

Supplementary Questions – Portfolio Committee No. 5 – Emergency Services and Resilience

SQ1

What is meant by “back-office” functions of the SES?

- (a) How has the government assessed who and what functions are “back-office”?
- (b) How many staff meet this description?
 - i. Of these staff, how many would tip into an operational capacity during a disaster?

Answer: The NSW Government supported recommendation 12 of the Independent Flood Inquiry in principle, with further work required on implementation. The NSW Government supports efforts to improve frontline capability, including through the streamlining of functions across agencies. Further consideration is required to examine the operational implications of this recommendation.

SQ2

What is meant by “back-office” functions of the RFS?

- (a) How has the government assessed who and what functions are “back-office”?
- (b) How many staff meet this description?
 - i. Of these staff, how many would tip into an operational capacity during a disaster?

Answer: Please refer to response to Supplementary Question 1.

SQ3

Can the Minister answer and identify who within the NSW SES is determined “back-office” staff using the staffing assigned across the following directorates:

- (a) The Chief of Staff;
- (b) Corporate Services;
- (c) Deputy Commissioner Operations;
- (d) Finance Asset Business Services;
- (e) Information & Communications Technology;
- (f) Metro Operations;
- (g) Operational Capability and Training;
- (h) People and Development; and,
- (i) Regional Operations.

Answer: Please refer to response to Supplementary Question 1.

SQ4

Will SES “back-office” staff be merged from Metro Operations which has roles such as Communication Officers, Coordinator Rescue Operations, Coordinator Duty Operations?

Answer: Please refer to response to Supplementary Question 1.

SQ5

Will SES “back-office” staff be merged from Corporate Services including Business Analyst, Media & Communications, Planning & Research?

Answer: Please refer to response to Supplementary Question 1.

SQ6

Will SES “back-office” staff be merged from People & Development including Work Health & Safety, Mental Health Services, Occupational Psychologists?

Answer: Please refer to response to Supplementary Question 1.

SQ7

Will SES "back-office" staff be merged from Finance, Asset & Business Services including Asset & Facility, Property and Facilities Manager, Administration Support?

Answer: Please refer to response to Supplementary Question 1.

SQ8

Will the NSW Government cut like for like roles across RFS and SES?

Answer: Please refer to response to Supplementary Question 1.

SQ9

Does the Minister support equalising payments for non-economic loss regardless of whether the victim is a volunteer firefighter or a non-exempt worker?

Answer: State Insurance Regulatory Authority (SIRA) has commenced consultation with icare and NSW Treasury to consider the remaining disparity in entitlements between volunteers, exempt workers and other NSW workers.

SQ10

What representations has the Minister made to Minister Dominello regarding this issue?

Answer: The Minister has met with Minister Dominello, alongside representatives from NSW Rural Fire Service and SIRA, in regards to this issue.

SQ11

Has FRNSW considered alternatives to TOLing to address the resourcing and operational needs that TOLing purports to address?

(a) If yes, what are they?

i. Did the Department do any costings of these alternate policies or processes?

Answer: FRNSW has several projects in place to minimise the incidences of TOLing.

(a) The Sustainable On-Call Program will improve the On-Call (Retained) firefighter model to a more sustainable system that improves firefighter availability by delivering projects to:

- Recognise and value skills and commitment
- Facilitate dual employment allowing permanent firefighters to work as on-call firefighters.
- Improve recruitment for better availability and recognition of primary employers.
- Develop on-call leaders
- Revisions to remuneration to better compensate availability.
- Improve physical work environments through IT and resources.
- Increase training supporting the commitment and service

(i) For 2022-23, Fire and Rescue NSW (FRNSW) has allocated \$642,000 to fund these initiatives.

SQ12

What requirements must be met for a volunteer to be assigned a rescue incident over an on-duty paid responder besides geographic proximity to the incident?

Answer: Rescue units must be accredited by the State Rescue Board, in line with the State Rescue Policy. Accreditation requirements may be found in the NSW State Rescue Policy, which is available at: www.nsw.gov.au/rescue-and-emergency-management/state-rescue-policy.

SQ13

On December 17 2021, FRNSW implemented a COVID-19 vaccination mandate:

- (a) If a firefighter is non-compliant with FRNSW's current vaccination policy what work if any is a firefighter assigned?
- (b) Does the Minister or FRNSW have any plans to change this vaccination policy?
- (c) How do you reconcile this with any other government agencies that have now changed their policy such as the Department of Education?

Answer:

(a) Non-compliant firefighters are placed on leave and not assigned any work duties. If a worker provides a valid medical contraindication, preventing them from receiving a COVID-19 vaccine, alternative duties may be assigned at the discretion of FRNSW on a case-by-case basis.

(b) FRNSW does not plan to change the vaccination policy.

(c) The FRNSW COVID-19 risk assessment considered the unique FRNSW duties compared to other Government agencies and determined vaccination is the highest level of reasonably practicable control available to reduce risk to FRNSW workers and stakeholders.

SQ14

How many hours of overtime were paid from 30 June 2021 to 17 December 2021?

Answer:

SES: 7,932.15 hours.

RFS: 9,616 hours.

FRNSW: From 18 June 2021 to 16 December 2021, FRNSW incurred 153,360 hours of overtime.

Resilience: 2,609.58 hours.

SQ15

How many hours of overtime were paid from 17 December 2021 to 30 June 2022?

- (a) Are these allocations statistically abnormal and if so, what do you believe should be done to remedy this situation?

Answer:

SES: 31,191.09 hours.

- (a) 29,140 of the hours are operationally related and not related to COVID or vaccinations.

RFS: 20,125 hours.

- (a) This reflects overtime hours worked on events including floods and the varroa mite response. It is not abnormal for overtime hours at the RFS to reflect incident response activity.

FRNSW: From 17 December 2021 to 30 June 2022 FRNSW incurred 496,196 hours of overtime.

- (a) The increase in overtime can be attributed to operational deployments to the NSW floods of March 2022 and mandatory vaccination requirements.

Resilience: 12,076.53.

SQ16

What capability does the RFS have to identify where vehicles are, how many crew are on board and the level of training including breath apparatuses to combat structure fires at a given time?

Answer: The RFS has recently introduced Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) to assist with the timely dispatch of resources. CAD uses a combination of pre-determined business rules and Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) technology to determine the nearest and most appropriate resources to be responded. Along with the Member Availability app (RFS ACTIV), CAD captures crew details and qualifications (including Breathing Apparatus) that can also be provided/updated manually.

SQ17

In a Rural Fire District (RFD), in what situation would an RFS appliance not be the fastest appliance to attend an incident?

Answer: There are occasions where other agencies are first on scene to incidents within Rural Fire Districts. This can occur for several reasons, including driving/response time from Brigade Station to incident location. The Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) and Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) systems have greatly enhanced situational awareness to ensure the nearest, most appropriate resource(s) is responded.

SQ18

How many incidents have FRNSW attended in a RFD to assist the RFS over the last 12 months?
(a) How many times were they first arriving?
(b) How many times has FRNSW been the sole agency to attend an incident in an RFD?
i. How many times has FRNSW done the same for the SES or VRA?

Answer:

FRNSW has recorded attending 1544 incidents within RFD, noting that the RFS may not have been called to respond as the incident may have related to rescue or hazmat operations which are within FRNSW's operational responsibilities. The RFS may also have attended these incidents.

i. The question is best referred to the NSW Police Force who are responsible for rescue response and coordination.

SQ19

What is the labour expense cap and what is the impact it has on your portfolio?
(a) What is the current amount for FRNSW related labour expenses?
(b) What is the impact of the cap on day-to-day FRNSW operations?
(c) What impact does it have on decisions to open new stations or determine whether existing stations are kept online?

Answer: The Labour Expense Cap (LEC) places a ceiling on the total of employee related and contractor expenses for a financial year, which results in Labour Expense budget being removed from FRNSW's total budget.

(a) The 2022-23 Labour Expense budget for FRNSW is \$634.3 million. The Labour Expense Cap Savings Target for 2022-23 is \$28.4 million.

(b) The LEC does not directly impact operational activities undertaken by FRNSW.

(c) Proposals for additional staff and new stations are managed through the budget process. FRNSW manages its activities within its allocated budget and establishment.

SQ20

Acting Commissioner Stiffler identified as a priority upgrading 128 facilities to provide appropriate privacy for female firefighters. Please provide an update on works completed since then?

- (a) Last year there was \$1.8 million allocated to interim measures. How much was spent?
- (b) How much has been allocated in the 2022-23 Budget?

Answer: As part of FRNSW's minor capital works funding, the Fit for Purpose Program has completed upgrades at Branxton, Coraki, and Mortdale Fire Stations.

- (a) The 2021-22 budget for the Fit for Purpose Program was \$1.452 million. Actual expenditure for this period was \$1.453 million.
- (b) The 2022-23 budget for the Fit for Purpose Program is \$2.35 million. The NSW Government has committed a further \$50 million over 10 years for Privacy and Diversity Enhancements in Fire Stations for women firefighters.

SQ21

Has KPMG completed its review to prioritise fire stations in order of need of repairs?

- (a) If so, can a copy be provided?

Answer: KPMG has completed the review.

- (a) The report is Cabinet in Confidence.

SQ22

What is the standard or benchmark for a FRNSW station to be considered 'fit-for-purpose'?

- (a) How many FRNSW stations would currently be regarded as not 'fit-for-purpose'?
Regional NSW and Stronger Communities
- (b) How many require remedial works to remain safe for workers?
- (c) Is there adequate funding in FRNSW's capital works budget to perform these works?
- (d) Has the Minister or Commissioner made submissions for additional safety remedial works that have been rejected by Treasury?

Answer: FRNSW 'fit for purpose' principles address clean building, diversity and inclusion, resilience and accommodation of the latest appliances and equipment. FRNSW design guidelines adhere to the National Construction Code.

- (a) 243 of 334 FRNSW Stations are considered not fit for purpose when assessed against modern standards and principles.
- (b) All stations have treatments to maximise workplace safety.
- (c) FRNSW is developing a comprehensive Asset Management Plan to outline the funding required to address capital needs.
- (d) In 2019-20 FRNSW submitted a budget bid to address property and fleet capital works. In 2022-23 FRNSW submitted a budget bid to address property capital works, the NSW Government committed \$51 million over 10 years for station upgrades.

SQ23

Has the Minister or Commissioner made submissions to Treasury to replace ageing appliances that present a WHS risk, which have been rejected?

Answer: In 2019-20, Fire and Rescue NSW made a submission seeking capital funding through the Budget process, which included fire appliances.

As part of the 2022-23 NSW Budget, there was \$114.6 million in funding announced to deliver new trucks and retrofit old trucks across the Rural Fire Service (RFS) and Fire & Rescue NSW (FRNSW). This was comprised of \$105.6 million to complete the recommendations of the NSW Bushfire Inquiry and \$9 million in further capital expenditure.

SQ24

Does FRNSW have plans to close any existing training facilities in the next twelve months?

Answer: No

SQ25

At the Emergency Services Academy, FRNSW have systems for managing air filtration for live-burn scenarios, correct?

- (a) Do the same systems exist for regional training centres?
- (b) If not, why not?

Answer: Yes

- (a) No
- (b) The volume of burns at the Emergency Services Academy far exceeds regional training centres. The surrounding infrastructure also requires a more comprehensive treatment solution.

SQ26

Based on the most recent audits performed by FRNSW, how many stations do not have access to hot water for decontamination?

- (a) Is this matter being identified through FRNSW's Asset Management arrangements?

Answer: None. All FRNSW stations have shower facilities.

SQ27

What assessment does FRNSW make to ensure fleet numbers are adequate to meet needs?

- (a) Has the Minister or Department received a request to increase fleet numbers?
- (b) What arrangements have been made to ensure that appliances are fitted with adequate burn-over protections for bushfires?

Answer: FRNSW asset management planning aligns fleet procurement to station needs. The NSW Government allocates appliance funding when delivering new (additional) stations.

- (a) The FRNSW Asset Management Plan has not identified a need for increased fleet numbers.
- (b) All bushfire tankers without cabin protection sprays have been or are in the process of being replaced.

SQ28

How many times have the new Compressed Air Foam System (CAFS) Aerial Pumps been delayed and pulled from active use due to safety issues?

- (a) What were the safety incidents?
- (b) Where is the northernmost aerial appliance in NSW located?
- (c) Where is the westernmost aerial appliance in NSW located?

Answer: CAFS Aerial Pumps has been removed from service three times.

- (a) There have been two potential issues and one safety incident:
 1. Shudder in boom identified, with the appliance removed from service to address shudder, and the potential issue was resolved.
 2. Waterway issue identified by FRNSW Fleet and removed from service as a precautionary measure, and the potential issue was resolved.
 3. Transfer case failure - the transfer case failure cause was identified and rectified, and the incident was resolved.

(b) Newcastle

(c) Albury

With the introduction of this new technology/design, FRNSW Fleet has worked tirelessly with its supplier, the original equipment manufacturer and its firefighters to ensure any and all issues and

potential issues are addressed, with safety being the paramount driver. There has been extensive consultation with FRNSW's training staff to identify issues that required technical resolutions or increased education for staff.

SQ29

What is the average age of FRNSW's Type 3 (normal urban fire truck)?

Answer: 8.19 years

SQ30

What is the average age of FRNSW's Type 2 (Retained urban fire truck)?

Answer: 12.39 years

SQ31

What is the average age of FRNSW's minor fleet?

Answer: 3.34 years

SQ32

How many vehicles does FRNSW own?

Answer: 959

SQ33

What was the development cost of the new Solve Safety solution for injury, illness, exposure and near miss notifications?

Answer: The details of the Solv procurement are commercial-in-confidence.

SQ34

What is the ongoing cost of the Solve Safety software?

Answer: The details of the Solv procurement are commercial-in-confidence.

SQ35

Has FRNSW investigated whether this software is providing better outcomes for firefighters as opposed to the old system?

Answer: Yes, the Solv system simplifies the submission process through efficiencies, such as selections from pull-down menus which has promoted an increased reporting culture.

SQ36

Have FRNSW lost any historic injury reporting and/or medical reports throughout transitions to alternative injury reporting systems?

Answer: There has been no known incident where historic injury or medical data has been lost.

SQ37

Where is the company responsible for GARTAN based?

(a) What guidance is there in FRNSW's Procurement Policy on preferencing NSW or Australian suppliers?

Answer: Ireland.

(a) The FRNSW Procurement Policy ensures all procurement is in accordance with the NSW Procurement Policy Framework.

SQ38

How does FRNSW request changes to this software?

Answer: FRNSW requests changes through an online support portal and client support email address.

SQ39

What was the development cost of GARTAN?

Answer: Gartan was implemented over two years:

2014-15: \$637,000

2015-16: \$369,000

SQ40

What are the ongoing costs of GARTAN?

Answer: The recurrent annual cost for GARTAN is between \$147,000 and \$302,000 per annum.

SQ41

How many retained staff are consulted on an ongoing basis about how well this software is running, and any improvements needed?

Answer: In 2016, FRNSW established a 'Support Help Desk' and platform for on-call firefighters to provide feedback. The system resulted in 72 improvements in 2021-22 financial year, of which 62 have been completed.

SQ42

What training or information is provided to RFS volunteers on the toxic nature of bushfire smoke and how exposure can be mitigated?

Answer: As part of the provision and implementation of enhanced respiratory protection to RFS volunteer firefighters, comprehensive information was provided on bush fire smoke hazards and protective measures. This information included instructional videos and factsheets available on the RFS member site and via a QR code on each respiratory set sent out. The information will also be combined into a quick reference online course to be available to all members.

SQ43

Does the RFS provide the following to volunteers:

- (a) Face to face educational programs to inform and empower all firefighters?
- (b) Clearly delineated and labelled 'living' and 'working' zones in fire stations?
- (c) 'Post incident wash-down' to remove contaminants from PPC?
- (d) Replacement set of PPE to avoid constant body exposure to contaminated uniforms?

Regional NSW and Stronger Communities

- (e) Dedicated laundering systems for PPC including heat extraction systems to promote off-gassing?
- (f) Appropriate station designs to promote healthy firefighter concepts.

Answer:

(A) The RFS has provided a range of resources to brigades about the new respiratory protection equipment, including information about cleaning, sizing and Frequently Asked Questions.

(B) There is no need for volunteer accommodation at RFS stations. The RFS is working to implement improved hygiene management in new station builds, which will include designated clean and dirty areas.

(C) Volunteers are trained on decontamination on site, with a quick reference guide found in the RFS Pocketbook APP. There are also videos on how to clean and maintain the PPC, including respirators. During an operation the Incident Controller determines when it is appropriate for a decontamination station to be established and PPC removed.

(D) Yes. The RFS has made a second set PPC available to all members. A funding allocation of \$15 million over 5 years is expediting the state-wide roll out.

(E) The RFS will be working with Fire and Rescue NSW as part of its clean firefighter strategy to trial a number of laundry options that can be used across the State. This will initially involve focusing on commercial laundry arrangements within key locations.

(F) The RFS is working to implement improved hygiene management in new station builds, which will include designated clean and dirty areas.

SQ44

FRNSW recently developed initiatives to deal with the issue of carcinogen exposure of firefighters. This included an approach to decontaminate and roll-out new laundry systems for PPC. How much funding has been allocated to address this?

Answer: The NSW Government has committed the following funding for the repair and replacement of firefighters' PPC:

- 2022-23: \$2.4 million
- 2023-24: \$4.9 million
- 2024-25 onwards: \$5 million

The PPC funding is in addition to investments in a new world-first laundry system, station upgrades, and improved policies and procedures for the management of carcinogen exposure.

SQ45

Have you tested all current and previous training facilities and fire stations for PFAS contaminations?

- (a) If so, are those reports up to date and available?

Answer: FRNSW investigates current training sites, sites for disposal, select decommissioned fire stations and locations where PFAS has been identified.

- (a) FRNSW will consider the publication of reports on FRNSW-owned properties/sites via its website. Information relating to non-FRNSW sites will not be published without approval from affected parties.

SQ46

Are FRNSW still burning particle chipboard at regional training centres as part of live-burn training?

Answer: Yes

SQ47

How will Resilience NSW's budget be redistributed to other combat agencies?
(a) What amount will be set aside for Recovery NSW?

Answer: The Department of Premier and Cabinet PMO is leading the response to the Independent Flood Inquiry and, as part of this work, will scope out the recommendation relating to Resilience NSW.

SQ48

What are the 'Cumberland Flyer' and the 'Macarthur Flyer'?
(a) Would the RFS prioritise using one of these appliances over Fire and Rescue?

Answer: Both the Cumberland and Macarthur Flyers are category 1 village tankers. The RFS may prioritise the use of these appliances depending on location/distance/status of RFS and FRNSW appliances, as well as business rules within the Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system.

SQ49

Is it correct that RFS Brigades have their own station bank accounts?

(a) If so, what is the purpose of the money held in these accounts?

- i. Who is responsible for these accounts?
- ii. How is money deposited into these accounts?
- iii. What governance applies to withdrawal of funds?
- iv. Who, if anyone, would audit these funds?
- v. Does expenditure from these funds get reported to a central location or body?
- vi. Does gear or equipment purchased using these funds go through a central procurement and safety assessment process?

Answer: Most RFS Brigades operate their own general purpose bank accounts. These hold funds for community events, day-to-day business expenses (such as telephony accounts, stationery and tea/coffee supplies) and for items of equipment that are not required but the members wish to have.

- i. Brigades are responsible for the operation of these accounts through appointed Brigade Officers.
- ii. Appointed members of the Brigade are responsible for its banking activities.
- iii. Governance of Brigade funds is mandated through the Brigade Constitution and Handbook.
- iv. Audit requirements are set out in the Brigade Constitution and Handbook, and vary depending on the quantum of funds held.
- v. From an accounting perspective, Brigade accounts are considered to be outside of the RFS entity boundary, and are not controlled or consolidated by the RFS. Under the governance arrangements, reports on the operation of accounts are made to District management, but funds are controlled by the Brigade.
- vi. Additional items of equipment purchased using Brigade funds are not part of the centralised procurement system. The NSW Rural Fire Service and Brigades Donations Fund allocated \$20 million for a Brigades grants program, which provides each Brigade with \$10,000 for items of equipment or station improvements. This program set rigorous purchasing guidelines to ensure equipment purchased was compliant with safety standards.

SQ50

How many trained counsellors and psychologists are employed in FRNSW to provide services to frontline firefighters?

(a) How many FRNSW firefighters failed to pass these health checks?

Answer: FRNSW employs a 'Manager Mental Health and Wellbeing' and five Occupational Psychologists registered with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency.

(a) 17 firefighters were found permanently unfit to perform their ordinary duties

SQ51

How does the peer support program work?

Answer: The FRNSW peer support program is a network of around 120 trained employees who provide an informal, short-term, confidential assistance and support focussing on promoting wellbeing. Peer Support Officers understand the unique stressors firefighting and can encourage colleagues to connect with formal support pathway provided by the FRNSW Wellbeing Team.

SQ52

Does FRNSW need increased funding to cope with the mental health workload coming from its workforce?

Answer: Additional investment in Mental Health and Wellbeing Support Services is always welcome.

SQ53

How many swiftwater rescue operators does FRNSW have in its ranks?

Answer: FRNSW has 149 in-water rescue operators.

SQ54

On how many occasions has the State Emergency Service requested FRNSW assistance with swiftwater rescues?

(a) How many of those occasions were in campaign situations? (that is, major, ongoing large scale events)

(b) How many of those occasions were for individual callouts in smaller scale incidents?

Answer: NSW SES utilises all available flood rescue resources during emergency response as required. Further information can be obtained from NSW Police on this matter.

SQ55

How many Fire & Rescue NSW stations are primary (General Land) rescue stations?

Answer: FRNSW has 84 accredited General Land Rescue stations.

SQ56

How many Fire & Rescue NSW stations are secondary (Road Crash) rescue stations?

Answer: FRNSW has 109 accredited Road Crash Rescue stations

SQ57

On how many occasions did an SES station go offline, requiring FRNSW stations to step up as the primary rescue station, in each year as follows:

- (a) 2019
- (b) 2020
- (c) 2021
- (d) 2022

Answer: There are more than 250 SES Units across the State. Whilst the major responsibilities for the SES is in response to flood and storm emergencies, the SES also provides general rescue response, especially in rural parts of the State. This includes road accident rescue, vertical rescue, bush search and rescue, evidence searches and other forms of specialist rescue that may be required. While SES units may on occasion go offline for a rescue capability, the Unit is not necessarily offline in its entirety or may also be supported by a nearby SES Unit. The time offline may also be as little as 1-2 hours and not a continuous time period. NSW Police, as the combat agency for rescue, would be able to provide details on which agency supported the community during those particular times.

SQ58

Has the Minister or Department received a request for any FRNSW stations which are currently not rescue qualified, to become secondary or primary rescue qualified?

- (a) If yes, which stations?

Answer: Yes.

(a) FRNSW Zone management teams work with Local and Regional Rescue Committees to ensure any operational gaps are filled. FRNSW is currently in the process of upgrading Tamworth, Moruya, Balranald and Macksville.

SQ59

How many FRNSW firefighters have moved to medical retirement following a health check in each year as follows:

- (a) 2020
- (b) 2021
- (c) 2022

Answer: (a) One firefighter was found permanently unfit to perform their ordinary duties in 2020.
(b) Nine firefighters were found permanently unfit to perform their ordinary duties in 2021.
(c) Seven firefighters were found permanently unfit to perform their ordinary duties in 2022.

SQ60

How many FRNSW firefighters have moved to medical retirement the year before a health check in each year as follows:

- (a) 2020
- (b) 2021
- (c) 2022

Answer: Medical retirement can be due to a wide range of factors and data to compare two separate processes is not collated.

SQ61

What is the total cost of administering health checks in each year as follows:

- (a) 2020
- (b) 2021
- (c) 2022

Answer: (a) 2019-20: \$342,000

(b) 2020-21: \$1 million

(c) 2021-22: \$1.5 million

SQ62

How many staff have been placed on light duties following a health check in each year as follows:

- (a) 2020
- (b) 2021
- (c) 2022

Answer: (a) In 2020, nine firefighters were provided alternative duties.

(b) In 2021, 75 firefighters were provided alternative duties.

(c) In 2022, 27 firefighters have been provided alternative duties.

SQ63

Given that in response to Recommendation 1 of the 2017 Inquiry into Emergency Services Agencies, the government claimed that "NSW has a suite of existing independent external complaints management and workplace oversight bodies available to scrutinise instances of workplace bullying, harassment and discrimination" please provide the respective number of complaints and investigations the below oversight bodies have conducted or obtained regarding Fire and Rescue NSW, NSW Rural Fire Service and NSW State Emergency Service in calendar years since 1 January 2019:

- (a) Bullying and harassment within these agencies
- (b) Maladministration matters
- (c) Complaints relating to the Anti-Discrimination Act 1977
- (d) Fraud or corruption matters
- (e) Serious misconduct claims

Answer:

SES:

Since 1 January 2019, three (3) fraud related matters have been referred externally (ICAC). No further action was taken by ICAC.

RFS:

Since 1 January 2019, oversight bodies have obtained information from the RFS, as follows:

- Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC): 12.
- NSW Ombudsman: 3.
- Office of the Children's Guardian: 1.
- Anti-Discrimination Board: 1.
- SafeWork NSW: 0.

The RFS also reports matters to oversight agencies, in accordance with its obligations under relevant legislation .and matters that may constitute a criminal offence to NSW Police.

In respect to the categories outlined at (a)-(e), NSW Police have obtained information from the RFS on 12 matters since 1 January 2019.

FRNSW:

	2019	2020	2021	2022 (to date)

(a)	Bullying and Harassment	3	-	6	1
(b)	Maladministration	-	-	-	-
(c)	Anti- discrimination matters	1	-	1	-
(d)	Fraud or corruption	15	36	13	13
(e)	Serious misconduct	1	-	-	-

SQ64

Given that in response to Recommendation 23 of the 2017 Inquiry into Emergency Services Agencies, the government claimed that “Fire and Rescue NSW periodically reviews its practices and procedures in relation to bullying and harassment and has established consistent policies in place that guide the appropriate disciplinary action be taken” please provide information in respect of the following:

- (a) How many reviews Fire & Rescue NSW has undertaken in relation to bullying and harassment by calendar year since 2014?
- (b) What changes have been made to Fire and Rescue NSW’s practices and procedures in relation to bullying and harassment since 2014?
- (c) In how many instances have the practices and procedures for bullying and harassment not been followed in Fire and Rescue NSW since 2014?
- (d) What remedial steps have been taken if practices and procedures for bullying and harassment in Fire and Rescue NSW have not been followed?

Answer:

(a)

2014: 1
2015: 1
2018: 1
2019: 1
2020: 1
2021: 2
2022: 4

(b)

- Since 2014 FRNSW has revised and published two updated versions of our Bullying and Harassment Policy in 2015 and 2019.
- In 2018 FRNSW published the Stop Bullying Action Plan (2018-2020), linked to the Public Service Commission’s (PSC) Respect, Reflect Reset campaign.
- The FRNSW Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy was introduced in 2020, the first of any fire service in Australasia to publish a stand-alone policy.
- In 2021 Professional Standards Branch started trialling implementation of Restoration Plans which provide concentrated and holistic support tailored to the issues being experienced at specific locations.

(c)

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Bullying investigations	9	15	9	13	3	9
Sustained	4	10	8	10	1	4
Not sustained	5	5	1	-	1	1
Direct remedial action - (A new category commenced 2019-20. The decision maker determined to take direct remedial action, no formal finding of misconduct)				1	1	4
Resignation (The person subject to the allegations resigned arising from the process)				2	-	-

(d)

- Remedial and disciplinary actions are implemented for individuals that have not followed policy or where there are sustained complaints of bullying and/or harassment.
- Restoration plans are implemented for workplaces with entrenched cultural issues or conduct not aligned with policy.
- Action Plans and Strategies are developed and updated.
- Associated policy and processes are reviewed and streamlined.
- Training is delivered to the organisation and/or individuals.
- External reviews are undertaken

SQ65

How often does FRNSW conduct a Behavioural insights survey?

- (a) What was the most recent date this was conducted?
 (b) What were the results of the survey?
 (c) What has been the trend of this?

Answer: FRNSW recently conducted a Behavioural Insights Survey, as a one-time survey, to gain insights into workplace behaviour as part its commitment to continuous improvement of workplace culture and professional conduct standards.

SQ66

What is the current headcount for rescue trainers in FRNSW?

Answer: 12

SQ67

What is FRNSW's budget for the delivery of training in each year as follows:

- (a) 2017
 (b) 2018
 (c) 2019
 (d) 2020
 (e) 2021
 (f) 2022

Answer:

- (a) 2017: \$27.5 million
 (b) 2018: \$29 million
 (c) 2019: \$28.7 million
 (d) 2020: \$30.5 million
 (e) 2021: \$34.4 million
 (f) 2022: \$35.8 million

SQ68

How many individuals have been trained by FRNSW trainers in each year as follows:

- (a) 2017
- (b) 2018
- (c) 2019
- (d) 2020
- (e) 2021
- (f) 2022

Answer:

- (a) 2016/17: 5,283
- (b) 2017/18: 7,482
- (c) 2018/19: 5,260
- (d) 2019/20: 7,474
- (e) 2020/21: 10,569
- (f) 2021/22: 7,206

Training figures include permanent and on-call firefighter recruit training, rank promotional programs, skills-based training courses (first aid, rescue, driver, breathing apparatus, hazmat, and skills maintenance training). 2017 does not include promotional figures.

SQ69

Does FRNSW provide a budget for training for each zone?

- (a) If yes, what percentage of that budget in each year is actually utilised for training?
- (b) If not, how is training allocated to staff and zones if not through a high level allocation?

Answer: Yes, zones are allocated budgets for attendance costs and allowances where required.

- (a) Approximately 80 to 90% of funding budgeted to zones is utilised each year.
- (b) Budgeted costs for trainers, programs and delivery of training are allocated to Directorates to work in partnership to deliver required training to zones.

SQ70

Is it true both professional and volunteer firefighters don't require Working With Children Checks?

- (a) If not, why not?

Answer: Yes.

- (a) The firefighting role is not considered 'child-related work' as defined by the NSW Office of Children's Guardian or the Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012.

SQ71

What proportion of current firefighters are up to date with their basic lifesaving training?

- (a) The FRNSW 'Plus Plan' refers to working with NSW Ambulance as the lead agency to increase capabilities in medical responses. What capabilities do these include?

Answer: More than 90% of operational firefighters have current three-year certification in basic life support.

(a) FRNSW supports NSW Ambulance with:

1. General emergencies, such as gaining access for a concern for welfare.
2. Non-clinical patient movement and preparation for transfer.
3. Providing early intervention cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and defibrillation through the Community First Response program.
4. Incidents involving mass casualties - undertaking triage when the number of patients exceeds ambulance resources.
5. The future Public Access to Defibrillation (PAD) program that aims to increase survival rates of people suffering a medically induced out-of-hospital cardiac arrest (OHCA).

SQ72

Of the \$7 million over three years announced to boost access to psychological and clinical support how much has been spent?

Answer: This is a matter for the Minister for Women, Minister for Regional Health and Minister for Mental Health.

SQ73

Of the \$5 million over three years announced to establish grants programs for NGOs to fund trauma-based programs, how much has been spent?

(a) How many applications have been received?

Answer: This is a matter for the Minister for Women, Minister for Regional Health and Minister for Mental Health.

SQ74

Of the \$3.5 million over three years announced to appoint headspace and Lifeline to work with affected communities and to identify what each community needs, how much has been spent?

Answer: This is a matter for the Minister for Women, Minister for Regional Health and Minister for Mental Health.

SQ75

Of the \$3.5 million over three years announced to recruit 10 local recovery coordinators to work with communities on the ground to respond to emerging issues such as mental health and hospital activity, how much has been spent?

(a) Have the positions been advertised yet?

Answer: This is a matter for the Minister for Women, Minister for Regional Health and Minister for Mental Health.

SQ76

Of the \$1 million announced to set up four pop-up Safe Havens to assist people in distress and/or experiencing suicidal thoughts how much has been spent?

(a) What stage is the setup of these Safe Havens?

Answer: The four Safe Haven sites are now operating in Woodburn, Lismore, Mullumbimby and Murwillumbah. This is a matter for the Minister for Women, Minister for Regional Health and Minister for Mental Health.

SQ77

Regarding the Flood Recovery Back Home Grant for July 2022 opened 5 August:

(a) What is the average time to process an application?

(b) How many outstanding applications are there?

Answer: On average, current processing times for completed applications is 5-10 business days. As at 20 September 2022, 5,083 applications have been received, with 1,979 applications approved, 1,173 applications undergoing assessment and 1,931 applications declined.

SQ78

Regarding the Flood Recovery Rental Support Payment for July 2022 opened 5 August:
(a) What is the average time to process an application?

Answer: On average, current processing times for completed applications is 5-10 business days.

SQ79

Regarding the June and July 2022 Storm and Flood Disaster Recovery Small Business grant opened 7 July:
(a) What is the average time to process an application?

Answer: On average, current processing times for completed applications is 5-10 business days.

SQ80

In instances where the 132 500 phone number is overwhelmed, is the SES considering or developing an online job log option similar to Queensland?

Answer: NSW SES has developed a beta version of an online application for the community to input their own requests for assistance.

SQ81

Regarding the 'OP 1.2.20 Operational Protocol for Backburning' was it developed in consultation with the National Parks and Wildlife Services?
(a) How was feedback from the National Parks and Wildlife Services integrated into the Protocol?
(b) When the protocol is implemented during severe weather conditions, will any person independent of the RFS review the planned strategic backburn?

Answer: OP 1.2.20 Operational Protocol for Backburning was developed in response to Recommendation 47 of the Independent Bushfire Inquiry. This recommendation required RFS to establish certain processes in respect to back burning.

Fire and Rescue NSW, Forestry Corporation NSW and the National Parks & Wildlife Service were all consulted throughout this process.

OP 1.2.20 Operational Protocol for Backburning requires that when the Fire Behaviour Index exceeds 50, the Incident Controller must contact the Major Incident Co-ordinator/State Duty Operations Officer for review. The review is to be conducted by officers approved by the State Operations Controller. There may be occasions where a non-RFS officer may conduct such a review noting availability, experience, qualifications and situational awareness and the timeliness to undertake such a review during fire activity.

SQ82

For every agency, department, or state-owned corporation within your portfolio, please provide the following:

(a) A list of all third-party contractor or consultancies engaged in communications services, including:

- i. Contractor name,
- ii. Contractor ABN,
- iii. Service provided,
- iv. Total cost paid

(b) A list of all third-party contractor or consultancies engaged in PR services, including:

- i. Contractor name,
- ii. Contractor ABN,
- iii. Service provided,

- iv. Total cost paid
- (c) A list of all third-party contractor or consultancies engaged in marketing services, including:
 - i. Contractor name,
 - ii. Contractor ABN,
 - iii. Service provided,
 - iv. Total cost paid
- (d) A list of all third-party contractor or consultancies engaged in Government relations or lobbying services, including:
 - i. Contractor name,
 - ii. Contractor ABN,
 - iii. Service provided,
 - iv. Total cost paid
- (e) A list of all third-party contractor or consultancies engaged in industry or peak body membership, including:
 - i. Contractor name,
Regional NSW and Stronger Communities
 - ii. Contractor ABN,
 - iii. Service provided,
 - iv. Total cost paid
- (f) A list of all third-party contractor or consultancies engaged in policy or strategy development, including:
 - i. Contractor name,
 - ii. Contractor ABN,
 - iii. Service provided,
 - iv. Total cost paid
- (g) A list of all third-party contractor or consultancies engaged in project management, including:
 - i. Contractor name,
 - ii. Contractor ABN,
 - iii. Service provided,
 - iv. Total cost paid
- (h) A list of all third-party contractor or consultancies engaged in accounting and audit, including:
 - i. Contractor name,
 - ii. Contractor ABN,
 - iii. Service provided,
 - iv. Total cost paid
- (i) A list of all third-party contractor or consultancies engaged in legal services, including:
 - i. Contractor name,
 - ii. Contractor ABN,
 - iii. Service provided,
 - iv. Total cost paid
- (j) A list of all third-party contractor or consultancies engaged in any other services, including:
 - i. Contractor name,
 - ii. Contractor ABN,
 - iii. Service provided,
 - iv. Total cost paid

Answer: Details of third-party contractors or consultancies are published in the annual reports of each agency.

SQ83

What is the percentage and total number of people who identify as having a disability who are currently employed by:

- (a) NSW SES
- (b) Fire and Rescue NSW
- (c) Resilience NSW

Answer:SES:

4%*

Fire and Rescue NSW:

0.94%

Resilience NSW:

0.44%

*Please note this is not a mandatory question for staff, with 14% (62 individuals) consciously electing not to provide information in this regard or left it blank.

SQ84

What is the percentage and total number of people who identify as having a disability who are currently employed by:

- (a) NSW SES
- (b) Fire and Rescue NSW
- (c) Resilience NSW

Answer: Please see answer to SQ83.

SQ85

Why did Commissioner Rogers conduct a pilot project of one Rural Fires Service station instead of implementing recommendation 17 of the Bushfire Inquiry 2020?

Answer: The RFS intends on installing a sprinkler system to Bell RFB station (designated Neighbourhood Safer Place (NSP)) during the 22/23 FY, which is a new initiative in addressing Recommendation 17 of the Bushfire Inquiry. The RFS is in the final stages of the tender process. Two stations (Balmoral and Penrose) within Southern Highlands have been identified for NSP works for commencement within 22/23 FY. Funding for this initiative commenced this financial year.

SQ86

Can you provide any evaluation strategy and or plan for this pilot project trial you are conducting of Neighbourhood Safer Place?

Answer: The RFS will undertake a feasibility assessment for the current 22/23 FY on eight of the remaining station locations to confirm works required at each site or identify an alternate suitable site as an NSP designation.

SQ87

Approximately 20 kilometres from Bell Rural Fire Station is Mt Tomah Rural Fire Station which had 10-15 community members sheltering in it during the Mt Wilson burn over event. Why hasn't Mt Tomah station been included in the pilot?

Answer: The planned works at Mt Tomah RFS station have been funded for this financial year and will be undertaken as a priority.

SQ88

When will recommendation 17 be implemented in full?

Answer: The funding to implement Recommendation 17 commenced this financial year. The full implementation will take a number of years to complete.

SQ89

Can you provide information on the name and number of Strategic backburns put in from November 2019 to February 2020 in the following Local Government Areas surrounding the Sydney basin:

- (a) Hornsby
- (b) The Hills
- (c) Hawkesbury
- (d) Blue Mountains
- (e) Penrith
- (f) Wollondilly
- (g) Wingecarribee
- (h) Lithgow
- (i) Central Coast

Answer: The NSW State Inquiry identified 1,067 back burns. Of these the following is a break down by these LGAs.

- (a) Hornsby - 0
- (b) The Hills - 0
- (c) Hawkesbury - 72
- (d) Blue Mountains - 25
- (e) Penrith - 2
- (f) Wollondilly - 62
- (g) Wingecarribee - 5
- (h) Lithgow - 0
- (i) Central Coast - 20

Historically, separate records may not have been maintained for back burns - details in relation to back burns are generally recorded in Incident Action Plans or as logged entries. Accordingly, in order to identify the number of back burns conducted during the 2019-20 season, the ICON Operational Management System log was reviewed for entries associated with the conduct and undertaking of back burns.

Since the 2019/2020 fires, the ICON system has been modified in accordance with recommendation 47 to record back burns to enable better analysis and reporting.

SQ90

Was planning for the Mt Wilson backburn done at RFS State Operations Centre?

- (a) Was this plan implemented by the Hawkesbury Incident Controller?

Answer: The planning for the Mount Wilson back burn was not undertaken at the RFS State Operations Centre.

SQ91

Will the Incident Controller responsible for implementing the Mt Wilson backburn meet with the communities impacted by the Mt Wilson backburn?

Answer: The Incident Controller met with community members at Berambing on the 15th September 2022.

SQ92

Will the Commissioner be present at such a meeting?

Answer: The Commissioner did not attend this meeting.

SQ93

On 2 September 2022 Commissioner Rob Rogers stated "Backburning, whilst obviously acknowledging that sometimes things go wrong, if we didn't do backburning, the losses we saw during the fire season would be considerably higher."

(a) What evidence does the RFS have to support this claim?

(b) Can you provide the quantified losses caused by the backburning operations and estimated properties saved by them?

Answer: The Incident Management Team identified that the back burn would form part of the broader strategy to build a continuous southern containment line from Colo, past Itchenstoke and Mountain Lagoon, on to Mount Irvine and Mount Wilson, across the Bells Line of Road and north towards Newnes. It was to prevent fire extension to the south of the Bells Line of Road and Mount Wilson Road impacting on rural communities located in the Blue Mountains Local Government Area. The establishment of a secure southern containment line would enable the Incident Management Team to manage fire in the landscape within the bounds of containment lines. The RFS is unable to provide quantified losses caused by the back burning operations and estimated properties saved. It is noted that the Gaspers Mountain fire is still subject to an active inquest by the State Coroner.

SQ94

On 17 December 2019 then NSW Premier Berejiklian stated in relation to the Mt Wilson Backburn, "They are tragic circumstances but when you think of the number of homes that were saved because of that [the Mt Wilson Backburn] and potentially hundreds of lives."

(a) Can you provide evidence to support this claim?

Answer: The RFS is unable to provide any evidence in response to this question, noting that the Gaspers Mountains fire is still subject to an active inquest by the State Coroner.

SQ95

The NSW South Coast region has experienced an ongoing homelessness crisis since the impact of the 2019-20 bushfire season. Two years onwards, approximately 700 people in the Eurobodalla Shire are experiencing homelessness including sleeping rough with no shelter, which is more than four times the figure of 121 people experiencing homelessness in the area in the 2016 census.

(a) How is the Government planning to invest in the South Coast region to support people experiencing homelessness to access housing with support and prevent continuing and longer-term homelessness?

Answer: Questions about the NSW Government's long-term strategy for reducing and preventing homelessness in NSW should be directed to the Minister for Families and Communities Services.

SQ96

How is the Government planning to address the problems raised in the NSW Legislative Council Select Committee on the response to major flooding across New South Wales in 2022 with Resilience NSW and State Emergency Services flooding response such as the lack of collaboration with local organisations and assistance for people experiencing homelessness?

Answer: The NSW Government is currently considering the findings and recommendations of the Select Committee on the Response to Major Flooding across New South Wales in 2022, with the response to be provided by 9 November 2022.

Questions about the NSW Government's long-term strategy for reducing and preventing homelessness in NSW should be directed to the Minister for Families and Communities Services.

SQ97

Services are reporting that people experiencing homelessness in the Northern Rivers region have no guaranteed access to temporary accommodation, and people have exited the limited pod accommodation due to a lack of funding for support services.

(a) How is the Government planning to review and improve access to housing and homelessness support given the ongoing impact of the February-March 2022 floods?

Answer: The NSW Government is delivering the Temporary Housing Support Package to provide accommodation for flood-affected residents who have lost their homes in major flooding events. The housing support package aims to assist households and allow people to move out of their emergency accommodation and into a comfortable, temporary environment while communities rebuild and recover. Temporary housing sites have been identified in the Northern Rivers area of NSW in partnership with local councils and community groups.

The NSW Homelessness Strategy has been developed and is managed by the Department of Communities and Justice. Questions about the NSW Government's long term strategy for reducing and preventing homelessness in NSW should be directed to the Minister for Families and Communities Services.

SQ98

What is the allocated budget for the Mullumbimby temporary housing pods?

Answer: \$350 million has been allocated to the Modular Housing Package, for the procurement and management of temporary accommodation sites in the Northern Rivers. Currently 11 sites are in development or operational, including the sites at Wollongbar, Mullumbimby and Ballina.

SQ99

What is the allocated budget for the Ballina temporary housing pods?

Answer: \$350 million has been allocated to the Modular Housing Package, for the procurement and management of temporary accommodation sites in the Northern Rivers. Currently 11 sites are in development or operational, including the sites at Wollongbar, Mullumbimby and Ballina.

SQ100

What was the cost of the Wollongbar temporary housing pods to date?

Answer: \$350 million has been allocated to the Modular Housing Package, for the procurement and management of temporary accommodation sites in the Northern Rivers. Currently 11 sites are in development or operational, including the sites at Wollongbar, Mullumbimby and Ballina. Expenditure to date for the Wollongbar temporary housing site is approximately \$26 million, with the majority of expenditure relating to the purchase of modular dwellings and site work costs.

SQ101

Resilience NSW have said in their fact sheets that the Mullumbimby Pod site on Prince and Station Streets was reviewed with consideration to flood risk and flood planning and goes on to describe raising of modular homes being level 1% flood levels:

- (a) Was any engineering or flood assessment conducted to ascertain the impact of putting 1 meter plus landfill on the site on surrounding properties in Prince and Station streets that were flooded this year?
- (b) If so, can you provide a copy of these assessments?
- (c) Was the site assessed for flood risk?
- (d) Can you guarantee that the properties surrounding the development will not experience greater flood impact in any flood events that occur due to the development?
- (e) Who do you consider financially responsible for any damage to the surrounding properties that does occur as a result of the development?
- (f) Is the lease for 2 years only?
- (g) Is there an option to renew?
- (h) How much is being spent on these two-year leases?
- (i) Can you provide a copy of the lease?

Answer:

- (a) The NSW Government commissioned independent consultants BMT to undertake flood modelling of different scenarios at the selected site. The site was reviewed with consideration to flood risk and flood planning, including under the North Byron Floodplain Risk Management Plan. Extensive flood modelling is ongoing by BMT to refine the site design and further minimise potential impacts to surrounding residences.
- (b) Extensive flood modelling remains ongoing by BMT to refine the site design and further minimise potential impacts to surrounding residences.
- (c) The site was reviewed with consideration to flood risk and flood planning, including under the North Byron Floodplain Risk Management Plan. Given the flood prone nature of many areas of Mullumbimby, suitable land is limited. The proposed site was identified following a comprehensive review of suitable land in the area.
- (d) Extensive flood modelling is ongoing by BMT to refine the site design and further minimise potential impacts to surrounding residences. The use of fill has been carefully considered and has been recommended by qualified civil engineers as the most effective site construction technique to minimise flood risk to both residents of the housing site and surrounding properties.
- (e) Public insurance liability is in place should there be any damage to surrounding properties that occurs as a result of the development.
- (f) The emergency legislation for temporary housing sites limits the amount of time a site can be used for temporary accommodation.
- (g)(h)(i) The licence over the temporary housing site at Mullumbimby includes a confidentiality clause. Resilience NSW is considering proactive release of the license and lease under the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009, noting this will require the agreement of the relevant lessors and licensors.

SQ102

The NSW Government released a \$285 million Temporary Housing Support package:

- (a) How much of the \$285m was allocated to rent?
- (b) What was left over from that budget and what was it spent on?
- (c) Did the \$285 package consider residents that were already homeless and living in their caravans/cars?

Answer: \$248 million was allocated to the Rental Support Payment Scheme. Underspend available in FY2022-23 will be used to fund the rental support program for the July 2022 floods and other flood recovery programs being administered by Service NSW, with approval from Treasury. The \$285 million package also included \$2.5m for the use of sports and recreation camps, \$10 million for motor homes, \$20 million for temporary dwellings, and \$4.5 million for housing recovery services.