

BUDGET ESTIMATES 2022
Questions Taken on Notice

Portfolio Committee No. 5 – Regional NSW and Stronger Communities

Paul Toole MP
Deputy Premier
Minister for Regional New South Wales, and Minister for Police

Hearing: Wednesday, 31 August 2022

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RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE

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The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Welcome, Deputy Premier. I want to briefly touch on drones, and my questions are more for the Department of Regional NSW at this point. I guess it's a fleet or a squadron of drones, but how many drones do you have within the department?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: There are different agencies that actually do have drones. Obviously, I've got to firstly say that the drones that we do use do help with the intel, especially around natural disasters. A lot of it has been also coordinated across with Fire and Rescue NSW. When we have seen Fire and Rescue NSW going into incidents, whether it's house fires or even flood-related activities, those drones have been critical in giving intel to know whether or not it's safe enough for emergency service personnel to be going into those areas. We also have a very strong fleet of drones through Transport. That's ensured that we've been able to have a look at roads as well.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: And DPI have got a lot as well.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Yes, through DPI. We've been able to utilise some of the drones there through Transport in relation to actually seeing the impact on those roads and just to know whether or not it's safe enough to send crews within those areas—to determine whether or not the crews can go in. But it also helps us to assess the damage.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: They've got a very real role.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Yes, it allows us to be able to assess the damage to a particular road or see the extent of the damage. We're able to also—instead of waiting before we can get in there, we know what kinds of materials are required. It actually helps with that preparation around looking—

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Where do we source the drones from, Deputy Premier? What's the process? I'm just interested in the process.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I'll ask Ms Fox if she has an answer to it; otherwise we'll come back this afternoon and provide a response to you.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I'm probably going to explore it in a bit more detail this afternoon.

REBECCA FOX: Yes, we can do that. I'll have to take the question on notice, but we can get that information, no problem.

ANSWER

There are approximately 150 Civil Aviation Safety Authority-registered drones in use across DRNSW.

The drones are purchased directly from retailers such as JB HI-FI, Harvey Norman and Australian survey grade instrument suppliers, using Government purchasing cards. This is in line with Government purchasing policies as they are considered 'low value' purchases, being less than \$10,000 including GST.

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The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I have just one more round of questions on another topic before I hand over to my colleague Ms Moriarty. Yesterday Mr Dominello was talking about exploring the Digital Restart Fund. Can I just ask, has the Department of Regional NSW—not police but Regional NSW—picked up any funds out of the Digital Restart Fund? What are those funds for?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I might ask Ms Fox to answer that specifically, but we do have a number of programs that we are running through our digital connectivity partnership programs as well. There are a number of different programs that we are running, but in relation to that specific question I just have to ask Ms Fox.

REBECCA FOX: We certainly have picked up some funding through the Digital Restart Fund, but I'll have to take on notice exactly what that funding is and what projects it covers.

ANSWER

DRNSW has received \$24.944 million in funding from the Digital Restart Fund for digital projects that benefit regional NSW. Projects include:

- \$1.5 million Smarter Soil Conservation
- \$5 million Commercial Fisheries Service Delivery and Systems Modernisation
- \$1.09 million Rural Assistance Authority (RAA) Service Transformation
- \$2.62 million Future proofing DRNSW's emergency response capability \$1.1 million DRNSW Customer Journey Roadmap
- \$1.34 million Smart Regional Spaces (Ready Set Go!)
- \$0.819 million Farm Development Planning
- \$1.8 million DRNSW Digital Uplift Program
- \$2.75 million Regional Knowledge Base 2.0
- \$1.25 million Digitisation of Local Government Project Management Tool Kit
- \$1.1 million MEG Legacy Oracle Modernisation
- \$4.57 million, a component of the Whole-of-Government grants portal

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The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: I'm actually out of time. But I just will ask one question that you might take on notice. Have you got or have you done any reconnaissance or research into the numbers of people who are involved in this particular problem? You can take that on notice because I am out of time. But I do want to get the question on the record.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: We'll actually come back this afternoon. If we can have the answer, we'll provide it this afternoon, if you're rushing off and not waiting for the answer.

ANSWER:

I refer you to page 58 of the transcript.

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The CHAIR: Hang on, Mr Whyte. I'm not really satisfied with that. At what stage have any of the customers threatened any of the staff at the registry? I've never heard of such a thing, honestly.

SCOTT WHYTE: That would be historic to me but I can take it on notice.

The CHAIR: Can you take it on notice?

SCOTT WHYTE: Absolutely.

ANSWER:

As of 20 September 2022, there have been seven instances of security matters relating to the Firearms Registry premises. This includes threats made against Registry staff resulting in the premises being a discreet location.

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The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Good morning, everyone. I wanted to start out by asking about the Mark43 contract. When was that contract terminated?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Sorry, which one?

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Mark43.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I would have to take it on notice, to find out when it actually was instigated for you

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The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Great. Thanks very much, Commissioner.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: We'll come back to you. If we can get it now, we'll get it. If not, we'll come back this afternoon with it.

ANSWER:

I refer you to page 30 of the transcript.

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The CHAIR: Minister, I've just got a couple of hand-ups for you. One relates to the results of an order for papers, an SO 52, and the other one is excerpts from the Coroner's report in relation to the Edwards inquest. The first is the briefing for the commissioner, document 11, returned from an order for papers, as I just mentioned. The second document is excerpts from the New South Wales Coroner's inquest report into the deaths of John, Jack and Jennifer Edwards. The briefing for the commissioner was prepared by the Firearms Registry—and I believe it was by Georgina Gold—in July 2018, for the then New South Wales commissioner, Mr Fuller. It refers to firearms licence applications for Mr John Edwards. The briefing states that the applications were reviewed by the probity team at the Firearms Registry who conducted the criminal names index, national names index, intelligence holding and a thorough review of the COPS profile—and I underlined that—to identify if there was any legislative impediment to Edwards obtaining either licence. I then refer you to paragraph 436 of the Coroner's report that states:

I am satisfied that Registry staff did have access to adequate information, because it is not disputed that they could have reviewed the COPS holdings in relation to John, which revealed an "obvious" pattern of domestic violence incidents. However, those COPS holdings were not reviewed. I am satisfied that the "unduly narrow" process followed by Registry staff in adjudicating the Commissioner's Permits led to a failure to review and take into account that information. This was a significant failure, and was inconsistent with the terms of the Act.

The other paragraphs 440, 441, 447, 448 and 530 also affirm that the police holdings on Edwards were not reviewed by the Firearms Registry. Do you acknowledge there is a contradiction between the briefing to the commissioner and paragraph 436 of the Coroner's report?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I've only just received it from Mr Larson, so how about we provide a comment back—we'll take it on notice.

The CHAIR: Minister, can you commit to a public independent investigation into this contradiction between these statements, and once and for all let's put this to bed properly? Someone, somewhere, has to be punished for what went on. I have not seen anyone publicly blamed. I have seen no-one punished, other than a continual process of tightening of firearms laws in New South Wales and law-abiding citizens who own firearms being subjected to these controls. Yet no-one within the registry or elsewhere in relation to firearms matters has been held to account for what's been going on or what did happen. How does that work?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I'll just make the point that you've just tabled a significant number of documents, and I want to review these in more detail before determining what is to take place next.

The CHAIR: Will you take on notice to come back to me in relation to that?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Yes, we can do that.

ANSWER:

In 2020, a coronial inquest was held into the deaths of John, Jack and Jennifer Edwards. A primary function of this inquest was to explore the cause and manner of Jack and Jennifer's tragic deaths. The State Coroner made 24 recommendations, with all recommendations relevant to the NSW Police Force being supported or supported in principle.

The State Coroner found that John Edwards, now deceased, bore responsibility for the homicides of Jack and Jennifer. The State Coroner (who had before her all the relevant evidence) did not identify any other person being criminally liable for their deaths. If the State Coroner had reason to believe any other person had caused their deaths through the commission of an indictable offence, and there was sufficient evidence to satisfy a jury of this, then the State Coroner would have been obliged to refer the matter to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP), as per section 78 of the *Coroners Act 2009*. To my knowledge, no referral of any NSW Police Force employee to the ODPP has been made by the State Coroner.

The State Coroner's recommendations were directed at the NSW Police Force as an agency, and not at any individual NSW Police Force employee.

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The CHAIR: If you have a look at the email, that's where we outline what the problem is. The guidelines do need to be fixed. Can you come back to me and inform me whether they have or they have not—and if they have not, why?

SCOTT WHYTE: Yes, I'll take that on notice.

ANSWER:

Page 21 of the Decision-Making Guidelines has been corrected.

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The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: How many have you developed responses for and provided to DPC?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: We've provided a response to those ones that are relevant to police.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: When were those responses provided?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: They've been provided—

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Can you take that on notice?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: We can take it on notice. But, as I said, we've provided a response to those questions. The report was actually commissioned by the Premier at the time as well.

ANSWER:

The final NSW Government's response to the Special Commission of Inquiry into the Drug Ice was announced on 21 September and is publicly available.

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Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Thank you. I want to ask you now about the program for redundancies at Blue Ridge Hardwoods on the south coast. I've asked you about this on notice recently. You've come back to me to say it's not a matter for you, it's a matter for the Minister for Agriculture. But in the March 2021 budget estimates, questions about the Blue Ridge Hardwoods payments were made on notice—which agency is responsible for implementing the program and the clear answer was the Department of Regional NSW. It described how much money had been paid at that date. Can you advise how many \$150,000 payments have been made to former Blue Ridge Hardwoods workers at this point?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: First of all, let me just point out to you that, whilst you may have looked at the budget estimates in May 2021, there's actually been a change of Acts. That occurred at the end of this year in relation to ministerial responsibilities and portfolios that have been given. So obviously in relation to that matter, it may have been an area that sat under the previous Deputy Premier, but it now sits with the responsibility of another Minister in relation to that. Obviously for me, jobs in the regions is something important to me. Whilst it may not necessarily sit in my portfolio, redundancies but also employment

and securing of employment in those communities is important. But also, when you have a look at the timber industry in some of those communities, they could be the lifeblood of those areas. There are many people that are employed within those areas, within those regions and we want to make sure that, if they are going to be retrained or they are going to go into other fields of employment, we are giving them an opportunity through Regional NSW, in assisting in some of those packages of support, to be able to do so. But, as I do point out, I know this is something that is being driven and something that is made aware to the Minister responsible as well.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Deputy Premier, I understand that. But I've asked this question of Agriculture as well in the more recent budget estimates.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I am just letting you know.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: They say it's a responsibility for the Department of Regional NSW. We go round and round in circles. Blue Ridge Hardwoods has reopened as South Coast Timber. I understand at least 51 individuals were paid \$150,000 redundancies. There are 30 individuals now working at the reopened site—or I think it just transitioned. Were any of the workers that were paid redundancies re-employed at South Coast Timber?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I don't know the 131 workers that you're talking about. We'd have to take it on notice.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Were there any restrictions on the redundancy payments that prevented workers from being re-employed at the site?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I'm sure there would have been guidelines around that, but I'm happy to provide that to you.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: So you will take that on notice about the guidelines?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Yes and, if so, we'll provide it this afternoon. We might be able to give—we can get it this afternoon and if it's from the other Minister's department we'll provide it this afternoon to you as well.

ANSWER

Payments of \$150,000 were made to 55 workers under the Blue Ridge Hardwoods Retrenched Workers program.

Workers were required to provide a statutory declaration confirming they were not in ongoing full-time work at the end of their qualifying period. The qualifying period was the period of time for which the worker received a redundancy payment.

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Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Sorry, there were 178 venues identified. I understand they were reported to police. There were referrals to the police. Have there been any arrests associated with that investigation and those referrals?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: That's a police operation and, again, I will go to the Commissioner of Police to respond.

KAREN WEBB: I will take that on notice, Mr Field.

ANSWER:

There were 212 individuals referred by Liquor and Gaming Authority to the NSW Police Force.

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The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Deputy Premier, today the National Cabinet is considering a decrease in the COVID isolation requirements from seven days to five days. Are you able to tell us over the last month how many infringement notices were issued for people breaching their COVID isolation?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: First of all, obviously the National Cabinet today is having that conversation and we have State leaders from right across this country that are coming together to discuss that, having a national rule around it. Because it's operational, I will go to the police commissioner to see if she has that information here today.

KAREN WEBB: No, I don't have the statistics in front of me.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Are you able to give it to us for the month for the last, say, four months—just the number of notices that have been issued?

KAREN WEBB: If I can get it before the end of today, I will.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: That would be fantastic.

KAREN WEBB: Otherwise I'll provide it on notice

ANSWER:

There were 11 infringement notices issued for people breaching their COVID-19 isolation in the last four months (1 May to 31 August 2022).

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The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: How many were there in about March of 2019? How many fully sworn officers?

KAREN WEBB: I will have to see if I can get that before the end of today or on notice.

ANSWER

As at 31 March 2019, there were 16,978 sworn police officers.

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The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I asked for 154 and you suggested that the others you'd prefer to take on notice. I'm comfortable with that.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: We can provide the 154. We'll give you the answer this afternoon for the 154.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Excellent. And you'll take the other one on notice?

ANSWER

I refer you to page 41 and 42 of the transcript.

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The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Which police districts don't currently have an elder abuse officer?

KAREN WEBB: I'll have to take that on notice. There's 12 out of the 58 that do.

ANSWER:

This information is publicly available on the NSW Police Force website.

This project is ongoing. ACPOs are members of statewide Crime Prevention Units. All officers attached to this unit are trained in the needs of all members of the community, regardless of the category of crime.

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The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:How many people are currently on the recruitment waiting list?

KAREN WEBB: I will have to take that on notice, but I can say that we're undertaking a recruitment campaign at the moment. We know from the Australia New Zealand Policing Advisory Agency that all the jurisdictions are suffering some recruitment issues at the moment. Some of their research indicates that, obviously, there's a competitive labour market at the moment. Any recruitment lag that we've got in New South Wales at the moment is not unique to New South Wales alone.

ANSWER:

As at 9 September 2022, there were 221 people in various stages of the recruitment process and 55 people were in the Eligibility Pool.

Of those 55 people, 34 people have accepted an offer into the Associate Degree in Policing Practice (ADPP) and the remaining 21 people are yet to submit their ADPP application.

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The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Thank you very much. Do you have, in the last four years, the number of people who have received an acceptance offer to the academy but not taken it up?

KAREN WEBB: I have to take that one on notice.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Sure. If you can again give us the breakdown for the years 2019 to 2022, that would be great.

KAREN WEBB: Yes, I will provide that.

ANSWER:

Year	2019	2020	2021	2022
Offer Declined (Full time)	36	36	49	35
Offer Declined (Part time)	24	5	3	7

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The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Do you ask for reasons if they don't accept the offer?

KAREN WEBB: Not every applicant, but we have gone back to some percentage to just canvass why they've not followed through. Not that it's a recent phenomenon, but there's been quite a percentage that don't follow through. They do the first component of an online program but don't necessarily transition into the next component. There's some various reasons for that. But it's not a qualitative or in-depth research piece of paper on that.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Do you do any analysis of those, or can you provide us with some more information on notice?

KAREN WEBB: We may be able to. As I said, it's not an empirical piece of data.

ANSWER:

The main reasons for people not to take up the offer are current work commitments, change of personal circumstances, and priorities.

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The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: What proportion of people can get those scholarships?

KAREN WEBB: I understand that all that make an application get those.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Have you got a percentage figure or a raw figure?

KAREN WEBB: I'll have to take that on notice.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Can you tell me how prospective applicants are told about the scholarship that they can apply for?

KAREN WEBB: I'd have to take all that detail on notice.

ANSWER:

I refer you to the answers Question 76 and 78 in the Supplementary Questions.

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Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Moving on, I just want to ask some questions about bail compliance checks. We've been contacted by a number of frontline legal organisations that are really concerned about bail compliance checks and particularly in relation to curfew conditions and that there seems to be an increase in these checks happening late at night. Can I just ask, why is this happening and how many are we doing? So maybe just in the last financial year, how many bail compliance checks were conducted where there was no court-ordered enforcement?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I might ask Mr Whyte to answer, if that's okay, seeing as it's more operation—if that's okay, if you know.

SCOTT WHYTE: I'd take the figures on notice, if that was okay, unless ma'am has them. I'll take those on notice and get them for you.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Okay. With that, can I ask then that those are broken down. We're very interested in how many of those were on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, how many under the age of 18, and, again, how many First Nations people under the age of 18—those categories. I can also provide those questions as supplementary ones if that would help.

SCOTT WHYTE: It would. Just for the record, just so you're aware, we are working with the Closing the Gap team around that and we're actively involved in the bail space and the breach of bail and police bail, so we're working together with that team.

ANSWER:

I refer to the answer to Questions 154-158 in the Supplementary Questions.

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The CHAIR: Just to take you back to hydrogen production again for a moment, you're not aware of any hydrogen production projects that are currently on the go that are being funded by the New South Wales Government?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I'd have to take it on notice and actually—

The CHAIR: Can you take it on notice?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Yes. Mr Hanger can provide—

CHRIS HANGER: If it might help, there are a number of media releases, including a recent EOI that's been undertaken by the Energy team here in New South Wales. There was \$4 billion of industry interest in potential hydrogen hubs.

The CHAIR: Could you take those on notice and send them to me, please?

CHRIS HANGER: I'm very happy to do that.

ANSWER

This is a matter for the Minister for Energy.

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The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I want to come back to the breakdown of the people who are leaving the force. Commissioner, you gave us the percentage figures before lunch: 3.6 per cent in 2019, 4 per cent in 2020, 4.4 per cent in 2021, and 6.8 per cent in 2022 but that can be adjusted to 5.7 per cent. Do you have some raw figures for us?

KAREN WEBB: Not yet, I'm just getting those verified.

ANSWER:

Number of separations, including retirements, as at 31 August 2022:

FY 2019: 641
FY 2020: 722
FY 2021: 811
FY 2022: 1287*

*Note includes separations related to the Optional Disengagement Scheme

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The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: No worries. I'm happy for you to take this on notice, but can you give us a breakdown of the seniority of those people who were departing the force?

KAREN WEBB: I'll have to take that on notice.

ANSWER:

As at 31 August 2022, the number of separations are as follow:

Rank	2019	2020	2021	2022
Commissioner	0	0	0	1
Deputy Commissioner	0	1	0	3
Assistant Commissioner	1	2	1	4
Superintendent	18	17	13	15
Inspector	38	49	49	59
Sergeant	133	142	146	286
Constable*	451	511	602	919
Total	641	722	811	1,287

*This includes Probationary Constables and Senior Constables

It should be noted that separations include retirement, as well as use of the Optional Disengagement Scheme.

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The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I understand. What is the eligibility for a scholarship? Is it means tested?

KAREN WEBB: I don't believe so, but that's something I'll be able to get when I get the question on notice for you.

ANSWER:

Scholarships are means tested by nature of financial need, taking into account applicants' income, their dependent children, and expenses that apply to the criteria.

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The Hon. MICK VEITCH: This may be a question for both Ms Fox and yourself, Mr Witherdin. As part of this then, how many staff—FTEs—do you now have in the corporation?

DAVID WITHERDIN: Within the corporation, 18 currently. At full capacity, we'll have 36. They'll progressively come on board over—I think probably about the next six weeks we should be getting pretty close.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Are they new employees or are you drawing them from other parts of the public service?

DAVID WITHERDIN: There's a mix: some from within the public service, some from outside of the public service. We've got some from local government, some from the private sector. The majority, I think, are from within the seven LGAs but some from outside of that as well. The focus has just been about really getting the people with the right skills there on board. But we've had a really excellent response.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I'm glad you said that people from within the seven LGAs are being employed. You might have to take this on notice—maybe you don't—but how many of the 18 that you currently have are actually from within those seven LGAs that have been impacted?

DAVID WITHERDIN: I would need to take that on notice. I could run through in my head, but I'm happy to take that on notice.

ANSWER

Provided on page 51 of Transcript.

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Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: Commissioner Webb, if I could come back to these random breath tests, between 21 June and 1 July—that is the dates I've been given—a number of people have been subject to stop and searches on the pretext of a random breath test or checking their licence but then questioned about their involvement in protest activity. Are you aware of that operation?

KAREN WEBB: No, not until you raised it. I'm happy to take that on notice so I can get a more full and comprehensive answer for you.

ANSWER:

This question does not contain sufficient information to allow the NSW Police Force to undertake further investigation in relation to the number of people being referred to in this question.

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Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I also understand that between 21 and 28 June 13 people were visited in their homes by police and questioned about their knowledge of upcoming protest activity. For example, a person who lives in the Gosford area was visited by two police officers on 23 June. They have no public connection to Blockade Australia at all. They were asked a number of questions from a typed sheet, including whether they were aware of the upcoming protests. Are you aware of that operation?

KAREN WEBB: Not particular circumstances of that, no.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: If I could ask you to come back on notice and let me know who approved that and how those people were identified and, if it wasn't using facial recognition technology, how that was done. The raid on the Colo farm, I understand that that was following a period of surveillance of that farm—is that correct?

KAREN WEBB: What I've read on the public record and media reporting, and what I understand of that operation, yes.

ANSWER:

A number of people associated with Blockade Australia were visited by police with a pre-prepared document asking a number of questions. The strategy was to encourage any participants or those who may have known participants who were attending any protest activities to submit a Form 1 to enable Police to facilitate a lawful protest.

It should be noted that authorised public assemblies are recognised under Part 4 of the *Summary Offences Act 1988*. The legislative context in which these provisions apply encourage the mutual cooperation between protestors and police, where an authorised public assembly notifies the Commissioner of Police about the assembly.

These people were identified through open-source information and/or police holdings. The strategy was approved by the Commander, Strike Force Guard.

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The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: We'll move onto something else then. I'll take us onto the mandates. When the last time the force conducted a risk assessment in relation to COVID-19?

KAREN WEBB: I can get the specific dates, but we ask and I ask that it gets reviewed regularly, particularly if there's an emerging new variant or some other change to the environment that changes the risk.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS: Roughly then, when was the last risk assessment done?

KAREN WEBB: As I said before close of business today I will get the answer. But it's likely within the last month.

ANSWER:

I refer you to page 65 of the transcript.

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The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: We talked a bit about operational strength with the Minister this morning—sorry, authorised strength and actual numbers. I understand that the release of that data is a policy question so I'll leave that to him. But I'm interested in whether the police is looking at moving to a full-time equivalent rather than an operational police officer count. Is that something that you're looking at?

KAREN WEBB: Full-time equivalent is the financial way of recording our spend against salary. Then we've got authorised and actual strength. Authorised—I'm authorised to a particular number of officers. And actual

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Are you able to provide us with the full-time equivalent on notice?

KAREN WEBB: Yes, that's something I'll discuss with the Minister, but it was certainly something we had done previously. I think it makes sense that we report on authorised versus actual—and FTE if I need to in terms of making sure that I stay within my budget.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: If you can provide us on notice with what the full-time equivalent is and if you've got it for any previous years, that would be quite useful. Obviously, the full-time equivalent would give us a better picture if there's someone on parental leave or leave without pay or a long-term injury—

KAREN WEBB: It may not reflect all of those things. It will simply give me a number that's on the books, so to speak. It won't necessarily give their work status. But we can work through that data.

ANSWER:

The NSW Police Force annual report includes information about Police Numbers (headcount).

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The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: Do you have any information about how many people, from your perspective? I'm aware of two. Are there any other deaths in relation to this activity?

KAREN WEBB: I would have to look and go back, but certainly there's people who have been seriously injured as well. It's not just the deaths that I'm concerned about, but just kids that—

The Hon. TARA MORIARTY: Do you have numbers about that? You can take it on notice, which is fine

KAREN WEBB: I will take it on notice. Certainly it's a concern to all of us. We will be co-chairing a youth crime task force with government, and I think the first meeting is in October. Deputy Commissioner Peter Thurtell will be leading that on my behalf.

ANSWER:

The question is unclear.

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The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Commissioner, how many houses are currently leased for police to live in across New South Wales?

KAREN WEBB: I don't know, but all the police housing is now managed by Property NSW. We have care and responsibility for police premises, as in police stations, not the residential premises.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Okay. But can you, on notice, acquire the number of how many—

KAREN WEBB: Officers that have police housing?

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Yes. Or how many police houses there are—or houses for police?

KAREN WEBB: I will take that on notice.

ANSWER:

There are currently 527 police houses in NSW, which are managed by Property NSW.

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The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: What is the assessment criteria to determine whether a police station will be or become a 24-hour station?

KAREN WEBB: Often that's about workload, which is then reflective in the resourcing of that area. It depends also on a number of factors—how far to the nearest 24/7 station, et cetera. There will be a range of factors.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Is that reduced to a policy document or do you have a—

KAREN WEBB: I'll have to take that on notice.

ANSWER:

All police stations attached to Police Districts (PDs) and Police Area Commands (PACs) have flexible resources available to respond to incidents across PDs/PACs.

All local resources are also supplemented by specialist police (such as highway patrol, major crime squads, and covert resources), who are managed centrally but can be deployed across boundaries to meet changing community needs and respond to changing crime patterns and emerging issues.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: If you could, that would be great. How many police station upgrades are currently underway?

KAREN WEBB: There are a number of new builds as well as upgrades, but I will have to take on notice the specifics of that. There's quite a big investment being made.

ANSWER:

This information is listed in the 2022-23 Budget Papers.

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The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Sure, if you could come back to us with some details. When you do, could you also let us know how many of them are on time? And how many are on budget and how many are over budget? Basically, all the metrics about the delivery.

KAREN WEBB: Sure. Some have been delivered, some are in progress and then there's some committed for future years.

ANSWER:

There are 12 police station projects (including new builds and upgrades) which are being delivered on time.

There are 14 police station projects (including new builds and upgrades), which are being delivered on budget.

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The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: How many police assets are subject to native title claims at the moment?

KAREN WEBB: I'll take that on notice, but there are quite a few.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Again, when you're reporting back to us about the length of time that they have been open for, can you indicate to us what is the blockage for resolving them? Is there a reason why it's taking a long time?

KAREN WEBB: That might be a question for colleagues from the Aboriginal Land Council, perhaps, but I'll give you our response.

ANSWER:

This is a matter for the Minister for Lands and Water.

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The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Can you tell us how many stations will need minor upgrades and how many will need significant work done to accommodate new staff?

KAREN WEBB: I will take that on notice and get back to you on that.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Are you able to tell us which stations those are as well, when you take that on notice?

KAREN WEBB: Yes.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Thank you. How many police stations are currently being refurbished, modified or improved in some way?

KAREN WEBB: Sorry, refurbished or?

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Modified or improved.

KAREN WEBB: I'll bring that back on notice.

ANSWER:

The NSW Police Force property portfolio contains infrastructure at various points in the asset life cycle. Not all assets require upgrades to accommodate new staff. Infrastructure investment is considered in conjunction with operational resourcing changes and delivered through various funding streams.

There are currently six police station works in progress related to the property fit-out and modifications to accommodate the Government's investment of an additional 1,500 police in NSW.

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The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: What period of time remains on the lease of the former Dapto TAFE for the active armed offender facility?

KAREN WEBB: I think we're procuring that this year, so I'm not sure that we're still in lease. But I'll try to get that answer before today's over.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Has there been an asset transfer or is that—

KAREN WEBB: I think we've purchased it, but I'm not sure whether it's peppercorn rates or it's actually market price.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Can you report back to us on what it is you're able to tell us?

KAREN WEBB: Yes.

ANSWER:

This matter remains commercial in confidence.

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The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Budget Paper No. 3 contains a nearly \$53 million allocation to the regional police station program—that's at page 5-42. Can you tell us which facilities are to receive upgrades or new facilities this year under the program?

KAREN WEBB: I'll provide that on notice, but there is a list of stations right across—

ANSWER:

This information is listed in the 2022-23 Budget Papers.

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The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: I assume there would be a list. If you could furnish us with that, that'd be good. How are the facilities to be upgraded decided on? What process did you go through?

KAREN WEBB: I'll have to have a look at that. There's obviously state of repair or disrepair et cetera and then a priority process.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Again, is there a set of criteria that you apply?

KAREN WEBB: Yes, and I'll provide that. t cetera and then a priority process.

ANSWER:

I refer you to the answer to Question 137 in the Supplementary Questions.

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The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: What's the budget allocation for that metropolitan police station program?

KAREN WEBB: For this year?

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Yes.

KAREN WEBB: I will take that on notice. We're currently under construction, or will be shortly. The police officers have decanted to another place—Parramatta, for example, and other places. There is quite a bit of work going on around metropolitan Sydney as well.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: When you come back on notice, can you tell us what the budget allocation is for each year to 2027, if you have that information?

KAREN WEBB: Yes

ANSWER:

I refer you to the answers to Questions 129-134 in the Supplementary Questions.

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Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Commissioner, how many people are currently subject to the Suspect Target Management Plan?

KAREN WEBB: I'll just see if I've got that with me. Mr Hudson tells me 834.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: How many identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people?

DAVID HUDSON: A very high proportion. I think it's over 50 per cent.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: How many of those are under 18 years of age?

DAVID HUDSON: From memory, 79.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Of those 79, how many would identify as First Nations?

DAVID HUDSON: I don't have that information.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Would you mind taking that on notice?

DAVID HUDSON: I can take—I can work that out.

ANSWER:

As of 8 September 2022, the number of people who were on Suspect Target Management Plan (STMP) was 858. Of those, 473 people were identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and 83 of those were people under the age of 18 years.

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KAREN WEBB: How many STMPs per area command?

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Yes.

KAREN WEBB: I'll take that on notice.

ANSWER:

There are 858 STMPs across 67 Commands.

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Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Does the NSW Police Force have a policy manual or directive to guide police interactions with people living with disability?

KAREN WEBB: I will have to take that on notice whether it's a specific policy around people with a disability or it is a more broader policy around policing vulnerable communities.

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Thank you. If you could take that on notice, and really if there is a specific policy for people living with disability, whether that can be released as well—if you can take that on notice too.

KAREN WEBB: Yes

ANSWER:

Guidance on police interactions with people with a disability is provided in the NSW Police Force Handbook.

Information is also available in the Justice Advocacy Service Procedures Manual (2019), which provides information to NSW Police Force staff, including Custody Managers and Officers in Charge about the Justice Advocacy Service (JAS).

Additionally, the NSW Police Force Missing Persons Standards Operating Procedures include procedures specific to people with disability, including autism and dementia.

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The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: I'll put a pin in that and come back to it. In 2020 the then police Minister, Mr Elliott, announced a new police station for Moama. At the time he said that construction would begin next year—that is, in 2021. When will Moama actually have a finalised new police station?

KAREN WEBB: Can I take that on notice? I've heard of Moama but I haven't been there. I'm not sure of the progress of Moama, certainly.

ANSWER:

The NSW Police Force is awaiting finalisation of the subdivision of the land by Murray River Council.

The construction schedule will be developed by the main contractor when that contract is awarded.

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The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Ms Fox, I want to go back to the drone questions that I started asking the Minister this morning. Some of this you may want to take on notice—I am not sure. Have we had a chance to check how many drones the Department of Regional NSW has?

REBECCA FOX: We do, but I would prefer to take it on notice and just confirm the numbers. I've got some numbers here for 144 registered with CASA. But I'm not 100 per cent sure that that's all of them, so I'll take that on notice and come back to you.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: That'd be good, thanks. Where do we source those drones from? Does the State Government have a tender process where the different agencies can source them, or do you go through that exercise yourself?

REBECCA FOX: I'll take that on notice as well, but I can give you some information. I've got here mixed retail. This is mostly from Primary Industries, so 90 per cent are DJI brand, under seven kilos. But having done some work in NSW Procurement, I'm sure they're looking at it across government as well.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Yes, probably one of the most purchased items by governments these days is a drone, and they have a very good purpose. I'm not in any way casting an aspersion on that.

REBECCA FOX: Yes.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: When you get the drones, do you check them for their IT or any of the software that goes with the drones?

REBECCA FOX: I'm sure we've got the experts that are looking at that in Primary Industries. I know the surveyors in Public Works are using them, and I'm sure they'd be putting scopes and specifications together to ensure that the drones are capable of doing what they need. But I don't have any more detail about that at the moment, Mr Veitch.

ANSWER:

Standard operating procedures ensure the drone operator checks the software and firmware is operating on the latest version, including the current no-fly zones, as specified by the Civil Aviation Safety Authority.

See response to Question 1 for more information.

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The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: At last budget estimates, questions were asked about the new Bega police station or the Bega police station redevelopment, and on notice the indication was that that work is currently underway and scheduled for completion in December next year. Are you able to give us an update on how far advanced that work is and whether it's still December 2023 that it's scheduled to be up and running?

KAREN WEBB: Yes, it is. It's still on schedule for December next year.

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Where is the construction up to?

KAREN WEBB: I'll take that one on notice.

ANSWER:

This project is currently on schedule for completion in late 2023.

Early works have commenced on site, including site remediation following removal of redundant underground fuel storage tanks.

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The Hon. MICK VEITCH: This morning I was talking about cybersecurity. One of the real concerns I have about the drones that we're purchasing is there is a capacity for a drone to acquire a whole heap of information that then could finish up somewhere overseas. You can understand that farmers would have great concern about a drone over their farmland. We're issuing drones, quite rightly, for some of our shark protection measures along the coast, and suddenly there's a lot of information being gathered that could be used elsewhere. What cybersecurity measures are we putting in place with our drones as we purchase them to make sure that we're not breaching the covenant of trust with the taxpayers, the residents of New South Wales?

REBECCA FOX: Again I can take that on notice and answer specifically, but I'm sure that our cybersecurity policy is picking that up and managing information. We've put a whole lot of focus and attention on cybersecurity, and I'm sure the information that we're picking up from drones would be covered by that. We have, I think, two dedicated people looking at that cybersecurity issue at the moment. I'll come back to you with a fuller answer.

ANSWER:

The operation of drones is only permitted for accredited and qualified users.

The Cluster has a drone working group to ensure we have a continuous improvement approach to our drone use and compliance with required regulations and data keeping. The majority of drones owned by DRNSW are manufactured by DJI.

There is no data automatically submitted by the drones during operation

Any data captured on the SD cards is treated as per Departmental policies and is saved on secure network drives.

In 2020, FTI Consulting (FTI) completed a cybersecurity assessment of a select population of DJI's products and mobile applications. FTI's assessment also confirmed that DJI employs various security best practices.

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.....

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I'd really appreciate that. Commissioner, the NSW Police Force obviously uses drones. Again, the same concern: What does the Police Force go through to ensure—

KAREN WEBB: We certainly go through a competitive procurement process. I couldn't tell you whether they're DJI or some other brand at this point in time, but certainly they're CASA compliant. It's the same CASA regulation as if it's manned, except it's unmanned. We've joined the licensing part of the organisation together at the police aviation command so that they're all under the one roof, so to speak—all the aviation assets. But to answer the question in relation to the technology, I'll have to take that on notice.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Could you please, and what we do to make sure that—

KAREN WEBB: Mitigate that—how we mitigate that. Yes, sure.

ANSWER:

The NSW Police Force uses drones to support frontline policing operations. As such, further particulars about the kind of drones cannot be provided as this may compromise law enforcement operations.

It should be noted that the NSW Police Force ensure they rely on technology that is fit-for-purpose, meets existing regulatory requirements, and is adopted by other law enforcement agencies across Australia. These factors recognise the importance of reliability, cost and technology development.

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The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: While it is getting circulated, can I just ask Mr Hudson: It may be a dumb question, but where does the Building Industry Task Force reside? Is that within the Better Regulation department?

DAVID HUDSON: I would have to get back to you on that, ma'am, I apologise.

ANSWER:

The Building Industry Task Force does not fall within the NSW Police Force portfolio of responsibility.

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The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I've just got one follow-up question to Ms Fox probably. The drones that you say they were using at DPI, did you say they were DJI?

REBECCA FOX: I think so. Let me just check the information that I've got. Sorry, DJI.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Are they made in China?

REBECCA FOX: I don't have that information, I'm sorry. I'm happy to take more information on notice. This is just part of the information that I got this morning, and I'd prefer to check it and come back to you.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: What I'm looking at here is, if there were Australian or New South Wales companies that build drones, do they get a look-in in the State Government's procurement process?

REBECCA FOX: We generally procure under the rules set by NSW Procurement, and we look at a whole range of issues when we procure those kinds of things. I'm happy to take that on notice and come back to you with a more detailed answer.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: The other thing is the maintenance of drones. They have a tendency to fall out of the sky, I've been told—I don't operate one—and they need repair. Whereabouts do we do the maintenance? Where does your department undertake that maintenance, or are they just discarded?

REBECCA FOX: I'll have to take that on notice too, I'm sorry. It's not an area that I've worked in myself personally, so I will take it from the operational teams and come back to you.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I wouldn't mind knowing how much you spent each year, over the last three or four years, on the purchasing of drones.

REBECCA FOX: Yes, no problem

ANSWER

Most of the drones in use by DRNSW are manufactured by DJI.

The drones are purchased directly from retailers such as JB HIFI, Harvey Norman and Australian survey grade instrument suppliers, using Government purchasing cards. This is in line with Government purchasing policies (TC21-01 Digital Payment Adoption) as they are considered 'low value' purchases, being less than \$10,000 including GST.

There are approximately 150 Civil Aviation Safety Authority-registered drones in use across DRNSW, ranging in cost from approximately \$2,000 to \$3,000 each.

DRNSW checks the software to ensure the safe operation of drones and to ensure the firmware is operating on the latest version, including the current no-fly zones, as specified by the Civil Aviation Safety Authority.

There is a process of checks that are conducted prior to every flight. Only staff who have completed the appropriate training are authorised to conduct the following maintenance on drones:

- Replacement of propellers
- Pre-flight and post-flight inspections
- Replacement and charging of batteries
- Fitting and removal of payloads and role equipment.

All defects identified in any part of a drone (transmitter/receiver, role equipment etc.) working under the authority of the ReOC, must be recorded as soon as they are identified and prior to further operation of the drone as per maintenance procedures.

In situations where a defect cannot be rectified, operators must suspend the drone operation. Under no circumstances is an aircraft to be operated if there is an open defect. Defects for batteries, drones and equipment are recorded and managed in the Aviation Compliance and Risk Management register.

See response to Question 1 for more information.

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The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I wouldn't mind knowing how much you spent each year, over the last three or four years, on the purchasing of drones.

.....

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Maybe, Commissioner Webb, if you could do the same thing?

KAREN WEBB: Yes, certainly. I think some of the procurement is not direct with DJI or whoever, but it's often a third party, and the same for the maintenance. But we'll have a look at that.

ANSWER:

Particulars about the kind of drones used by the NSW Police Force cannot be provided as this may compromise law enforcement operations.

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The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Commissioner, what plans do the police have to deliver a 24/7 police station in Murwillumbah, and when will that be delivered?

KAREN WEBB: I'll have to take that on notice. We've certainly got 24/7 at Tweed Heads. Byron Bay is not that far away, and we've got many other police stations—I think there's 10 police stations—in that district. I mentioned this morning if there's a demand and resources to match demand, but most police stations operate, certainly on those busy nights—Thursday, Friday, Saturday night—extended hours. So I'd have to have a look at what the needs are in Murwillumbah before I committed to a 24/7.

ANSWER:

Murwillumbah is part of the Tweed/Byron Police District, which has a 24-hour response available to the public.

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The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I want to ask about urgent calls. How many were received by the police in 2021-22?

KAREN WEBB: I'll have to take that on notice.

KAREN WEBB: There are four categories: P1 to P4.

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Can you provide us on notice with the amount of calls that were received and the average response times?

KAREN WEBB: Yes

ANSWER:

In 2021-22, Police responded to 172,029 urgent calls (P1 and P2), with an average response time of 10 minutes, and 59 seconds.

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The CHAIR: Commissioner, just a quick one. I think you're talking about applications that are running on VPNs, basically. Is that what you're saying? Or are they running on public network?

DAVID HUDSON: No. It's its own independent server. They create their own network.

The CHAIR: So it would probably be through a virtual private network? That's what I'm saying.

DAVID HUDSON: I'm not too sure if that's correct, sir. I can check that for you. But I'm not too sure if that's correct.

The CHAIR: If you could. What do these devices actually look like? Do they look like an Apple phone like you've got, I've got and everyone else has got? Or are they something special?

ANSWER:

The NSW Government introduced world-leading legislation targeting dedicated encrypted criminal communication devices in September 2022. The Government's Bill is available on the NSW Parliament website.

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The CHAIR: Thank you. Maybe to you, commissioner, through to Mr Whyte, a question in relation to an email I sent to the commander of the Firearms Registry that he look into allegations that we had received that a prohibited paintball marker was being sold in New South Wales by a paintball dealer in Victoria. To date we've received absolutely no response, nor did we receive a response to a follow-up email I sent on 14 July 2022. Do you know whether the allegation of importing prohibited paintball markers into New South Wales was ever investigated?

KAREN WEBB: I'll defer to Mr Whyte on that one.

SCOTT WHYTE: I'll take it on notice, if it's okay, sir, because I've got no immediate visibility on it. But I'll chase it up and let you know.

ANSWER:

This matter is currently under investigation by the NSW Police Force. Email advice was provided to the Chair's office on 2 September and 8 September 2022.

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The CHAIR: Thank you. Commissioner, we're all saddened by the news that a police officer has taken his own life at Ermington a few weeks ago. How many currently serving police officers are being managed for mental health issues?

KAREN WEBB: I'll have to take that on notice.

ANSWER:

As at 31 August 2022, there are 1,627 serving police officers being managed for mental health issues.

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The CHAIR: Why, then, are the medical reports on firearm licence applicants assessed by unqualified adjudicators with no medical professional qualifications at all?

KAREN WEBB: I'll have to take that on notice, unless Mr Whyte can speak to that.

SCOTT WHYTE: I'll give you a far more detailed response on notice. The adjudicators assess the medical report not on a medical basis but to ensure it is in line with what the standards are that they ask them to give in the report, managing the risk. If the report doesn't, in their mind, address those issues, that's what they would seek clarity on, not the content of the report as in what the medical prognosis may be.

ANSWER:

As part of the Adjudication process, if a condition is identified that may affect an applicant's suitability to hold a firearms licence, a determination is required based on a risk

assessment of the medical evidence and medical practitioner's opinion supplied to the Registry by the applicant.

Adjudication Officers are not medically trained and in accordance with operational guidelines, they do not base decisions on a particular diagnosis or specific level of impairment or disability.

In assessing any licence or application, the Adjudication Officers complete a full and thorough consideration of all available information, including evidence from medical practitioners, in accordance with the Firearms Registry's Decision-Making Guidelines to assess any risk to public safety.

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The CHAIR: Thank you. I'll look forward to seeing a change. Commissioner, it was revealed in the iNews earlier this month that the COPS replacement system, IPOS has been shelved. How many IT systems in the NSW Police Force have been axed now in the last three years? EFIMS, COPS, WebCOPS—are there any others?

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: NewCOPS.

The CHAIR: NewCOPS, \$170 million.

KAREN WEBB: It's only one that I'm aware of, but I'll take that on notice. It was discussed this morning, the Mark43 question. It's one and the same vendor. But not the only vendor in that IPOS—

ANSWER:

Nil in the last three years.

The IPOS program remains current. The NSW Police Force has commenced exploring options to secure an alternative solution to help deliver the program.

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The CHAIR: Thank you. Mr Field?

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Ms Fox, this one's for you in the first instance, so you might want to refer it. Recently I have been chasing information around the remake of private native forestry codes. Under a GIPAA request of the EPA I was provided a document entitled, "Advice on koala protection in the proposed new Private Native Forestry Codes of Practice". This document was prepared at the request of Regional NSW by NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer. The document was provided to me, then I subsequently received a letter from lead counsel of the EPA advising that the EPA had consulted with the Department of Regional NSW about the full disclosure of the document and Regional NSW objected to the report's disclosure on the grounds that the document was Cabinet information. Can you advise why this document is considered Cabinet information?

REBECCA FOX: I'll have to take it on notice to get you some more detail. I've been sitting in the secretary's chair for I think 11 or 12 days and I'm certainly aware of the issue, but I think it's probably better directed to the Minister for Agriculture and the Local Land Services team that have been dealing with that issue. I certainly know that they received

the advice. I'm happy to take some further advice on why we consider it Cabinet in confidence.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: It was the Department of Regional NSW that responded to the EPA and objected to the release, and that's quite recently. The reason was that it was considered Cabinet information. This was the decision taken by the Department of Regional NSW. Who would have made the decision to object to the release?

REBECCA FOX: I don't have that information personally. I'm guessing, or I assume, it was done by our general counsel in consultation with the team. But I'm happy to take that on notice and get some more information, Mr Field.

ANSWER

Confidentiality of Cabinet documents is a convention at the core of our system of Government and public servants have no discretion to release Cabinet documents. This is clear from:

- the Premier's Memorandum 2006-08 issued by Premier Iemma and still in force
- Schedule 1 of the Government Information (Public Access) Act (GIPA Act) which states that there is a conclusive presumption of an overriding public interest AGAINST disclosure for Cabinet information
- Section 126 of the GIPA Act which states that notices or notifications under the Act "must not disclose information for which there is an overriding public interest against disclosure".

It is the position of DRNSW and LLS that the document in question is Cabinet information and accordingly that there is a conclusive presumption of an overriding public interest against disclosure. It is not appropriate to provide more information as this would require the further unauthorised disclosure of Cabinet information in contravention of the GIPA Act and the 2006 Premier's Memorandum.

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Mr JUSTIN FIELD: That would be great, thank you. My next question goes back to this issue of the redundancy payments for Blue Ridge Hardwoods on the South Coast. I think there was some discussion this morning. The Minister may have suggested that he could get some information by this afternoon for me about the guidelines for provision of these redundancy payments. Was any information able to be received?

REBECCA FOX: I haven't got it. I'm just not sure whether Mr Hanger has got it, or we can take that on notice. Mr Hanger?

CHRIS HANGER: I think we'll take that on notice. It's probably easier to provide all those details. You have asked a number of questions as has been documented and published on the Parliament's website, so we'll take that on notice and provide further details.

Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Just to be clear, the questions I'm asking on notice are: How many payments in total? How many payments at the \$450,000? How many payments that were pro-rataed? Are there any applications? How many have been paid? Are you aware of how many people have been re-employed at the same facility since receiving a redundancy and were there any restrictions or guidelines about being able to continue employment at the site after redundancy? If you're prepared to take all those on notice, that would be much appreciated.

CHRIS HANGER: Absolutely.

ANSWER

55 applicants have received payments worth \$8.25 million as at 13 September 2022. The program is now closed.

Program criteria were included as part of the online applications submitted via SmartyGrants.

For details on redundancies refer to Question 3.

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Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Commissioner Webb, this is for you and it goes to the issue of money laundering through poker machines in New South Wales. How many referrals have you received this year from Liquor & Gaming about potential money-laundering activities in New South Wales clubs and pubs due to poker machines?

KAREN WEBB: I'll have to take that on notice, sir.

ANSWER:

There were 212 individuals referred by Liquor and Gaming Authority to the NSW Police Force.

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Mr JUSTIN FIELD: Commissioner Webb, are you able to provide any data about the number of charges that've been laid with regard to money laundering through poker machines in the last 12 months?

KAREN WEBB: No, I'll take that one on notice as well.

ANSWER:

For the period between 31 August 2021 to 31 August 2022, one person has been charged with money laundering where electronic gaming machines were identified.

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The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: That's okay. Maybe I'll ask you and see whether or not we just need to wait for the commissioner to return. In the past 10 years the rate of psychosocial injuries to NSW Police Force personnel has increased. What processes or systemic processes have been implemented across the Police Force to identify and manage psychosocial risks?

.....

DAVID HUDSON: I would imagine she'd like to take it on notice if you're going back 10 years because there would've been a progressive—

ANSWER:

The NSW Police Force website provides information about wellbeing support services. This includes internal and external support services for NSW Police Force Officers and employees, support services for NSW Police Force families, and additional resources for NSW Police Force Officers, employees and families.

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The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: Sorry, Commissioner, I was just asking some questions about what's the forensic investigation process if a heavy vehicle is involved in an accident. This is off the back of concerns that were raised with me by the Australian Heavy Vehicle Repairers Association. I'm happy if you want to provide more detail on notice. But, for example, do you look at the repair history of the vehicle if it is involved in an accident?

KAREN WEBB: Yes, certainly. I'll take that on notice but traditionally the Crash Investigation Unit would take on something like that if it's serious fatal-type injuries and look at the supply chain issues around the vehicle itself—if there is a history of failure to manage repairs, service, neglect of the vehicle in terms of contributing factors.

ANSWER:

As a matter of course, vehicle repair history is not viewed unless the investigation lends itself to make those inquires. Should mechanical/vehicle issues be raised as the causal factor by the driver or if police identify mechanical/vehicle issues during their investigation, then repair history would be reviewed.

The NSW Police Force Traffic Operations Group assists the Crash Investigation Unit to obtain the service history of the heavy vehicle and all lines of enquiry relating to this would be followed up and produced to the relevant court.

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The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Commissioner, what systematic processes are implemented across the NSW Police Force to identify and manage psychosocial risks?

KAREN WEBB: I'll have to take that on notice. I am certainly concerned about the wellbeing of my police officers. We certainly do have a range of programs in place—WellCheck for high risk type employment areas of the organisation. It's not for every member of the organisation. But there's certainly a whole range of other services available: EAP, chaplaincy, peer support officers. There's a whole range of things, but certainly WellCheck is a periodic assessment meeting with individuals with a psychologist to check that they're in good mental health.

ANSWER:

Refer to the above answer on page 28.

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The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: When officers are disengaging from the force, do you ask them why they're leaving to try to get some sort of insight into that?

KAREN WEBB: We do. We have exit interviews. I'd have to provide you the answer on notice. But certainly there's a range of issues. Like I mentioned this morning, we've had a three-year officer disengagement scheme that allows officers to leave with dignity and to do something else of their choosing. Others leave for other employment and others leave with medical conditions. Medical conditions are self-evident, but on why others leave, I can get back to you.

ANSWER:

Resigning officers are asked to complete a separation survey prior to their last day of service.

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The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: And whether psychological injury is going to play a part in that. If New South Wales, as expected, implements the amended model WHS regulations, are you confident that the NSW Police Force will be able to demonstrate compliance with the new clauses regarding psychosocial risks? Is that something you're looking closely at?

KAREN WEBB: Not yet. My Workforce Safety Command might be considering that. But, certainly, I remember when the original laws came in we were given some lead time because it took quite a shift. It was a step change to make sure that those systems were embedded in the organisation. If you're after specific information, then I can take that on notice.

ANSWER:

Yes.

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The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Thank you. I want to go back to the freight linkages priority registration process, Ms Fox, if I could. There were 47 applications. This morning, when we explored this a little bit with the Deputy Premier, the 47 applications did not meet the Snowy fund legislated requirements and the guidelines.

REBECCA FOX: That's right.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: Are the guidelines publicly available?

REBECCA FOX: It was done before I was responsible for that program. I'm guessing that they were, but I'll have to take that on notice to confirm.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: I'm happy for you to take that on notice. If they are able to be provided, that would be good, because I'm just checking their consistency with the Act. That's all I'm after.

REBECCA FOX: We generally make those guidelines available. As I said, it was before I was involved in the program, but I will double-check for you.

ANSWER

No.

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Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: I just wanted to ask a couple of questions again, Commissioner Webb. Just very quickly, in relation to the WDVCAS co-location, I understand there are two programs. There is a hearing support pilot and there is also the co-location of DV specialist workers in police stations. I wanted to check that the evidence you were giving me earlier was in relation to the last of those and not the first.

KAREN WEBB: I can take that on notice. As I understand it, the co-location is the 14. There are four sites in the former one that you mentioned, but let me clarify that out of session.

Ms ABIGAIL BOYD: My understanding is the hearing support pilot is 14 locations. The co-location pilot was five locations and was due to start on 5 September, but I understand it has been unilaterally halted by the police.

KAREN WEBB: I'll check and get back to you.

ANSWER:

I refer to the response to Question 60 provided in the Supplementary Questions.

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Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Commissioner Webb, are you aware of an incident that took place where a forest scientist was assaulted in the Northern Rivers by some forestry workers. The incident was filmed by a Forestry Corporation officer, and then when the matter of the assault was reported to police in Coffs Harbour, it turned out that some months later the poor chap who had been assaulted was then charged with a criminal offence. Are you aware of that incident?

KAREN WEBB: I'll have to take that one on notice. I'm not aware of that matter at all.

ANSWER:

The NSW Police Force is aware of this incident that took place in June 2020.

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Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Commissioner Webb, who would have given the instruction or who designed the Colo operation? Where did that instruction come from that we were going to go and surveil and then go undercover on somebody's private property at Colo?

KAREN WEBB: I'll have to take that on notice, but, as I said earlier today, it's part of an investigative strategy trying to prevent disruptive activity. But I don't know. I can't give you the specifics now, but I'll provide you an answer on notice.

ANSWER:

The matters relating to the activity conducted by the NSW Police Force in Colo are currently before the Courts.

They are sub judice and therefore, it would be inappropriate to answer and produce any documents that may be called upon as evidence.

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The CHAIR: Well, we haven't. Ever since I've been involved in the shooting politics, I've never seen a commonsense approach taken by the registry when it comes to ranges. We actually did, under previous supervisors of the registry. Under "Bluey" Lyons, for example, recommendations did go up to the police ministry, through the police, to adopt as an alternate approach a risk-based approach. In other words, a proper risk assessment. As you would do, for example, if you are doing anything—whether you were going to do mining or any workplace health and safety arrangement—you do a risk assessment. But, again, it always stops dead. It never seems to go anywhere. Why wouldn't you do that? Of course, that then leads to the perception amongst the users of those ranges that they're being victimised because it doesn't make any sense. It makes a fool out of the bureaucratic process. I draw your attention back to the Goulburn example, where they have been shooting there since the Anzac days into a mountain, but the range is closed now. I ask you, why? That's the thing—why? What has changed?

SCOTT WHYTE: I'll take that on board, sir, and I'll look into the Goulburn range. As I said before, a lot of what you said makes sense and I will certainly take a commonsense approach when we look into these regulations.

ANSWER:

The Goulburn range remains functional, and is not closed.

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Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I have one more question, if that's okay. This is just going back a little bit in relation to the issuing of COVID fines, in particular in the Walgett area. Are there members of the community in Walgett that still have outstanding COVID fines that they have not been able to pay, or who are on hardship payments? I was made aware of a particular concern by the Dharriwaa Elders Group, who sat down with a police officer through their liaison officer. Sorry, I can't remember the correct term. The Dharriwaa Elders Group does a lot of frontline work assisting with the Aboriginal community there. They were assured that the fine system was not going to be used, and then they found out that it was. They were dealing with some members of the community—I was informed it was quite a number—who were really stressed and really struggling. Is that still an issue?

KAREN WEBB: I'm unaware of that issue until you raised it, but I'll certainly take that on notice. In terms of the issue around paying the fines through a payment plan or some other arrangement, that's done through Revenue NSW. But in terms of the situation around fining people, I know that the numbers—and I will provide them on notice subsequent to this—are much lower in the last few months. I was asked that question this morning, but the numbers are much smaller. But I don't have the spread of where they've been issued at this point in time.

ANSWER:

The NSW Police Force does not have access to data surrounding infringement notice payments or in relation to individuals who may have entered into payment plans.

Individuals can lodge an objection or dispute an infringement notice through the Revenue NSW website at www.revenue.nsw.gov.au.

There have been no COVID related infringement notices issued in Walgett since October 2021.