



Legislative Council Environment and Planning Committee

Hearing Date: 10 October 2023

Question taken on notice

Directed to: Pyrenees Shire Council, Kathryn Doroshenko-Pempel, Jane Bowker

Received Date: 27 October 2023

1. **Melina Bath, page 27**

Question Asked:

... Pyrenees, you did a wonderful job talking about rapid impact assessments and the fact that you felt that they were not done within those 8 to 48 hours, which is the stipulated requirement from the SES, and that had an impact on how you could deal and respond. You put a lot of great context there, but I am looking for a recommendation to us. Do you want to take that away and have a little bit of a think about what you would like? It is okay if you want to.

Response:

The first recommendation is a review within the SES organisation on how they manage their response and data captured for RIA for parts of the region that do not have an SES base location. This is to ensure processes are completed within the required timeframes and that there is accountability for the data being generated and sent out to LGAs.

The Pyrenees Shire was receiving data from more than one source, which was collectively grouped according to their own SES boundaries in their response activities. There are five units that cover Pyrenees. Data collection was not done in a timely manner according to the SES's stipulated requirement, nor was the data consistent in its content from the different SES regions. This added additional work on Council staff to chase what little data there was and compile it to try and give an overall view to inform recovery activities.

This situation ultimately affected the ability to formally transition to recovery, which was initiated 7 days after the event. Due to the lack of content, formal transition to recovery was never completed by either organisation.

A further recommendation is to explore having an SES unit based in the Pyrenees. The SES regional office put forward a proposal to establish a unit in Beaufort in 2015-16 but it didn't come to fruition. We are not sure of the reasons.

In spite of the best plans and intentions, when there is a big flood, Pyrenees simply gets little support from the SES as they either can't get here or they don't have enough boots on the ground. Council understands that the Oct/Nov 2022 flood event was widespread and VicSES personnel did the best they could, but this put more pressure on Council and other local measures to be put in place for the response phase. However, there was a visible presence of SES personnel in Beaufort for the November 13th event which was appreciated.

Having a local unit(s) would alleviate the delay in response and provide up to date, timely data. There could be a closer working relationship between the CFA, SES and other emergency services including Council. Unfortunately, having external SES units doesn't allow the true connection to Pyrenees communities which is required for building resilience and relationships.