



Legislative Council Environment and Planning Committee

Hearing date: 1/05/2026

Questions taken on notice

Directed to: Inspector-General of Emergency Management

Received date: [office use only]

1. P.44 Melina Bath

Question: -Page 17, actions 3.5 and 3.6 are specifically around road corridors, reported as 'Complete'. The Hume Freeway Longwood issue, in that period, in the 2025–26 bushfire season, how can that be considered complete when, from your perspective, when the fires started on the edge of the road with high fuel load and dry fuel load? I think you might have to take it on notice.

Emily PHILLIPS: I am happy to take that on notice.

Response:

Fire Season Inquiry Phase 1 Actions 3.5 and 3.6 required DELWP (now DEECA) to review reporting requirements and datasets regarding fuel management and bushfire risks on roadsides.

The implementation of Action 3.5 resulted in reviews of the fuel management Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Framework, and the annual Fuel Management Report. The reviews were reported as complete in the IGEM's 2021 Progress Report.

The implementation of Action 3.6 resulted in the establishment of the Road and Rail Fuel Management Working Group and the finalisation of the DEECA-managed Vicmap Transport network dataset to inform bushfire risk modelling to the road and rail network. These activities were reported as complete in the IGEM's 2024 Progress Report.

Additional questions

Melina Bath

1. Are you sufficiently resourced to undertake your role?

Under Part 7 of the Emergency Management Act, the Department of Justice and Community Safety (DJCS) provides the resourcing for the Office of the Inspector General, and all staff are employed by DJCS. Questions regarding the resourcing of the Inspector General for Emergency Management should be directed to DJCS.

2. Has there been any reductions to your resourcing levels over the past 5 years?

Under Part 7 of the Emergency Management Act, the Department of Justice and Community Safety (DJCS) provides the resourcing for the Office of the Inspector General, and all staff are employed by DJCS. Questions regarding the resourcing of the Inspector General for Emergency Management should be directed to DJCS.

3. How do you report on progress against actions from your previous reports?

Section 64(1)(ba) of the *Emergency Management Act 2013* (**EMA**) provides for the Inspector General to monitor and report on implementation progress of recommendations that arise from the Inspector General's self-initiated system-wide reviews.

Implementation status is based on documentary evidence provided by the organisations responsible for the implementation of each action or recommendation. Evidence is supplemented by demonstrations of systems and processes where appropriate. The final status reflects the progress of implementation against the specific wording of the recommendation or action.

The Inspector General provides completed progress reports to the Minister for Emergency Services under s 70 of the EMA. The Minister may then make the report or any part of the report publicly available per s 70(6) of the EMA. Progress reports are then made publicly available on the Inspector General's website.

4. How do you hold the government accountable for actions they commit to?

The Minister for Emergency Services can request that the Inspector General monitor and report on committed actions pursuant to s

64(1)(ca) of the EMA. If the government produces a formal government response or government implementation plan, this establishes the scope of the monitoring and reporting undertaken by the Inspector General.

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Here are some references in the IGEM Submission Appendix B document titled "Overview of implementation progress"

5. • Page 3 – Action 2.5 Municipal Emergency Management Plans – last update was 2024 – how does this impact on Councils' ability to be bushfire ready?

Section 60AN of the *Emergency Management Act 2013* requires all Municipal Emergency Management Plans to be reviewed at least once every 3 years. This is to ensure that each such plan provides for a current, integrated, coordinated and comprehensive approach to emergency management at the municipal district level.

6. Page 6/7 – Action 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5 all to do with building up IMT capability – all showing as "complete" yet we have less IC3's than ever before – what are your recommendations in relation to incident management capability?

The scope of 10 Year Review actions 4.2, 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5 and the Inspector General's monitoring activities does not include the number of Level 3 Incident Controllers.

Any future recommendations which I may make in relation to Level 3 Incident Controller will depend on the scope of the terms of reference the Minister provides to me in relation to the review of the 2026 High Risk Weather Season. They will also have regard to the work of this committee, including its final report and recommendations, and the evidence I gather in the course of my review.

7. Page 8 – Action 4.7 Fit for purpose incident management platform – not even started – what are your recommendations to this committee for government to consider?

I am currently preparing my 2026 progress report which will include a progress update for the 10 Years of Reform Review Action 4.7. As I have not concluded this process, which involves gathering evidence and responses from the government departments and agencies, it would be inappropriate for me to comment on the progress of this action now. My assessment of progress of this action will be set out in my 2026 progress report, which will be available to the committee as soon as that report is published.

8. Page 17 – Action 3.5 and 3.6 is specifically about road corridors - Reported as complete. The Hume Fwy /Longwood fires ignited on the roadside and were said to have spread because of significant dry fuel – what do you recommend to government that needs to change?

I will be undertaking a review later this year relating to the 2026 high risk weather season. In accordance with legislated requirements, I cannot pre-empt the findings of the review and it would be inappropriate for me to form opinions or make recommendations ahead of undertaking the review.

9. Page 22 – Action 6.9 Identify, prioritise and conduct fuel management along major arterial roads – action is “closed” reason given was lack of funding – how does this impact risk of bushfire spreading?

I will be undertaking a review later this year relating to the 2026 high risk weather season. In accordance with legislated requirements, I cannot pre-empt the findings of the review and it would be inappropriate for me to form opinions or make findings ahead of undertaking the review.

10. Page 48 – Action 17.1 – Accommodate the needs of CALD community in VicEmergency app – showing as overdue – what reason has the Victorian government made to account for this and what actions do you recommend?

I am currently preparing my 2026 progress report which will include a progress update for Fire Season Inquiry Phase 1 Action 17.1. As I have not concluded this process, which involves gathering evidence and responses from the government departments and agencies, it would be inappropriate for me to comment on the progress of this action now. My assessment of progress of this action will be set out in my 2026 progress report, which will be available to the committee as soon as that report is published.

Wendy Lovell

1. What bushfire knowledge / expertise do you and your office have that qualifies you to inquire into the 2026 fires?

In confirming the appointment of the Inspector General for Emergency Management, the Governor in Council is required to be satisfied that they have appropriate management, professional, technical and operational expertise in emergency management and appropriate skills to perform the functions of the Inspector-General for Emergency Management set out in section 64 of the EMA.

2. For those recommendations that have been implemented (the majority) from 19/20 why have those actions proven to be ineffective? We are still hearing about the same problems with fuel management, radio communications, command & control (ICC's), emergency warnings, inadequate relief and recovery support for affected communities.

Major fire events in Victoria, including Black Friday (1939), Ash Wednesday (1983), Black Saturday (2009), the 2019–20 Black Summer fires, and the 2026 summer fires, have exposed the vulnerability of communities and the environment to large-scale fire events.

Victoria has examined these events through formal reviews, royal commissions, and parliamentary inquiries. They have provided critical lessons on preparedness, land management, response capacity and community recovery. Most recently, the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission and the Inspector General for Emergency Management's Inquiry into the 2019-20 Victorian Fire Season have resulted in significant reform to the state's emergency management arrangements.

The formal reviews show that many enduring and inherent challenges recur across emergency events. While important progress has been made, ongoing reform and continuous improvement are critical to ensure Victoria's emergency arrangements are effective and actively helping to keep communities safe. My work to review the 2026 higher risk weather season will look at what further improvements can be made.

3. The 2009 VBRC was the most comprehensive enquiry into Bushfires and Victoria. We have heard evidence that many of these findings have been forgotten; Why does IGEM appear unable to embed real improvements into the system?

Following the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission, Neil Comrie AO APM was appointed as The Bushfire Royal Commission Implementation Monitor to monitor the implementation of the 305 implementation actions. When he concluded his work in 2014, 21 implementation actions remained in progress. The Inspector General for Emergency Management continued to monitor the implementation of the remaining 21 actions. The Inspector General's final progress report in 2016 found 2 actions remained in progress. The completion of the final 2 actions in 2018 concluded the Inspector General's monitoring and reporting on all Victorian Bushfire Royal Commission implementation actions.

The Inspector General for Emergency Management's legislated objectives and functions are not to embed improvements, which are the responsibilities of Victoria's emergency management agencies and state government departments. The Inspector General's implementation monitoring role under s 64(1)(ba) and s 64(1)(ca) of the EMA is to monitor and report on the implementation progress of recommendations that arise from the Inspector General's self-initiated system-wide reviews, and to monitor and report on the implementation of recommendations arising from other reports and inquiries at the request of the Minister.