

Questions taken on notice and further information agreed to be supplied at the hearings.

Portfolio:	Local Government
Witness:	Hon Shaun Leane
Committee Member:	Mr Danny O'Brien
Page/s of transcript:	3

Relevant text:

Mr LEANE: No. No funding has been taken away from libraries.

Mr D O'BRIEN: No, but there was \$7.7 million extra in 2020–21, \$5.6 million extra in 2021–22, \$2.3 million extra this year and no extra next year. So we have gone from what you said this year is \$48 million, so last year it must have been in the \$56 million or \$57 million bracket. It has obviously come down, so what is being taken away?

The CHAIR: Sorry, Mr O'Brien, but your time has expired. Perhaps the Minister would like to take that question on notice. I will pass the call to Mr Maas.

Answer:

Total funding allocated to public library operations in 2020-21 totalled \$45.8 million. In 2021-22 it totalled \$47.4 million. In 2022-23 total funding allocated is a record \$48.135 million.

Questions taken on notice and further information agreed to be supplied at the hearings.

Portfolio:	Local Government
Witness:	Hon Shaun Leane
Committee Member:	Mr Sam Hibbins
Page/s of transcript:	4

Relevant text:

Mr HIBBINS: Okay. Thank you. I want to ask about the councils and emergencies project that was a six-year project run by Local Government Victoria that finished in December 2021. This found that councils have a number of responsibilities when it comes to emergency management planning, preparedness, response and recovery. It also found that councils do not have the capability or capacity to undertake many of their roles. Given this, why were the recommendations of that report, the councils and emergencies final report, ignored, and why wasn't any additional funding given to councils to undertake their role in regard to emergencies?

Mr LEANE: That is a very good question. I can get you more information on notice on that particular program if it helps. I have had a number of conversations, particularly with smaller rural councils around their capacity, particularly in emergency relief after a natural disaster. I 100 per cent concede that it is challenging for those smaller councils. Jaclyn Symes is working on a different iteration of bushfire recovery, I understand. I am not too sure if Minister Symes has already appeared and if you got the opportunity to ask her about that. But if she has not, she is doing some work on a different iteration of Bushfire Recovery Victoria to have assistance in recovery across all natural disasters. I think that it does fall within Minister Symes's responsibility. But taking on board that there is a lot of responsibility that falls onto local government, we are working with that new iteration of BRV on how they can be relieved of some of their responsibility and also on how they can be assisted better in the aftermath of a natural disaster.

Answer:

The Councils and Emergencies project is a three phased project that aims to enhance the capability and capacity of councils to meet their emergency management obligations. During the third phase of the project the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions undertook extensive consultation with councils and the emergency management sector to investigate opportunities to improve the emergency management capability and capacity culminating with the release of a Regional Consultation Report in December 2021. The Department is developing a councils and emergencies framework and action plan to give effect to the actions and issues identified in this report.

The Victorian Government remains committed to providing support to councils to assist them to undertake their emergency management responsibilities. The Municipal Emergency Resourcing Program (MERP) provides \$4.6 million per annum to 64 Victoria councils to help them plan and prepare for emergency events. In 2020-21 and 2021-22 the Government provided an extra \$1 million per annum to councils through the MERP to recognise the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Victorian Government also ensures that councils severely impacted by natural disaster events are supported with the resources they need to assist their local communities. The \$16.56 million

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee | Into the Inquiry of 2022-23 Budget Estimates

Bushfire Council Support Fund was provided to Alpine, East Gippsland and Towong councils following the 2019-20 Victorian bushfires. It assisted these councils to employ additional resources required to support their communities. Similarly, the 11 councils impacted by the June 2021 Extreme Weather event were supported through the \$8.2 million Council Support Fund.