment that they use and some other capital assets. Those funds come out of the emergency services levy, as the member knows. There has never been a recommendation at all, even in the Ferguson report, for an independent volunteer-run bush fire service. It cannot be done; local government would not take it on.

[2.10 pm]

Mr I.C. BLAYNEY: What consultation has been done in rural communities since the election on their views of a rural fire service and their fire protection needs more generally?

The CHAIR: Is this still related to the original line item you quoted, member for Geraldton?

Mr I.C. BLAYNEY: Yes.

The CHAIR: Are you happy with that, minister?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: I do not mind answering the question. A significant amount of consultation has been done by both the department and our government—not only the bushfire mitigation summit we held in Mandurah, but also the bushfire mitigation forum held by the department in Busselton, which was a significantly well-attended forum and included many volunteer organisations. Also, we had the public consultation period for two to three months, when we asked people to put forward their views on what a rural fire service should look like.

By the way, member for Geraldton—I thought I indicated this in the house, but if I did not, I will indicate it now—since becoming minister, in talking to volunteers, and this is only the volunteers, I have been to both sides of the Kimberley, the Pilbara, the goldfields, the midwest, Albany and Esperance. I visited people affected by the fires in Esperance. With some of my officers I took a road trip from Yarloop, down to Margaret River and back via Collie. We drove through all the areas recently affected by fires throughout the south west. On that trip alone I spoke to over 500 volunteers and each time I raised the issue of a rural fire service and asked for their point of view. I have visited and spoken to probably 60 or 70 brigades around Western Australia, and I have put to them the issues we are talking about now, and asked them for their personal input.

Mr I.C. BLAYNEY: One final follow-on question.

The CHAIR: We have had five questions on this one now; I just want the member for Roe to get one in as well.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Further to the member's question, from his meetings with the Esperance group affected by the fire, can the minister relate to me their thoughts on the rural fire service? Obviously, the Cascade-Scaddan fire group put in \$100 000 of its own money for its review.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Absolutely, member. I must say that that report is a very good report, too, particularly the way it is laid out. Reading the time line and how that fire jumped out of the unallocated crown land is a bit of a horror story. As I indicated to the member for Geraldton, I had a meeting with the farmer who employed the three backpackers who lost their lives and his wife at their farmhouse. Later, the brother of one of the farmers who lost his life was in attendance at the Scaddan Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade. I spoke to all those people. I spoke to the Scaddan bush fire brigade, and that meeting was well attended. We talked about the rural fire service. I made it clear then that I will not support an independent rural fire service and explained why in exactly the same way

I have here today. I indicated that we are still waiting to see what the structure will look like and whether it is within the Department of Fire and Emergency Services, which is the other option that has been put forward by the Ferguson report.

Member for Roe, the key things raised with me were not so much about the rural fire service, although of course it was raised, but about access to aerial firefighting—that was a big thing—and the use of that chap down there's plane as a water bomber. I cannot remember his name. The guy who does the seeding—Mr Repacholi. He does seeding, fertilising and weed round-up. Mr Repacholi has gained Civil Aviation Safety Authority certification to use the plane as a water bomber. Only as late as yesterday, I raised with the commissioner the possibility of using Mr Repacholi's services on an as-needs basis, because that is what was put to me by the people from Esperance. The proposal for the next fire season is to have the aerial fleet follow the harvesting season around Western Australia, which will include basing the fleet in Esperance. Many people in Esperance indicated to me, including those in Scaddan, that before they take off the harvest, quite often a number of lightning strikes hit in the unallocated crown land, which is the example we talked about, and access to Mr Repacholi's plane would be a good thing. I indicated that I would go back and have a look at that, and we were just talking about it yesterday.

People highlighted another two things: the transparency of the emergency services levy and how it is spent, which we have just talked about; and the types of equipment that they have—for example, the ground clearance for the heavy water tankers that literally could not make it into the unallocated crown land around Esperance without a dozer there to pull them out. Those were the big-ticket issues for the people of Esperance, which I promised I would take up and I have taken up with the commissioner.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: The minister is obviously aware of the amount of heat that he received over the number of volunteers and local government people who had access to the forum in Mandurah. Is the minister comfortable that he got a broad enough response? When I talk to local governments throughout the regions, they tell me that they felt that they did not have enough representation. Obviously, I was invited and I appreciate that, but there is a general feeling that there was not enough local government and volunteer representation.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: All the volunteers involved in any bushfire or catastrophic incident were involved and all the associations. More than one rep from each of those organisations came along. The principle of the meeting was about mitigation in the first instance, but I asked that it take up the issue of the rural fire service as well. The people we invited to the meeting were principally landowners or those people responsible for mitigation. Remember, DFES is not responsible for mitigation; the landowner is responsible for mitigation. One of the biggest criticisms from local government—from people the member represents—is the failure of government agencies to do mitigation on their land. Remember that? That is a true statement. That is the reason I wanted those people in the room. As the previous government would have known, chasing the departments of water, environment and conservation, and all the others around government to get them to do the right thing and do mitigation is just a nightmare. Getting them all in the one room to agree on an outcome of how we address the issue of mitigation was a far better way of doing it. I invited a representative from each of the regional fire areas under the current Western Australian Local Government Association structure.

If I went further than that, the member for Roe would know what would happen. If I invited one shire and another shire missed out, we would never hear the end of it. At what point do we stop? The member for Roe knows how many shires are out there. There had to be a rational approach to it, so I invited the Western Australian Local Government Association to send its representatives. As the coordinating body, it had about two or three reps there, as the member knows, but also there was a representative from all the various regions. To really get to the point that the member has just made, we cannot just have WALGA as an organisation there; we have to have local people there too. That is why I invited those regional reps.

[2.20 pm]

Mrs R.M.J. CLARKE: I refer the minister to the first dot point on page 320 of volume 1 of budget paper No 2. Can the minister outline how the additional \$3.7 million will support the bushfire risk management planning process?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: The bushfire risk management planning process goes to a couple of things that both the members for Roe and Geraldton were just talking about, one of which is mitigation. Although it did not start under our government—it started under the previous government—I am a very strong supporter of bushfire risk management planning. A number of shires in the member's area that she deals with are involved in bushfire risk management planning. There is a strong argument that came through at the summit, as the member for Roe knows, that more money should be spent on mitigation. They argued that \$1 spent on mitigation would save \$10 in the clean-up after a horrendous fire goes through. That is both economically sound and an efficient use of resources. At the moment, 16 shires are involved in bushfire risk mitigation planning. That extra money that the member talked about will bring another 11 shires into the bushfire risk mitigation planning process. A further 13 shires are being assisted, but are not being funded at the moment.

I went to Margaret River recently and that shire is doing its bushfire risk mitigation plan in conjunction with Nannup. I looked at what they have done and how they have done it. I must admit that it is just fantastic. That really is the future for the way in which we should be addressing rural and regional fire in Western Australia, because the shires themselves, with assistance from the department and other areas, involve all the local communities that are identified in high-risk bushfire zones, including private and public landowners, the local government itself and other government offices such as the Department of Education or whatever, and organisations such as Telstra, so that should a catastrophe strike, the infrastructure that is needed is protected by being the first area to be mitigated. Then the other areas of high risk in that shire's area can be identified and determined in how we go about undertaking mitigation burns or other forms of mitigation to reduce the fuel loads in those areas. It has actually got the community on side to say, "There is a real problem here; we really need to do something about it." It has not said, "Let's go out there in the adjacent park that may belong to the state government and burn everything we possibly can and that would save the town", because that might not necessarily be the bit that will save the town. It is about identifying the specific areas that come within the costings for that shire, because at the end of the day it will be either the shire or the private or public landowner that bears the cost of the mitigation. That will come within the costings of either the shire or the landowner to do a functional burn that will significantly reduce the risk for that particular area or town without having to spend huge amounts of money on mitigation.

It is all on a geographic information system platform, so we can physically see on a mapping program exactly where those high-risk areas are in and around a town or council. In future, we hope to overlay that information across the state with the type of emergency management GIS tools that the Department of Fire and Emergency Services and the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions have so that we know exactly where the highest risk areas are in the state. We will know the highest risk areas in that particular local zone, whether they have been mitigated, the possibility that there will be a bushfire in that season and the risks that are faced. That is great. This is a fantastic tool that reduces the cost of bushfire mitigation and also applies the resources for those shires that are struggling, particularly the smaller shires, only to the areas that specifically need it. It is a really great tool.

Mr I.C. BLAYNEY: On page 320 of budget paper No 2, the first dot point outlines the role of bushfire mitigation, particularly in working with priority local governments. Can the minister explain how a local government becomes a priority local government? Have any local governments been added to or removed from this list since the election; and, if so, which ones? What additional services are provided by the priority local governments and what extra resources are given to them?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: The priority local governments are based on an agreed level of risk to that particular area. Fifteen local councils have completed the bushfire risk management plans. The member for Geraldton will understand why they were placed on that list as I go through them; it is because of the risk involved. The 15 that have completed their BRMPs include Beverley, Chittering, Irwin, Carnamah, Northampton, Boddington, West Arthur, Woodanilling, Jerramungup, Ravensthorpe, Augusta–Margaret River, Nannup, Boyup Brook, Donnybrook–Balingup and Bridgetown–Greenbushes. We do not have to be rocket scientists to work out why those 15 local councils have developed their bushfire risk management plans; it is because of the risks that those shires face from bushfire. They are bushfire-prone areas. The 11 local governments that we are stretching this out to as part of the funding that the member for Murray–Wellington just talked about are Toodyay, York, Northam, Dandaragan, Coorow, Wagin, Harvey, Denmark, Busselton, Gingin and Manjimup. A significant number of local governments in both the north in the Pilbara area and the urban rural interface around the city of Perth have expressed interest in doing them as well. I will pass over to Mr Steve Fewster to explain a little more about the reason those shires were chosen.

Mr S. Fewster: The minister has pretty well covered the reasons. When we established the bushfire risk management project a number of years ago, those local governments were considered to have the highest bushfire risk in a statewide bushfire risk profile as mapped with the will of the local government to participate—community ownership is important and necessary from a shared responsibility point of view—and their lack of resources to do it themselves.

[2.30 pm]

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I refer to "Significant Issues Impacting the Agency" on page 320 of the *Budget Statements*. The first dot point refers to the report on the special inquiry into the Waroona bushfires. Is the government committed to implementing all recommendations of that inquiry?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: The answer is yes. We gave that as an election commitment. The recommendations fall within numerous agencies, not just the Department of Fire and Emergency Services; other agencies are caught up in the recommendations. There were 17 recommendations and 23 opportunities contained in the report to which the member refers. DFES was the lead agency for 17 recommendations and 18 opportunities. The department has

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progressed all but one recommendation—namely, recommendation 12, which requires the department to work with the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage and the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries to establish places of bushfires as a last resort. They are working with the department on identifying the practicalities of that.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Obviously the government is committed to that. If so, where is the budget allocation to do so?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: The member will find that it would have been allocated under the previous government and we are simply continuing that work.

Mr M. HUGHES: I am interested in crew safety. I draw the minister's attention to page 325 of the *Budget Statements*. Can the minister provide me with some information on the progress of the initiative regarding crew protection in their vehicles?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: The issue of crew protection came about as a result of the Black Cat Creek fire inquiry. The member for Roe would remember when one of the volunteers unfortunately lost their life in Albany in that fire. As a result of that, a commitment was made by the government of the day, the previous government, to introduce crew fire protection for all appliances, including in particular bushfire volunteers, volunteer fire and emergency services and also career fire service vehicles, particularly those that are involved in bushfire response as well. The good news is that there is further funding in this budget for the final roll-out of the crew protection process. Crew protection is in three stages. I will explain that to members so they understand exactly what has been installed. Stage 1 was the fitment of burnover blankets and radiant heat shields to 981 in-scope appliances. That was completed in early 2016. Stage 2 incorporates the installation of in-cab air so that people who remain in the cab have access to their own independent oxygen during a fire that might go over the top of them; a deluge system, which is basically a plumbing system that goes around the outside of the appliance which has an independent source to continue water pouring over the appliance as the fire would go over the top of them; and critical component lagging and panel, particularly underneath the vehicle so that the vehicle itself does not catch fire from underneath. Stage 2 commenced in September 2015 and is expected to be completed by 2018. Stage 3 is the automatic vehicle location installations—that is, the identification of each of the vehicles in the entire fleet. That is both career firefighters and volunteer firefighters with electronic automated vehicle location systems so that at any point in time it can be identified where they are, not just on the road going to and from a fire, but actually on the fire ground itself. Therefore, it is known exactly where the vehicles are, and if the crew is in the vehicle and the fire is going over them, we know instantly that they are in danger.

Mr D.T. Klemm: Or if they roll over.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Yes, if they roll over, as Commissioner Klemm has just indicated. It has happened on numerous occasions when the vehicle has rolled over and the crew was unable to reach help. In that instance, the AVL will go off.

Those are the three forms of fire crew protection. There are very few left to be done. As Mr Pasquale indicates, 186 out of the 981 appliances are left for stage 2. Stage 3, the AVL system, was completed the other day for all vehicles across Western Australia. Hats off to the previous government, member for Hillarys, for picking up that crew protection program because it is certainly going to save lives.

Mr I.C. BLAYNEY: I wrote to the minister not long ago about this matter. Firefighters from the south had raised it with me. I was looking at one of the new trucks at Waggrakine the other day. I asked specifically whether the truck had an air temperature sensor on the air intake and they said that they thought it did. It means that at a critical moment, if they are caught trying to get out of a fire front, that sensor will shut down the motor of the truck. The crews have made it clear to me—I agree with them—that the best thing would be for that sensor to be disabled so that that will not happen. Has the minister had any progress with that?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Yes, that was raised with me in Esperance and one other brigade raised it with me as well. My background is originally as a mechanic, so when they told me that there was a sensor on the motor that shut it down to the slow speed, crawling speed, when it sucked in smoke—and it was a fire engine—I just thought, “Come off it. I can't believe it.” Apparently that had been raised. The response has been that it could not be switched off because it would then breach the manufacturer's obligations. It is an issue I raised just yesterday with Commissioner Klemm, on his first day on the job! I indicated that if we were buying that number of vehicles, we should be telling the manufacturers what we want, not having manufacturers tell us about whether we can or cannot turn off those sensors. I am informed by people in Esperance that other organisations such as the police and the army, who use similar vehicles, have their sensors switched off. I cannot prove that; I was just told by people in Esperance that that was the case. I cannot believe that it occurs, and it is an issue I have raised with the commissioner.

Mr D.T. Klemm: The minister obviously raised this with me yesterday, and it is something that we can follow-up through other member agencies of the Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council that, by and

large, across Australia and New Zealand, use a lot of similar trucks from the manufacturers. It was raised with me yesterday and we will take that up in the coming days.

[2.40 pm]

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I refer to the asset investment program on page 324 of budget paper No 2. Almost following on from the previous question, the first dot point states that \$22.1 million has been allocated for vehicle acquisitions, enhancements and ongoing replacement programs. This being the government for local jobs, I am concerned that I am getting feedback that some regional companies that have been supplying firefighting trucks as recently as the past 10 to 15 years on a constant basis have now been told that their tenders are no longer required and that these works will be going elsewhere. I am very disturbed when I hear of this, because we are obviously talking about companies that employ people in regional towns and so on. Can the minister enlighten me about what is happening there?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: I share the member's concerns. Given that there is an expression of interest out at the moment for certain vehicles, which may or may not turn into a tender process that I might have to sign, it would not be appropriate for me to enter into that conversation, because I do not want to upset any tender process. That would not be any good for the tenderer or for the department. However, I will pass that question on, on the basis that I should not answer it. It would be inappropriate for me to answer it, but I will pass it on to the commissioner. It is an issue that the commissioner is aware of.

Mr D.T. Klemm: The comment I can make is that the matter was raised with me yesterday—the very point the member raised—about two towns in the south west, Narrogin and Collie. In relation to the future fleet tender, I do not have visibility of that. I have not been involved in the future fleet tender process to date, in my former role, but I could get either Frank Pasquale or Steve Fewster to comment as people who are involved, bearing in mind that, very similar to what the minister said, the tender process is still ongoing.

Mr F. Pasquale: A process is in play at the moment in which a tender has been issued for exploring the construction of new firefighting appliances. That tender is still in play, at a preferred respondent stage, and in accordance with State Supply Commission guidelines, that is about as much as we can divulge at this stage about those ongoing negotiations. That is as much as I can elaborate.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Thank you for that response. I understand the delicacy of the tender process. Having one of those places in my electorate, and having seen the quality of the product, the longevity of the contract and so forth, and also our new government's desire to support local jobs and regional jobs, I would urge the minister and the department to have a serious look at it. We have some fantastic local industries, and we really need to support them, within reason, if possible.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: My question relates to the income statement on page 327 of budget paper No 2, particularly the line item for regulatory fees and fines. Is there a breakdown that could indicate how much of that income comes from false alarm fees for premises that are direct brigade alarm monitored?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: I have just been informed by Mr Pasquale that it is not actually in that section, although that is where I would have gone as well, if I had been in the member's position. I remember that the previous government increased the fines for false alarm callouts to \$750, should someone deliberately call out the fire and emergency services for a false alarm. That new fine commenced on 11 January 2016, so it is not included in the line item the member just referred to. I can tell the member, however, that as of June 2017, the Department of Fire and Emergency Services had raised 4 445 invoices with a total value of \$3.3 million.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: I have a few questions around this issue. Is there an indication of what types of businesses are particularly being impacted by this?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: That is an operational matter, so I will pass it on to Suzanne Paterson.

Ms S. Paterson: A range of businesses are involved, fairly large users being hospitals, hotels and some small industries. There is a range. If the member wants a breakdown, we could take the question on notice.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: If I could get it as supplementary information, I would appreciate that.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: My understanding is that the member wants a breakdown of the types of businesses that this applies to and the number of businesses.

[*Supplementary Information No A16.*]

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: Is there a world record, if you like, for the number of invoices issued to one particular property? What is the highest number of fines issued to one property under this regime in the 18 or so months since it has been operational?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: If the staff at the Office of Emergency Management, which is coming up next, do not stop burning the toast, they will get one over there in Dumas House, because there have been two callouts there already. That has not involved getting a fine.

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Ms S. Paterson: In terms of a fee for service, I think, from memory, one business has been invoiced 75 times. I can take that question on notice to provide more details.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: Can that be perhaps incorporated with the supplementary information on the previous question?

The CHAIR: No; I will issue a new one. Will the minister please restate what he is prepared to provide?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: The member is seeking not a named business but the type of business that has exercised the highest number of false alarms, and how many of those false alarms.

[*Supplementary Information No A17.*]

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: Does that \$750 fee reflect cost recovery for being called out to a false alarm, or is it more in the realms of a penalty? Has any work been done on the actual cost of responding to a false alarm?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: I remind the member that his government introduced this measure.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: I recognise that.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: I am sure the previous government would have already done that work before it was introduced. Nevertheless, I will pass it over to Ms Paterson.

[2.50 pm]

Ms S. Paterson: As it is a fee for service, it is based on the cost of actual service of a fire truck turning out to the business. Yes, it is cost recovery.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: On what basis was it determined that that was the actual cost, or the approximate cost, of the service?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: As the member knows, the Economic Regulation Authority would look carefully at this type of fine being applied because the ERA would argue strongly that it would have to be on a cost-recovery basis. I am therefore assuming it is for the literal call-out—the wages, the attendance and the use of the vehicle.

Ms S. Paterson: That is exactly correct. It does not include all administrative costs, for example, for administering the false fire alarm invoices or collecting the revenue. It is literally the cost of the truck going out with the crew. These costs were modelled before the fee was introduced.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: Is there any intention to expand these false fire alarm fees or fines or however we want to describe them, to privately monitored alarms or will it simply stay with the direct brigade alarm?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: It is as it is at the moment—just a false alarm for those who make a call for fire and emergency services. There is no intent to expand it to any further operations.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: Since the introduction—this is about the right time to start measuring how this is working—have we had any perverse effect such as businesses opting out of the direct brigade alarm system or perhaps new businesses that otherwise might have considered this not taking it up?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: That is a good question in terms of exactly what behavioural change has occurred as a result of the introduction. I will get Ms Paterson to answer. To highlight to the member, WA is not alone in this fine; all other states do it.

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: No; I recognise that.

Ms S. Paterson: Legally, certain businesses and certain types of buildings are required to have a direct brigade alarm, so they cannot opt out. We have seen one business realise that they did not need to have an alarm, as they were not legally required to do so. It was a vacant building; it was an exchange. They realised they did not need to have it. It was causing trouble to local firefighters, so they applied to have the DBA removed. That is the only instance that I am aware of. Legally, they cannot remove the DBA. We have been monitoring to make sure businesses do not deliberately turn off their early warning systems because it would be illegal, so we have been monitoring to see whether any unintended consequences in behaviour have been exhibited by businesses.

Mrs R.M.J. CLARKE: I refer the minister to significant issues on page 320 regarding the report of the special inquiry into the January 2016 Waroona fire. I note that the special inquiry supported the prompt establishment of the critical messaging system. Can the minister please comment on the critical messaging system and how this will benefit the Western Australian community?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Thank you very much indeed. The critical messaging system is linked to Emergency WA, as the member knows. If people have not been on the Emergency WA website, I encourage them to do so. Again, it is a geographic information system platform that can tell us every single incident that is occurring in Western Australia right now. We can do it on our mobile phones if we want. If we put the cursor over the little fire symbol, it will tell us where it is, what it is doing and the response and the level of the incident on an hour-by-hour

basis. It is a superb piece of technology that will be upgraded in due course as we go forward. Part of that is the critical messaging telephony that will be attached to it.

Mr F. Pasquale: It is quite a sophisticated piece of technology. The back end is called the critical messaging system and the front end is the WA emergency website. The website has been a significant success in the number of accesses that it has had. I cannot recall the exact stats but I am sure that since its inception, it has had more than a million accesses and something like seven million hits. It has all those functionalities that the minister described as being able to identify warnings, scheduled burn-offs and mapping capabilities so that people can click and see where things are happening. It has been quite a success story.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I refer to the emergency services summary on page 321, volume 1 of budget paper No 2. The frontline services line item shows a reduction in spending from the previous state budget of 2017–18, \$12.536 million; 2018–19, \$20.786 million; and 2019–20, \$17.003 million. Can the minister explain the significantly reduced expenditure and how frontline services will be impacted by this significant reduction in expenditure?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Was the member talking about frontline services at \$266 million, which is the budget estimate for this year, or was he talking about compliance and technical advisory services, which is \$21 million, going down next year to \$17 million?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I am looking at frontline services on line number 4.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: From the budget 2016–17 at \$274 million to the current budget it came in at \$269.790 million, estimated actual for the last year, and it has decreased in this year's budget estimate to \$266.096 million, which is a decrease of just over \$2 million. I am advised that the decrease is primarily due to the decrease in the percentage of allocation of overheads and lower capital grants relating to the volunteer marine rescue service replacement hull program in 2017–18. A bit more can be added by Mr Pasquale.

Mr F. Pasquale: Probably the best way to demonstrate the hull replacement program is by referring to the income statement on page 327. The bottom section of page 327 refers to the details of controlled grants and subsidies. Members will see the very last line "Volunteer Marine Rescue Service" and that the funding profiled against those years is quite lumpy. It is lumpy and it goes down particularly from 2016–17 to 2017–18 because it is based on a replacement cycle of the vessels. When that funding was supported based on that replacement cycle, it recognised vessels were being renewed for replacement in different years, so the funding was not being averaged over the full life cycle of the replacement program. It is representative of when a vessel needs to be replaced. If it falls in 2017–18, funding is allocated in 2017–18, so there is a dip in 2017–18 as a result of that.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Is the minister talking about items more than locations that will be impacted? That is my understanding.

[3.00 pm]

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Yes, that is right. In this case, these items relate to the volunteer marine rescue service. Basically, boats' hulls have to be replaced from time to time. There is usually a replacement program. I think hulls have a 10-year life expectancy and then they are replaced under the program. If the member for Roe looks at the new boats down his way, in Albany, I think everybody would want a 900-horsepower offshore boat to replace their hulls.

Mr I.C. BLAYNEY: I think they change the motors every five years, and the hull every 10.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Yes. I think that is right, member for Geraldton.

The CHAIR: Minister, I just remind you of the time. You wanted to finish after an hour. Would you like to continue? The member for Kalamunda is next on my list.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: If we moved onto the Office of Emergency Management, it would be good.

Mr I.C. BLAYNEY: I would not mind asking a few more questions.

The CHAIR: It is up to the minister. Is that okay?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: It is fine, yes.

The CHAIR: Is it a follow-up or a new question?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: It is probably a new one, but it is similar.

The CHAIR: That is fine, if the minister is happy with it.

Mr M. HUGHES: Can I bag the next question?

Mr P.A. KATSAMBANIS: It really is opposition time.

Mr Ian Blayney; Mr F.M. Logan; Mr Peter Rundle; Mr Matthew Hughes; Mr Peter Katsambanis; Ms Lisa Baker

The CHAIR: Members, hang on a minute. I am clarifying the timing now. The member for Kalamunda will get the call now. Two other members have questions and I have a question that I would like to put as well.

Mr M. HUGHES: I have been very patient.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: He has been patient, and he is in a high bushfire-prone area.

The CHAIR: Member for Kalamunda, would you like to ask a question?

Mr M. HUGHES: I would. I am interested in the protection we provide to our volunteer personnel. I refer the minister to “Frontline Services” on page 324. How is the government supporting volunteers who develop prescribed cancers as a result of performing firefighting duties? That is the first question. A follow-up question to that is: will this be affected by changes to the act?

[Mr S.J. Price took the chair.]

Mr F.M. LOGAN: In terms of volunteers’ eligibility to make a presumptive claim that the work that they did led to their exposure to carcinogens, compensation is now in place. The remaining parts of the act commenced on 16 September this year, which is very good. The Firefighters and Emergency Volunteers Legislation Amendment (Compensation) Bill 2016 was introduced and passed by the previous government. I would like to put on the record that the then shadow Minister for Emergency Services, Margaret Quirk, actually introduced a private member’s bill that was identical to the government’s bill. The member for Geraldton may remember, because he was here, that that was knocked back by the then minister, Troy Buswell. I can understand why the government did it. Its view was, “We’re the government; we make these changes. The opposition don’t do that; we do it.” I thought it was a bit churlish. When the government’s bill was introduced to the house, it was identical to the one introduced by Margaret Quirk, the member for Girrawheen. Basically, we had chewed up all that time, during which people could have made applications had they contracted cancer, for no real reason. There was no benefit out of it, except that the government claimed a win. I think it was a bit churlish to do that, but nevertheless the government did it and the bill passed, because obviously the Labor Party supported it. The final part of that act commenced on 16 September this year, which is great for volunteers. It is very good news for volunteers. That is terrific.

Mr I.C. BLAYNEY: The second dot point on page 320 relates to the drafting of the new emergency services bill. Is that bill a government priority? What consultation has been undertaken in formulating the legislation and what are the priorities for improvement in fire mitigation with the intended changes to the act?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: Drafting and consultation on the emergency services bill has been going since 2012. I do not know who the emergency services minister was then. I presume it was Troy Buswell; I am not quite sure.

Mr I.C. BLAYNEY: It was Joe Francis.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: It started in 2012. The object of the exercise is to collapse all the older acts into one piece of emergency services legislation. The work has been done, and the consultation process occurred under the previous government. I am informed that 200 individuals, groups and organisations provided more than 5 300 comments in 2014, which informed the decision paper. The final draft is sitting there at the moment. The advice from the regulatory gatekeeper is that it is a cabinet-in-confidence document. It has not been to cabinet yet; therefore, it is not available for further release yet. The consultation and the work has been done. There is a further issue to do with the bill. I think that comes to the last point the member made: if we establish a rural fire service, it will definitely have an impact on the act. That is why I have advised both commissioner Klemm and the previous commissioner, Gregson, to hold steady on this. I do not want to walk it into cabinet yet until we finalise the issue of the rural fire service, those structures, and how they will fall under the act.

Ms L.L. BAKER: I also refer to the new emergency services bill. Some time ago—in fact several times—I wrote to the former government asking for advice on the management of animals during disasters and emergencies. I have read a national report that I am sure some of the minister’s team would have read several years ago, which showed Western Australia was the worst at managing its response to the evacuation of animals. Obviously we do not want animals loose on the road, but a lot of farmers need to provide attention to their animals. Anyone who has been caught in a disaster realises that there is a very specific set of circumstances that require a response. Has any consideration been given in the drafting or redrafting of this bill, from the submissions that were received, to improving the way WA coordinates disaster responses to animal welfare?

Mr F.M. LOGAN: I thank the member for the question. That issue not only concerns farmers, it also concerns people like the member who have horses. That very issue has been raised with me by farmers on a number of occasions. If farmers have to leave their property quickly as a result of a catastrophe, they want to get back to their stock as soon as they possibly can to see how they fared and whether any are in pain or are suffering. Farmers raised that with me on my road trips to Esperance and Yarloop, and in a couple of other places. As the member just pointed out, that arose because of controls that were put in place for road access, primarily during the recovery process. Unnecessary restrictions were also put in place that stopped people from going back to their farms or

properties to basically look after their animals. I can assure the member that that has been taken up by the department. As far as restrictions for people who have good reason to be there—they are either property owners or they have stock or other animals—in the future they will be allowed access, as long as it is safe and appropriate. I will flick over to commissioner Klemm in a minute. Those changes have been made as a result of the lessons learnt primarily in Yarloop and other places.

Ms L.L. BAKER: I thank the minister for that. That is really heartening to hear. The other side to that is the coordination of services and products that flow into disaster areas. My office fended off any number of veterinarians, feed merchants and good-natured people who wanted to help. There is no-one on the ground coordinating that. Waroona was a particular example of that. There were at least three stockfeed places trying to deliver feed and whatever and there was no-one on the ground. I could have rung someone from my office and told them to speak to Stephen Fewster or such and such and they will do this work and coordinate the veterinarian products. There were dodgy products that were out of date being donated and no-one was on the ground coordinating any of that.

[3.10 pm]

Mr S. Fewster: The department has been in contact with the South Australian veterinary aid organisation. Work has been done to train some of our career firefighters in the movement of heavy animals. Of course, horses, cattle and the like can get into trouble. The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development is responsible for livestock support during emergencies and it is one of the things at the forefront of an incident controller's mind.

Ms L.L. BAKER: That is interesting. I shall ask the Minister for Agriculture and Food.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: This is my last question to wrap-up. I refer to efficiency indicators on page 322 of budget paper No 2 and the line item near the bottom of the page "Average Cost per Fire and Emergency Service Emergency Response Guides Reviewed". I noticed that the actual cost for 2017–18 has increased massively from 2015–16 and 2016–17. Note 3 on the following page attempts to explain that, but can the minister tell me what this is made up of, what it entails and why there is an increase in cost?

Ms S. Paterson: In terms of the actual task, in the metropolitan area there is a station officer and their crew who go out and inspect the response guides that are at each large premises storing a significant amount of hazardous materials. In rural areas that is done by the district officer. This efficiency indicator looks at the average cost to do those reviews of the emergency response guides. The requirement for the emergency response guides is licensed through the Dangerous Goods Safety Act, so it does not specifically belong with the department, but we review those guides partly because it is important for our emergency response if we get called out to an incident at such a premises and it also means when we are called out, we know what to do to manage the local population and whether or not to evacuate. I will turn the answer on the costing over to Ms Camarda.

Ms G. Camarda: The costing is based on the hourly rate of the crew that has turned out to review the premises and those of the area and district officers in their review of the guides of the premises. That is used to factor into the average cost, the output being the number of emergency response guides reviewed in the year. There was an error in the average costs across the years with the 2016–17 budget calculation being incorrect. The figure for the budget for 2016–17 should have been \$1 549, which is more comparable to the actual for 2016–17.

The appropriation was recommended.