

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND
FINANCIAL OPERATIONS**

2015–16 BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARINGS

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE
TAKEN AT PERTH
THURSDAY, 25 JUNE 2015**

**SESSION TWO
DEPARTMENT OF FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES**

Members

**Hon Ken Travers (Chair)
Hon Peter Katsambanis (Deputy Chair)
Hon Martin Aldridge
Hon Alanna Clohesy
Hon Rick Mazza**

Hearing commenced at 11.08 am

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN

Attorney General representing the Minister for Fire and Emergency Services, examined:

Mr WAYNE GREGSON

Commissioner, examined:

Mr LLOYD BAILEY

Deputy Commissioner, Operations, examined:

Mr FRANCO PASQUALE

Executive Director, Corporate Services, examined:

Ms GEORGINA CAMARDA

Director, Business Services, Chief Finance Officer, examined:

Mr STEPHEN FEWSTER

Deputy Commissioner, Capability Command, examined:

Mr JARAD FINNERAN

Policy Adviser, Office of the Minister for Emergency Services, examined:

The CHAIR: On behalf of the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations, I would like to welcome you to today's hearing. Firstly, can I ask the witnesses, have you read, understood and signed a document headed "Information for Witnesses"?

The Witnesses: Yes.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Witnesses need to be aware of the severe penalties that apply to persons providing false or misleading testimony to a parliamentary committee. It is essential that all your testimony before the committee is complete and truthful to the best of your knowledge. This hearing is being recorded by Hansard and a transcript of your evidence will be provided to you. The hearing is being held in public, although there is discretion available to the committee to hear evidence in private either of its own motion or at the witness's request. If for some reason you wish to make a confidential statement during today's proceedings, you should request that the evidence be taken in closed session before answering the question. Government agencies and departments have an important role and duty in assisting the Parliament to scrutinise the budget papers on behalf of the people of Western Australia and the committee values your assistance with this.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIR: Unless anyone wishes to make an opening statement, I will seek to ask members: who wants to ask questions? I do not think we have started with Hon Martin Aldridge yet, so let us go to you first.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: I want to ask about spending changes, on page 713, to the volunteer fuel card. We have spending changes over the budget this year, the budget estimate and two years of the forward estimates. On page 720, "Details of Controlled Grants and Subsidies", that is reflected in the current year as the 2014–15 budget being \$1.75 million and the estimated actual being \$1.759 million. In 2014–15, what have we spent \$1.759 million on?

Mr Pasquale: If I can just clarify the context: on the spending changes table, that does not represent the complete program; that purely represents the cash flow adjustments as a result of, I guess, delays in formalising the cabinet submission in relation to the funding. That is just representing the cash flow adjustments. The “Details of Controlled Grants and Subsidies” table is representative of what the original approved estimates were for the total program. There has been a delay in terms of the commencement of that program but the total, in the order of about \$7.4 million, is still available for that program. That program is anticipated to start around September next financial year, subject to the business case being authorised.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: I appreciate that. Would not then the 2014–15 budget be \$1.75 million and the 2014–15 estimated actual be a figure much less than that, and the spending change reflect the decrease in spending as a result of those delays?

Mr Pasquale: Because the cabinet submission is still subject to consideration, no approval has been granted to change to the final cash flows so the initial cash flows on spending changes, if I recall correctly — I might just ask Georgina Camarda, if I can, through the minister, to clarify the spending changes.

Ms Camarda: The spending changes are the difference between the first allocation we had of \$1.75 million per annum and the varied allocation, which is about \$1.8 million now. The program has not been approved by cabinet so we have spent only about \$20 000 on the project this year. When these were published and printed there was still a chance that cabinet would approve the fuel card scheme, and there has been a chance that we could have rolled it out but the cabinet submission is still awaiting approval.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: With regard to the budget sign-off date, it was the anticipation of the agency to have delivered that \$1.759 million in this financial year, which is not going to be the case.

In relation to insurance costs of the department, could you point to me in the budget where those costs are contained?

Mr Pasquale: If I could just clarify, do you mean all forms of insurance or are you focusing on a particular form of insurance?

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: Is it in “Other expenses”?

Mr Pasquale: I will just confirm that. In “Other expenses” we do have workers’ compensation premiums. Then obviously I would imagine other forms of insurance are going to be represented in other line items—for example, motor vehicle insurance. I am not exactly sure; I would have to confirm that for you. But “Other expenses” certainly includes workers’ compensation.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: Would workers’ compensation be provided to the department by RiskCover?

Mr Pasquale: Correct.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: It is not necessarily insurance, but I guess the equivalent of workers’ compensation that you provide to your volunteer personnel, would that be covered under “Other expenses” as well?

Mr Pasquale: Our workers’ comp equivalent, if you want, for volunteers, but we certainly have workers’ comp for our full-time staff, yes.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: Obviously from last year to this year Parliament has passed legislation to provide presumptive legislation for career firefighters who are diagnosed with one of 12 prescribed cancers. Has there been any impact or revaluation done of your insurance premiums purchased from RiskCover as a result of the passage of that legislation?

Mr Pasquale: Yes, there has. I am not sure if we have that level of detail. I do recall that the cost estimated at the time for what has been passed to date, if I recall correctly, was in the order of \$600 000 or \$700 000, but I would need to confirm.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: So that is the premium increase as a result of the legislative reforms that were passed?

Mr Pasquale: From memory, yes.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: Could you take that on notice to clarify that for me?

Mr Pasquale: Absolutely.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: Could you also take on notice for me if there has been a claim under those provisions of the legislation?

[Supplementary Information No B1.]

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: In terms of the second stage of those committed reforms to extend similar protections to retired and volunteer firefighters, have those costs and premium increases been forecast in next financial year's budget and the forward estimates?

Mr Pasquale: My understanding is yes, they have.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: Would you also be able to provide as supplementary information the increased cost in premiums in providing those protections as a result of those reforms, presuming that they pass both houses of Parliament?

Mr Pasquale: Yes.

[Supplementary Information No B2.]

Hon KATE DOUST: I refer to page 714, looking at the third dot point, which deals with the emergency services acts review. How much money was spent on the emergency services acts review and what is the department's total budget over the forward estimates for the same?

Mr Pasquale: The cost for the preparation of the draft legislation has been done within the organisation's budget. No additional resources were brought in. In terms of trying to cost for you, we would need to undertake that work. No significant additional funding was required; it was all done within the organisation's approved budget.

Hon KATE DOUST: Are you saying there is other information you could provide on notice about that?

Mr Pasquale: If you would like us to cost the effort from within the organisation, we would need to do that. There were no additional resources; it was all done within the approved budget. So no additional funding was provided for the project.

Hon RICK MAZZA: Just on that dot point, I have a question too. Minister, could I just ask: with that review, is it the government's intention to include the emergency services levy on boats and cars?

[11.20 am]

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: I will ask the commissioner to comment on that.

Mr Gregson: Are you asking is there an intention to put a levy on vehicle registration and boat registration?

Hon RICK MAZZA: Yes.

Mr Gregson: Not that I am aware of.

Hon RICK MAZZA: In that review also, is there any intention for the commissioner to be able to discipline volunteer bush fire fighters; and, if so, what mechanism would be included?

Mr Gregson: I can already discipline volunteer bush fire fighters.

Hon RICK MAZZA: Can you?

Mr Gregson: Sorry; I beg your pardon. I can discipline volunteer fire and rescue; volunteer bush fire fighters belong to local government. Might I add that it is intended to standardise some of those administrative oversight and disciplinary aspects in the new legislation. Ultimately, they will be decisions to be made by the minister and cabinet.

Hon RICK MAZZA: What sort of discipline can you apply to a volunteer?

Mr Gregson: The issue is it is different; it depends on the volunteer. I can take action against certain volunteers for breaches of code of conduct et cetera. I can formally charge other volunteers under the Fire Brigade Regulations for breaches of discipline. It depends on the nature of the volunteer. I have no formal authority over others from a disciplinary perspective but can apply other censure or sanctions if I think it is necessary.

Hon RICK MAZZA: Have you had to do that in the last, say, three years?

Mr Gregson: Yes.

Hon RICK MAZZA: How many volunteers have you disciplined?

Mr Gregson: I would have to take that on notice. It would depend. It can be for a whole range of things. It can be for non-attendance at required training. It can be through disorderly behaviour at meetings. It depends on the nature of the volunteer. It can be for all types of things.

Hon RICK MAZZA: Could you take that on notice and also what penalty was actually applied to the particular volunteer?

Mr Gregson: Yes, I can probably have a look at that. If it is any comfort to you, the maximum penalty currently under the act is \$20, so we do not usually impose much of a penalty.

Hon RICK MAZZA: Is the review of the act going to change the ability for you to put a more harsh penalty?

Mr Gregson: Hopefully, it will modernise and put some modern procedures and a little bit more transparency and natural justice into the way in which—the current acts from 1945 were not so concerned with things like appeal and natural justice. I think you will find something much more akin to modern oversight in the new act. But, again, they are public policy decisions for the minister and cabinet in the fullness of time.

Hon RICK MAZZA: I look forward to seeing it.

[Supplementary Information No B3.]

Hon KATE DOUST: I go back to page 714, and this time looking at the fifth dot point, which references mental health wellbeing. What is specifically already being done as part of a significantly expanded and enhanced peer support program being rolled out in 2015–16, and what is the total budget for mental health-related programs over the forward estimates and are you able to provide a breakdown by service—so for the volunteers, for career and SES and so on? You might have to provide that last part on notice.

Mr Gregson: The short answer to your question is yes. I am sure we could give some granularity as to the expenses per category. The answer to the more general question about the expansion of services is there is a lot more endeavour happening in the industry with respect to post-traumatic stress disorder welfare support. Specifically, we are embarking on programs in place to address that and research is being done nationally through the Australasian fire and advisory councils, which is, ostensibly, the fire services across Australia are looking at some of these emerging challenges in the mental health space. We have significantly increased our welfare support. We have doubled the size

of our chaplaincy, for example, and provide significantly more welfare, and that does canvass both career and volunteer personnel.

Hon KATE DOUST: Do you also provide support to families of firefighters in those cases where there is a mental health issue that has arisen as a result of their work, be it volunteer or paid?

Mr Gregson: To the best extent possible, yes. Again, it also depends on if we become aware of it and to what level it is. If we have, for example, a suicide, the answer of course would be yes. We provide such chaplaincy services not only to our own volunteers and career personnel, but we have been known to provide it to other agencies as well.

Hon KATE DOUST: On the same page, 714, that last dot point talks about the impact of demographic shifts within Western Australia. What is the total budget for the 10-year volunteer sustainability strategy and how are the existing volunteer services being involved in the development and delivery of this strategy?

Mr Gregson: The volunteer sustainability strategy is a relatively new strategy. There has been great consultation in putting that together. The strategy is focused on attracting and retaining volunteers.

Hon KATE DOUST: Just looking at that last part of that dot point where it references setting up the Aboriginal firefighter cadetship program, I am just wondering if you are able to provide some detail as to where that has been established and how that is travelling and also what you are actually doing to increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants to become firefighters.

Mr Gregson: With respect to the traineeship program, what we did was we selected 11 Aboriginal trainees who had a desire to become career fire and rescue firefighters. We have embarked on a 12-month program to make them much more competitive from an eligibility point of view, so that when they go for their exams and tests to get into the fire and rescue service, they will be much more able to do well. We started with 11 cadets; we are down to eight and we are probably three-quarters of the way through the program. It is an all-embracing program, from physical fitness through to numeracy and literacy and all those types of things that will enable them to step up to the mark. There is no intention to reduce the hurdles or the barriers to get into fire and rescue, but there is every intention to work with those Aboriginal trainees to make them as competitive as they possibly can be. I hope that we will get between four and six who will go into the ensuing fire schools.

Hon KATE DOUST: Just on another point linked to that, how many women are currently serving as permanent firefighters? I do not know whether you are able to provide detail about women operating as volunteers or in the SES. I am just interested to see what level of female participation there is in this area.

Mr Gregson: We would be able to provide those details certainly with respect to career fire and rescue and some of the volunteer cadre. It is more problematic with respect to volunteer records for the bushfire volunteers, for example; again, they come under local government. But I am sure that we would be able to give you a gender-based profile.

Hon RICK MAZZA: How many volunteer bush fire fighters are there currently?

Mr Gregson: I would say somewhere in the order of 26 000 to 28 000.

Hon RICK MAZZA: How many volunteer firefighter brigades do we have?

Mr Gregson: I do not know off the top of my head. Perhaps Mr Fewster may have more of an indication of the number of brigades.

Mr Fewster: No, not at the moment.

Mr Gregson: No. We will have to take that on notice.

[Supplementary Information No B4.]

Hon RICK MAZZA: Just on that dot point, you talk about a sustainability strategy and a focus on improving recruitment. What are some of the initiatives that you have within that strategy to try to improve the retention of volunteers?

Mr Gregson: Do you mean what sort of initiatives?

Hon RICK MAZZA: You talk about the strategy. I just wonder what some of those strategies may be.

Mr Gregson: There is a whole range of initiatives that we are looking at. It depends whether it is around attraction, recruitment and retention. For example, advertising would be a strategy for attraction. For retention, it would be excitement and training. Training and professional development is a very big requirement particularly. The feedback from the volunteers and the volunteer surveys is that they are very big into their desire for nationally accredited training. It is somewhat problematic in some regional areas because of the shifting population demographic, and also there is an age demographic which also will be somewhat of a challenge in the out years. But there is a range of initiatives within the strategy to try and address each of those things.

[11.30 am]

Hon RICK MAZZA: What about retention of some of the existing volunteers, and maybe some of those who have been there for some time? Speaking to some of those volunteer bush fire fighters, some of them are quite disgruntled, if you like, with the way that things have developed between the FES and volunteer bush fire fighters. Is any work being done to try to maybe change some of that culture where a number of volunteers are becoming disgruntled?

Mr Gregson: I am not aware that there is an increasing number of volunteers in the bushfire space becoming disgruntled. I think it is a matter of fact that there has always been an element of disgruntlement within the bushfire —

Hon RICK MAZZA: Quite a few I have spoken to have —

Mr Gregson: Yes, and sometimes equally it is quite a complex issue. They are not necessarily disgruntled with the Department of Fire and Emergency Services. I get similar feedback on occasions that they are disgruntled with particular aspects, particularly around training—the ability for them to access training. Sometimes many of them are disgruntled with the level support that they get from their own local government. It is very interesting, bearing in mind that they are local government volunteers; they do not belong to the Department of Fire and Emergency Services.

Hon RICK MAZZA: In fairness, too, commissioner, it is not always just the FES, it is also Parks and Wildlife that they may have some issues with. But my concern is that there is a lot of experience out there amongst some of these volunteer firefighter brigades that I would not want to see lost and I wonder whether there is any work to try to mend bridges.

Mr Gregson: We have done an awful lot of work with the volunteers—collaborative work on things like the training program, the professional development pathways and access to training. There is work on the way in which all government and non-government agencies work together, the way in which we come together at an incident, whether it be a fire or a natural hazard—a storm, a flood, a cyclone—no matter what is, you have always got a number of stakeholders from different areas, whether that be Parks and Wildlife, State Emergency Service, Department of Fire and Emergency Services career rescue personnel or volunteer bush fire brigade personnel. There will always be, because of human nature, a conflict on the fireground and we try to establish through training and standardisation of methodologies and equipment—the more you can get people training and exercising together, the better understanding they have of each other's roles and responsibilities. I do not have a magic wand to get rid of all conflict between all players in these types of environment. There will always be people, particularly with the benefit of hindsight, who know better than the person making the decisions at the time.

Hon RICK MAZZA: Sure, I accept that; 26 000 to 28 000 volunteers is a big resource.

Mr Gregson: That is only the bushfire volunteers.

Hon RICK MAZZA: The bushfire volunteers alone, which is a massive resource, and obviously one that we want to preserve.

Hon KATE DOUST: I am looking at expenses on page 720 and specifically at the listing for accommodation. This is probably something you will need to provide on notice, but are you able to please provide a breakdown of the \$10.2 million spent on accommodation? That is the first part of that question. The second part of that question, again, looking at expenses and accommodation is: what is the total expenditure of the Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council in relation to membership fees, travel, accommodation and other costs spent each year over the past three years and budgeted over the forward estimates, broken down by staff member? I appreciate that that will have to be provided on notice.

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: Mr Pasquale will deal with that.

Mr Pasquale: In answer to the first part of your question, I can tell you what is included in the accommodation line item. I cannot give you the separation of the line item, but included in accommodation expenses is operating lease expenses for some of our accommodation around the state, obviously, utility charges and building and maintenance charges.

Hon KATE DOUST: Thank you, but I would still appreciate an appropriate breakdown on each of those figures attached to those types of expenses.

[Supplementary Information No B5.]

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: I have some figures regarding an earlier question. Volunteer bush fire service brigades, groups and units amount to 580 across the state and there are 22 167 volunteers as at 20 May 2015. Hon Rick Mazza was inquiring into those figures.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: I have a few questions and hopefully we can work through them quickly. Firstly, the “Are You Ready?” campaign, which has been going for a while now. What sort of work has been done to judge the effectiveness of the campaign; and has any of that work, if it has been done, resulted in tweaks or changes to the campaign?

Mr Gregson: That campaign is run by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, so I cannot elucidate.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: All right then, I will direct my questions to them next time we see them! On page 713 of budget paper No 2, volume 2, there is the allocation in royalties for regions for fire crew protection. Obviously, that is important. It is pretty lumpy, it goes up and down over the next three years, including the forthcoming budget year. Can you outline what that will be used for?

Mr Gregson: A contribution towards improved crew protection predominantly on appliances, which includes things like lagging, panelling, sprays, radiant heat shields, fire blankets, protection of critical components, deluge systems, automatic vehicle location and a range of technological improvements to the appliances throughout the fleet.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: My last question at the moment is around Butler Fire Station. We were there a few months ago now when it was opened. It is a very, very good facility, but in a massively growing area. Are there any plans for future upgrades to the equipment, as in more equipment, at that fire station? That is the first part of my question and if you answer that, I will move on from that.

Mr Gregson: Specifically, I do not know. What I would say to you is that we always have plans to increase equipment, manpower, stations and training right throughout. We are an expanding

metropolitan area and so we run a resource-to-risk profile and then, subject to budgetary allocations, we improve the capability and capacity of the service.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: As the northern suburbs expand further north into Alkimos, Allara, Yanchep and eventually all the way through to Two Rocks with rapid growth, are there any long-term plans for a metropolitan-style fire station further north than Butler?

Mr Gregson: Yes.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: Where would that be?

Mr Gregson: The plans set out incremental expansion right across the metropolitan area over the next 10 years. You are asking me if there are plans, though, not any funding for it?

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: No, I am not asking about any funding, but is there any plan; and, if so, whereabouts would the station be located?

Mr Gregson: Stations would be located north of Butler and increasingly up the northern coastal corridor, south, in two prongs, and potentially to the east over time.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: Is there any indication when the stations further north will be required?

Mr Gregson: Without looking at the resource-to-risk modelling and knowing a bit more about that, I would have to take that on notice.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: I have a question around the State Emergency Service. Again in the northern suburbs we have a joint facility at Joondalup for Joondalup and Wanneroo, covering a vast area and a rapidly growing area as far as population is concerned. Has any planning or consideration been given to creating another unit in the northern suburbs, perhaps a Wanneroo unit to complement the joint unit based at Joondalup?

[11.40 am]

Mr Gregson: These things are considered. They are always based against a resource-to-risk profile. It is slightly different with the State Emergency Service in that it is not quite the same call on them for response times, so we are not looking at polygons of response area ensuring that we can accommodate a response within certain times. The State Emergency Service is more easily deployable from hubs.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: Yes. What particularly strikes me with the State Emergency Service in that area that I have got to know relatively well is that we always seem to complain that there are not enough volunteers and they have more potential volunteers than they can possibly cope with at their current location, their current hub. It would be a real shame to waste that enthusiasm and that spirit by not providing a hub. Sorry, I am trying to look at you through the Hansard reporters; I apologise for that. It would be a real shame to waste or not harness that energy that is available there at the moment, especially as I said given the expanses of the geographic location and that separation because of the state forest between the western part and the eastern part of Wanneroo. It is the western part that is developing very, very rapidly.

Mr Gregson: Yes, I think you make a good point. The point is well made that there is not a volunteer shortage—or should I say, perhaps there is a global volunteer shortage but in some areas there is large number of volunteers and you could potentially split units and create new units or fold units down appropriately. These are things that relate to our risk-to-resource modelling, but I am not aware at this stage that we are necessarily pursuing a new State Emergency Service. I can go to my deputy commissioner capability, he may be more intimate with that, but I do not think we are.

Mr Fewster: Minister and Chair, thank you. The commissioner has correctly outlined our arrangements. We have a model that tells us where organisations need to be to allow us to respond in the appropriate time. The State Emergency Service response is not generally speaking time-

based, so we do not have the same requirement for the number of units. There is a review of our metropolitan task elements underway at the moment. That review is looking at where all the metropolitan facilities are, but not specifically at an additional SES unit north of Wanneroo–Joondalup.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: When is that review due to be completed?

Mr Fewster: I expect that it is actually an operations matter, but if I can speak for the operational folks, at the moment, the review has only just commenced and I would expect that it would take us at least 12 months to undertake that review.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: Would there be public consultation or is that just internal?

Mr Fewster: It is not internal. It will have consultation with the volunteers involved and local government stakeholders, but I would not expect it to be public.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: Okay. But there will be consultation with the volunteers and with the actual units themselves?

Mr Fewster: Certainly.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: Okay, great, thank you.

The CHAIR: I just want to confirm. I think there was a debate earlier on in that exchange about the timing, but then I think there have been further questions there. Did you still want that taken on notice about the specific timing of when that is? Are you happy with the answers?

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: I do not think so. I think at this stage there has been an indication of around about 12 months, so I daresay we will be back here.

The CHAIR: For the review, but then timing and that will determine the station, so I think we have covered it.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: And the planning was sometime in the future, but no set date is what I got.

Mr Gregson: For the career fire station.

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: Yes.

Mr Gregson: Well, if you give me the money, I will build the fire station.

The CHAIR: The ESL is going up fast enough as it is, commissioner. I do not think we can afford —

Hon PETER KATSAMBANIS: Sure. The money does have to come with a need. It is a future need; it is not something that we pinpoint right now.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Page 717, emergency services: what is the total amount of income received from the emergency services levy?

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: Mr Pasquale.

Mr Pasquale: If I can refer you to page 720 on the income statement and in particular the second line item under income that is referred to as “Regulatory fees and fines”. The levy is that line item. In 2015–16 the levy is expected to collect \$320.521 million.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: So in 2014 it collected \$289 million?

Mr Pasquale: Correct.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: What is that primarily dispersed to—the \$289 million? In particular, I want to know, what component of that is used for volunteer bushfire services?

Mr Gregson: It depends on what you are counting as in or out. The levy funds the running of the department, the local government grants scheme, all equipment, as much training as we can then afford.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: So all the equipment and all the volunteer bushfire service equipment?

Mr Gregson: Yes. Really, the organisation is much more, how would you describe it, homogenous. We do not break it up necessarily, we do training together, we do exercising together, equipment purchases are all done through the local government grants scheme, sometimes it is given to local government and sometimes it is given direct to volunteer brigades, groups or units depending upon who owns them. If I take it on notice, I could rearrange it and break it down however you like, but sometimes it is not so easy to say what goes to volunteers and what does not. For example, it may be that the helicopters are funded through that—sometimes they are supporting volunteer operations and sometimes they are supporting career fire and rescue operations—they are always supporting departmental operations, but it is hard to break down on a volunteer–non-volunteer basis.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: That would be good if I could take that on notice. And the estimated cost of services provided to volunteer bushfire services.

[Supplementary Information No B6.]

Mr Gregson: Sorry, can I just clarify. Are we just talking volunteer bushfire services, not other volunteers?

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: At this stage, bushfire services. So that is the 580 brigades that Hon Rick Mazza was talking about before?

Mr Gregson: Yes.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Just to be clear. And, if it is possible, to break that down in terms of equipment, training and the volunteer retention strategy. If it is possible, that would be useful—but, whatever is possible.

The CHAIR: So that is all under B6.

Mr Gregson: So you want that down to as much granularity as we can; so welfare —

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Correct, because that is going to be my next question. Thank you.

In terms of the strategy to retain volunteers. Can we get a copy of that?

Mr Gregson: The strategy?

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: The retention of volunteers strategy that you were talking about before. Can we get a copy of that?

Mr Gregson: Yes.

[Supplementary Information No B7.]

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: And in terms of B6, if I could get an estimate of how much is expended on the retention of volunteers strategy and how that is expended, that would be good.

The CHAIR: Shall we make that all B7?

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Sure.

I come to volunteers' workers' compensation. Is there an intention for that to be reviewed in the next 12 months?

Mr Gregson: I am not sure what you mean because volunteers do not get workers' compensation.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: They are not workers.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Sorry, insurance. So when the volunteer is injured, the compensation which covers the cost of their loss of earnings from work?

[11.50 am]

Mr Gregson: It has only recently been reviewed, I believe, but I do not think there are any plans to do a second review.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Is it possible to get a copy of that review?

Mr Gregson: We have endeavoured to equalise the arrangements for volunteer coverage, if that is what you are talking about.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Yes, that is exactly it.

Mr Gregson: I am happy to make that available to you; no problems.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: In terms of the outcomes of that, was it about the way in which volunteers are covered for loss of earnings if injured in voluntary work?

Mr Pasquale: Those coverages exist now. However, there are differences between the type of volunteers, so the equalisation project is about trying to standardise the equity of cover across the different volunteer services, and that is something that is being looked at. The cover exists, but there are some slight variations in respect of covers at the moment, and we are trying to equalise those cover arrangements.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: When do you think that work will be completed?

Mr Pasquale: I think that is planned for completion next year, but I would have to confirm that.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Can I take that on notice, when that is to be completed?

[*Supplementary Information No B8.*]

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: I refer to the rollout of radiant heat curtains amongst volunteer bush fire brigades. The last time I asked, there were 544 radiant heat curtains still to be rolled out. Where are you at with that now?

Mr Fewster: The rollout of the radiant heat shields will finish in December 2015.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: How many have been rolled out and how many are waiting to be rolled out?

Mr Fewster: We have done about 80 per cent, which is 776 vehicles.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: What has been the delay in the rolling out of those? I should choose a different word.

Mr Fewster: I do not know that there has been a delay. The time frame includes the time it takes the contractor to measure the vehicle windows, so the radiant heat shields wrap around the glass area of the cabs of the fire appliances.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Yes; I had the opportunity to view the use of them recently.

Mr Fewster: Almost all of the cabs' glass areas are different for the different makes of vehicle, so each one needs to be measured specifically because the radiant heat shield has to fit the glass that is in a particular cab. We do not have one size fits all. The contractor who is doing that, therefore, measures the vehicle, makes the curtains and fits the curtains.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Are the individual brigades informed of when they should anticipate their vehicles being fitted with the curtains?

Mr Fewster: Yes, they are. The arrangements to have a brigade fitted require, largely, the bush fire brigade's local government managers of the vehicle to liaise with the volunteers who are managing the vehicle.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: How far out is that? Are brigades that are getting curtains in October aware that their vehicles will be refitted in October?

Mr Fewster: I would not have thought so, no. It is much more —

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: Instantaneous?

Mr Fewster: Not instantaneous, but there is not a lot of point telling somebody that it is going to be done in October if we do not know how long it will take the contractor to get theirs, but they will certainly be given a reasonable amount of time, understanding that for the volunteer bush fire brigades, in particular, it means somebody has to be at the unit to open the shed.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: So you are confident that they are getting sufficient warning to allow for that to happen.

Mr Fewster: Yes.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: I move on to a different program altogether. The JAFFA program: is that still being funded?

Mr Gregson: Yes, it is; it is still being funded.

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: How much was expended on the program last year and what is the budget for it this year? I am happy to take it on notice.

Mr Gregson: I will have to take it on notice. Do you have a page reference?

Hon ALANNA CLOHESY: No; that is why I asked the question.

[Supplementary Information No B9.]

Hon RICK MAZZA: In relation to the Denmark–Walpole fires, has the department done any calculations on what the direct cost was to the department for fighting that fire?

Mr Gregson: Yes, we would have.

Hon RICK MAZZA: Can we take that on notice if you do not have it at hand?

Mr Gregson: Yes.

[Supplementary Information No B10.]

Hon RICK MAZZA: The second question I have—I did ask this of Parks and Wildlife but they have handballed it to you—is: have you been able to calculate the number of volunteer firefighter hours that were involved in those fires?

Mr Gregson: I am not sure about that; we would have to take that on notice. We would have some understanding of volunteer effort, but whether we have calculated it at an hourly rate or on a hour basis, I am not sure. But, certainly, we can have a look at that.

Hon RICK MAZZA: If you have not calculated that and you do not calculate that, I just wonder whether it is possible to maybe in the future do so.

Mr Gregson: They are not my volunteers. They belong to local government —

Hon RICK MAZZA: I know they are not your volunteers, but you know who is there and you know how long they are there for.

Mr Gregson: — so I do not always know who is there.

Hon RICK MAZZA: You should know who is there, because it will be interesting to see the value of those volunteer firefighters for those particular programs. It would be very useful data, I would think.

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: Perhaps it might help if the commissioner could explain the level of involvement that the service has with those units that are controlled by local authorities. What sort of information do they pass back to you?

Mr Gregson: It varies. Sometimes we get very good information as to who is available, who is on the fireground and how long they are there for. When we have good command and control, good incident controllers in place, good systems and processes established, which could be quite some hours into the incident, then the record keeping starts to become more accurate and more specific, but it would be very difficult to calculate. In some communities, for example, everybody in the community is a registered volunteer, even Aunty Mavis who is making the cups of tea. It is very hard to be able to tabulate effort. It might be more easily done for individual bush fire brigade firefighters who are on an active appliance at the fire scene, but it is sometimes quite problematic. Some local government records and bushfire control officers are much better than others in terms of record keeping. We do not often get involved in an incident until it escalates to a certain level of severity, so tabulating or calculating the hours of effort prior to our engagement or our involvement is often also somewhat problematic.

Hon ADELE FARINA: Can I just clarify: the member was just asking for the volunteer bush fire fighter hours. Given that the incident controller deploys these officers, surely you have some capacity to estimate those hours?

Mr Gregson: Yes, we could estimate the hours.

Hon RICK MAZZA: If we can take that on notice, it would be good, and you estimate those hours.

Mr Gregson: Just for clarity, you are looking for the estimated number of bush fire brigade volunteers—none of the other volunteers; just bush fire brigade volunteers—at the Walpole fire down south?

Hon RICK MAZZA: The Walpole–Denmark fires, yes, and Northcliffe, too, if you can include that.

[Supplementary Information No B11.]

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: Given the impact that the large bushfires have on communities, and even when there are no structures damaged, why are there no key efficiency indicators relating to the minimisation of the size of those incidents? This is on page 716.

Mr Gregson: That is a really good question. There is a review currently around our key performance indicators and efficiency indicators. Whether or not one will ever relate to size in terms of fire scar is problematic, because sometimes fires are intentionally allowed to run over an area and sometimes there is back-burning done. It does not necessarily mean you have had a successful fire because it is limited to a certain amount of hectares or acreage. But there is a new suite of key performance indicators and efficiency indicators being worked on at the moment.

[12 noon]

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: When do you think that review will be finished?

Mr Gregson: There is an endeavour to have it done for next year's budget papers, but, to be honest, I do not know who signs off on them. I would imagine they would be approved by Treasury or EERC.

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: Still on page 716, under “Prevention and Mitigation Services”, are the DFES contributions to the salaries of community emergency service managers included in this number? If not, where in the budget are they accounted for, and what is the cost of the community emergency service managers for the last three years, and over the forward estimates broken down by year?

Mr Pasquale: To provide the detail that you have asked for, we would have to take that on notice, but the first part of your question—they are included in the prevention and response area. The two services are based on a cost allocation model, so the salary costs, if they are employed by the Department of Fire and Emergency Services, are appropriately allocated. If they are employed by local government, then we are providing grants to support that, so they will not be in the salaries area; they will be under grants and subsidies.

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: Still on page 716, still under “Prevention and Mitigation Services”, how many extra FTEs have been engaged for the comprehensive fire crew protection over the past three years and over the forward estimates?

The CHAIR: Sorry, just once again, that information—was there anything that you wanted taken on notice in that previous question? I just think we skipped over it.

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: Yes.

[Supplementary Information No B12.]

The CHAIR: Now we will move on to your most recent question. My apologies.

Mr Pasquale: From memory, I do recall there were some staffing resources to assist with the rollout, given the magnitude, because originally it was identified as a four-year program. I cannot categorically tell you the exact number. I would have to take that on notice.

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: Okay; if we could do that.

[Supplementary Information No B13.]

Hon ADELE FARINA: How many level 3 bush fire fighters are employed in the south west region by the department?

Mr Gregson: Level 3 incident controllers, you mean —

Hon ADELE FARINA: Yes.

Mr Gregson: — or bush fire fighters? I am sorry. You are looking for the number of qualified level 3 incident controllers in the south west region? I would have to take that on notice. I was just wondering if we had answered that before, but, no, it does not look like it.

[Supplementary Information No B14.]

Hon ADELE FARINA: In relation to the Bunbury career fire station, which is currently under construction, what is the expected completion date on that?

Mr Gregson: It will be completed 2016–17—towards the end of the 2016 calendar year, we think.

Hon ADELE FARINA: That is very general.

Mr Gregson: I do not think we have awarded the contract for construction yet.

Hon ADELE FARINA: What is the delay in that, because it was announced quite some time ago?

Mr Gregson: I think there was some debate early on in design as to whether or not there was going to be the co-location of volunteers on that particular site, so that caused a bit of delay to get everybody engaged in that consultation process and make a decision moving forward.

Hon ADELE FARINA: What about the Australind career fire station? Has that been permanently shelved?

Mr Gregson: It is unfunded.

Hon ADELE FARINA: Just in relation to world’s best practice of training for our firefighters, I understand our facilities in Western Australia are well below world’s best standard. I am just wondering whether there is any funding that has been allocated in the budget to actually improve those facilities.

Mr Gregson: I do not know what you are basing world's best practice on, but the short answer is no.

Hon ADELE FARINA: The Shire of Nannup has a proposal for a bush fire fighting centre to be established in Nannup, and I understand there is general support for that proposition. I was just wondering whether the department has advanced that proposal any further.

Mr Gregson: No, I would not go so far as to say there is general support or otherwise for the proposition. I think we have had some preliminary discussion and I believe the last thing we said to the Shire of Nannup is, "If you give us some more details of what you are proposing, then we would be happy to comment."

Hon ADELE FARINA: In the Northcliffe fires, there was a problem with sourcing water at various stages during that fire. I am just wondering what the department is doing to address that issue in regional areas, because, obviously, it will not only be a problem in the Shire of Nannup.

Mr Gregson: I am not aware of any problems with sourcing water, but perhaps I could defer to the deputy commissioner.

Mr Fewster: The bulk water tankers are part of our vehicle fleet, and bulk water tankers provide that additional water at a fire where there is insufficient water to be obtained locally. The bulk water tanker is part of our fleet process where a resource-to-risk model is done by the local government concerned, and if it is supported, then a vehicle is allocated from our vehicle fleet build. Whether or not there are any bulk water tankers being built at the moment, I am not sure.

Mr Gregson: We are not aware of any problems with water shortages at that job.

Hon ADELE FARINA: Okay. I will come back to you on that then.

The CHAIR: Just before I go to Hon Kate Doust again, I might just have a question of my own. Why has the funding for the Whitfords—and the metropolitan sea rescue, but particularly for the Whitfords sea rescue—been cut in half?

Mr Gregson: Well, it is a long story, but the gist of it is: when the volunteer marine rescue service units came under the Department of Fire and Emergency Services, there were three units that did not want to do that. Those three units amalgamated into what became known as the metropolitan volunteer sea rescue groups, or something of that nature. There was a funding allocation given to them. Since that time, two of those units have come under the Department of Fire and Emergency Services banner, leaving just Whitfords. Whitfords gets a proportional share of the budgetary allocation that used to go to the three units, so it is not being cut, in a sense.

The CHAIR: What is the total funding to metropolitan sea rescue groups for this financial year then? How is that divvied up, and how does that compare to two years ago, or even last year?

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: Mr Pasquale, I think, has the information.

Mr Pasquale: What I can share with you, on page 720, under "Details of Controlled Grants and Subsidies", you will notice the bottom line, "Volunteer Marine Rescue Service". These are the volunteer groups that come under the auspices of the department. That is the funding profile in support of those groups. It is lumpy for the reason that the majority of those costs are supporting a hull replacement program, and the life cycles of those boats are being renewed at different times, hence why it is lumpy.

[12.10 pm]

The CHAIR: I understand that. Maybe I am asking for the ongoing recurrent funding to support their operations rather than funding for boat purchases.

Mr Pasquale: It is in there also but we would have to separate that out for you.

[*Supplementary Information No B15.*]

The CHAIR: I am also interested in how much goes through to each of the metropolitan sea rescue services, both this year, going forward in the forward estimates, and over the last four years. A commitment was made in 2008. My understanding is that the government is now claiming that that commitment was only for the term of that election—2008 to 2013.

Mr Gregson: I know to what you refer. There was an allocation that is called a standardised allocation to the units. There was a commitment given by government over the four years of the forward estimates. That amount was doubled, I think, from memory. At the end of the four-year forward estimates, that doubling ceased so it went back to its baseline. That is correct.

The CHAIR: This one might be for the minister to answer. I find it interesting that I read the press release that was issued on 13 August 2008, which states —

The Liberal leader Colin Barnett today announced that funding for the alliance would be boosted from \$200 000 each year to \$400 000 under a Liberal government.

Mr Barnett said the volunteer sea rescue groups were responsible for more than 70 per cent of all sea rescues in their areas. WA's wonderful and pristine oceans make boating an important part of our lifestyle. Therefore, a well-funded rescue service is an essential part of our community.

I cannot see anywhere in that press release where it limits it just to the four-year term. It says that the funding will be increased from \$200 000 to \$400 000 a year. Does this mean that from now on all government announcements can only be taken for the four-year period of the next term of government?

Mr Gregson: I do not think that is a question for me.

The CHAIR: That is why I am putting it to the minister.

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: And I do not think it is a reasonable conclusion to draw from that. I am not familiar with the press release and I am not able to comment on it as I am not intimate with this portfolio but I am happy to take it on notice.

[Supplementary Information No B16.]

The CHAIR: I would like to know exactly where in that press release it was limited only to the four-year term and does each community group now need to have included in the words of any commitment that it will be an ongoing commitment not just for the next term of government? That will all be under B16.

In terms of the cuts to the Whitfords sea rescue, do we have any idea what the impact of the cut will be on the ability of Whitfords volunteer sea rescue to provide the essential part of our community that the Premier talked about back in 2008; what impact that will have? Has there been any attempt to assess what impact that will have on their operations by FESA?

Mr Fewster: The redistribution that occurred when the Fremantle group left the Metropolitan Volunteer Sea Rescue Group led to a reduction in money that went to that umbrella body. That umbrella body passes the money to the Whitfords Volunteer Sea Rescue Group. It is not sent by the department to that group and we are not part and parcel of the management of the group. That is an independent organisation. We simply transfer money from government to the organisation.

The CHAIR: You have it acquitted. You would know where it goes. In fact, I think you were quite ferocious in requiring them to acquit their funding; I would hope so anyway.

Mr Fewster: We are in the business of making sure that when we give a group money, we know where it goes. We get the acquittal from the Metropolitan Volunteer Sea Rescue Group, not from Whitfords.

The CHAIR: The metropolitan group would acquit as to where they then provided the money and whether it went to Cockburn, Fremantle or Whitfords.

Mr Fewster: You would have to ask that group that question.

The CHAIR: That is not part of their acquittal to you?

Mr Fewster: The acquittal to us is where they have distributed money on a particular date. It covers things like their insurance because we fund their insurance. We do not look at the operational activities of the unit and the acquittals against that operation.

The CHAIR: When you have changed the way in which you fund those organisations, you have done no assessment of what impact that then has on the funding available to the Whitfords group. Is that what you are saying?

Mr Gregson: That would be right.

The CHAIR: You have not done any assessment of what the impacts on that particular group is when you change the way in which you fund the three groups?

Mr Gregson: We pass through the money from government to the volunteer marine rescue groups and they then acquit the money back to us.

The CHAIR: That was fine when there were three groups and you funded them all directly through that metropolitan group. Since that has now changed, you are funding two groups directly and one that stands outside of that.

Mr Gregson: Correct. The split was done on a number of jobs basis, so the moneys that were available were apportioned based on the number of jobs that they do for the HMA.

The CHAIR: Are you saying that when they were under the three groups, Whitfords was getting more than their fair share based on job numbers?

Mr Gregson: No, I am not saying that at all. I am saying that the money that was available to distribute to the metropolitan group was apportioned. When the group split, the money was apportioned based on the amount of tasking that they did. So there has been no disadvantage to the Whitfords group. Now you may argue, which is a different argument, about the reduction over the four-year forward estimates. That is a different issue. In terms of the funding for the department, Whitfords still gets its baseline funding based on the number of tasking that they had previously when they were under the auspices of the Metropolitan Volunteer Sea Rescue Group.

The CHAIR: That was then complicated by the fact that the funding was cut from \$400 000 to \$200 000 as per the previous election.

Mr Gregson: It was not complicated.

The CHAIR: It was complicated for the organisations in that they got a reduction in their funding.

Mr Gregson: Yes.

The CHAIR: If you are sitting in the Whitfords sea rescue, you will see it as a complication. You might not see it where you sit. For them, they do.

Mr Gregson: That is right.

Hon KATE DOUST: I just have a couple of questions about the recent closure of the Success Fire Station due to the health issues, sadly, that a number of the firemen had to deal with. What sort of testing has been done on that site as a result of those issues? Are you able to provide a list of the tests that were conducted?

Mr Gregson: Yes. Three tranches of tests were done in relation to Success. The first one that I think you are referring is the actual site or environmental testing, which was done by a contractor.

That report has been published on our website. The tests were exhaustive in terms of quality of the site and soil and other endeavours to find and locate potential sources.

Hon KATE DOUST: What were the other tests?

Mr Gregson: A second range of tests was done by the health department in terms of establishing whether or not there were any potential health risks of the area more globally. There was a third range of tests on any individual firefighter who had done more than a certain number of shifts at that particular fire station as well as looking at the antecedents of those firefighters who served there.

Hon KATE DOUST: Are the results of those tests public?

Mr Gregson: The report on the environmental testing is public. The report on the site is public. The two reports are on the website. The details of the individual health aspects of the firefighters I do not believe is public.

Hon KATE DOUST: As a result of that incident down at Success, have you also conducted tests on any other fire stations?

Mr Gregson: No.

Hon KATE DOUST: What will now happen to that particular fire station that you have closed down? You have obviously had to shift those firemen to another area, which leaves a gap in that community. What will happen to that building in the first instance?

Mr Gregson: I will just go back a step. There is no gap in terms of service delivery to the community. There are interim arrangements in place so that there is no degradation of service delivery into that community. Ultimately, that site will be sold.

Hon KATE DOUST: That is interesting.

I want to move on to the West Perth Fire Station. I know that it is a work in progress. I want to know what stage it is at in terms of construction and what is your anticipated completion date?

Mr Gregson: We have identified a block of land that we believe is very suitable. We are in the final stages of doing due diligence on that site. We hope to settle on that site within the next couple of weeks and we will then move to the design and construct phase.

Hon KATE DOUST: Who owns that block of land and where is it located?

Mr Gregson: It is located in Carr Street in West Perth. I understand there are three owners. We are consolidating at least two titles with a little bit of confusion on some sort of access way down the middle. We are ostensibly consolidating one larger block of land. I do not know who the owners are but that could be provided. They are private owners.

[12.20 pm]

Hon KATE DOUST: Given that this was an announcement in last year's budget, why has it taken so long to get to this point?

Mr Gregson: I think we have just been following the normal schedule, so it was over a three-year program of works, and we have been working towards that.

Hon KATE DOUST: I have a question going back to page 720 in relation to controlled grants and subsidies, in particular the local government emergency services grants. I note that \$25.8 million was awarded to local governments for grants this year. Can the minister advise the total amount that was sought by local governments; that is, what is the total of grant requests, including those that were refused? You might need to provide that on notice. I do not know whether you have got that information available.

Mr Gregson: We would have to provide that on notice.

[*Supplementary Information No B17.*]

Hon KATE DOUST: Again, on page 720, looking at income, regulatory fees and fines, what is the total cost and FTE count of administering the ESL per year over the past three years, and what is budgeted for over the forward estimates?

Mr Gregson: Again, what do you want to include in, and what do you want to include out? I really need some specificity about what it is you are looking for in terms of FTE count to administer ESL moneys, or are we talking just the grants, are we talking acquitting, or what?

Hon KATE DOUST: Administration—we want to know how many FTEs are required to administer the ESL.

Mr Gregson: The ESL, or just the grant scheme?

Hon KATE DOUST: The ESL.

Mr Gregson: I just do not know how I am going to quantify that. It is ostensibly the budget of our agency, so are we counting people who do wages, people —

Hon KATE DOUST: Do you have people who are allocated specifically for managing the ESL?

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: Perhaps Mr Pasquale will be able to assist.

Mr Pasquale: The levy is fundamentally our primary funding source, so basically our finance department, whether it is the levy, whether it is commonwealth income, their role is to actually account for, collect and raise. It would be very difficult to try to articulate with some specificity about what you are asking. However, in terms of the policy around the levy, we do have fundamentally one person full-time whose sole purpose is around maintaining our policy guidelines and advice around how it is collected, and how it ought to be billed, so there is a permanent person who has that primary full-time role. Other than that, everyone else in the finance department has a significant role to play in relation to accounting for it as well.

Hon KATE DOUST: Thank you for that. Probably my final question is: in relation to my own electorate, South Metropolitan Region, given the significant growth in that lower end of the southern corridor—I am looking at areas like Southern River, and some of the areas not in my region, like Piara Waters—what plans are there for new fire stations to be set up in those growth areas, if you like? Have any areas been pinpointed for new stations?

Mr Gregson: We have a comprehensive strategic asset plan, which involves where we would wish to put, in the out years, future fire stations, not just in your area, but right across the state.

Hon KATE DOUST: Is that available on your website, or would I need to get that list from somewhere else?

Mr Gregson: It is not on the website and, might I say, it is a dynamic document.

Hon KATE DOUST: Does that mean ever-changing according to whether the government can provide the money for you to do that?

Mr Gregson: No, the wish list exists notwithstanding funding. I need to be clear here. Are you asking me what is funded, or what is planned, or —

Hon KATE DOUST: Yes, sure—what is planned, what is actually funded for the future, and when is it going to happen?

Mr Gregson: I can only tell you what is planned. I cannot help you with the other issue.

Hon KATE DOUST: Are any new fire stations planned for South Metropolitan Region?

Mr Gregson: Planned, or funded?

Hon KATE DOUST: Well, if you can only tell me what is planned, what is planned?

Mr Gregson: Fire stations in the south metropolitan area —

Hon KATE DOUST: South metropolitan, yes.

Mr Gregson: East and north.

The CHAIR: Can I maybe assist? I would have thought you would have a strategic asset program that would list, at least for the next 10 years, what your expected rollout of stations would be.

Mr Gregson: Yes.

The CHAIR: Is that something you can provide to us as supplementary information?

Hon KATE DOUST: That is essentially what I would like to see.

[Supplementary Information No B18.]

The CHAIR: I have no other members asking questions. I have one last one, if no-one else has any questions. When the ESL was originally introduced, my recollection is that the policy of government at that stage was that the share of your funding that came from the consolidated account would not be reduced, but the ESL would replace the previous levy on insurance companies and provide additional funding for your operations—growth funding. Clearly, that commitment to maintaining the share of your operations from the consolidated account is no longer the policy, but what is the current policy of government with respect to the funding of your organisation in respect to how much is from the ESL and how much is from the consolidated account? Is there a current policy? Each year we seem to see the ESL going up by well above inflation and the share of the consolidated account reducing, so what is the current policy of the government?

Mr Gregson: I do not know, really, whether I am the right person to tell you what the current policy of government is, with respect.

The CHAIR: I am not asking you to comment on it. Is there a policy, and can you tell us what that is? You can give us that. What I cannot do is ask you to give an opinion on whether that policy is good or bad.

Mr Gregson: I understand that the current policy of the government is to fund what can be funded out of the ESL.

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: With certain exceptions.

Mr Gregson: There are some things that cannot be funded out of the ESL, and they are not funded from the ESL.

The CHAIR: What are those things that cannot be funded?

Mr Gregson: They would be things like the south west rescue helicopter, unexploded ordnance and surf lifesaving.

The CHAIR: Are we now at the point where all the things that can be funded out of the ESL are now funded out of the ESL, and those things for which you receive an appropriation from the consolidated account are now those things that cannot be funded under the ESL?

Mr Gregson: Yes.

The CHAIR: When did we reach that point, where we are funding everything that can be funded out of the ESL?

Mr Gregson: This budget.

The CHAIR: This budget—right, thank you. Hopefully, we should not be seeing any increases above inflation from now on.

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: That would be a matter for the budget considerations in each budget cycle.

The CHAIR: I might ask for you to provide on notice a list of all the things that cannot be funded under the ESL, and how much is allocated to each of those.

Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN: Things that cannot be funded through the ESL are the emergency rescue helicopter service, unexploded ordnance, Surf Lifesaving WA, contributions to the holding account, unbudgeted and unpredictable costs associated with wildfire and other emergency incident responses, ESL charges on state government properties, and salary costs under the Salaries and Allowances Act 1975. As to the amounts for each of those, I would have to take that on notice.

[Supplementary Information No B19.]

The CHAIR: The committee will forward any additional questions it has to you in writing in the next couple of days, together with the transcript of evidence, which includes the questions you have taken on notice. Responses to these questions will be requested within 10 working days of receipt of the questions. Should you be unable to meet this due date, please advise the committee in writing as soon as possible before the due date. The advice is to include specific reasons as to why the due date cannot be met. If members have any unasked questions, I asked them to submit these to the committee clerk at the close of the hearing. On behalf the committee I thank you for your attendance today, and I will see everyone else back here at 1.30 pm—well, I will see some of us back here at 1.30 pm.

Hearing concluded at 12.30 pm
