

**Division 30: Fire and Emergency Services, \$156 051 000 —**

Ms L.L. Baker, Chair.

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

Mr D. Klemm, Commissioner.

Mr M. Cronstedt, Deputy Commissioner, Strategy and Emergency Management.

Mr C. Waters, Deputy Commissioner, Operations.

Mrs G. Camarda, Chief Finance Officer.

Mr R. Burnell, Executive Director, Corporate Services.

Mr M. Carter, Executive Director, Rural Fire Division.

Mr T. Palmer, Chief of Staff, Minister for Emergency Services.

Ms M. Onorato-Sartari, Senior Policy Adviser.

[Witnesses introduced.]

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

The minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee rather than asking that the question be put on notice for the next sitting week. I ask the minister to clearly indicate what supplementary information he agrees to provide and I will give it a reference number. If supplementary information is to be provided, I seek the minister's cooperation in ensuring that it is delivered to the principal clerk by Friday, 30 October 2020. I caution members that if a minister asks that a matter be put on notice, it is up to the member to lodge the question on notice through the online questions system.

Member for Churchlands, you have got the call.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** I refer to page 456 of budget paper No 2, volume 2, and the total appropriations line. I note that there is a fall in the total appropriations to the tune of \$225.949 million, or a 76.5 per cent fall, between the 2019–20 actual and the 2023–24 forward estimates. Can the minister please provide some clarification about why this is the case and whether any services will be impacted by this significant change in funding?

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** That will come down to the expenditure on the build program and the asset program that is underway at the moment, of which the member would be aware. I will pass to Mrs Camarda in a second, but as the member is more than well aware, we have undertaken a significant construction program, which includes Kensington Fire Station, Cockburn Fire Station, four volunteer fire and rescue facilities, the level 3 incident control facility and the high season fire fleet storage facility in Collie, which is a significant expenditure for the department. Of course, the Bushfire Centre of Excellence is being built on Lake Road in Nambeelup and it will be completed at the end of this year. Those are the assets under construction at the moment that make up the significant bulk of that money and, of course, as they come off the total appropriations reduce.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** With that line, the minister talked about a number of facility upgrades that are obviously nearing completion and hence the significant fall. I will link that answer to what is being spent on volunteer facilities upgrades because I notice on the next page that \$4 million is allocated for 2020–21 and \$4 million allocated for 2021–22 but nothing has been allocated in the out years. Is there reason why the government has not maintained the capital spend to support the development of these volunteer facilities upgrades?

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** I will deal with the \$4 million in the line item. Immediately above "Volunteer Facilities Upgrades" is the heading "COVID-19 WA Recovery Plan". That money has been allocated specifically under the asset investment primarily for upgrades of volunteer facilities in regional WA. A significant amount of that money will be spent in the areas of maintenance, but also for ablutions and change rooms in many regional and country volunteer fire and rescue facilities, State Emergency Service facilities and BFB facilities. One of the reasons the commissioner chose to expend the money in this way is the significant increase in the number of women who have been attracted to volunteers —

**Mrs A.K. HAYDEN:** To volunteer.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** Yes—to volunteer. Many of those facilities were built at a time when only men volunteered and they are not appropriate for women. For example, 50 per cent of the volunteer fire and rescue volunteers in Exmouth are women and there are no change rooms or proper ablutions for them. That will be fixed. In terms of the capital investment in volunteer bushfire brigade facilities, that is obviously allocated through the local government grants scheme, which is elsewhere in the budget papers. That ongoing funding is provided to the tune of approximately \$30 million every year across the shires of Western Australia. The councils put up their requests for what they believe is needed for what is ultimately their assets, the BFB facilities. They are considered by the LGGs committee, which involves participant members of the Western Australian Local Government Association, council representatives and representatives from the Association of Volunteer Bushfire Brigades and the Department of Fire and Emergency Services, who then choose which of the requests will be approved. I will give three examples of investments. The first is the facility for the Broome Regional Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade, which I opened, which cost, I think, \$1.6 million. The bulk of that money came from the emergency services levy and about \$30 000 came from the Shire of Broome. It is an unbelievable facility. It is a large, very modern and high-tech facility for the bushfire brigade in Broome. Another is the Collieburn–Cardiff BFB facility, which is fabulous. The third example is in Worsley. As the member knows, there is not too much in Worsley but there is a brand new BFB facility. The Shire of Collie's contribution to both those facilities was to the tune of \$20 000, or maybe a bit more. The rest of it was paid directly from the ESL.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** What was the rest?

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** It was all paid from ESL.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** How much?

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** They were about \$500 000 each. They are fantastic facilities. They look like career fire stations.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** That is a fair bit to take in, minister. I will bring it back to the minister's answer, particularly around facilities upgrades to toilet facilities and change room facilities, particularly for women. I visited the Collie shed opening with the minister recently.

[8.50 pm]

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** Yes, the member did. That is right.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** I understand what the facilities can look like. The minister has just indicated that those facilities cost around \$500 000 to create. He also indicated in his earlier answer that the department has about \$30 million in another pool of funds that helps it allocate money to these facility upgrades. With a simple bit of maths, that means we could have 60 upgrades a year.

**Mr D. Klemm:** That is for trucks as well.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** Yes, that is right.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** That includes vehicles as well. Is the shed itself around the \$250 000 to \$300 000 mark?

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** Yes. That is the money that is allocated for trucks, assets, asset upgrades and other operational equipment.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** That is understood. The question is: for the State Emergency Service, volunteer fire and emergency services, volunteer marine rescue services or any volunteer organisations throughout Western Australia, how many require facility upgrades to the minimum standard of a women's toilet and women's change room facility?

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** I might pass to the commissioner for that. There are an awful lot of them.

**Mr D. Klemm:** I do not have those exact details in front of me. I know that we are at the tail end of an audit of all those facilities. Bear in mind that some of those facilities are owned by the Department of Fire and Emergency Services and others are owned by local governments. In the bush fire brigade space that is certainly the case. For the State Emergency Service, there is some variance in that as well between local government and DFES. Sometimes it is just something that has been built over time with money that has been raised and it is 30 or 40 years old. As the minister mentioned, there is a significant piece of work ahead of us to deal with the gender issue and make sure that we have change room and ablution facilities for both males and females in all those facilities.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** Some of it is not just facilities. For some, there has never been a bush fire brigade facility. For example, two weeks ago, we opened five new BFB facilities over the weekend. Two were on either side of Toodyay and three were in Esperance. Coomalbidup is on the west side of Esperance and had been pushing for a facility for 40 years. There is just a crossroad there. It now has a very large facility with a great meeting room, which can also be used by the community, as well as being a BFB facility. That includes all the ablutions et cetera. On the other side, an hour east of Esperance, is Howick. Again, there is no town there. The firefighting vehicles were kept in farmers' sheds. It now has its own BFB facility. It is not just the fact that bush fire brigades exist. Some of them do not have anything.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** I absolutely understand that. I think that is why I am asking the question. I originally said that the appropriations had fallen significantly. The minister said that was because of capital works programs coming to a conclusion. Hence, I asked my question. A thorough audit of what is required in these regional areas may expose the need for a capital budget in order to at least have a minimum standard of facility to house equipment and enable change room and toilet facilities. The commissioner said that an audit was underway. Does the minister have any idea when that audit will be complete so we can have a better understanding of what budget requirements will exist next year and into the forward estimates to build those facilities?

**Mr D. Klemm:** We are anticipating getting results that we can act on within 12 months. If I can, can I also explain that the \$30 million that the minister referred to is made up of both capital and operating grants that are made to local governments. They are operating grants for the day-to-day management of bush fire brigades and the State Emergency Service. There are also capital grants that could come in the form of a new firefighting truck for a bush fire brigade, a general rescue utility or some sort of vehicle for the State Emergency Service. It is also for the construction of buildings. As the minister mentioned, they are sometimes a brand-new facility, as we saw at Worsley—the member was there—and the building at Morangup near Toodyay was an upgrade of that facility. Both those facilities, essentially, cost the same amount of money. One was brand-new—greenfields, if you like—and the other one was bringing something up to spec.

Separate to that \$30 million is an ongoing fund of \$2 million that we have in place at DFES through the emergency services levy for the upgrade and replacement of volunteer fire and rescue service brigade buildings and volunteer fire and emergency service buildings. That covers off all the firefighting services plus the SES. There is also a grant program in place for volunteer marine rescue services should they need a building or new boats or the like. While the member is referring to the papers, there is an ongoing capital replacement program for facilities, firefighting equipment, trucks, appliances and boats.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** The member for Churchlands will remember that those two grants, one of which is for marine rescue, never existed until I pushed for it. The member will remember that there was a lot of argument about whether marine rescue should be covered by the ESL. Some people thought that it should not be. We now have it completely covered by the ESL. We have a \$20 million allocation over four years, which, as the member will see in the budget papers, continues to run at a high amount in the forward years, at \$7 million a year. That has resulted in a significant number of new boats, and upgrades and new buildings for marine rescue around Western Australia. The \$2 million allocation of money was also one I pushed for. I pushed for more than that, as a minister would, but I got \$2 million allocated to us for the VFRS and the VFES. That is an ongoing investment that will be made.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** We have already acknowledged that there are differences from one facility to another throughout Western Australia. One that is closer to home is the Stirling State Emergency Service facility. I know that it has been lobbying the minister and that members on his side of the chamber have been lobbying him pretty heavily. As the minister knows, that shed facility is 900 metres away from the ops room. In winter, that is a significant way to go to get to vehicles and equipment. The capacity to reverse vehicles into and out of that shed in the space that is there is quite limited. I would argue that although it is getting away with it, it is not ideally fit for purpose. When the storms come through Perth, it services a huge part of metropolitan Perth. I do not see anything in the budget to address those issues in Stirling.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** When the Stirling SES replacement issue first kicked off, Commissioner Klemm had a full head of hair! In fact, he had long hair at the time! This is what has come about as a result of discussions about this building. I have been trying to push it along. When I picked up the portfolio, the SES got me out there straightaway and it has been going on ever since. The money will be allocated to the new building. This is not an issue about money. I think the money was allocated in 2012. I think there was an agreement in 2012 for that money to be allocated. The problem is identifying where the building should go. First of all, the SES wanted a new building on an empty block. As the member knows, there are not too many empty blocks in that area. We tried to get land from the Water Corporation and Western Power that was quite close to the existing facility. We had pushback from both of those. They pushed back and said no. This continued on to the point at which I said, “Look, for crying out loud, there are so many warehouses in that area. Why can’t we just buy a warehouse and remodel it so it fits your purpose?” They thought that was a great idea, so the City of Stirling went out looking for facilities. It identified, I think, three facilities, and it came down to one particular warehouse that it agreed on with the State Emergency Service. The City of Stirling then did a building evaluation of that particular warehouse and said, “No, we can’t buy that. That’s not appropriate.” That was as a result of its building evaluation. I will be quite honest with the member: it has become quite acrimonious again between the SES and the City of Stirling. They know that we are trying to help. I got an email just yesterday from Jenny at the SES, who thanked me for at least trying to help them resolve this problem, but we are still in a very difficult situation. Commissioner?

[9.00 pm]

**Mr D. Klemm:** Further to that, I was told just before I came in here that there was a meeting yesterday between the City of Stirling, Department of Fire and Emergency Services officers, and Stirling SES—Jenny and the unit leader, whose name escapes me at the moment. Essentially, we are waiting for the City of Stirling to request funding through the capital grants process. That will start again on 1 July next year, so, as the minister mentioned, the money is there; it is just about finding a suitable facility and the City of Stirling and the State Emergency Service need to agree on what that is.

**Mrs A.K. HAYDEN:** I just want to confirm: we started off on the capital appropriations and moved across to the COVID volunteer facility upgrades?

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** Yes.

**Mrs A.K. HAYDEN:** Just on the volunteer facility upgrades, is the minister able to provide, even if it is by supplementary information, a list of the locations for the \$8 million —

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** I actually read them into *Hansard* when I did the bush fire brigades.

**Mrs A.K. HAYDEN:** All of them?

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** The locations, yes. I read them into *Hansard*, but, for the member's edification, I know what she is looking for: she is looking for one that may well be in her electorate.

**Mrs A.K. HAYDEN:** I am hoping there is more than one, minister.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** No. Unfortunately, I am going to have to disappoint the member. There are a number in the member for Warren–Blackwood's electorate and there are also a number in the Leader of the Opposition's electorate. I will run through them. They are Augusta, Boyup Brook, Brookton, Wagin, Kellerberrin, Tammin, Exmouth, Eucla, Dongara, Karratha, South Hedland, Yanchep and Waroona. Waroona?

**Mrs A.K. HAYDEN:** No.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** No. They are also in Torbay, Baandee —

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** Baandee. I used to play footy for them!

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** Was the member any good? I continue: Mt Caroline, Kellerberrin North, Nungarin, Julimar, Allanson, Dardanup Central, Harris River, Hester Brook, Wellington Mills and Albany.

**Mrs A.K. HAYDEN:** I note my extreme disappointment for Darling Range, also noting that it is a high bushfire zone right around metropolitan Perth, with a number of volunteer fire brigades that desperately need some funding. Is any funding allocated in the minister's capital appropriations to any of our volunteer bush fire stations?

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** I might flick this to either Mr Waters or the commissioner. The shires we are talking about that would have put up their hand for those upgrades would be —

**Mrs A.K. HAYDEN:** The Shire of Serpentine–Jarrahdale, the City of Armadale, the Shire of Mundaring, and the City of Kalamunda.

**Mr D. Klemm:** In addition to the \$8 million that the member referred to, a sum of \$7 million is allocated over the next two years for capital grants to local governments. I think the minister read out some of those locations for part of that money, but what has not been recorded yet is \$2 million over two years, which makes up part of that \$7 million, for water tanks for bush fire brigades. Following the returns from all the local governments, we went out to them to ask, "Which bush fire brigade sheds need water tanks?" I do not believe we have that list yet; I certainly do not have it in my notes at this point. They may well include some of the bush fire brigades in the member's electorate.

**Mrs A.K. HAYDEN:** I note there was no funding for the new Bedforddale fire brigade station. Is there any money in this budget for that?

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** I am pretty sure there is; I think Bedforddale has been allocated funds. It has been ongoing for a while. I remember that the issue with Bedforddale was about location, and they have resolved that now.

**Mrs A.K. HAYDEN:** I am not sure if the minister is aware—I was not invited, and I gather the minister was not, either—but the City of Armadale did the sod-turning for that station two weeks ago and said that it was disappointed that it had had to fill the gap because it did not receive any funding to complete the building. The City of Armadale is claiming that it had to fund it, due to lack of funds coming through.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** There are two things. One is that the City of Armadale can invite anyone it likes; it can invite the member or it can invite me.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** It is the other ones who have to get permission!

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** That is right; it is not all beer and skittles. Even we do not get invited, sometimes!

Two things on that. One is that ultimately those BFB facilities belong to local governments; they do not belong to the state government. They can build them wherever they want. They can go off and build a new facility at any stage; it is their facility. Even if we were to contribute to it, we would be giving them —

**Mrs A.K. HAYDEN:** It applied for funding and it was rejected.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** Yes, it is done by a committee, also made up of volunteers and representatives from the Western Australian Local Government Association and the Department of Fire and Emergency Services, and they allocate the funding based on their resource-to-risk formula. Armadale will probably be in there, but where it is on the list, I really do not know. If it wants to move on and build its own facility, hey, it is its facility; it can do that. We are not stopping it. But in terms of allocating the money, clearly the committee did not agree with a request from the City of Armadale. That is probably the reason why they did not invite us!

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** I refer to page 467 of budget paper No 2 and the line item “Emergency Services Levy” in the table headed “Income Statements”. I have a number of questions on this, but I will just get some clarity on the first bit. The 2020–21 budget estimate figure of \$372 million as income from the emergency services levy is quite a bit down from the previous year. I can only imagine that some concessions have been given in respect of the payment of that levy for the COVID-related stuff. Can the minister just clarify the reason that is down on the previous year’s actual, and what the trend line is for the next year in the forward estimates?

[9.10 pm]

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** I will point the member to a number of things. First of all, as the member knows, the emergency services levy for the forthcoming financial year has been held at zero. Therefore, that is the drop in the income we would normally receive —

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** Is that in terms of the growth?

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** It is not in growth; there is no growth in the relationship to the gross rental value rating either. Simply, none of us will have an increase in the ESL. In fact, the member has already had it; it should have been on his rates notice. If he goes back to his rates notice, he will see there has been no increase in ESL, regardless of what category he is in. The difference between that and what would be approximately the right amount of money—around \$407 million—has been made up by an allocation from consolidated revenue of approximately \$40 million so that the department is not —

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** Can I clarify whether the levy is still there?

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** Yes.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** What is the minister saying is zero?

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** There is no levy collected this financial year.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** Is no levy being collected at all in the 2020–21 financial year?

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** Yes.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** Is that number not what would normally be collected? What is the figure for the emergency services levy income?

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** Does the commissioner want to talk about that?

**Mr D. Klemm:** There has been a zero per cent increase in the ESL —

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** But not zero levy.

**Mr D. Klemm:** Correct.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** The minister just said no levy was being collected, which is why I am confused.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** No. Obviously the levy is being collected but there is no increase in the levy being collected.

**Mr S.K. L’ESTRANGE:** At least it is clear now!

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** It is not that no levy is being collected! Has the member not read his rates notice yet?

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** I asked that twice, minister.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** Yes, sorry. I can see who pays the bills in the member’s house and it is not him. He should have read the rates notice already; it is all on there. He should have paid it; I hope he has paid it! Does he pay level 3?

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** I would love to hear from the commissioner.

**Mr D. Klemm:** The decision by government to keep the ESL rate rise at zero per cent meant that once the revaluation of the metropolitan area from a gross rental value was done, which occurs on a rolling three-year cycle as I understand

it, there was a reduction in GRV of circa 10 per cent. That meant, effectively, the ESL was reduced, which led to that figure.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** Is that the \$33.669 million?

**Mr D. Klemm:** Correct.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** I thank the minister for clarifying that. That makes sense. As I suspected, concessions were given, which is why there are holes. On the theme of the emergency services levy, a commitment was given to put in place an independent ESL referral and grants advisory committee. Could the minister give me an update on the status of that committee?

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** Cabinet has endorsed the committee and the nominees have been appointed. The first meeting will be immediately after this budget has been endorsed by this house.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** What is the cost of the committee? Has a budget been allocated to it in preparation?

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** I do not think a budget is allocated to the committee. The Department of Finance has a recommended sitting fee—it is whatever the sitting fee endorsed by the department is.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** Will there be published reporting of the committee's activities?

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** Yes, I think there will be.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** Does the minister want to check with the commissioner? He is looking at him.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** No, there will be. The commissioner is not sitting on the committee; that is the whole point. It is an independent oversight of ESL and its expenditure by people other than those in the Department of Fire and Emergency Services. There are people from the Department of Finance on the committee for example, and a representative from the Western Australian Local Government Association. It will be chaired by Dr Ron Edwards, and there is also an independent person. A report would be produced. The report may well be published, but I have not put that to Dr Edwards. It is not one of the things that will be tabled in Parliament, but it could be.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** In the spirit of having an independent group look at the emergency services levy and its expenditure, is the minister able to provide a breakdown of where the \$372 537 000 emergency services levy is being spent in the 2020–21 budget?

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** The emergency services levy is contained right across this budget paper in various components.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** There are a heap of elements to this, including other grants and other sources of revenue.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** Of course there is.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** I am interested in the spend of the emergency services levy.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** The member knows exactly where the emergency services levy comes from—the levy itself.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** Yes, I know where it comes from. I am asking where it will be spent.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** We are dealing with its expenditure in this budget paper.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** Is the minister not able to give me a breakdown of where it is being spent?

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** That is the whole point; it is our income.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** What proportion of agencies' revenue does the emergency services levy make up?

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** The member can see that the total income is \$398 million and it makes up \$372 million in the current financial year.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** Is that it? The minister is talking about \$372 million out of \$398 million. One component of that, on page 472, is the line item for the mitigation activity fund ESL grants program, which is budgeted in 2020–21 at \$9.16 million. The minister is saying that out of the total ESL fund of \$372 million, a total of \$9.1 million will go towards mitigation activity. Is that the only amount of money being spent on mitigation activity out of the ESL?

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** No.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** Can the minister please enlighten me about the other amounts?

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** Sure. Can I take members to page 468 and details of controlled grants and subsidies? Under the rural fire division, members can see the "Bushfire Mitigation Activity Fund—ESL".

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** That is what I was just talking about.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** Yes, that is right. For this financial year, there is \$9.1 million. In the forthcoming financial year, the "Bushfire Mitigation Activity Fund—RfR" is allocated \$1.271 million.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** That is not from ESL.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** No, it is allocated from royalties for regions. We discussed this last year, or the year before, if the member remembers. There is also an allocation for bushfire risk management planning. If the member looks at the funding that will be spent in the out years after the \$9.1 million, it is a significant amount of money. It is not only \$9.1 million. Remember that no money was being spent on bushfire mitigation before, so it is a significant increase.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** I ask the minister again: can he therefore confirm—it seems that he has done in a very long-winded way—that \$9.16 million is the only allocation from the ESL fund going towards bushfire mitigation activity?

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** Does the member mean from the ESL for this financial year?

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** Yes.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** That is correct. Does the member have a problem with that?

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** It is one heck of a lot of money. For people out on the ground, there is a concern about getting resourced to the ground, and I guess that is the sort of thing that makes them concerned.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** Remember it is significantly under the rural fire division. It has been pointed out to me by Mr Waters that of the \$9.16 million coming out of the ESL, \$1.38 million is for the bushfire risk planning coordinator support program, which is under bushfire risk management on page 472. There is also the bushfire awareness campaign, and the member knows how important that is every year on the TV, radio and in newspapers; \$1 million is allocated to that. There is \$1.839 million for the bushfire risk management branch. There is also the unallocated crown land ESL contribution of \$4.5 million. Would that be including mitigation on that? I think it is.

**Mr D. Klemm:** Yes.

[9.20 pm]

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** Yes, it is. On that basis, I stand corrected. There are two pots of money—three, if we count royalties for regions. There are two pots of money: the mitigation activity fund emergency services levy grants program, which has \$9.16 million, and then the unallocated crown land ESL funded mitigation money of \$4.5 million, which is a total of \$13.6 million. That includes grants and the UCL allocation.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** Out of the \$372.537 million ESL, is \$13.5 million spent on bushfire mitigation activity, both in local government and at the department level?

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** Yes, which is an enormous amount of money. If the member for Warren–Blackwood does not believe me, he should ask New South Wales what it spent before those bushfires.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** Further to the question—this was going to be my next line of questioning anyway.

**The CHAIR:** Great; we have two for the price of one!

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** I could go further to this right now, because I think it is important. The member for Warren–Blackwood is onto something here. We have \$372.537 million allocated to the emergency services levy, which is coming in, but I only heard the minister talk about up to \$20 million being spent. The question then is: what is the rest being spent on? I suppose more specifically, how much is being spent on equipment and training facilities for the volunteer outfits, the volunteer bush fire brigades, the State Emergency Service and the rural service—all these groups that may well need upgrades to equipment? I cannot speak for everybody out in the community, but when they sign off on the ESL and think that that money is going towards a good cause, I think possibly they would like to know the breakdown of ESL spending. Is there any way the minister could provide us with a breakdown of ESL spending?

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** I can. Again, did the member pay his rates this year?

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** We sure did.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** Did he open up the envelope and pay it?

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** I did not open up the envelope, no.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** Who did? The member's wife?

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** It would have been the other half.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** It is obviously the same with the member for Warren–Blackwood. Had they opened it up —

**Mrs A.K. HAYDEN:** I am a wife and I did not open mine; my husband did.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** There is a lot I could say here, member. Had the member opened it up, he would have seen an additional document in there that goes to that very point, for the very reason that he raised it: because people ask, "What is my ESL being spent on?" If we go back a few years, some of the councils did not want to collect it. Some get upset at what they believe is the proportion they get of ESL, plus the fact that because they collect it, they do not want to have the finger pointed at them by ratepayers who say, "You're making me pay this." The council put a document in its rates notices a few years ago that basically said, "Remember that ESL has nothing to do with us. You have to talk to the state government about that." To counter that and also to counter the arguments about where

that money goes, over the last two years a document has been sent with the rates that breaks down where that money goes—it identifies each and every area that it goes to. It is there. We tell every single person in Western Australia about that.

If the member goes to the page that we are dealing with, under “Income Statement (Controlled)”, the total income for this year, because of the 10 per cent reduction in the gross rental value rating, is \$398.471 million, but if the member looks at the total cost of services above it, which is where it is spent, he will see that it is \$472.293 million. The rest is made up, as I said before, with the \$40 million allocation from the consolidated fund, which is set against the fact that there is no increase in ESL. We can see where the majority of the expenses go—to employee benefits and grants and subsidies. Supplies and services is all about the vehicles and everything else that goes with it. As I indicated to the member, there has always been an allocation of \$30 million for local government. It was allocated under the previous government as it is under ours; it has not changed. That is allocated to local governments for the purposes of requesting what they want in their shires. If somebody wants to change that, they can.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** I think one of the requests for transparency on this is not so much to know generally where this is being spent, but to have more of an actual breakdown. It came to my attention—I do not know how true this is—that up to \$200 000 was spent on artwork for a new career firefighting facility. If ESL funding was used for that purpose, some might argue that that money would be better spent on equipment for volunteer bush fire brigades and the artwork cost for that new facility should come out of the department's budget.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** That is included in here. That artwork money has been included from the consolidated fund allocation in here, not ESL. I know where that criticism came from. When the previous government built fire stations, it did exactly the same thing with the artwork money. It has been a joint approach by both sides of the house for many years that artwork makes a tiny percentage of government-owned capital investments—I think it is 0.9 per cent of the construction cost. That has been the same going back to —

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** I am not arguing for or against the artwork. I am just saying, in terms of the ESL, it would be beneficial to actually have a breakdown of where the money is going.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** But we have addressed the example that the member gave. Because of that criticism, we will get it from CF, and we have. It is contained in the budget. But, I must admit, as an individual taxpayer in Western Australia, I got a bit cheesed off with that. I mean, it is \$200 000 across Western Australia. The member for Churchlands knows that one of those trucks costs \$500 000.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** That was a story that rose and fell. The point is still alive. I have not seen what was in the mail that we were supposed to have received, nor have the members for Churchlands or Darling Range. How detailed is it?

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** We know why.

**The CHAIR:** Are we still on the same further question by the member for Churchlands? Are we going to the member for Warren–Blackwood's further question now?

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** Okay. Good, just keeping up.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** How detailed is that, and would the minister provide it to us?

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** There are two ways in which members can find it. Firstly, it comes with their rates notice. I have done that deliberately so that ratepayers in Western Australia know where their ESL is going. It is all broken down quite a lot. The other area to identify where the money is going is in the annual report. Remember, this issue comes out of the Economic Regulation Authority review of the ESL. It made these recommendations that there should be greater transparency in the way in which we can identify where the ESL goes. We have done that in two ways. One is to make the annual report far more transparent regarding where the money is collected and where it is spent. By the way, at the back of the annual report, we can see how much each shire has contributed to the ESL and how much they got back. That is in the annual report. Then there is the document that goes out to every single ratepayer in Western Australia. I will give the member some examples of where this money goes. This is provided to us about ESL and bush fire brigades.

[9.30 pm]

**Mrs A.K. HAYDEN:** All we are asking the minister to provide are details of the ESL. If it is publicly available, why can he not provide that as supplementary information?

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** Because it is in the annual report, and it is located in this house.

**Mrs A.K. HAYDEN:** Why can the minister not provide it?

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** The member should go and look for it. I am not doing the member's work for her. She should go to the bills and papers office and get out the annual report. What does she want me to do—write it out for her?



**The CHAIR:** Are you still answering the question, minister?

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** These initiatives are all in the bush fire brigade areas. Member for Warren–Blackwood, there is one thing that is not taken into account in expenditure of the ESL in regional WA that should be taken into account. For example, this year alone we are spending \$4.5 million on a line scanner—a twin engine aircraft that does laser plotting of where fires are and how fast they are moving. We can get it all on a geographic information system for every single volunteer who is out there or any person involved in a fire. That line scanner is not used in metropolitan Perth; it is used only in regional WA.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** I have not raised any questions about that, minister.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** I am just saying that some of the things that people complain about in relation to the use of the emergency services levy in regional WA are over and above the local government grants scheme funding. A truckload more of the ESL is spent on other things to keep people in regional WA safe.

**Mrs A.K. HAYDEN:** I have a further question on the ESL but on a different angle. Has the minister or the department had any discussions with the Shire of Serpentine–Jarrahdale about changing its zoning?

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** The zoning is not changed by the Department of Fire and Emergency Services. I understand that it is done by the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage. Does the member mean gross rental value zoning, or for the purposes of determining which category of funding?

**Mrs A.K. HAYDEN:** I am talking about the ESL zoning—what the shire will be charging its ratepayers.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** At the moment, the Shire of Serpentine–Jarrahdale is doing that. I do not know. What does the member pay?

**Mrs A.K. HAYDEN:** As I said, my husband opens that bill! I am just keeping it fair.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** You lot should look at your own bills please, and then come here and ask the questions!

**The CHAIR:** I think the member is happy with all of that.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** No, she is not. I will ask the commissioner to respond.

**Mr D. Klemm:** There is a process that exists each year when we review certain ESL boundaries. I cannot confirm whether that has happened in Serpentine–Jarrahdale in the last two years. I have not had any discussions with the Serpentine–Jarrahdale local government about changing ESL boundaries in any locations.

**Mrs A.K. HAYDEN:** I appreciate that.

**Ms C.M. ROWE:** I am extremely proud of the Belmont career fire and rescue station. It provides an incredibly important service in my electorate. I refer to the line item “Western Australia Emergency Management Training Centre Business Case” under “Spending Changes” on page 457. I would be really interested to get a brief explanation, given the time, of what this investment is and what that will mean for emergency services going forward.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** It is not surprising that the member asked that question. Basically, the whole existence of the Department of Fire and Emergency Services comes out of the academy because that is where everyone is trained. I believe the facility was built around 1983 or 1984 and has been added to and added to over the years. It is certainly beyond its use-by date and needs to be replaced. We have been allocated just over \$2 million to begin the process of identifying a location and doing consultation and design work as to what the new academy should look like, whether it will continue to be in Belmont in the member’s electorate or not. It does need to be replaced. The commissioner and I went to a number of training academies around Australia, and also Singapore, all of which have invested heavily in their training academies and have new training academies, particularly Victoria and New South Wales. Singapore is probably the standout amongst all of them. We need to do that in WA. We cannot train firefighters and volunteers in the most modern techniques in firefighting unless we have the right training facilities to do so. That \$2.1 million has been allocated to begin the process of its replacement, which is great. It is overdue and I am very pleased that as the minister, even though I am an outgoing minister, I have begun the process of replacing that academy.

**Ms C.M. ROWE:** And I hope to see it in Belmont.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** I am not too sure! I will ask the commissioner to add to that. He used to head up the academy.

**Mr D. Klemm:** The academy was originally on Great Eastern Highway in Belmont, just up from the Belair Motel, if that is still there. I am not sure whether that is still there but it was right on that corner. It is now out at Forrestfield. The minister is quite correct; it was built in the mid-80s and has been in need of an upgrade for a period of time. There are more environmentally sound ways of replicating our training requirements, particularly in a practical space, so we are looking to replicate fire using gas, which was not the way it was done in the past. We only use gas out there now. The new academies in Victoria and New South Wales are the two most recent ones in Australia, and certainly in Singapore there is some fantastic technology to replicate that training environment to mirror the experience that firefighters would get in a structural fire, road crash rescue, Hazmat and the like.

Also, it is obviously important that both volunteers and firefighters are trained for those hazards, and also the State Emergency Service with the work it does, working on roofs in storms and the like. It is really important that we provide the most realistic training environment that we can for those people, whether they are paid or not.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** I refer the minister to page 458. This is probably very similar to the last question. The fifth paragraph under “WA Emergency Management Training” refers to training delivery for both career and volunteer personnel. I note one of the mandatory components of the volunteer training is to complete the online course on the code of conduct. I asked a question on notice recently of the minister about the take-up of that. For the benefit of *Hansard*, the code of conduct was when the minister put a gag order on volunteers from talking to members of Parliament. There was not necessarily public pushback but there was certainly internal pushback. I note that fewer than 20 per cent of those who were required to complete that mandatory code of conduct completed it by the due date. Could the minister enlighten the house on his strategy to respond to the fact that there has been a massive shortfall in the number of volunteers who have completed what the minister has described as the mandatory code of conduct training?

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** I think this is the sixth question that the member has asked on this issue.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** It is progressing, would you not say?

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** The member has asked three questions on notice and five questions without notice, and now he has asked a question during estimates as well. I have the 2017 code of conduct and the 2020 code of conduct in front of me. The member would probably be very surprised that they are identical.

[9.40 pm]

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** No, they are not, minister.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** They are identical except for one issue.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** One of them does not have a gag order.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** No, it is not a gag order. I will read it out. The member knows why we have codes of conduct. They are a requirement under the Public Sector Management Act. Every agency in Western Australia has to do the same thing; it is no different. The code of conduct does not apply to bush fire brigades. They are covered by local government codes of conduct, which have exactly the same requirements on developing codes of conduct. However, the differences between the 2017 code of conduct and the 2019 code of conduct are twofold. The first is the issue in the code of conduct that the member has been raising, which states —

- not contact or communicate with any Federal or State Members of Parliament regarding Departmental business;

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** Yes, “must not”.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** No, it states —

- not contact or communicate with any Federal or State Members of Parliament regarding Departmental business; or invite or allow them onto any DFES premises unless authorised

There are two components to that.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** It is a gag order.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** It is not a gag order.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** It is saying that they cannot talk to members of Parliament.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** It is not a gag order. It is no different from me walking into the member’s bottle shop and asking his staff about how much the member’s business makes and whether he pays tax or takes cash in hand or any other issue. I cannot do that and the member would be going off his face if I did because it is his business. In this case it is the commissioner’s business and he needs to know. Because he is held accountable for the control of communication and information, he needs to know who the hell is passing it on. I think it is outrageous for the member to say that it is a gag order. It is no different from proper business practice that prevents me from going into the member’s bottle shop and asking him about his business practices. It is not on, it is not done and the same applies to the Department of Fire and Emergency Services. If the matter relates to anything other than departmental business, of course people can talk to volunteers—of course they can—but when it comes to departmental business, no. It is the same across all agencies.

In reference to the second component, which is about inviting federal or state members of Parliament onto DFES premises, there is a lot of heavy moving equipment on those sites. If any member of Parliament were to get injured, the person in the firing line, as we have seen recently with the passing of the Work Health and Safety Bill in the upper house, is the Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner. He would be in the firing line if he did not know the member was there and the member was run over. That is not on. It is like any workplace. Members cannot just

wander in there. They have to seek permission and get authorisation. The member knows that when we he rings me up and says that he wants to go to a facility, I always say yes. I never say no.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** I have always said that a code of conduct is needed, and I am not stepping away from that. I would have thought that the professional and ethical behaviour covered in codes of conduct would cover all the things the minister talked about, such as speaking out of turn. Therefore, I ask the minister why this is the only code of conduct that takes a very prescriptive approach to saying that volunteers are not allowed to talk to members of Parliament about departmental business, when that requirement does not exist in the Department of Education's code of conduct or the Department of Health's code of conduct. This is the only code of conduct in which it occurs. Those other agencies would have massive risks with departmental information that, quite rightly, should be confidential.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** Is the member suggesting that someone who is employed in the public service in the Department of Education can pass on that type of information to the member?

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** No.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** What is the member suggesting?

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** I am making the point that the code of conduct covers off on that.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** Is the member suggesting that people can do that?

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** No.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** Why can they not do that? Why would that be inappropriate?

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** Because the code of conduct describes what they cannot do.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** That is correct. That is no different. The member dealt with the HSE act in the house, so he knows that volunteers, not the bush fire brigade members, particularly those volunteers who come directly under the authority and discipline of the commissioner under the HSE act, have now been determined as being the same as employees. We passed that legislation just recently. Therefore, à la the code of conduct, the commissioner is responsible.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** Along the same line of questioning, I refer to the details of controlled grants on page 468. Surf Life Saving Western Australia receives funding from DFES. Not far below it on the table is Volunteer Marine Rescue Western Australia, which has to mandatorily comply with the code of conduct. Can the minister let me know whether Surf Life Saving volunteers have to comply with the code of conduct?

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** No, they do not, because the money for Surf Life Saving Western Australia is allocated only through the Department of Fire and Emergency Services; it is not under the authority or responsibility of the commissioner.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** Can the minister, or maybe the commissioner, give me the basis for and authority under which this measure applies? I understand the need to have a code of conduct for ethical and professional behaviour, and that is absolutely appropriate, but what authority provides for the code to include "must not speak to a member of Parliament about departmental business"? That includes things such as emergency services levy funding. The minister gave me that response in answer to another question. The ESL and where that money is spent relates to taxpayers' funds. The minister is saying that a volunteer cannot talk to me about that in my electorate. That is banned under this code of conduct. They cannot talk to me about department funding or facilities.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** No.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** They were the responses the minister gave me in answers to questions on notice.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** I would not go so far as that.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** I specifically listed ESL, department funding and facilities. The minister said that a volunteer cannot talk to a member of Parliament about those issues because they are considered departmental business.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** If it is considered departmental business, the answer is —

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** I asked whether ESL funding is departmental business and the answer was yes. I asked whether facility upgrades were departmental business and the answer was yes. I asked whether it was departmental business if the funding was for an agency or organisation and the answer was also yes. They are all considered issues that volunteers are not allowed to talk to their member of Parliament about. I would have thought that members of Parliament would be one of the last ports of call for members of our community when they had issues with governments, agencies, behaviour or anything, yet the prescriptive nature of what is written down here, including the minister's response to what I put to him about what is and what is not departmental business, says that they cannot talk to members of Parliament. I find that abhorrent.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** For a start, the code of conduct would not change anything because there is a process and a method by which all the things the member listed can be raised internally within a department.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** Of course.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** Hang on. The member had his go.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** But that is not an excuse for what the minister has done.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** There are processes, procedures and rules around all those things that can be dealt with within the department, and those volunteers know how it can be raised. I will pass over to the commissioner to answer why it was put in and why he wanted to ensure that his information and communication is protected. Before I do, let me just put this to the member: the only person in Western Australia who has complained about this is you.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** No, minister.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** Let me also put this to the member: I was at a volunteer conference last week with 800 volunteers in attendance—the biggest volunteer conference ever—and no-one raised it. As the member knows, I have been to more volunteer places than the member can ever even think about. No-one has raised it. The only person who has a problem with it is you.

**Mr D. Klemm:** As the minister mentioned, the code of conduct is a requirement that I have to have in place. The member has, of course, acknowledged that. A whole range of mechanisms exist that, in large part, are used by volunteer and paid staff within DFES to raise certain matters. In addition, they can access a raft of external agencies—places like WorkSafe, the Corruption and Crime Commission, the Public Sector Commission Ombudsman and the like—should particular matters come up. The code of conduct is about providing a framework for people to operate within.

What I can tell the member about the training so far is that although the number of people who have done it continues to grow, it is understood that volunteers do not always prefer online training; a lot of the time they prefer face-to-face training, which takes a lot longer. We are providing face-to-face training when it has been requested, and it has been requested. Our director of professional standards has been visiting a number of volunteer and career stations, in particular, to provide face-to-face training. What is happening, largely, is that the brigade group and unit leaders are the ones who have completed the training—over 50 per cent of them have. I heard some feedback from them on the weekend about the code of conduct. Their benefit in providing that framework was to ensure their brigade group or unit—the people who were members—could operate within it. I think we all understand that once something is written on paper, there will always be a word in the wrong spot or we have been unable to describe every particular situation that someone will face. There is a self-test at the front of the code of conduct that allows a person to think about the particular behaviour that they have either witnessed or exhibited themselves and determine whether that code of conduct has been met.

[9.50 pm]

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** I do not have any issues with that, commissioner. The only bit I have an issue with is “must not talk to a member of Parliament”. All of the other stuff is absolutely right. I absolutely appreciate why the department would want to do it and why it needs to be there. It is professional and ethical behaviour to be able to manage an organisation between career and volunteer personnel.

**The CHAIR:** Member for Warren–Blackwood, we have only 10 minutes left.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** The minister has not made the case for why a piece that says that they must not talk to a member of Parliament needs to be in there.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** I think that point has been made.

**The CHAIR:** Yes, I agree with the member. This issue has been discussed and debated. Clearly, it will not be answered here to everyone's satisfaction. I would like the member for Churchlands to ask a question.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** I will allow my reserve question to go to the member for Darling Range after I ask this follow-on question. I have one question for the minister. If a volunteer at a marine rescue group or a volunteer fire brigade group says, “Shadow Minister for Emergency Services, we'd love you to come out and look at our facility”, is the minister saying that I have to get permission?

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** Yes. If it is marine rescue, for example, it is directly under the authority of the commissioner.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** They all are now; the minister just said that.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** No, they are not all under the authority of the commissioner. The BFBs are not, for example; they are under local government. The member would have to ask a local government for permission.

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** The reason I say that is, obviously, if I visit a school, I do not have to get permission from the minister. I can visit a local primary school. They can show me whether their facilities are good, bad or otherwise

and I can represent them to the minister, if I see the need. That is the case for the minister in Cockburn; it is the case for all of us.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** Can I just say that the member for Churchlands is in a good position, and a flexible one, under our government. I can tell the member —

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** All governments.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** It was not under the last one! Seriously, member for Churchlands, I had to seek permission to visit my own schools in Cockburn. They would not let me go. I am not joking. The member for Churchlands should have tried to go to a railway station under the Barnett government. They had the cops on me!

**Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE:** Anyway, let us move on.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** For example, if the member visited marine rescue and went over the side of a boat, who is responsible? The commissioner is, and he does not know the member is there. That would be all over the front page of the paper. The member knows that and I know that.

**Mrs A.K. HAYDEN:** I am hoping we can finish on a high note with the minister giving me some great news, especially coming up to Christmas—I would like a new present!

I refer to the total appropriations on page 456. I am going to be cheeky and ask two questions to try to save time. Firstly, can the minister advise whether any money has been allocated out of frontline communications and public safety for black spot areas? I am talking about Bedforddale and Jarrahdale; all those areas are really suffering from black spots. Will any funding be allocated to brigades in Darling Range for black spots in the frontline services? Secondly, are there any funds or has the minister had any discussions to identify the need for a career fire rescue station in Byford? The closest one is in Armadale.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** The first question was about whether money is available for black spot funding. Money has been made available through the federal government for black spot funding and communications. The commissioner and his team have already allocated a portion of that money, one of which came out of the Esperance coronial inquiry. Obviously, that was a high priority. Other areas have been identified as a result of recent bushfires in regional Western Australia, not in the outer suburbs. That is yet to be rolled out in terms of technology upgrades for radio communication and mobile communication black spots in and around the great southern, particularly. If the member wants that information, we can give it to her.

The areas in the member's seat that she was talking about—I know exactly what the member is getting at, which is the same across all of the hills—is an issue that directly relates to Telstra and NBN Co Ltd. The member knows that as well. We have met with Telstra and NBN on numerous occasions to push them to provide better coverage and services in the hills of the Darling scarp, for the very reasons raised by the member for Darling Range. Mal might have better information on that. Some investment in the hills has been made by NBN. I am not 100 per cent sure that it is in Darling Range. There has been some investment made by both Optus and Telstra, but it is still a major problem.

In respect of the second question, it is resource to risk. All stations are being looked at. For example, the coronial inquiry said there should be a fire station in Esperance. That is not going to happen. A number of fire stations, including Byford, Broome, Karnet and Busselton, are being looked at by the Department of Fire and Emergency Services under the resource-to-risk models about what should come next. Commissioner, has anyone got a better idea about the hills?

**Mr D. Klemm:** I assume that when the member said “black spots”, she was talking about radio and mobile phones; is that correct?

**Mrs A.K. HAYDEN:** Yes.

**Mr D. Klemm:** I will deal with radio communications first. In addition to the Esperance repeater referred to at the coronial inquiry, with the assistance of the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, we have recently put an additional repeater in the eastern part of the Lake Grace shire to deal with some communication challenges. We have had a number of fires on the crown land there. I have met with Telstra a number of times over the last 12 months, and will be again in the next two to three months as we head into the bushfire season. I believe we have a meeting coming up with NBN Co. One of the key issues that came through from the majority of local governments was the ability for towers to be repowered after power is lost, so the battery backup. We are doing some exercises with Telstra. It will be part of our state operations centre over the bushfire season. Often it is, I dare say, as simple as connecting a generator to a mobile phone tower to get it back up and running again. Clearly, we need mobile phone communications to do our business when bushfires are burning, as do the public. We are working with Telstra to help it streamline the work that it does to get those towers up and running off generators when power is lost.

**Extract from *Hansard***

[ASSEMBLY ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A — Thursday, 22 October 2020]

p445b-457a

Mr Sean L'Estrange; Hon Fran Logan; Mrs Alyssa Hayden; Mr Terry Redman; Chair; Ms Cassandra Rowe

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**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** Member for Darling Range, that is to ensure that people are not frightened in the hills as well. The federal government has allocated money for communications to providers as well; for example, Telstra is one of them. What are those mobiles called?

**Mr D. Klemm:** The COW.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** Yes, it is called the mobile COW—cell on wheels. Should there be an incident in Serpentine–Jarrahdale, in the hills, one of those COWs will be brought in to ensure there is mobile communication.

**The CHAIR:** Member for Darling Range, I am really sorry but I have to wrap this up. If you are quick, you can ask one more question.

**Mrs A.K. HAYDEN:** I would like to say thank you very much. I want to advocate strongly for it because people's lives are at risk and we really need that. It takes a long time to get the cell on wheels there.

**The appropriation was recommended.**