

Division 56: State Emergency Management Committee Secretariat, \$5 015 000 —

Mr I.C. Blayney, Chairman.

Mr J.M. Francis, Minister for Emergency Services.

Mr M.G. Cronstedt, Executive Director.

Mr D. Derman, Acting Chief Financial Officer.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIRMAN: I give the call to the member for Girrawheen.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: How many staff are currently employed at the State Emergency Management Committee Secretariat? We might need to take this by way of supplementary. What are their job titles and levels?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I will ask Mr Cronstedt to elaborate on that.

Mr M.G. Cronstedt: There are 30 full-time equivalents.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: Their job titles and levels might need to be taken by way of supplementary information.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I will agree to provide the member for Girrawheen, by way of supplementary information, with a breakdown of the job titles and descriptions for the 30 FTEs employed by the State Emergency Management Committee.

[*Supplementary Information No A7.*]

Ms M.M. QUIRK: Was there remuneration for the chair, the deputy chair and other independent members of the committee?

Mr M.G. Cronstedt: The remuneration was published in our annual report last year. It would be that, plus the consumer price index, for this coming year.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: It would be helpful if that could be provided by way of supplementary information.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I agree to provide to the member for Girrawheen, by way of supplementary information, a list of remuneration for the chair, deputy chair and independent members of the committee.

[*Supplementary Information No A8.*]

[11.00 am]

Ms M.M. QUIRK: Is it correct that the funds to run the State Emergency Management Committee are sourced from the emergency services levy?

Mr M.G. Cronstedt: No—independent.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: No; they are sourced through the consolidated account.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I note that the SEMC now conducts the monitoring and implementation of report recommendations; it was formerly done by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. In this case, have the reporting mechanisms changed, and does the SEMC now report to the minister rather than the Premier?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: That is correct, member for Girrawheen. The SEMC now oversees the reporting mechanisms of the implementation of the recommendations of various reviews; obviously, the key one was the implementation of all the recommendations from the Keely reviews. That update is then provided to the minister.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: How often and in what form is the minister briefed by the SEMC?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: How often? I meet with the State Emergency Management Committee once a month or every six weeks maybe. If I am not there, certainly my office meets with it. From time to time I will go out to the SEMC for one of its meetings. It provides me with a full update in a written brief on the progress of certain recommendations.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I am trying to find out whether the minister has the oversight responsibility of the SEMC; does the minister have that responsibility?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: Correct.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: Can the minister outline what, if any, responsibility the SEMC has for the clean-up in Yarloop, and, for example, the capacity or resilience-building in that community?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: The short answer is none. The recovery is all done by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. Future resilience and capacity-building will be looked at, but certainly insofar as the recovery is concerned, it is entirely the Department of the Premier and Cabinet through Mr Bob Hay, the recovery

coordinator. Specifically for Yarloop, it is Dr Ken Michael; he is heavily involved in the recovery of Yarloop. It is not the SEMC's responsibility.

[Mr P. Abetz took the chair.]

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I have two further questions, and then I will finish this division.

The CHAIRMAN: Is this a new question or a follow-on question?

Ms M.M. QUIRK: It is a new question.

In the case of the Northcliffe fires over a year ago now, the Department of Fire and Emergency Services undertook a major incident review through Nous Group consultants. At the same time a report in pretty similar terms, although abbreviated, was produced by the SEMC. The reports were released within a month of each other. Can the minister explain the rationale for doing almost parallel reports in pretty much the same terms?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: Certainly. The obvious answer is that people do not always see the same things. If we looked at the same incident, we would probably find different angles to it. I do not think there is anything wrong with having two agencies conduct a review.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: Sorry; I did not explain my question well. The SEMC report was highly derivative of the report commissioned by DFES. I cannot see the utility of the SEMC even putting out a report.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I will ask the executive director to elaborate on that.

Mr M.G. Cronstedt: There is an expectation that agencies with hazard management agency responsibility produce, after every major incident, a review. The SEMC in this case undertook a strategic review; the Nous report fed into that and directly addressed one element of the overall SEMC report. They were complementary, and the SEMC report was at a more strategic level.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: Can the minister outline the nature of the resilience work for the state; that is, how, where and by whom it is undertaken?

Mr M.G. Cronstedt: The State Emergency Management Committee Secretariat is embarking on a state risk project that will identify risks and risk profile across the state. We are now moving to local government to identify the same thing. Consequent to that, we will work out the capability that exists to address that risk. We also administer a national fund for disaster resilience that provides grant funding on a yearly basis to local governments and any agencies that wish to address the national resilience priorities that we replicate in Western Australia.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I do not think that answers my question.

The CHAIRMAN: Do you have another question?

Ms M.M. QUIRK: Minister, I am asking about the nature of that work. Is it policy work, is it face-to-face training or is it blackboard training via a computer? To whom is that training delivered?

Mr M.G. Cronstedt: The SEMC secretariat is a policy body; we develop policy that agencies use. We do not deliver direct training to anyone, other than helping district and local emergency management committees directly, through our network of regional staff, to address the local risks and then work through the issues about identifying what can be done about it. It is more of an extension process rather than direct training.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I have two further questions.

The CHAIRMAN: When you say further questions, are they follow-on questions or new questions?

Ms M.M. QUIRK: No, they are different questions.

Mr Cronstedt mentioned the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and the work done by Mr Hay and his colleagues. Can the minister explain why that should not be subsumed into the SEMC work; is there not some level of duplication?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: Good question, member for Girrawheen. My view would be that the Department of Fire and Emergency Services predominantly and local government and the authorities that turn out regardless of them being volunteer or career are, effectively, a combat agency rather than a recovery agency. That kind of applies regardless of whether it is a flood, a fire or whatever the natural hazard might be. As to the current arrangements, I think the Department of the Premier and Cabinet having a recovery coordinator such as Mr Bob Hay in charge of state recovery is obviously a decision for the Premier. We do just the combat, to a large degree, and if and when it comes to bushfire risk mitigation, a number of different agencies are involved. Much of it is the remit of the Department of Parks and Wildlife.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I have a final question.

The CHAIRMAN: I will come back to you, but I will give the member for Eyre an opportunity to ask a question.

Dr G.G. JACOBS: I refer to the first dot point on page 618 under “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency”, which reads —

The State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC) Secretariat is implementing a strategic State-wide, All Hazards, Risk Management Program.

In relation to fire, further on the paragraph states that the state will prioritise resource allocation to develop the most cost-effective mitigation programs. Again in relation to fire, which mitigation programs does that refer to? As to those mitigation programs, who will end up paying for them; will it be the government, local government or someone else?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: The short answer is that the whole community ends up paying for it. Whether it is local government, state government or someone else, we are all the same—Western Australians. I will ask the —

Dr G.G. JACOBS: Minister, there is a degree of issue around mitigation, particularly for firebreaks. There was an issue after the Esperance fire around who should pay for that mitigation work.

Mr M.G. Cronstedt: The state risk project is identifying risks at the state, district and local level. Essentially, the hazard management agencies, in particular the risk owners themselves—the landowners—own the risk. The risk is owned by whoever owns the fuel. Our project will identify the risks and the gaps and provide those who sit around the State Emergency Management Committee table with the wherewithal to understand where resources ought to be allocated. In terms of a specific bushfire mitigation program, we administer, on behalf of the Department of Fire and Emergency Services, a national bushfire mitigation program. That distributed funds this year, and is likely to distribute funds next year, for direct mitigation.

[11.10 am]

Dr G.G. JACOBS: Can I ask about the amount of funds that are distributed to fire mitigation?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: What page is the member on?

Dr G.G. JACOBS: Page 620.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: Mr Cronstedt.

Mr M.G. Cronstedt: We administer the funds on behalf of DFES, which actually does the allocation. A sum of \$300 000 is allocated for 2016–17, and \$605 000 was allocated in the current financial year.

Dr G.G. JACOBS: As a follow-up question, can the minister tell me which regions in the state of Western Australia they were allocated to?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: Mr Cronstedt.

Mr M.G. Cronstedt: I have not got the details of the specific mitigation projects that were funded, but I am happy to provide that by way of supplementary information.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I agree to provide to the member for Eyre details of the distribution of national bushfire mitigation program funds, as outlined on page 620 of the *Budget Statements*.

[*Supplementary Information No A9.*]

Ms M.M. QUIRK: Western Australia contributes to a range of national capability projects and research. What is the quantum of those contributions, who decides, and from where are the funds sourced? I refer to the heading “Relationship to Government Goals” on page 618.

Mr M.G. Cronstedt: The State Emergency Management Committee Secretariat funds some research programs by the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre, and that is its sole national contribution to research and development.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: What is the quantum of that?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I undertake to provide the member for Girrawheen, as supplementary information, detail about what the SEMC provides to the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre.

[*Supplementary Information No A10.*]

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I have a further question on that topic. The state has contributed to a number of other national capability programs and is reconsidering its position on these. I would like the minister to identify what they are and why they are being reconsidered.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: What page is the member referring to?

Ms M.M. QUIRK: It was the goals number, if I can tell the minister what they were.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: Is it “Relationship to Government Goals” on page 618?

Ms M.M. QUIRK: Okay; I will put it this way. Has any evaluation been done by the SEMC of all the national capability development and implementation projects and how Western Australia's contributions will be funded in future years?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: The short answer is that any prudent government agency will continually re-evaluate its contribution to these kinds of projects to see whether it is getting value for money for the taxpayer. If the member wants further information, I would have to ask the chairman to elaborate.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: Did the minister attend the Australian and New Zealand emergency management ministerial council meeting in February 2016?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: Was that the one in Perth?

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I do not know where it was.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: From memory, I think the commissioner attended, if it was the one held in the eastern states.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I will put it another way. There are two projects—Register.Find.Reunite and the National Fire Danger Rating System. Does Western Australia currently contribute to these projects, and is the SEMC reconsidering whether Western Australia should continue to contribute?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: Mr Cronstedt.

Mr M.G. Cronstedt: Those two programs are funded by the agencies themselves, not the SEMC secretariat. We are reviewing all national contributions across those programs and others to see what rationalisation could occur.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: As a corollary of that, will Western Australia continue to contribute? That is within the deliberations of the SEMC.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: If we are getting something for our money, we will continue to contribute—if it is worthwhile.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: No wonder we are not getting enough GST if we are pulling the pin on everything.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: Maybe the other states might have to lift their game, and we will just get it for free, if that is what the member is getting at—slowly clawing back our little bits of GST in small amounts.

The appropriation was recommended.