



# **Inquiry into Appropriation Bill 2026–2027 and Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2026–2027**

## **Answer to question on notice**

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Asked by: Ms Fiona Carrick MLA

Addressed to: Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services

Reference: Bushfire and other natural disaster resilience and response

Hearing: 28 July 2026

In relation to: Bushfire Preparedness

Question received: 03/08/2016

Answer Due: 12/08/2026

Minister

**(1) Budget 2026-27**

- (a) What proportion of the ESA budget in 2026-27 has been provided to fund the activities of the Rural Fire Service?
- (b) Has there been any change to the quantum of funds provided to the Rural Fire Service to enable it to effectively manage bushfires in the rural areas of the ACT?

**(2) Over the past 2 years two fire tankers have been withdrawn from the Tharwa RFS brigade and as yet they have not been replaced.**

- (a) Will the replacement fire tankers be delivered to the Tharwa brigade before the commencement of the bushfire season?
- (b) If not, why is the replacement program delayed?

**(3) I am advised that the Tharwa RFS brigade shed does not have an appropriate space for the brigade to undertake the required training of its members.**

- (a) What support is the RFS providing to the Tharwa brigade to conduct indoor training and what plan is in place to upgrade the facilities at Tharwa, so that that brigade has similar facilities to other RFS brigades?

**(4) Has the Government developed a response to the written advice on prescribed burning provided to the Minister in October 2025 by the Multi-Hazard Advisory Council?**

- (a) If not, why not given the importance of those activities in reducing fuel hazards in forests?
- (b) Does the ACT Government still support the policy of implementing broad area fuel reduction practices to establish and maintain a range of differing fuel loads across the broader natural and rural landscape of the ACT?

- (5) The establishment of Community Fire Units was an important initiative following the 2003 bushfires.
- (a) How many of the existing 44 Community Fire Units have sufficient members to be operational in the event of a bushfire threatening houses in their areas of operation?
  - (b) What support is ESA providing to maintain the capabilities of the volunteer members of the Community Fire Units?
  - (c) Why are there nine Community Fire Unit trailers parked within the ESA compound at Fyshwick and does that mean there are actually only 35 CFU trailers currently located within Bushfire Prone Areas?
  - (d) Will all 44 CFUs be fully operational during the 2026-27 bushfire season?
- (6) In your response of March 2026 to Questions on Notice Paper 17, you indicated that members of the Multi-Hazard Advisory Council would be consulted and provide input to the 2026 Review of the Emergencies Act.
- (a) Has the Multi-Hazard Advisory Council met to develop its input into the current legislative review?
  - (b) If not, what process are you using to achieve the outcome you indicated in your response to the question?

**Dr Marisa Paterson MLA:** The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

- (1)(a) Approximately 2.7% of the 2026-27 ACT Emergency Services Agency (ESA) budget has been allocated to directly fund the ACT Rural Fire Service (ACTRFS). Additional support is provided through combined centralised services where the proportion of total expenditure used to support the ACTRFS specifically cannot be separately identified.
- (b) There was not a material change to the quantum of funds provided to the ACTRFS in 2026-27 compared to 2025-26.
- (2) (a & b) Two tankers were not withdrawn from Southern Brigade (Tharwa). One was unfortunately involved in an accident and written off under insurance. The other tanker referred to was at 'end of service life' and replaced with a new bulk water tanker. The bulk water tanker has been with the brigade for three years. The damaged tanker will be replaced under insurance.

Bushfire tankers are built to specifications and are not commercially available to purchase. The ACTRFS is currently building two tankers for other brigades under the ESA Vehicle Replacement Program (VRP). The two new tankers are scheduled to be operational in September 2026 and once these tankers have been delivered to the identified brigades, Southern Brigade will get one of the replacement tankers for the 2026-27 fire season as an interim, while a new tanker is built.

- (3) (a) Southern Brigade underwent facility upgrades in 2023 to improve ablutions/change areas and training room upgrades. This included an increase to the size of their training room resulting in a room where all members can train or conduct meetings.

Southern Brigade, like all other ACTRFS Brigades, can access other ESA facilities, including the ACTRFS Helibase which has a training room and large indoor hanger space, or the ESA Training facility where there are multiple indoor training rooms or outdoor areas.

- (4) (a) ACT Government officials engaged with Council during meetings on matters related to prescribed burning, including a presentation on ACT Government hazard reduction burning policy and programs. Verbal advice from Council members, where appropriate, has been considered within this policy and the forward work programs.
- (b) The ACT follows residual risk modelling to monitor and maintain fire risk for the Territory. Hazard reduction is one of many mitigation activities undertaken across the Territory to reduce fuel loads and manage risk of fire.
- (5) (a) There are currently 44 Community Fire Units (CFUs) operational in the ACT that meet the minimum number of members to be deemed operational.
- (b) The ESA provides the following support to maintain the capabilities of the volunteer members of the CFUs:
- i. Monitoring CFU member operational status and encourage participation in annual refresher training
  - ii. Providing refresher training opportunities with the CFU coordination team or with ACT Fire & Rescue (ACTF&R) operational crews within their area of response
  - iii. Foster the development of CFU Team Leaders and Deputy Team Leaders
  - iv. Providing opportunities for CFU members to engage with their local community and promote emergency preparedness activities
  - v. Ensuring unit resources are inventoried and maintained in preparation for activation
  - vi. Conduct recruitment activities in areas where new members are required.
- (c) These trailers have been removed from areas where there was insufficient or no interest from the community to meet the minimum number of members required to maintain a unit's operational status. ACTF&R currently has 45 trailers strategically positioned across the ACT with one of these trailers cross-crewed in Denman Prospect area.
- (d) ACTF&R's intent is to maintain the operational status of all CFUs regardless of the declared bushfire season. This is achieved through the support offered to CFUs outlined in the response to question (b).
- (6) (a & b) Members of the Multi Hazards Advisory Council (the Council) have been consulted with on the review of the *Emergencies Act 2004* out of session. In relation to consultation on the *Emergencies Amendment Bill 2026*, Council Members were individually consulted and input considered in the development of the policy advice and drafting instructions.

Approved for circulation to the Select Committee on Estimates 2026–2027

Signature:



Date:

14/8/26

By the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services, Dr Marisa Paterson MLA