

# **PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE**

## **Inquiry into the 2026–27 Budget Estimates**

Melbourne – Friday 15 May 2026

### **MEMBERS**

Sarah Connolly – Chair

John Pesutto – Deputy Chair

Jade Benham

Michael Galea

Mathew Hilakari

Lauren Kathage

Aiv Puglielli

Richard Riordan

Meng Heang Tak



## WITNESSES

Vicki Ward MP, Minister for Emergency Services;

Emma Cassar, Secretary,

Dean Tighe, Deputy Secretary, Emergency Management,

Timothy Wiebusch, Emergency Management Commissioner, Department of Justice and Community Safety, and

Sonia Meloni, Chief Executive Officer, Community Safety Building Projects, Victorian Infrastructure Delivery Authority.

**The CHAIR:** I declare open this hearing of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee and ask that mobile telephones please be turned silent.

On behalf of the Parliament the committee is conducting this Inquiry into the 2026–27 Budget Estimates. The committee's aim is to scrutinise public administration and finance to improve outcomes for the Victorian community.

I advise that all evidence taken by the committee is protected by parliamentary privilege. However, any comments repeated outside of this hearing may not be protected by this privilege.

All evidence taken today is being recorded by Hansard and is broadcast live on the Parliament's website. This broadcast includes automated captioning and members and witnesses should be aware that all microphones are live during the hearings and anything you say may be picked up and captioned, even if you say it quietly.

As Chair, I expect that committee members will be respectful towards witnesses, the Victorian community joining the hearing via the livestream and other committee members.

Witnesses will be provided with a proof version of the transcript to check and verified transcripts, presentations and handouts will be placed on the committee's website.

I welcome the Minister for Emergency Services, the Honourable Vicki Ward, as well as officials from the Department of Justice and Community Safety.

Minister, I invite you to make an opening statement presentation of no more than 5 minutes, after which time committee members will ask you some questions. Your time starts now.

**Vicki WARD:** Thank you. Chair. I acknowledge the Wurundjeri people as the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet today and pay my respects to elders past and present. I also acknowledge and thank every Victorian, Australian, New Zealander and Canadian for all they did for Victorian communities over a very difficult fire season.

### Visual presentation.

**Vicki WARD:** The changing climate is evident across Victoria, causing more frequent, prolonged and intense natural disasters. The increased occurrence and severity of bushfires, storms and floods is placing ever-growing pressure on Victoria's emergency services. Long-term trends show that the number of incidents attended by emergency service organisations in Victoria is increasing. To keep pace, the government's investment in Victoria's emergency services has increased over the last decade, from \$1.1 billion in 2016–17 to \$2.26 billion in 2025–26.

This means emergency management output has more than doubled and demonstrates the government's longstanding commitment to supporting the emergency services. It is worth noting that this means the Allan Labor government has surpassed all other states in investment in our fire services. The Productivity Commission's report on government services proves we invest more than any other mainland state on both an overall as well as a per capita basis. This budget continues that work by backing our emergency services with the resources they need to help keep communities safe. We have provided over \$350 million in initiative

funding to equip our emergency services, boost emergency services capability, support our volunteers and help keep Victorians safe.

The government continues to invest in our emergency services vehicle and vessel fleets to help protect communities, delivering \$100 million to CFA over 10 years for new firefighting vehicles, continuing our fleet upgrade investment. The government is also strengthening investment in modernising FRV's fleet, with an extra \$13.5 million to replace appliances and to boost vehicle maintenance capability. \$4.3 million has also been allocated for MSAR vessel maintenance and the replacement of marine search and rescue response vessels at Port Welshpool and Torquay.

Fit-for-purpose infrastructure supports volunteer participation and service delivery outcomes, and that is why the government is investing \$17.4 million to construct a new facility for the VICSES Corio unit, deliver a refurbished VICSES facility for the Port Phillip unit and acquire land for the Whitehorse VICSES unit. The budget also delivers \$26.2 million for CFA for new upgraded planning and land acquisition across stations in Charlton, Mirboo North, Kingston and Woodvale, Yarrambat, Barongarook West, Lakes Entrance, Dereel, Nar Nar Goon and Beveridge. Funding of \$6.3 million is provided to upgrade FRV fire stations, including continued installation of diesel emission capture systems.

Further funding is also provided to directly support our wonderful volunteers. This budget delivers \$22.4 million for personal protective clothing, improved internet connectivity and wellbeing support for CFA volunteers. It also provides \$3.6 million to operationalise new VICSES units in the population growth areas of Kalkallo and Devon Meadows.

This government is always committed to keeping Victorians safe and delivers \$2.4 million in the budget to update VICSES local flood guides, municipal flood and storm emergency management plans. It also provides \$7 million to Life Saving Victoria for paid lifeguard services, rescue watercraft services, rescue helicopter and drone services, and public information, relations and messaging. The funding also supports the completion of surf lifesaving facilities at Bancoora and Point Lonsdale.

This budget allocates \$9.3 million for Victoria's contribution to operating and maintaining the national emergency alert system. The government is also investing to boost the sector's capability. FRV's old CFA-MFB hybrid human resource management systems will be replaced with a transformational, modern and efficient system thanks to an investment of \$37.1 million.

This budget delivers \$101.9 million to upgrade Victoria's 000 telephony system, further supporting Triple Zero Victoria to continue to provide timely and reliable responses to emergency calls and protect the community during emergencies, building on prior investments that we have already made in Triple Zero for their next generation CAD, as well as for extra frontline staffing. Thank you, Chair.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much, Minister. The first 7 minutes are going to go to the Deputy Chair.

**John PESUTTO:** Thank you, Chair. Good afternoon, Minister and officials. I will direct my question to the Secretary, or Fire Rescue Commissioner Gavin Freeman if he is attending, if not the Secretary. I refer to budget paper 3, page 80, and the need for a safe operating environment for firefighters, and also page 98 of the 'Department Performance Statement', referring to parliamentary appropriations for the department. Presumptive firefighter rights for cervical, ovarian and uterine cancers commenced in 2003. Can I ask, Secretary, what has been the additional cost to each year's budget for all claims pertaining to these three cancers, broken down by financial year and delineating between career and volunteer outputs, with an estimate for this year's budget?

**Vicki WARD:** Sorry, Mr Pesutto, can you tell us which cancers that was again?

**John PESUTTO:** It was cervical, ovarian and uterine.

**Vicki WARD:** Is there a reason why you have pulled out women's cancers?

**John PESUTTO:** I am just asking a question. I am not sure I have to explain why.

**Vicki WARD:** I just find it unusual that you would single out women's cancers, that is all.

**John PESUTTO:** I might ask the questions, Minister. If you do not have the info, I appreciate that, but could you commit to providing that to the committee?

**Emma CASSAR:** Yes, Mr Pesutto. We can take that one on notice and come back to you.

**John PESUTTO:** And just a further question in relation to this. What has been the cost of claims made under the presumptive program since its introduction in 2019? Again, if you do not have that information at hand –

**Emma CASSAR:** No, we do not have that information, I am sorry.

**John PESUTTO:** Okay. Again to the Secretary. Since Commissioner Freeman has been in the role, could you advise the committee on how often the commissioner, and on how many occasions the deputy commissioners, have attended any incident as the incident controller, broken down by year and incident and deputy commissioner attending?

**Vicki WARD:** Do you have a budget reference for your question?

**John PESUTTO:** I gave it earlier.

**Vicki WARD:** Did you?

**John PESUTTO:** Yes.

**Vicki WARD:** I did not hear it.

**The CHAIR:** Can you repeat it, please?

**John PESUTTO:** Okay. Not that I have to, but I will. Budget paper –

**The CHAIR:** Excuse me, Deputy Chair. It is common courtesy to witnesses and ministers, particularly if they have asked, and I think it is reasonable to do so in this case.

**John PESUTTO:** Budget paper 3, page 80, providing a safe operating environment for firefighters, and page 98 of the 'Department Performance Statement'. My question, I maintain, is not dependent on the budget paper reference. These clearly fall within the emergency services portfolio.

**Vicki WARD:** Well, the question does. But I guess the question is whether it is relevant to the budget or what we are discussing here today or whether you have got a question that is perhaps another agenda that is not relevant to today.

**John PESUTTO:** Minister, you have raised the question. Can I then put this to you: are not the government's departmental outputs relevant to the budget?

**Vicki WARD:** I would put to you that we usually do not talk about shifts that people do, but I can also tell you that in the State Control Centre over the summer I have seen many from FRV and I believe Commissioner Freeman also there.

**John PESUTTO:** Yes. It is a question asking how often deputy commissioners have attended any incident as the incident controller.

**The CHAIR:** Excuse me, Deputy Chair. There is a point of order. Ms Kathage.

**Lauren KATHAGE:** Thank you, Chair. To assist Mr Pesutto, as a new member of the committee, that line of questioning is better suited to the outcomes hearings, which are held at a different time of year. Right now we are inquiring into the existing budget before us, the programs involved and the costings. If he has a question relevant to this year's budget, I suggest that he puts it.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. Deputy Chair, if you wish to speak to the point of order, please do.

**John PESUTTO:** On the point of order, it is absurd to say at a hearing into these estimates that questions about outputs and taxpayer-funded roles, particularly in the emergency services portfolio, are not relevant to the matters before this committee. It is absurd. It is a simple question.

**The CHAIR:** Excuse me, Deputy Chair. Mr Hilakari, on the point of order.

**Mathew HILAKARI:** I think the budgets are forward looking. We use another session within PAEC to look back at the outcomes that have occurred. It is entirely reasonable for you to ask about prospective – things that are going to happen in the future – but I think if we are so far backwards looking, it is actually a different session that we do.

**The CHAIR:** I am going to rule on the point of order unless anyone else wishes to speak on that. I will take your silence as no. I do uphold the point of order raised by Ms Kathage, Deputy Chair. If you could rephrase your question so it fits within the terms of reference of the inquiry that is before the committee, perhaps that is a better way to move forward.

**John PESUTTO:** Could you note for the record I dissent from that, and I do not think it is a finding that is open.

**The CHAIR:** It is not a vote, Deputy Chair. It is not a vote. No motion is before the committee. Did you want to rephrase your question?

**John PESUTTO:** I think it is absurd, and if the Labor members of this committee are going to say you cannot look back, they would be the last to abide by the standards they are trying to impose on us.

**The CHAIR:** It is not the time of day for grandstanding.

**John PESUTTO:** Well, I did not raise the point of order.

**The CHAIR:** As I said, Deputy Chair, perhaps you can go ahead and rephrase your question.

**John PESUTTO:** Secretary Cassar, we want to know: are deputy commissioners involved in operational matters or are they office bound? That is what we are really getting at here. So can you tell, please, this committee how many deputy commissioners in the next year are expected to attend fire incidents and like occasions?

**Vicki WARD:** I think it would be helpful if we had clarification about what you are referring to when you say ‘operational matters’.

**John PESUTTO:** Well, attending any incident as the incident controller. Do you expect – may I put it this way –

**Vicki WARD:** We have just had a whole process to talk about the question that you have raised.

**until September last:** Minister, are you scared to answer this question?

**Vicki WARD:** No. What a ridiculous thing to say.

*Members interjecting.*

**The CHAIR:** Excuse me. You put a question to the minister. The minister can proceed.

**John PESUTTO:** Well, I put it to the Secretary, to be correct.

**The CHAIR:** If the minister wishes to answer it on behalf of the Secretary, then surely you must wish to have an answer.

**Vicki WARD:** But he is asking the same –

**John PESUTTO:** Are you scared of answering simple questions?

**Vicki WARD:** No. But your approach is quite bizarre.

**John PESUTTO:** It was a simple question.

**Vicki WARD:** As was mine, which is what is your –

**John PESUTTO:** Will deputy commissioners attend as incident controllers?

**Richard RIORDAN:** Is asking questions bizarre for you at PAEC?

**Vicki WARD:** No, just your questions are bizarre.

**Mathew HILAKARI:** In a hypothetical incident, who should turn up?

**Vicki WARD:** No, but you are re-prosecuting exactly the same question that has just been decided by the Chair.

**John PESUTTO:** Well, this a reflection on –

**Vicki WARD:** No, it is actually quite disrespectful of Commissioner Freeman, who does an extraordinary job.

**The CHAIR:** We are going to Mr Galea. Thank you, Mr Galea.

**Michael GALEA:** Thank you, Minister, Commissioner and officials. Other people that do exceptional jobs are CFA volunteers. Minister, as you know, I am very proud that in the south-east we have the CFA State Logistics Centre, which late last year we had a big intake of new trucks from. But I would like to ask you about budget paper 3, page 79, and the recurring funding over the forward estimates for delivering a new Country Fire Authority fleet. How do you propose to acquit this funding, Minister?

**Vicki WARD:** Thank you very much for your question, Mr Galea. We do know that Victoria, as we have seen over this summer, is one of the most fire-prone regions in the world. We do have an extraordinary body of people who do volunteer and put themselves forward with the CFA, notwithstanding the diverse array of people who were involved in responding to this year's fires, whether it be with CFA, FRV, FFMV or SES. The list is endless, the amount of people who have come from all over to help us fight an incredible amount of fires on our landscape.

We are continuing to back the CFA with the modern equipment and the appliances that they want and that they need. We want to support volunteers as much as we can to help keep communities safe. So in this budget there is, as was flagged in the presentation, \$100 million over 10 years for new appliances. And while this announcement is critical for delivering new fleet, it cannot be just seen in isolation as one investment and that that is all we are doing to help support, for example, the rollout of new appliances across the CFA. The announcement builds on the existing \$40 million that you might recall from last year, which is \$10 million over four years to invest in fleet. So that builds on the \$100 million announced this year. It also builds on supporting CFA brigades across the state. We have also doubled the volunteer emergency services and equipment program grants, which has significantly increased the investment with CFA. They had access last year to \$22 million. They have now got access to \$23 million, which is quite a change from what they had previously. What that does is give the CFA a huge amount of options in terms of, for example, this year alone, where they might want to direct their investment, which is anywhere up to \$53 million that can be used for new appliances, for firefighting equipment and so on. We know that CFA volunteers love their trucks and are very proud of them. We know that most Sundays there are training activities, but there is also a clean-up of the truck. I mean, I have gone out to brigades where they have got a volunteer whose sole role is to come in during the week and clean the truck and make sure everything is okay. It is a testament to the fact that there is almost always a job that you can do at the CFA. It does not matter what your time requirements might be or what your capabilities are or what you might want to do, there is always something for you to find to do so.

The CFA's first priority is always to make sure the trucks are safe and are fit for purpose, and we do want to apply those modern appliances. They can access new appliances with improved features and enhanced firefighting capability. It is the firefighting capability, but it is also the increased safety mechanisms that come with new appliances as well, whether it is foam protections over some appliances, whether it is the screens that

a number of cabins now have. There are amazing things that we are having with new appliances. We had 89 new trucks delivered in the last year, and there are 167 trucks in production right now. That includes heavy tankers, which have been delivered to places like Beaufort, light tankers for communities including Flowerdale, Omeo and Strathbogie and medium tankers delivered to brigades in Colac, Emerald, Marysville and Port Fairy, and ultra-heavy tankers supporting communities such as Ouyen, Murrayville and Lake Bolac. They have also delivered ultralight tankers for brigades including Heathcote, Mooroolbark, Port Fairy and Yackandandah, ensuring communities have the right vehicles for the local conditions and risks.

Whether you are peri-urban, whether you are in a regional centre or whether you are out with a few farms, you need different vehicles to respond to different challenges that you might have, as well as your topography. These investments are about making sure CFA volunteers have the equipment they deserve and that Victorian communities can continue to rely on a strong, modern emergency response fleet.

**Michael GALEA:** Thank you, Minister. You touched on peri-urban communities, which you and I both have, and particularly fire-prone areas as well. In terms of the immediacy, you did talk about some of the existing rollout that is taking place. If I can bounce off that, this funding that is in the forward estimates, how quickly can brigades expect to see the further rollout of new tankers light, heavy and in between?

**Vicki WARD:** Thank you. It is a good question, because I think that there is a perception by some that there is a showroom where you can just rock up and get a truck off the shelf and away you go. Trucks do take some time to build. All the chassis that we have both within CFA and FRV are imported. First, they have got to be designed, and CFA volunteers certainly have input into how trucks are designed. I know that the current designs that they have and the appliances that we are building are very much appreciated and liked by many volunteers. They go through a manufacturing process; I think there are about four places in the state or nationally where you can actually get your trucks assembled. They are all purpose built. It takes time to get them rolling through. Then they have got to be commissioned, and there has got to be training put in place to ensure that volunteers are able to drive their new trucks. They are then put into operation. So it can take some time.

I visited manufacturer RA Bell and saw firsthand how important this is. What is helpful with this long-term funding, though, is it means that there will be able to be some streamlining. Jason Heffernan has spoken to this, as has the owner of Bell engineering, which is that when you have got that pipeline, it means that you are able to really streamline that process, that the manufacturers have got that certainty around knowing what their pipeline looks like, what staff they have got to employ and how they have got to make sure that that production line works as quickly and safely as possible. But it also means that CFA is able to line their ducks and be able to order things in advance. As I said, chassis get ordered from overseas and that takes time. In the current climate, where we do not know where the Strait of Hormuz will take us next, it is really important to have that streamlined approach.

**Michael GALEA:** Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr Galea. Going to Ms Benham.

**Jade BENHAM:** Thank you, Chair. Secretary, this one might be best answered by yourself. What are the base budgets for all the emergency services organisations for 2026–27?

**Emma CASSAR:** Thank you for the question. ESO budgets can fluctuate each year, and we have seen that historically, and they often change throughout the financial year where budget supplementation is provided to cover the cost of the unpredictability of emergency events and incidents. Given that funding typically changes by year end, indicative budgets are not released. When figures are released at their appointed time, as opposed to the final figure, the total outcomes are best found in the ESOs' annual reports, departmental annual reports and indeed the budget papers.

**Jade BENHAM:** So there is not overarching base funding for CFA, SES and FRV?

**Emma CASSAR:** No, they are still being finalised.

**Jade BENHAM:** They are still being finalised. Okay. Do you have any idea whether the grant payments for CFA, SES and FRV will increase?

**Emma CASSAR:** So I will just see if Mr Tighe can –

**Jade BENHAM:** Still finalising?

**Dean TIGHE:** Still being finalised, yes.

**Jade BENHAM:** Okay. That is no problem. I want to go to the breakdown of CFA appliances that we were just talking about. Last year I think the minister took it on notice about the breakdown in pumper type et cetera. We need to, if we are able to, get the type of CFA appliances, pumpers and tankers, and the age profile. If we need to be supplied that on notice, that would be great, because it is a lot of information, I appreciate.

**Vicki WARD:** I think that has already been provided to the leader –

**Jade BENHAM:** Not the age profile – we are after the age profile. And also whether those appliances are actually owned by the brigades themselves or whether they are CFA owned, owned by the organisation, because there are apparently some differences.

**Vicki WARD:** Well, yes. So the differences are – you will have appliances that are issued direct from CFA. Then you will also have appliances that will have different funding points. So there will be appliances that will be managed through CFA, if you like, that will be a part of the volunteer emergency services and equipment program. So that means the brigade might contribute some, other orgs might contribute some, but the government has also contributed. They are brigade appliances, but there are multiple points of where they have actually been paid for and supplied.

**Jade BENHAM:** Yes, and that is fine. We are just after the age profile of –

**Vicki WARD:** CFA are the ones who order them and –

**Jade BENHAM:** I am sure the department will have that information. But the age profile –

**Vicki WARD:** It would be more that CFA would have that information. And CFA has quite –

**Jade BENHAM:** I would have asked the CFA.

**Vicki WARD:** an extensive fleet. They have not been here before, Ms Benham.

**Jade BENHAM:** This information has been provided, but not since 2024, and that data was from July 2023. So we are actually just following up now – we need the information on the age of CFA appliances.

**Vicki WARD:** I thought that was provided.

**Jade BENHAM:** You are happy to provide it? Great. Thank you.

**Vicki WARD:** Well, we have got to check, because we think it has been provided. We need to check the –

**Jade BENHAM:** Not since 2024. We have checked.

**Vicki WARD:** No. There was an FOI that was put through to the department and released.

**Jade BENHAM:** Yes, and the age profile was not provided. That is okay. I will move on.

**Vicki WARD:** We will see what we can find.

**Jade BENHAM:** I will move on to budget paper 3, page 3. Actually I want to go back to the first question where we talked about the budgets being finalised. When do we estimate those will be finalised, Secretary?

**Emma CASSAR:** They are in the annual reports, which come out around October, and we are working very closely with the ESOs to make sure those reports come out as quickly as possible.

**Jade BENHAM:** Do you have estimated budgets? They have been provided before to this committee. They were provided by then Minister Symes in 2024.

**Dean TIGHE:** No.

**Jade BENHAM:** No? Going back to budget paper 3. Page 3 shows funding provided across the whole of government for bushfire relief and recovery. How much of that funding was provided to emergency services organisations, ESOs – CFA, FRV et cetera – in 2025–26 and the out years? Could you provide a breakdown for each agency and year?

**Vicki WARD:** Could you ask us that question when we are before you under emergency recovery?

**Jade BENHAM:** I can.

**Vicki WARD:** Natural disaster recovery, sorry. It is not for this portfolio.

**Jade BENHAM:** Minister, there seems to be a lot of handballing.

**Vicki WARD:** It is not handballing.

**Jade BENHAM:** I asked you a question before the budget. This is the budget process, and I am asking about the estimates for the emergency services. I want to get to at least some answer here. It has been provided in the past. Estimated budgets for emergency services – CFA, SES, FRV – have been provided before. Why are you not able to provide this information any longer?

**Vicki WARD:** Because it is still being worked through with the agencies.

**Jade BENHAM:** But it is being worked through at this time every year. We understand that, but estimates in the past have been provided.

**Vicki WARD:** Ms Benham, until it has been decided what it is, there is no –

**Jade BENHAM:** So why was Minister Symes able to when she was the Minister for Emergency Services? She was able to provide those answers in 2024.

**Vicki WARD:** Maybe you could have asked Minister Symes that when she was before you as Treasurer.

**Jade BENHAM:** Okay. What has been provided to the emergency services organisations?

**Vicki WARD:** What do you mean?

**Jade BENHAM:** Surely they are working off an estimate so they can plan.

**Vicki WARD:** You are saying the department has worked with the emergency services –

**Jade BENHAM:** And given them estimated budgets leading into the forward estimates period.

**Vicki WARD:** That is for the emergency services organisations to talk through what they need and to work through with –

**Jade BENHAM:** So what are the figures that they are working off?

**John PESUTTO:** At the end of next month they start the next financial year, so how much money have they got?

**Jade BENHAM:** Surely they do not leave it until June, July, to start planning for the same financial year.

**Dean TIGHE:** We have ongoing conversations with them, and we worked with them from earlier on this year. The budget is finalised, and you will see through the emergency output – I think it is best illustrated – that fluctuation that can happen within the year. It was a change of 14.5 per cent. That is why we are not inclined to release those indicative budgets. They are still being finalised, and later on in the year, as the Secretary said, the annual report is when they are locked down.

**Jade BENHAM:** But this is budget estimates. You would think that would be up for discussion during budget estimates.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Mrs Benham, for being on time. We are going to Ms Kathage.

**Lauren KATHAGE:** Thank you, Chair, Minister and officials. It has been a really, really difficult summer for lots of communities across Victoria, absolutely devastating for so many. I join with you, Minister, in what you were saying earlier, just being so thankful to community members for following safety warnings. I think certainly around my house and in my town the app was the most popular thing going. I think it is great to see how it has become so normalised. And there is a lot of pride in our communities with the CFAs from our areas that went and protected and supported other communities. And to think that, you know, there are 1200 CFA stations across Victoria supporting communities, and we want them to have the best, most fit-for-purpose stations that there are. Looking at BP4, page 64, I can see that there is a bit over \$23 million in more CFA stations. Which communities are benefiting from this funding? There are a few different line items around CFA stations, so how is this supporting?

**Vicki WARD:** Thank you. Yes, there are a number of communities that are being supported in this budget, as well as communities that are carrying forward from previous budgets where the work is ongoing in terms of building, designing or acquiring land for new stations. We are working on a number of new builds for the CFA. Just let me get the list for you, because you will be pleased to know that one of them is yours. The budget has got a very good investment in CFA stations across the state, which is \$26.2 million in new funding for CFA infrastructure. That includes new funding for Barongarook West, Lakes Entrance and Dereel.

**Richard RIORDAN:** Hear, hear!

**Vicki WARD:** Glad you are happy about that.

**Richard RIORDAN:** Very happy – closest brigade to my house.

**Vicki WARD:** Oh, good. I bet you are doubly happy about that. And that includes land acquisition for Dereel and Nar Nar Goon. I know that there have been a lot of local MPs who have really worked to support Nar Nar Goon brigade, and that includes the Member for Pakenham as well as – as the captain Justin Seddon – the Member for Narracan. There is one for the Member for Kalkallo – Ros Spence has spent quite some time advocating for her station. And with the northern growth corridor, which I know you are very familiar with, Member for Yan Yean, it is important that we respond as the corridor continues to expand. We are regularly, as the department, in conversations with CFA on increasing risk profiles and future service needs across the state.

Beveridge is another community that has been identified by the CFA as needing additional support. In 2024 we opened the new Beveridge CFA station, replacing what had previously been a satellite station. That station remains in place and continues to serve the community, but with the growth that we are seeing in Beveridge there is greater risk and there is greater demand. The CFA advised us that long-term planning is now needed to meet that future demand, and local community members have also strongly advocated to both me and the Member for Kalkallo about the need for expanded services at a future station. We have listened to those concerns, and that why it is funded in this year's – well, it has been a priority for CFA, and we have responded by funding it in this budget. There is also –

**Lauren KATHAGE:** The captain's father is very happy.

**Vicki WARD:** Oh, glad to hear it. There are also upgrades for Yarrambat, in your own electorate.

**Lauren KATHAGE:** The local member is very happy.

**Vicki WARD:** I am glad to hear it because I know that you were also happy when we were out at Yarrambat for the 25th anniversary of their current station and that inclusive turnout space that they have created there – terrific brigade, good people, excellent captain. It was a good event. I reckon Captain Andrew Napoleone will also be happy with the news that there is additional investment in Yarrambat CFA. We will build on the improvements that have already been made at Yarrambat.

There are new builds also for Woodvale, Mirboo North, Charlton and Kingston. I understand Kingston brigade members started having conversations about a new station 15 years ago, so I am glad that we are finally there. I want to acknowledge the Member for Ripon and the brigade members for their persistence and advocacy in securing this outcome, just as the Member for Mildura, I know, has been an advocate for Charlton.

**Lauren KATHAGE:** Thank you. There are a few different elements that are under that. What about the sort of planning land acquisition elements? Can you talk us through how that works.

**Vicki WARD:** Yes. CFA will work with the – what is it called now? The Victorian Infrastructure –

**Sonia MELONI:** Delivery Authority.

**Vicki WARD:** In fact you might want to talk through the process of how land is acquired.

**Sonia MELONI:** Thank you. We work with the CFA and the agencies very closely in determining, based on their operational needs and their operational boundaries, the type of land or site that is required that best meets those needs. We work quite closely. They give us an indication of what they are looking for and then we undertake those investigations for them. We put those properties back to the CFA and other agencies to get their feedback, and then we undertake the due diligence once they confirm what site is right to meet their operational needs. So it is quite a process, but we try to ensure that we have done that due diligence before we present a site and make sure that we have taken into account any conditions or any other issues that we need to be across. That is quite a detailed process.

Similar to planning, we undertake all the planning needs in regard to dealing with council and understanding whether there is any cultural heritage management that needs to be looked at or there is native title or other planning conditions on that site. We factor that into our design, and then we factor that into our costings to make sure we get a station that is fit for purpose and meets their operational needs.

**Lauren KATHAGE:** Thank you. It is great to hear that there is that sort of looking ahead. Looking back, we know Mallacoota, for example, experienced devastating fires, so there is an existing project in the works for Mallacoota. What was that one? That is something a bit different, isn't it?

**Vicki WARD:** Mallacoota is a combined facility that is being worked through with both SES and MSAR to create a hub for that community so that you have got everybody. It is a very collaborative workspace, and I think Mallacoota are showing an example of how well that can go.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. Mr Riordan.

**Richard RIORDAN:** Thank you. Budget paper 3, page 79, has the allocations for the Country Fire Authority fleet. You have allocated some \$100 million for new appliances over the next 10 years. How many tankers and how many pumpers are you expecting to buy over the forward estimates?

**Vicki WARD:** Is that a question for me?

**Richard RIORDAN:** Yes.

**Vicki WARD:** Great. Thank you. That will be an operational decision by CFA. What CFA will be doing is looking at what their priority lists are and the kinds of appliances that are needed. Because there are so many different appliances that each brigade uses and utilises and will need, it means that the CFA will be working through what that number will be, because there is not just one price for one appliance – it is multiple appliances with different prices.

**Richard RIORDAN:** You mentioned to us before, I think when Mr Pesutto, the Deputy Chair, asked the question, and I wrote down that 167 trucks were ordered for next year.

**Vicki WARD:** Yes. That is from a previous investment.

**Richard RIORDAN:** So that is not included in this number?

**Vicki WARD:** No, because as I was explaining earlier to other members, you cannot walk into a showroom and pick up a truck. You have actually got to order it and it takes time.

**Richard RIORDAN:** Those 167 from previous budgets are being delivered all next year or over the course of how many years?

**Vicki WARD:** Well, the 167 will continue to roll out.

**Richard RIORDAN:** How many have rolled out to date?

**Vicki WARD:** Well, if you want me to finish my answer to you, I can, or you can keep interrupting me. That is up to you.

**Richard RIORDAN:** I am not interrupting you. I am just asking how many have been delivered.

**Vicki WARD:** They are in various processes now. Some are on order, some are being rolled out and being manufactured, and they will be delivered. Now, that date will depend on when the manufacturer completes that.

**Richard RIORDAN:** So how many have been delivered, of the 167?

**Vicki WARD:** Well, there are 167 in the pipeline.

**Richard RIORDAN:** Yes. Have we got any of the 167?

**Vicki WARD:** The 167 cannot be delivered if they are actually –

**Richard RIORDAN:** I know. Have you done one, have you done two, have you done three? How many have you delivered?

**Vicki WARD:** No. I am trying to work through the logic of your question because I have said that there are the 89 that have been delivered. There are 167 in the pipeline, so they by default and definition cannot be –

**Richard RIORDAN:** So the 89 are part of the 167?

**Vicki WARD:** No, they are delivered.

**Richard RIORDAN:** Right. So there are 167 more to come?

**Vicki WARD:** Right.

**Richard RIORDAN:** Are we getting five this year, 10 this year? How many of the 167? Perhaps if you do not know, Minister, could the Secretary answer the question?

**Dean TIGHE:** The information is provided by the CFA, which I think the minister touched on earlier. So it goes through design, planning and procurement. The 167 that you mentioned are in various stages of design and delivery. Given that I think it said roughly for specialist appliances the timeframe for delivery is approximately 12 months, you would expect to see those progressively roll out depending on where they are at in that production line. Some may have already started given they were funded last year.

**Richard RIORDAN:** Because we are estimates – this is an estimates committee – estimate, please.

**Dean TIGHE:** I would say 167 over the forward 12 to 24 months.

**Richard RIORDAN:** So within 24 months you are expecting to deliver that 167.

**Vicki WARD:** No. You are verballing – what the Deputy Secretary –

**Richard RIORDAN:** I am not really. We are at an estimates hearing. We are struggling to get estimates.

**Dean TIGHE:** Depending on the type of tanker, some –

**Vicki WARD:** That is right. It depends on the type of tanker, so they may be delivered earlier than 24 months.

**Richard RIORDAN:** Would you be disappointed if you did not have 167 over the next two years?

**The CHAIR:** Excuse me, Mr Riordan. I am going to say you are just being facetious now.

**Richard RIORDAN:** I am being a little bit facetious. We are just trying to get a sense –

**The CHAIR:** Excuse me. The minister is trying to answer your question. You have asked the question.

**Richard RIORDAN:** But she did not know the answer so the kind gentleman at the end Mr Tighe had some idea and I was trying –

**The CHAIR:** Excuse me. Did you have another question you wish to ask? I am mindful of your time, Mr Riordan.

**Dean TIGHE:** I think depending on the type of the type of appliance, it could be –

**Richard RIORDAN:** It is another 10-year wait.

**Vicki WARD:** It is highly probable that they will be delivered by the end of next year.

**Richard RIORDAN:** Right. Highly probable. Okay. Could we have the list that we often ask for – that is, what is the average age spread of the CFA tanker stock that we have got today?

**Vicki WARD:** Are you talking pumper tankers? Are you talking medium tankers?

**Richard RIORDAN:** We are just talking the fleet – the CFA fleet, the 3500 or whatever the figure is vehicles.

**Vicki WARD:** Well, the fleet goes beyond pumpers. It goes beyond tankers.

**Richard RIORDAN:** I am just saying, the CFA truck fleet that we have got out there that keeps Victoria safe. If it is available on a spreadsheet, could we have it? Can you take that on notice?

**Dean TIGHE:** Yes.

**Richard RIORDAN:** With the 167 plus the \$100 million that we are allocating over the forward 10 years, what will that do to the average age of the current CFA tanker fleet? How much do you expect it to lower the average age?

**Vicki WARD:** That goes back to the answer that I gave you earlier, which is that the CFA will go through their operational decisions to determine the types of appliances that they will order. Based on the types of appliances that they order, that would then give us an indication of how that changes the fleet and the age of any cluster of appliances within the fleet. But until the CFA have determined what they will purchase with that \$100 million, nobody can give you an accurate answer on that.

**Richard RIORDAN:** I reckon you could estimate again, Minister.

**Vicki WARD:** No, you are actually asking people to guess.

**Richard RIORDAN:** I am assuming we are not probably going to replace a five-year-old truck. So we could take all the five-year-old ones off the list. Because we have got trucks that are in excess of 30 years, I imagine we are probably even going to leave the 10- and 15-year-old trucks in place. So it leaves us a cohort somewhere between 15 and 35 years. Is that a fair assumption?

**Vicki WARD:** What the CFA does is when a new truck comes in, it will go to a brigade, and then the brigade will, if the truck is of the right age and if the truck is in good running order, which it should be because the CFA regularly check them and maintain them, it will then go to a brigade that will have an even older truck. So they do a bit of a waterfall effect of rollout of their trucks as new appliances come in. You are expecting people to guess for you, but you are not understanding that it is not a straightforward answer. We are trying to explain to you the mechanics behind it.

**Richard RIORDAN:** Last question. Work has just started this week on the new Winnindoo station, first announced by Labor in 2020. It has taken six years and tenders. It is a one-tanker station. Why is it taking so long?

**The CHAIR:** Apologies, Mr Riordan. We are going to Mr Tak.

**Meng Heang TAK:** Thank you, Chair, Minister and officials. Following another demanding summer for emergency services in our state, we have seen just how important it is that we back our volunteers, including SES volunteers. I just want to take you to budget paper 3, page 72, and budget paper 4, page 64 – the additional funding for SES units across the state. Can you please take the committee through the new builds in Corio and Port Phillip?

**Vicki WARD:** I can absolutely, thank you. I will start with saying what an awesome organisation VICSES is. We have some incredible volunteers who just get out there, get on with it, do their job. They are there for practically every emergency imaginable and they are equipped for every emergency imaginable. They are an extraordinary volunteer group. Modern, fit-for-purpose facilities are really important for operational capability. But you also know that when you have got a good unit where you have got what you need, where you have got the storage that you need, where you have got the meeting/social space that you need, that you also strengthen your volunteer base, that you have got more people who are interested in getting involved. This is also really important when it comes to inclusion. What is great about the new SES builds is around having those inclusive spaces to make sure that anybody, regardless as to who they are, will feel comfortable volunteering with VICSES. Unit controllers and teams tell me that outdated or undersized facilities can create operational pressures and make it harder to accommodate growing volunteer numbers. And we know that across a number of our VICSES units there are increases in volunteer numbers, so they do need to also be accommodated.

Corio is an example of this. Corio has worked for some time to try and find the right place to park themselves. It has been an exercise you would have commenced, I imagine, and I am glad to say that we are getting there. The current facility presents operational challenges due to the shared use. It is the local council facility as well, so they do not have exclusive use of the space that they are in. So you can have challenges with access sometimes, with where you want to put things, and training can also be difficult because you are trying to find the space for it but council has parked cars there – it is a pain. So VICSES volunteers responding to emergency call-outs have got to navigate sometimes shared car parking, which is not the easiest thing to do, especially when you are in a hurry. The facility needs to be the right size to accommodate more members for a growing community, and the current location is just not suitable. New and upgraded SES facilities are designed not just for current operational demand but with future growth in mind as well, and particularly in fast-growing communities like Port Phillip and Corio where emergency service demand is expected to continue increasing over coming decades. But do you want to talk through the journey that we have been on with the SES build?

**Sonia MELONI:** Yes, it has been quite a long and tenuous journey with council and trying to navigate through some of the structural issues with the existing facility. There were issues with fire. There were issues, as the Minister has mentioned, in parking and capacity. And the funding that was originally allocated was to refurb that existing facility. That became no longer possible or tenable, and therefore we had to look at something more permanent. We have worked with the council quite closely, and we have managed to secure a suitable property through a lease system with council to build a new Corio facility, which at this stage is under design. We will look at it probably being a three-bay motor bay, but we will continue to work with CFA just to finalise those designs.

**Vicki WARD:** With SES.

**Sonia MELONI:** With SES, sorry. Apologies – CFA on the brain.

**Meng Heang TAK:** Thank you, and thank you, Minister. Still on the volunteers, and I refer to the same budget paper at the same page, budget paper 4 on page 64, Minister. I refer to the operationalisations of the new Kalkallo and Devon Meadows SES units. What do these operationalisations mean, and what does this funding provide for these units and the communities that they serve?

**Vicki WARD:** Thank you. It is a good question, and it goes to, in part, the need for them, which is around the growth that is happening in those areas and the fact that you need to be able to turn out as quickly as you can and get to the emergency that you are getting to as quickly as you can. These units will be well positioned to do that.

The 2017–18 budget delivered new funding to establish new SES units early. We have secured land for both sites, and we are looking at next steps so that when the units are built and ready to be opened, the volunteers also will be ready to respond. Operationalising a new VICSES unit means putting in place all of the people,

equipment, vehicle systems, training and support required to ensure that the unit can become fully operational and respond to emergencies in the community. So it is about things like ensuring they have got the appliances, they have got the storage that they need, they have got their kitchen fitted out and they are able to run their SES unit. It gets it up and running with admin and recruitment support, new vehicles and equipment. For the Kalkallo unit, new vehicles will include a heavy rescue truck, twin-cab support vehicle, light rescue vehicle and a storm trailer and equipment. For the Devon Meadows unit, the new vehicles will be a medium rescue truck, twin-cab support vehicle, light rescue vehicle and a storm trailer and equipment.

Some of the other recent examples of operational VICES units are the newly established units in Point Cook, Aintree, Officer and Cranbourne. It was not that long ago that I was out at Cranbourne with the local member and Cranbourne VICES volunteers to check out their new unit and how things were going, and it is great. They have got so much space, they have got all the gear that they need, but because of where they are positioned and their access to major roads, they are able to turn out really quickly. And what is great about the Cranbourne unit is the really good, strong diversity and leadership that they have got there. It is a really inclusive unit that does some really great work, and I will take this opportunity to thank them for all they do. They have been supported with volunteer recruitment, as the two new VICES units that we have spoken about will be, new vehicles and equipment. The investments are about giving local volunteers the support that they need, because we appreciate what they do.

**Meng Heang TAK:** Thank you, Minister.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. I am going to go to Mr Puglielli.

**Aiv PUGLIELLI:** Thank you, Chair. Good evening, Minister, as you have highlighted in the opening presentation, the State Control Centre takes a leading role in emergency and disaster management in the state. I have been made aware of a current proposed restructure to the centre, where the department has proposed moving the control centre from a 24/7 model with specialised emergency response workers to a reactive nine-to-five Monday-to-Friday model with a generalised watch desk overnight. Can I ask: what will be the impact of this restructure on the state's emergency management response capacity if that were to proceed?

**Vicki WARD:** Thank you. I think that you have been misinformed, Mr Puglielli. I will get the commissioner to talk to it in a sec, but what you have described is not what occurs at the SCC. It would be impossible to operate it in that way. But I will let the commissioner talk to how his workplace works.

**Aiv PUGLIELLI:** If it assists, the particular document was titled 'Implementation of a Proposed New Operating Model and Structure for the State Control Centre and Staff Impacts April 2026'. Are you aware of this document?

**Timothy WIEBUSCH:** I certainly am. We are currently in a formal consultation phase under our enterprise bargaining agreement with our workforce about some updates and changes that we are making to the operating model for the State Control Centre. What I can assure you is that the State Control Centre proposal does continue a 24/7, 365-day model with a dedicated workforce that will be in the building each day – 24 hours a day, a workforce being there. What we are doing is, I guess, revamping the model based on the last five years. The State Control Centre has operated since 2021 in a 24/7 capacity, and obviously since then we have had pandemics, large storms, large floods and significant fires. Like all things, there is an opportunity to review that and look at what is the best and most efficient operating model, so that is what we have undertaken.

We had some pre-engagement with our staff workforce about how they thought things would work better. We have now put together a proposed model for the future which continues a 24/7 capability, so it is not correct to say that it will only be Monday to Friday. There is also a part of that workforce that is Monday to Friday in the new model, which will look at improvements to the state emergency management arrangements more broadly. We talk about stewardship of the system, where we work with all the emergency services to make sure that we have good processes and we can refine things. But those that work on the Monday-to-Friday component will surge into the model as well when we have major emergencies that are occurring. There is an FTE count of 88 at the State Control Centre in the current model, and there will be 88 FTE in the new model – a slightly different mix, but there will definitely be 24/7 capability moving forward.

**Aiv PUGLIELLI:** So that change, though, is proceeding, is that correct?

**Timothy WIEBUSCH:** That is a change that we have proposed. As I said, we are currently in a formal consultation phase with our staff, but also with some of our emergency services that we provide that service for.

**Aiv PUGLIELLI:** Okay. Can I clarify: which roles specifically are changing given the FTE remains the same?

**Timothy WIEBUSCH:** At the moment we have a workforce that is broken up across both a 24/7 capability, a seven-day-a-week capability, and some that work Monday to Friday. There is a bit of a change in the mix of some of those roles, but we are introducing what is called a watch desk model under the proposal, which is consistent with what is deemed best practice in a number of other jurisdictions, not just here in Australia but also overseas. That will continue to see a 24/7 model in our workforce. For some of what has been the 24/7 workforce, the proposal is that they will continue to provide services out of the State Control Centre, not on a 24/7 basis but will surge in during those major emergencies, and that might mean that they are recalled onto shifts or other things as time goes on.

**Aiv PUGLIELLI:** Okay. I will move on to another matter. Thank you for that response. Just on to budget paper 5, page 23, the Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund. I understand the new ESVF is projected to receive \$1.6 billion in 2026–27 and \$1.7 billion thereafter. Can I confirm: how much will both FRV and CFA receive from the 2026–27 financial year?

**Vicki WARD:** That will depend. It is mandated in law, as I am sure you are aware, that all of the income that is generated from the Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund is for the emergency services that are listed within the legislation. So with the work that is being done to work out what the base funding, if you like, using the phrasing that we used earlier, will be, then you will be able to calculate what component, what amount from the Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund, will go towards those individual agencies.

**Aiv PUGLIELLI:** So we are not in a position to calculate that now?

**Vicki WARD:** No. Unless you have something further to add.

**Dean TIGHE:** Only that, as you said, the rates are legislated as well in terms of 90 per cent of FRV's budget and 95 per cent of –

**Vicki WARD:** Well, it is not of the budget but of that component.

**Dean TIGHE:** Correct.

**Aiv PUGLIELLI:** Okay. I might move on to another matter. Looking at the \$10 million for FRV's rolling fleet replacement program, just to understand, is that funding in addition to a pre-existing, ongoing \$10 million per year that has already been secured in last year's budget?

**Vicki WARD:** That is right.

**Aiv PUGLIELLI:** That is correct.

**Vicki WARD:** That is correct.

**Aiv PUGLIELLI:** Can we get a sense of how many appliances we are seeing replaced with that type of amount per year?

**Vicki WARD:** Yes. So what we have got is – what I will do is just give a little bit of a snapshot of the appliances that are being directed towards FRV. So in October last year we had two heavy pumpers delivered to South Melbourne and Windsor. We had four heavy pumpers in December delivered to Carlton, Northcote, Ascot Vale and Hawthorn. In April we had a heavy rescue vehicle delivered to Dandenong. In May, there was a heavy rescue vehicle delivered to Melton, this month, and we are anticipating two Series 1 heavy pumpers to Highett and to Croydon. So, sorry – I can give it to you, Aiv.

**Aiv PUGLIELLI:** Thank you. That would be appreciated.

**The CHAIR:** We are going to go to Mr Hilakari.

**Mathew HILAKARI:** Thank you, minister. Thank you, officials – appreciate your attendance on a wonderful Friday evening. We are not quite yet at the football stage, but we will get there over the course of the night.

**Vicki WARD:** I will write it down for you.

**Mathew HILAKARI:** I would like to get to budget paper 3 around Triple Zero Victoria, pages 72 and 79. The reason I cross over those two, those points, is we cover off upgrading Victoria's 000 telephony on both those pages. And there is about 100, just over \$100 million in upgrades.

**Vicki WARD:** \$101 million, yes.

**Mathew HILAKARI:** Why are we doing this and how is it going to help our community?

**Vicki WARD:** We are doing it because, as you would expect with any system, there needs to be modernisation when you are dealing with technology. So while – we know that we have got to build towards a system that will not be supported in a few years time – will not be supported in the way it should by the vendor. So what we have done is pre-empt that and invested now, so that we can get the process rolling to get that telephony system happening. It is a telephony system that will help not just the connectivity and help it work better, it will talk with the next-generation CAD better, that we are investing in and building right now. And it will also be clearer, we will have less noise interference. People will be able to communicate with each other better. And when you are in a situation that can be as highly stressful as what it can be for call takers, for example, or even dispatchers, to be able to have that clarity, to be able to have that comfort is pretty important. But it is not just the headsets, it is the whole system that will be rebuilt.

**Mathew HILAKARI:** And that is critical. And you take me really to the next question I was going to get to, which was around the next generation computer-aided dispatch, page 67 of budget paper 4. How do they complement each other? Does one roll into the other or how does that work?

**Vicki WARD:** Well, I guess you could say one is front of house and one is back of house. So you cannot have –

**Mathew HILAKARI:** There have been some issues on the other side around back of house, but you know –

**Vicki WARD:** Well, you have got the telephony system that people are using to communicate with each other. But then you have also got the CAD system, which is there to actually keep all of that together. That is what I mean by – you have got one that frontline workers will be using, and one that IT people will be using. So the next generation CAD – it is a \$250 million multi-year program where we are replacing the existing CAD system. The scale and the complexity of the incidents that we are receiving now are such that we need to have a system that is modern, that is efficient, and that is able to continue to adapt in the future as demand on it continues to increase. It is a contemporary emergency communications environment. The CAD will be the digital backbone of Victoria's emergency response. It will support call processing, prioritisation and the allocation of resources. As I was saying, they perform different functions, but they do form a single workflow because they integrate into each other for community as well as for frontline staff. So the government's investments are enabling TZV to strengthen the system end to end while maintaining safe, continuous operations. Triple Zero Victoria continues to operate and maintain the current CAD system while the new system is being delivered, so we are ensuring that people are still getting the service that they need, getting the response that they need, as quickly as possible, while we continue to build the CAD system. Delivery of next generation CAD is planned to be completed by quarter four 2027–28, as you can see in budget paper 4, page 67. Given the scale and complexity, it is being delivered as a staged multi-year program, and there will be careful testing and transition planning because it will be a massive system. Of course we will want to make sure that it is absolutely perfect before we put it out to the community to interact with, because we want to make sure 100 per cent that it is ready and able to be used. It will strengthen dispatch decisions to support multiagency coordination. It will bring together call, location and incident information in a shared operational picture, so it will support more consistent prioritisation, improve information sharing between emergency services and greater operational resilience through what they call a modern architecture and recovery capability.

These improvements are increasingly important, as I was saying, as incidents just get harder and they get more challenging. We have new incidents that emerge, as we are seeing, for example, with batteries. There are

changing incidents that emergency services are responding to. Overall these investments are intended to work together with workforce growth, telephony renewal and CAD modernisation. What we are aiming for of course is a safer, resilient emergency communications system that is always there when Victorians need it.

**Mathew HILAKARI:** Fit for purpose for Victorians – love it. I am going to take us to the ‘Department Performance Statement’. I am going to keep on Triple Zero Victoria. There is a series of new measures, just over half a dozen of them, that are listed out. I suspect some of what you have just been talking about will go to how we assess what is working well and what is right to be assessed, particularly priority 1 emergency calls are a strong feature of the new measures. I am hoping you can just talk to this and how this monitoring is going to drive improved performance.

**Vicki WARD:** Thank you. This has been really important work, and I do want to thank the commissioner for the amount of work that he has done in pulling all of this together and doing the research and the consultation that he has done. You might want to have a couple of words about your work.

**Timothy WIEBUSCH:** Sure. Thanks for your question. As you will see in the budget papers, we will be introducing, from 1 July, new call-taking and dispatch performance measures for police, ambulance and SES in particular and harmonised standards right across the board for those agencies. It also includes a refresh and enhancement of the qualitative standards that will exist. I guess what this does is it brings together both a time-based set of measures and also a set of quality measures, because you cannot have one without the other. It is equally important to have speed, but we also need accuracy and efficiency. The new standards introduce a piece around the qualitative – the way that the call-takers and dispatchers are doing their job and how they are providing that information to emergency services.

**Mathew HILAKARI:** Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr Hilakari. Minister and officials, thank you very much for appearing.

**John PESUTTO:** I just have a point of order, Chair.

**The CHAIR:** Go ahead, Deputy Chair.

**John PESUTTO:** I just want to clarify. In answer to a question from Mr Puglielli I believe the minister committed to providing a document, but I just want to clarify that that document will be made available to the committee, not just to Mr Puglielli.

**Vicki WARD:** I do not have a problem with that at all.

**The CHAIR:** Thanks for the clarification, Deputy Chair. Minister and officials, thank you very much for appearing before the committee today. The committee will follow up on any questions taken on notice in writing, and responses are required within five working days of the committee’s request.

The committee is now going to take a break before beginning its consideration of the natural disaster recovery portfolio at 6:50 pm. I declare this hearing adjourned.

**Witnesses withdrew.**