

TRANSCRIPT

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING

Inquiry into fire season preparedness

Melbourne — 25 January 2016

Members

Mr David Davis — Chair

Ms Harriet Shing — Deputy Chair

Ms Melina Bath

Mr Richard Dalla-Riva

Ms Samantha Dunn

Mr Khalil Eideh

Mr Cesar Melhem

Mr Daniel Young

Participating Members

Mr Greg Barber

Mr Jeff Bourman

Ms Colleen Hartland

Mr James Purcell

Mr Simon Ramsay

Witness

Cr Samantha McIntosh (affirmed), Mayor, City of Ballarat.

The CHAIR — I reopen the inquiry into fire season preparedness and indicate that this relates to the committee's reference on bushfire preparation. I welcome to the hearing Samantha McIntosh, the mayor of the City of Ballarat, accompanied by?

Cr McINTOSH — I am on my own.

The CHAIR — Alone. I indicate that evidence provided to the committee here is protected by parliamentary privilege and therefore from any action in court, but if you speak outside these proceedings, that is not protected by legal or by parliamentary privilege.

As I understand it we certainly heard evidence earlier in the proceedings concerning the skycrane and the impact that many in the west of the state believe that will have on fire preparation and fire response. I understand that the City of Ballarat has taken a formal position on this. You might like to relate to us briefly the council's position, and then we will follow with some questions.

Cr McINTOSH — I will just briefly go through the situation, the EMV response and then what the City of Ballarat would like to see and why. So that is pretty much the format that I will follow.

The situation currently: in August 2016 EMV announced that it would be relocating the 7500-litre Erickson Aircrane from Ballarat to Moorabbin. The air crane was replaced with a type 2 firebombing helicopter, which some of you may know will hold about 2000 litres, so a lot less than the air crane. A major asset was removed from Ballarat and has been replaced by a helicopter of a lesser capacity that is on autodispatch. Council at that time met with EMV, shortly after the decision was made, to present council's position, which was to seek a reversal of the decision. The community were very concerned to hear of the loss of this firefighting asset, particularly in light of the Scotsburn and Mount Bolton bushfires. I would even add further to that: we are central for country Victoria and many of the areas further afield than Scotsburn and Mount Bolton, like Halls Gap, Pomonal and so on, where we saw some pretty wild bushfires around 2006. They were responded to from our space as well.

EMV's response was that the decision to place the helicopter in Ballarat was a royal commission recommendation and that it strengthens the ability of the CFA to fight fires in the region. The smaller capacity firefighting helicopter can be in the air within 8 minutes, compared to the 15 minutes it takes the air crane to become airborne. The smaller aircraft will be automatically dispatched, and therefore crews on the ground will effectively have a tank in the sky. This fire season will be the first fire season that the aircraft will be dispatched from Ballarat, meaning the city will have a similar response to Bendigo. All of these points I will respond to in a moment. The Erickson Aircrane would not automatically be dispatched. They also said that its central location made Moorabbin the best location for state coverage, but they did not rule out locating the air crane in other areas if there were high fire risks on a particular day.

What the City of Ballarat wants is the location of the Erickson Aircrane as well as the type 2 firebombing helicopter based in Ballarat. Ultimately the City of Ballarat wants to ensure the firefighting capacity and safety of the community, and as we heard with the response back then, the community were exceptionally concerned; there were great fears that were put forward. We know that the type 2 firebombing equipment will only host 2000 litres, in comparison to the 7500 litres, which has been used, for instance, in the Mount Bolton and Scotsburn fires. Not having the capacity of such a piece of equipment for the Pomonal-Halls Gap bushfires certainly saw loss of life, and I know firsthand that many families experienced the horrid responses to that. It is very important that we have a much better response than just the type 2 firebombing, and that is not coming just from the airport and the fire safety community, but it is also coming from the broader community that have certainly expressed their concerns in this area.

Ballarat is centrally located to the identified fire hotspots, particularly Wombat forest, Scotsburn, the Grampians and the Otways. This has been confirmed in numerous conversations over a number of years, which is why we have been talking about the need for an emergency hub at the Ballarat airport. We know that it works well. We know that it is centrally located, and we also know that if the Erickson is placed at Moorabbin, it is a much longer trek to get through the wind and terrain, compared to going in the opposite direction, so it works better being based in Ballarat.

Having had a recent conversation even as of today with experts in this field and coming from a family of fire bombers, I know it firsthand — I know what is required. We have lived on farming land, and I know that

Ballarat airport is positioned centrally and that it provides what is required in those areas at times of high fire response needs. It is very well located to ensure maximum response times, and that is what we are talking about. It is why there has been this concern coming from the broader community.

Ballarat has a broader vision of developing an emergency services hub and clustering firefighting aircraft in Ballarat. This conversation has been ongoing; I was involved in it from the very first conversation that we had back in around 2008. There has been support across the board because people can see firsthand the requirements. We know the time frames that are required, and we know the emergency aircraft and the amount of water that can be held in their bellies; 2000 litres does not do the same as 7500 litres. The extra hour or so in getting something from Moorabbin to our area is just not going to cut the mustard when you have got wildfires going like what we have seen in past years, sadly.

It will deliver on the bushfires royal commission recommendation as well — the multi-agency interoperability. The emergency services hub is a joint project between the City of Ballarat and Emergency Services Victoria. The conversation has been strong and long and positive. The role of the hub would be to ensure that emergency services organisations and stakeholders are integrated assets and are optimised and that efficient and effective responses to emergencies are delivered. The emergency services hub will be a hub for emergency coordination, training, logistics, storage, maintenance, research and development. When I look at the area of Ballarat and surrounds and the ability to respond in these times of emergency, I guess you could refer to it as a hub and spoke type analogy. We are based centrally. We do have great access, and I have seen it happening from when I was a child right through to now. It is very important that we know that we have got the right equipment on ground that can actually deliver in that manner to those needs.

The City of Ballarat wants to ensure it is always well considered. We do not want to be left in the shadows, losing assets critical to the state fire asset network. We have certainly seen the loss of manufacturing opportunities of all sorts, and we want to know that in this particular area we are not losing what will potentially save lives. It is much broader than that. There is a lot more that would be benefited from.

Losing the air crane was a major concern to the Ballarat and regional community. If you have not heard about it, we have, and we consistently hear about it moving into this time of year and season. We know what it means to our community, and we know the concerns that have been put loud and clear to us as a council, to me now as mayor and also to our families and surrounding farming communities.

Every year we have had a major fire in the area, and we want to ensure that Ballarat is maintained as a central piece in the firefighting network. As I have said, we have looked at this over a long period of time, we have had many experts look at the positioning over a long period of time and we have had consistent responses suggesting that we are ideally situated as an emergency hub, a multifaceted emergency hub.

As we are talking today specifically about the air crane and firefighting response, it is our position that it would work exceptionally well for regional Victoria. We are not just talking about Ballarat and surrounds here, we are talking about much more broadly afield. We know that we are also positioned to be able to access across the South Australian border, up into New South Wales and even further down, Tassie way. So it is not just Ballarat and surrounds that we are talking about. We are talking about our economy and making sure that we as a regional community are considered in these important conversations and that they are not just metro conversations. It is important that we do retain the appropriate responses from the Ballarat airport for all of the reasons that I have just put very briefly.

The CHAIR — I thank you for your response. Is there a written submission you want to make available?

Cr McINTOSH — I can certainly provide a written submission if that is possible.

The CHAIR — You may wish to.

Cr McINTOSH — I could leave my scruffy notes, but I would rather present some more formal ones.

The CHAIR — Sure. My understanding, to summarise, is that the royal commission recommended the basing of an air crane in the western region.

Cr McINTOSH — Correct.

The CHAIR — That has now been unwound, and the Erickson skycrane that was based at Ballarat has now been moved to Moorabbin in metropolitan Melbourne.

Cr McINTOSH — Correct.

The CHAIR — My understanding is that council's position is that this is the wrong step and that it exposes the area of Ballarat, but more broadly western Victoria, to greater risk, and further, that the smaller replacement helicopter does not have the same capacity — at 2000 or so litres compared to 7500 — to have the impact that is required.

Cr McINTOSH — Correct.

The CHAIR — And further, that the time required for the helicopter to get to potential fire sites in the west is now much greater, hence the response would be hampered. Is that a fair summary?

Cr McINTOSH — Absolutely. We know the airspace could be more complicated. You do not know what it is going to be like at times of fire. We know, as I said, that the flight pattern coming from Melbourne up to Ballarat and surrounds can be hampered by wind and by terrain. This therefore makes that flight path much longer, much greater and much more concerning. By having the air crane in Ballarat there is no question about the time saved and the ability to have a much greater response. My other great concern is that 2000-litre difference in the type 2 helicopter compared to the air crane of 7500.

The CHAIR — Do you think that people may be at risk, in that lives could potentially be lost in some circumstances?

Cr McINTOSH — Well, I know there were lives lost in the fires back in 2006 in the Grampians. I knew the people. I know the land where they lost their lives, and the air crane was not available.

The CHAIR — I hasten to add here that some of the officials have indicated a willingness to give evidence, and I also want to put on the record that the committee's motion with respect to this matter made it clear that no evidence that we took on this or any other matter would interfere with the fire season response or any particular risky fire day. But I would certainly make it clear on the record here now that we would be prepared to have evidence from the relevant officials about these decisions. However, has an explanation been provided to the City of Ballarat that satisfies you?

Cr McINTOSH — No. The explanation that has been provided to the City of Ballarat is that we would have a type 2 helicopter that has a 2000-litre belly, in effect, and that that has a shorter time frame to get up off the ground — 8 minutes compared to 15 with the air crane. However, we know that there is the 7500-litre belly, and it is a much greater opportunity to have the air crane and the type 2 helicopter together to be able to provide an appropriate response. Having spoken with the experts in the field, this has been confirmed, and I had another conversation with one this morning.

The CHAIR — Let me ask another question. It is my understanding that the officials responsible for this particular air crane are no longer the ones who were responsible when the machine was based in Ballarat. It is my understanding, and I do not know whether you can shed light on this, that a very experienced officer has been squeezed out of that position and a city-based suburban officer has been placed in charge of the air crane. Is that your understanding?

Cr McINTOSH — I cannot confirm that, but what I would say is that often we see from a rural and regional perspective that we lose a lot to the metro demands. Rural and regional Victoria need appropriate responses, and they need appropriate equipment to be able to respond at times of emergencies. I am not sure who is actually looking after them.

The CHAIR — Do you know Wayne Rigg?

Cr McINTOSH — I know Wayne Rigg, yes.

The CHAIR — He was, as I understand it, the relevant officer, and he is no longer — —

Cr McINTOSH — I was not aware of that, but I do know Wayne Rigg, and I know that he was very closely involved.

The CHAIR — He was a person of huge experience in air operations.

Cr McINTOSH — Yes.

The CHAIR — Would that concern you, if a city-based operative were to take over the running of that air crane?

Cr McINTOSH — Absolutely. We need to have people in rural and regional Victoria that understand our terrain, that understand the wind patterns and the challenges to get a flight movement. In comparison, from Moorabbin to Ballarat, it is a much quicker path going in the opposite direction. It is for simple stuff like that that we need to have appropriate people based in our area that know those challenges firsthand. A metro head in a regional area does not always provide the same knowledge, and especially at a time of emergency response you want somebody there that knows firsthand, that is experienced and that in fact is an expert, not just in the piece of equipment but in the area. When we look at the way that an aeroplane moves, it is not just about the technical piece of equipment that you are flying; it is about how everything else around affects the flight pattern — like I said, the wind pattern and the terrain. So there is a lot more to it than knowing the metro area and knowing the technicalities of a piece of equipment.

Mr MELHEM — Thank you, Cr McIntosh. My understanding is that the decision to relocate the Erickson crane made by the CFA or EMV was in response to the royal commission. My understanding is that the logic of it was to get some air support that can be mobilised very quickly. According to something on the EMV website, it would take 20 minutes with the smaller aircraft versus the Erickson, which might take about 35 minutes for the automatic response. That is the main reason, on my understanding, or the logic or the explanation given by emergency services for actually making the change to have the smaller aircraft, to respond quickly and at the same speed as the fire trucks. It is my understanding that that is the logic for it. Do you agree with that logic?

Cr McINTOSH — I find the logic really quite confusing and complicated. It is a simple situation. If you have the Erickson on site in Ballarat and you have got your fuel tankers there in Ballarat, you have got a much more accessible path going straight to the area where it is required at times of emergency. If you have got it based in Moorabbin, it is further to come, there is a more difficult path, you have got wind and terrain that is of concern and you have got your refuel miles away. It does not make any sense to me.

Mr MELHEM — It is my understanding that we have two Erickson skycranes or helicopters.

Cr McINTOSH — One in Essendon and one in Moorabbin.

Mr MELHEM — One in Essendon and one in Moorabbin. I think part of the logic, on my understanding, of emergency services is to actually spread them to service the rest of the state, but then add I think it was 27 small helicopters of 2000-litre capacity stationed in various locations and hence the new ones, these helicopters, will be stationed permanently in Ballarat. That is the logic. To me, every child would love to have an Erickson crane plus half a dozen small helicopters, but it is a matter of resources, do you think?

Cr McINTOSH — Having an Erickson in Essendon and an Erickson in Moorabbin in areas that are massively surrounded by water and we have got a little helicopter of 2000 litres up in Ballarat, if you look back to that hub and spoke thing that I talked about before, totally surrounded by land that is likely to be threatened at times of bushfire, it sort of makes a fair bit of sense to me. It is a shorter path, it is more accessible for fuelling, it has lesser challenges with air traffic. We have talked about it for the last eight years, looking at where is the most sensible area to base it, and the conversations consistently come back to Ballarat.

The CHAIR — So it has been at Ballarat, has it?

Cr McINTOSH — It has been at Ballarat and it has been taken. So we had it at Ballarat and we used it for Scotsburn and Mount Bolton. However, the previous fires, to my knowledge, it was not available for and there were some horrific catastrophes.

Mr MELHEM — So you had one skycrane in Ballarat. Do you know, to your knowledge, whether there were any small aircraft or helicopters stationed there as well?

Cr McINTOSH — To my knowledge, this will be the first fire season that we have the smaller aircraft, which will be the type 2, 2000-litre belly.

Mr MELHEM — The reason I am raising these things is because I have read what Mr Lapsley has said in relation to the change and why. Quoting from one of the news articles, it says:

Mr Lapsley referred to 15 occasions where the smaller aircraft had arrived on scene to bushfires before tankers, allowing them to be attacked quickly and effectively.

Reading that, the logic for what the CFA and emergency services have put in place is basically to have smaller aircraft to be able to respond quickly and to attack the fires when the fires start, instead of just relying on the Erickson. To me, that is logical. I am not advocating for or defending the decision on whether the skycrane should remain in Ballarat or Moorabbin. What Mr Lapsley is saying makes sense, don't think?

Cr McINTOSH — It makes sense to have the faster response type 2, 2000-litre helicopter there so that we can get it out straightaway, but it does not make sense to me to be enough, it does not make sense to be adequate. Having lived my whole life in that area, having grown up in a family that were fire bombers and/or pilots and servicing that whole region, I have seen how it works. I know the delivery, and it is pretty clear that there needs to be an appropriate response. What we saw through those Halls Gap bushfires was catastrophe. What we have recently seen through Mount Bolton and Scotsburn is a response with the Erickson that was good. Sadly, fire is not great at any time. But it is so important. We do not know what is going to happen when we get wildfires. We saw what happened back in 2006 and we have seen plenty of other examples, too, sadly. We need to have the appropriate response there. It is for a much broader area than Ballarat. We are talking about the whole region. You can see that we are smack bang in the middle of it. We are not surrounded by water; we are not surrounded by busy air traffic movements. We have got an airspace that is pretty available, and at times of emergency we can make it very available, and we can certainly make the response times very appropriate with the combination of the type 2 and the Erickson together.

Mr MELHEM — And that is my understanding. My understanding of the whole change was, one, to respond to the royal commission recommendation that we need to have attack helicopters to be able to arrive at the scene at the same time as fire tankers. So my understanding is that was the logic that was adopted by the CFA to make the change for the emergency services. Secondly, my understanding is that the Ballarat region will continue to be supported by large air tankers et cetera. So other available aircraft will continue to support that.

It would be wonderful — if we were able to, and I am not actually defending the CFA — to have five skycranes. We could actually have them in more locations. But my understanding is that the decision to locate them one in the west and one in the south is to basically attend to fires — and not necessarily the initial attack but subsequent as support mechanisms. Hence the change.

Cr McINTOSH — It would make a lot of sense to not have one in Essendon, one in Moorabbin and none in Ballarat. When you look at the comments in space of our position it just seems to be very accessible. It is not an area surrounded mostly by sea. It is surrounded by the land that needs to be looked after.

Mr MELHEM — One last question: have you noticed any physical change? I mean, touch wood, I do not believe we have had any fires in the region so far. How are we going so far?

Cr McINTOSH — What I notice is that we have had a very wet winter and we have had dramatic growth, and we now are hitting a dry summer. Having grown up in this space, knowing the firefighting industry from air, we need to be ready for it.

Mr DALLA-RIVA — You mentioned a few times about the refuelling. Has the facility that was the skycrane now all closed down?

Cr McINTOSH — I cannot tell you that; I am not sure, sorry. I can find out.

Mr DALLA-RIVA — So if historically — —

Cr McINTOSH — To my knowledge it would not be closed down. The facility would be accessible, but I could certainly find out the answer.

Mr DALLA-RIVA — Is the support there still for the skycrane, or has it been all now converted back to Moorabbin?

Cr McINTOSH — The support would be there for the skycrane. I have no idea if it is currently being accessed or not.

Mr DALLA-RIVA — So, just trying to get some clarity — —

Cr McINTOSH — That is probably a bit more technical than my area of expertise.

Mr DALLA-RIVA — Yes. It might be worthwhile to find out. If the skycrane flies from Moorabbin to a fire in the vicinity of Ballarat, and it is active in service around there — and you kept on saying ‘the refuelling’ — is the refuelling then that it has to go back to Melbourne to refuel, or is there a facility nearby where it could refuel?

Cr McINTOSH — It would be able to refuel in Ballarat, because that is where they would be refuelling. What you would be doing is sending your tankers out.

Mr DALLA-RIVA — Yes. And the other question: other municipalities, what are their views on it? Have you communicated that to them?

Cr McINTOSH — Surrounding municipalities to our region have expressed concern. From the moment that this became apparent the community have asked questions. They have come into our council chamber; it has been through our regional newspapers. It has been very publicly talked about by our community, and the concerns have been raised.

Mr DALLA-RIVA — So you recently raised that because you have just been appointed as the mayor, albeit you have been in the council for a — —

Cr McINTOSH — Correct. Our first meeting for the year comes in tonight — our first public meeting.

Mr DALLA-RIVA — Right. And will that be raised again in council’s concerns?

Cr McINTOSH — I would imagine so.

Mr DALLA-RIVA — Do you have a list of those other municipalities? If not, perhaps provide that to us, although, as I say, there might be the fact that there will be new councils and mayors in the surrounding areas.

Cr McINTOSH — I can seek information on that for you as well.

Ms BATH — Thank you, Samantha, for your presentation. These may be some questions that you might like to take on notice. With respect to the larger skycrane, 7500 litres, have you got an idea of what diameter area that would impact on? So would it be a football oval sized impact? I know I am getting technical, but I guess I want to — —

Cr McINTOSH — I am not a pilot, and I am not a firefighter. I have certainly grown up in the field. My father was a fire bomber, but I could not tell you the exact area that it works for. I guess, listening to the speak, a 2000-litre dump is quite different to a 7500-litre dump. Knowing that there has been the skycrane used in the past two fires that we have talked about — Scotsburn and Mount Bolton — and also listening to the experts, they have expressed very strongly the need for the larger air crane with the bigger carrying capacity.

Ms BATH — That leads into my question or comment that I would like you to address. I have, through a work colleague of mine, received from Mr Harcock — I think he is Grenville fire captain — comment that the new ones hold 1200 litres. We are saying it is 2000 litres, but in effect he is saying that is half a tanker’s worth. Well, by calculation it would be about three-quarters of one tanker’s worth. I guess the comment I am interested in is: in many fires — so the ones that you have mentioned — how many tankers would be deployed at those fire sites?

Cr McINTOSH — Again, I am not a fire person. It is not my expertise to be able to provide you with that information. I could certainly find out for you. I just know that when you are fighting from the air a larger dump is a much more effective and efficient way of managing in an emergency.

Ms BATH — And the smaller type 2, is that in residence in Ballarat now?

Cr McINTOSH — Yes.

Ms BATH — And has it been used, to your knowledge?

Cr McINTOSH — Not to my knowledge.

Ms BATH — Not yet? Thank you.

Mr RAMSAY — I am not sure what the Andrews government has against the community of Ballarat, but not only have we lost a training college at Fiskville and Ballan, but they still have yet to purchase any land to replace what was a world-renowned training centre for volunteers. We live in one of the most fire-prone areas in the western part of the state, having both the Grampians and the Otways as potential hotspots for fires, yet we are not able to get a significant water-carrying capacity aircraft to be stationed there, as we did have for many, many years, and they have both responded to those significant fires in those areas. So I can understand the city council's view that they very much want the skycrane to be stationed at Ballarat for all those reasons.

My interest is actually in Craig Lapsley, given that he seems to be the emergency services commissioner representing the government in respect to this decision. What triggers the skycrane's move from Moorabbin to Ballarat on a day of a hot weather event? Were you given any comfort that if it is over 30 degrees a skycrane would automatically be transferred to Ballarat? If it is a high-risk fire day, does the skycrane automatically be triggered to Ballarat? Were you given any sort of comfort that the crane would move quickly if — —

Cr McINTOSH — No. We were given the surety that the smaller equipment would be stationed there for response. As I have said in my presentation, and listening to the experts, it is very important for us as a regional community to have a larger capacity carrying piece of equipment that can respond. There are so many unknowns when it comes to fire, and certainly when it is wildfire that we are talking about you need to know that you have much greater access, much more efficient access, timing, and having the two — having the smaller and the larger together — is a more appropriate response, given the massive area surrounding. As I said, we are not surrounded by a big mass of water; we are surrounded fully by a big mass of land.

Mr RAMSAY — Yes, I understand that, but in the introduction that you read out from EMV was the promise that the skycrane would be quickly diverted to Ballarat on what was seen as a hot weather day. The question that I would ask if I was a councillor at Ballarat is: who makes the decision and what triggers the skycrane to move, given that at this point in time it is being stationed at Moorabbin?

Cr McINTOSH — I guess we need to put a bit more pressure on to make sure that we have got appropriate responses.

Mr RAMSAY — Thank you.

Mr MELHEM — Just to follow on from Mr Ramsay, did you ask emergency services or Mr Lapsley or the government about getting a specific response as to why it was relocated at all?

Cr McINTOSH — We did, and the response that they gave us I did very briefly cover. Basically what they said was that there would be type 2 aircraft for immediate dispatch and that the Erickson Aircrane would not automatically be dispatched; that was the response. Its central location made Moorabbin the best location for the state coverage; that was part of the response, but it did not rule out locating the air crane in other areas if there was a high fire risk on a particular day. I guess that is the question from Mr Ramsay.

Mr MELHEM — And that is my understanding, because the logic from what I have read is the skycranes — the two cranes — are to provide state coverage. The only change, to my understanding, is the location, whether it be Ballarat or Moorabbin. I think there will always be an argument as to whether that decision is correct or not. But it is not that the skycrane is specifically to service the area of Ballarat and that particular region. It so happens that it is located there, but it is to service the whole state. For example, last summer the crane spent two weeks in Wye River and not in Ballarat, because it is designed to go and attack long-term fire. It is not for the initial attack; it is basically getting in to attack the fire after a while — —

The CHAIR — Usually.

Mr MELHEM — The initial attack is done by small aircrafts and by tankers, so the two cranes are there to service the whole real estate of the whole state, so the only debate here is whether Ballarat or Moorabbin is the right location. Is that — —

Cr McINTOSH — I guess when you are talking about servicing the whole state, that is pretty much my point. You have got one at Essendon, you have got one at Moorabbin and we are central to the state.

Mr MELHEM — And that is the debate.

The CHAIR — So the conclusion is that you still think that despite the explanation by the authorities this puts Ballarat and hinterland at risk.

Cr McINTOSH — I have no doubt, and that has been my question from the very beginning. I do not understand how two skycranes — one based in Essendon, one based in Moorabbin — can provide the appropriate emergency response required when we have an airport in the centre of the state that could better manage a more efficient and appropriate response.

The CHAIR — Right. Thank you for your evidence today, Mayor. I note that you may well come back with a further note for the committee. We may well be in touch in the forthcoming period. I note there were a couple of questions, including municipalities that are near to you that may have specific views on some of these matters too. I also again reiterate the fact that the evidence from today's hearing will be provided to the CFA and to Emergency Management Victoria, and they will have an opportunity to present as well if they seek to do so. Certainly I know that the emergency services commissioner communicated, I think, to the secretariat that he was keen to provide particular evidence to the committee. Thank you, and the hearing is now closed.

Cr McINTOSH — Thank you.

Committee adjourned.