

Chairman; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Joe Francis; Mr Dave Kelly; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Murray Cowper; Dr
Graham Jacobs; Mr Chris Hatton; Ms Eleni Evangel

Division 55: Fire and Emergency Services, \$18 702 000 —

Mr I.C. Blayney, Chairman.

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

Mr W. Gregson, Commissioner.

Mr G Swift, Acting Deputy Commissioner, Capability.

Mr L Bailey, Deputy Commissioner, Operations.

Mrs G. Camarda, Director, Business Services, and Chief Finance Officer.

Ms S.K. Paterson, Executive Director, Governance and Strategy.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIRMAN: This estimates committee will be reported by Hansard. The daily proof *Hansard* will be available the following day.

It is the intention of the Chair to 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 will be restricted to discussion of those items for which a vote of money is proposed in the consolidated account. Questions must be clearly related to a page number, item program or amount in the current division. It will greatly assist Hansard if members can give these details in preface to their question.

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 then allocate 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, 3 June 2016. 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 with the Clerk's office.

I give the call to the member for Girrawheen.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I refer the minister to page 612 of volume 2 of the *Budget Statements*, under "Funded By" and also to the budget fact sheet to ask about the emergency services levy. How is the increase of 4.2 per cent calculated? Does it include growth in wages, capital expenditure, personnel and training? Is that all factored in?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: The first thing I will say is that when the budget is finalised and goes to print, obviously the final calculation —

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I am aware of that; I did not ask that, minister

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: — for the ESL is yet to be determined, because it is awaiting, obviously, the gross rental values and a number of other different things to come back. My understanding is that it is due to be gazetted in two days' time and the expectation is that it will come in at about 3.5 per cent, which is less than what has been estimated in the budget. As to what it covers, I will ask the commissioner to elaborate.

Mr W. Gregson: Yes, it predominantly covers previously approved policy decisions and costs around wages.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: So it does not include expectations about capital expenditure or training within that figure?

Mr W. Gregson: Training would be covered within the ESL.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: Last year we were told that everything that could come out of the ESL came out of the ESL. It might be quicker in the long run if the minister could advise or produce, maybe by way of supplementary if necessary, which items and expenditures are not covered by the ESL.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I am happy to provide that by supplementary information, but my advice is that there are no changes from last year in the balance between what was consolidated account funded and what was ESL funded, but we will provide the member for Girrawheen with a list of what is funded, therefore, through another source other than the ESL. I will ask the commissioner to elaborate and then I will go through the agreement for supplementary information.

Mr W. Gregson: I can tell the member that there are wages under the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal and money for surf lifesaving. There is some money for unexploded ordnance, which cannot be covered under the ESL, and I believe that there is some money that came for the volunteer fuel cards, which is not covered by the ESL.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: It is royalties for regions.

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Mr W. Gregson: The helicopter also comes under royalties for regions. A contribution to the Geraldton Volunteer Marine Rescue Group also did not come from the emergency services levy.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I will get the member that exact list. I undertake to provide supplementary information to the member for Girrawheen—that is, a detailed list of what is expended by the Department of Fire and Emergency Services that is not covered by revenue raised through the ESL.

[*Supplementary Information No A3.*]

Ms M.M. QUIRK: Can the minister confirm that the estimate this year for the government's contribution out of the consolidated account is \$18 702 000?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: That is correct.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: My final question on this is: can the minister advise when a policy decision was taken to reduce the government's contribution out of the consolidated account to more than half of what it was when he came into government?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: As the member knows, that was done progressively. Even prior to what was the Fire and Emergency Services Authority, the ratio of funds that were covered through the ESL versus the consolidated account, and a few other minor sources, had changed. It changed under the previous government, and it changed under the current government, to the point that from last year's budget, when this issue was raised, it was funded predominantly by revenue raised through the ESL for what, under the legislation, it could be spent on. It is a progressive change that has happened over, I guess, the last 10-odd years under both governments.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: Minister, it is less than 10 years; it is more like eight.

[10.10 am]

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I say to the member for Girrawheen that we once had this debate in Parliament on a Wednesday evening. It has been a progressive change to the point that what can now be paid for by the ESL is paid for by the ESL and what cannot be paid for is paid through the consolidated account.

Mr D.J. KELLY: The minister would be aware that in March 2015 —

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

Mr D.J. KELLY: I am referring to the second dot point on page 608 of the *Budget Statements* that relates to major incidents. The minister would be aware that a major incident occurred in March 2015—a fire at Ashfield Flats. I wrote to the minister about that incident several times. I asked for a copy of the report that was done. The report was completed in May 2015. In October 2015, the minister wrote to me and said that I could not have a copy of the report because it was still in draft format, so it was completed in May. In October, the minister said that it was still in draft format. I asked the minister about that discrepancy on 24 February 2016 in this chamber and his response was —

The advice I was given was that it was still in a draft format, and I gave the member that advice.

The minister said he had been incorrectly advised by his department that the report was still in draft format. When was the minister advised that that report was in draft format, who gave the minister that advice and was that advice verbal or written?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I would have to take that on notice. As I said to the member at the time, I am not in the business of keeping secrets on incident reports. That is what I was told at the time. Obviously, I do not personally prepare the correspondence to members of Parliament; it is either prepared by the department or my office or a combination of both. The member has to accept that I had no reason to delay providing the member with the report. I apologised to the member at the time and I am happy to again say that I am sorry. It was not my intention not to provide the member with the report.

Mr D.J. KELLY: The minister apologised in the chamber and then gave me a serve. He told me in this chamber that his office was advised that the report was still in draft format. If he wants to take the question on notice and give me the information, I would like to know when he was given that advice, who gave him that advice and whether it was given verbally or in writing. That report was very critical of the fire-ready state of that government-owned land. People are a little suspicious that the report was deliberately buried to protect the owners of that government property. If the minister was incorrectly advised of the status of that report and it was not the minister's fault but someone else's fault, given that he told Parliament that was the advice he was given, who gave him that advice, when was that advice given and was it verbal or written in nature?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I will provide that as supplementary information. It was a year ago. The member for Bassendean cannot expect me to recall that kind of stuff. I will undertake to provide to the member for

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Bassendean as supplementary information further information on the timing and content of the advice regarding the Ashfield Flats fire.

Mr D.J. KELLY: I would also like to know who gave that advice.

The CHAIRMAN: The minister has clarified to me exactly what he will provide as supplementary information.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I will provide details on the timing and the content.

Mr D.J. KELLY: The timing and the content does not indicate who gave the minister that advice. I also want to know whether it was written or verbal advice. Is the minister happy to give that?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: It would not have been verbal advice.

Mr D.J. KELLY: So, it was written advice.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I am guessing so. It was a year ago. I will get the member the information. I am not in the business of keeping that stuff secret. I have nothing to hide.

Mr D.J. KELLY: I just want to be clear what the minister is going to give me.

The CHAIRMAN: Minister, are you happy to repeat what you will provide?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: Sure. I undertake to provide to the member for Bassendean as supplementary information details on the timeliness and the content and the name of the person who provided the advice on the Ashfield Flats fire that occurred last year.

[Supplementary Information No A4.]

Mr P. PAPALIA: I refer to “New Works” in the table on page 612 of the *Budget Statements*. Can the minister confirm that no new career fire stations are planned for the duration of the forward estimates?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: At this stage there is no funding in the forward estimates for new career fire stations. Having said that, there is obviously a requirement to replace Success Fire Station. In a minute I will ask the commissioner to provide an update on how he is going with the search for a suitable block of land for that fire station. On top of that, a number of different locations are obviously being considered on the resource-to-risk calculations that the department undertakes on population increases and where career fire stations may be required in the future. When that is done, the government will look at the further allocation of funds on a case-by-case basis.

At the moment, the member is right in saying that no funds are allocated in the forward estimates. The first one to consider is probably a replacement for Success Fire Station. As the member knows, the site in Success has an interesting history. It appears that at different times a number of firefighters have contracted a similar or the same type of cancer after working there. An extensive investigation was carried out. No evidence of contamination was found at the site but we just do not know what we do not know. There seemed to be a high number of cancer diagnoses amongst the firefighters when the only thing they really had in common was the fact that they had served at that fire station at different stages of their career. We made the call. I spoke to the commissioner at length about it. I would not send my child to work there so why would I send a firefighter to work there? We just do not know. At the moment Success fire and rescue is still temporarily housed at the Cockburn joint volunteer facility until we progress those works.

Mr W. Gregson: I can only add that we are currently in discussions with the shire about acquiring a suitable block of land.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Is the analysis that the minister is referring to about resource-to-risk a specific report that has an end date or is that a constant process?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I understand that it is a constant process but I will ask the commissioner to give the member some information on that.

Mr W. Gregson: It is just a constant process by which we gauge where potential future assets need to be deployed.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I ask one more indulgent follow-on question. Does the minister know where Baldivis stands in the ranking of the potential future need for a career fire station?

Mr W. Gregson: I do not know offhand but it certainly would be on the list.

Mr M.J. COWPER: I refer to “Works in Progress” in the table on page 612. My question kind of follows on from the previous question. This time last year I asked a question that related to the Australind Fire Station. About four years ago, it was funded and appeared in the budget papers and there was a problem with land. I understand that among the sequence of events that occurred, it was decided that the money would be used by

Bunbury Fire Station. I note that it appears in these budget papers. I note also that there is no money in the outgoing years. What progress have we gained since this time last year to at least identify some suitable land for the future Australind Fire Station?

[10.20 am]

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: As I replied to a question from the member for Warnbro, no money has been allocated in the forward estimates for new fire stations.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: You really got robbed, didn't you?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: Sorry?

The CHAIRMAN: Member for Girrawheen!

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I will ask the commissioner whether he has further information on the progress of a fire station in Australind.

Mr W. Gregson: There is nothing more than preliminary planning for potential suitable land sites for not only Australind, but also a number of other places.

Mr M.J. COWPER: The minister may be aware that I wrote to his predecessor and, subsequently, made remarks to the minister about the circumstances attending that fire. I must say that I am somewhat aggrieved on behalf of the constituents who live in that area because analysis by the department has shown that this is an area that needs a fire station. In fact, it was totally funded—we understand the circumstances—but I would have thought that notwithstanding the verbal discussions I have had with the minister's predecessor, there would have been some progress on this at least in the last 12 months. I have nominated a number of parcels of land that are already in government ownership that would require only a transfer of land. I am a bit concerned that no work has been done in that area in 12 months.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I will ask the commissioner to add further information.

Mr W. Gregson: I did not say that no work had been done; a lot of preliminary work has been done around Australind and a number of other places to consider potential future sites.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: The first table on page 611 shows an estimate for an increase of 27 full-time equivalent employees. Can the minister explain in what areas they will be deployed?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I am advised that is predominantly around the West Perth fire station, so that will require, obviously, those extra firefighters.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: Are those 20 positions all career firefighters?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: That is correct.

The CHAIRMAN: I agreed to allow the member for Eyre to ask a question after everybody else had asked their first question.

Dr G.G. JACOBS: I thank the Chair for that indulgence. The first dot point on page 608 states —

A demanding southern bushfire season has resulted in a number of independent reviews.

Although it mentions the Waroona–Yarloop fires, I refer to one of a number of independent reviews into the Esperance bushfire commissioned by the department and done by an organisation known as the Nous Group. In early intervention in fighting fires, what opportunities for improvement have been learnt from this review?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I am going to ask the commissioner to answer that question.

Mr W. Gregson: The Nous report, which is publicly available, recommends three areas for improvement. Within each of those three areas are three subsets that all relate to improvements in potential opportunities for greater coordination of the various parties that are involved in response.

Dr G.G. JACOBS: As the minister would understand, I have read the report very thoroughly. When considering mobilisation of aerial support or water bombers in early intervention, is it true that when the department has jurisdiction over a fire, water bombers are not employed until the fire is at what is known as level 3?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I will ask the commissioner to answer that question.

Mr W. Gregson: No, that is not true. The deployment of aerial assets, as with other resources, is a decision of the incident controller, no matter what level the fire is at.

Dr G.G. JACOBS: What opportunities for improvement does the minister see in early intervention and for the mobilisation of water bombers in the early phase of a fire? How do we get over the impediments that stopped appliances in Esperance being used because they were not approved for different reasons? How can we use that

as an opportunity to improve, as the report states, the regulatory impediments against using appliances in Esperance, recognising the geography and how far Esperance is from other bases?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I will ask the commissioner to elaborate on the other appliances, but I would say that we have had a significant increase in investment in aerial firefighting capacity over the last few years. We now have the largest aerial fleet the state has ever seen, which comprises a number of different platforms—fixed wing; the Erickson air crane, the largest helicopter in the fleet; and other smaller craft. A combination of assets will be used in different ways to give the best outcomes. The fixed wing is the fast-attack aircraft of the aerial fleet. It can obviously travel faster and get to an incident quicker than a larger helicopter. The key thing, though, is that they all have their limitations. I will ask the commissioner to elaborate in a second, but just so that I am clear, the member for Eyre is asking why civilian crop dusters were not employed; is that the issue the member wants addressed?

Dr G.G. JACOBS: Yes. The minister can talk about all those appliances, but Esperance is 720 kilometres from Perth and 550 kilometres from Albany. From a geographical point of view, if we are going to talk about early intervention and seize that opportunity, we have to get over that issue and try to perhaps use the potential of appliances that could be compliant and used in fires, particularly in early intervention, until the squadron arrives.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I will ask the commissioner to elaborate on the suitability of noncompliant civilian aircraft.

Mr W. Gregson: Particularly when the fires are still at the early stages of level 1 and 2 and under the remit of local shires, there are issues with aerial support, predominantly in the areas of safety, training, licensing and Civil Aviation Safety Authority regulatory requirements. We have undertaken to look at all those issues to see whether we can facilitate a much earlier use of local aircraft by shires predominantly in the early stages of fire.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I have a follow-up question on the Nous report on the Esperance fires. I asked the minister's colleague the Minister for Environment a question about a finding in the Nous report concerning the lack of high-level collaboration between the Minister for Emergency Services' department and the Department of Parks and Wildlife. The Minister for Emergency Services advised that that finding in the Nous report was incorrect. What measures have been taken to ensure that an addendum is made to that report so that those reading it are not misled?

[10.30 am]

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I will ask the commissioner to elaborate on that because there are two separate issues. The first is about the intergovernmental agency agreements and the second is about the operational agreements.

Mr W. Gregson: The arrangement or the heads of agreement between us and the department of environment have been signed. In other words, there is a commitment to work collaboratively and cooperatively together. All those procedures and structures are in place. The arrangements about how to work—in other words, the operational procedures—are still a work in progress. We have come an awfully long way but there is still a little way to go with some of the detail about how the agencies work together. A lot of that is to do also with the sharing of systems as we move towards increased sharing of various systems. Where the Nous report refers to sharing of resource management systems and incident command and control systems, that is where there needs to be greater collaboration.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: Minister, what is the hold-up?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: Commissioner?

Mr W. Gregson: There is not a hold-up; it is just a work in progress. There continual improvement. We will never reach an end point. We will continually improve systems, processes and structures so that both agencies can work together.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I will just add an example with the rollout of the automatic vehicle location system. We expect to see that in trucks this year.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: It was due last year.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: One reason it has taken a bit of time is obviously the evolving technology. I am not an expert on this, but we are looking at a solution that can futureproof the technology, such as the integration of T-cards so that the incident controller will know who is in what particular appliance and where it is on the fire ground, even to the point where we might be able to put a sensor on the trucks to know how much water is left in the tanks. As part of our interagency agreement, do we then look at ensuring that AVL in Department of Parks and Wildlife trucks, for example, speaks the same language and it is all the same technology so that people can see both departments' platforms on the screen at an incident control centre? They are the kinds of things that make it take some time. We want to get it right, because we do not want to have to come back and do it all over again.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: It is arguable that they should be the same platform.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: Correct, and also that the information should be shared and all the same, because that would give economies of scale. It would also be helpful when white trucks, red trucks and DPaW trucks—I will not call them green trucks—are all working on the same fire ground; that is, volunteer, career and DPaW trucks. The incident controller should have the same tactical picture regardless of whom the truck belongs to.

Mr D.J. KELLY: I refer to item 3, “Training and Organisational Resourcing Services”, in the box at the bottom of page 608 of the *Budget Statements*. It is under “Relationship to Government Goals”. When did the department become aware of the pentachlorophenol contamination of groundwater at and around the Forrestfield training facility, what concentration of PCP contamination was found at Forrestfield and what is the safe concentration according to health standards?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: The commissioner is just looking for that information. I am pretty sure I answered a question on notice in the other place on this recently with exactly that detail. I may be wrong, but I know we have it handy. I am not going to remember the specifics off the top of my head. We will have to provide that as supplementary information.

Mr D.J. KELLY: I have a couple of follow-on questions from that, so could they be added to those to be provided by way of supplementary information?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: Sure. The member can tell me what he wants to know.

Mr D.J. KELLY: The first two questions were: When did the department become aware of the PCP contamination of groundwater at and around the Forrestfield training facility? What concentration of PCP contamination was found at Forrestfield and what is the safe concentration according to health standards? The other questions that I would ask be added to the supplementary information are: What program of action has the department planned to manage and minimise the effects of this contamination? Who is responsible for the monitoring of the groundwater contamination and how often and over what area will the samples be taken for this monitoring? Who will do the actual testing and for how long will they have the contract? What budget over the forward years has been planned to continue both the monitoring and remedial action, if necessary, to be carried out? Finally, how is it planned to keep the public informed with regard to both the extent of the contamination and the monitoring process, and what compensation package is envisaged if the containment actions are not satisfactory to the nearby residents and primary school at Forrestfield? I will helpfully give the detail of those questions to the minister to assist him in providing that information. It is very disturbing when the minister winks, but I take it in good nature!

The CHAIRMAN: The member for Bassendean is handing his questions to the minister.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I agree to provide the member for Bassendean by way of supplementary information with details of when the department became aware of the PCP contamination of the groundwater at and around the Forrestfield facility; what concentration of PCP contamination was found at Forrestfield and what the safe concentration is according to health standards; what program of action the department has planned to manage and minimise the effects of the contamination; who is responsible for the monitoring of the groundwater contamination and how often and over what area samples will be taken for this monitoring; who will do the actual testing and for how long they will have this contract; what budget over the forward years has been planned to continue both the monitoring and remedial action, if necessary, to be carried out; how it is planned to keep the public informed of both the extent of contamination and the monitoring process; and what compensation package is envisaged if the containment actions are not satisfactory to the nearby residents and Forrestfield Primary School.

[*Supplementary Information No A5.*]

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I refer to the same page and item that my colleague just mentioned—the third item at the bottom of page 608. The training academy is very much past its use-by date. What plans are there for its replacement and over what time frame?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I understand that the commissioner is looking at different options to revitalise, refresh or change certain aspects of the academy, but I will ask him to elaborate on where he is at with that.

Mr W. Gregson: We have a plan for the future; it is just not currently funded.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: Perhaps the commissioner would like to elaborate on that?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: Commissioner?

Mr W. Gregson: I am not sure what the member wants me to elaborate on. There is a plan for the revitalisation of the Forrestfield site broken up into stages to improve, over time, the training facilities. I do not know what

more elaboration I can give or what the focus would be of more elaboration. It is a comprehensive plan to revitalise the Forrestfield asset.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: If I asked for it in those terms under freedom of information, would the commissioner know what I was talking about?

Mr W. Gregson: Yes.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: Thank you.

Mr C.D. HATTON: Am I able to forfeit my question opportunity and delegate it to the member for Eyre?

The CHAIRMAN: I have the member for Eyre a little further down the list, so no.

[10.40 am]

Mr C.D. HATTON: I refer to page 612, “Works in Progress”, under the sixteenth line item relating to the “Heavy Rescue Air Cache Program” and road rescue units. Could the minister outline the investment in heavy rescue cache and road rescue units and how this will assist firefighters and the community?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I thank the member for Balcatta. I will keep this short. To be frank, I am very aware that estimates committees are predominantly for opposition members, but obviously everyone gets a right to ask a question. The department has received \$392 000 in capital funding for the road trauma trust account to expand the Department of Fire and Emergency Services air deployable heavy rescue capability to be available to regional and remote areas. In fact, we announced that a few months ago at Forrestfield with the Minister for Road Safety. The short version of this great story is that we are now using technology such as battery-operated road crash rescue equipment—jaws-of-life and all those kinds of things—that do not need the umbilical attachment to a hydraulic pump anymore. The location for dispatch will obviously be located in the major regional areas of Perth, Albany, Kalgoorlie, Geraldton and Karratha, so it can be flown out or trumped out at short notice to remote areas. At the end of the day, it is a good use of money from the road trauma trust account to purchase newer technology equipment such as cordless and battery-operated jaws-of-life, spreaders, cutters and all those kinds of things.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I refer to the sixth dot point on page 608, identifying the challenges associated with retaining volunteer numbers. I note that recent legislation introduced to Parliament relating to cancer presumed to be acquired as a result of bushfire fighting activities effectively excludes bushfire volunteers in a de facto way from recognition of their acquisition of that disease. I notice the minister is shaking his head, but the question is: does the minister think that the way the volunteers were treated with this legislative amendment may contribute to a challenge in retaining them, and them reconsidering their service?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: Let me make the detail on this short. I know it has taken some time, and that has been because of the challenges of drafting, which I have pretty much kept the member for Girrawheen, the shadow minister, up to date with along the way. At the end of the day, it is not really a material issue, because its start date is retrospective and will be the same as the commencement date for the original legislation that we had for current serving career fire and rescue firefighters. For volunteer bush fire fighters, it applies exactly the same as it does for volunteer fire and rescue firefighters or anyone else who is covered as a volunteer under the legislation, and that is the 25 qualifying incidents that they have to attend over a five-year period. The reason for the qualifying incidents is that there is absolutely no scientific evidence whatsoever that exposure to plain bushfire smoke presents a risk of contracting cancer or that there are carcinogens in it. A year ago I made the point that if there was any evidence whatsoever, we would not be going to smoking ceremonies, if members remember. The inclusion of qualifying incidents means that they need to have exposure. Regardless of whether they are a volunteer bush fire fighter, a volunteer fire and rescue firefighter or a volunteer anything that is covered, the qualifying incident has to be a structural fire, a rubbish fire or something that has carcinogens in it. A volunteer bush fire fighter might turn out to an incident in the bush, but it turns out that there is a meth lab with all kinds of chemicals in it. These things happen on a regular basis. Volunteer bush fire fighters get called out to car fires; sometimes they get called out in support of structural fires as well. I know that and I can promise the member that that happens, especially with some of the resources that bush fire brigades have, such as the large water tankers. The qualifying incident has to be something that has a scientific base for having carcinogens in it, and a plain bushfire does not. I know of volunteer bush fire fighters in the member’s electorate, for example, who turn out regularly to incidents that are not just bushfires, so they would qualify just the same.

Mr P. PAPALIA: That aside, are there no studies that indicate that the concentration of exposure over a long period to heavy landscape fires contributes to the likelihood of cancer?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: There may be studies—I do not know—but I have not seen any evidence to suggest that exposure to bushfire smoke in itself will trigger one of those particular types of cancer. I will read more about it.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: Is the minister aware of the recent Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council study that suggested that duration rather than the number of incidents was a material factor in this context? Also, there were some anomalies in terms of bushfire only volunteers that suggested that there was an impact when there was a lengthy duration in service.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I have not seen that study or report, but if the member for Girrawheen wants to give me the link, I am happy to read it.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: Is the minister aware that this state contributed to that study? Maybe during the minister's convalescence, he might like to read it.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: Sure; I will look at it. Thank you.

Ms E. EVANGEL: I refer to the twelfth line item, "South West Emergency Rescue Helicopter Service", under the heading "Works in Progress" on page 612. Can the minister outline spending plans for the south west emergency rescue helicopter service and the new base, please?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: This is something, as I said at the time, that I am exceptionally proud of. When I think of all the things we do in public life, the ones that make a difference are the ones that actually save lives. We made a commitment at the last election to fund a second rescue helicopter, predominantly based in the south west. Obviously, as the member knows, that is now flying and based in Bunbury. It commenced operations on 1 February this year. The key reason is that if we have only one rescue helicopter and it has a 500 kilometre range—a 250 kilometre-odd radius from Perth—it is limited in its ability, in particular if we have two incidents at the same time. It is one of those assets that we wish we never have to use, but I have seen news reports that both helicopters were in the air at the same time attending separate incidents, and I am pretty sure that people are alive today simply because that second helicopter is in the air. When we look at its location in Bunbury and the footprint that it covers, even into other electorates surrounding that and other areas, it is a great asset to have.

[10.50 am]

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I refer to "Outcomes and Key Effectiveness Indicators" on page 609. I note there is a new indicator, "Proportion of responses to incidents in Emergency Service Levy 1 and Emergency Service Levy 2 areas within target timeframes". What is the target response time?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: It is listed as 90 per cent in the 2016–17 budget.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: No; I want to know the actual time.

Ms S.K. Paterson: For ESL 1, it is a 90 per cent turnout within 12 minutes, and for ESL 2, it is a 90 per cent turnout within 14 minutes.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: How is that time measured? Is it from the time the 000 call is received by communications or is it from the time the crew is suited up and actually leaves the station?

Ms S.K. Paterson: I would need to check the detail of that, but I understand it is from the time of the dispatch call.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: It is from the time of the call?

Ms S.K. Paterson: Yes; but I would need to confirm that. I can take that on notice.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: Could that be provided by way of supplementary information?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: Sure.

The CHAIRMAN: Can the member state what is required?

Ms M.M. QUIRK: From what point is the response time measured?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I agree to provide the member for Girrawheen, by way of supplementary information, the detail of how the response time is measured.

[*Supplementary Information No A6.*]

Ms M.M. QUIRK: What impact does traffic congestion have on response times or have these been factored into the new targets?

Ms S.K. Paterson: We are not able to provide that detailed information. The overall response time is based on the amount of time that it currently takes to turn out. That takes into account the current traffic conditions.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I will add some anecdotal feedback to that. It is obvious that traffic will impact on response times, but it depends on what time of the day or night the call is made. For example, an ambulance

Chairman; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Joe Francis; Mr Dave Kelly; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Murray Cowper; Dr
Graham Jacobs; Mr Chris Hatton; Ms Eleni Evangel

went past me today on my way here in peak-hour traffic. Its driver was fighting to get through a traffic jam in South Perth, but if it was three o'clock in the morning, it would make no difference.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: There seems to be a distinction between “response” time and “turnout” time. Could the minister explain the distinction and how it is relevant in terms of these targets?

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

Mr W. Gregson: There are different ways of measuring grades of service. The turnout time is considered to be the time the crew leave their station to the time of arrival; the response time is the time taken to the time of arrival. Both are taken from the time of call receipt.

Mr M.J. COWPER: I refer to the first dot point under “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency” on page 608 of the *Budget Statements*. On 7 January 2016, the Yarloop fire station burnt down and another 409 properties were affected. What plans are there at the moment to rebuild the fire station?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I understand that as it is a bush fire brigade, it belongs to the local shire, so those plans would have to be with the local shire. It is the local shire’s brigade and fire station.

Mr M.J. COWPER: I understand its role, but what concerns me is that there is not a lot of activity in the town as a whole. I think we need to demonstrate some tangible support for the people in that town. At this point I am not aware of any approvals for any buildings in that town five months post the fire. I was hoping I might be able to get some support from the minister’s department to expedite at least the replacement of the existing fire facility.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: The bottom line is that recovery is an issue for the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, not the Department of Fire and Emergency Services. The Department of Fire and Emergency Services has not seen any proposals through the local government authority for the rebuilding of that fire station. I am very aware of the sensitivities. I am very aware that even rebuilding a volunteer fire station would be a morale boost, if nothing else, for that town and certainly a nice gesture and a symbol of success. If the local government authority contacts the department, I am more than happy to provide some support.

Mr M.J. COWPER: Who pays for the building? Does it come out of the ESL?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: Firstly, it depends on the insurance level of the local government authority. Secondly, it would predominantly come out of the ESL through the local government grants scheme. At the moment there are certain conditions about what is funded and what is not funded. The majority of it would be funded through the ESL through local government grants.

Mr M.J. COWPER: Unit 3/4 out of Yarloop is —

The CHAIRMAN: That was it, I am afraid, member.

Mr M.J. COWPER: My question relates to unit 3/4.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you, member. We agreed to finish this division. Do members want to finish this division now?

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I have a couple of questions under the next division, the State Emergency Management Committee.

The CHAIRMAN: Okay. It is up to members.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: I make the comment, Mr Chair, that we are effectively slotting another portfolio into the same division we did last year, which is unsatisfactory because of the limited time we have in this whole area. In that spirit, I will move on. The minister can expect a lot of questions on notice.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: That is fine.

The appropriation was recommended.