

# **LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING COMMITTEE**

## **Inquiry into the 2026 Summer Fires across Victoria**

Quantong – Wednesday 22 April 2026

### **MEMBERS**

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**Necessary corrections to be notified to  
executive officer of committee**

**The CHAIR:** Welcome back to the proceedings of the Legislative Council Environment and Planning Committee's inquiry into the 2026 summer fires, coming to you today from the Quantong community recreation centre. We are now moving to the open mic session part of today's proceedings. This is really an opportunity for the committee to do a bit of listening instead of talking for a change, and to hear from the community members. What the set-up will be is – I have got a list of about a dozen people who have preregistered. I will call you up in the order I have got here in groups of three or four. There are four seats and four microphones, so I will probably get four people up at a time. Then we will just go through the list one by one. Everyone will have 3 minutes to make a statement, and we will take it from there.

I will just read out the names, and those who are here in the first four can come up. I have got Joshua Hodges, Kevin Bolwell, Peter Flinn and Andrew Colbert. There is no assigned seating, so you can sit wherever you like. Just sit in front of a microphone.

I will tell you, as I have told everyone, that all the evidence that we receive and that you give us is protected by parliamentary privilege, which means that there cannot be any action against you for anything you say to us today. We will be recording and will provide you with a copy of the transcript to review at the end of the session. Three minutes – it would be great if you could keep to time so we can get through as many people as we possibly can. And with that, I think I will start with Josh. Before everyone begins, if you could just state your full name for the Hansard record, that would be great.

**Joshua HODGES:** Dr Joshua Hodges. I am a local volunteer in Natimuk group, second lieutenant of the Noradjuha fire brigade and a dual responder with the Natimuk fire brigade, group community safety coordinator and group comms officer. I am also CFA staff and the district 17 vegetation management officer.

I am just going to quickly speak. I know the committee obviously heard a bit from me on the tour this morning. I am just going to provide a bit more detail, just officially, on some of the fuel management and community safety work that was done at a group level prior to this fire. Just for awareness, the group community safety coordinator role, which I undertake for Natimuk group, has two components. One is the fuel management and vegetation management side of things. The other is the community engagement side of things.

Just by way of a few facts, 16 treatments were nominated onto the joint fuel management program for Natimuk group. Of those, five treatments were completed this year. That was four burns and one slashing treatment. Obviously a couple of those you did see today. There were a few treatments that were impacted by the Natimuk fire that were not treated in the lead-up to it. There are quite a few reasons as to why that is, but I am just going to put it on the record from my perspective as Natimuk group community safety coordinator. That had little to do with any planning issues. All of our burns were 100 per cent planned and approved and had environmental and heritage values checks approved. The predominant issues associated with delivery of treatments – one is just suitable weather windows; weather always plays a big role in being able to get our treatments done, and the other being availability. But I will just say that Natimuk group was the only group in district 17 to complete any roadside burning this financial year, which I think is a testament to the work that our volunteers and our local farmers as well did do in committing some resourcing to some planned burning, which is fantastic.

On that, a couple of those treatments that were done prior to that in 2024, that was the first set of roadside burning that Natimuk group had undertaken for quite a considerable number of years, so it has been a big increase in roadside burning done by the group in the last couple of years, which is really good. Should we be doing more? Could we be doing more? Of course we can. There are a lot of things that we could be doing more, but I think as a group we have been doing quite well in our preparedness.

The other aspect of that is the community engagement side of things. We did not have a group community engagement plan this year – we will be putting one up this year – but we had been doing quite a lot of social media posts in the lead-up. I know there were some questions about the warnings that went out during the incident but noting that there was a social media campaign by the group in our local community Facebook groups. Around the lead-up to any total fire ban day we have a message that we put out for extreme days and we have messages that we put out for catastrophic days, which was worked through with Parks Victoria focusing on what to do – leave early; the location of the neighbourhood safer place on Jory Street, which is the Natimuk Showgrounds; and also evacuation of Mount Arapiles and leaving early, which we worked through with Parks Victoria. So that gets done. Should we be doing more? Yes, of course we could be, but I am just noting that in the aftermath of the fire a number of people did contact me about those posts as well, and they

had made a positive influence on their decision-making on the day. That is probably enough from me. Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Great. Thanks, Josh. Kevin, just state your full name if you can.

**Kevin BOLWELL:** I have been in the CFA for 50 years. I have held most positions right up to the ICC. There are three things I would like to talk about. One is fuel load. Fuel load has increased in the last 40 years on farms due to good-quality farming, shifting from cropping to sheeping. Council roads – there is very little done in fuel reduction burns on council roads, or slashing or cleaning up. Then you get to the Natimuk Creek – nothing done there. There were landowners that used to lease the creek frontage and they used to keep it eaten down, keep the vermin out and keep the weeds out. That has not been done for many, many years. You move across past Natimuk and you get to the Wimmera River. Again, it has been fenced-off land that was used and leased and eaten down and cleaned up. It has been finished. Then you jump over the river and you get into this area here where it used to be all irrigation area. There are channel reserves and various other things that have not even been looked at in the last 10 to 15 or 20 years, perhaps. So that is fuel loads.

‘Catastrophic day’ is a great word that somebody invented. We listened to Ivan before – he had catastrophic days in 1944. This is not – a catastrophic day is a name. It is not something where you can turn around after a fire and say, ‘It was a catastrophic day; we couldn’t do anything.’ It is not. A catastrophic day is just what we call a day over 100 FDI on the grassfire index.

When you have got a place like Natimuk, when you call a catastrophic day, you have got different bureaucratic organisations that look after people in Natimuk in their houses. Some have got cancer. A person has got to go out there, a district nurse or something or other, to help them with their tablets on the day. You have got people that need to be helped around their house to get changed and clothed and things like that. All these people have been forgotten about. They are all sitting in their houses, shivering in their boots, because we called it a catastrophic day so therefore, when you get into the other organisations, they do not bring the people out because it is too dangerous for them – occupational health and safety and various other things. There are probably about 50 people between Hateleys Road, which is 2 or 3 k’s from the start of the fire, right through and into Natimuk. Then you have got the nursing home. They did a fantastic job – great – but then when you left the nursing home, there were people all around through that community with mental problems, health problems and mobility problems. Then you move into this area here, and you have got four or five people that are in the same boat again, and we do not look after them.

A catastrophic day – people all get up in the morning and want to do a good job. They want to help and nobody wants to do anything bad and nasty, but how it ends up is that these people fumble their way through the day. You call evacuations – where are you going to evacuate 500 people into Horsham? There are 12 seats in at Kmart. There are a few seats at the pool. Where is safe? We need to do more to look after people within their communities – health and physically. There is no transportation. Ambulances – when you ring for an ambulance to come into Natimuk on that day, there are a lot of processes that go through behind the 000 call before the ambulance leaves the station. Ambulances are pulled out of various areas on catastrophic days to solidify up where they are and be safe –

**The CHAIR:** All right. Kevin, if I can get you to just wrap up, because we have hit our time.

**Kevin BOLWELL:** but no aerial support on catastrophic days. Then we have got fireground commands – a lot of scrap and no local knowledge in any of the areas that are in command.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. Peter.

**Peter FLINN:** Peter Flinn, chairman of the Howitt Society and secretary of the Grampians asset protection group, life member of the CFA and of Dunkeld fire brigade. I just want to reinforce the comments already made about fire prevention. In a bush- or grassfire – it has already been said – the only factor we can influence is the fuel. How? Using fire, but in the right way and at the right time. Mild fuel reduction, burning carefully controlled, is a vital tool both in our forests and on our roadsides. This is good fire. It has been used in Australia since ancient times, and we need more of it. On the other hand, we all know what bad fire is. We saw it run riot last summer, we saw it devastate the Grampians and the Little Desert just over a year ago, as well as the death and destruction wreaked on the many so-called black days as far back as 1851 – but it seems we never learn.

A key recommendation from the 2009 Black Saturday royal commission that a minimum of 5 per cent of Victoria's public land be fuel-reduced each year was rejected by the government. Instead we have the Safer Together policy – a real misnomer; it is not working. Similarly, the vital and time-honoured practice of roadside firebreaks burnt annually and efficiently by CFA volunteer brigades to protect their communities has also become much more difficult. The process has been strangled by unrealistic bureaucratic conditions and at much greater cost. As a result, more roadsides are becoming serious fire hazards, something sadly evident in some of the recent fires. The call from some quarters for a response-only strategy in which fuel reduction is rejected as useless and damaging to the environment is a recipe for disaster. Of course we need rapid detection and response and efficient firefighting equipment. However, its use can be severely limited during a raging bushfire in searing heat and gale-force winds, particularly aircraft.

After yet another massive wake-up call, enough is enough. We need more good fire at the right time to help reduce the intensity and catastrophic effects of bad fire at the wrong time. It is not good enough to wring our hands about climate change, which does not cause fires but of course can adversely affect weather conditions when a fire starts. Fires will always start, whether by lightning, accident, carelessness or sadly arson, but their intensity can be reduced. Climate change makes it even more urgent to undertake serious and effective fuel reduction using every possible weather opportunity. Wisps of white smoke in autumn are preferable to heavy black smoke and red skies in midsummer. Prevention is better than cure.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. Andrew.

**Andrew COLBERT:** Like any good book, there are villains and heroes. In the case of the Little Desert and Grass Flat fires, the villains are the forest fire management and incident control centre; the heroes are the men and women of the Wimmera. DEECA under their many guises, Forest Fire Management Victoria, Parks Victoria and the incident control centre did not start any of these fires that led to a majority of the Wimmera's population being in extreme danger not once but twice. Two thousand people in three towns were hurriedly forced to evacuate. The Wimmera's capital Horsham was put on notice to evacuate. Countless farming families were evacuated, with those remaining left no option but to fight. DEECA presented them with fires on a horrific scale.

I will have to miss this. I do not have much time.

I will go back to an earlier point, where it was asked about the ESVF. I question the reason why all CFA volunteers and registered firefighters are not exempt from the fire services levy, or the ESVF, and insurance on stamp duty. They are the people that run towards danger while others run away. Self-employed volunteers deserve better. Each call-out amounts to hundreds, if not thousands, of dollars.

Thank you for coming from the city to the Wimmera.

**Jacinta ERMACORA:** I did not come from the city.

**Wendy LOVELL:** I am from Shepp.

**Jacinta ERMACORA:** I am from Warrnambool.

**Andrew COLBERT:** Okay, thanks for coming to the north-west Wimmera.

**The CHAIR:** Thanks for having us. Thanks, gentlemen. We will get the next crew up. The next lot for the open mic are Matt Morgan, Ross Johns, Trevor Puls and John Bennett.

Just a reminder that all the evidence you give to us today is protected by parliamentary privilege, so you are protected from any action for what you say here. You will be given a transcript of the proceedings afterwards. We have got 3 minutes. If you can keep to time, that will be great, so we can get through. And before you speak, it will be exceptionally helpful if you could state your name for the Hansard record. Should we start here and work our way down?

**Ross JOHNS:** Thank you. A couple of procedural issues, if I may, first up. Have you got a copy of the bushfire royal commission recommendations?

**The CHAIR:** Just if we can get you to state your name.

**Ross JOHNS:** Ross Johns.

**The CHAIR:** Thanks, Ross. Yes.

**Ross JOHNS:** You do. And can I refer to issues contained therein?

**The CHAIR:** Yes.

**Ross JOHNS:** All right. Well, look, thank you very much, inquiry members, the Victorian Parliament and members of the public. Thank you all for coming. I would like to highlight some very wilful disregard, or in fact planned criminal neglect. I am the president of the Wimmera Mallee Environmental and Agricultural Protection Association, a role I take very seriously. The issues around bushfire in Australia have been long and well established – Black Thursday in 1851, a massive blaze; 14 February 1926, a massive blaze; and January 1939, and there was a royal commission after that blaze. And do you know what they recommended? That there should be strategic cool burning. In 2009 there was a massive fire in Victoria that killed 173 people and destroyed 2000 homes; also fuel reduction burns were a key component of that recommendation – 5 per cent of Victoria’s bush and scrub land should be cool-burnt. In fact we have had less than one. There is an issue here that the Victorian government is exposing regional Victorians to extreme life-threatening risk, and despite good information that has been provided, there has been no action.

Farmers are people that are practical. We do practical things for practical reasons. A bureaucracy is something that writes a report and never reads the report. We must have results. I am claiming there is a very different Umwelt, a way of thinking, between practical country farming people and the bureaucracy of government. Today in Australia 18 per cent of our workforce is employed by government – 18 per cent. That means we have got 18 per cent of people that are not doing practical things to reduce risk and exposure to rural communities. Why is regional Australia important? Fourteen per cent of Australia’s export revenue comes from agriculture. Sixty per cent of Australia’s export revenue comes from mining. Both of those two key industries are run in regional Australia and regional Victoria.

I would like to make five key recommendations to this inquiry. To fully implement the recommendations of the bushfire royal commissions of 2009 and 1939, what I am proposing is that we actually reduce the fuel load prior to the severe event; (b) keep bureaucracy out of fuel reduction burning; (c) implement continuous and best global practice fuel reduction burning in the highly combustible environment of Victoria – we are potentially the most combustible environment in the world; (d) fire control is hugely difficult on a catastrophic day, if not impossible, so all the planning must be done in the years leading up to the actual event; and (e) rescind the pathetic emergency services and volunteer levy that has been imposed on country and rural people, and that will increase the participation in the CFA, which has been absolutely lacking. This government is prepared to pass off \$15 billion to criminals and yet not fund adequately an emergency services system that protects regional Victorians for \$350 million? This is appalling. Thank you very much.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. State your name, and then we will get into it.

**Trevor PULS:** My name is Trevor Puls. Thank you for this opportunity to speak to the committee. I am the captain of the Vasey fire brigade, which is about 80 k south of here near Balmoral, but I am speaking as an individual. At this point I must say that we have actually had a very quiet fire season, a rarity in this room. I did not come to Natimuk. Our truck did not come to Natimuk. We did go to the Telangatuk fire.

Thank you for giving grassroots firefighters an opportunity to be heard, and I am as grassroots as you can get. As you may well know, I sent a submission into the inquiry. I have never sent a submission into anything before, like many others in this room. This is not what I do or who I am, but I consider the issues important enough to get out of my comfort zone. While you have heard about operational issues relating to this past summer, my focus is more on the morale and engagement with CFA by remote rural firefighters – shed in the paddock brigades – which are not connected to a township or lifestyle properties. I have focused on the structure of our remote rural brigades, attempting to highlight the differences between our brigade and an urban or peri-urban brigade. To give an example, of the approximately 1200 CFA brigades in Victoria, there were 547 who participated in Get Fire Ready events last year. If you overlay a map of brigades in Victoria with the Get Fire Ready participation map, you can clearly see which areas did not participate. My submission indicates some of the reasons why they did not participate in events like Get Fire Ready. My submission also focuses on

the necessity and use of private vehicles and utes within rural areas, pointing out that they are not in addition to the CFA but are entwined, have an equal role in firefighting and must be acknowledged as such.

I would like to end with what a brigade member said to me: 'There are many things in life I must do, but I do not have to be a volunteer.' This further highlights the low morale in rural brigades and the disrespect they feel as CFA volunteers. As a society we must have processes and an ethos in place so that the community feels that they will want to volunteer, knowing they will be safe and respected. I welcome any queries or questions, but for me, it is more important that the questions I have asked in my submission be answered, because the answers to these questions will give a greater insight into remote rural brigades than I can. I do have a few potential legislation changes, if I get a moment.

**The CHAIR:** Very quickly.

**Trevor PULS:** I will start with the easy ones: a fully funded FCV to a five-brigade ratio at the moment; FCVs to remote Starlink for phone connectivity; renewable infrastructure to be levied at the same rate as businesses, especially owing to the low CFA volunteer commitment by these multinational companies and that air support is severely limited when firefighting is in the vicinity of this infrastructure; and a comprehensive survey be undertaken to assess morale, needs and concerns of all brigade members, and the results made public so that procedures and policies can be better targeted. Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Thanks, Trevor.

**John BENNETT:** John Bennett, local farmer, CFA member, chair of the West Wimmera Action Group. I farm next to the Little Desert. The Little Desert National Park was set up in the 1950s to protect the endangered malleefowl. The work was put in by a number of local farmers, and 1200 hectares were set aside. That has currently grown to 130,000 hectares. The fire there two years ago burnt 90,000 of that 130,000 hectares with devastating consequences. The previous largest fire there had been of 15,000 hectares, back to the 1940s. The first day the fire went to Dimboola in the afternoon, about 60 kilometres, and burnt 70,000 hectares. Due to a number of other circumstances, potentially avoidable, the fire then burnt back to the point of ignition over six days. That was the bit we could have actually fixed.

When you look back over the royal commissions or commissions or inquiries into fire, fuel reduction is always coming up as a common thread. Local farmers, people living in local communities and environmentalists all have intimate knowledge of fire and its behaviour. They use it as tools in their businesses, and they understand its impact on the ecosystem. Increasingly those local people are feeling that their voices are being discounted in the discussions about managing the environment with fuel reduction, which directly impacts them. In many cases private landowners are being asked to provide the firebreak for public lands. The state government is our largest neighbour, and in many cases I think we are being asked to contribute more than what is being done on the other side of the fence. I do not think that meets requirements that good neighbours have of each other. I always presume good intent. Since the fire the West Wimmera Action Group has been approached by Michael Condon and DEECA, and we have actually started to set up some formal interaction.

My recommendation is that the government looks to set up a formal mechanism or engagement process with interagencies and all stakeholders, including rural representatives with appropriate knowledge, and that timeliness and accountability would be a centrepiece of that vehicle. Practical outcomes would be the key objective. I would also recommend that the emergency services volunteer levy be rescinded. To demonstrate the impact of that: in the Shire of Ballarat if the rate rises went up this year, every man, woman and child in the Shire of Ballarat would pay \$100. In the West Wimmera shire – with a population of about 4000, 80 per cent of those rates coming from rural ratepayers – that would be \$1000 per man, woman and child. That demonstrates the inequity of that tax. We need to be well funded, but that is not the way to do it.

**The CHAIR:** Thanks, John. Matt.

**Matt MORGAN:** Thank you. Matthew Morgan. I am a senior leading firefighter with FRV in Melbourne. This is going to beg the question: what am I doing here if I am not a volunteer and I am not a resident of the bush? I have never seen up close a bushfire, never had to drive down a road surrounded by exploding trees, but I have been on strike forces that have come to do asset protection and release local brigades with the local knowledge to go and fight the fire proper. I will tell you what I have seen. I have seen 30- and 40-year-old Hino tankers with no turnover protection system and crew riding in the back under a fibreglass roof coming back

after 24, 36, sometimes 48 hours out on the fireground exhausted. And what is provided there for them? More times than not I have seen there is nothing provided there for them.

Now, I have been referred to as a professional firefighter. I will tell you what makes me a professional firefighter is the fact that I chose it as a career and I get paid for it. Anyone who takes on the mantle of firefighter is already a professional because of their dedication to each other and the community, their commitment to their people and their respect for the job. I will not be swayed on that. It is now time to pay the piper. We have relied on the goodwill and the generous nature of volunteer firefighters since the dawn of time. They outnumber the career firefighters. They do not want an AFL round named after them. We do not need a national firefighters day. They want to be looked after.

Let me gather my thoughts here. I find it remarkable that in one fell swoop, as a 30-year member of the firefighters union, that current conditions have managed to wipe out more than a decade's worth of animosity between career and volunteer firefighters. We are now joined together in an effort to improve our lot, and frankly, congratulations, because no-one else has been able to do it. So bluntly, folks, you have sowed the wind, now you have got to reap the whirlwind. They need to be looked after. Thanks, Ryan.

**The CHAIR:** Thanks, Matt. Thanks to the four of you. We will get the next one up. The last registered participant I have is Brad Marson. This would be an opportunity for anyone else who is in the gallery who wants to participate. This will be our last opportunity to do that. If anyone wants to do that, they can talk to the secretariat. Otherwise Brad can take his pick of the seats.

All the evidence you give us is protected by parliamentary privilege, which means you cannot have any action taken against you for what you say today. You will be provided with a draft of the transcript following the proceedings. Brad, I might start with you – 3 minutes.

**Brad MARSON:** My name is Bradley Marson. I am a CFA captain and group training officer, and I am the vice-president of the CFA volunteers group. I was also a member of the first initial CFA strike team that came up to the Natimuk fire out of district 4. My talking points all relate to preparation and planning, alongside volunteer retention.

CFA's experience, knowledge and devotion start with it is wildfire firefighters, the volunteers. However, through bureaucratic interference, a huge gap has formed in the volunteer firefighting organisation controlled and managed by everyone except our experienced wildfire firefighters with extensive local knowledge within the areas they volunteer. Fuel reduction and roadside burns not only mitigate the risk of fire starting on the roadsides, like we have seen in Longwood and in my district this year, but they also create an extremely important strategic landscape that can be used to guide bushfires into before they become too aggressive and large for the CFA and other organisations to manipulate. Bureaucratic processes now only hinder community preparedness in the CFA rather than help them. This needs to change so that when CFA leading firefighters and groups see risks that need to be eliminated or strategic burns put in place for the upcoming fire season, they have full autonomy across all levels in the state to implement and conduct these strategic protection plans, supported by CFA staff and seconded officers, and also without interference from outside organisations, as their primary concern is not the protection of life and property like it is ours.

This also highlights the issues the CFA and Victorian community face with not having their most experienced wildfire firefighters in management positions. This applies at all levels. We need the knowledge, the skill and the expertise of Victoria's most experienced wildfire firefighting leaders placed within the CFA chains of command. The CFA board is out of touch with volunteers. There needs to be volunteer representatives from each region elected by that region's group officers. They also need to be able to access and fill roles in all levels of management within the CFA structure, which they currently do not. More influence is needed to ensure practical and effective programs and policies are implemented that do not have a negative impact on volunteer retention like we have seen over the past few years.

There is a detrimental gap, where highly skilled wildfire fighters cannot positively influence or affect firefighting techniques and strategies at a management level. This needs to change. Volunteer retention – there will be an unknown toll of volunteers that have left the service due to the implementation of the new emergency and volunteers fund tax. These members remain officially on record, but they no longer have the capacity to respond to protect Victorians like they once used to. This was apparent at a local fire event in my

district, where 20 tankers were called for, but only 11 responded, with some brigades travelling past others that did not respond to the fire.

The financial pressures that have now been placed on CFA volunteers – on the CFA volunteer base – in a targeted tax with an ineffective rebate scheme for volunteers is seeing brigades now having to pay a tax of some over \$400,000. My brigade alone is \$90,000, and for its members the new tax alone has single-handedly cut volunteer availability to the service, and the one local event above highlights this. Ageing appliances and substandard safety features are a major concern, with near misses and potential fatal results a major concern. I have got one example of a brigade in Victoria. The brigade management team made a decision on themselves to implement a standing order where no-one could ride on the back of that tanker anymore. It was a 30-year-old tanker. A week later after they had implemented that, there was an incident where the water tank on the back of the tanker became dislodged and slammed into the back of the bulkhead. If volunteers were sat on the back of that tanker, they would be dead. That is it.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. Sir, if you could just state your name for the record before you start.

**Lester MAYBERY:** I am Lester Maybery. I am a local – most likely a vocal local. I represent the Natimuk group of fire brigades. I have been a CFA member all my life – group officer for the past couple of decades, but now I am only deputy. One: I was a little bit disappointed that I never got an invite to go with you on the tour today, to be honest. I would have loved to have been there. The fire at Natimuk and Quantong – wait a minute, I have just got to get myself back here.

**The CHAIR:** That is all right.

**Lester MAYBERY:** The CFA has lost members, especially the younger ones, I believe to the extent of one to two generations. Where is our succession plan with that? We are not going anywhere. The fire at Natimuk and Quantong if it was left to Forest Fire Management Victoria and the CFA, in my mind and several others, would have made Horsham. The volunteers that turned out in their private appliances were the only way the fire was managed, controlled and extinguished. I see a couple of problems there. Problem one that has raised its head is communication and how to manage the volunteers. On a day like that it is pretty awesome, and so many people are there. Problem two: how well are these volunteers insured, personally and their appliances? It makes me shudder to think what it may be. The CFA has not managed their resources very well either. We have two large tankers in region 17. One is only 30 minutes away, and it failed to make the fire. With a catastrophic day, as they planned the night before, that unit should have been put on stand-by because there would be no aerial support.

The other issue I have got is the lack of water. It has been an aim of mine to have water in the Mitre dam, and I have met with several deputations, but to no avail. I met with a consultant, a forest fire management person, and we moved 3000 metres out of the dam. The flood came and knocked the wall out. He provided the money to repair the wall, but now we have not got water there, and I would love to get some. There is a problem there. I think it is Parks Victoria that have done it. They have put culverts in where the old spillway was, and it causes the water to build up when there is a flood on and almost go over the bank. This dam is within a kilometre of the pipeline and within a kilometre of Mount Arapiles. It would be just perfect for a helicopter to work out of and look after our communications and everything that is on top of the mount. Please help me to do something with that. In concluding, please include a helicopter in our air support. Thank you, and thanks for coming along.

**The CHAIR:** An absolute pleasure. Thank you both for your contributions. I want to thank everyone who has contributed to the open mic session, all the witnesses who participated in today's proceedings, all the members of the gallery who have joined to watch and everyone who has made this committee's time in this part of the world so informative and welcoming. We thank you very much, and with that, today's hearings are concluded.

**Committee adjourned.**