

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND JUSTICE  
STANDING COMMITTEE**

**INQUIRY INTO THE STATE'S PREPAREDNESS  
FOR THIS YEAR'S FIRE SEASON**

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE  
TAKEN AT PERTH  
FRIDAY, 2 NOVEMBER 2012**

**SESSION ONE**

**Members**

**Mr A.P. O'Gorman (Chairman)**  
**Mr R.F. Johnson (Deputy Chairman)**  
**Ms M.M. Quirk**  
**Mr I.M. Britza**  
**Mr T.G. Stephens**

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**Hearing commenced at 9.56 am**

**O'CALLAGHAN, DR KARL JOSEPH**  
**Commissioner of Police, examined:**

**BELL, MR DUANE**  
**Assistant Commissioner, WA Police, examined:**

**The CHAIRMAN:** Good morning, Commissioner and Duane. The cameras will be here just while I read the official bit and ask you to give your names and things like that. After that, we will ask the cameramen to leave. But before I start, I will read you the official bit, and then I will introduce the Committee.

This Committee hearing is a proceeding of Parliament and warrants the same respect that proceedings in the house itself demand. Even though you are not required to give evidence on oath, any deliberate misleading of the Committee may be regarded as a contempt of Parliament. Have you completed a "Details of Witness" form?

**The Witnesses:** Yes.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Did you understand the notes at the bottom of the form?

**The Witnesses:** Yes.

**The CHAIRMAN:** And did you receive and read an information for witnesses briefing sheet regarding giving evidence before parliamentary committees?

**The Witnesses:** Yes.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Can you state the capacity in which you appear before the Committee this morning?

**Dr O'Callaghan:** I am the Commissioner of Police for Western Australia.

**Mr Bell:** I am Assistant Commissioner for Counter Terrorism and State Protection with the WA Police.

**The CHAIRMAN:** If I can introduce the Committee: Rob Johnson, the member for Hillarys, is Deputy Chair; Margaret Quirk is the member for Girrawheen; Ian Britza is the member for Morley; and I am Tony O'Gorman, the member for Joondalup and Chair of the Committee. Before I ask any questions or I ask you to address your submission, can I ask the cameramen to leave, please.

Thanks, Commissioner. You have provided us with a submission this morning. Rather than read it all, do you want to just address the main points in your submission, and then we can start asking you some questions?

**Dr O'Callaghan:** So you just got this. I was going to read it into evidence, but I do not know whether that is necessary or not. It is only four pages; it will not take long to read. So, if we can do it that way, I would prefer to do it that way, if that is okay with you.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Okay.

**Dr O'Callaghan:** Can I start off by saying —

It is important to note that the WA Police respond to fires in accordance with the emergency management arrangements which include the relevant WESTPLANS and State Emergency Management Policies. FESA is the Hazard Management Agency for fire, but shares the role of controlling agency with DEC and Local Government. In this way we —

That is, the Police —

are a combat agency assisting the particular Hazard Management Agency or controlling agency for different fires. Police officers may be requested to assist FESA and DEC through establishing and maintaining vehicle control points; undertaking evacuations; providing information from police systems—such as to register evacuees, victims and so on; cordon duties for roads, footpaths, access-ways and the like; directing people, closing businesses and conducting investigations.

We also provide emergency coordinators, whether that is at the local or District level, and I have the role —

As you know —

of State Emergency Coordinator. This emergency coordination function is different to the incident controller who is from either FESA or DEC in the case of fires, and who has direct command and control of the response to a fire. The emergency coordinator function has a much broader role during a fire event and assists through mechanisms such as an operational area support group or the State Emergency Coordination Group, which is also known as the SECG.

There were two recommendations from the 2011 Perth Hills Bushfire Review for which implementation responsibility was not assigned to WA Police, but which related to my functions as State Emergency Coordinator. Firstly, as the then Chair of the State Emergency Management Committee, or SEMC, I directed the revision and amendment of State Emergency Management Policy 4.1—Operational Management. These changes were approved by the SEMC in November 2011 and provide greater detail and clarity on the criteria for assessing and elevating the operational level, provide certainty and explicit direction about when and how an incident ought to be declared together with the actions to be taken. The amended sections also provide greater accountability by being more definitive about who should be notified, with particular emphasis to the State Emergency Coordinator, and by whom.

You will know that that was a focus of this Committee last year —

Secondly, an amendment to section 50 of the *Emergency Management Act 2005* to allow me as Chair of the SECG to declare an emergency situation has passed through Parliament and I understand that its proclamation is imminent.

I am no longer the chair of the SEMC —

As you know —

with that position now having been moved to a person independent of the various Hazard Management Agencies. This has provided a distinction between the development and maintenance of policy at the SEMC, and the strategic coordination of hazard events at the SECG. This distinction has already provided greater clarity about the work of these two groups.

In relation to the implementation of recommendations flowing from inquiries and reviews of recent bushfires in WA for which WA Police have responsibility or direct involvement I am able to provide the following information.

Senior Officers from WA Police and FESA met and resolved interpretation issues in relation to powers used by police in assisting fire authorities in responding to bushfires (rec 31).

Again, I mentioned that in my presentation when I was here last year —

Legislative changes to the *Emergency Management Act 2005* have been agreed upon and incorporated into the broader review of the Act. I understand that the final document from

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that review will be soon progressed to the SEMC for consideration by the Secretariat. In the meantime, the senior officers from both agencies have agreed on new operational procedures for the use and application of powers under the *Bushfires Act 1954* by FESA officers.

The matter of 'restricted access permits' to allow public access past a vehicle control point into an emergency area (rec 32) was referred by SEMC to the Emergency Services Subcommittee (ESS) which subsequently referred it to the Interagency Bushfire Management Committee (IBMC). This is a difficult issue, with serious consequences for persons encroaching on or near any fire ground. I understand that the IBMC Fire Operations Group has reported to the IBMC and the ESS is awaiting their advice.

So that is still a work in progress —

The development of a 'one source: one message' system (rec 34) has been progressed by the SEMC Public Information Group. An assessment was conducted through an invitation to register interest, which generated a large response from the commercial sector and appeared to confirm the viability of the system concept. The assignment of responsibility for the preparation of a business case has recently been given to WA Police and this work has commenced. This will, in time, require funding and be submitted through the budget and cabinet process for consideration.

Whilst local government, the Department for Child Protection and other support agencies have the primary role in assisting victims from communities affected by bushfires, the WA Police provide support when requested. The ongoing impact on victims of communities recently affected by bushfires has been ameliorated through the development of improved arrangements for communicating the loss of home and possessions to persons gathered at evacuation centres (rec 36). These were implemented to good effect last bushfire season for the Margaret River bushfire.

The selection of evacuation centres on the urban fringe that are unlikely to be impacted by an incident (rec 37) has been enhanced through location and other data being collated and made available to Hazard Management Agencies and Incident Controllers using a Geographic Information System (GIS).

There were no recommendations arising from the 2012 Margaret River Bushfire review relating to the WA Police. Similarly, there were no recommendations for WA Police arising from the Post Incident Analysis for Blackwood fire 8 concerning the Ellenbrook-Gnarabup fires on 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> of November 2011, nor the Blackwood Fire 11 concerning the Milyeannup-Sollya fires on 23<sup>rd</sup> of November to 5<sup>th</sup> of December 2011. Whilst local police were interviewed as part of the Post-Incident Analysis process, no submissions were made and no responses to the reports were requested or required.

I noticed that the Committee did ask for any submissions we made in regards to the Noetic report. We have made none because there are no recommendations that concern the WA Police —

Quite apart from those matters dealt with by inquiries or reviews, the WA Police have undertaken a number of operational, training and exercise activities to enhance our preparedness.

The Arson Squad, FESA and DEC continue to work very closely in investigating deliberately lit bushfires, monitoring crime trends, hot spots and developing response initiatives and strategies.

The Committee may be interested in asking some questions about Strike Force Vulcan as we go through this morning's proceedings, and Mr Bell is in a position to answer those —

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This work is supported by a Memorandum of Understanding with FESA and DEC which permits information sharing between agencies for the purpose of fire investigations. To further reduce arson, the WA Police will again be conducting Operation Vulcan during the bushfire season. This operation focusses specialist teams in engaging and monitoring Priority Prolific Arson Offenders.

That is what we call them, or PPAOs.

To complement the work of these specialist teams, an electronic learning training package was introduced in January 2012 and includes modules designed to assist frontline police officers to identify and monitor Priority Prolific Arson Offenders and target known fire areas in an effort to reduce the potential for bushfires during the fire season. The training package also contains modules regarding legislation for officers acting in support of a controlling agency in a bushfire, guidelines for conducting evacuations, and a module developed by FESA on bushfire behaviour and staying safe when working in a bushfire affected environment.

Mandatory Local Emergency Coordinator (LEC) training has been introduced for all police officers who may undertake the role of LEC. Although this is a whole-of-government role it was determined that there was a need to bridge any potential knowledge gaps and therefore WA Police developed an electronic learning awareness package. Over 250 officers have completed the package since September 2012.

WA Police have continued to make the Maylands Command Centre available to Hazard Management Agencies (HMA) as a State Emergency Operations Centre providing both the capability and capacity to deliver the required level of operational management for complex multi-agency emergencies and the potential for real time information sharing between the control tiers, emergency management agencies and the executive level. Additionally, the Centre has also been utilised by FESA for their interagency Major Incident Management for Incident Controllers Level 3 Course. This has provided a greater link between training and the operational environment.

A program of Pyro-Terrorism exercises involving WA Police, FESA and DEC and consisting of scenarios using the Hydra Suite at the Police Academy, Joondalup have been conducted. The program is supported by a refresher on applicable policies and procedures and an emphasis of the Hydra exercises is the making and recording of critical decisions. It provides personal development and an opportunity to practice in the role of Police Commander and Incident Controller, and further cross-agency experience and collaboration. This augmented the WA Police participation in the State bushfire exercise conducted by FESA last week.

To assist FESA in operating a crisis information management system, I have —

As the Police Commissioner —

committed resources to host and develop data boards on our WebEOC system. This provides not only a capacity for them, but also allows information to easily move between FESA and WA Police. I have committed to continuing this arrangement until they are able to procure a compatible system of their own.

In conclusion, whilst preparedness is not a state that can be defined or assessed in a yes/no sense, the continuous improvement, training and exercising that has been undertaken places us well to meet the challenges of the upcoming bushfire season.

I think we are in quite a good position, particularly when you realise where we have come from since the presentation to this committee last year. So, thank you for allowing me to do that.

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**The CHAIRMAN:** Thank you. Commissioner, we have heard numerous times this year that this upcoming bushfire season is probably potentially the worst we will have seen with the fuel loads and the dry weather that we have had. I know you have read some of it in in your preamble to your submission, but can you give us a broad brush of how exactly the police have prepared for this upcoming season?

**Mr Bell:** I think what we have done is made sure that we have all of those things in the hazard management agencies. That is why I think it was important to note that we are a combat agency; we assist them to respond to tasks. So, when this comes up and there is a fire, we man vehicle control points, do evacuations and things like that. We have run a number of exercises on evacuations so we can ensure that we can give accurate information to the incident controller—how long it will take; how many people are required—in that way, we have done a lot of work around our logistic requirements for it. For us, really, these things are a matter of ordinary business; we have vans on the road, and it is a matter of putting extra resources around at those times and making sure that we can respond to requests for information.

**The CHAIRMAN:** You mentioned that your responsibility, or one of your responsibilities, is evacuation. In the Margaret River bushfires, unfortunately there were a lot of people trapped on the beach. Have you got a plan for that if that happens again?

**Mr Bell:** What we do is at the direction of the hazard management agency, so they will determine whether or not an evacuation is required and where that is to be. We provide resources to carry out the directions of the hazard management agency.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** Are you suggesting in the case of Margaret River, Assistant Commissioner, that you were given no such directions in terms of evacuations or they were too late? What were the circumstances surrounding evacuations?

**Mr Bell:** No; what I was saying was that at this stage we have not got a plan, particularly on that beach, but we have done a lot of research around both in rural and urban environments. We have done four exercises now to better understand how long each of that takes, so we can understand from the time we get it how long it will take us to implement that and how many officers would be required to undertake that.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** Just on that question of logistics, obviously the focus is on the South West of Western Australia. So in terms of you assigning extra personnel in those areas, as I understand it, you have trouble getting enough FTEs in the South West in any event because of the problem about district allowances. How are you able to get additional personnel down there when, as I understand it, you are a little understrength anyway?

**Dr O'Callaghan:** Our total response does not come from the local police officers. For argument's sake, last year we sent down a series of units from the metropolitan area. As you know, we have a number of groups like the regional operations with the traffic enforcement group that can be deployed to places in the South West. We know that most of those places are within three or four hours driving distance from Perth, so we can deploy them reasonably quickly to the south west. The issue about vacancies in the south west, I understand, has largely been resolved in the last few weeks, so there are very few vacant positions in police stations like Margaret River or Bunbury at the moment.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** In terms of bringing people in from elsewhere, one of the issues that comes up—sorry, member; I will let you go in a minute—in all these situations is that people who do not know the local conditions and who do not know who the key players are have been brought in from outside, and that applies not just to WA Police but to all the agencies. Surely it is better to have someone on the ground who has good links and liaisons with a local shire, local bushies, local DEC officers and so on?

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**Dr O'Callaghan:** Yes, it is. That is why I think it is so critical to make sure that all of the stations in that area are at full strength for the summer period. I also know that the South West district offices are able from Bunbury to deploy some groups down further to places like Margaret River if need be, so they do not all have to come from the metropolitan area. It really depends on the size of the hazard we are dealing with.

**Mr Bell:** I will also say that they then work in integrated teams, so they do not work solely with Perth officers going down—they combine with those local officers around there.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** Yes; I was certainly talking to some of your officers in Bunbury after Margaret River and they were somewhat annoyed that the incident management control centre was at Kirup and not at Margaret River, because that was additional travel time.

**Dr O'Callaghan:** I think that was an issue that was raised with us, yes.

**Mr Bell:** Yes; that was about the DEC, who were the incident controller and that is where it set that up. We attended their incident centre.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** Commissioner, Assistant Commissioner, my main concern in relation to the upcoming bushfire season relates back to the previous bushfires we have had—that is, resources that are available to you financially and also front-line officers on the ground. I have seen your officers where they have had to create roadblocks on some different roads that lead towards a fire and they were there doing evacuations and so on and so forth. They are basically doing that 24/7 when there is a bushfire on. If it lasts for a week, your officers are out there doing that very, very important work. I am concerned that any cuts that may be put in place are going to affect front-line service. Just refresh my memory. From what I can recall, we were looking at an efficiency dividend saving of \$21 million; then, I think you were foisted with a \$10 million additional saving—that is \$31 million. In my recollection, you also have to add to that basically around \$20 million, which is the EBA that Treasury insisted that you come up with, and the GROH housing, which makes it about \$51 million. Is that correct?

**Dr O'Callaghan:** There are the efficiency dividends, as you have pointed out. The proviso of the efficiency dividends is that they are not to affect front-line services. As you will know, recently the commitment for Government to continue to recruit the police FTEs was continued. One of the issues for us—you may remember a dialogue about this—is the resource agreement that I have with Government. What I have specifically said to Government is —

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** Have you signed it yet?

**Dr O'Callaghan:** I have. What I have specifically said to Government in the resource agreement is that if I consider events such as these outside of my normal budget process, I will be going back to government for money if we have another Margaret River bushfire. We cannot compromise emergency response because of budgets. As far as I am concerned, those things are not included in my day-to-day budgets; they are unusual events. If we get something of the magnitude of Margaret River again this summer, I have made it clear in my resource agreement that I do not consider that part of my budget.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** I want to follow on.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** So do I.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** Do you agree that in overall terms there was roughly \$51 million in total? I understand that the Government has said that you can have \$25 million back out of that. In other words, they are not giving it back to you; they just simply not going to take it from you. So, you are left with about \$25 million or \$26 million that you still have to find within the Police budget. My personal view is that you will not be able to do that without affecting front-line services, and if you can, I would really love to hear how you are going to do that. I have a serious concern, which has

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been suggested in the past, that there may be a different mix of more public servants and less police officers.

I also understand, from what I can remember of the budget system, that Treasury were not going to give you any money for advertising for recruitment in this financial year, which I think is correct. You were going to have to find that out of your existing budget and, of course, once again, that is more like a cut if you find that without any additional funding for advertising. I noticed in the paper today that Police have got a new advertising agency that is going to do some big adverts over the coming month or two, starting tomorrow, for recruitment. At the time, from what I can recall, Treasury were saying that you do not need to advertise recruitment, you will get people coming along wanting to join the police anyway. Has anything changed since then or is everything I have said accurate?

**Dr O’Callaghan:** Money is being provided to do the advertising campaign to forward recruit. I think there are about 170 more recruits to be employed before June 2014—to get the figures right. Permission has been granted, and I think we are already in the process of sending a number of people to the UK to do some recruiting over there. So, that has all been signed off and they will be going over there to make sure we have a sufficient pool of recruits to be able to make the 170 —

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** But these are for adverts that are going ahead in WA on the television, on the radio and in the print media. That is what it said in *The West Australian* today. Is there a desperate need for recruits at the moment, because Treasury did not seem to think that there was at the time?

**Dr O’Callaghan:** The issue we face is that not only do we have to recruit 170 extra, but we have to recruit against attrition as well, which is currently running at about 22 a month. If you multiply that by 18 and add 170, you will get an idea of the challenge we are up for in trying to maintain those numbers and achieve the government’s election promise targets before we reach June 2014.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** June 2014 is ambiguous; it is an arguable date, of course, and depending on where you come from, you would argue whether that is the correct date or not. But my concern is that you have got enough police officers to do be able to do the job—front-line services—and that we do not see any depletion of front-line officers now, at this present moment in time, or in the next 12 months.

**Dr O’Callaghan:** There is no depletion of front-line officers and no strategy that has been put forward to government to meet the efficiency dividend has a direct impact on front-line officers. So, there will not be a diminution in the number of officers anywhere in the state or in the front-line. Whether that is Margaret River, Bunbury or Perth, there will not be one of those officers taken off the street because of efficiency dividends.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** No, but what I am concerned about is that if you are forced to take on more public servants and fewer fully trained police officers, you may be moving some police officers from behind desks, which I think you said before, out onto the front line, which means that you keep your promise of not depleting the front-line services. But I question whether you have enough officers who are sitting behind desks that you can actually shift them out from behind their desks because I thought that you did that sometime ago.

**Dr O’Callaghan:** We have, but the process is not really complete yet. I guess that one of the things we are talking about now is this conversation about whether the Government may stop capping or enforcing a fixed number of police officers and giving the Commissioner of Police an amount of salary to make a choice about who is employed. When that comes about, you can make choices about auxiliary officers, fully tactically trained officers and public servants to provide the service. The way that has to work, though, is there has to be some guarantee to the community and government that there are a number of officers on the front line and we have a good definition of what that means so that everyone is clear on exactly how many officers are on the front line and if

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we employ auxiliary officers how many more fully tactically trained officers will end up on the front line. That work is yet to be done.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** I have to tell you that I made a lot of friends in WA Police from all ranks over the last four years and they are tremendous people, I have to say. I am told today that there have been directions that budgets must be cut in various districts and that overtime is being cut back. If that is the case, please tell us, and if that is the case, surely that will have an effect on front-line delivery?

**Dr O'Callaghan:** Overtime is not being cut back. No direction has ever been given by me to cut back overtime. What I have asked the agency to do is give me an understanding about how overtime is spent. What is happening is that managers are asking questions. They are saying, "Is it necessary to use this overtime? Can we do this in a better way?" The overtime profile—the overtime spending—is going down, but it has not been cut. One of the concerns I had when we looked at this process was that in many cases it was not clear why overtime was being expended and, in my mind, there was not sufficient accountability around it, so I have asked them questions. Asking those questions has meant that people are looking at their overtime profiles but the overtime fund remains the same; the same amount of money is available for overtime.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** Do you have authorised strength at the moment in relation to WA Police in the districts?

**Dr O'Callaghan:** Yes, we do. We have an authorised strength for the agency. District strengths are a little bit different. They are not authorised as such and can be moved around.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** On these issues, Commissioner, you are saying that you do not have enough money in the budget to deal with these contingencies such as major bushfires or emergencies and you have flagged with Government that if such an event occurs, you will be going back and rattling the tin, if you like, for additional money.

**Dr O'Callaghan:** Yes, because I believe you cannot budget for major disasters or major events. It is just impossible. It cannot be contained within your budget. My view, and I have said this to Government, is that that expenditure needs to be put on a separate ledger and then go to Government as a cost pressure to be reviewed.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** What I am concerned about, and what we are concerned about today, is bushfire preparedness in particular. A lot of expenditure must be done before an emergency; for example, training and possible improvement of radio coverage at repeater stations. A whole lot of things need to be done prior to an emergency that are probably not categorised as front line. Are you confident that you have the money to do all that?

**Dr O'Callaghan:** That has not been affected. The money I am talking about is in terms of the actual response on the day, so the overtime and travelling allowance, feeding the troops and all the things that you have to do in a situation like that. I do not consider they are contained within the core budget that has been provided. That is a separate issue and if we get a major bushfire this summer and it costs a large amount of money, we will go back to Government and say that we want to be reimbursed for that cost.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** In relation to the advertising campaign, Commissioner—the one that is happening from tomorrow, which was reported in the paper—what is the overall cost of that campaign; are you getting that funded separately from Government; and if, so when did you get permission for that?

**Dr O'Callaghan:** I would need to provide that as supplementary information. I believe the advertising cost is around \$500,000. Exactly when it was apportioned and how it came about I cannot tell you now but I could provide that as supplementary information.

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**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** To get that sort of expenditure, if it is not contained in your budget—I know it was not contained in this year’s budget—you would have to go to the head of the GMO to get permission to do that.

**Dr O’Callaghan:** It was certainly requested as extra money and I believe there was a discussion. I cannot remember exactly what the decision was so I do not want to give you the wrong information but I will provide it as supplementary information.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** Half a million dollars is a lot of money for advertising. If you can give us information on how many advertisements that is, what form of advertising it is and how long it will go on for.

**Dr O’Callaghan:** Half a million dollars does not buy you much airtime.

**The CHAIRMAN:** We know! You mentioned the evacuation exercises. Did you include the local governments and local communities in that? Are those exercises part of your normal budget or is that additional?

**Dr O’Callaghan:** That is part of our normal budget but I will ask Duane to answer the question on who has been involved in that process.

**Mr Bell:** Yes, we did involve local government and others in that. Primarily, it was about our own resourcing and understanding how long things took and different methods of evacuation. One, for example, was done in the Denmark area that involved the local emergency management committee down there and another one was done in the Mundaring area. We try to cover the likely scenarios that have happened in the past and those that could occur in the future. We have involved the local emergency management committees in a combination of all those but the real driver was so that we could understand the logistics and resource requirements so that when something happens we can provide enough information to the incident controller on how long it will take and what resources we need. In that way, from a police command side, we would understand the need to move resources around.

**The CHAIRMAN:** So were these exercises on the ground, moving people out of their houses?

**Mr Bell:** They were practical exercises. We did not necessarily get people to leave their homes and go but we had police officers go to each house, for example. We tested how long it would take in a rural setting to go from door to door and how long it would take in an urban setting. We then used our own police officers acting as ordinary citizens living there to move from one place to another. In that way we actually got some really good data so that we could understand the resource requirements. We have also done some training for our own logistics officers, so they then understand that better and have the data available to them.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** I want to ask a couple of questions about communications. I will leave aside the fact there was a box of handsets in Perth and not down in Margaret River before the last fires, but—

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** You want to leave that aside!

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** Yes, but I have not forgotten it. We have not had access to the Noetic report but I understand that there were some issues raised about communications and I want to talk about a couple of those. It is notorious in some parts of the State that there are radio and phone black spots. Have you identified areas where it might be appropriate to have additional repeater stations or additional backup contingency plans? I understand that was one of the things identified in that report.

**Dr O’Callaghan:** I will let Duane answer that, but you would be aware that the regional radio network is being built. If you go to Maylands, you can see all the equipment being put together now. The rollout of that network and the extension of the metropolitan radio network will significantly enhance communications in an area of the state where 90% of the population lives.

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That will largely address many of those issues. I will get Duane to talk about what was in the Noetic report specifically.

**Mr Bell:** There was one issue that came up during the post-incident analysis, and that related to police officers who were manning the vehicle control point wishing to communicate back to the incident controller from the hazard management agency because some members of the public had come to that point and wanted access to nearby areas. Again, because of the unusual conditions, there was both a black spot for our own radio and mobile phone and, indeed, for satellite phones. What then ended up happening was the vehicle control point was moved further away from the fire so that communication could take place. There was no direct impact on any lives or anything else. What did happen though was some members of the public were further inconvenienced because it was moved back a fraction. Since then we have had a look around as part of our normal program of rolling out and understanding black spots for our radio. That is why in the beginning I said that this is normal business for us.

So whether it is a fire or whether it is some other incident that police attend, we do not want a black spot there for them. So we will do this as a matter of course. It is not a matter of additional funding in that. What we have determined so far from the review of this incident is that it really just needed a mobile repeater pushed across there, and we have then enhanced the procedures for the callout of our radio area support unit, and also the local knowledge. So in the awareness training that we have given the officers, that has been included as well. Basically, we are ready to deploy mobile units around the place as required. The issue that we have is how many.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** So that is mobile units that are repeaters?

**Mr Bell:** That is mobile repeaters, yes. So we can then put that in a vantage point and increase that coverage for an operational response. We have already had that in place. What we have done is raise the awareness and make sure those procedures are being reviewed and are current.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** It is not just the Margaret River region. For example, I have got advice that around Geraldton there are communication black spots, and that the analogue radio system is an issue with portable radios. The digital rollout is not scheduled until early next year, and it is still some time, I gather, before there is land for towers and repeaters. What is the time frame to have better coverage across the State?

**Dr O'Callaghan:** I think the total rollout is about a four-year program, and it is only just starting now.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** There is also an issue, as I understand it, in relation to emergency personnel, police in particular, being allocated some spectrum from the Commonwealth to have, if you like, a band for emergency networks. At what stage are the negotiations for that?

**Mr Bell:** That will not necessarily affect our own radio. But my understanding is that recently an allocation has been made, and I am awaiting formal advice on that.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** So you do not know much more about that? What will be the benefit of having that for emergency services personnel?

**Mr Bell:** Under the digital broadband dividend across Australia, we were seeking a particular portion of that allocation. There have been discussions on which band it would come out of. My understanding is that that has now been resolved, and there is a portion that has been allocated as a matter of the last few days, and we are still, as I said, awaiting formal advice. What that will allow in time is better buying power for emergency services, because we can all use the same sorts of radios, and they will all be compatible. But affecting us immediately now, we have had that rollout program of digital, we are quite advanced in comparison to other states, and the Commissioner has directed resources and allowed other government agencies to back onto that already. So we have a greater capacity than many other states. Queensland, for example, does not have digital. We have

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quite sufficient digital at the moment, and a good program to roll that out, and we have the capacity to allow others onto that system as it grows.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** Do you have a schedule for where you are rolling it out that you can provide to the Committee?

**Mr Bell:** Yes.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** Thank you.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Commissioner, you mentioned in your introductory comments section 50 of the *Emergency Management Act*. That has passed through both houses of Parliament but has not yet been proclaimed. Do you have any idea why that has not been proclaimed yet, because that was a critical recommendation, if I remember correctly?

**Dr O'Callaghan:** I do not think I can throw any light on that.

**Mr Bell:** I am not trying to push things off, but the *Emergency Management Act* is not one of our acts. It is covered by FESA and a different minister, so we would work with them to get that through. I just sought that information as to where it was before we came to this parliamentary inquiry.

**The CHAIRMAN:** You also mentioned, Commissioner, that you are no longer the chair of the SEMC?

**Dr O'Callaghan:** That is right.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Who is the chair now?

**Dr O'Callaghan:** Kerry Sanderson.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** On that issue, Commissioner, what was the rationale for you standing down, because I understand that Kerry Sanderson's appointment came sometime after you stood down?

**Dr O'Callaghan:** There was a recommendation that occurred. One of the points I made is that I think there is a conflict of interest between me chairing the SEMC and the SECG as well. One of the issues that I raised with the Committee some months ago now—probably about a year ago—was that it seemed that police were in charge of the State Emergency Management Committee, because the Commissioner of Police was fronting it, and there is a conflict. So I think the Committee generally agreed, and then there was a subsequent recommendation that we move to an independent chair and that I become a member of the SEMC but not as the chair. So I still attend, but I am not the chair.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** So under the *Emergency Management Act*, you are the State Emergency Coordinator?

**Dr O'Callaghan:** That is right.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** Who is the person who declares an emergency? Is it you or is it —

**Dr O'Callaghan:** It can be HMA or I can do it as well, because there has been a change, yes. That came about, again, as a result of one of Keelty's recommendations. It seemed that everyone potentially could wait around for the HMA to declare a situation where the chair of the SECG might believe it is a good thing to call a situation and call people together.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** What is the relationship between you and the chair of the SEMC? Have you had discussions as to how that is going to work?

**Dr O'Callaghan:** We have had handover discussions, and there have been about three meetings of the SEMC since Kerry has taken over. The early ones were about planning and positioning the SEMC and how it might work in the future. The numbers of people on that committee has been pared down to only essential agencies. So they have really been operating only since about June or July.

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**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** I want to ask you a bit about the tragic events that occurred in Albany a couple of weeks ago. We were very sad to hear that one of those firefighters has died. That is now subject to a coronial inquest, presumably, Commissioner, so the investigation will be headed by WA Police?

**Dr O'Callaghan:** It will be, yes. There are two investigations. There is an investigation into the arson part of it, and there is a coronial investigation as well, and obviously they overlap.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** In terms of your officers having a free and unfettered hand, there seem to be a number of concurrent investigations occurring. I think DEC is doing its own investigation; WorkSafe is doing one; FESA is doing its post-incident analysis; and the City of Albany is doing something with FESA. How is this all going to tie in? Obviously I think the work of your officers takes paramount importance. How are you going to ensure that this is coordinated and they are not stepping on each other's toes, et cetera?

**Dr O'Callaghan:** My understanding is that the relationship between the agencies is good and it is working quite well. Of course we will take a pre-eminent position in this, because we are directed by the Coroner to do it, and the coroner actually wants police to take control of the investigation. So he will be, I think, driving this very hard. I have not had any reports from the investigators that there is any sort of blocking from the other agencies at this stage. So I am quite confident that it will go ahead quite well.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** I just meant things like people having to recount their story a number of times, or alternatively people being worded up, or whatever.

**Dr O'Callaghan:** The issue has not been raised with me. But if there is anything that I can provide by way of supplementary information, I am happy to do that.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** You mentioned earlier in your opening remarks that the issue of permits seems to be bogged down in a number of subcommittees and committees. What are the sticking points? Why is this a problem?

**Mr Bell:** The first part was trying to find the appropriate committee that had the understanding. It came through the SEMC and the emergency services subcommittee. Parallel to that is the interagency bushfire committee. So we referred across to them, because they are the fire experts. It was not really so much a vehicle control matter. It was about access onto a fire ground. So that, we felt, was the best home for it. They referred it to their fire operations group. I understand they have reported back to that group and to me as chair of the ESS; I am just waiting for them to come back to me on that. My understanding was that Keelty 1, in terms of the Perth Hills bushfire, looked at the Victorian model, which apparently is quite cumbersome around that, but we wanted to make sure that each of the considerations really related to access onto a fire ground as well, not just people getting in to look at things.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** So are you confident that that will be ready to roll this fire season? We have got a couple of weeks to go.

**Mr Bell:** We have got the advice on whether or not people are going to be permitted into the fire area. That is one of the vexed questions for this. That is why we needed the fire officers themselves and those involved in the direct operations to give us guidance as to whether or not people should be allowed to be on that vehicle control point, and ultimately that will come back to the incident controller at the time understanding it. Whether it is a permit system or whether it is a decision on the day to day as to the reason for it, where that access is and where the vehicle control point is established, those are the parts they are wrestling around with at the moment.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** I was told at Margaret River by a fire crew that they were held up at roadblocks for some time by a police officer, who would not let them in. They were quite obviously fire crew. That seems undesirable. Have discussions got to the stage that they have resolved that particular issue, for example?

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**Mr Bell:** The vehicle access is for non-emergency personnel going in. That is quite a separate one. That is why there is a vexed issue around ensuring safety of people and safety of those responders in there. I was unaware of any issue around emergency crews getting in but I can certainly chase that up and have a look for you. I suppose it would generally rely on the direction we are given about who can come through and who cannot at any particular time. Those vehicle control points are established under the *Bush Fires Act* at the direction of the incident controller. We are merely acting as conduits for them. That is why the information getting backwards and forwards, leading to an earlier question, is so important.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** Post Keelty 1, or in the course of Keelty, it was found there was ambiguity in the instructions or the powers and responsibilities of police. We passed legislation promptly with good bipartisan cooperation and we were all under the impression things had been clarified. I am concerned this is still going on two years later.

**Mr Bell:** The legislation aspects in terms of the powers, that has been quickly resolved and we have operational procedures on that, so we are in closer agreement and actually understand now from FESA how they will apply those in the way that we wanted them done so that our officers were then able to act in accordance with the legislation. On a particular day as to whether a vehicle got through or not really depends on the direction. As I said I can follow that up.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** My main concern is resources, as I said earlier; that is, financial resources—funding—and actual police officers on the ground doing the work that the public are looking for them to do. I think it is fair to say—the comments earlier—that in overall terms we were looking originally at \$50-odd million. Roughly \$25 million has been taken from that overall money you have to find over and above your existing expenditure. You can have it any way you like and say, “Well, \$25 million represents the two per cent efficiency and \$4 million of the \$10 million the Government wanted”, or you can say, “Well, no; it wasn’t for that; it was for the EBA and GROH housing and whatever.” But I think it is fair to say that in overall terms, we were looking at \$50-odd million, but now we are probably looking at about —

**Dr O’Callaghan:** Twenty-eight million dollars.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** — \$28 million savings that has to be found. I am aware that in your budget, Commissioner, about 80%, roughly, is actually spent on FTEs, predominantly police officers, and all the equipment and stuff that each officer has to have to be able to go out and do their frontline duties. I would be very interested to know where on earth you will find \$28 million worth of savings if it is not going to affect in any way frontline servicing. I will ask you a question that the media asked one of your former colleagues the other day: can you give a cast-iron guarantee that none of these cuts will affect frontline servicing?

**Dr O’Callaghan:** In terms of bushfires?

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** No; in terms of policing in general.

**Dr O’Callaghan:** None of these cuts will affect frontline services at this time—in the foreseeable future. I cannot speak about a year or two years down the track. But in this budget process, none of the cuts will affect frontline services.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** You are confident you can find \$28 million within your budget for 2012–13 that will not affect frontline services?

**Dr O’Callaghan:** I think the bulk of that has already been identified and presented to the minister.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** Twenty-eight million dollars’ worth?

**Dr O’Callaghan:** Yes.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** When is anyone else likely to see where that \$28 million will be saved?

**Dr O’Callaghan:** As you would be aware, that process is subject to the Minister accepting the submissions. I believe there is general agreement on what has been put forward. It is a document that is in the Minister’s hands.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** Is part of that formula an increase in the number of non-operational police officers—fully trained officers; in other words, more public servant-type people?

**Dr O’Callaghan:** Not in this financial year, no.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** I could never find \$28 million when I was the Minister. I would be very interested to see —

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** They are looking down the back of the couch somewhere!

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** Yes, I know; I will be very interested to see where those savings are, I have to say.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Commissioner, have the police been involved in any actual bushfire exercises or prescribed burns in the past year—not just desk-top but actual exercises?

**Mr Bell:** How many exercises? We do so many exercises. We keep a bit of a schedule. I will have a look at those.

**The CHAIRMAN:** One of the recommendations was a one-source, one-message system. Has the business case for the development of that been put forward and has it been further developed by police?

**Mr Bell:** As the Commissioner said in his opening address, that has only recently come back to us. We are working on that business case now. That was referred initially through the SEMC to the public information group. It sits under that. They have dealt with it. WA Police then on behalf of that group put out a request for interest to the commercial sector. Based on those responses, we have realised there are some viable systems that can address this. That has gone back to the group and then referred to WA Police to do a business case. Because of the way the funding arrangements are, it needs to come to an agency. We are happy to host that. We have now taken that on board and are developing that at the moment. We will put that through the Cabinet submission process.

Can I say that although the recommendation is about one-source, one-message there has been a whole raft of enhancements to our communication through the use of social media and other forms like that. The former-FESA website is still being enhanced with that. Ours has been enhanced with social media and the tightening up of the media contacts, so that Neil Stanbury, our Director For Police Media, who is also the State Public Information Officer, has a coordination role when it comes to these sorts of emergency response areas. Through practice now, we will ensure that we get greater cohesion about that—that we are incorporating everyone’s message into the one send-out and that, by going to social media such as Twitter or Facebook, we are able to send those into one place and push that out as well. The system will enhance that in time. But certainly I can say that our communication has been enhanced over the last couple of years through these additional measures.

**The CHAIRMAN:** You mentioned in your introduction as well that you are making resources available so that FESA, or the new Department, has access so it can run its own pages on it.

**Dr O’Callaghan:** Yes.

**Mr Bell:** Yes. In fact they are using it already. It was used in the state bushfire exercise. We have a licence for WebEOC, so it would be difficult under those license conditions for us to make it available to them. What we have done is design boards to be used. They have their own boards on our system. It is a separate incident to ours, but the advantage currently is that we can pass information between us. That is in place. We have an MOU with them. We have committed resources to that and the commissioner has committed that we will continue that through until they

go through the procurement cycle so they are about to go out for a crisis information management system, which, under SEMC direction, must be compatible. As they go through that cycle we will continue to make WebEOC available to them.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Does that extend to DEC as well as FESA?

**Mr Bell:** We will certainly make that available and they can also use the WebEOC in the command centre. One of the things we do is give officers who are there log-ons to our system.

**The CHAIRMAN:** And all they need is a computer.

**Mr Bell:** All they need is a computer with Internet access, yes.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I think you answered it earlier, but I am double checking. Last year, Commissioner, you told the committee that there is an existing ambiguity that police officers face when working in a bushfire and it creates a situation that may expose them to civil liability issues. Has that been resolved?

**Dr O’Callaghan:** Yes, I think it has. I have referred to it in this. I am just trying to find where I referred to it.

**Mr Bell:** One of the main ones was the powers we were acting under. I think that clarification we had under the *Bush Fires Act* we have gone from one of the sub-subsections—we have clarified that with FESA and that way it provides us greater powers to cordon off an area as opposed to a single road. That was the main issue.

**The CHAIRMAN:** It stops the people going off road and around.

**Mr Bell:** That is right. There are three subsections. In the main, they were using the third one, which is close the road only. So if people went off the road, we had no legal power to do that. When officers tried to intervene, they could be liable for civil penalties around that. By simply clarifying that point with them and they used the “close an area” or “prohibit entry from an area”, describe it that way, we have the protection under the *Bush Fires Act*.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** Are you able to say what equipment has been bought in the last year which directly relates to your responding to bushfire emergencies? What additional capital expenditure has been—

**Dr O’Callaghan:** We would have to provide that by way of supplementary information as well.

**Mr Bell:** In the main we were not really seeking any specific capital expenditure funding for bushfires. I suppose that is why we try to say we treat this as just another hazard that we deal with, without treating it lightly, but police need to be able to respond across the board. We are very fortunate that through our partnership with the commonwealth for CHOGM we had those enhancements to the—

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** You got a few toys then.

**Mr Bell:** We had enhancements to the Maylands command centre. We have made that available. We have worked with all three agencies, at the very least, plus others, in that centre as a state operation centre. The additional real-time information equipment we got for that we have used for the bushfires since. They were already in place last year and there was nothing we were specifically looking for to enhance it. Again, it comes back to our normal tools—our normal job—whether it is a vehicle control point for a fire for some other hazard or indeed a crime we are trying to block that area off for, it is the same tools across the board. It is part of our rollout program for radio and our real-time information. With those enhancements we had leading up to CHOGM only a year ago now we are well placed in the future.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** How many sworn police officers are in the arson squad?

**Dr O’Callaghan:** We will take that as a supplementary question.

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**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** And the other issue is there was a suggestion some time ago that in the key spots that might be the subject of arson, CCTV equipment might be installed. Is that something that you have explored?

**Dr O'Callaghan:** Part of Operation Vulcan is to conduct covert activities and so some of that would have been done not on, I do not think, a permanent basis but on an investigative basis. I have to be careful about what I provide, but we may be able to provide you with some information about that.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** But what I am wondering is if you have got the resources to expand that program in terms of the use of CCTV; have you got the equipment you need to do that?

**Dr O'Callaghan:** I do not think we have got the resources for that. It is certainly not factored into the current budget arrangements.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** From what you have said about current budget arrangements on my rough calculations, Commissioner, that \$26 million or so that Mr Johnson has been talking about—

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** Twenty-eight million dollars.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** Twenty-eight million dollars. He corrects me. That is about three per cent of the Police budget. So, you are saying that it will not affect you this year, but are there things that you will not be doing this year that you would have planned to have done but for that cut?

**Dr O'Callaghan:** Not in the operation arena. A significant amount of that money comes from the deferment of recruiting of some police officers and some public servants—so pushing out the salaries cost to the end of the financial year or to the following year.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** Is that where we get this May 2014 figure for the police numbers from? I must admit I was a bit puzzled about that.

**Dr O'Callaghan:** I understand that is connected to the first budget process. That is my understanding. It is certainly nothing to do with us or pushing out the FTEs. It is something else that government has come up with.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** Just picking up on that point, Commissioner, I am fully aware that one way of saving money in recruitment is to defer recruitment to the end of the financial year rather than what was planned at the beginning of the financial year, which means most of the cost for those additional police officers will then appear in the following financial year rather than this particular current financial year.

**Dr O'Callaghan:** That is correct.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** I am assuming that is one of the proposals that you have put to the Minister. I do not expect you to answer that, because that is obviously between you and the Minister, but I am assuming that that would be one of the savings in that \$28 million saving. The only problem I have there is that there will be a shortfall at some stage; if it is not in the next six to eight months, it will certainly be in the following three, four or six months after that. So there is going to be a hiatus somewhere along the line between this budget and the next budget period where I believe that front-line service will be affected.

You used your words very carefully when I asked you whether you would give a cast-iron guarantee and you said certainly not in this budget period, and you probably will not. But I am concerned what is going to happen immediately after this budget period, by deferring the number of police officers that you are recruiting in this present financial year and pushing it out to the following financial year—I know it is one of the savings and that has happened in the past, I think, when you have had financial constraints put on you, but that must have an effect at some time within the next 12 months, say, on front-line service. Would you accept that?

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**Dr O’Callaghan:** Those officers of course are unallocated at this point in time. As front-line service is today, it will not be affected. But in the forward recruiting of the police officers you are always forward recruiting to anticipate increases in demand. So at some stage if those officers are not recruited, there will be a flow-on effect for front-line services. There is not enough science around this to say at exactly what point that will occur, but what I can say is as far as what is on the street today, there will be no front-line services affected.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** It concerns me that there will be a stage when front-line service will be affected, and I think you probably accept that, at some stage in the next 12 months.

**Dr O’Callaghan:** As I said, I can give you a guarantee that front-line services will not be affected in this financial year. The following financial year is yet to be negotiated and sorted out.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** Yes, but you know and I know that if you are going to meet the commitment of government and the expectations of the public in relation to police officers, you need to be recruiting them and getting them on board and trained and whatever else at the academy and, obviously, there is a hiatus. There is a delay in that here in WA, I assume, and that is why are you looking at once again recruiting overseas, so that in that final 12-month period up to June 2014, which I say is an arguable date in relation to the five-year promise—there are people who would argue that is not part of the promise; it should have been from the moment government took over.

That is what people are arguing. Whether they are right or wrong is for other people to decide, but obviously that is where you will be gaining your extra police officers. Your committed police officers to meet that election promise will be in the final six or nine months up to June 2014. By doing that I think that does give the public and many other people concerns that there will be this hiatus period where there will be, for all intents and purposes, not enough front-line service police officers out there doing the job that the public want them to do and trust—

[Interruption.]

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** I had nothing to do with that whatsoever!

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** It is all right; the microphones are still working. Go for it.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** That is a concern I know many people do have. Commissioner, I am sorry if I put you on the spot, but I think that has highlighted the fact that there will be a period of time when front-line services, I think, could easily be affected, not in this financial year because of the reasons you have said, because you have been forced to defer recruitment, but if that is the case, why on earth are we spending \$500,000 on recruiting campaigns now, which is starting tomorrow, if we are being forced to look at 2014, halfway through that year, as committing to the election promise?

**Dr O’Callaghan:** It takes an average of about six months from the time someone makes an application to the time they are accepted as entrants to the Police Academy, so we have to be forward thinking on that. We also expect between now and the end of the financial year to have to recruit something like 160 officers for a attrition, so that would mean that the academy has to keep going, it has to keep recruiting, to keep up with even the numbers that are in the police force today.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** Are you getting plenty of people applying to become police officers?

**Dr O’Callaghan:** We are getting sufficient, but the issue for us is that we want to obviously have a choice and we want to be able to make the best choice, and you need a sufficient pool of people to make that choice from. At the moment we are managing with local applications, or applications from Australia. The challenge will come when we have to meet attrition and the extra staff, the extra 170.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** So at the moment you are purely meeting attrition?

**Dr O’Callaghan:** We are able to meet attrition now, yes.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** Absolutely, overall?

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**Dr O'Callaghan:** Yes, we are; yes.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** So there is not a shortfall in new recruits and attrition?

**Dr O'Callaghan:** No, and there is no shortfall in police numbers either at the moment, based on what are authorised.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** Right; okay.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** This is dredging back a way, but I understand that the arson squad in conjunction with a consultant did an inquiry into the Toodyay fire in 2009 and you might need to take this on notice but was there a conclusion reached as to the cause of that fire?

**Dr O'Callaghan:** I will provide you with the report if that helps.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** Thank you. The other issue I wanted to raise touches on one of the Committee's inquiries relating to post-traumatic stress. I preface what I am saying that the government and presumably your input to government in terms of responses are yet to be made, so I understand if you are not able to give us much of an answer. I asked a question in Parliament to the Minister in late September relating to a decision in New South Wales which is *State of New South Wales v Doherty*, where the police department there had to pay significant common law damages because a police officer who had been exposed to post-traumatic stress, and that was known to the department, was then tasked with going to a field of inquiry which was going to re-aggravate that post-traumatic stress. I just want to know, Commissioner, what mechanisms do you have for, if you like, flagging on a computer or something like that to making sure that that does not happen here? Were you aware of that decision, and what action have you taken as a result of it?

**Dr O'Callaghan:** Western Australia Police have done some work on it; we can provide you with that, if it helps. We have a number of peer support officers on the ground, and they are very well trained and attuned to monitoring these situations. There was some suggestion some time ago now that police officers who have been to a stressful situation be directed to undergo counselling. Our medical advice is not to do that because you cannot actually direct people to undergo counselling if they do not want to, but you can make it available. So we have a number of internal psychs and a large number of external providers, so if people are found to be in need of post-traumatic stress counselling and management, there are sufficient resources to deal with that because we just outsource most of that work, and you will also be aware of the fact that we have two chaplains who are on the ground full time as well.

The issue for us is still about how you identify and monitor these things and then how you manage someone's career afterwards. I would need to provide you with policy statements from health and welfare if you want a complete view of how that works.

**Ms M.M. QUIRK:** There was also, of course, the coronial inquest, I think earlier this year, in relation to the death of an officer in Collie. I cannot recall offhand what recommendations WA Police have to follow-up on as a result of that.

**Dr O'Callaghan:** I think that was one of the things that we had to respond to at the time about whether mandatory counselling ought to be enforced for officers who go to stressful situations and, as I said, our view and the medical profession's view is that you cannot actually mandate that, you cannot enforce it, but you can be more vigilant about how you manage these things and again, I would be happy to provide you with our response to the coroner's recommendations.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Thank you for coming in this morning, and thank you for your evidence before the Committee; it has been very enlightening. A transcript of the hearing will be forwarded to you for correction of minor errors. Any such corrections must be made and the transcript returned within seven days from the date of the letter 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 your evidence cannot be altered. Should you wish to provide additional

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information or elaborate on particular points, would you please include a supplementary submission for the Committee's consideration when you return your corrected transcript of evidence. Again, thank you very much.

**Hearing concluded 11.05 am**

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