

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee
Inquiry into the 2023-24 Financial and Performance Outcomes

QUESTION ON NOTICE

Asked by: Nick McGowan MP

Question: *[In relation to the reported two hour unplanned outage to Triple Zero Victoria's computer-aided dispatch system which occurred on Wednesday 20 November 2024] How many calls were taken in that two hour period?*

Reply:

On 20 November 2024, Triple Zero Victoria (TZV)'s call-taking and dispatch system was temporarily unavailable from 5:34pm to 7:14pm. TZV staff transitioned to well-trained manual operations to ensure continuity of service. There was a total of 781 calls for assistance made to TZV during this time. This included:

- 308 Ambulance calls
- 428 Police calls
- 21 Country Fire Authority calls
- 18 Fire Rescue Victoria calls
- 6 VICSES calls.

Kate Houghton PSM
Secretary
Department of Justice and Community Safety

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QUESTION ON NOTICE

Asked by: Bev McArthur MP

Question: *[...Let's go to the CFA Fleet upgrades, Kate. Budget Paper 4 2023-24 page 95 shows the 2021-22 Base Capital Fleet upgrade with an estimated expenditure of \$3.512 million, to be completed in quarter 2023-24, yet Budget Paper 4 2024-25 page 93 shows that this still has not occurred, and the estimated completion date is now Quarter 4 2024-25. How many fleet vehicles are still remaining to be delivered to brigades?]*

Kate Fitzgerald – So as you mentioned there has been budget announcements of some previous budgets in relation to upgrades or replacement or new pumpers. So in relation to the pumpers a total of 25 were announced by the Minister in June 2024, so 10 were funded via CFA Base Capital and 15 funded in the 2024-25 State Budget. Manufacturing in relation to those commenced in late 2023 and the first pumpers are due to be completed in mid-2025. The locations, which I'm happy to take you through, of those first 10 pumpers have been announced, and the locations for the remaining 15 pumpers are yet to be determined, and that's a matter for CFA to work through that from a risk-assessment perspective. In relation to the Ultra Heavy tankers, CFA is currently rolling out 29 of those tankers. 13 have already been delivered to brigades, and locations are now confirmed for the remaining 16, which I'm also happy to take you through if that's required. We also have heavy tankers, and 48 have been funded through State budgets in relation to those, and 42 have now been delivered to brigades. Locations have been identified for the remaining 6.

Bev McArthur – Perhaps, Ms Fitzgerald we could just get all that detail on notice?]

Reply:

The locations for the first 10 pumpers are as follows:

Brigade	District	Region
Lorne	7	South West Region
Wendouree	15	West Region
Sebastopol	15	West Region
Kangaroo Flat	2	North West Region
Eaglehawk	2	North West Region
Rochester	20	North West Region
Emerald	13	North East Region
Benalla	23	North East Region
Narre Warren	8	South East Region
Bairnsdale	11	South East Region

The locations for the remaining 16 Ultra Heavy Tankers are as follows:

Brigade	District	Region
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Milltown	4	South West Region
Burn Brae	5	South West Region
Vite Vite North	6	South West Region
Lake Bolac	16	West Region
Marnoo	16	West Region
Stoneleigh	16	West Region
Joel Joel	16	West Region
Sandsmere	17	West Region
Bowenvale	2	North West Region
Kamarooka	2	North West Region
Teddywaddy	18	North West Region
Murrayville	18	North West Region
Anuello	18	North West Region
Dumosa	18	North West Region
Sandhill Lake	20	North West Region
Bundalong	22	North East Region

The locations for the remaining 6 heavy tankers are as follows:

Brigade	District	Region
Olinda (delivered 14 November 2024)	13	North East Region
Winchelsea	7	South West Region
Beaufort	16	West Region
South Morang	14	North West Region
Irymple	18	North West Region
Maffra	10	South East Region

Question: [...Budget paper 4, 2023–24, page 95 lists the 2022–23 base capital fleet upgrade with an estimated expenditure of 9.832 million due to be completed by quarter 4, 2023–24. However, budget paper 4, 2024–25 shows that there is still a remaining \$3.31 million expenditure...] **Given that these projects are literally years late, are there any plans to expedite them and provide what is the genuine expected delivery date?**

Reply:

The initiative was delayed due to several factors outside of the Country Fire Authority's (CFA) control, including supply chain disruptions, manufacturing delays and skilled labour shortages. These challenges are largely the result of post-COVID-19 impacts, which continue to affect the manufacturing industry locally and globally.

CFA is actively working with manufacturers to overcome known supply chain issues and optimising its procurement practices to ensure completion by the revised date of Quarter 4 2024-25.

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QUESTION ON NOTICE

Asked by: Bev McArthur MP

Question: *[As at 21 November 2024]* **Can you tell us what the current waiting time for CFA trucks requiring maintenance?**

Reply:

The wait time for CFA trucks requiring maintenance varies based on a range of individual factors, including (for example) if the maintenance required is of a planned or unplanned nature, and the availability of replacement parts. As such, there is no average or standard wait time specific to CFA trucks requiring maintenance.

Question: *[As at 21 November 2024]* **How many are currently out of service currently awaiting maintenance?**

Reply:

The number of vehicles awaiting maintenance is not routinely available due to the dynamic nature of CFA truck maintenance scheduling, where unplanned critical maintenance is given priority ahead of planned maintenance (and triaged accordingly). Note, for both unplanned and planned maintenance, brigades can receive a service exchange vehicle to ensure there is no impact on capability.

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QUESTION ON NOTICE

Asked by: Aiv Puglielli MP

Question: What is the yearly cost to the department to administer the fines system, specifically the enforcement of registered infringements?

Reply:

Victoria's infringements system is made up of over 140 State Government, local government and other enforcement agencies such as hospitals and universities, which issue fines.

The Department of Justice and Community Safety supports the collection and enforcement of infringement fines from when they are issued by Victoria Police and most other State Government enforcement agencies. This includes the statutory functions of the Director, Fines Victoria, responsible for managing unpaid infringement and court fines registered for collection and enforcement under the *Fines Reform Act 2014*, and the functions of the Sheriff, responsible for executing enforcement warrants issued by the Magistrates' Court for unpaid infringement and court fines.

These activities are captured in the Budget Paper 3 output for fines and road safety enforcement. The cost of delivering these outputs in 2023-24 was \$270.1 million (Department of Justice and Community Safety Annual Report, p. 45).

The department does not report separately on costs associated with specific stages or aspects of the fines lifecycle, such as the enforcement of infringement fines from the point they are registered with Fines Victoria.

Question: How does the cost of enforcement compare to infringements revenue collected following registration of infringements with Fines Victoria?

Reply:

In 2023-24, \$750 million in fines revenue was reported (State's Annual Financial Report 2023-24, p. 53). Fines are collected from road safety cameras, toll road evasions, police on-the-spot, court and other (non-traffic) statutory infringements. This figure recognises fines income at the time the infringement notice is issued, not at the point when it is paid.

It is not expected that all fines will result in the collection of revenue. There is a range of mechanisms and schemes in place to support vulnerable and disadvantaged fine recipients who cannot, or should not, have to pay their fines.

The department does not report separately on fines revenue for a particular stage of the fines lifecycle, such as after a fine has been registered with Fines Victoria.

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QUESTION ON NOTICE

Asked by: Danny O'Brien MP

Question: Do you have a square-metre figure for fire stations, for example, that you have each year on what it costs?

Reply:

The current Fire Station estimate (2 bay facility) equals \$1,236 per square metre¹. The estimate per square metre has been calculated using recent market rates in comparable locations for comparable sites. The scope for a 2 bay CFA facility includes:

The Building

- Motor bays, including thicker concrete base slabs to accommodate larger vehicles and appliances
- Office and multipurpose areas
- Volunteer turn out rooms
- Workshops
- Kitchen & staff amenities
- Laundries
- Breathing apparatus rooms

The Site

External works and services required to support the facility are:

- Water
- Sewerage (including septic tanks where required)
- Electricity
- Telephony & data services
- Road resealing / widening / slip lanes (where required by Department of Transport and Planning (DTP))
- Crossovers and footpaths (where required by Council / DTP)
- Traffic signals (where required by DTP)
- Public lighting upgrades (where required)

¹ Assumes the CFA building represents approximately 14% of the total site and incorporates both the facility build estimate and the associated supporting infrastructure required for the site.

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QUESTION ON NOTICE

Asked by: Nick McGowan MP

Question: *[In relation to the increase to Probate Office Fees which commenced on 18 November 2024]*
How much do you expect the new fee increase to actually raise?

Reply:

On 20 June 2024 the Department of Justice and Community Safety released a Regulatory Impact Statement, which proposed a new fee structure for Probate Office Fees. The projected revenue for the preferred option contained in the Regulatory Impact Statement was \$46.7 million, had it been implemented for the entire 2024-25 financial year.

The total fee revenue attributable to services rendered by the Office of the Registrar of Probate (Probate Office) in 2024-25 is now expected to be \$33.78 million. This is comprised of estimated revenue collected under the old fee structure of \$5.05 million up until 17 November 2024 and then projected revenue under the new fee structure from 18 November 2024 to 30 June 2025 of \$28.73 million.

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QUESTION ON NOTICE

Asked by: Nick McGowan MP

Question: How many Victorians who sought Victoria Legal Aid funding had their applications rejected in 2023-24?

Reply:

In 2023-24, 2,551 people had their application for legal aid rejected. 44 of those applications were made for an independent review of the decision, resulting in 7 rejections being overturned on review.

Further explanation of services

The services provided and funded by Victoria Legal Aid (VLA) vary from providing information or advice on a single occasion, having duty lawyers available to assist people at courts and tribunals on the day their matter is listed, through to legal advice and representation for lengthy and complex matters that may continue over years.

Legal aid funding for ongoing, rather than one off, assistance is provided through grants of aid that are paid to the person's lawyer. Eligibility for grants is governed by funding guidelines. The funding guidelines are contained in the VLA Handbook which is publicly available.

Under the *Legal Aid Act 1978* (the Act), VLA is required to set guidelines in relation to the provision of legal aid and, in particular, guidelines to be applied for the purpose of determining whether legal assistance may be provided to a person under the Act. Guidelines are set having regard to funds available, any legal aid arrangement and relevant recommendations of the Commonwealth.

Grant applications are generally made by lawyers on behalf of their clients. When assessing applications for grants of legal assistance, the following are generally considered:

- Whether the legal matter is one for which VLA may make a grant of legal assistance in accordance with the Act.
- Whether the person qualifies for a grant of legal assistance under the means test.
- The merits of the legal matter.
- What, if any, initial financial contribution VLA will require the person to pay if VLA makes a grant of legal assistance.
- The conditions which VLA may place on the grant of legal assistance. These include standard terms such as keeping VLA informed about financial circumstances and may include conditions related to financial contributions the person is required to make in certain circumstances.

If VLA refuses to make a grant of legal assistance to a person, then VLA will tell the person and their lawyer (if any) of its decision in writing. VLA will also tell the person and their lawyer of their right to request:

- VLA to internally reconsider its decision
- an independent review, if they are unhappy with the result of internal reconsideration.

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