

TRANSCRIPT

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

Budget Estimates 2019–20 (Police and Emergency Services)

Melbourne—Friday, 14 June 2019

Members

Mr Philip Dalidakis—Chair

Mr Richard Riordan—Deputy Chair

Mr Sam Hibbins

Mr Gary Maas

Mr Danny O'Brien

Ms Pauline Richards

Mr Tim Richardson

Ms Ingrid Stitt

Ms Bridget Vallence

WITNESSES

Ms Lisa Neville, Minister for Police and Emergency Services,

Ms Rebecca Falkingham, Secretary, and

Ms Corri McKenzie, Deputy Secretary, Police, Fines and Crime Prevention, Department of Justice and Community Safety; and

Mr Graham Ashton, Chief Commissioner, and

Ms Julie Walsh, Executive Director, Strategic Investment, Reporting and Audit, Victoria Police.

Mr Andrew Crisp, Emergency Management Commissioner, and

Mr Andrew Minack, Deputy Secretary and Chief Executive Officer, Emergency Management Victoria.

The CHAIR: Good afternoon, everybody. I declare open this hearing of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee. On behalf of the Parliament of Victoria, the committee is conducting this inquiry into the 2019–20 Budget Estimates. Its aim is to scrutinise public administration like never before and to improve outcomes for the Victorian community like never before—two lofty goals and ambitions that we are meeting with aplomb. Minister, I welcome you and your officials, and thank you for appearing before the committee today.

All evidence given is protected by the Parliamentary Committees Act. This means that it attracts parliamentary privilege and is protected from judicial review. Witnesses found to be giving false or misleading evidence may be in contempt of Parliament and subject to heinous penalties too grievous for me to list in this afternoon's hearing.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Come on, give us another example.

The CHAIR: I feel, Mr O'Brien, that I need to be, with the Commissioner here, on my best behaviour.

Mr D O'BRIEN: A week-long tour of irrigation communities with Paul Weller and the Minister for Water.

The CHAIR: Al right, fine. Anybody who is in found to be in contempt of Parliament will be subject to going to Van Diemen's Land. Minister, I invite you to make a very brief opening statement or presentation of no more than 10 minutes. This will be followed by great questions from us—not so great from Mr O'Brien, but great from the Deputy Chair and Ms Vallenge. Over to you, Minister.

Visual presentation.

Ms NEVILLE: Thank you, Chair. I think the committee knows I am doing both police and emergency services as a presentation and then into police questions. I will start with police, and I want to just start with the community safety statement. We have had two of these statements. This really sets the frame for both our investment and our direction in relation to Victoria Police and community safety. It is an agreement between VicPol and the Victorian government on what we are going to invest and how they are going to utilise those resources to make our community safer, but it also is a very strategic document. It looks at legislation, it looks at policy, it looks at resourcing, it looks at uplifting technology—it looks at all of that, not just in the police portfolio but across a broader justice profile about what we can do to reduce crime and make our community safer. Our third one is due to come out this month, so that will be set for the next 12-month period.

Just to give you a sense of what that has resulted in, it has been a \$2 billion investment just out of the community safety statement. All up we have put \$3 billion into police since we came to government. It has funded the biggest technology uplift, the biggest number of police we have ever had in Victoria in terms of one investment, and a commitment to an ongoing way of supporting and funding police. It has also put in place new laws around banning cash for scrap, bail laws and tougher penalties for particular crimes. One would say that as a strategic document it has provided a framework and a road map to how we will all contribute to making our community safer.

This shows you the sustained investment. The average spend now is with \$1.1 billion more being spent than when we came to government—a 44 per cent increase in the budget output for Victoria Police. The first investment came in 15–16, and this was a really significant investment to start the process of freeing up police time. That was the investment in our police custody officers, and people will have seen that. We now have 400 of those across the state, and that has contributed to freeing up thousands of hours of police time back onto the beat. We also had an investment in 16–17 of a major uplift in things like equipment for our public order team, our counterterrorism teams, and the IT uplift. The mobile devices, for example, were part of that particular uplift. Then in the last 17–18 budget was when we had the \$2 billion investment, which continues to roll out. That is about the frontline police, so 2729. That was on top of the resources in 16–17, so bringing our investment to 3135 police. But it also funded the police assistance line, which I will talk a bit about later; the new specialist youth workers; the family violence transformation; air wing; and automatic number plate recognition—so, again, a significant investment in infrastructure technology but also in actual police on the ground. In 18–19 we continued that with a particular focus on high-harm crime, cybercrime and organised crime. This budget has a focus on road safety; again, that high-harm crime, particularly youth offending; police infrastructure; and mental health and wellbeing.

This next slide shows you that there are now 2000 full-time effective more police in stations and on our street in Victoria than there were in 2014. There are more than 320 PSOs on our public transport network. There are 400 PCOs. We have also invested in forensic officers and analysis, and you will see some further investment of that in our drug forensic area in this particular budget. So the force is bigger and better than it has ever been, and we are bucking the trends of the other states. You will see down below—this is from the Productivity Commission record, which shows you where we were sitting around police per head of population. We were at about 260. That is where we were per head of population. We were below the national average. We are now outpacing every state and outpacing the national average at 290 police per 100 000. So we have really transformed that.

What this also shows you is that this has also delivered outcomes. As you know, we have had a six-year increase in crime. We are now starting to see that turn around, with seven consecutive quarters of crime coming down. We have got the lowest victimisation rate in a decade. We have got the lowest rate in burglary and enter in a decade—in fact police would say since LEAP was collected. The decade is based on Crime Statistics Agency reporting. We have the lowest rate of youth offenders, and we are the second lowest in the country just behind the ACT. We have got the lowest rate of non-family violence serious assaults in a decade. We are also turning around some of those really high-harm crimes. So aggravated robberies, for example—a significant decline in that, taking us back to below figures we were seeing in 2011–12 and 13. So it is a really significant impact there. Aggravated burglaries and home invasion figures are coming down, and motor vehicle theft—that high-volume crime—has also seen a significant decrease over the last couple of years. And obviously we know property crime is what often drives the crime rate in Victoria.

The next slide shows you just where the next lot of our investment of police—the pipeline of new officers—are going. So this includes the 300 frontline police. I will not go into the SAM model right now—I will a little bit later—but the model has now started to see a significant impact out also in regional and rural communities, so in this allocation every region is getting some additional resources. That includes police officers, it includes family violence—we know that this enables our frontline police to go back into the stations and not having to pick up the specialist family violence work that they have had to do. It fulfils our commitment around backfilling of parental leave, which is one of the really big recommendations out of the VEOHRC report that was done into bullying in Victoria Police and equality in Victoria Police. It has investments around prosecutors, it has investments around some of our specialist teams—homicide, for example—in this round as well. And as that shows you, it has a good spread across the state, and given the way the model works, you would imagine that will continue to occur as further allocations are made.

Just in terms of family violence, this remains undoubtedly one of the biggest law and order issues that faces Victoria. Victoria Police respond every 7 minutes. It represents 40 per cent to 60 per cent of work. So what have we been doing in this space? Taking the recommendations from the royal commission, there has been transformation around the training that Victoria Police have been undertaking. We have got a new specialist training facility out at the academy, which I opened earlier this year, and we have got the 415 new police and family violence specialists now. These are about working with those high-risk families. We know once

someone gets beyond one incident they become a very high risk and are likely to reoffend at a more serious risk. So Victoria Police—30 of the 32 recommendations have been implemented.

The other changes are around the iPhones and iPads—10 000 of these are being rolled out. This is again really transformational for Victoria Police, changing the way they work, whether it is in the street, on the stations or if you are a road policing officer.

In counterterrorism we have got new laws—significant laws—that came into place out of the Harper-Lay report. We were the first to invest in a counterterrorism team. This budget continues to invest in further support for capability—for example, maintaining the security upgrades we are doing in the CBD but also assisting police in the work they do around crowded places—not just with agencies within government and within the city of Melbourne but agencies outside that are seeking to look at how they best protect their crowded places.

I think one of the biggest investments and one of the things that we will all look back on as being a significant game changer in terms of mental health and wellbeing for police is the announcement around the new system around provisional acceptance for our emergency service workers who have a mental illness. Now, this comes into place on Monday for Victoria Police members, and for ambulance and the remaining emergency service workers by 1 July. This is a nationwide-leading proposal. It does not just deal with PTSD but also mental illness.

I am conscious of the time. I might just move on to emergency services. I am sure that the committee will ask me about some of the other significant areas that we are investing in, like in road safety and some of the police station infrastructure upgrades as well that are in this year's budget.

If I can move on to emergency services, this is a big portfolio which covers a number of agencies which you can see listed there. Basically 5 100 career staff, 100 000 volunteers, 14 000 appliances, over 1 500 stations, units and clubs, and they all work together and also operate independently of each other as well. There has been a significant increase in output, as you can see, over the period that we have been in government in terms of our emergency services output. Yes, before everyone jumps to what is the difference between 18–19 and 19–20, that is basically the 450 firefighters that we have already recruited into that realm, and we had a significant investment of \$100 million of which \$60 million has been spent of that. So there are no cuts—let us just be clear about that. That is about just the base of funding with occasional increases in capital or particular funds that are—

Mr D O'BRIEN: Not what you have said in the past, but anyway.

Ms NEVILLE: Happy to do it in detail. Hope you ask me the question, Mr O'Brien.

Mr D O'BRIEN: I do not want to foreshadow anything, Minister—

Ms NEVILLE: So if we can then just have a look at some of the challenges in emergency management—I think this is perhaps the most important part to talk about. Those who sat through my water presentation, you know we have got hottest, driest, really dry soil levels, climate change impacting on the type of emergencies that we are experiencing. Then on top of that you add a massively growing population, so since the 1960s our population has doubled. It will double again in the next 30 years at least, and it may even outpace that. We have massive urbanisation, so we have 90 per cent of people who are now living in urban communities, and we have a massive ageing population. That is affecting, not just Victoria but across the country, our volunteering base as they age, and that is across all the agencies. That presents some challenges for us about how we frame, structure and support our emergency services going forward.

I think the other thing to note is that as much as technology will also be a fantastic thing for us in this space—things like drones et cetera—if you take account of things like an electric car catches on fire, it can take days, hours to put out. So it changes the way we think and how we need to continue to adapt to this as we go forward to manage all of those challenges in this emergency management space. This is what all the emergency management people are talking about, learning about, training about, in order to make sure we are in the best position in Victoria and nationally. This shows you from July last year and 30 April—you can see how busy our services have been: structure fires, bushfires. This summer alone we had double the number we had the year before. We had over 4 000 bush and grassfires. You have got the flood, you have got the major emergency

events for the SES, the number of warnings, aircraft. And of course this summer we also continue to see unfortunately drownings—50 over this period, about 29 over the summer period. So it remains a challenging environment, and of course in that we had the tragic death of two of our lifesavers. Those families are still doing it tough, as are the clubs—the SES and the lifesaving clubs—that are down in those communities. We do not lose many, but two is too many. Losing anyone who volunteers in these environments is just one too many.

So what are our responses to these challenges? How are we investing in capability? So for example in the last years we have invested substantially in uplifting new technology for fire trucks et cetera, so a massive rollout of that. The digital radio for police and for our firefighters and ambulances is funded in this. Some of that investment, significant investment, is the 450 new firefighters. Again, being able to deal with population growth and urbanisation—that is what is driving reform and modernisation of the fire services. Whatever we do, whatever happens, we need to do that. We have to stay ahead of the game and we need to look at how we better support and grow our volunteer base in the context of an ageing population.

So if just move on quickly to this particular budget, we have got new fire stations and three replacement fire stations funded in this budget: Armstrong Creek, Phillip Island, Riddells Creek and Junortoun in the Bendigo area are all funded. That is on top of others that are coming online. I know for example I am opening the Portarlington one. We have got Moe, Wyndham Vale, Craigieburn, Morwell, Leopold, Truganina. There are about another eight to come online over the next 12 months as well, so significant investment in CFA facilities—volunteer and career facilities.

Funding for additional lifesaving clubhouses—again, on top of the I think almost \$21 million we have already put in. This is another \$2.3 million for Jan Juc, Carrum and Barwon Heads. And we are continuing our Marine Search and Rescue investment. People may recall that we did some major restructuring on how we support our Marine Search and Rescue units. This money continues us helping them with fuel, equipment, training et cetera. We restructured the whole system—that is providing better governance and support and training. There is money for our Victoria State Emergency Service—a number of facilities there, from Clyde, Craigieburn North, Kalkallo, Cranbourne, Officer, Point Cook, Caroline Springs, relocation for the Chelsea unit, Mr Richardson, and also money for the Knox unit relocation. So that takes our investment in the last couple of budgets to \$53 million into the SES.

And finally, some really important investments in ESTA 000. This enables us to meet growing demand for ESTA, but also to look at the technology in that space as well, the use of new technology—mobiles et cetera—and being able to cater for that. Our new emergency alert system—a really critical system that is about letting communities know when there are emergencies on. The digital radio for ambulance and money for the Surfers Rescue, which is part of upskilling our surfers to assist in driving down some of the drownings.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Minister, and no doubt people around the world will be grateful for your significant opening statement because you have left me 3 minutes—not even 3 minutes—in the first allotted time.

Ms NEVILLE: My apologies.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Best thing that has happened all week, Minister—keeping Mr Dalidakis quiet. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Keeping Mr O'Brien happy is the hardest job as well, so we are both winners here, Mr O'Brien. Minister, with the 2 minutes remaining I will ask you to move into the issue of ongoing investment in police resourcing. I refer you to budget paper 3, pages 266 and 267, and the policing and crime prevention output statement and the major investment being put into policing in Victoria. I am just asking if you could detail in the remaining 2 minutes and then possibly take on notice for the rest of it what is behind that major growth in funding.

Ms NEVILLE: Thank you, Chair Dalidakis. I will try and focus my attention on a couple of key things worthy of pointing out. Firstly, there has been some substantial investment in infrastructure projects, so 40 police station infrastructure projects that are about replacing stations. There are also police residence upgrades—a dozen are being refurbished and other police residences upgraded at nine sites. One of the really exciting ones I opened the other day was the Melbourne East police station, and if you have not been down

Bourke Street, go and have a look. This used to be in Flinders Lane. It is our busiest and one of our most important police stations in the state. It was there for Bourke Street. It was there for Flinders Street. It was there for the terrorism incident that happened last year. They do all the safe street initiatives overnight—a great new facility, a lot of feedback from community already around the better and easier access to the police station there as well.

I have also mentioned the really important allocation of or the deployment of new police. So of the 3135, we have deployed more than 1250 of those. That is in the first two allocations. That is above attrition. So remember we are recruiting and training a lot more than that because we need to meet the attrition rates, which are around 400-odd. We meet that above the attrition rate because our attrition rates are very good at the moment—

The CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. Unfortunately I will have to move on to Ms Vallence.

Ms VALLENCE: Thank you, minister and officers. Minister, back in May 2018 the firearms prohibition order came into effect as part of the government's community safety statement, and about a year ago, on 6 June 2018, assistant commissioner Shane Patton stated that based on prior convictions and police intelligence there were around 2200 existing targets for firearms prohibition orders, or FPOs, across outlaw motorcycle gangs, crime gangs, youth offenders and terrorism suspects. Minister, to date how many of these identified 2200 individuals have been issued with an FPO?

Ms NEVILLE: I will give you the figure, but I will tell you what police determine, which I think is exactly the right thing. It is that given the extent of the powers—and I must say that the opposition did try to weaken these powers—they would attempt to do this in a systematic way and make sure their members were trained. So it has been limited to this point to crime command, and they have issued 181 of these, which I think is very public knowledge. They are in the process now of rolling these out to the regional crime command teams in order to be able to reach those figures. But they are doing it in a systematic, careful way.

Ms VALLENCE: So is that 181 of the 2200 identified?

Ms NEVILLE: Yes.

Ms VALLENCE: So as we compare it to New South Wales, for example, around the end of June 2018 they had issued around 3657—around; that is a precise number—in five years. That rates approximately 730 a year. Why are we in Victoria so far behind?

Ms NEVILLE: As I said, there was a decision taken by police, which I think is the right one—I do not want to question their expertise in this—the right decision to be able to make sure that their members were trained properly, that they were used properly, because as you may not be aware there are some VCAT hearings about this. People have challenged this. We have got one in fact where we lost the VCAT hearing and we are now having to appeal that decision, so we do not want to risk finding criminals thinking they can get away with this, so this is about making sure we have got the right procedures and that there will be significant uplift in that by this time next year, a year in—so unlike New South Wales. I would like to know what they did in their first year as opposed to the average. Do we have that?

Ms VALLENCE: We are asking the questions. In relation to the Rebels outlaw motorcycle gang, boss Colin Websdale successfully overturned his FPO in May this year. How many FPOs have been issued since that time—to you, Chief Commissioner, perhaps.

Chief Comm. ASHTON: Since that decision was overturned I do not think we have issued any over and above that one, so we are in the process of appealing that one at the moment.

Ms VALLENCE: None. Okay. Since I think that has been discussed as being a game changer, really a game changer, to get guns off the street, and at that first test Mr Websdale has successfully appealed. You have now had these new powers for 12 months, and we just recently had a deadly period of eight shootings in eight weeks. Wouldn't you say that having more of these FPOs and a greater rate of these FPOs is critical for safety on our streets?

Chief Comm. ASHTON: Yes. We certainly want to issue more of them and we do intend to issue more of them. We have got to now evaluate, as we have done, the results of that VCAT decision, and we are appealing that, but until—well, we may issue some in the meantime—

Ms VALLENCE: So they have not really been a game changer yet? We have had these powers in for 12 months, and it has not been a game changer.

Chief Comm. ASHTON: I think it will be, and it has already had a good effect in getting some firearms off the street and also preventing criminal groups from obtaining firearms.

Ms VALLENCE: We seem to have had an escalation, I think. You know, eight shootings in eight weeks—it seems to be an escalation.

Chief Comm. ASHTON: I think when you look over the course of time it probably has not been an escalation. They tend to happen in clusters like this: 99.9 per cent of these are related to drug deals and drug activity and they tend to follow the drug trade. Essentially we have been finding those really challenging to investigate because the victims of those offences do not assist us and we have to rely on the community to try and assist us, either through CCTV or other witnesses.

Ms VALLENCE: All right. We will move on; we have limited time for questions. I will move on back to you, Minister. The 2019–20 budget shows—budget paper 3, page 267, is the reference—a target number of alcohol screening tests have been reduced by 500 000 compared to the 18–19 period, and given we are experiencing over a 50 per cent increase in the road toll as compared to last year, why has the number of alcohol tests been reduced so significantly? Is the government just not serious enough about this issue?

Ms NEVILLE: I know you are a pretty new member, Ms Vallence, so you will not have actually had a look at the previous budget papers, where in fact in 17–18 the budget paper 3 target was 1.1 million tests. As a result of discussions with Victoria Police and the then assistant commissioner—that figure only represented what we did in drug and alcohol buses—it was felt that we needed to take account of the fact that all police, not for drug testing but all police, have a role to play with alcohol testing. So Victoria Police came to us and suggested that they thought 3.5 million, which was what we had in the last budget, and then as a result—if you may have followed the news or not; again, you were not a member at the time—there was an issue around the preliminary alcohol testing that was being done by Victoria Police. We had Neil Comrie do a review about it, and IBAC oversaw that as well, and that recommended that we needed to just be careful because there had been a small number—it was about 1.5 per cent—of tests that were not accurate or had not been applied, basically. It was not that they were not accurate, but they actually had not been done while police members had shown that they were done. So in reflection of that we went back to 3 million. So just bear in mind the figure was 1.1 million. We have now increased that. So this is not about going back. It is about being a true reflection on what we think across the state with the new procedures and the new accountability that we can do. So this is advice—

Ms VALLENCE: I think people, the public, do not really care about whether I am a new MP. I think what they care about is that they are seeing that the total number of tests are reducing—

Ms NEVILLE: But they are not. I just say they are not.

Ms VALLENCE: when the road toll is increasing.

Ms NEVILLE: They are not. They are not though. Just to be clear, they are not reducing.

Mr D O'BRIEN: On your own targets. It is in the budget papers.

Ms VALLENCE: It is in the budget papers.

Ms NEVILLE: They are a target—

Ms VALLENCE: It is in the budget papers in black and white.

Ms NEVILLE: that is reflective. And, as I said, in 17–18 the only target was 1.1. We then attempted to test out how you could take account of all the other breath alcohol tests that are done by police, and we increased it.

Ms VALLENCE: Chief Commissioner, the 19–20 budget also contains no additional funding for roadside drug tests, and the budget papers are showing that approximately one in 10 tested drivers return a positive result. Don't you think that additional drug tests would help make roads safer and stem the road toll?

Ms NEVILLE: Sorry, could I just go first on that, Chair? So, firstly—

Ms VALLENCE: The question is to the chief commissioner.

Ms NEVILLE: I think I can still answer.

The CHAIR: The minister is entitled to answer if she chooses.

Ms NEVILLE: I mean, just on policy, given it is our budget settings. So we increased them. If you have a read of the community safety statement—and again you may not have had a chance to do that—it talks about increasing, firstly, to 150 000, which we did in last year's budget, and we are now doing 150 000. It then also talks about the issue that we have with drug testing that was set up in a way when it was first started that is both exceptionally expensive but time-consuming and limited to who can do them in Victoria Police, because at the time people were concerned about their accuracy. So we are now, as we flagged in the community safety statement, working with police, working with the legal team, about how we can change some of those ways in which we do drug testing with the aim of a significant uplift, and that is on the advice of Victoria Police. We all agree we have to uplift it; we just have to change the rules about how we do that.

Ms VALLENCE: Yes, I do have that document here.

Ms NEVILLE: Good.

Ms VALLENCE: Thank you. Chief Commissioner, did you ask the minister for an increase in funding to roadside drug tests?

Chief Comm. ASHTON: No, what we have asked for is a different process, because we do want to do more drug testing, but at the moment we have got a very, convoluted, expensive process around the testing. We are keen to do more on-the-spot infringements and then deal with the testing when they are challenged, much as we do with the alcohol screening environment. I think if we can get those changes, we will be able to dramatically uplift the drug-driving numbers.

Ms RICHARDS: Thank you, Minister; thank you Chief Commissioner and departmental officials. With your indulgence, Chair, I would like you to pass on, Chief Commissioner, to your members our appreciation for the work that they do on behalf of the community and certainly on behalf of the people in Cranbourne as well. Minister, in your presentation I think you used the language of 'technology uplift'. I would like to refer you to budget paper 4—it goes from page 71 to 73—and the table listing various existing projects. There are some pretty big numbers there associated with the work underway as part of initiatives titled, 'Community safety statement' and 'Public safety—police response'. Can you provide some of the detail on what is involved in that?

Ms NEVILLE: Yes, well, as you pointed out, Ms Richards, this is a transformational project for Victoria Police, and it cuts across a number of particular areas, so whether it is our mobile technology project, which is about delivering 10 000 iPad minis and iPhones to members, and that has also now been factored into the unit cost. As new police come out, they will also get that. So this will become a new way of working. We are at 8000, and we will have those completed about the middle of this year for the others. We have got our body-worn cameras, which will ultimately be on 11 000 police officers. At the moment we are sitting at about 2500. This project involves significant upgrades to electricity and new equipment and capital works at police stations for this equipment to be stored at. That is well underway, and we would hope to have by the end of the year the full rollout of that. We have got our police assistance line and online reporting, which commences on 1 July. It has been in operation in a smaller scale really since about February, I think it is, Chief Commissioner?

Chief Comm. ASHTON: Yes.

Ms NEVILLE: And we have got our rollout of our automatic numberplate recognition technology to 220 highway patrol members. We have got upgrades to the police intelligence system, and I find the changes extraordinary and will really make a significant difference to the way police are able to identify crime links between people. And we have also got our digital radios—encrypted, I should say, digital radios for our regional police so people cannot listen anymore onto police radios through scans.

Ms RICHARDS: You mentioned the police assistance line and an online reporting portal. How will that work, and what are some of the outcomes you expect to see from that?

Ms NEVILLE: We are the only state that has not had a police assistance line and an ability to do online reporting. At the moment, the only way people have access to police is 000, and there are two aspects of that. One is that people who do not need a 000 response end up taking up the ESTA system, but there are also people who do not report things because they do not want to take up the time by ringing 000. This enables people to ring a phone number—it is the same phone number right across each of the states—and people will be able to ring. It is a call centre overseen by police, and people are able to ring, report crime. That is then fed back into police stations as well. So you might have had your bike stolen. It is not something you would necessarily ring 000 for, but you want someone to investigate what has happened. They are able to ring that, a crime record is kept and that is then passed back to the local police and police stations for investigation and follow-up.

We know already just from the soft launch that we have done—which has involved I think it is 20 police stations across the state who have been linked in, where their phones are diverted into the police assistance line—that it saves something like 5000 hours of police work. So we think it is going to be quite significant in terms of freeing up police at local stations as well as providing a better and more appropriate area for people to report crime that is not a 000. There is a ‘no wrong door’ approach, and we found that during the soft launch that we are able to refer both ways. So if it goes through to the police assistance line and it should be 000, it is referred back, and if it goes through to 000 and it is a police assistance line, it gets referred back there. So far it is something like—I am trying to remember; it is an extraordinary number of calls that have been made to it—42 000 calls already just through a soft launch, so we think this is going to be a really valuable additional asset for Victorians as it has been in other states.

Ms RICHARDS: That is a game changer. In response to my very first question, you did mention body-worn cameras, and we have been conscious of those being rolled out across Victoria. How is that work progressing? I am interested in some of the benefits of this new technology.

Ms NEVILLE: We are doing it broadly for the 11 000 frontline police, but also we are doing a trial around family violence in this space as well. It has a number of advantages. Firstly, it has the advantage of recording incidents as they happen, or interactions as they happen. If you have a look at some of the case studies, you start to see people who get agitated; the police officer turns it on. In lots of cases it has meant people’s behaviour has changed when they have realised that the camera is on. It also helps with police behaviour; they know it is being filmed as well. There have also been a lot of complaints that have been stopped as a result, because people say, ‘I’m going to complain about your behaviour’, they are shown the film—the footage—and they say, ‘I’m going to withdraw my complaint’. So there is a bit of that. So it should work both ways, in terms of behaviour of offenders. A lot of people who make complaints, particularly, say, when they get a speeding fine, there are a lot of complaints of, ‘They were rude to me’. Again— footage that is able to be checked, but also an opportunity for police to think about their behaviour when they are interacting and hopefully improve their customer relations as well.

Ms RICHARDS: And in the short time I have got left, I am also interested in any evidence you have got around the rollout of the smart devices. What does access to this type of technology mean for police officers? What are some of the community safety outcomes we expect to see from these?

Ms NEVILLE: Let me give you a couple of examples around the iPads. They first went out to our PSOs, so they have been using them for quite a while. What would often happen is somebody at a train station is causing a bit of an issue. PSOs might pull them over and want their name. They would go to check on who this person is. They would have to get on the radio, often particularly on Friday and Saturday nights, the radio is busy, so they would just let people go. What they have been able to do is: check, ‘Here’s your name’; and check, pull up people’s records if they have got a record, if they have got outstanding warrants, if they have got other issues,

on the spot. That has changed it. But the other side is also as you roll it out to our road police, for example. So at the moment when the road police pull a car up, they go up, they get their licence, they go back to the car, they put the car in, get the details, go back. They are now able to take their iPad with them and go, 'Here's the details. Here's your licence. Yeah, it all matches up. You shouldn't be driving' or 'You should be'. So it is about both speed and efficiency and also it has created some greater connections for PSOs. They have had more time at stations to talk to people as well.

Ms RICHARDS: I think I am just about done. I am interested to hear the rest of the evidence that you give, but I think I am out of time.

Mr HIBBINS: Minister, can I just quickly clarify with the police assistance line that calls to that do go into police data, because we are often told that only calls to triple zero, not calls to police stations, then get fed back into the data?

Ms NEVILLE: Anything that is reported as a crime, wherever it is, goes into the data, so whether it is at a police station, whether it is the police assistance line. We may find that there are a whole lot of crimes that have never been reported when they start doing it through the police assistance line. You might get a bit of a spike in some types of theft crimes et cetera, but they are all recorded. They will be part of the Crime Statistics Agency data.

Mr HIBBINS: I would also like to ask about alcohol tests, just in terms of some of the measurements within the budget. It is more around a question of: in terms of when the task force looked into the instances of falsified tests, it actually recommended moving away from quantitative measures within the budget and moving to qualitative measures. But you have still maintained the quantitative measures. Why is that the case and are you concerned that that is going to have an impact?

Ms NEVILLE: Well, I suppose from a government perspective—and I might get the chief commissioner to add to this—I think it is still appropriate that there are some measures; there is a substantial investment that goes into this and we as a community need to know that some of that is coming back. So we need to not have perverse outcomes. You will see one of the measures we have actually said that we will discontinue—because that was one of the measures that Neil Comrie and IBAC agreed was a perverse outcome—is the measure about how many people are found to not have alcohol in their system. It is almost like an encouragement not to test to meet the measure. Whereas this one is still—

Mr HIBBINS: Can I just follow you up on that point and let you continue. But that measure has also been I think maintained for drug driving. Why has it been discontinued and continued for the other?

Ms NEVILLE: One, as the chief commissioner mentioned, they are very different systems of testing. So there are very limited people who do drug testing in Victoria—the highway patrol and through the drug buses. So it is very limited: how you do the test in a certain way; and they all get sent to forensics. So it is a very different system and different test. It was really the fact that I think in this case every police officer was expected if they pulled someone over to do an alcohol test on them. What they were talking about at police stations, what would happen was a senior sergeant might say, 'You need to get X number done', as opposed to using intelligence and tasking to determine that. And they are the targets that have changed, not this particular target around 3 million. What we know is that we need that level to try and be a discouragement for drink-driving, and that is exactly what happens with drink-driving. The fact people think they are going to get caught by anyone—and this is where we need to be with drug testing ultimately—not just a booze bus but by a police officer is a deterrent. So you need volume to get there. But in terms of how the police are tasked at their station is what has really changed in terms of trying to deal with that issue that was raised around targets. I do not know if you want to talk about it?

Chief Comm. ASHTON: Just in response to the Comrie review, I did not agree that we should get rid of targets overall in response to that recommendation, but what we have done is reduce the trickle-down effect to the workplace and the people that are doing the tests. Your senior sergeants, your police service area commanders, they are not being held to those targets. It is always, as the minister outlined, around doing the intel briefs now for them so they know where the target is. We are not saying, 'You have to do X hundred by X date'. That is to try and get away from the targeting pressure that they felt they were under.

Ms NEVILLE: I will just say just for the interest of the committee, MUARC, the Monash University Accident Research Centre, is also doing some work with us on what the performance measures should be.

Mr HIBBINS: Qualitative targets. So that work is being undertaken?

Ms NEVILLE: Yes, that is right.

Mr HIBBINS: Can I move on to the fixated threat assessment centre. I think it was indicated that 300 high-risk radicalised people would pass through the centre in the first 12 months. Can I get some understanding of the figures around that?

Ms NEVILLE: Yes. I may need to take it on notice. I think it is sitting around 200-odd; 220 I think is the figure at the moment.

Chief Comm. ASHTON: I will try and find you a number on that.

Ms NEVILLE: We will try and see if we have got the actual number. But it is doing what it is meant to do. There are some incredible case studies out of that.

Chief Comm. ASHTON: So the FTAC is currently managing 44 cases. Thirty five of those relate to lone-actor—as they are called—individuals who are not connected to others. Then there are eight cases, which are being oversighted around groupings of people, and we received 25 referrals in March in relation to these matters, of which eight were accepted. That was in March of this year.

Ms NEVILLE: That is at any one point in time, though. So some people go into the system, might get referred to services and not necessarily ongoing monitoring. So you would hope, if the system is working, not all of them stay monitored.

Mr HIBBINS: Thank you, and do you have information in terms of the nature of the extremism that actually relates to the person going through? Is that some of the information that is—

Chief Comm. ASHTON: It does vary quite a bit, but generally speaking it is relating to their own fixation, which is dealing with some issues that have impacted them. So some official—it might be a member of Parliament or it might be some other person—that has made a decision, a bureaucrat or someone who has made a decision that has impacted them, through service delivery quite often. That seems to be a very common theme—and then fixating on that person as the cause of their whole life's issues and then wanting to act out, or potentially act out, violently around that.

Ms NEVILLE: There is a lot of mental health, a lot of drug stuff as well. So one of the case studies that I looked at recently was a guy that had been threatening to cause serious harm at the races—the racecourse. It ultimately got referred to FTAC. Through a mix of interventions, which include finding housing—he had been living in a car, he had gambling debts, you know—acknowledgment, he stopped gambling, got assistance with that, and ended up being committed for a period of time in a mental health facility. Ultimately now he has been able to not be under the constant monitoring of FTAC as a result of that, so there are people with often very complex issues and backgrounds.

Mr HIBBINS: Yes, I can imagine. Okay, thank you.

Ms NEVILLE: Some of the investment in this budget is to have that additional specialist intervention from mental health practitioners.

Mr HIBBINS: I just want to follow up on a couple of the recommendations from the expert panel on terrorism report that was after the Brighton siege. There was recommendation 2 for the government to support further research on extreme left and right threats and Islamophobia in Victoria and its impact on Muslim Victorians. Is that research being undertaken?

Ms NEVILLE: It has been funded.

Mr HIBBINS: So it has been funded and then will be undertaken?

Chief Comm. ASHTON: Yes, it is underway.

Mr HIBBINS: Do we have a time line on that particular place of work?

Chief Comm. ASHTON: I would have to take that on notice as to when that is—

Mr HIBBINS: Sure.

Ms NEVILLE: There was an initial bit of work that was done around information sharing both in terms of far right and far left—not far left, more extremism—cases. That work has been done, there was an independent panel that we established and that has reported back to government, but this research will be iterative, so it will be as they develop. It is not just ‘We’ll wait for year for it’. As they do work, it will feed into strategies.

Mr HIBBINS: Okay. Thank you. Then recommendation 12 was for government, possibly Victoria Police, to design new disengagement programs for right and left-wing extremists, as the current programs focused only on Islamic extremism. Are these programs being designed?

Ms NEVILLE: Yes, there is work and research going in. Is there an off-the-shelf model? No, and that is part of what the expert panel has come back to government on. So there are a range of models and options that we will look at. We are probably further ahead than most other countries, but there is no ‘Here’s the answer’.

Mr HIBBINS: All right. Thank you. I will ask finally, just in terms of new police stations, what the criteria are for them being assessed, and I will probably put in a plug for the Prahran police station, which I know the police association has identified as a station that probably needs rebuilding.

The CHAIR: Mr Hibbins, I will leave that as a question on notice as we move to Ms Stitt.

Ms NEVILLE: We will provide that, yes.

Ms STITT: Thank you, Minister and Chief Commissioner—

The CHAIR: Also Prahran station is in my electorate as well, but that is okay.

Ms STITT: I want to ask you some questions around the police response to family violence, and obviously this is still a big part of the resources of Victoria Police. Can I take you, Minister, to budget paper 3, page 266, and the performance measure regarding family violence intervention orders. The target has gone up this year. Can you just unpack that for us and maybe give us a bit of information about what that means on the ground and how that is changing our police practices?

Ms NEVILLE: It is a good question, and thank you for that. The number of intervention orders that are issued and then enforced are interesting figures, but I think at the moment they remain figures that show that police continue to take this seriously and have a greater ability to understand where people are at risk and where they need intervention orders. Then if you have a look at the other justice procedure parts of the crime stat figures, it shows that the contravention and then the enforcement of those intervention orders by police have also gone up. Again that is a reflection of the extent to which police have probably shifted over time in how they have taken this issue more and more seriously.

As I said at the beginning, family violence remains the biggest law and order issue. It is one every 7 minutes that a Victoria Police member is called to: 40 per cent is the average, but in some communities 60 per cent of call-outs are family violence related. If you have a look at last year, 90 per cent of all murder and manslaughter offences committed against women happened in the home. So the biggest safety issue for women is what is happening in their home. We want them to be safe in the streets but also in their home.

There are a number of initiatives. The new centre for excellence for family violence is developed using the information, the views of the royal commission and working with experts on what those training programs are. So this is a new facility that will train both our specialist family violence staff but also our day-to-day new recruits as they come through. They worked out of a temporary building until the new one was built and opened this year, and it has seen a significant increase in the number of police that have been trained, extra hours—over 3000 extra hours of training that have happened since 2017, so significant work in there. So police are changing

and improving constantly the way they support their officers, their understanding of family violence, but how they use intervention orders and contravention of those to keep women and children safe.

Ms STITT: Thanks, Minister. So how are we going with the rollout of the specialist family violence officers?

Ms NEVILLE: As part of the additional police we funded in the community safety statement, we committed to 415 specialist family violence workers. That is not to say we did not have people doing some of this more intensive work we did, not necessarily with the same level of training the ones now have, but we were taking people out of stations in order to do that, and we needed to do that given how significant this issue was and the risk to safety for women and children.

In the last allocation of these last year we saw half of them rolled out, and this allocation which we announced earlier this year finishes off the rollout of those 415 specialist family violence workers. Just to give you a sense, to be able to do it you need to be able to train enough new constables to fill positions as people go on to train to become specialist family violence workers, so you could not be filling this and taking them off. So you need to be able to stage the rollout of this. I would say that this is already making a really significant difference in the response.

We have got a new risk assessment model. As I mentioned in the introduction, if you can intervene for one person and they do one incident, you may be able to stop them, but once they go past that, they escalate, and you need people—and this is what our specialist family violence workers can do—to understand the risks: what are the risk factors? Strangulation is one, for example. Even if it is hands around the throat, that is a very escalating factor, so once that happens, the chances of a woman then being significantly injured or killed increase significantly. So teaching and training our family violence specialist police in that and understanding those risk factors is ultimately about saving lives. But also, if you have a look at our multidisciplinary centres that we have also funded—Dandenong has got one, Geelong has got one and Werribee the other—that is about bringing police, our specialist family violence workers and agencies together, again to have a holistic response to women who are at risk.

Ms STITT: Thanks, Minister. I was going to take you actually to the funding allocation for family violence-related education for police—that is budget paper 3, page 267—and just ask you how that training is being rolled out and whether you are seeing any results from that.

Ms NEVILLE: Yes. As I just touched on briefly before, whilst we were waiting for the new family violence centre to be completed, we had some temporary facilities out at the academy to commence this process. What that has enabled us to do is uplift significantly, from new constables in training right through our force, people's understanding of and training in family violence. There are over 3300 extra hours of training. There is a lot of e-learning as well for our constables. When you go out there and you meet some of the people in training, which I have done a lot of, as people graduate you say to them, 'What's the biggest thing that you see?', and number one is family violence—no question. Anyone who goes out to stations in their training, and you say, 'What was it like? What was the biggest challenge?', it is all family violence, and these are constables who will be in regions, out in vans. This is both what they are confronting but a significant uplift in being able to provide them with the knowledge and skills to be able to best intervene. In fact when we opened the new centre—they have got an area that they make up as a home, as a unit, and they can set it up in different ways, and there is role-playing that goes on—we were able to witness some of that training in action when we went out and opened that facility.

Ms STITT: Great. Thank you, Minister. Just finally—I think I have got a couple of minutes left—I wanted to ask about how the implementation of the royal commission recommendations are going. You may not be able to answer fully, but maybe—

Ms STITT: So in terms of police, there were 32 specific recommendations for police out of the royal commission, of which they have fully implemented 30. There are a number of others that are related to other agencies that we work with but that are subject to their time lines. But real progress has been made, and the other two will flow as we roll out the body-worn—that is one of them—and we are doing the pilot at the moment around taking evidence-in-chief.

Ms VALLENCE: Chief Commissioner, we might just pick up on where we left off. Just to clarify your previous answer, you did say that you would like to see more drug tests and that they would help the road toll. Wouldn't you need more budget allocation to achieve that?

Chief Comm. ASHTON: Not necessarily if we can get some change to legislation around the process. We have a process currently where we have got to send every sample off for testing, every sample we take, and we wait for the result of that testing. But what we are looking for is to be able to have that presumptive result acted on, and then we have to test the matters that are challenged. That will mean a saving of—

Ms VALLENCE: So not necessarily any more money?

Chief Comm. ASHTON: No, no.

Ms VALLENCE: Okay. Chief Commissioner, to you again: given we have got a very unfortunate situation of a 14-year high in Victoria's road toll, or lives lost, and over the most recent long weekend it was reported that Victoria Police has begun reallocating crime prevention officers to prop up the highway police patrol units, do you agree with the police association's request for an additional 500 highway patrol police? Wouldn't it help reduce the road toll?

Chief Comm. ASHTON: Yes, we agree we want more police in the highway patrol, so we have allocated under the current staffing allocation model additional police to go into highway patrol to try and do that.

Ms VALLENCE: The 500? So that amount—500?

Chief Comm. ASHTON: No, I do not agree with the amount.

Ms VALLENCE: You do not agree with the 500?

Chief Comm. ASHTON: But the model will allocate to the amount that we think is necessary. If we want to put more in there, we can put more in there, but it will mean they will not be going into other areas. So the work there is really to make sure that we get as many highway patrol vehicles as visible as we can, particularly on country roads, as soon as we can.

Ms VALLENCE: Okay, but you do not agree with that number of 500.

Ms NEVILLE: Can I just add to that, Chair, if that is okay? I did not really get to this in detail when I did my presentation, but one of the models we have agreed with and signed up to with the police association under the staffing allocation model includes highway patrol and includes road policing as part of the allocation and the determination of how many police you allocate. So that is the model that we are rolling out. We are doing exactly what we signed up to with the police association and with Victoria Police, and you could not fit another person into the academy if you wanted to.

Ms VALLENCE: But not the 500 that they have requested. Chief Commissioner, we will move a little bit away from that. In the 19–20 budget it states that new booze and drug buses were completed in quarter 4, 18–19. On average how many drug and alcohol tests would each one of these buses complete per day?

Chief Comm. ASHTON: I would have to probably take that—

Ms VALLENCE: Take that on notice, sure.

Chief Comm. ASHTON: I will take that number on notice about exactly how many they would do.

Ms VALLENCE: Yes, that is okay.

Ms NEVILLE: It is about 1.1 a year for all of them, so work that out.

Ms VALLENCE: Sorry?

Ms NEVILLE: It is about 1.1 million a year, so work that out.

Ms VALLENCE: Right, 1.1. But perhaps take it on notice because you are looking at sort of an average per day per bus.

Chief Comm. ASHTON: Yes, sure.

Ms VALLENCE: In April just gone it was reported that six of the 10 new booze and drug buses were unable to operate due to safety issues with the buses. How long have these buses been off the road, and how much does it cost to repair each individual unit? I know it might not be the same for each truck, so on average per truck there must be a cost estimate to repair them?

Chief Comm. ASHTON: Well, currently they are off the road. They have been off the road now for a couple of months because they have not been meeting our own safety standards since we got them. It has meant that we have had to go into contractual discussions and settings with the provider about how that is going to be funded. But we also have asked for a safety report on the safety issues we think are there with the buses, and then that will ultimately decide what we need to do. We are just waiting still—

Ms VALLENCE: It was reported six of 10. How many are off the road?

Chief Comm. ASHTON: Six of the new small buses.

Ms VALLENCE: Six are off the road?

Chief Comm. ASHTON: Yes.

Ms NEVILLE: But the old ones are back on operating, so we have no less buses.

Ms VALLENCE: Six are off the road, and you are investigating contractual avenues in which to proceed. So is there any cost estimate? There must be a cost estimate. Is there a cost estimate on how much it would cost to repair them?

Chief Comm. ASHTON: We will not know until we get the report back from the experts as to what is required to fix them.

Ms VALLENCE: So they have not assessed the issues?

Chief Comm. ASHTON: They are doing that now, and we are still waiting for the report.

Ms VALLENCE: What is the time frame then? May I ask what the time frame—

Chief Comm. ASHTON: We are expecting it very soon in fact, so I was hoping in the next few weeks we will get the report.

Ms VALLENCE: In about two weeks?

Chief Comm. ASHTON: It is hard to put an exact time because I am not doing it, but they are telling us that we will be able to get it soon.

Ms VALLENCE: We will move on to our next topic. We have such a short time for so many topics to get through. Chief Commissioner, earlier this year, 21 February, the Court of Appeal dismissed Victoria Police's attempt to maintain the suppression of the identity of lawyer X. What we are after is around the expenditure side of things. How much was spent by Victoria Police attempting to block the release of lawyer X's identity? Just a dollar value, the running total dollar value.

Chief Comm. ASHTON: Right. I will check if we have got that number. Yes, I will have to take that number on notice. I can tell you that so far since—

Ms VALLENCE: We are after the running total. We know that there has been involvement in multiple levels of courts and injunctions—

Chief Comm. ASHTON: Yes, that is right.

Ms VALLENCE: Yes, so just the total value. It has been reported I think in the media that it is around at least a \$5 million figure to date. Would you say that is accurate?

Chief Comm. ASHTON: Well, I will take their number on notice and get back to you with the exact number rather than just guess.

Ms VALLENCE: So in response to the Royal Commission into the Management of Police Informants, Victoria Police established Taskforce Landow. Can you provide the total number of people involved in that task force and a full list of job roles in Taskforce Landow, including contractors and outsourced legal representatives?

Chief Comm. ASHTON: There are overall involved, based within the Landow office and the supporting office—that is in the intel covert services command—about 80 or 85, and it varies on a regular basis. We have got a plan to put additional people in there shortly as well, so that number will increase.

Ms VALLENCE: So was that including—sorry if you already said—

Chief Comm. ASHTON: That includes lawyers, barristers, admin, clerical—

Ms VALLENCE: So 80 to 85.

Chief Comm. ASHTON: Yes, that is all in that number.

Ms VALLENCE: So what is the total cost? Can you list the total cost of running or operating Taskforce Landow? So right through wages, legal fees, rent—all costs to operate the task force.

Chief Comm. ASHTON: Well, the costs around the legal costs at the moment are at \$6.5 million, and there are obviously staffing costs associated as well.

Ms VALLENCE: So \$6.5 million is the operating cost, not including—

Chief Comm. ASHTON: That is the legal costs.

Ms VALLENCE: That is the legal costs—\$6.5 million?

Chief Comm. ASHTON: Yes.

Ms VALLENCE: Okay. And in terms of the task force, you said there are around 80 to 85 headcount involved.

Chief Comm. ASHTON: Correct.

Ms VALLENCE: How many more staff? I know you said you were bringing in some more. How many more would you expect?

Chief Comm. ASHTON: Well, we will be putting more in there, and it might be as many as 10 more shortly.

Ms VALLENCE: About 10 more shortly? Is there more foreseen beyond that?

The CHAIR: Sorry to interrupt you, Chief Commissioner and Ms Vallenge. It is now time to move on to Mr Richardson.

Mr RICHARDSON: I want to talk about drugs and serious crime. Minister, I refer to budget paper 3, page 81. Could you provide some more detail on the forensic drug intelligence capability program listed in table 1.15 and the way this initiative is improving how police tackle drug crime?

Ms NEVILLE: Thank you, Mr Richardson. This is a model that we established with Victoria Police back in—I think we funded initially in 15–16 as part of the Ice Action Plan. It has continued to develop, and this money is to ensure it can continue to grow and develop the work that it is doing. So it is not just about being

able to test—you know, someone brings in a bag of drugs and you work out what they are. It is working much more closely with crime command around samples—where, when—and intelligence-led policing where you may have cross-referencing of drugs from particular seizures from this end and this end and who might have been involved in that. So this is a very significant difference from the way that it has worked before, and it has been able to lead to quite a big increase and uplift in some of the drug trafficking interventions and disruption that Victoria Police have been able to do. It augments really—it is hand in hand really with crime command and the drug squads in there, and it is absolutely about enhanced drug profiling, intelligence analysis and giving police increased intelligence and knowledge about what drugs are out there, where they are and who is involved in that.

Mr RICHARDSON: How are Victoria Police approaching serious drug crime, and are we seeing any impacts from these efforts on serious drug trafficking gangs and operations?

Ms NEVILLE: I think there are a few things in this area. Firstly, in terms of just a Victorian focus, if you have a look at the last crime statistics, what you are seeing is a trend around increasing drug trafficking charges—it has increased by 9.5 per cent in the last 12-month period—and also drug possession and trafficking have both gone up. That represents, more than anything, as Victoria Police have got more police, the ability to make sure they have got a strong target on this, both at a local level as well as through crime command. Obviously drugs are an international and a national problem, so there is a lot of work that goes on between Victoria Police and border force and also international agencies about where drugs are coming from, importation and how to stop them before they get to our borders in the first place. There have been some significant disruptions—just even recently, I think, some massive haul by border force. That is a joint intelligence process between Victoria Police and our national and international agencies. So there is a very strong focus locally. That forensic team help significantly in being able to identify that, and some of that information also assists border force in looking at where things may be coming nationally as well, and across borders.

Mr RICHARDSON: Minister, I note that there are new DNA powers for Victoria Police coming into effect shortly. How will these powers help police target serious crime?

Ms NEVILLE: I think this, like FPOs, which I think are game changers, is also another step change for Victoria Police. We have been a bit out of alignment with the nation, and now we are going to lead the nation in how we take DNA. So if you think about at the moment we take everyone's fingerprints when they are brought into a police station—they are charged or they are suspected of committing an indictable offence—we are now going to do that with DNA. So what this will mean is—initially we know that we have about 55 000 crime scene DNA profiles that are held now by police—once you start collecting people's DNA, there is the ability to solve those crimes. In fact there was a recent one—Minogue, actually—a rape case that was solved by DNA, that Victoria Police recently solved. So DNA is perhaps one of the most accurate measures of whether someone has been at a particular crime scene. So it is being able to have an increase in the number of DNA profiles on record, being able to use that to match to crime scenes we have not been able to solve. But also now particularly around high-harm and high-volume crime, if you are able to pick someone up, identify someone who is doing motor vehicle thefts or doing some of our serious offending, like home invasions et cetera, quickly, because you are able to identify the offender, that will make a significant difference to both the crime rate and community safety.

Mr RICHARDSON: Minister, what other initiatives are Victoria Police pursuing to tackle serious and organised crime in Victoria?

Ms NEVILLE: So one of the things we did—I think it was in our first or second budget—was to fund the anti-gang team, with additional staff in that. That has been a significant investment to assist in firearm crime and organised crime. Last budget we also invested in capability in Victoria Police around cybercrime. What we know is a lot of organised crime is also occurring on the darknet, as with child exploitation as well on the darknet. So we funded that in the last budget. That is now up and running. Additional specialists are operating there. Firearm prohibition orders, as they roll out further, will give significant powers to Victoria Police to disrupt organised crime. If you are holding a gun or you are someone with a gun and you should not be, Victoria Police have the ability to search you, search the car, search the people that are with you, search the houses—it will become a significant way of interrupting and disrupting that crime.

We have also banned cash for scrap. We did that last year or the year before, and this year coming into effect is also the ability for Victoria Police to close scrap metal companies that are continuing to use cash, take cash. So it will be a significant change in access to easy money and being able to clean money through scrap metal companies through these changes. We have certainly seen that in New South Wales. We have strengthened the asset confiscation regime. So there has been a significant effort in this space.

Mr RICHARDSON: Minister, I want to take you now to road safety. I refer you to budget paper 3, page 81. Could you provide some more detail on the road safety package listed in table 1.15 and then on table 1.16 and what this package will involve?

Ms NEVILLE: Yes. It has been a really tragic start to this year—148 deaths we are sitting at now. Again, well and truly more on country roads—89 of those on country roads, with country people dying on country roads. We have had motorcyclists over-represented as well. Pedestrians are higher than we have had before. Alcohol and drugs still look like about a quarter of our deaths on the road. So in Victoria every 2 hours somebody is killed or seriously injured on the road. It was interesting. We had our road safety summit, and I think a couple of things came out of that—not only a bit of a road map on some of the things we need to keep thinking about, but we know that drivers' behaviour is the biggest cause of death and injury on our roads. So whether it is distraction, alcohol and drugs, speeding, they absolutely contribute, but we need to continue to invest in the things we know that will change that. So even if we cannot get people to change their behaviours, we have still got to do the things we know we need to to stop that.

Enforcement is one of those. So police presence is a big one both in terms of prevention but also disruption, but stopping people speeding—mobile speed cameras are a significant part of that. So this is a \$120 million package. There is an additional 96 mobile speed cameras, with additional uplift in the hours that those speed cameras are on—a 75 per cent increase in that. New technology as well, so being able to go across lanes through steel piles. And also the ability then to use that new technology to connect in new technology around mobile phone detection. That will be one of the trials we are doing as part of this package. There is also some money for behavioural change advertising.

The Monash uni accident research centre has said to us that they think this investment—we use their advice a lot to argue the case for this sort of investment—will save somewhere up in the range of 65 lives. So this is an important extra investment in road safety that we are making in this budget.

Mr RICHARDSON: And in the short time I have got left, Minister, can you update the committee on what some of the research on the road toll is saying and how these new cameras will help address some of the key drivers of the toll?

The CHAIR: Minister, you will have to take that on notice. We move back to Ms Vallence.

Ms VALLENCE: Just back on the topic that we got cut off on there before, Chief Commissioner. You were saying in the last question there around the operating costs of Taskforce Landow that it is over \$6 million in legal fees to run Taskforce Landow just in a couple of months, and you are looking to increase it to nearly 100 people working on this task force just to manage Victoria Police answering how they used informants. That is a lot of money in such a short period of time, isn't it?

Chief Comm. ASHTON: Yes, that is over six months. That is a lot of money, yes. It is an example of the sort of fees that the legal services community charge for their work.

Ms NEVILLE: You do know they do not have a choice? This is a royal commission. They are compelled to provide evidence.

Ms VALLENCE: I do.

Ms NEVILLE: They need to pull that evidence together, so they have a choice but to do exactly what they are doing.

Ms VALLENCE: I appreciate that. But that is a pretty large legal bill, in such a short period of time, of taxpayer dollars to pull together that information on what we know, obviously, with lawyer X.

Ms NEVILLE: So you are suggesting that we should regulate legal fees?

Ms VALLENCE: I will be asking the questions here, Minister, thank you. I think on behalf of taxpayers that is such an astronomical legal bill—

Chief Comm. ASHTON: Yes, a large amount of money.

Ms VALLENCE: in such a short period of time, and you are already looking to up the head count to 100. So we have got that, and what we are just after is: you said it was over \$6 million. I just want a confirmation, Chief Commissioner, that you will take it on notice to come back with the total operating costs for Taskforce Landow, and broken down to each of the elements—legal, rent, so on and so forth.

Chief Comm. ASHTON: Yes, absolutely.

Ms VALLENCE: Thank you. We will move on now. Minister, the 2019-20 budget—this might have been picked up on before—has removed the existing performance metric relating to the proportion of positive blood alcohol tests recorded. Why?

Ms NEVILLE: Why? It was a recommendation of the Comrie review that was undertaken into the falsification of the testing, and it was supported and backed up by IBAC. So we followed that advice. It encourages people to probably do what they did, which is to meet a target that says not many people have alcohol in their system.

Ms VALLENCE: And to your point, Minister, back in April IBAC publicly called for Victoria Police to release their internal report into the falsification of breath tests. Yet the report prepared for Victoria Police by the director of the Centre for Ethical Leadership, Peter Collins, they called for that to be released also. Yet this month Victoria Police released a highly redacted version of their internal report and failed to release Mr Collins's report at all. Why hasn't Victoria Police done what IBAC said it should?

Ms NEVILLE: Is that to me? They did release the report redacted, and the reason they redacted it is it contains operational information.

Ms VALLENCE: But, Chief Commissioner, why was it not released in full, as IBAC said it should? Why was it not released in full?

Chief Comm. ASHTON: Okay, so the report has information in it that relates to our pursuit policies and other operational methodology.

Ms VALLENCE: I missed that, sorry, Chief Commissioner.

Chief Comm. ASHTON: Relating to our pursuit policy and other operational information. We had a situation a few years back where the community got a misguided view of our policy and we had criminals in the community behaving appallingly on the roads. So we took a decision this time around with our latest policy that it would not be a public policy so as not to try and educate them as to how to try and go about avoiding police contact. That is why we try and maintain that sort of stuff around those sorts of policies. And any other operational information that sits in those reports or anything that might identify, say, people in any way in breaching their privacy, we try to redact that information as well.

Ms VALLENCE: Right. Chief Commissioner, was the practice of falsifying preliminary breath tests ever taught in practice during dedicated workplace training deployment to the road police and drug and alcohol section for the booze bus activities?

Chief Comm. ASHTON: No, it was not ever taught as an official practice. It came in over a number of years, it seems, as a cultural practice, but it has never officially been sanctioned.

Ms VALLENCE: It does not seem like it has just been a few outliers; it seems systemic.

Chief Comm. ASHTON: Yes, it was systemic, and the report found that. Absolutely. It came in as a cultural practice to, in the eyes of some police members, try and meet the numbers that they were being asked to meet.

Ms VALLENCE: Right, okay. And key sections that have been removed from the report include topics: ‘Was pressure applied?’, ‘The futility of speaking up’, ‘Other perverse behaviours’ and ‘The most egregious examples’. Why were these sections, most particularly, removed from the report?

Chief Comm. ASHTON: Again, we have removed sections redacted from the report if they relate to operational methodology or if they relate to the identification of individuals. Also—

Ms VALLENCE: So speaking up is an operational matter?

Chief Comm. ASHTON: No, but the people who spoke up spoke up on the condition that they would not be publicly outed. It was so we could get the real information from them and they would not be guarded—

Ms VALLENCE: You were concerned about protecting them then?

Chief Comm. ASHTON: Well, it depends. We could have protected them and virtually got no information or we could have said, ‘Well, give us what you know and we’ll try and treat it as a learning experience to try and make sure it doesn’t happen again’, and that was the approach that we took.

Ms VALLENCE: So what about just redacting the name perhaps? To protect the individual just redact the name.

Chief Comm. ASHTON: Well, that is the sort of information that was redacted, but we gave a commitment as to what we would do with that information and we tried to stick with that commitment.

Ms VALLENCE: With respect, those whole sections were removed, not just the name. Why did you remove the sections when you could have just redacted the name to protect the individuals?

Chief Comm. ASHTON: No, well, I have just explained that to you. It is not a matter of just redacting the name. We said, ‘The information that you give us, we will use it to try and learn from, but the fact that you are giving it to us’—and there is information in there that does tend to identify people. Even though it might not name them, you can tell from what is being said in there where that information is coming from.

Ms VALLENCE: Okay. Chief Commissioner, in your 19-20 questionnaire it identifies a \$7.5 million cut to Victoria Police’s budget as part of Labor’s whole-of-government efficiencies. Commissioner, can you rule out any material impact on operational or frontline police services as a result of this \$7.5 million cut?

Chief Comm. ASHTON: We always try and make sure that when we have to find savings, as we have to every year, that we work to try and make sure that they do not impact operationally. That is always a challenge, but I think—

Ms VALLENCE: So can you rule out any impact?

Chief Comm. ASHTON: Well, we always try and make sure that there is not, and I think we have had a good track record so far in not impacting operations.

Ms VALLENCE: What measures are you putting in place to try and—

Ms NEVILLE: So can I just answer from government’s perspective? We have put in place efficiency measures across every department, as we do every year. I am not sure if you saw my first slide, which indicated clearly a \$3 billion investment in Victoria Police. I think the only people that ever cut Victoria Police were those opposite, and they did not fund any new ones. So we have given a commitment. None of these efficiency measures are about frontline staff or frontline services, and that will happen.

Ms VALLENCE: And the 19–20 Justice and Community Safety questionnaire highlights a \$3.8 million cut to police services, Chief Commissioner, made by reducing ‘the funding available to deliver non front line services’. Commissioner, in what areas will funding be cut by Victoria Police?

Chief Comm. ASHTON: Well, we always look to try and map out those reductions. We have got to try and find savings into areas that reduce—

Ms VALLENCE: What is the time frame to map them?

The CHAIR: Sorry, Chief Commissioner, we will have to move on.

Ms VALLENCE: Take that on notice.

Mr MAAS: Thank you, Chief Commissioner, and thank you, Minister. I would like to take you to the area of counterterrorism, if I could, and to that end I refer you to budget paper 3, page 81. Minister, could you provide some more detail on the Fixated Threat Assessment Centre, or FTAC, which is listed in table 1.15, and what this investment involves.

Ms NEVILLE: Just building on really what I provided to Mr Hibbins before in the question, we established this with additionally an investment of \$31.6 million to operate, and it is about providing complementary mental health and alcohol and other drug services. We have got specialist forensic mental health staff in there working with us, and they helped develop the model. When we developed it we looked across internationally about how this model would work, and we have been able to take the best of those models internationally and add our own knowledge and interpretation of what we need to do to manage counterterrorism risks and other risks from people who might commit serious violence.

It has two main objectives: to identify and assess individuals who pose a threat to public safety because of pathological fixation or grievances, including radicalised beliefs. So we do know that there is often a link between someone who is really fixated—you might find that with public officials; you get somebody really fixated on them, and that often can be somebody who is one of these people at risk. And also it is about delivering effective interventions by police, mental health services and other relevant agencies. So coming with this is not just how we maintain—which is what the money does—the police component of it, but the \$19 million for those services. The way the system has been working is if you have been identified as at risk and needing a mental health intervention or a drug intervention, you do get priority, and then services enable that. These are not people you want to leave waiting to access those services because we know that those services can be critical to reducing the risk of somebody who may cause really serious harm, not just to themselves but more in terms of the broader community.

Mr MAAS: Thanks, Minister. Would you be able to go into some more specific detail about the kind of individuals that FTAC engage with?

Ms NEVILLE: Yes. A combination you might have—you might have a criminal record; you might have a mental health issue; you may be making threats to communities online or otherwise. You might find a school or identify somebody who is at risk online looking at extremist material. So it is the full range, but it is people in whom it is more likely the combination of their factors may lead to them either being a risk in terms of terrorism or lone wolf events or in terms of just their mental health issues causing some serious violence as well.

Mr MAAS: There is another budget item on the same page relating to ‘Counter-terrorism protective security training and infrastructure’. Would you be able to provide some more detail on that initiative?

Ms NEVILLE: Yes. We provided over the last couple of years a \$50 million investment in infrastructure for the City of Melbourne. That has been the speaker system, and we have trialled it and unfortunately also had to use it in one incident, which is about how you get out warnings to communities if there is an incident and where people may need to stay away from. It has also upgraded CCTV cameras, so additional cameras as well as making our CCTV cameras 360 degrees capacity. I am not sure if you know that when we established the Victoria Police MAC, Monitoring And Assessment Centre, that operates out of the city 24 hours a day. They actually have access to almost 8000 CCTV cameras now on trains and in the CBD—so significant oversight

around. I have stood there and watched people not thinking they are being watched, so be careful if you are picking your nose or something, because you might be spotted by the VP MAC.

But our infrastructure investments include all the bollards that you would have seen—the work that we did Flinders Street, for example. That has created both a safe place and a bigger pedestrian area there as well and a bigger crossing. Pedestrians were identified as being at very high risk in that area. Princes Bridge works—we have done that in a way that really matches the historical area. It is apparently the most photographed part of Melbourne—down from the Princes Bridge—according to the City of Melbourne anyway. They probably would say that. This money goes towards both being able to maintain these bollards and the infrastructure we have got, but also into assisting Victoria Police. They do an enormous amount of work on assisting other agencies and services in understanding risks in their crowded places. They have got a crowded places network in Melbourne, so they bring together things like the university shopping centre, the casino and sporting facilities to look at how best to manage some of those risks around crowded places. This money will help them be able to—because that is oversubscribed, the work they are doing—help other agencies and organisations, including private, to understand some of the risks around crowded places and how they might be able to mitigate them; like shopping centres, for instance.

The CHAIR: All right. Thank you, Minister. That brings an end to the first part of the portfolio. We are not actually adjourning; we are simply suspending proceedings while we allow officials to change over.

The CHAIR: The committee will now resume its consideration of the portfolio of police and emergency services. We have already had the presentation for emergency services from the outset. We move straight into questions from Ms Richards.

Ms RICHARDS: Thank you, Minister, and again to the officials for your appearance here this afternoon. Minister, in your earlier presentation you spoke about the importance of world-class facilities, so I am going to refer you to budget paper 4, page 90, and the initiative titled 'Emergency services local infrastructure'. Can you provide some detail on the scope of that initiative and some of the outcomes expected from it?

Ms NEVILLE: Thank you for that. Overall this budget invests a new \$17 million in local infrastructure packages. Firstly, we have got money going into lifesaving clubs. I think we have already invested \$21 million, and a number of those are still to come, opening this year and the year after, but in this budget we have added three to those—that is, Jan Juc, Carrum and Barwon Heads.

There is also \$14.7 million for the delivery of new CFA fire stations, and again this is on top of the other ones that we did last year which are rolling out over this year and next year. This budget contains Armstrong Creek—\$7.4 million for that. That will have a new three-bay, eight-bedroom career firefighter station. If people know Armstrong Creek in Geelong, it is a very fast-growing community. It is on the edge of my seat. It is not quite in my seat. Unfortunately, we did have a very tragic death there, and the need for this fire station is absolutely evident. The last budget had money for the land acquisition, which has been purchased, and these funds will build the new fire station and purchase the appliances and special equipment that is needed.

There is also money, \$2.7 million, for Phillip Island, to construct a four-bay volunteer-only station, which will be done by mid-2021. Riddells Creek, there is \$3.1 million for land acquisition and the construction of a type 2A three-bay volunteer station by the end of 2021, and at Junortoun, \$1.6 million for land acquisition and construction of a type 1C three-bay volunteer station.

If I look at some of, say, for example, the lifesaving facilities that we are upgrading, at Jan Juc \$600 000 will contribute towards the full delivery, construction and fit-out of the facility by the end of this year. At Carrum we are going to increase the size and accessibility of the change rooms and ground floor storage, make new access routes and an observation room, and add an additional kitchenette. Lifesavers—I have dealt a lot with my own locally, but as the new emergency services minister, I see just how critical our lifesaving services are, the numbers of volunteers and how embedded these places are in communities. Barwon Heads, which is in my electorate, will also receive money for training and to expand their training room capacity.

All of these things are about making sure that our volunteer and our career staff are best able to deal with those challenges I talked about, some of those challenges, so that we have got the best facilities, we have got the

ability to attract people to come and work and volunteer in these organisations, and providing facility improvements does that.

Ms RICHARDS: I am aware that there have been some issues with some infrastructure builds in the past. I am wondering if you can provide some evidence to the committee about what we are doing to make sure these builds deliver on operational and community needs.

Ms NEVILLE: I think it is true to say that for some, particularly our volunteer organisations, their role is not to be builders and constructors. Whether you are the SES or you are lifesaving organisations, I watched, for example, the major development happening in my electorate in Ocean Grove, and the amount of time and energy that the committee—the volunteers—are having to put into getting that right. So we have established the Emergency Services Infrastructure Authority. It is a bit like the school building authority. Its focus is on having the right people who are good at working with all those agencies and organisations they need to. They need to reflect the local needs but be able to drive and make sure taxpayers get value for dollar but that projects get done on time and on budget. Having that expertise in one place, I think, will help assist us to do that.

Ms RICHARDS: And can you give the committee an update on the progress of some of these current bills that are underway across the state?

Ms NEVILLE: Yes. So when you have a look at the budget papers, there is \$40 million additional in capital—so for new projects, and I went through some of that—but there are also 15 existing projects valued at around \$157 million, \$158 million, that are currently rolling out and are still to roll out. For example, there is about \$12 million for capital investment in land, buildings and fleet upgrades. There is the CFA Fiskville transition program. This is an ongoing program building new training capabilities—so given Fiskville is no longer safe for use, being able to provide training in other areas as well as a new emergency management training centre and the land to be built as well as purchase of the institute in Mount Macedon, which I think the commissioner would say to me is going very well. Certainly any volunteers or career people I have known that have gone there have been raving about those facilities.

We have also got in that build the Morwell emergency services hub, which is being built; the new Craigieburn fire station; regional support to volunteerism sustainability, so that is on top of another \$151 000 to spend on top of the \$2.4 million; Truganina fire station—I met with the captain and other members of that station the other day around where and how that is going to happen; and Wyndham Vale fire station—I also met with them recently—so they have got some money in that particular budget. There is also money for more specialist appliances and volunteer support as well.

Ms RICHARDS: Thank you, Minister. I would actually like to move on to a discussion about health and wellbeing of our emergency service workers and perhaps take the opportunity again to ask that you pass on our appreciation to your members for the work that they do in supporting our community. Minister, I will refer you to budget paper 3, page 81 and a reference to the initiative ‘Better mental health care for our emergency workers’. It is listed in table 1.15, and I am interested in having some detail on this initiative.

Ms NEVILLE: We went to the election with two commitments in this space. One was that we would establish a provisional acceptance model as a pilot for emergency service workers this year, and I announced that model this week on Wednesday. That commences for police and ambulance on Monday and then for everyone else by 1 July, and I will take you through that in a moment. The other part we committed to was then to cover all workers in relation to a provisional acceptance model for mental health for all workers in Victoria, and that will require change to the WorkCover legislation. This pilot will inform what that looks like.

So why did we prioritise emergency service workers? Well, the work that Beyond Blue was commissioned to do on behalf of emergency service workers told us very clearly that 1 in 3 emergency service employees experiences high or very high psychological distress, much higher than the 1 in 8 amongst the general population. More than 1 in 2.5 employees and 1 in 3 volunteers report having been diagnosed with a mental health condition in their life, compared to 1 in 5 as adults. Employees and volunteers report having suicidal thoughts over two times higher than adults in the general population, and more than half of all employees indicated that they had experienced a traumatic event that had deeply affected them. I think the other fact is that employees who had worked more than 10 years were almost twice as likely to experience psychological

distress and six times more likely to have symptoms of PTSD. So the work that our emergency service workers do absolutely causes trauma and mental health issues. There is no question about that.

One of the things we know is that early intervention can actually save lives, make a difference to the quality of life and the ability of people to recover. Of course if you break your leg in the WorkCover system, nobody says to you, 'Wait until we accept it or not'. We have got to get you into surgery and fix it. Mental health up until this point has been, 'Oh well, we're going to go through a really long and traumatic process; we may accept you, we may not accept you and we're going to make you wait weeks to get any access to services'. We know that is incredibly damaging, as it would be if you left your broken leg for that long as well.

So the way this system will work is that once somebody lodges a claim they will automatically, immediately get access to medical expenses as per the definition under the act for mental health treatment and care. That will continue for 13 weeks. So WorkCover have to determine a claim within 28 days, but often the claim is resolved somewhere between then and the 13 weeks through conciliation. People will continue to get access to those services up to that 13 weeks and an expectation on employers of how they transition people if ultimately the claim is rejected. And we are doing it through the pilot. We have got a fund that is set up. So say, for example, you put in a claim to Victoria Police, you put it in to your employer, you start getting treatment straightaway, the fund reimburses VicPol and if it is accepted as a claim, WorkCover will then ultimately reimburse the fund. So that is how the system will work. It will cover police, ambulance, CFA, MFB, SES, midwives, public-sector nurses, youth justice, correction and child protection workers. That will all be from 1 July, and I think we should be incredibly proud of this system. Most other states—and nationally—focus on PTSD only. This will be all mental health issues. We hope through the pilot we are able to show better outcomes for employees and volunteers—people back at work better able to connect to communities, less severe mental illness and ultimately savings in WorkCover as well.

Ms RICHARDS: Thank you. That is incredible detail. Just finally in this area, I am just wanting an update for the committee on the progress of the emergency services memorial.

Ms NEVILLE: Yes. So we provided funding—\$2.3 million of this—back in 2016–17. There has been a long process of working through with emergency service workers as well as particularly those families from the CFA who had plaques out at Fiskville, and of course it is no longer possible to have a memorial there. So we have determined where it is, which is in Treasury Gardens, just down below where the education department is. That is a very tranquil, quiet place in the middle of the city, easy for people to get to. It will not acknowledge and recognise police, as they have their separate memorial down St Kilda Road, but all other emergency services personnel. Unfortunately there will be 177 names on it. That of course includes the two recent lifesavers who died. So it will be a place where we can all come together as a sector and as a community to acknowledge people and thank them for their sacrifice, as well as an opportunity and somewhere for families to come and have quiet moments there to remember their loved ones and the contribution that they made to our state.

Ms RICHARDS: Thank you, Minister. In the absence of the Chair, through the Deputy Chair, I would like to cede my time to Mr Maas.

Mr MAAS: Thank you, Minister. I would like to take you to water safety now, and in particular the investments that the government is making to make our beaches more safe. I refer you in that regard to budget paper 3, page 81 and reference to the initiative 'Surfers Rescue 24/7', which is listed in table 1.15. Would you be able to provide some more detail for the committee on that initiative?

Ms NEVILLE: So this is an initiative that board riders came to government about, and I think it is a really good initiative; a really interesting one. We know that a lot of people who drown at our beaches do so outside the flags. People do not die if they swim within the flags—good reminder: swim between the flags—they die outside. Who is most likely to be there are our surfers, our board riders. Being able to uplift their ability to rescue someone, provide CPR, first aid, we think might make a really big difference to whether somebody's life can be saved if they are caught in a rip, taken out and they are outside the flag area. So this will deliver \$800 000 towards that program, but there will also be a modified program that is provided to secondary schools. So we will do the board riders, and we have already started to roll this program out. We want to be ready for this particular summer—that we have got a number of our board riders with those skills, but we are

also rolling it out to secondary schools. So again we want some of our secondary school students to have some of those CPR and first aid abilities as well as, hopefully, teaching them and their peers about water safety issues and challenges.

Mr MAAS: It sounds like a great initiative. Thank you, Minister. Can you update the committee on the last summer and some of the future work required to improve water safety?

Ms NEVILLE: Summer is not always just about fire, although there was a lot of that over the summer. We also unfortunately had drownings in a whole range of areas. So it is not just beach drownings; we had them in a waterfall, we had them in rivers over the holidays—and in dams as well. It is interesting when you have a look at the statistics of who and when, there is not necessarily an easy, ‘It is this demographic. It is this group of people’; they vary right across the board. So knowing how to target some of that information is going to be important in how we might start to reduce this overall.

So since 1 December we have had 29 reported drowning deaths in Victoria. I think you would have seen up there that we have had 50 since 1 July last year. There were 23 drowning deaths between 1 December and 28 February. Now, that is consistent with the previous summer, but they are high numbers; that is a lot of people who died what should be very preventable deaths. As I said, no-one dies if they are swimming between the flags; they just do not do it. That is just such a safety measure for families and people using our beaches.

As part of this we have provided Life Saving Victoria—because we know there are some issues with people from different backgrounds, people who have immigrated here, about their knowledge of water—some \$630 000 for them to deliver a range of programs to the CALD communities about safety in water. We also provide funding around the Play It Safe by the Water safety campaign, which targets beach locations and inland locations. We also did some trials over summer of some targeted messages using SMS et cetera, targeting people in different locations. So if you were on holiday along the Murray, you would get a particular message. If you were down by the beach, you would get a particular message about water safety. So we will do a little bit more of that over the next summer period. We also had Life Saving Victoria extend the lifeguard programs for a longer period, to 3 February for the first time. Lorne, Torquay and St Kilda went to 24 February. Because it was a hot, warm summer that went for a while we had more people on beaches than we would normally have in those times of February.

Because I remain concerned about what we can do, that the messages are not getting through, we are not seeing any improvement, I have asked the commissioner to do some work to bring agencies together to look at messaging. Do we need to change some of the messaging, reaching different people in a different way? Do we need a more hard-hitting campaign? We do need to not just accept this as a reality of our summers; we have got to change that. I think we have all grown up by the water. If you were born in Australia, you think you can swim. I am somebody who in fact in my 20s had to be rescued at a beach, having grown up in Queensland and swimming all the time. But you get caught in a rip and you do not how to deal with it. I was in between the flags so I got saved. But we need to remind people, particularly as you get a bit older, that your skills may decline as well. So the commissioner is leading some work on that, and hopefully that will help inform some different messaging we might do over this coming summer.

Mr MAAS: Excellent. Thank you, Minister. I see there is also further funding for marine search and rescue. Could you provide us some detail on what that investment will contribute to?

Ms NEVILLE: There was a parliamentary inquiry I think back in 2014 that indicated that we had some issues around marine safety. They are a very diverse group of organisations that are part of this, pretty much all run by volunteers. But there were issues raised in that parliamentary inquiry around governance, transparency; there are big sustainability issues. So we did some changes in the governance arrangements and brought it all together. We provided additional funding for equipment and vessels and uplift in technology for a lot of our marine safety organisations, and this budget commits \$1.9 million to continue to be able to subsidise some of these organisations. They do something like 1300 rescues a year, so they play a really big part in our marine safety, along with our water police. So this funding will go towards fuel, equipment, training and insurance improvements. EMV, the commissioner, has a particular role in governance and oversight in relation to this, and strengthening their abilities to report, to be accountable and to ensure that they can continue to do the good work that they do.

Mr MAAS: Budget paper 4 at page 73 identifies continuing funding for MSAR into the next financial year. Can you please update on the progress of that investment?

Ms NEVILLE: As I said, that money—the \$1.9 million—will go to subsidising operating costs. We had provided, I think it was back in September 17, some extra output money, nearly \$5 million, and almost over \$6.5 million towards that asset upgrade. Now they are making really good progress in the rollout of that; most of that will be completed by the end of this year, early next year. This is procurement of boats being built et cetera. So we are seeing really a step change in terms of the ability of marine safety rescue organisations to be able to have the equipment and the support they need to keep doing those 1300-plus rescues they do each year.

Mr MAAS: I am now interested in how we support our volunteers across the emergency service sector more generally. We know that volunteers are of course critical to our emergency services. There is a performance measure in budget paper 3 at page 286 which relates to the number of operational volunteers across the emergency services sector. Would you be able to update the committee on some of the supports in place to encourage and maintain volunteerism?

Ms NEVILLE: Yes. In the slides you would have seen we have about 100 000 volunteers across emergency services in Victoria—some of those active, some not. There are support volunteers. Some are very operational and very active in terms of whether it is SES or life saving or CFA. They play a really important role. There is no question in my mind that, whether it is fire, whether it is road rescue, whether it is safety on our beaches, we cannot do this work without volunteers in Victoria—there is absolutely no question. But as you would have seen from my presentation, we also have a significant ageing population, so if you look at the cohort that we have, but also nationally, and what are the age groups that are volunteers, they are ageing out of the system. So we have got to think about how we do this and what are the sorts of things that we need to better provide to volunteers to both encourage younger members in but also retention of what we have got. We have got to do not just what we have been doing; we have got to continue to enhance that and think of new ways to recruit and retain volunteers across those agencies.

Some of the things that we do do: our Enhancing Volunteerism Grants program is one of them. This was something that the previous minister announced and put in \$60 million for this program—\$10 million was funded out of that \$60 million uplift in 2017. This has been about equipment, facility upgrades, local initiatives around strengthening volunteerism, so giving opportunities to local groups to think about how they might best work in their communities and encourage and promote more volunteers to come in. They are able to do things like address immediate needs and improve culture, diversity and fairness.

I thought members may be interested to just know some of the things that were funded out of that program. For example, Mr Richardson, you have the Aspendale Life Saving Club, which got board trolleys, inflatable rescue boats. Edithvale Life Saving Club got—

Mr RICHARDSON: A new clubhouse.

Ms NEVILLE: a beach patrol shelter. Mordialloc Life Saving Club got a new buoyancy vest for school training, a new motor for IRB. Also Mordialloc Life Saving Club got marquees. Edithvale got money for office furniture, access and security.

Mr O'Brien, I think you had 10 grants under that volunteer sustainability area.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Struth—10!

Ms NEVILLE: Volunteer emergency services, eight grants—

Mr RIORDAN: These sound like equipment grants. Are these the equipment grants?

Ms NEVILLE: Yes. Volunteer emergency services equipment program and the emergency volunteer grants program and the emergency services volunteer sustainability—all three of them.

The CHAIR: Deputy Chair, you cannot get jealous because you are not as effective a local member as Mr O'Brien.

Ms NEVILLE: No, he has done even better than Mr O'Brien. He got, for the sustainability grants, 24 compared to 10. Mr O'Brien was not working as hard.

Mr RIORDAN: Twice as effective.

Ms NEVILLE: That is right, and 22 for the equipment—

The CHAIR: That is why you are the Deputy Chair, and not Mr O'Brien.

Mr D O'BRIEN: I demand an inquiry, Minister, immediately.

The CHAIR: Let us just stop there. It does not get any better than this for you, does it, Mr Riordan?

Ms NEVILLE: In fact everyone except Narre Warren and Cranbourne. They have not got any yet, but you never know—in the next round. There have been substantial investments—

The CHAIR: Sorry, Minister, I just need to check this. You are pork-barrelling Mr O'Brien's and Mr Riordan's seats ahead of Narre Warren and Cranbourne.

Ms NEVILLE: That is right. We like to distribute them fairly.

The CHAIR: I am very proud to hear you are governing for all Victorians, Minister.

Ms NEVILLE: That is right. In western metro we have got a lot there as well, so in terms of—

The CHAIR: What about southern metro?

Ms VALLENCE: No, we have to hear this bit first.

Ms NEVILLE: Southern metro, I will get to you as well. I have got you here as well. Things like the Hobsons Bay VICSES, Brimbank SES. Things like storm trailer, electric chair lifts, a Ford Ranger, a four-wheel drive, shears, pumps, airbags, generators, concrete pads, radio broadcasting equipment, a light tanker for the Diggers Rest CFA. And in Southern Metro I know the Chair will be really excited to hear that South Melbourne Life Saving Club got a marquee, a trolley and an inflatable rescue boat. Glen Eira VICSES got defensive driver training, trailer towing training—

The CHAIR: We need it in Glen Eira, let me tell you—that defensive driver training!

Ms NEVILLE: I think it will prove to be very effective. Brighton Life Saving Club got money for a dual axle IRB search. Also St Kilda Life Saving Club, outboard motors. South Melbourne got some temporary accommodation, and I think they were doing some works there—

The CHAIR: You are embarrassing me now, Minister. I do not want Mr O'Brien to start getting jealous.

Ms NEVILLE: You did pretty well in your grants for your region. In fact everyone did except, sorry, Narre Warren and Cranbourne, but we will work on that. That may be because you have less numbers of life saving clubs et cetera.

Mr MAAS: I was just saying to the member for Cranbourne that, yes, we need a beach in our electorate.

The CHAIR: You are near Taylors Lakes, aren't you?

Mr MAAS: Patterson Lakes.

Ms NEVILLE: I am sure climate change may assist.

Mr MAAS: Just finally in the time I have left, I will just take you to the interoperability and coordination of Victoria's emergency services sector and take you to budget paper 3, page 287. There is a performance measure relating to multi-agency joint procurement assistance or equipment in the coming financial year. Would you be able to provide some more information on what that relates to?

Ms NEVILLE: Yes. One of the really important things that firstly came out of the royal commission and any of the reviews that have been done since is the need for our agencies to work closely, hand in hand together. 'Working as one', I think we use that terminology. When you are in the State Control Centre, whether it is a flood, whether it is a fire, whether it is a storm, whether it might be a major structure fire like some of the chemical fires we have seen, the ability of our agencies to work as one is critical to ensure the right response at the right time. That also goes to things like how we standardise equipment, how we standardise training systems, operating procedures, where that is appropriate and we need to do more of that. That is something that the commissioner is very focused on and will be doing some more work on that over the coming 12 months. I think that was one of the big things that came out of the fire services review as well—the need for greater interoperability—and we need to continue to have a look at opportunities to do that.

One of the things that you will see in that budget paper is we have started some joint procurement opportunities as well, that is by a cost-saving measure but also about that standardisation. We have looked at—for example, this year there is a joint procurement around fleet maintenance, tyre services, procurement of those tyres as well, so again cost savings but also starting a process of where we are much more joined up. There are obviously roles for each individual agency and they have got responsibilities to do that, but in certain emergencies we require all our agencies to work together and to work across those agencies and put those boundaries aside. You see it in practice; you absolutely see that in practice in incident control centres, state control centres all the way up, but we also need to keep embedding that in terms of our systems, our structures, our policy settings going forward. The role of Emergency Management Victoria is critical in both leading that but also in its future role in making sure that we are joined up and working more closely together.

Mr MAAS: In budget paper 3, page 81, there is funding for the Emergency Alert upgrade. Would you be able to provide some more detail on that initiative and how it better drives coordination across the emergency services agencies?

Ms NEVILLE: Yes. Emergency Alert is a 24 hours, seven days a week national telephone-based warning system. Out of interest for the committee, EMV are the ones who manage that contract, so we manage it on behalf of the commonwealth and all the states, and we are seen as leaders in being able to do that. This is where you deliver warnings directly to people around emergencies, so it is a really important system. This money is about taking the next contract period but also continually improving the quality of those emergency alerts, using the best technology. We have got Telstra, Vodafone and Optus who are the ones who deliver this service to us and they do it through a mix of telephone, landline or mobile, regardless of where you are. That provides for international visitor roaming as well on our Australian system. Again, one of the big issues is you have got visitors down the Great Ocean Road. We know the Otways is a high fire risk area. Being able to reach people who may otherwise have no knowledge or understanding of fires, this system plays a really critical role in doing that.

The CHAIR: I will just interrupt there, Mr Maas. Minister, thank you for that. We will now pass on to Mr O'Brien.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Secretary, budget paper 4, page 90, lists the capital projects for the CFA for 19–20, and its total allocation is \$40 million. In last year's budget the allocation was \$81 million, so it is cut in half basically. The estimated expenditure in total for 19–20 is also reduced by \$38.7 million. Can you advise how much of those cuts are attributable to funding being directed towards the new proposed Fire Rescue Victoria or is it simply a reduction in community safety funding?

Ms NEVILLE: So, Chair, I am going to take that question as the minister across the detail of this. Firstly, I would encourage people to have a look at their budget papers because what is absolutely clear here is that this is a lack of understanding of how to read budget papers. So if you have a look back—

Mr D O'BRIEN: Minister, please. With the greatest respect, I have been on this committee for five years now. I do understand the budget papers.

Ms NEVILLE: There are no cuts. Well, you are misleading the community on this.

Mr D O'BRIEN: In the 2018–19 budget, on the exact same table, new projects for the Country Fire Authority—total new projects—was \$81 million.

Ms NEVILLE: Yes.

Mr D O'BRIEN: This year it is \$40 million. How can you say that is not a cut?

Ms NEVILLE: It is not a cut. It is additional money this year, capital projects—

Mr D O'BRIEN: Yes, I understand that. It is less money than was provided for capital in the CFA last year.

Ms NEVILLE: When you were in government in 13–14 you had \$60 million in that year. The year after you had a lower figure. Was that a cut? I do not think it was a cut.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Minister, it is less money for capital than was delivered last year. There is no question about that.

Ms NEVILLE: So let us look at it. We have got 40 plus 157.

Mr D O'BRIEN: We can have the argument over the output if you like.

Ms NEVILLE: We have got 157 plus 40. There is no cut to funding. It is a capital program, and if—

Mr D O'BRIEN: But it is a cut in the amount of capital that is available to the CFA this year.

Ms NEVILLE: No, no. Let us have a clear look at it. So over that period of time, which you never got anywhere close to that sort of money, we have done a large fleet replacement—18 medium have been delivered, 27 heavy ones, 10 ultra-lights—

Mr D O'BRIEN: Minister, sorry. Can I ask the questions and have them answered—not the way you want to give them. Minister, \$81 million last year was allocated for capital for the CFA.

Ms NEVILLE: Yes, to roll out this massive fleet replacement, which we have done.

Mr D O'BRIEN: This year \$40 million is allocated. How in any way is that not a reduction, if you do not want to call it a cut? How is that in any way not a reduction in capital funding?

Ms NEVILLE: I feel, Chair, that we need a lesson on recurrent versus capital here. We do.

Mr D O'BRIEN: No, excuse me. Spare me the condescension, Minister. I know exactly what capital is. It is state capital paper number 4.

Ms NEVILLE: Okay. Have you got your previous budgets? Let us go back over all the budgets. This is what happens every single budget year—

Mr D O'BRIEN: No, no. I am asking the question, Minister.

Ms NEVILLE: that one year there will be this, this, this, depending on the capital needs of the CFA at any one time.

Mr D O'BRIEN: All right, let us have this fight now then, Minister, because—

Ms NEVILLE: They are delivering \$198 million of capital investment over the next period of time.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Excuse me, Minister, I am asking the questions. But if you want to have the fight, let us go to what you put in your own presentation.

Ms NEVILLE: Yes, which is across the whole emergency service sector.

Mr D O'BRIEN: That is the outputs for the whole emergency management. You pre-empted. You said, 'Oh, it's a \$50 million reduction on last year. Oh, but that was because last year we did a whole lot of stuff'. Now, you just started to go to the previous government, so let us go to that, because you and your government, your Premier and your Deputy Premier consistently say that the \$60-odd-million reduction one year, after the introduction of significant funding as a result of the bushfires royal commission, is a cut. You cannot now say, 'That was a cut, but this is not'. Were you wrong then, or are you wrong now?

Ms NEVILLE: No, no, no. We did not just say, 'Your emergency services minister said it'; I am saying there is no cut at all to the CFA.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Okay, so there was a cut then, but when the budget is reduced now, it is not. Is that right?

Ms NEVILLE: In fact you were running at about \$900 million; we are running at \$1.2 billion in investment. Let's have a look: CFA when we came to government was getting four \$449.80 million, it is now getting \$568.70million. That is operating.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Based on your explanation, will you now guarantee that you and your government will never, ever say again that the previous coalition government cut the CFA budget?

Ms NEVILLE: No, I would like to quote your emergency services minister, who admitted there was a \$66 million cut. There was a cut.

Mr D O'BRIEN: No, I asked you a question. All right, this is the hypocrisy of your government, because you are saying exactly what you are doing in this year's budget is not a cut.

Ms NEVILLE: Again, capital versus recurrent cut. Capital versus recurrent.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Yet when it came to us having put in extra money for the bushfires royal commission, you then say that is a cut. It cannot be both. You can only have it one way.

Ms NEVILLE: There are capital cuts. There is capital and there is recurrent. Recurrent cuts are very different.

Mr D O'BRIEN: I will move on. Secretary, can I ask, please, for you to provide a current list of high-priority CFA stations due for replacement that will remain as 100 per cent CFA?

Ms NEVILLE: That is a matter for the CFA. They keep the list.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Well where are they?

Ms NEVILLE: Well, they are not the department.

Mr D O'BRIEN: They have always been here in the past.

Ms NEVILLE: Well, I do not know.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Well, that is why I am asking the secretary, Minister, because this is the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee and we have to account for public funding.

Ms FALKINGHAM: I am happy to take that on notice and speak to the chair and the CEO and get that information for you.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Okay. So what I am seeking, just to be clear, is the current high priority list for stations across the state for the CFA. In the budget, Secretary, the high priority stations—again we go to page 91 of budget paper 4—like Truganina and Craigieburn have had major delays from the original timelines. Can you

advise how many other stations have either been delayed or are not included in this year's budget because of the capital reduction?

Ms NEVILLE: There are none that are not included in this budget; the money is still there. There is the money—

Ms VALLENCE: Coldstream?

Ms NEVILLE: There is the money for all of those projects.

Ms VALLENCE: Will Coldstream be done this year?

Mr D O'BRIEN: Well, I am asking: what are the ones on the high priority list that have missed out?

Ms NEVILLE: Sometimes there may be issues of location of land, for example. So if I look at my St Leonards one, there has been an issue there because the land availability is on developers' land. The developers would not sell it at the price available; they wanted to sell it as a housing development site. We have now located land. That took longer than people thought, for example. That is an example of why projects may take longer. Similarly in terms of Truganina, I have spoken to the Truganina CFA. They are comfortable where they are and what we are working through in terms of their issues and where they want to be.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Minister, the question I was trying to ask the secretary is: which of the stations on the high priority list for replacement have not gone ahead this year because there is a \$40 million reduction in the capital budget?

Ms NEVILLE: Well, there is no reduction; there is no cut.

Ms VALLENCE: CFA have had the land at Coldstream for years and years and years and there is still no plan. They were told that they had plans.

Ms NEVILLE: Well, if they provide their priority list, it is up to them to set the priorities.

Mr D O'BRIEN: I will move on and I will go back again directly to the budget papers and that table on page 90—the very top line item '2019–20 base capital fleet upgrade'. The total estimated investment is \$12.3 million, but only \$6 million is allocated for this year. So, Secretary, can you tell me which stations across Victoria will miss out on vehicle upgrades this year because of that money not being spent?

Ms NEVILLE: I think, Chair, again we are back to this argument about whether there is a cut or not. There is no cut at all. In fact if you read—

Mr D O'BRIEN: No, no, Minister, no please, let me explain. Have you got the table in front of you?

Ms NEVILLE: I do—\$12 million. We are investing \$12 million. Some of those projects may take over two years. That is why it is spread. They may not be.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Why is it called the '2019–20 base capital fleet upgrade' then? How can the 2019–20 base capital fleet upgrade be finished in 2021?

Ms NEVILLE: Well, because they may procure it. They may pay for some of it. For example, you may procure a number of BARTs to your fleet. You pay for some of it and it is not delivered until the next year. It is exactly what happens with capital and equipment all the time. It happens every budget.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Well, why was it not phased that way last year, Minister?

Ms NEVILLE: Estimated. It could be more if they are faster at doing it, or someone is able to deliver it quicker.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Minister, the budget papers from last year have exactly the same line item and it is all delivered in the same year.

Ms NEVILLE: Yes, well, the CFA have advised us that that is how they can deliver that project.

Mr D O'BRIEN: So I am asking you again: which stations are going to miss out on new trucks this year?

Ms NEVILLE: No-one.

Mr D O'BRIEN: No-one is going to miss out?

Ms NEVILLE: No-one that is expected out of the \$12 million. They will deliver as they can deliver. That is what they have advised us. They advise us on how they would like to split those resources, how they think they can deliver and how many projects they can deliver at any one time.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Minister, I have got stations in my electorate. There are stations all around every district. Stations in district 13 have complained about a number of vehicles that are aged and dangerous. How long must they wait before they get a replacement vehicle?

Ms NEVILLE: Just remember, you are the ones who got rid of the 10-year limit. Just saying that. But anyway—

Mr D O'BRIEN: No, no. I asked you a question, Minister.

Ms NEVILLE: So there is a list that the CFA provide. I do not determine who it is. The CFA work out what they need, what the timelines are, what is capable of being delivered in any one year. That is exactly what they have done. That is what those figures reflect—what they have indicated as the key priorities.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Okay, Minister, I am not going to get an answer, clearly, on that so I will move on to the secretary. Can I ask you to provide an outline of the cost of overtime in the 18–19 year for both the CFA and the MFB?

Ms FALKINGHAM: I do not have that information with me, Mr O'Brien, but I am happy to take it on notice and come back to you.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Okay. Can you also provide a breakdown of overtime for—and I will list a few—overtime paid for specific events, overtime paid for sick leave replacement, overtime paid for leave replacement and overtime allowances paid for overtime at a station other than your primary station?

Ms FALKINGHAM: If we currently hold that information, I am happy to provide it in a format that is appropriate

Mr D O'BRIEN: Well, presumably the CFA and the MFB would have that information. I would hope so. Secretary, in the past 12 months can you tell me what the increase in overtime was for both the CFA and the MFB?

Ms FALKINGHAM: Again, I am happy to take that on notice.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Do you have any information on that available?

Ms FALKINGHAM: None today, Mr O'Brien.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Minister, do you know whether there has been an increase in overtime payments?

Ms NEVILLE: No.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Okay. Secretary, I refer to the—

Ms NEVILLE: Can I just make a point though? You did see my screen that said the increase in—so for example if you look at CFA integrated stations, they have had a 51 per cent increase in call-outs in the last 10 years; CFA generally 25 per cent. If you think about that increase in structure fires: are our firefighters doing more work? Absolutely.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Well, you have also bragged about the 450 extra firefighters, so—

Ms NEVILLE: And we needed to meet that in order to be able to meet the population growth. We have got three more integrated stations that have been established in the last two years as well.

Mr D O'BRIEN: I believe, Minister, you said last year or it might have been the previous year in PAEC that with those new firefighters coming online—

Ms NEVILLE: Well, I haven't been the minister, so I wouldn't have said that.

Mr D O'BRIEN: that overtime will be reduced.

Ms NEVILLE: Well, let's see. I haven't said that because I haven't been the minister until this PAEC.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Okay. Secretary, the questionnaire provided to the committee by the department on page 10 notes a \$125 million increase in the revised budget for CFA and MFB, and one of the reasons given is that there has been a new EBA approved for the CFA and the MFB. Can I ask when the EBAs were signed off and who by?

Ms NEVILLE: Well, the MFB was signed off by the Fair Work Commission last year.

Ms FALKINGHAM: Thanks, Mr O'Brien. We are pleased that the Fair Work Commission has decided to approve, subject to undertakings by the Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board, the enterprise agreement which covers over 2000 operational staff.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Sorry, just when and who by—the Fair Work Commission?

Ms FALKINGHAM: I can get you the date.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Yes. And CFA?

Ms FALKINGHAM: In relation to the CFA, we are pleased that in the enterprise agreement which covers the Country Fire Authority's district mechanical officers and tower overseers. The mechanics were successfully negotiated in 2018. The agreement was approved by the Fair Work Commission on 19 February and came into operation on 26 February. The government remains committed to the terms which were agreed for the 2016 operational staff agreement. It is pursuing steps to have these conditions implemented. So for MFB, just so you know, is 25th.

Mr D O'BRIEN: That is not career firefighters, Secretary. Is that still outstanding, then, the career firefighters, CFA?

Ms NEVILLE: No. If you recall, the previous minister and the government indicated that we would implement the terms of that CFA agreement administratively. That included passing on all the wage increases and that is what the costs reflect. So all wage increases were passed on at the time, back in—I don't know—2016. In terms of the MFB, it was 25 February the Fair Work Commission had approved it, and in fact despite attempts by the commonwealth to intervene, they were denied.

Mr D O'BRIEN: I just wanted to clarify, then. You mentioned the mechanics; that has been done. But in terms of the career firefighters in the CFA, I understand what you said, Minister, but there has been no new EBA signed off?

Ms NEVILLE: No, that is right. But we committed to implement the conditions of the EBA administratively and that is exactly what is happening.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Okay. Secretary, are you able to detail any new costs, including extra allowances, wage increases and staff levels, that are required to be delivered with the new EBAs, the ones that have been completed?

Ms FALKINGHAM: I might ask Mr Minack to help on that question.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Sure.

Mr MINACK: Under the new EBA there are some additional allowances, but I do not have the actual dollar figures in front of me. I am happy to take that on notice.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Okay. Again, just to be clear—

Ms NEVILLE: It will be a couple of documents.

Mr D O'BRIEN: extra allowances, wage increases and staff levels as a result of new EBAs. If I could get that on notice.

Mr MINACK: Yes.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Likewise— and I do not know whether you can give me this right now—the cost annually, including average allowance payments but not including overtime in the MFB for all classifications of firefighters.

Ms FALKINGHAM: Again, we will have to take that on notice, Mr O'Brien.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Okay. Can I get the same information also for the CFA and again across all the classifications?

Ms FALKINGHAM: Again, if it exists in a form we can provide it, happy to provide it.

Mr D O'BRIEN: And, finally, I am interested to know what the cost is to train a firefighter for active duty in both the CFA and MFB. Are you able to—

Ms NEVILLE: It is 20 weeks of intensive training. I am not sure what the full cost would be. Do you know, Andrew?

Mr MINACK: No.

Ms NEVILLE: It is a proper training program—

Mr D O'BRIEN: I would assume this is information—

Ms NEVILLE: and they train together now.

Mr D O'BRIEN: This is information that we know for police and other services. I do not know whether the commissioner—

Ms NEVILLE: I am not sure we know. I could not tell you exactly for police, but they train together for 20 weeks, so we can provide the information if it is readily available.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Do you have any idea of the costs of training a new officer?

Mr RIORDAN: Overtime, training costs?

Ms NEVILLE: No.

The CHAIR: It is not always such an easy question to ask.

Members interjecting.

The CHAIR: If you have a trainer that is employed full-time for the year, whether they train one person or a thousand people, you are asking for a figure that then has to be—

Mr D O'BRIEN: Chair, sorry. Your job is to make rulings on points of order and the like, not to assist the ministers to answer the questions. It is not an unreasonable question.

Ms NEVILLE: We said we do not have those figures and we will provide them if they are readily available.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Can I, Minister, ask also—

The CHAIR: The minister is helpful, too.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Can I also ask you to outline, with respect to the EMV output—the one on your slide that we talked about a moment ago—how much the total wages bill is for frontline staff and also for non-operational staff?

Ms NEVILLE: No, I cannot. I can tell you what the CFA bill is, if you would like to know that—

Mr D O'BRIEN: Yes.

Ms NEVILLE: how much we pay in output for them, recurrent?

Mr D O'BRIEN: Yes.

Ms NEVILLE: So that will be a range of costs. It is \$568 million and that compares to when we came to government of \$449 million.

Mr D O'BRIEN: \$568 million?

Ms NEVILLE: Yes.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Per annum, the 18–19 figure?

Ms NEVILLE: Yes, that is 19–20. That is just the running of the organisation, which will include, you know, the career staff and—

Mr D O'BRIEN: No. I am asking specifically about wages.

Ms NEVILLE: No, I cannot give you that breakdown.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Right. No worries. How am I going?

The CHAIR: You're going tremendously well.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Thank you for the support.

The CHAIR: If it was a fire, I would have already thrown in the white towel for you, but you're going tremendously well.

Mr D O'BRIEN: Thank you again for your assistance. I want to go to some of the questions that Mr Maas I think was asking before. Minister, we know that since the government came to power there have been 3749 less operational volunteer firefighters. Given that the targets remain to increase the number of volunteer firefighters but we are not meeting those targets, as per the budget papers, what are you actually going to do to increase the number of volunteers?

Ms NEVILLE: So you do know what the figure was when you left government—38 799.

Mr D O'BRIEN: It is not what I asked, Minister.

Ms NEVILLE: And it is 38 150. Nobody, no-one, no government has ever met the aspirational target in these BP3s—no government. So this idea that somehow there are less is just incorrect. It is just incorrect. We have—

Mr D O'BRIEN: The CFA annual report lists the numbers, Minister. So you are accusing them of lying, are you? It is in the annual report—operational volunteers.

Ms NEVILLE: And what the CFA say is what they do each and every year. Let us be clear: we have more active CFA volunteers as a proportion now than we have ever had, right?

Mr D O'BRIEN: As a proportion of what?

Ms NEVILLE: We never call on more than 19 000—ever; we never have in our history. Over this summer we had 17 600 turn up to firegrounds. There is no question we continue to have an active and viable volunteer base in the CFA, and my commitment, including to the VFBV, is that we are going to focus on building a stronger volunteer-only firefighting agency whose requirement is to focus on supporting, retaining and training our volunteers.

The CHAIR: And just like that, Minister, Mr O'Brien's time is sadly expired.

Mr HIBBINS: Thank you, Minister, and thank you, Commissioner, and team, for appearing. Did you ever get the money back for that Glen Iris fire station that got built and then got knocked down and then got rebuilt again?

Ms NEVILLE: Do you know the answer to that? Greenvale, isn't it, or—

Mr HIBBINS: Glen Iris.

Ms NEVILLE: Glen Iris, that is right. I cannot answer that question. We will find out whether that is the case. We will find out.

Mr HIBBINS: Okay. Can we find out also the eventual total cost of that project as well? Because I think it was originally budgeted at \$5.5 million, but it would be good to get an overall cost of that project.

Ms NEVILLE: I am sure it cost more than that. I am sure, so we will get that to you.

Mr HIBBINS: I really just wanted to touch on an area in the presentation, and that was in regard to one of the challenges of a changing climate, with hotter, drier summers. I noted that there were 74 heat health alerts last year. Can I just get some information about what particular initiatives in this year's budget are going to address that particular increasing challenge?

Ms NEVILLE: Do you want me to cut across the whole budget? Like, obviously there are initiatives in climate change.

Mr HIBBINS: Well, probably more specifically from an emergency management point of view.

Ms NEVILLE: I suppose our role is to make sure our agencies are able to be sustainable and have the resourcing equipment they need to deal with those particular challenges. You know, I talked about the need, for example, in the fire area how we needed to continue to modernise, given the pressure around urban population, climate change, heat and hotter conditions—the work that Andrew is doing in terms of that working as one mechanism.

Mr HIBBINS: I guess, to be a bit more specific with the area that I am going into is obviously when we have got heatwaves, a lot of people, particularly elderly people, are vulnerable, and particularly people who might live in, say, public housing. So I am just really seeking some information about how you are meeting that challenge.

Ms NEVILLE: Okay. In fact when I was Minister for Community Services we established—because we had had some deaths as a result of some significant heatwaves back then—a vulnerable persons list. What this does is it gets enacted on those really hot days where we are doing heat alerts. What that means is it could be a mix of local governments or community agencies that are reaching out to people who are getting Meals on Wheels or they are in a disability agency or we know they are aged and living alone, and public housing is absolutely one of those groups where there is a strong link to the department of housing in order to provide the messages directly to people. Sometimes it is actually practical solutions around where you can go for that day and providing that or just the tips around how you keep cool and keep hydrated. It could be providing actual ice

blocks or whatever. So it is a range of things, and we use that list as a mechanism to do direct outreach to people who are vulnerable, particularly to heat.

Mr CRISP: If I could just add to that, Minister, Mr Hibbins, again, if you go back to 2009, more than 370 people lost their lives as a result of heat over a number of weeks, and again we have learned from that. If I look at what we did over the last summer period again, we did have 74 heat health alerts. It was 19 more than the same time last year, so there is that in itself—the fact that we are getting those heat health alerts put out by the chief health officer. On those really hot days I will appoint a state controller for heat. Some of the funding actually goes into our emergency alert systems and social media. So we are tracking very much what is happening on those hot days. We focus on the heat, and I know from over the last summer when we were tracking that, Ambulance Victoria would see at times slight spikes in relation to what we were doing, but as a result of, I guess, all that collective effort, we are seeing much better community outcomes. But, you know, the way things are looking, we will continue to see more and more heat health alerts. But it is a bit like the fire side of things, sometimes you cannot stop a fire, but it is about actually how you warn and work with community.

Mr HIBBINS: Terrific. All right, thank you. Chair, no more further questions.

The CHAIR: Well, in that case it gives me no pleasure to end early, but it gives me great pleasure to thank the minister and the officers at the desk. The committee will follow up on any questions taken on notice in writing, and responses will be required within 10 working days of the committee's request. The committee will now break for an exorbitant amount of time, all of which is 32 minutes. We will resume at 4.00 p.m. with the portfolio of corrections. Minister, thank you very much. Commissioner, thank you very much. Secretary, thank you very much. I now declare this hearing adjourned. Au revoir.

Witnesses withdrew.