

CORRECTED VERSION

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND OUTER SUBURBAN/INTERFACE SERVICES COMMITTEE

Inquiry into Marine Rescue Services in Victoria

Melbourne — 24 March 2014

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Victoria State Emergency Service

Mr Tim Wiebusch, ESM, Deputy Chief Officer

Mr Stuart Beales, Manager, Regional Operations, Gippsland

The CHAIR — Gentlemen, welcome to this hearing of the Economic Development, Infrastructure and Outer Suburban/Interface Services Committee into marine rescue services in Victoria. All evidence taken today will be protected by parliamentary privilege. However, any comments you make outside this hearing will not be protected by the same privilege. Can you both state your full names and addresses, whether you appear on behalf of an organisation and what role you have in that organisation.

Mr WIEBUSCH — Tim Wiebusch, I am the deputy chief officer of the Victoria State Emergency Service and am representing the SES today. My address is [REDACTED]

Mr BEALES — Stuart Beales, manager, regional operations, Gippsland, appearing for the Victoria State Emergency Service, and my address is [REDACTED]

The CHAIR — Any evidence you give today will eventually become part of a public document, so I ask you now to make an oral submission.

Overheads shown.

Mr WIEBUSCH — Thank you for the opportunity to make a presentation to the committee. VicSES has a strong interest in this particular area, and Stuart Beales is here with me today as one of our main operational leads in rescue boat operations. I will move through some of the early slides fairly quickly. You can take those as you will just to set the scene, but I really want to get to the final five slides to where the gold is in terms of where things can be enhanced into the future.

You probably best know the SES for our role in floods, storms, earthquakes and tsunamis, but also for our rescue services across the state. We are the largest road rescue provider, with 102 locations where we provide that service across the state along with a range of other rescue types. In particular we have legislative roles to support Victoria Police with search and rescue if a person is lost on land or in water. That is defined in section 5 of the SES act. We also assist police, fire and ambulance agencies in a range of other support activities, whether it is in the snow, missing searches, bushwalkers out in the bush and on water as well.

That gives you a quick snapshot of our operational activities at SES. You can see a progressive trend over the last 10 years, and the bottom table reflects VicSES's support to Victoria Police as the control agency for search and rescue with around 500 requests made each year. Only a small number of those come via the Rescue Coordination Centre of Victoria Police, which is the bottom line there; but we would suggest to you that perhaps not all the marine activity comes directly through there in the first instance. In many cases it comes from local response by local police requesting that advice. Only a small number come directly from the rescue coordination centre.

The CHAIR — At what sort of percentage?

Mr WIEBUSCH — We believe it is probably around a quarter of the events — for example, at Balmoral and the lake out at Rocklands last week the request was from local police for a boat crew to come out and assist with a missing person's case.

The CHAIR — Does that find its way into the coordinated data?

Mr WIEBUSCH — Not always, and I think Victoria Police would concur with that. Not all events always end up being backward recorded, and part of the challenge for John Todor and Mark Arneil, with whom you have just spoken, is being able to get their local field crews to be able to report some of those events back in at some time. Part of our role with that is making sure we can connect back with the rescue coordination centre as that occurs.

The CHAIR — Would it be fair to say then that the task at hand out there is far greater than is represented in the data?

Mr WIEBUSCH — Yes, you would certainly see that in our data, and our fellow volunteer agencies, particularly the Coast Guard and Life Saving Victoria, would concur with that. There have been a number of reviews, and you have already heard evidence from police about the Ernst & Young report commissioned by Victoria Police and Marine Safety Victoria in 2002. We would similarly advocate that a number of those recommendations are still valid today. More importantly, as you will see on the slide here, some of the key observations in 2002 have been re-echoed in the government's review undertaken by Mr Neil Comrie of the 2010–11 flood response. I have highlighted some of the key activity words there around definitions of roles and responsibilities needing to be clarified; that appropriate training, equipment and support is provided; that there needs to be common training programs, standards and accreditation; and that appropriate levels of water rescue capability and capacity is established and, more importantly, maintained.

Mr McGUIRE — Before you go on, you are saying this is former Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police Neil Comrie's review of a better coordinated system following the floods, and you are saying this applies across the board to the issues before us as well.

Mr WIEBUSCH — Yes, specifically in this recommendation he is responding to the water rescue and swift water rescue components, which are very much akin to the overarching arrangements.

The CHAIR — Was he referring to the 2002 Ernst & Young report when he went through this?

Mr WIEBUSCH — No, he was not.

Mr McGUIRE — But your evidence to us is that he effectively is echoing that proposition.

Mr WIEBUSCH — Correct. Points made in that recommendation you will also find are found within the Ernst & Young report.

Mr McGUIRE — So Ernst & Young has independently given its report and the former chief commissioner of Victoria Police has echoed that proposition as well?

Mr WIEBUSCH — Yes. This next slide shows the current emergency management arrangements in Victoria, and defines the control agency role, which as you have already heard is Victoria Police in many instances, but also where the support agencies are. Victorian SES is obviously listed in a number of categories there for water rescue, water search and also overdue aircraft.

The CHAIR — That is not quite representative, though, is it? You were saying in the control agency several times it is actually you guys?

Mr WIEBUSCH — We are control agency for storm, flood and other things, but not when it comes to water rescue.

The CHAIR — Bet even with marine rescue — —

Mr WIEBUSCH — Victoria Police is the control agency.

The CHAIR — Yes, but it sometimes does not get there?

Mr WIEBUSCH — Correct. But Victoria Police will be represented in their field units, not necessarily in the water police component of Victoria Police.

The CHAIR — If that is not going to them at all, then you guys are the de facto control agency?

Mr WIEBUSCH — Potentially, in the first instance, because many of the local police resources may not have the skills and experience necessarily, and that is where I guess it is important that we bring that connection back into the Rescue Coordination Centre.

More importantly, though, I think you will find in our emergency management arrangements it does not actually define marine search and rescue. Whilst there is this table that outlines who the control agency is and what agencies provide support, there is actually no definition of marine search and rescue or swift water rescue as it stands today. The marine search and rescue arrangements have certainly gone a long way towards capturing what that looks like. The marine search and rescue arrangements in Victoria were launched in May 2012. They articulate a definition around marine search and rescue, but it is largely related to vessels or incidents involving people on or off vessels.

The CHAIR — So what does that mean? What does that end up being as a consequence?

Mr WIEBUSCH — As a consequence we believe there is a range of water rescue and search activities that are not captured by that definition, and as a result some of the instances that you saw earlier are not necessarily reflective of the total effort that is required by volunteer agencies. That does not just relate to ourselves, but also Life Saving Victoria and the Coast Guard responding to a range of events that are not perhaps necessarily captured in the dataset today.

A good example of those is in some of these images here, where we have people who are quite obviously involved in water rescue activities or who are needing to be assisted along the way. Our current capability is 97 vessels across the state, and I have a capability map that I will show you in a short time. These vessels are obviously used for a range of marine search and rescue activities: flood rescue, flood evacuation, flood resupply, as well as traditional marine search and rescue. I guess this also highlights our consolidating to a number of small vessel types, as opposed to having myriad differing vessel types right across the sector, which you may find in some cases.

More importantly, we have a fantastic cohort of volunteers who are trained for marine search and rescue activities. We have 519 crew persons — they are, if you like, the assistants on board the vessels when a vessel goes out for a marine search and rescue — and 312 coxswains, who are the people in charge of operating the vessel at that time.

Mr RONALDS — Can I ask just a quick question on the coxswains? Are they trained specifically for you or are they people who have been in the commercial industry who volunteer to you?

Mr WIEBUSCH — That is a very good question. They invest significant time undertaking training with us — —

The CHAIR — And money.

Mr WIEBUSCH — Yes, absolutely.

Mr RONALDS — But they are not commercial, any of them, or are some?

Mr WIEBUSCH — Some of them may come to us already with commercial qualifications, but we still enhance training on top of that around the actual activities that are being undertaken in their environment. Search and rescue is quite different to perhaps charter boat-type activities or the like. There are around about 40 hours of effort to get to the first crew person competency, and then there is an additional period of time and skills maintenance before you can become a coxswain. The coxswains course itself is another four days of activity normally broken up in two lots, so it requires a significant contribution by volunteers to their efforts.

You will also notice there that we have 60 air observers, aligned with the Australian Maritime Safety Authority, and they are quite often called upon for vessels or aircraft that are in distress situations. Most recently, last Friday we deployed seven of those volunteers with AMSA to WA to conduct the search for the missing Malaysian aircraft. They have just come back into Victoria in recent hours.

Mr McGUIRE — So we understand that, can you be called upon to get involved in international search?

Mr WIEBUSCH — Yes, absolutely. We have a memorandum of understanding with AMSA, as do most of the SESs right across Australia, to provide a trained capability for air observing for lost aircraft or for people whose beacons go off on land so that they can be searched for. One of those key capabilities of the aircraft down at the bottom right there is based at Essendon Airport; they provide some of that capability. Again, you will not necessarily see those statistics inside some of the marine statistics that you have seen today, but it is another capability that is provided by the state.

Mr McGUIRE — Even though it is an international search, and it is way off the coast of Western Australia, the SES in Victoria can become part of that. Is that under a protocol? How does that work?

Mr WIEBUSCH — The Australian Maritime Safety Authority has the jurisdiction for the area that is currently being researched for the Malaysian aircraft. Because the resources are state based, in this particular case they have drawn on a range of resources from across jurisdictions to contribute to the search effort.

Mr McGUIRE — Is that standard practice and procedure?

Mr WIEBUSCH — Yes.

Mr McGUIRE — If there was a similar one off Bass Strait or something — —

Mr WIEBUSCH — South Australian resources or Tasmanian resources would come in.

Mr McGUIRE — So we take a national approach and respond in that situation.

Mr WIEBUSCH — Absolutely. We have 68 locations across the state that you can see here on this map that provide marine search and rescue capability, covering all the major river systems and lakes. That also includes the New South Wales water of the Murray River.

Post the Comrie review in 2012, we undertook a comprehensive review of our capability and the capacity of our rescue boat services right across the state. That was in part led by Stuart. This identified some locations where vessels may not have been ideally suited to all operating environments or where the optimal capacity — as in, the number of people who would ideally be trained — was below that ratio of four trained for one person who might be required. We operate on a model that is that we train four people to make sure that one is available any day of the week to respond. In most of our locations we would be looking to train 12 to 16 people to make sure that we have 2 to 3 people who can respond on any call that may come through. That is not necessarily a standard that is across the board.

You will see on the map that capability is spread right across the state, as I said, on the various river systems and lakes. The red boats are showing where we have identified that there is a need for perhaps a more suitable vessel and/or that the ratio of training — the numbers of personnel required — may be below the level we believe is necessary.

Mr RONALDS — So there is a vessel but it may not necessarily be suitable?

Mr WIEBUSCH — Correct, in some cases. Not every red boat is an unsuitable boat.

Mr McGUIRE — I want clarification. You have more than 20 identified as red boats, and your legend says that they are not suitable. What accurate assessment can we make of that?

Mr WIEBUSCH — I guess it is suitability of capability, so it could be that the vessel is not ideally suited for all applications. It might be suitable for some applications — for example, flood work — but not marine search and rescue activity. Conversely, it could be that in some of those locations we are below par with where we would ideally like to be with volunteer numbers. We still have a capability to respond, but instead of perhaps 16 that we might require at that location we may only have 14, or something like that.

Mr RONALDS — But when you say it is unsuitable, if you look at the Gippsland Lakes, you have a number of vessels there that are not suitable. Is it that they are not suitable for all tasks? Could they still be a good thing but not suitable for all tasks?

Mr WIEBUSCH — That is right.

Mr RONALDS — So it is not completely negative.

Mr WIEBUSCH — That goes back to the earlier evidence that you heard about suitability for location and making sure that the capability is understood when it is being tasked — —

Mr RONALDS — Given that there is VMR, there is Victoria Police and there is the Coast Guard.

Mr WIEBUSCH — That is right. What is the right boat for the right task? That is, as you will see in one of our recommendations, one of the key areas that we think could be improved.

Mr McGUIRE — You will come to this, will you, about suitability for location and purpose?

Mr WIEBUSCH — Absolutely.

The CHAIR — Is that more about suitability for what would usually be the purpose in that location?

Mr WIEBUSCH — Correct. Our submission that you will soon receive includes 21 recommendations covering five key areas around service provision, governance, funding, training and communications, and I would like to step through each of those with you now. First of all, the marine service delivery framework is currently fragmented and does not easily support interagency response. It creates difficulty in communications in some cases and sees differing standards for training in vessels and in effect the management, then, of issues and safety. The emergency management white paper of 2012 outlines the government's position of a multiagency approach, providing the best utilisation of existing resources whilst not duplicating in terms of administration.

We see a strong rationale for the alignment and affiliation of service provisions to the three key agencies that you can see there: the Australian Volunteer Coast Guard, us and Life Saving Victoria, which have key strengths and capabilities. Specifically, each of these three agencies is a nationally registered training organisation under the government's framework. They all have established relationships across the three agencies, focus on consistency of standards — bringing confidence to the overall capability of the state's response arrangements — and are also able to provide access to established administrative structures and advocacy for what are currently some independent groups. I guess what we are saying is that each of those three agencies has specialist skills in different types of marine search and rescue environments and that we could perhaps encourage some of the independent affiliates to affiliate with one of the three to ensure that they have got the appropriate training, the support for procurement of vessels and also for the associated governance. That means that the precious volunteer time can be more appropriately used for training and response activities, rather than some of the other challenges that volunteer groups face.

We have also suggested there that there should be a review of the existing marine search and rescue provision, preparing a statewide strategic resource plan. Again, you have already heard evidence today of where there are a range of resources spread across the state, but it necessarily has not come about in a strategic or planned manner. I think our review, as you will have seen on the earlier slides, highlights that perhaps in some cases we have not necessarily got the right capabilities in the right locations.

The third point is around accreditation, and I guess we are suggesting that accreditation should be based on provider location, using a similar system to what is used for the likes of road rescue arrangements in Victoria and also those processes outlined in the Ernst & Young report. If you are not familiar with the road rescue arrangements in Victoria, we have three agencies that provide that service — the MFB, the CFA and the SES — but each of them is accredited to the same standard for training, equipping and response. There is a process where every three years each of those groups goes through an accreditation process to ensure that the capability is still in check, that the equipment is still in sound condition and that

they are meeting their response time standards. That type of approach that we are advocating for here would serve well for the marine search and rescue environment as well.

Mr McGuire — Do you think three years is an adequate time?

Mr Wiebusch — Generally we do not see a lot of movement in capability with volunteers, but obviously being a volunteer base you do see movement from time to time, so we think three years is around about the right period of time. Obviously the agencies are doing their own annual checks, but in the case of road rescue we actually bring South Australia SES into Victoria to independently reaccredit our units so that we are not looking at our own work but getting somebody else to pass a view as to whether that capability is still sound.

Mr McGuire — Are you recommending a similar mechanism in this case?

Mr Wiebusch — Yes, certainly a similar mechanism, or where it is different agencies I guess reviewing each other's capabilities so that there is a level of independence from the agency itself.

The Chair — What do you see as the difficulties in achieving that?

Mr Wiebusch — I have no doubt that for the 12 to 15 independent groups out there at the moment that could be seen as a central point of conflict, but I would hope — —

The Chair — Why conflict?

Mr Wiebusch — In the sense that somebody else is perhaps giving a view as to their capability and capacity. I think it has been demonstrated that the process we have had running for a number of years now, once you get past that initial perception, is actually of benefit to people because they can know where their gaps in capability may be. It may not be to the point that they are unserviceable, but it may be to the point where it actually supports a funding bid or it supports the replacement of a vessel or something in the nature of those things along the way.

Mr McGuire — Either way, we need a reality check on what is really happening and what is the standard.

Mr Wiebusch — Absolutely, and one of your earlier questions was around where that may sit. That takes us to the governance for marine search and rescue. We would suggest that the responsibility for strategies, standards, policy and support would best be vested with the new entity that has been created under emergency management arrangements, which is Emergency Management Victoria. That is going to be the overarching peak body which is looking at strategies, standards and policy for a number of other areas and in this case provides that umbrella view. Under that umbrella view you would have those three key agencies that can provide the support, the training and the leadership, if you like, of the volunteer resources.

This state Marine Search and Rescue Committee is currently chaired by Victoria Police. We are suggesting that that should be in the future chaired by an independent group, that being Emergency Management Victoria. That takes away the pressure for police, and I think you heard in their evidence today that they do not necessarily see it as their role to advocate for or on behalf of the volunteer agencies directly, whereas Emergency Management Victoria obviously has that mandate for an all-hazards, all-agencies approach. We are suggesting that you retain Victoria Police as the control agency and Transport Safety Victoria as the regulator. Effectively the emergency management governance would be picked up through EMV.

When it comes to funding, I think if you spoke to any of our volunteer units along with our colleagues in the other volunteer agencies, including the independents, this is certainly one area that is a key challenge for marine search and rescue. Currently it is a challenge to plan for end-of-life replacement of vessels and equipment due to the agencies having to vie for funding from five different funding streams. There is a range of different grant programs available to volunteer agencies, including us, along with the BERC funding through central government budgeting.

The availability of funding does not adequately match the level of services, and it needs to be expanded to allow for the ongoing planned replacement of critical response assets. I guess you could almost couch the current regime as a bit of a lottery in terms of having to bid, through grant programs, to replace key service delivery within the community. We are suggesting that a better method may be to consolidate the funding and provide, in addition to an asset program that is sector-wide across all of the agencies, an operational funding allocation. You have already heard today about the process of fuel reimbursements, and our volunteers in many cases do not even bother because of the administrative process and burden that is involved.

The CHAIR — Is that by design, do you think?

Mr WIEBUSCH — I am not sure whether it is by design, but I think, like all processes, particularly in some of our cases where the dollars perhaps are not as great as they are for some of the offshore activities that occur, the effort to go and get a \$150 fuel reimbursement is probably not worth all the hurdles they need to work through.

Mr McGUIRE — Before you move on with that point, are you saying this is an example of the issues — that instead of having just a one-stop shop, for want of a better phrase, this is one of the complicating and irritating propositions that occur?

Mr WIEBUSCH — For sure. It might be overcome by providing an annual operations funding allocation to each of the marine search and rescue providers for fuel, maintenance and training. That would significantly reduce that administrative burden. I guess such a model could be based on a local risk profile and perhaps an average of their operational activity over the last five years as a couple of parameters to give some sense to what that annual amount might be. That then saves the administrative processes for Victoria Police and TSV in administering it, but it also means that there is some certainty for each of the marine search and rescue providers across all of the agencies as to what their operating budgets are going to be, whereas at the moment they are left to sausage sizzles at Bunnings and the like to try to cover their operational requirements.

Mr McGUIRE — So I understand in a little more detail, you are saying that there could be a budgeted amount each year for five years — you are thinking five years provides confidence — as an annual allocation.

Mr WIEBUSCH — Doing an annual allocation but looking at the last five years to get a sense of what level of activity this group is involved with and the number of people they need to keep up to skill. That would then drive some sort of allocation.

Mr McGUIRE — Then the proposition would be that you would provide the receipts and everything to justify that payment.

Mr WIEBUSCH — No, not necessarily; I think based more on activity-based funding as opposed to — —

The CHAIR — It would be a rolling budget.

Mr WIEBUSCH — Rather than a reimbursement scenario. As I said, at the moment people simply are not in some cases seeking that reimbursement.

Mr McGUIRE — What you are saying is just to provide that as an evidence-based proposition from the previous five years and then you get on with your business. Then if you want to have sausage sizzles or do anything else above that, that is your business.

Mr WIEBUSCH — That is right. When it comes to training, as you would be aware new national laws have come into play, particularly in the area of volunteer marine search and rescue. This is another area that is a particular challenge. We suggest that Emergency Management Victoria and Transport Safety

Victoria need to continue to influence the national regulators not to adopt a commercial coxswain as the single standard.

A commercial coxswain requirement, we believe, in many cases is in excess of what is required for a number of the operating environments for marine search and rescue organisations. The commercial coxswain also covers a range of responsibilities that a marine search and rescue coxswain is never going to contend with. For example, why train somebody in diesel motors and refrigeration when they are driving a two-stroke outboard motor that is on the back of their vessel? The commercial coxswain requires that because of the nature of charter work and other things that may be involved in that space.

Each of the three major volunteer organisations I have spoken of — Coast Guard, Life Saving Victoria and us — has a duty of care under the Occupational Health and Safety Act already to train our members and provide a safe working environment. We believe we do that already through our national accredited training programs and that there is that balance as a result. VicSES is also keen to see a regime that sees marine search and rescue operators licensed to operate in the environments they hold their competence in. The majority of our volunteers currently only hold a boat licence to undertake their SES response roles, and maybe there is also consideration for some exemptions from the licensing fees for volunteers involved in marine search and rescue activities.

Finally, the key thing here is that the standards need to be managed and administered, and we would suggest again that it be by Emergency Management Victoria. Training cannot be one size fits all. Training standards need to be developed based around the marine search and rescue operating environments, and that will vary whether you are on a lake, a river system, working offshore or involved with inshore activities along the way.

Mr McGUIRE — A horses-for-courses strategy.

Mr WIEBUSCH — Absolutely. Finally, around communications, the SES sees the need for a single computer-aided dispatch system to be provided within the Victoria Police rescue coordination centre that provides visibility to the key volunteer agencies but also allows for the recommending of the closest capability which integrates the GPS tracking of some of the agencies that are there already. The three key volunteer agencies, being Coast Guard, Life Saving Victoria and SES, all GPS-track their vessels, but it is all back to their own system. These need to be integrated into one system with one spatially displayed view — a map, if you like — of the resources that are on the water to allow for efficient interoperability and monitoring of the response.

A good example of why this would enhance marine search and rescue response was a case study of a missing fisherman at Kilcunda near Phillip Island back in January this year. His vessel was discovered washed up on rocks. Williamstown water police responded in the first instance and activated Volunteer Marine Rescue Hastings in support. As it turned out, Inverloch SES, as the closest offshore vessel, was not activated until our SES land search crews from San Remo arrived to search the beach and look from the cliffs. They brought to the incident controller's attention the fact that we actually had a vessel with capability just around the corner. The water police rescue coordination centre in this case was unaware that Inverloch's vessel was an option, and it was then very quickly tasked to that event.

Although that vessel had already been there and on the system, the current system is rather manual in its process and relies on some inherent knowledge rather than the computer-aided dispatch systems we use for most of our other emergency response work, which, by the inputs you put in, recommend the resources that it sends — whether it is for a fire, medical condition, police response, storm and flood, or road rescue that we are involved in. We believe there would be great value in the state having a computer-aided dispatch system for marine search and rescue as well.

Mr McGUIRE — Before you move on, what was the result of that? As you have said, around the corner a vessel was available but was not deployed. What happened?

Mr WIEBUSCH — In that case our commander who was there with the volunteers undertaking activities onshore brought that to the attention of police. A call was made back into the rescue coordination

centre. The response was, 'Yes, okay'. Then Inverloch was activated, but I think it was a couple of hours down the track.

Mr BEALES — There was about a 5 to 7-hour delay.

Mr McGUIRE — What was the result of that?

Mr WIEBUSCH — The result was that the Inverloch vessel was deployed and formed up as part of the resources for that search.

The CHAIR — Frank is asking you what was the outcome for the person being searched for?

Mr WIEBUSCH — At this stage I believe they still have not been found.

Mr BEALES — Yes, they are still missing.

Mr McGUIRE — They have never been found.

Mr WIEBUSCH — They have still not been found.

Mr McGUIRE — Could this have made a difference — that is, if everyone knew that Inverloch was there and available, and if 5 to 7 hours had not been lost, could this person have been saved?

Mr WIEBUSCH — It is hard to say. Ultimately, all these scenarios will depend on the conditions at the time and if we are actually looking in the right spot. There was a vessel washed up on the rocks.

The CHAIR — I am not sure this is something you should comment upon anyway at the moment.

Mr McGUIRE — Let us put it this way: we are looking at the system from a systemic overview and all the rest of it, so how would you describe the impact of that oversight?

The CHAIR — I do not know that they should be commenting on this, Frank.

Mr WIEBUSCH — What it serves to highlight is that a manual system would be enhanced by a computer-aided dispatch system that would have brought the resource to the attention of people.

Mr McGUIRE — That is a fair answer, and we are conscious — the Chair is intimating to me — that this is subject to a coronial inquiry.

The CHAIR — It will be, for sure.

Mr McGUIRE — We do not want to prejudice that in any way. It is more the systemic answer I was after.

Mr WIEBUSCH — The final one, which goes to the diagram we have on the screen, is around providing access to the new digital radio networks that the state is providing. The black box in the middle is the radio the SES currently has, which allows us to uniquely talk to all the other agencies that we operate with along the way. We are the only emergency service that currently has that capability. Moving to the cloud at the top left, the new P25 digital network, as they call it, which is being built across Victoria as we speak, will allow Life Saving Victoria, police, ambulance, fire agencies, the Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority and us to interact on the same network for interoperability. We are suggesting that access needs to be provided to that statewide network for all the agencies that are going to be involved in marine search and rescue if we are truly going to have interoperability for marine search and rescue along the way. That concludes our presentation.

The CHAIR — Thank you very much. On behalf of the committee, I thank you very much for your time and for making your submissions. They have been very educational. We certainly have found some information we would like to get answers to, and it will aid us in our recommendations. In a couple of

weeks you will get a transcript of today's proceedings. If you would, point out where you think there are any mistakes et cetera, but please do not change the substance of the document at all.

Witnesses withdrew.