

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND JUSTICE STANDING COMMITTEE

HEARING WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES



TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE
TAKEN AT PERTH
WEDNESDAY, 1 NOVEMBER 2017

Members

Mr P.A. Katsambanis (Chairman)
Mr M.J. Folkard (Deputy Chairman)
Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup
Mr A. Krsticevic
Mr D.T. Punch

Hearing commenced at 10.22 am

Mr DARREN KLEMM

Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner, examined:

Mr LLOYD ALEXANDER BAILEY

Deputy Commissioner, Operations, Department of Fire and Emergency Services, examined:

Mr MURRAY DOUGLAS CARTER

Director, Office of Bushfire Risk Management, Department of Fire and Emergency Services, examined:

Mr MALCOLM GRAHAM CRONSTEDT

Executive Director, Office of Emergency Management, Department of Fire and Emergency Services, examined:

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank you for agreeing to appear today. One of the functions of the committee is to review the departments within the portfolio's responsibilities. From time to time, the committee will conduct agency review hearings. The purpose of today's hearing is to discuss a range of matters such as the preparation for the 2017–18 bushfire season; the state's emergency management framework; and the department's possible involvement in counterterrorism arrangements. So that we are completely transparent, the committee is contemplating an inquiry into counterterrorism arrangements in WA and wants to canvass a range of matters with some agencies before it defines the terms of reference. The Chairman of the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee, Mr Peter Katsambanis, is away today, so I am chairing the hearing. My name is Mark Folkard and I am the Deputy Chairman of the committee. I would like to introduce the other members of the committee: Mr Zak Kirkup, MLA, the member for Dawesville; Mr Don Punch, MLA, the member for Bunbury; and Mr Tony Krsticevic, MLA, the member for Carine. It is important that you understand that any deliberate misleading of this committee may be regarded as a contempt of Parliament. Your evidence is protected by parliamentary privilege. However, this privilege does not apply to anything you might say outside of today's proceedings.

Before we begin with our questions, do you have any questions about your attendance today or would you like to make a brief opening statement?

Mr KLEMM: Chair and representatives of the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee, thank you for the opportunity to address the committee. Can I say it has been an honour to be appointed as the Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner. My first priority will be to listen and engage with staff and volunteers, stakeholders and the community. It is important that I hear first-hand what is working and what is not, and where opportunities exist to improve the way DFES operates. Reflecting on the past year, it has been a story of parallel seasons. Last bushfire season was one of the quietest, or calmest, seasons we have had in some time. In contrast, a record-breaking wet season in the Kimberley caused by monsoonal troughs resulted in resupply¹ operations stretching from December 2016 through to April 2017. This was amplified in February this year as a

¹ A letter of clarification about this part of the transcript can be accessed on the committee webpage.

tropical low crossed most of the state, resulting in major road and rail closures isolating towns and communities. There were numerous rescues, including DFES chartering a helicopter to rescue 15 people stranded on the outskirts of Ravensthorpe after a bridge washed away. Tragically, there were two fatalities near Esperance, highlighting how important it is to educate the community about the danger of floodwaters. This year's bushfire and wet season will be our next test as an agency. A key part of my approach will be having a greater focus on bushfire mitigation and working closely with other agencies, including DBCA, Western Power and local governments to carry out prescribed burning. DFES is busily preparing for the season ahead. However, we need the community to play their part to help keep everyone safe this summer—it is a shared responsibility, after all.

I would like to take this opportunity to reflect on the major achievements over the past year. To date, we have launched the Emergency WA website, which gives people better access to emergency information, including map-based warnings. The website has received over 7.5 million visits since it was launched last October. We have created restricted-access permits to simplify the process for people to enter areas impacted by fire, providing more flexibility while ensuring community safety. We have established pre-formed interagency level 3 bushfire incident management teams. These teams include representatives from DFES, Parks and Wildlife, local government and volunteer emergency services. We have completed stage 3 of the crew protection program, with 1 487 vehicles fitted with automatic vehicle location technology, increasing the visibility of firefighting vehicles on the fireground. An additional 400 portable units are also available statewide. We have made volunteer ID cards available to all emergency services volunteers at their request, as this is an opt-in initiative. To date, 4 538 volunteer ID cards have been distributed across all services. We have implemented a new web-based resource management system that tracks resources and personnel on an incident ground. This will enhance the coordination of resources and welfare management of career and volunteer personnel.

A communications support vehicle, complete with satellite technology, was formally commissioned by DFES in July this year. It is equipped with the latest communications technology, enabling communications in isolated areas or where networks are not available during an incident. We have ensured easier access to compensation for volunteer and former career firefighters who develop one of 12 prescribed cancers. We have launched Fire Chat, a flagship suite of bushfire-preparedness tools to invite families and neighbours to a potentially lifesaving five-minute discussion to determine if they will stay or leave in the event of a bushfire. We have launched the DFES volunteer sustainability strategy, aimed at increasing volunteer recruitment and retention by diversifying volunteer roles, being more flexible with time commitments, and engaging people through social media. Finally, we have rolled out the urban search and rescue canine handler training course, which is the first course recognised in Australia based on national competencies.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you. They are good achievements. Before we get into it, I read your annual report last night, or yesterday afternoon. It is comprehensive, I must say, and I commend you for your efforts and what you have done. A couple of things stood out. One was DFES volunteer turnouts within targeted time frames. You achieved over 90 per cent of that. You need to be commended for that on the record, particularly those individuals, for that sort of dedication. What are those time frames or does it vary depending on the agency?

Mr KLEMM: The agency?

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: SES and their turnout times versus DFES and volunteers, bush fire brigades and volunteer brigades et cetera.

Mr KLEMM: For the career firefighters, the time frame is set slightly shorter than it is for volunteers because they have to travel from home to the station and then respond whereas the career

firefighters are either in their fire appliance travelling around to the respective area or are at the station, so the times are slightly shorter.

[10.30 am]

Mr BAILEY: It is seven minutes for careers and nine for volunteers, I understand.² However, SES turnouts are different because they are usually in response to something that is going to occur or has occurred and there is no life at risk, so they can take a little longer to get their trips together and respond. It might be managing a search or assisting in a search with police, for instance, and they might get 12 hours' notice if a search is required. For Volunteer Marine Rescue, of course, they have a different response because of the nature of the call that they would be responding to. Then we have issues, of course, with non-reporting of turnouts, so some of the initial calls get extended in terms of the record because we are not able to say when that particular brigade has responded because they do not tell us. But, really, the careers', as the commissioner has said, is around seven minutes and that includes call-taking time.³

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: And that includes call-taking time?

Mr BAILEY: Yes.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: So that goes through your call centre, out through the network, to the appliance, and then it deploys to the permanent staff?

Mr BAILEY: Yes.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Was it 98 per cent of level 2 bushfires—level 3s have no structural loss of significance; so 98 per cent of the fires that you did turn out to, you did not lose any structures or fires. So that, again, needs to be on record as saying that is an outstanding effort, because I know the sort of resources you require to actually deploy it. What are your thoughts on that?

Mr KLEMM: We have spent some time developing the new KPIs. We did really focus in on, I guess, trying to ensure that there was some measurement of the vast number of bushfires that are responded to across the state. I guess it would be our opinion that what tends to get the most media are the larger bushfires that occur in each summer, but of course every summer thousands of bushfires occur across the state where property is not lost, and most oftentimes it is because of the good work of the people on the ground. We wanted to be able to record that in the KPI. I think the result of the KPI speaks for itself.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Why did DFES not report on the KPI average cost per fire and emergency service response guides reviewed in the 2016 annual report?

Mr KLEMM: We had some problems recording the data. If I could use the acronym FES-ERG for what you have referred to. They are at high-risk facilities throughout the state. What we have found challenging during the year was being able to record the data of the amount of time spent reviewing the FES-ERGs. What has been put in place for this reporting period is the ability to record that information. It was just a simple matter of unfortunately the KPI was put in place when there was no ability to capture the data behind the KPI.⁴

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: So next year we will be able to see it?

Mr KLEMM: Correct.

^{2, 3 & 4} A letter of clarification about this part of the transcript can be accessed on the committee webpage.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: It is looking good. I am taking it that previously we did not have the ability to capture those costs, but as we have gone about it now we do; so we will probably see that in next year's report.

Mr KLEMM: Correct.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I picked up on a line in the report "one source of truth". I take it that is your line of communication and there being one source within the fireground; is that what we are talking about there?

Mr KLEMM: I might need a little bit more context.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: It is —

Recent bushfire reviews highlighted the need to have 'one source of truth' for the community to access during an emergency incident.

Mr KLEMM: So this is about public information. The timely release or warning of the community is critical. I think that has been highlighted in a number of reviews. It certainly is very much the focus of DFES. The challenge we have with that is social media. With the younger generation these days, the various mediums on social media and their acceptance of information that is seen somewhere is a challenge for us, because we have both the requirement to get that information out as quickly as we possibly can, but we are also very mindful of making sure that the information we put out is absolutely correct, because the downside for us of putting incorrect information out is that we could possibly put lives at risk. So we tend to want, wherever possible, to make sure that we have a single source of getting that information out, and that is the Emergency WA website, certainly as a starting point, and it was one of the drivers for the development of that. What we tend not to do is to repost things on social media because there is any amount of information that comes in on social media during bushfires that is just that—it is just information; it is just something that someone sees. People might perceive that to be fact, but we need to ground-proof that before we officially release the information. It is a single source of making sure that we have got a single entry point all the way from the incident, through the incident control room and then out to the community.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: With the various phases in an emergency operation, you obviously go from the actual execution of your operation and you come towards the end and start moving into recovery phase. How is the agency looking at the transition from the actual operation into the recovery phase and that communication? Local government obviously charge under a Westplan and takes coverage of the recovery. We have seen in the past where that transition from the operational phase into the recovery phase has been a breakdown causing animosity within the community. What strategies do you have in mind to actually alleviate that in time?

Mr KLEMM: There has been the appointment of a state recovery coordinator that is established within OEM. Perhaps I could ask Mal to expand on the state recovery coordinator's role within emergencies.

Mr CRONSTEDT: Thanks, commissioner. The state recovery coordinator, since earlier this year, has been charged with taking up those various review recommendations and observations concerning that transition, as you rightly point out, from response and operations through to finally getting people standing back up on their feet and infrastructure in place, and all the things that we saw as a result of, say, Yarloop. He has been working very hard, particularly in conjunction with DFES regional staff and others, and local governments in particular, who have, after all, the on-ground responsibility for ensuring recovery occurs, recognising that all these players, and in particular local government, do not all have the same capability and ability to act swiftly and appropriately and accept transition from a response agency such as police or DFES. Effectively, Steve Joske has been

working with local governments, doing lots of preseason work in terms of workshops and forums, and actively seeking out and working with people to ensure that whatever systems are in place, that recovery is thought about very early in the incident so incident controllers are appropriately briefed and have checklists and the wherewithal to understand that we need to think about recovery right now and get someone on the job. Then Steve, as a state recovery coordinator, will support that role early so things happen. This year you will probably see quite a shift in emphasis much earlier in getting people supporting that recovery effort, and in particular supporting local government who, as we all know and as I have mentioned, range from the Joondalups of the world to the Woodanillings of the world—vastly different capabilities and need different supports. But we are onto it and we are very keen to make sure of that transition.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I picked up on a point there that having recovery as part of your initial appreciation of the emergency you have in front of you, is that actually a part of the training for the level 3 and level 4 incident managers?

Mr CRONSTEDT: It certainly is for the level 3. All the way through some element of recovery is mentioned in training, as I understand it, and is certainly being pursued by a state recovery controller. Having been exposed to that training in my past experience, I know that it has always been a consideration. This year it has got much more emphasis, particularly with incident controllers who are likely to be faced with the level 3s, which are the largest incidents. So they consider it, they have the wherewithal and they have the tools. They have the checklists, the aide memoirs and the things that will help them so that they do not have to remember everything; they can actually go to something, call someone up and say, “Look, I need to get these things underway now” and then they can put that responsibility to someone to effect.

[10.40 am]

Mr KLEMM: If I could add to that, Chair, over the last 12 months both Mal and myself have been part of a group with AFAC on the east coast that has done a review and update of the AIMS manual. Included in that manual now is a dedicated chapter to recovery written by a recovery specialist from the east coast. What has come out of that work is that, with respect, they really do not like the word of transition from operations to recovery because the view of the recovery specialist is that the recovery starts the moment the incident starts.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Agreed.

Mr KLEMM: So the chapter in the new AIMS manual is very much written in that way so that people are educated about the importance of establishing the Steve Joskes of the world and his mirrors in local government in the early stages of these incidents, and that can be whether the incident is quite minor all the way through to a Waroona–Yarloop-type event.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: With that in mind, are the costings of operations and the actual budgetary restraints for particular operations and that, mindful of the—say, for example, we use method A versus method B or tactic B to deal with an incident, but one particular method is better for the recovery, but it costs more. Is that taken into account within your budgetary process, but, more importantly, within the operational delivery of the services?

Mr KLEMM: I am a level 3 incident controller and I could not tell you a time where I have sat there and made an assessment of different strategies based necessarily on the cost of implementing the strategy. In terms of the cost of not implementing the strategy, in terms of the recovery effort, then certainly that is the case that that has some bearing on the decision that is made, particularly when it goes into environmental values and those sorts of things. I do not want to get too tactical about it but “Are we prepared to lose this pine forest? If we put this strategy in place, then we are going

to lose this pine forest. Well, what is the cost of that either from an environmental point of view or from a Forest Products Commission point of view?" So, those types of assessments are part of the toolkit of the level 3 incident controller, but if it is a case of determining, "Gee, do we have enough budget to use this helicopter or the smaller helicopter?", then that should not come into and does not.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Commissioner, thanks very much for your time. I will preface the comments that I have here with a disclosure that I have some intense interest or certainly experience with fire and emergency services. Having served the previous Premier for four and a half years, I had the privilege of covering fire and emergency services. Certainly while we went through the reform program, and I think I worked with all your colleagues here as part of that transition. I would also like to couch all of my questions in the sort of context that when I look back to the most defining domestic terror event for the Anglosphere with September 11, that of the 2 977 victims, 343 were firefighters. That is the most by far of any of the sort of frontline responders. So, in that context, you can see where I am going to go here. I note that at the AFAC conference held in Sydney earlier this year—it was in September—former London Fire Brigade commissioner Ron Dobson said that there is a domestic terror threat that continues to face fire and emergency services right across western countries. He suggested that at that point in time there needs to be specialist teams within fire and emergency services brigades to respond to domestic terror threats. Is that something that the department is considering?

Mr KLEMM: The short answer to that would be at this point no and that is not a deliberate decision that has been made to say, "Oh, well, we are not going to do that." I was not at AFAC this year, so I am not across the presentation by the chap from London. I think the events that we have seen in New York over the last 12 hours or so is a good indicator of the evolving nature of terrorism and the way that they use something that is more accessible—that is, a truck or a car, rather than perhaps in the past they may have used chemicals or bombs or the like. I am certainly no terrorism expert and that is a matter for police. I can say that certainly in the last five weeks since I have been appointed, we are—I had a brief discussion with the Commissioner of Police last week in relation to counter-terrorism and one of my assistant commissioners is meeting with an assistant commissioner from police next week to discuss that very thing.

In terms of the firefighting effort and particularly in relation to what we call a complex building but a high-rise structure, we have various standard operating procedures for how we deal with those things. With the fires and events inside those buildings, the cause of that fire sometimes is not the most critical matter. The most critical matter is how we go about putting out what the hazard is, whether it is fire or chemical or whatever it is, and we have various procedures to deal with that. Notwithstanding that, the point is well made that things get a little bit more conflicted when terrorism is involved because there is that added risk to the responder that we would work very closely with police. That is why the assistant commissioner has been tasked next week to sit down with the AC from police to start working through and to—there are some great lessons to learn out of London and I have not been there, but both from a review of some of the literature and also visibly on the television in the footage I see police, fire and ambulance all working very well together. All the reports indicate that that is, in the main, the way that things play out and so there is a standard that has been set there that we would like to achieve.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Former Commissioner Dobson also suggested that firefighters should now be given ballistic vests given they are going into a frontline scenario. I understand that is something that is now being strongly considered by your counterparts in the eastern states. Is that something that might be considered in the Western Australian sense for DFES?

Mr KLEMM: At this stage, I certainly have not considered that to this point. I would be happy to consider that should it become an issue. More importantly for me right now is to get an indication from police of what exactly the role is that they are expecting us to play, notwithstanding that I am very well aware of what the hazards are and what we are responsible for, but, as I say, the issues around terrorism just provide that additional complexity.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: The concern I have, commissioner, obviously, is more and more—I appreciate certainly for a vehicular incident, that is a different story—you have a look at London with respect to tunnels and public transport, there are more tunnels now than there were 10 years ago that are being utilised by public transport now where there might be a mass incident. Your officers will be expected to go into that scenario, possibly putting themselves in the line of fire, and at this point they are not equipped tactically, like police might be, to help respond to that situation. Does that not give you cause for concern?

Mr KLEMM: Yes, it does. I mean, there are additional tunnels and a very large tunnel currently being built. We have been part of the design for that.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Have you done any training to prepare any responses?

Mr KLEMM: Yes. We have a range of procedures to deal with tunnels. Clearly, the Forrestfield tunnel is not the only tunnel and there have been a series of tunnels that have been around for a period of time and we have procedures to deal with that. We are in the procurement phase currently for a new state-of-the-art UHF radio capability because of the Forrestfield tunnel and the requirement for us to operate within it. We have been part of the design process for that. Our crews have been part of a series of visits to the site at the airport as the various tunnel boring machines have commenced work. Out of that will come a whole series of procedures about how we are going to operate.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Commissioner, just to clarify, if there was an incident in any of the existing tunnels at the moment, does DFES have the radio capability to respond to that?

Mr KLEMM: I would say yes, we do.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Have you done any mock-up or trial exercises to confirm that is actually the case?

Mr KLEMM: We do various exercises in all the tunnels. So, we would have the “Polly” Farmer tunnel, if you like, that gets closed from time to time for works and we take advantage of that to do —

[10.50 am]

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Sorry, commissioner, with respect to public transport and the tunnels for such rail and bus that have been built, has the department undertaken any exercises there?

Mr KLEMM: Yes.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: And you can confirm that the radios worked fine?

Mr KLEMM: Yes, not that it has been reported to me that they do not, but I am happy to correct that if that is the case.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: You mentioned before a high-structure fire that might exist. At the department’s disposal, how many telescopic ladder platforms exist as part of your fleet?

Mr KLEMM: In commission, which for me means sitting at a fire station with people in it ready to go, there are two at any one time.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: How many of those are within the city area?

Mr KLEMM: One. There is one at Wellington Street and one at Fremantle. There is also one more at our workshops, which is almost brand-new, and then I believe that there are two more, which are ones that were replaced by the two currently in play that are used—when the trucks get serviced, they come in and stand by.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Commissioner, I realise this might be getting beyond the operational involvement that you might apprise yourself of, but what height do those telescopic ladder platforms reach in terms of storeys?

Mr KLEMM: I knew you were going to ask that. It is 30 metres.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: We are talking three metres to a storey, so perhaps eight or nine storeys.

Mr BAILEY: Ten storeys in a domestic building—a block of flats.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Is that consistent with operations across Australia—10 storeys—given we have 40-storey buildings now? It covers a quarter of that at best. Is that consistent with operations across the east coast or across the federation, or is that small? Are we under-resourced with respect to that?

Mr BAILEY: The building code here does provide great protection in our buildings for fire, with sprinkler systems and so forth above that height, so they are not really used regularly for removal of people from buildings, because the buildings have internal stairwells with pressurisation protection and so forth. It is a reasonably new city. You can get 100-metre high platforms and access to buildings and so forth and use of them for rescuing people would be very rare.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: I am cognisant, I suspect, deputy commissioner, because I am aware, as we all are in this place, of the cladding issue that might exist. I am aware that if there was an incident in Western Australia, certainly in the city, which is I suspect is where the greatest threat is, a lot of that cladding exists, and obviously operations on the east coast have that equipment to go at a far higher level where the cladding might be a problem in terms of wiping out a floor and you cannot get by it. I guess I am trying to understand from the department whether or not they feel well resourced to respond to an incident like that, especially in a building that might be clad, as part of a domestic or complicated threat or attack.

Mr KLEMM: The situation with the cladding is such that we know there are buildings in Western Australia that have that particular cladding; we just do not know where they are at the moment. That audit is going on.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Do you know when that is expected to return back, commissioner?

Mr KLEMM: No, not off the top of my head. I could check my notes and find the answer for you. I guess the question that we ask is: if we knew a building had that particular cladding on it and it was at the corner of St Georges Terrace, for example, what would we do differently in terms of response with the available appliances that we have? Certainly, there would be a greater weight of response. There would be various warnings and slight changes to procedure to cater for the fact that—you might have seen from the Grenfell Tower episode that there was a lot of debris falling from the building, which did make the use of the aerials quite problematic, and there are obviously some warnings et cetera to go around that. Ideally, we would know where every building is. I am not necessarily convinced that they are all in the CBD. With the proliferation of residential towers, particularly pushing over into Kensington and South Perth and the like around the casino, I would expect there would be a fair number over there as well once we know exactly where they are.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Obviously, with respect to the decentralisation of response capabilities, we have a city east station and a city west station. I am keen to understand where that is at.

Mr BAILEY: Vincent Street is looking at getting commissioned around April. It will be commissioned. Next up, the appliance and crew put on into the service then as well.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Is that on time, deputy commissioner?

Mr BAILEY: From the delays we have had in procuring land—the building is under construction.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Construction-wise, we are okay?

Mr BAILEY: Yes.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Just to go back to some of the earlier points you raised, member for Dawesville, with the Westplan and roles and responsibilities, the role of the police, in particular deployment to a terrorist incident, is actually to make the ground safe before the deployment of DFES in those particular incidences. Am I right in saying that?

Mr KLEMM: Yes. Current practice is—I think one of the best examples perhaps is the active shooter-type environment where, put simply, we would not be committing our crews into that environment. I guess there would need to be one of the hazards that we are responsible for occurring at the same time as the active shooter. Just because there is an active shooter would not necessarily mean that we would require our firefighters to respond. If there is a fire or if there is a hazard or some material spill or there is someone who needs rescuing from a car so on, then —

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: And that is clearly defined in Westplan, is it not?

Mr KLEMM: Yes.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: In the HMA for WA Police.

Mr KLEMM: Yes. Could I say that there has been a series of hazmat CBR terrorism exercises that we have been a part of with police since 2015. If I could just quickly read those. In June 2015, Exercise Cook Up, which was a multi-agency response to an illegal, clandestine lab making chemical warfare agents; in August 2016, Exercise Iron Sentinel, which was a multi-agency response to three concurrent terrorist attacks using chemical and projectile weapons, with a real-time activation request for Australian Defence Force assistance; April 2016 was international involvement in Canberra, and October 2017 national involvement in Brisbane in the Australia–New Zealand Counter-Terrorism Committee joint hazard response team exercises. Although there is significant expertise within DFES in relation to hazmat, quite clearly, because we are the HMA for hazmat, I guess it is that crossover from hazmat that in some respects may be seen as a bit of, perhaps, the old way of doing terrorism as opposed to what you see now with the use of trucks and the like, as we discussed.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Not one of those exercises occurred in a tunnel; is that right?

Mr KLEMM: Not that it says here.

Mr D.T. PUNCH: Commissioner, could I ask whether any of those occurred in regional areas or has there been any evaluation of regional area responsiveness?

Mr KLEMM: Apart from the ones where it says Brisbane and Canberra, the other two actually do not give a location other than I suspect they were here in WA, and more than likely, I think, in the metropolitan area.

Mr BAILEY: There was one about four years ago in Karratha, which was a terrorist-type event —⁵

Mr D.T. PUNCH: In relation to gas.

⁵ A letter of clarification about this part of the transcript can be accessed on the committee webpage.

Mr BAILEY: — by the police and we were involved in supporting it.

Mr D.T. PUNCH: Is there any consideration given to major facilities such as port infrastructure or power station infrastructure in relation to potential threats and responsiveness?

Mr KLEMM: The question previous raised by the chair in relation to the FES-ERGs—when I talk about a FES-ERG being a response plan or a management plan, if you like, for what are considered high-risk facilities, they would pick up the very facilities that you are talking about. To give you some context, the majority of the businesses on the Kwinana strip have a FES-ERG for that reason, because of the high-risk nature of what they do.

Mr D.T. PUNCH: Would there be one, commissioner, for Kemerton Industrial Park given the nature of the products produced by the gas installations there?

Mr KLEMM: I could take that on notice. I suspect that there is, but I am happy to take that on notice.

[11.00 am]

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: One other question, I think, member for Dawesville; I think this one will probably have to be taken on notice. Would you have any reports or information in relation to radio blackspots with particular emphasis on the tunnel systems throughout the metropolitan area et cetera and probably in regional WA as well as the blackspots with your telecommunication plans et cetera? I know you would not have that at the tip of your fingers. Could we, just on notice, get a copy of what you have got so we can have a look at it and review it, if that is possible?

Mr KLEMM: Can I just confirm that is to do with our radio communications, is it?

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Correct.

Mr KLEMM: Not mobile phones, because we are not responsible for that?

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: No; just your radio network. I am mindful of the SES as well—they would be having communication blackspots as well—but with a particular emphasis on infrastructure. Basically the tunnel systems throughout, whether there are any or not.

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: As I explained to the Chair before, I am greatly concerned about—I catch the train from Perth down to Mandurah, and my phone blanks out at least twice. Certainly three times, if you consider Wellard as well, when you go into the dive there. I am very keen to understand that if an incident occurred there, that tactically you guys are well equipped, I suppose, given that you are going out for it. Sorry to keep harping the point, Chair, I am curious to understand what necessitated the need for you to investigate a UHF upgrade for the Forrestfield–Airport Link tunnel versus the existing constraints of the other tunnels. Why did that one necessitate it and the others did not?

Mr KLEMM: Sorry, I might not have articulated that very well. The procurement process to update our UHF radios is part of normal replacement of the kit. And also, just to make sure I am clear on what you are asking: you are talking about your mobile phone not working in a tunnel?

Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP: Sorry, no, that was the context, but no [inaudible].

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Radio communication specifically.

Mr KLEMM: Specifically.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The handheld radio versus your appliance radio. That is across DFES, I would suggest, because, as I said, regional WA has definitely got blackspots. I know, having worked in there for a few years. Moving on to current emergency issues and trends —

Mr D.T. PUNCH: I would also like to pass my thanks on to you, commissioner, and to the staff of DFES. Living in a regional area, I am very appreciative of the work that I see on the ground and that

is involved in being a recipient of the evacuation services during the bushfires around Yarloop; so thank you very much.

I have got a series of more detailed questions that arise out of the annual report, so forgive me for that, but I was interested in the KPI around operational volunteers. There was around 39 per cent participation in the pathways training. That seemed a little low, and I know there are some concerns out there in terms of the balance of training requirements, personnel and employment requirements and volunteer requirements. Have you got any suggestions about how that might be improved into the future?

Mr KLEMM: The amount of participation?

Mr D.T. PUNCH: Yes.

Mr KLEMM: There are a couple of reasons for that, if I could. The first one is that some volunteers, for the very reasons you have raised in terms of available time that they have to put to additional training, may well reach a level of training in a pathway sense. I am not talking about maintenance of existing skills here, I am talking about new training that they might do in a new pathway. They will reach a certain level of training and stop there, so that reflects on the percentage, because they are not then enrolling in the next pathway to do more training. Does that make sense? That has an effect on it. There have also been some issues around, I guess, the engagement into pathways and that is once again about some connectivity issues in rural areas in particular in terms of establishing our new e-academy. That has meant that has been a little bit challenging for some of our volunteers, and where perhaps we thought that we might be able to progressively move away from a paper-based approach to training and do some of the training products online has not necessarily materialised due to the ability of the internet to handle the downloads required to deliver.

Mr D.T. PUNCH: The other view that has been expressed regionally has been a sense of uncertainty in terms of equipment provision for volunteers. This really highlights what it is that volunteers are entitled to in terms of vehicles or whatever, and the levels of equipment, and uncertainty in terms of messaging that is received from DFES about what is eligible and what is not. I just wondered if you had any view about whether there was confusion in the equipment lists; I think it is through the ESL.

Mr KLEMM: Yes, I think that you are talking about the grant scheme.

Mr D.T. PUNCH: Yes.

Mr KLEMM: There is a capital grant and an operating grant. There has been some work done on the grants manual in recent times in terms of what is eligible, but I presume you are talking mainly about the State Emergency Service.

Mr D.T. PUNCH: Yes.

Mr KLEMM: There has been some work done. Really, one that comes to mind is in relation to mobile phones, for example. Not only are they eligible, but then how many mobile phones you are allowed to purchase for each region. DFES is very well aware of that. We have got responsibilities to make sure that we are getting the ESL to work as hard as it possibly can to provide the most for the most, and so it is a bit of a balancing act sometimes for us to make sure that we temper the needs of some and improve the outcomes for others.

Mr D.T. PUNCH: Yes, I think it is about clarity; about what is in and what is out and what is an appropriate level of equipment for a vehicle et cetera, so it was in those sorts of areas that I have been getting the feedback. If there is work happening to improve that parity, that is really great.

Mr KLEMM: If I could, for us it is more about, I guess, some standardisation. What we are trying to do is put that standardisation into the grants process so that if you have truck A, then you know that truck A comes with these 25 pieces of equipment. Of course, in some instances they have actually got 104 pieces of equipment on this truck, and they get the new truck and they are trying to work out how things fit, when actually the new truck only comes with 25.

Mr D.T. PUNCH: I can absolutely understand. It is a difficult area, but I think that clarity will help in terms of managing expectations. I wanted to move on to building plans and development plans approvals. The KPI that you have got in your annual report shows 97 per cent being approved within the specified time frame. I am just wondering, is that an aggregate figure across the whole of the state, and is that KPI being met for regional areas? I think you are probably picking up I have a regional interest here.

Mr KLEMM: This would relate to the whole state. If I understand the question correctly, this is a KPI around the work of our built environment branch, which is where our fire engineers are, and they assess plans, and this is about their ability to turn those plans over. For them, they make no decision around whether something comes from rural WA or from the CBD. It arrives, and it is to be dealt with within a certain time frame.

Mr D.T. PUNCH: So I can be assured that there is not a discrepancy between getting something through from a metropolitan location in a quicker time frame than from a remote location?

Mr KLEMM: I would be very surprised if there is any differential at all, because the address of something should make no difference to the assessment of it.

Mr D.T. PUNCH: There are many government agencies that do not meet that sort of outcome, so I am really pleased to see that. There is also a KPI here that shows that there is an average of \$237 in costs per building plan assessed.

Mr KLEMM: Yes.

Mr D.T. PUNCH: Do you charge for assessments for building approvals?

Mr KLEMM: No.

Mr D.T. PUNCH: So that is a straight out cost. There is no user recovery on that?

Mr KLEMM: No.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: May I ask why? Is that just to get people to do them; to get the building analyses done rather than cost recovery against the users, for want of a better word?

[11.10 am]

Mr KLEMM: It is a fine question and proposition, is it not? If I took the really selfish view and perhaps a view of where the assessment of plans came from back in the day, so many years ago, the assessment of plans is quite selfish, really, because it is about our built environment, and our fire engineers are assessing the plans to make sure the buildings are as safe as they possibly can be so our firefighters can go into the building to extinguish a fire. In that respect we have some significant skin in that game to make sure that we are keeping our people as safe as they possibly can be. So, yes, it is about sprinklers and making sure that fires can be small as a first thing, but certainly pressurised stairwells and the like so people in the buildings have a safe place to go to when they exit the building. Also, there are the various booster systems and the like that we use when we go there. We have clearly got a vested interest in that to make sure that if we, in a tactical sense, send firefighters to the twenty-third floor of a building, they have access to water at the twenty-third floor, because the notion that you are going to run hose all the way up that 23 floors is clearly not going to happen.

Mr D.T. PUNCH: I have still got a related question to that. One of the issues in regional areas that has come up is the difference between pressure standards in mains water systems and the requirements of service in terms of pressures for firefighting. In some areas, particularly industrial areas, that has led to really significant costs in on-site water storage and pumping per block. Is there any thinking, perhaps collectively with planning, around more innovative ways of sharing the fire management loads in, say, an industrial park to try to help reduce those development costs?

Mr KLEMM: You are referring to, perhaps, four building lots sharing a common storage-type water supply; is that what you are referring to? I am aware of that. I do not have any detail as to whether there are discussions going on, but I can certainly take that on notice and get back to you on that.

Mr D.T. PUNCH: That would be very helpful. I have got one last question and then I will hand over. I refer to the rescue helicopter in the south west. Are there any contractual arrangements that limit its use only to transfer from the site of an accident to an emergency centre in Perth? I am thinking here of scenarios such as stroke victims who have a time window in terms of recovery to get from a regional location up into the Perth stroke unit.

Mr BAILEY: We manage the contract, but the turnouts and where they go are managed by the Department of Health, so they have determination of where they take somebody.

Mr D.T. PUNCH: So, there is nothing in the contract itself that would limit the use of the helicopter for that purpose?

Mr BAILEY: I would probably need to confirm that, but it is not our one to manage.

Mr D.T. PUNCH: Could I ask for some information to come back on that?

Mr KLEMM: Is that specifically relating to stroke, is it?

Mr D.T. PUNCH: Stroke is the example that comes to mind. It has been raised with me that there is about a 40-minute window from a stroke accident occurring to be able to get treatment that has an impact on rehabilitation. My current understanding is that the contractual arrangements require those victims to be transferred by the Royal Flying Doctor Service rather than the helicopter, and I just wanted to get the bottom of why that might be the case.

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: Thank you very much again for being here today. I just want to focus a bit on local governments, because obviously local governments have a lot of land under management and have a lot of responsibility in terms of the bushfire management side of it. In terms of the management plans, I notice that the average cost of an engaged local government to support the bushfire risk management program was nearly \$25 000 per engaged local government on average. What does that cover and is that enough?

Mr KLEMM: If I could ask Murray to respond to that.

Mr CARTER: Firstly, what it covers, certainly in my office, in the Office of Bushfire Risk Management, we deal with the standard to which bushfire risk management plans should be done and how the process works. Within DFES they support through training and capacity building the actual planning process within the regions, and I mean regions both in the metropolitan, outer metropolitan and country sense. To do the actual work, and it is a really important feature of this program, as you would be aware, they are owned and done by the local government. Local governments, of course, depending on their size, generally do not have the resources unless they are a very large one to do this, so there are some arrangements in place whereby DFES currently co-funds, so part-funds, some positions that are employed by local government to do bushfire risk management planning, but also have some more, I guess, legacy positions, for want of a better word, within DFES to support that as well in a particular region. So, there is a cost in the support both in the staff members physically

supporting local government to do the planning and then there are some elements of that around a bushfire risk management system, which is a central system that deals with the asset identifications and the follow-up treatments that are being used for all the local governments that are currently engaged. That is largely a summary of what that money is used for.

The question about whether it is enough is a difficult question to answer, but I will say that there is certainly increased focus in this area, which I am very pleased about, because it is front and centre of our business. I know the commissioner made some public statements early in his term around further emphasis in this area. I think we will get some economies of scale in there as well, because we are still very early and we have gone, in two or three years, from a pilot program in four local governments, or largely south west ones, into now working with the next stage of 16 local governments, which are actively supported by the government through DFES. Of those 16, 15 have now produced a bushfire risk management plan that has been endorsed by my office as compliant with the standard, which is a good result. So, we are nearly through those 16 and now we are already moving into the next stage with those and rolling those out further. I think there will be some economies of scale in the way that staff have been allocated to particular local governments, where they will be able to move from the one into the neighbouring local governments and gets a more regional competency I think as well, because, as we know, the management of bushfire does not start and stop on borders. Whilst local governments, and this is understandable as well, sometimes are a little territorial in that they have got one of the support staff and they are co-funded and—you must be very well aware of this—do not like to see them move across the boundary, there is a nice sweet spot in the middle of there somewhere where we can get them to take a more regional view and expand, I guess, our touch of bushfire risk management planning further into the number of local governments. Within the higher risk ones we are up towards the high 50s or 60 of those that we consider would need to be done pretty soon, and then as you move further in, of course, there are 138 or so in Western Australia. Almost all, except for a couple of very inner city ones, have elements of bushfire risk.

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: What is the plan to make sure that you engage them all and what time frame have you got to have plans in place for them? Obviously, if you have got holes in between different local governments, it is really not going to achieve the objective that you are trying to get to.

Mr KLEMM: Clearly, we would be seeking to continue on with this bushfire risk management planning program. Murray has spoken about the number of local governments that we see as high risk. Clearly, we would like to arrive at a point in the future where every local government that requires to have a BRMP over and above the 50 that we are talking about now throughout the state has one. Not only do they have the bit of paper that says this is the plan and these are the various treatments that need to be done in these high-risk areas, but they have actually implemented the plan.

I recently visited Bremer Bay, which is in the Shire of Jerramungup, and met with John Iffla there. It is probably one of the few local governments that has a bushfire risk management plan and actually implemented the treatments. So, I spent some time with John going around, in particular, Bremer Bay and one of the locations there, and the work they have done and, I guess, the involvement of local government, has made it really successful. I guess one very good example is that they put in 30 metre-wide strategic breaks some time ago and now the local government is going through and maintaining those breaks. So, there is a real investment in the outcome of the bushfire risk management plan. That is probably the one true example of a total community approach to implementing the bushfire risk management plan, not just having the plan.

[11.20 am]

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: So what you are saying is over 50 high-risk ones have been identified, and of those only a small percentage actually have a plan at the moment that you have signed off on?

Mr CARTER: Yes.

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: And there is no urgency to make that happen as soon as possible, because obviously, from what I am gathering, is that there is no plan to say, “In the next three months, six months or 12 months these ones that are high risk”—I am assuming “high risk” means that it is very dangerous. To be at this point in time and for them not to have that, is that because they are not doing anything, we are not putting any pressure on them, the funding is not there? It is considered important, but we are all too busy? It just seems concerning that there are so many high-risk ones and, at this point in time, after what has happened in recent history, that we still sort of seem to be saying, “Well, it’ll happen eventually and when we get around to it”, even though it is considered high risk.

Mr CARTER: It would be fair to say that the accelerated expansion of the programs is a budget process, so that is a matter for government. I will just clarify, though, the numbers I spoke about are around actively supporting the process of bringing the plans together through staff. There are also a number of other local governments—I can name a couple off the top of my head—that are doing it without that level of support through the same processes, the same guidelines. They are generally larger ones because they have the resources. So it is not a matter of waiting in line until DFES says you can have one; we encourage all local governments to have them now. It is a matter of how much resource is available to actively support your staff. So we try to accelerate that as well. But, yes, certainly the City of Karratha and the City of Cockburn are two. They are well into the late stages of bushfire risk management planning, with very limited direct government support to pull those together. Others are starting to move into that space as well.

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: Is that your support staff or is it their own staff?

Mr CARTER: Their own staff.

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: So what you are saying is that a number of these high-risk local governments are not actually allocating resources to do this urgently?

Mr CARTER: There is an element of that, yes, and local governments are different. They are pulled in a whole range of directions, and so it is afforded the priority that the local government sees it as. Some are moving without active support through the allocation of staff, and I guess others are waiting.

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: But do you see this as a local government making its own mind up when it feels like it, based on its own priorities, or do you see this as a direction from you to the relevant minister to say, “This must be in place urgently within the next 12 months. There needs to be a plan. It is not when they feel like doing it; these are high-risk areas, people’s lives are at risk, we cannot let local governments sit there and make dog parks their priority ahead of, for example, this plan”? I am just concerned that we are just sort of saying that they can do it when they get around to it, depending on how much they consider it to be important, when on the other side of the fence, you are saying that this is high risk, this is important, fires do not have borders, people die, and all we are saying is, “When you get around to it, that’s fantastic. The sooner the better would be nice”, but we have no mandated responsibility. I would suggest that there should be a legal requirement for them to have a plan within the next 12 months. It should already have been in place, as far as I am concerned, but why have we not done that and why has someone not pushed that with the relevant minister?

Mr KLEMM: Yes, it is a challenging space, I think is what I would say. We are very mindful across the whole PPRR spectrum that what is critical to our business is healthy, strong relationships with local

government. We are very mindful of that. We talked about local governments that put their own staff to—the City of Cockburn is an example—doing bushfire risk management plans. That is not to say that our regionally located staff, which there are many of throughout Western Australia, are not playing an active role in assisting local governments where the resources may not exist to help them along the way. What is critical to us, though, can I make the point, is that we need to do this together with local government. That would be my preference.

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: Do you think this current status as it sits is good enough?

Mr KLEMM: I would like it to be a lot better than what it is. Certainly, when I know the impact fires such as Waroona–Yarloop clearly have on the community, and, just as importantly, the impact it has on my personnel.

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: What do we need to do to make that happen? What do you need to do or we as a government or as members of Parliament, working together with local government, right now to make that happen in an appropriate time frame for you to feel comfortable to tell the people of Western Australia they are safe and everyone is doing the best they can?

Mr KLEMM: So, it is appreciating the risk. Clearly there is a bushfire risk. This is not news to anybody in terms of the risk that the south west of this state presents in terms of bushfire, particularly given the population. I would like to see, in local government and across the board, a real understanding and appreciation of the level of risk that we are faced with in this state.

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: So at the moment what you are saying is that we do not actually have a plan to deal with high-risk areas that you are comfortable with that will cover the local government areas?

Mr KLEMM: A bushfire risk management plan?

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: Yes.

Mr KLEMM: Not every local government has a bushfire risk management plan, as we sit here today, in the south west of the state.

Mr CARTER: We have the framework to take us there, and we need to have them done. The framework for a bushfire risk management plan is a very, very good framework, and the Ferguson review examined that amongst a whole range of other things, and basically said it is very good, it is world-class, and get on with it.

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: Can I suggest they should not have a choice; they should have this.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Bearing in mind, that it is a local government responsibility, particularly in the south west.

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: It is, but local governments are obviously, as we know, part of the state government created under our legislation; and, if this is important to the state, it is important to you, it has to be important to them. They cannot just sit on their laurels and not do this. I am shocked that it is not already done —

Mr D.T. PUNCH: Are we talking a few or a lot?

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: A lot.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: We know of 60 that are on scope, and you have mentioned there is a couple that are not that are doing it on their own merit, following the guidelines.

Mr CARTER: If we talk about almost 60, being the greater south west—again, it is a higher higher risk; more fire vulnerability amongst the local governments—probably just better than half are on the way through that, are making some starts and getting through. It is not a start and finish; it does

not have an end point. You get your plan, as the commissioner said, then you do your treatment, you roll it over; it is a continual process.

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: You have not got a starting point.

Mr CARTER: You need a starting point, yes.

Mr KLEMM: It is really critical that they are committed to it. The community has to be committed to it. I think that is the real takeaway I took from Bremer Bay. The experience they have had down there as a community is that they are committed to the bushfire risk management —

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: Can I suggest that if you went to the local ratepayers and said, “Your council’s not doing anything at all to stop your area getting under bushfire”, they would be outraged. I am sure they would be.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Being mindful of the time, I have two more questions. If you have time, you can answer them; or if you want to take them on notice, I will leave that up to yourselves.

With DFES and PFOS foams and that and the transition into FF foam, is that on scope, are we looking at it and where do we sit with that? That is the first question.

The second one, again, bearing in mind you mentioned earlier on in your opening statement about the wellness and the success you have been having in that particular environment, I note that PTSD was not covered in that particular chunk of work that you commented on. If not, why not, and where does DFES sit with that?

Mr KLEMM: In relation to the change out of our foam, I think you are referring to future foam—if we were to call it that—we are currently trying to engage with agencies on the east coast, so similar agencies on the east coast that have already undertaken testing to transition to a different product. We should be provided the outcomes of that testing. Once we have done that, then we will go about procuring whatever that foam is. What we want to make sure, and particularly Lloyd will want to make sure, is that whatever new foam we get actually does what it is supposed to do, which is put fires out, particularly B-class fires. As soon as we get that testing information out of the eastern states agencies, then we can analyse that and institute⁶ a procurement process to replace the current foam.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The other one was the PTSD question.

Mr KLEMM: There has been some discussion around presumptive legislation for the PTSD. It has not progressed very far at this point, as far as I am aware. It clearly is an issue for many responders, not just firefighters.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: First responders, and hence my interest, bearing in mind that we have volunteers, we have SES that have road accident rescue roles et cetera.

Mr KLEMM: Yes. I think the last discussion I had about it was more about the very broad nature of it, so police, perhaps nurses, St John—certainly firefighters are in that. I think it is more holistic than just firefighters. Could I also say that there are many, many better ways we can operate that reduce the exposure to events that lead to PTSD, and there are procedures and different methods of operating to make sure that we limit that, which I think should also be considered perhaps before we get to a presumptive legislation space.

⁶ A letter of clarification about this part of the transcript can be accessed on the committee webpage.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Bearing in mind we have probably got half a dozen more questions we would like to ask, and I am mindful of the time, I am hoping you would be happy to answer those on notice.

Mr KLEMM: Yes.

The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I would appreciate that.

In closing, I thank you for the evidence before the committee today. The transcript of this hearing will be forwarded to you for correction of minor errors. Any such corrections must be made and the transcript returned within 10 working days of the date of the email attached to the transcript. If the transcript is not returned within this period, it will be deemed to be correct. New material cannot be added via these corrections and the sense of the evidence cannot be altered. Should you wish to provide additional information or elaborate on particular points, please include a supplementary submission for the committee's consideration when you return your corrected transcript of evidence. On that, I thank you very much for your attendance today and answering our inquiries.

Hearing concluded at 11.32 am
