

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

**IN THE MATTER OF THE ROYAL COMMISSION INTO
NATIONAL NATURAL DISASTER ARRANGEMENTS**

DAY 20 TRANSCRIPT

Continued from Wednesday, 8 July 2020, DAY 19

CANBERRA

10:01 AM, THURSDAY, 9 JULY 2020

MS D HOGAN-DORAN SC and MS K DOVEY, appear as Counsel Assisting

<RESUMING 10:01 AM>

COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Good morning, Ms Hogan-Doran.

5 MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: Good morning, Chair.

COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: How's your voice?

10 MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: If I stopped talking, it might help. Commissioners, we
turn now to the States and Territories' responsibility for, and experience of, recovery
from natural disasters and what should be done to improve the arrangements
including with respect to resource sharing. This is a matter raised by paragraph A of
your Terms of Reference. States and Territories are at a different stage of their
recoveries from recent natural disasters but, for all, the recovery effort has been
15 compounded by the impact of the continuing COVID-19 pandemic.

Across our nation, most borders are closed and the economic and social dislocation
has been profound and, regrettably, continuing. For many, recovery is seen as a poor
cousin to response, as I mentioned in my opening on Monday, yet recovery could
20 not, and should not, be regarded as the final phase of emergency management.
Recovery provides an invaluable opportunity to prepare for and build resilience to
future disasters. Australia's arrangements for improving resilience and whether
accountability for recovery should be enhanced are matters raised by paragraph B of
your Terms of Reference.

25 Over the next two days, in addition to the pre-taped video evidence of four
community witnesses you will hear from 13 key principals in the States and
Territories recovery processes. Today you will hear from the State of Queensland
and Mr Brendan Moon, the CEO of the Queensland Reconstruction Authority and
30 Mr Cameron MacMillan, CEO of the Queensland Rural and Industry Development
Authority; from the State of Tasmania, Ms Jenny Gale, Secretary of the Department
of Premier and Cabinet, and Mr Craig Limkin, Deputy Secretary, Policy and
Intergovernmental Relations and State Recovery Adviser; from the State of South
Australia, Ms Margot Forster, State Lead Disaster Rebuilding and Recovery, from
35 the Department of Premier and Cabinet; and Ms Georgie Cornish, Department of the
Premier and Cabinet.

Finally, you will hear from the Northern Territory, Mr Len Darragh, Director,
Security and Emergency Response from the Department of the Chief Minister, and
40 Ms Fleur O'Connor, Chief Officer of the Northern Territory Emergency Services.
Tomorrow you will hear from the State of Victoria, Mr Lee Miezi, CEO of Bushfire
Recovery Victoria. From the Australian Capital Territory, you will hear from
Mr Bren Burkevics, Executive Branch Manager, Security and Emergency
Management Branch; and from the State of Western Australia, Mr Mal Cronstedt
45 AFSM, Deputy Commissioner, Strategy and Emergency Management of the
Department of Fire and Emergency Services. And, finally, from the State of New
South Wales, Ms Marg Prendergast, Executive Director, Disaster Recovery,

Resilience New South Wales and Mr Chris Presland, Director of the Natural Disaster Expenditure and Governance, Resilience New South Wales.

5 We will ask these experienced officials to assist you by giving you their insights into the impact of recent natural disasters on their jurisdictions and the status of their recovery effort; by giving you an overview of their key recovery agencies and processes, and of any challenges and opportunities in coordination arrangements; by identifying what lessons can be learned and can be adopted for the future; and by
10 expanding on their reasons for their suggestions for improvements that can promote successful recovery from, and resilience to, future natural disasters.

These questions are more limited than a topic such as recovery deserves, but, as you know, Commissioners, since last Thursday, 2 July through to and including this
15 Tuesday, the States and Territories have responded to a Compulsory Notice issued by the Royal Commission on 16 June 2020. This is with the exception of the State of Tasmania which has responded voluntarily to the Royal Commission's questions by furnishing a witness. I will be tendering those State and Territory responses together with key documents; they consist of eight volumes of material.

20 Given the significance of the recovery process and its place in your Terms of Reference, the Royal Commission's questions were understandably far ranging, including requiring information as to coordination of recovery support; resource sharing arrangements between States and Territories; monitoring and evaluation of recovery programs; coordination of volunteers; responsibility for recovery centres;
25 funding and financial assistance; the effect on the built environment and infrastructure; methods of collecting impact data; clean-up and debris removal; numbers of houses with asbestos; impact of the bushfires on business, primary producers and industries; the impact on small business and the barriers to provision of support to small business; social impacts and recovery assistance; the consistency
30 of support across Local Government areas and borders, as well as the role of Local Government in recovery; the benefits of data sharing arrangements or standardisation; the concept of a single point of contact for recovery support; and the potential role for the Commonwealth, including a stand-alone recovery agency.

35 To provide greater context, in addition to those eight volumes I will tender also a further volume of additional material which will include relevant national frameworks and policy documents, as well as recent responses provided by the Australian Government's National Bushfire Recovery Agency and the Department of Home Affairs to Compulsory Notices seeking updated impact data and recovery
40 information. I will tender also the overarching written submissions made by three States: Victoria, Tasmania and Queensland, and the Australian Capital Territory, as I anticipate they may be referred to in the evidence of some witnesses over the coming days.

45 During Hearing Block 1, the Royal Commission received some initial evidence of the scale and enormity of the destruction caused by the 2019-2020 bushfires across the built, social, natural, and economic environments. Since that time a substantial

amount of additional information has been gathered through the Royal Commission's Compulsory Notices procedure. Today I am able to give you an updated on the wide and varied impact of the 2019-2020 bushfires. This new information highlights a significant challenge that is posed to individuals, communities, businesses and governments to rebuild from natural disasters and improve resilience to future disasters.

In particular, in New South Wales and Victoria the scale of the 2019-2020 bushfires exceeded the capacity of individual Local Governments and impacted on multiple regions within those States. The information gathered reinforces the insight that the impacts of disasters can be long-term, complex and intangible.

Turning first to the impact on the natural environment, it has been substantial. In New South Wales, 5.5 million hectares were burned, of which 2.6 million were national parks. Queensland has indicated that the 2019-2020 bushfires season resulted in more than 7.7 million hectares being burned. In Victoria, the fires impacted approximately 1.5 million hectares, including approximately 12 per cent of Victoria's parks and reserves, and 27 per cent of State forests. As we will hear from Victoria tomorrow, if there is not a deliberate and focused recovery effort, the probability of some species persisting beyond 10 years is less than one per cent.

In South Australia, 285,162 hectares were burned, of which 112,860 were nature conservation reserves, and 80,227 hectares were grazing pastures. In Western Australia, more than 3.5 million hectares were burned, of which 734,360 hectares was national park, 681,974 was private land and almost two million hectares of the burnt area was Local Government land.

During the 2019 bushfire season, 5.73 million hectares or approximately 4.2 per cent of the Northern Territory was affected by bushfire. In the ACT, the Orroral Valley bushfire burned 87,923 hectares. Tasmania has indicated that 30,075 hectares were burned; this is following the impact of the 2018-2019 bushfires which affected around 95,430 hectares, or about six per cent of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage area.

Next, the impact on the built environment is extensive in a number of States. In New South Wales, the scale of loss has never been seen in modern recorded history: 2,476 houses were destroyed, 284 facilities were destroyed, and 5,559 outbuildings were destroyed. Many of the homes that were damaged contained asbestos. New South Wales has reported that in 12 affected Local Government areas, 50 per cent or more of the properties cleared contained asbestos. Victoria's information is that 40 to 50 per cent of cleared properties have been confirmed as having asbestos.

In South Australia, 46 per cent of properties contained asbestos. You will hear how asbestos presents challenges in ensuring safe and quick clean-up of fire-affected properties. In South Australia, 194 primary residences were reported as destroyed across the larger Cudlee Creek, Kangaroo Island, Yorketown and Keilira fires, and a further two lost in the Eyre Peninsula fire. 97 primary residences were also reported

as damaged. 890 non-residential buildings, which includes business, tourism facilities, community facilities, sheds and vacant houses were reported as destroyed or damaged. The damage in Queensland which included 150 houses destroyed, was compounded by storm and flood and monsoon damage that occurred over the period
5 of 1 January 2019 to 31 January 2020 when almost 3000 houses were damaged.

The economic impact from the 2019-2020 bushfires was significant and has been deepened by the subsequent pandemic restrictions. Indeed, given the ongoing economic impact of the pandemic, the full economic impact of the 2019-2020
10 bushfires may never clearly be known. In Hearing Block 1 you heard from the Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman about the effects on small businesses. The evidence from Local Councils in our second week of this block of hearings highlighted the impact the fires have had at the local level, particularly on small businesses. Businesses that were not destroyed or damaged as
15 part of the fires were impacted by a downturn in trade during the peak tourism season.

Over the next two days you will hear about the broader impacts on States' and Territories' economies. New South Wales estimates the total damage to animals and
20 agriculture is over \$1 billion. Victoria indicates that it expects to lose \$400 million through 2020 to 2022 in its agricultural sector due to lost assets and lost agricultural production. In Queensland, the economic effect on the agriculture - agricultural sector of the Cobraball fire alone is estimated is estimated at over \$17.9; while the monsoon trough rainfall and flood event in January to February 2019 is estimated to
25 have caused \$376 million in livestock loss and the average loss for small business is estimated to have been between \$35,000 to \$43,000.

South Australia reports that preliminary estimates of lost agriculture and primary production losses as a result of the fires show a loss of \$187 million. Tourism losses
30 are estimated at \$73.1 million. The ACT has described the significant impact on businesses due to the hazardous smoke that blanketed the region as a result of the fires. Indeed, next, although also difficult to quantify, it is clear that the 2019-2020 bushfires have had a significant impact on the health and wellbeing of Australians.

The social impacts of the bushfires have been seen in a broad range of groups, including children, youth, the elderly, people with disabilities, first responders and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Particular impacts include financial hardship, dislocation, disruption to education, injury, death and separation from loved ones, and escalation of pre-existing issues such as domestic violence and
40 substance abuse.

As you have heard, Commissioners, the scale of the consecutive and compounding natural disasters in Australia can be demonstrated by a variety of data points. Perhaps chief amongst them is an Excel spreadsheet produced by the Australian
45 Government's Department of Home Affairs which lists 250 different disasters since January 2015, some of which disasters have qualified for financial assistance pursuant to the joint Australian State and Territory Governments Natural Disaster

Relief and Recovery Arrangements prior to November 2018, and from that time pursuant to the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements. The Excel spreadsheet provided to the Commission links to the website disasterassist.gov.au where further details and assistance information can now be obtained.

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The National Principles for Disaster Recovery, which I showed you in the first Hearing Block, identified the importance of understanding the local context and using community led approaches to recovery with activities and delivery informed by the unique impacts and consequences of each event, the profile and needs of each community, and feedback from that community. To better deal with the increasing incidence of disasters, the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience affirms a cooperative response that emphasises shared responsibility and empowering communities. Commissioners, the responses from each of the States and Territories demonstrates that recovery arrangements acknowledge that context, and embrace that approach to recovery.

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The National Principles also provide that successful recovery must be both responsive and flexible, engaging communities and empowering them to move forward. They must be planned, coordinated and adaptive based on a continuing assessment of impact and needs. We will explore coordination and cooperation in these hearings. The Commission will inquire also into the resource sharing arrangements to ensure emergency relief or immediate needs of communities were met, the operation of the Cross-Border Assistance Guidelines and the newer Guidelines for Interjurisdictional Assistance Community Recovery from 2020.

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We will also inquire as to the States' and Territories' participation and collaboration through several extant national recovery groups, including the Community Outcomes Recovery Subcommittee, or CORS, of the Australia and New Zealand Emergency Management Committee, or ANZEMC, and the National Social Recovery Reference Group and its Interstate Deployment Coordinators. We understand that the SRRG includes representatives from the Australian Government, all States and Territories, the New Zealand Government and the Australian Red Cross. The SRRG provides a national body to help coordinate and develop social recovery policy in Australia.

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A key theme of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework from 2018 is the importance of building resilience through recovery following a natural disaster. Addressing the significant impacts through recovery processes is ongoing. It will not be a process that occurs over six to 12 months or the life of this Royal Commission but, rather, one that occurs over many years. Over the next two days we will explore with the States and Territories the frameworks, processes and programs they use to respond to the profound impacts of natural disasters and build resilience to future disasters.

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We note that some States have changed their existing frameworks to more effectively respond to the specific impacts of the 2019-2020 bushfires. For example, Victoria has established a whole new agency, Bushfire Recovery Victoria; and in New South Wales, the Office of Emergency Management has become Resilience New South

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Wales. Commissioners, on Tuesday you heard from the Inspectors-General of Queensland and Victoria the importance of incorporating lessons management in disaster management arrangements.

5 Presently, there is limited provision within national policy settings for mechanisms to share the learnings of evaluations between and across jurisdictions. The National Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for Disaster Recovery Programs is an Australian Government initiative, version two of which was published in May 2018. The evaluation framework was developed in response to a recommendation endorsed
10 by COAG in 2012. By improving the quality of disaster recovery evaluations, governments are able to improve subsequent disaster recovery programs, as what is learned from these evaluations is incorporated into program design and delivery.

15 And evaluation of each of the different recovery programs presently under way is a task beyond the scope and resources of this Royal Commission. But one of the principal objectives of the evaluation framework is to ensure that recovery programs are focussed on achieving outcomes, not processes and outputs.

20 The question will be whether you see in the material presented by the States and Territories an indication that they have shifted their recovery planning to an outcomes-based focus. As I mentioned at the start of this address, the objective of disaster recovery programs is, and should be, to help communities reach a point where they are sustainable and resilient through building community capability; an outcomes-based approach undoubtedly assists this.

25 As the State of South Australia recognises in its response, the bushfires of 2019-2020 presented the first opportunity for it to apply the principles of the Evaluation Framework. The State reports the principles have informed its bushfire recovery planning, and project leads are required to articulate outcomes to be achieved during
30 program design.

In our federated model, the Commonwealth is not responsible for delivering recovery operations, although it is involved in coordination and national policy development. It also enables recovery programs, through funding arrangements with the States and
35 Territories. And, as such, there are two principal sources of State and Territory recovery funding: State initiated funding through normal Treasury processes or tax relief, and Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements which are cost shared between the Commonwealth and the States and Territories.

40 The State of Victoria reports that as at 19 June 2020, \$103.2 million of recovery funding has been released through 30 grants and initiatives in Victoria. The three significantly impacted fire Local Government areas - East Gippsland, Towong and Alpine Shire - have received 75.5 million or 73 per cent of the recovery funding to date. Tomorrow, I anticipate being able to provide you summarised recovery funding
45 information from New South Wales.

The DRFA includes four broad categories of recovery funding with different triggers and thresholds that States can apply for Commonwealth reimbursement for costs. In recent years the application of the DRFA has shifted to also support communities to become more resilient. Under the categories a range of recovery measures have been made available to support community resilience across the recovery domains, including infrastructure betterment programs and resilience grants programs.

Notably, category D measures, pursuant to the terms of the DRFA, are measures which are to alleviate distress or damage in circumstances which are, in the opinion of the Commonwealth, exceptional. A matter for potential consideration is whether funding to “build back better” to improve a community's resilience should be required to be shown to be exceptional. There is much to commend in incorporating betterment and resilience more generally into recovery.

As I mentioned in my opening on Monday, in March this year the Council of Australian Governments requested a review of the DRFA and work is being undertaken by the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments to develop new national guidance on how the restoration and rebuilding process can be used to make infrastructure more resilient. I anticipate the State and Territory witnesses may well address these issues in some detail during the course of the next two days of hearings.

Finally, it has been an important feature of this Royal Commission that we hear from community witnesses so as to gain greater insight into the lived experience of natural disasters. As with most of our community witnesses, the evidence of our next four community witnesses was pre-taped in accordance with the COVID-19 protocols, and to give effect to this Royal Commission's preference that further exposure to trauma and stress be minimised for those who have only recently experienced a natural disaster.

Before lunch today, you will hear from Kevin and Milusa Giles, flower growers from Sarsfield in Victoria who lost their house and their business when fires destroyed their property shortly after Christmas. You will hear what it is like to try to reconstruct your home and your livelihood from the ground up, as well as the support that the Gileses have received and the challenges they face for the years to come.

Tomorrow morning you will hear from Jenny and Arthur Robb, in Kiah on the southern coast of New South Wales. The Robbs ran several small tourism businesses. Their house survived when the fire came through but their property burned and they've lost facilities they used for their businesses. They will describe the experience of seeking support for small business, as well as the significant effect on their community of the indirect damage which resulted from the loss of tourism.

Commissioners, as you would know, with the resurgence of COVID-19 pandemic in recent days, the border between Victoria and New South Wales is now closed for the first time in a century. This development could prove particularly challenging for the communities and small businesses in those many fire-affected communities in

south-eastern Australia. Commissioners, we invite you to consider that development when you receive the evidence of the Gileses and the Robbs which was recorded before the border closures took effect yesterday. Thank you, Commissioners.

5 COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Thank you, Ms Hogan-Doran, a great summary as to why we're actually here and what we are seeking to achieve. Thank you. Let's proceed.

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: I will deal with the tender of the relevant material.
10 Actually I'm going to ask Ms Dovey to do that.

COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: How is your voice, Ms Dovey?

MS DOVEY: My voice is fine. Thank you very much.
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COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Good. I would hate to stress the counsel assisting.

MS DOVEY: Certainly. I tender documents in the tender list today, being in respect of the State of Queensland, exhibit number 20.1 being documents provided by the
20 State of Queensland, CLQ.001.001.0071 through to the last in that, is 20.1.7 which is CLQ.001.001.0053. I tender the documents in exhibit 20.2, being 20.2.1 through 20.2.8, being documents provided by the Queensland Reconstruction Authority. Chair, would you like me to read out the document IDs?

25 COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: No, I'm happy with that. We've got those on the record.

MS DOVEY: Thank you.

30 COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Just the basic ID number.

MS DOVEY: Certainly. Then exhibit 20.3, which is exhibit 20.3.1, documents provided by the Queensland Disaster Management Committee. The next is 20.4, being items 20.4.1 to 20.4.17 being documents provided by the State of Tasmania.
35 The next is exhibit 20.5 being documents relevant to the Notice Response from the State of South Australia and they are exhibit 20.5.1 through 20.5.13; 20.6.1 through 20.6.7; 20.7.1 to 20.7.2; 20.8.1 to 20.8.5 and 20.9.1. The next bundle is the documents relevant to the material from Northern Territory. That's exhibits 20.10.1 through 20.10.11; 20.11.1 through 20.11.4 --

40 COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Ms Dovey - okay. No, that's all right. Keep going.

MS DOVEY: -- 20.12.1 and 20.13.1. The next bundle is documents relevant to the material from Victoria, which is exhibits 20.14, made up of 20.14.1 to 20.14.6;
45 20.15.1 to 20.15.5; 20.16.1 as well as 20.17.1 to 20.17.3. The next is, the documents - there's one document from the Australian Capital Territory which is exhibit 20.18.1. The next is the bundle of documents in relation to Western Australia

which is exhibit 20.19, which are documents from the State of Western Australia consisting of 20.19.1 to 20.19.5, as well as exhibit 20.20, which is documents from the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, consisting of exhibits 20.20.1 to 20.20.3. Exhibit 20.21 which is a document from the State
5 Emergency Management Committee still from Western Australia, that's document 20.21. And finally a bundle of documents also relevant to the material from Western Australia in exhibit 20.22, being 20.22.1 through 20.22.5.

10 The next group of documents is those relating to the material from New South Wales. Exhibit 20.23 is documents provided by the State of New South Wales, being exhibits 20.23.1 through 20.23.7. And exhibit 20.24 which are documents from the Office of Emergency Management in New South Wales, consisting of exhibits 20.24.1 through 20.24.5, as well as the evidence from the community witnesses that we will hear from, the video-ed evidence, and that is exhibit 20.25 is the evidence of
15 Kevin and Milusa Giles which consists of the transcripts of 20.25.1 and the video at 20.25.2; and the evidence of Jenny and Arthur Robb, exhibit 20.26 and the transcript is at 20.26.1 and the video is at 20.26.2.

20 There's a supplementary tender list as well, which I seek to tender at this point in time, which has exhibits 20.27 which is a response to a notice to give from the National Bushfire Recovery Agency. Next, exhibit 20.28 consisting of two Responses to Notices to Give from the Department of Home Affairs, Emergency Management Australia, being exhibits 20.28.1 and 20.28.2, as well as an exhibit 20.29, being documents which, although we've received them from the State of
25 South Australia, actually apply nationally, and those documents are 20.29.1 being Cross-Border Assistance Guidelines dated August 2014; and 20.29.2 which is the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for Disaster Recovery Programs dated May 2018 which was referred to in the opening. Now, there is a further supplementary tender list.

30 COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Sorry, are they Commonwealth documents or are they --

35 MS DOVEY: So the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for Disaster Recovery Programs, that is a document which, it is at a national level.

COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Yes.

40 MS DOVEY: And if I can just have one moment, I will just pull that up.

COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: I just want a baseline where they originated from, not who gave them to us.

45 MS DOVEY: Certainly. No, that's okay. It is an Australian Government initiative, according to the front page of the document. If it's this, we can pull it up now to have a look at it.

COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: No, that's okay. It's an Australian Government initiative.

5 MS DOVEY: It's an Australian Government initiative. Also on the overleaf it says it is the Australian and New Zealand School of Government produced document.

COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Okay.

10 MS DOVEY: It's a document that applies on a national level and a number of states referring to it in their evidence.

COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Okay.

15 MS DOVEY: And then finally --

COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: That document was the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework; is that right?

20 MS DOVEY: That's right.

COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: What's the Cross-Border Assistance Guidelines, who owns that?

25 MS DOVEY: The Cross-Border Assistance Guidelines, that's the ANZ EMC Recovery Subcommittee Social Reference Group document.

COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Okay. Thank you. And that was developed by the Social Recovery Reference Group?

30 MS DOVEY: That is my understanding.

COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Okay.

35 MS DOVEY: Based on the face of the document.

COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: I would like to find out who's on that group throughout the day too, if we could. Thank you.

40 MS DOVEY: Finally, there's exhibit 20.30 which is the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience from the Council of Australian Governments.

COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Okay.

45 MS DOVEY: Exhibit 20.30.1.

COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Okay. Keep going.

MS DOVEY: We ask that those documents be tendered.

COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: All those documents as marked will be accepted as exhibits as marked. Thank you.

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<EXHIBIT 20.1 STATE OF QUEENSLAND DOCUMENTS 20.1.1 TO 20.1.7>

<EXHIBIT 20.2 QUEENSLAND RECONSTRUCTION AUTHORITY DOCUMENTS, 20.2.1 TO 20.2.8>

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<EXHIBIT 20.3 QUEENSLAND DISASTER MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE DOCUMENT, 20.3.1>

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<EXHIBIT 20.14 STATE OF VICTORIA DOCUMENTS, 20.14.1 TO 20.14.6; 20.15.1 TO 20.15.4; 20.16.1, AND 20.17.1 TO 20.17.3>

<EXHIBIT 20.18.1 AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY RESPONSE DOCUMENT>

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<EXHIBIT 20.19 STATE OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA BUNDLE OF DOCUMENTS, 20.19.1 TO 20.19.5>

<EXHIBIT 20.20 DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT DOCUMENTS, 20.20.1 TO 20.20.3>

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<EXHIBIT 20.21 DOCUMENT FROM STATE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE, WESTERN AUSTRALIA>

<EXHIBIT 20.22 WESTERN AUSTRALIA DOCUMENTS 20.22.1 TO 20.22.5>

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<EXHIBIT 20.23 NEW SOUTH WALES DOCUMENTS, 20.23.1 TO 20.23.7>

<EXHIBIT 20.24 DOCUMENTS FROM OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT, NEW SOUTH WALES, 20.24.1 TO 20.24.5>

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<EXHIBIT 20.25 EVIDENCE OF KEVIN AND MILUSA GILES, TRANSCRIPT 20.25.1 AND VIDEO 20.25.2>

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<EXHIBIT 20.26 EVIDENCE OF JENNY AND ARTHUR ROBB, 20.26.1 AND VIDEO 20.26.2>

<EXHIBIT 20.27 NATIONAL BUSHFIRE RECOVERY AGENCY RESPONSE TO NOTICE TO GIVE>

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<EXHIBIT 20.28 DEPARTMENT OF HOME AFFAIRS, EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AUSTRALIA RESPONSES TO NOTICES TO GIVE>

<EXHIBIT 20.29 CROSS-BORDER ASSISTANCE GUIDELINES 20.29.1 AND MONITORING AND EVALUATION FRAMEWORK FOR DISASTER RECOVERY PROGRAMS 20.29.2>

5 <EXHIBIT 20.30 NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR DISASTER RESILIENCE FROM COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENTS, 20.3.1>

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: Commissioners, I foreshadowed I would be tendering submissions from some of the States - sorry, those submissions that we have received
10 from the States and Territory, I've just been informed that the submission of the Tasmanian Government was tendered yesterday. Do you have recollection of that?

COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Okay. There was a lot yesterday but we will just go back and check and make sure

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MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: I think what I might do is defer the tender of these submissions until I have that confirmed. It should be the opening submission of the State of Queensland, the ACT Government's submission to the Royal Commission. This list doesn't have the Victorian submission. It has a Victorian State response to
20 the Notices to Give, but that's a different thing. So we will have that updated and have that amended list brought to you after the morning tea adjournment, Commissioners.

COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Okay. Thank you.

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MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: Now, Commissioners, I tendered eight volumes - or we tendered eight volumes plus the additional, from the States and Territories. You recall on Monday I said that we were proposing to tender a large number of additional responses by the States and Territories. This is a subset of some of that. So
30 what's left is not as large as I originally indicated, but it is still quite significant. That material should be ready to be tendered by the end of tomorrow.

We've written to the States and Territories asking them to identify any particular documents that ought to be included in the broader tender as being of importance or
35 relevance to you. I haven't got the precise wording of the basis on which the request was made, but in any event there may be a supplementary tender once those documents have all been identified.

COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Okay. I mean, the important thing is to get - tender
40 the documents where they answer the questions that we've asked.

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: Indeed.

COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Yes.

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COMMISSIONER BENNETT: Can I just clarify one thing? Did you say that there was material coming that the States and Territories wish to have drawn our attention to specifically?

5 MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: No, it's in the sense of, the States and Territories have already responded to a large number of Notices to Give.

COMMISSIONER BENNETT: Yes, I know.

10 MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: Most of that material has either been already tendered or it has, during the course of this week, been tendered as we have moved through the different topics. I had indicated at the beginning of the week there would be a mass tender. What has happened is we have been tendering the documents through the week. So that mass tender bundle keeps getting smaller and smaller.

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COMMISSIONER BENNETT: Well, what remains of it is getting smaller and smaller.

20 MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: What's left, which I don't have a sense yet of how big that is, we are aiming to have tendered by the end of this week.

COMMISSIONER BENNETT: I got that. I thought you said something about material that the States and Territories asked to have --

25 MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: Yes.

COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: No, it was what was important to the States and Territories we needed to make sure were tendered before we got to them.

30 MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: What it is, the Notices to Give Responses - the requests - sorry, I will start that again. The Compulsory Notices to Give Information are narrative responses. A number of them refer, at times, to particular documents, pre-existing documents. The current tender intent was only to be the written responses. And what we are seeking to do is to clarify what documents need to be
35 included in the tender so they can be read with those narrative responses. Does that make sense?

COMMISSIONER BENNETT: Yes, that does make sense. I misunderstood before.

40 MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: I apologise for not being clear to begin with. I call Mr Brendan Moon and Mr Cameron MacMillan. I'm pleased to say it's warming up in here.

45 COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Mr Moon, Mr MacMillan, thank you for joining us this morning.

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: Mr Moon and Mr MacMillan will both take an oath.

<BRENDAN MOON, SWORN>

<CAMERON MACMILLAN, SWORN>

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<EXAMINATION BY MS HOGAN-DORAN SC>

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: Mr Moon, you're the CEO of the Queensland Reconstruction Authority?

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MR MOON: Correct.

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: And, Mr MacMillan, you're the CEO of the Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority.

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MR MacMILLAN: Yes.

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: So to assist the Commissioners, I might ask you both just to begin by identifying to the Commissioners what is the responsibility of each of your agencies and how do they differ from each other? Perhaps I might start with you, Mr Moon.

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MR MOON: Thank you, counsel. The role of the Queensland Reconstruction Authority is to coordinate recovery to natural disasters in Queensland. We also administer the joint Commonwealth and State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements. We are also responsible for coordinating whole-of-government resilience policy and implementation of the same. Since 2011 we have administered the recovery, or coordinated the recovery, to over 80 events with a reconstruction and recovery program in excess of \$16 billion.

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MR MacMILLAN: Thank you. QRIDA is actually an independent statutory authority. It's actually legislated under the Rural and Regional Adjustment Act 1994. Our DNA is in agriculture to be honest, but we also, QRIDA is responsible for administering DRFA schemes, including grants and loans to primary producers, small businesses and not-for-profits. Actually, in the last 25 years we have approved 53,000 disaster loans and grants and delivered over \$900 million in financial assistance directly to primary producers, small businesses and not-for-profits.

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MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: Now, what I might ask you both, I just want to give the Commissioners a sense of the material that has been provided by the State of Queensland's comprehensive response of 2 July, and the Commissioners also have the Queensland Reconstruction Authority response of 6 May. What's acknowledged in that is that recovery is a long-term process and it can take years for a community to recover following a natural disaster. But in Queensland the time taken to recover is compounded by the number and scale of natural disasters, the majority of which are floods and cyclones. And at any one time Queensland will be recovering from multiple natural disasters and you often have the same community being impacted by

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multiple events and the cumulative impacts on communities can, therefore, be significant.

5 Can you give a sense to the Commissioners as to - I've identified there the impact on the community but what does that - is this the most significant driver to establishing these stand-alone recovery and reconstruction agencies in Queensland?

10 MR MOON: Thank you, counsel. It has - the Queensland Reconstruction Authority was first established in 2011 in response to Tropical Cyclone Yasi and the flooding of south-east Queensland. This, effectively, saw 100 per cent of Queensland disaster declared, and the reconstruction recovery program for the events of that year alone almost was \$6 billion. So it put an enormous strain on our existing recovery and also response arrangements, and in response to that, the Queensland Government established permanent stand-alone agencies to coordinate recovery from that.

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I would also note that we were always established with only a two-year life span but it was recognised in 2015, given the repeat nature of the events, the added intensity of those events, that we were made a permanent authority.

20 MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: How did QRIDA come about in that context, Mr MacMillan?

25 MR MacMILLAN: I think, as I mentioned, we were part of the Rural and Regional Adjustment Act 1994 and it was the fact that we had developed skills in grant delivery and loan delivery through the Queensland Government. And then there was a need for a sort of stand-alone independent organisation that could actually be at arm's length from policy owners. We deal directly with the not-for-profits, with the small businesses, and with the primary producers in the marketplace.

30 MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: To what extent, Mr Moon, is QRA a policy owner?

35 MR MOON: We do not own policy per se. We administer on behalf of other agencies, but we certainly are involved in the framing of those policy settings and, in some cases, implementation of the policy outputs.

35

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: Has QRA changed over the life span of its establishment from 2011 or after 2011? It's almost a decade now?

40 MR MOON: We have a strong focus on providing assistance to recovering communities through technical and also through recovery advice. What I would say has changed, counsel, has been our approach to recovery; and, as you reflected on in your initial comments, is that now the conversation has very much transitioned from our - in our communities and also within government from just rebuilding communities, but to building more resilient communities, so that we are more prepared into the future to face whatever our climatic events befall us.

45

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: On a practical level, what does that shift in focus, how is that demonstrated?

MR MOON: Okay. I would refer to our approach to reconstruction and recovery
5 planning in the early days, which was very much centred on ensuring that people
were able to return to their homes quickly and also that we reconnected our
community through a very focused approach to reconstruction. Since then, however,
we've noted that not only driven by community expectations but also the focus
10 internationally was there is a real mindset change that we needed to make our
communities more resilient. That appeared in terms of how we framed our recovery
programs and how we funded them.

So you will note over the history of the QRA and also recovery in Queensland that
we have had some quite sizeable betterment programs and some quite sizeable
15 resilience building programs, so much so I would use the north and north-west
monsoon of '18 and '19 where the community resilience and also betterment program
was some \$242 million, and we are in the middle of delivering that. But also if I go
back historically, we had significant betterment programs that enhanced the
resilience of our infrastructure in 2013, '15 and again in 2017.

20 MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: I'm going to come in some more detail in a little while to
the betterment programs and the resilience programs and to both of you. But if I just
stay with the shift over that period of time. We have heard some evidence on
Tuesday from the Queensland Inspector-General and we also had included in the
25 materials that were tendered to the Commissioners, his Recovery Governance
Review. What impact did that work have, that review have, on QRA's settings and
activities?

MR MOON: Certainly, Commissioner. It not only impacted QRA, it impacted the
30 whole of the recovery environment here in Queensland; because what we do have
here is a very, very effective review process and we do learn the lessons from each
and every one of our disasters and we build into our system those improvements and
those learnings. So specifically in relation to recovery governance, there are a couple
of key recommendations which stand out there, and it was about clarification of roles
35 and responsibilities of not only State agencies but all the way through to district and
also local level. And certainly the foundational work, the policy documents that
underpin our disaster management arrangements have incorporated that clarification
of roles.

40 MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: Just --

MR MOON: We also recognise --

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: If I could just pause you before you go to the next two
45 because this is very helpful to the Commissioners. When you say clarification of
roles, what's that in aid of? What does that assist by doing that?

MR MOON: So it provides clarity not only to agencies delivering recovery outcomes for the community but, importantly, it provides clarity to local recovery groups and local disaster management groups about who is responsible for delivering a range of recovery outcomes. In Queensland, it is dispersed across lines of recovery, and I think our Notice to Give, we have provided the structure of that. It was about clarifying who was responsible for what, and what services and what they could be relied on to provide a Local Disaster Management Group.

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: I might just have the Commissioners --

MR MOON: I would also go on to --

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: Sorry, Mr Moon, I want to take this in a couple of stages. I think what you're referring the Commissioners to is this document, CLQ.001.001.0071 at 0072. Can we just scroll in on that diagram? It may not be this particular thing you were referring to, Mr Moon, but it might assist the Commissioners just to get that sense of the number of actors in the recovery processes in Queensland; and you spoke of the clarification of roles and responsibilities being something important for the local communities and recovery groups. I imagine it's also important, so there's not duplication of work and also, therefore, of assistance to members of the community who are seeking assistance through your recovery processes; is that correct?

MR MOON: That's correct. Our disaster management arrangements clearly define the role of the Local Disaster Management Group and local recovery groups, and as supported by not only at the district level but also the State groups. And that clarification, as identified in the IGEM report, has been incorporated in those disaster management arrangements and the documents that support that.

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: We will just leave that there because I will come back to the question about how you build that right through from a local level right through to the Commonwealth. We will return to that question in a moment, but I did interrupt you when you were identifying the other key outcomes from the IGEM's review of recovery governance in Queensland?

MR MOON: Thank you, counsel. I would also refer to two other key findings. There was an opportunity to build capability and capacity at a local level to ensure that some of the governance arrangements that we were able to administer at a State level also cascaded through. And we implemented what we call the Recovery Governance and Capability Project, and we've touched over 50 Councils now where we take them through the recovery planning process: we talk about recovery leadership and we essentially are building that capability through our Councils at a local level.

Additionally, we also have provided a web resource that identified the need for a place for local recovery groups to access foundational, also recovery material, and also guidance on how they may conduct their recovery planning.

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: How have you personally found the IGEM process, engaging in the IGEM process?

5 MR MOON: Extraordinarily valuable for, I believe, everyone involved in disaster management in Queensland. IGEM are present during the decision-making, during the response and also recovery. From these events they attend our recovery meetings all the way through, and they also gauge the impact of our programs at a local level as well. And this informs their - their - not only their reports but also their crafting of disaster management standards here in Queensland.

10 MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: Now, just back up on the diagram, you've got the Commonwealth. Queensland's connections with the Commonwealth has been the subject of some earlier evidence in earlier hearings. We heard from the Drought and North Queensland Flood Response and Recovery Agency, Mr Shane Stone, and also 15 from the National Bushfire Recovery Agency, Mr Colvin, both of which were Commonwealth agencies that were set up following natural disasters. What kind of interactions and cooperation do you have with each of those agencies? And I might come to both of you to respond to that question.

20 MR MOON: If I may, counsel, I would like to split my answer in two sections: operationally and also from a policy perspective. From a policy perspective, obviously administering the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements, we have a very, very close relationship with Emergency Management Australia. And that close relationship and the flexibility that's inherent in the DRFA process, and our ability to 25 work closely with the Commonwealth has allowed us to tailor our recovery assistance to our most impacted communities.

From an operational sense, if we look at the first stages of a disaster here in Queensland, our Queensland Disaster Management Committee which is chaired by 30 the Premier and attended by not only also all the response agencies and their Ministers but also by the recovery agencies. At that table, during the early part of a disaster will also be representatives of the Australian Defence Force, the Bureau of Meteorology and liaison officers from Emergency Management Australia. And it provides a clear line of sight between an unfolding event and what's required from a 35 recovery perspective.

Since then, we've obviously had the establishment of a number of Commonwealth bodies to assist in coordinating that recovery and we've been involved ever since the establishment of both those bodies in providing the material and the lessons learnt 40 from the many disasters we've experienced here in Queensland.

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: Now, QRIDA has a particular relationship, I understand, with the Floods Recovery Agency, the Commonwealth agency. Mr MacMillan, could I just get you to speak to how that relationship has worked?

45 MR MacMILLAN: Thank you for the question. Actually very, very well. We, in the early stages of the formation of the National Drought and the North Queensland

Flood Response Recovery Agency - they approached us. They had a pool of funds which were directed to particularly primary producers who had been extraordinarily affected by the monsoon. That is a dollar-for-dollar grant up to \$400,000 that goes to a primary producer. Very, very focused on a replacement of livestock, and then the replacement of infrastructure, particularly fencing, etcetera, that was actually destroyed by the monsoon. So that relationship has been - perhaps is now 12 months of age and we hold a very, very good working relationship with that authority.

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: Now, I will return to the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements in a short while. I passed over getting some feedback from you for the Commissioners on a sense of the impact of the 2019-2020 bushfires in the context of compounding or continuing disaster recovery efforts. If I could have the Commissioners shown CLQ.001.001.0391, this is a dashboard that has been compiled by the Queensland Reconstruction Authority that has been provided, and no claim for confidentiality has been made, and we thank you for that. So that material can become available to the public.

This identifies the DRFA assistance and the particular assistance grants that have been there, and also the damage assessments. Those fires - that shows the burn scar in each of the affected areas. We can see in relation to Noosa how adjacent that burn scar is to the urban area and the peri-urban area, and also in the Southern Downs area and, of course, in parts of Livingstone and some smaller parts of Toowoomba and the Gold Coast and in Gladstone. To what extent had any or all of those regions been previously impacted or were still in recovery from previous disasters?

MR MacMILLAN: Thank you, counsel. I think the reality of recovery and also response here in Queensland is that we currently have 53 Councils - I'm sorry, 73 Councils who are recovering from an event in - since 2018.

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: You've only got 77.

MR MacMILLAN: yes, and I was going to say, over 50 of those Councils have had three or more events since 2018 as well. So it is fair to say that most of our Councils are in some form of recovery most of the time. And certainly we recognise, in terms of how we plan, how we respond, and the support that we need to provide our communities from a State Government and also from a Commonwealth Government perspective, we need to incorporate that fact.

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: The second page incorporates much more detail that the Commissioners will be able to read but you've identified, you've reported against each of the domains in which recovery operations need to take place. And I addressed some of those in my opening remarks today, and all of that material will be available to members of the public on the website of the Royal Commission during the course of today.

You spoke there about particular communities or particular - well, a large number of Councils being in a situation, not just their second but their third disaster. In the

context of the submissions that you've made on betterment and its crossover into the categories for disaster recovery funding assistance, if I could have the Commissioners taken now to CLQ.001.001.0110 under Betterment. You mentioned earlier in your comments the measures that are taken in Queensland to ensure it becomes the most disaster resilient State, and we can see that in your written materials. To what extent is what has been happening in Queensland a lesson or an insight for the rest of Australia and for the Australian Government?

MR MOON: I think it's important to recognise it's one of our foundational objectives in terms of the National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework and certainly it is in Queensland's Strategy for Disaster Resilience that we need to keep investing in disaster risk reduction. The betterment, and we recognised in 2013 that infrastructure assets that had been rebuilt from 2011 were being re-damaged. Our community were asking us: why are we rebuilding in the same place and in the same condition? And they were key drivers to our changing the approach to incorporating betterment within our system.

The reality is that we seek to obviously not only reduce the exposure of our communities to these climatic events, but we also need to recognise that the repeat damage is creating a massive drain on the public purse as well, and I mentioned \$16 billion since 2011. Importantly, as you will see, the betterment project has worked not only in terms of savings to the community but, importantly, if we look at all of those assets that have been built to a more resilient standard since 2011, many of them have been re-damaged. And what we have found, because we do monitor the performance of them, is some 96 per cent of them are either still functional or undamaged in the immediate aftermath of subsequent events. And I would also add, internationally the UN is looking at the betterment program that has been delivered by Australia and they see it as world's best practice.

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: You focused just a moment ago, triggered something in my mind about communities saying, well, just rebuilding and then having it re-damaged because of the nature of the environment in which you live and not necessarily building to a higher standard. One of the things that was raised in evidence yesterday is part of the response of the Department of State Development Manufacturing Infrastructure and Planning. There was a question raised by the Chair. QRA has a quite unique power in its legislation to facilitate the relocation of people affected by natural disaster. Could you just speak to that and to the circumstances in which that power has been exercised?

MR MOON: Thank you, counsel. We do have powers under our Act to facilitate the rapid recovery of communities impacted by disaster and also to mitigate the potential impacts of future disasters. This gives us powers under our Act to declare reconstruction areas, make development areas, and also to facilitate other decision-makers into ensuring that approvals are provided in a prompt - in a prompt matter. It has only been used once and I believe it was referred to yesterday, which was the relocation of Grantham out of the flood - out of the floodplain onto the hill beside it, so out of the high risk area.

I think what we saw there was Local Governments, State Government and the Commonwealth Government coming together to deliver a solution for a community which reduced their disaster risk, and using those powers in that particular
5 circumstance, and there were out there - were significant circumstances attached to the loss of life in Grantham. We saw from the inception of the community engagement to people moving into their homes in Grantham, that took a period of 12 months. And I understand from my planning colleagues that under normal
10 circumstances that process could take anywhere between three and five years to effect.

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: So, just so that I can be clear, how was that all funded, that exercise? Was it - it's not --

15 MR MOON:

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: It's not within the context of betterment as such?

MR MOON: It was a mixture of State and Commonwealth funding, counsel.
20

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: I see.

MR MOON: And it was not related to the betterment program.

25 MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: I see. Right. Have there been other circumstances, or can you imagine or anticipate other circumstances, in which other communities might, because of the heightened risk and exposure to natural disaster, that there may need to be communities that need to be relocated as the increased incidence of severe weather begins to impact on particular communities?

30 MR MOON: I - in answer to your question, the potential there obviously is important to recognise. The circumstances in 2011 were quite - quite considerable given the loss of life attached to that flash flood. If we are confronted by similar circumstances, that would be a discussion that I believe would need to be held with not only the
35 community but also Local Government, State Government and Commonwealth entities, but the powers certainly reside within the Act to do that.

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: Back to the broader question: how do you identify
40 projects for betterment?

MR MOON: Under our frameworks, which we have agreed with the Commonwealth, they are locally identified and prioritised. There's also a streamline approval process for betterment projects. We have - we take into account not only the impacts of past disasters but we also look at the importance of that piece of
45 infrastructure to that community, and that allows us a framework in which to decide which projects require funding.

I would also remark that we have recently released two Local Governments throughout Queensland. We have collected the spatial data and the impact data for all natural disaster events since 2011, and we have presented that spatially now, which clearly outlines, in a heat map basis, the vulnerabilities of infrastructure networks which allows Councils to make informed decisions about where they can invest betterment funds into the future.

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: I will just, before I pass from this topic, on the next page, 0111, you continue on other aspects of the Queensland's Betterment Program and that it has garnered interest from international disaster management sector and you participated in discourse at the United Nations. You've also developed the Queensland Disaster Resilience and Mitigation Investment Framework, which is a framework providing guidance on effective investment decision-making and prioritisation. Is that just government investment in, for example, public infrastructure, or is that investment on a broader scale; that is, also for the business community and international investors?

MR MOON: We provide that to our recovery partners. It is - it is publicly available, but it is meant to give guidance to those agencies and those entities who we are - who we - who we partner with in the recovery space and who we fund during the - well, for example, the betterment process. But there are also a range of other State Government initiatives which build resilience. And we - we look to the mitigation and investment framework as a guidance document to inform their decision-making about how they prioritise funding, because we certainly recognise the need for building resilience at times far outstrips the available funds in which to do so.

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: And finally - you speak about the Get Ready program but I will just move past that, Get Ready Queensland, but over to 0112, the Household Resilience program. Now, the Household Resilience program is one that's particularly directed to, as I understand it, to cyclones and making structural changes to existing household stock so that it can better resist a future exposure to cyclonic activity. And we heard some evidence about that indeed on the first day of hearing in the context of the significant risk of property damage and, of course, also risk to life from cyclones. Has there been any consideration of extending the Household Resilience program to other kinds of natural disasters; for example, bushfire risk mitigation?

MR MOON: At this stage, this is a program that is administered by the Department of Housing and Public Works. Their focus has been on cyclone - cyclone vulnerable areas from Bundaberg north to the Cape. For Queensland, severe fires, catastrophic fires, are a relatively new event, our first one being 2018 where we experienced catastrophic bushfires in central Queensland. I think, as time goes on, we will probably need to look at extending similar programs to ensure that they take an all-hazards approach to the - given the environment we are now facing.

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: I have, in the time available, two other quick points I want to take the Commissioners to and ask you to expand upon. The first is 0107.

This is opportunities for the future. You raise a number of opportunities which I think may be of interest to the Commissioners in that first dot point. Thank you. One of the things we have heard constantly, it seems, throughout this Royal Commission, has been the difficulties experienced by members of the community in having to deal with a variety of people and having to retell their story, which, of course, can be both triggering and re-traumatising to them, but, of course, the necessity to gather data in order to be able to facilitate the delivery of recovery programs.

The proposal here is for a single point of all data collected to be put through, essentially, through the one data point. You mention elsewhere in the submission at 0131 - don't go to it - an integrated case management system for all recovery which would facilitate one view of client needs and assistance being provided. Is that the same thing as you're speaking to here or is that a different thing?

MR MOON: It is the same thing, counsel. And I think that you've raised two issues there for us, is the centralised collection of data to trigger relief measures. That is done at an agency level and we centralised that through our State Disaster Coordination Centre. But the issue in relation to that integrated case management piece is about how we deal with people who have been deeply impacted by a disaster and how we arrange support for them, be it psychosocial support, financial support. And it is a challenging area because I don't believe a one size fits all.

And the best recovery hubs that I've seen in operation are those where there are a variety of services available in a one stop shop where people can go and share their story to someone who may have the capacity to provide that psychosocial support, and then in the same place also provide financial support. Having one person being able to do that would be challenging and also would be very costly to train them. As I said, we've seen it work very well in our recovery hubs, which are administered by Department of Communities, and having that one stop shop with all those facilities available has worked very, very well in the past.

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: You say here:

"A single point of - an opportunity is a single point of all data collected by any government or private NGO entity in any event, such as -"

I'm not sure if this is a mistake:

"- National Globe Data for Emergency Management."

Should that be "globe" or "global"?

MR MOON: "Globe". I understand it's a platform.

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: It's a platform. I see. I probably should know that. You also then go on to talk about exploring the role that the use of live big data may play. Are there any steps being taken by QRA or QRIDA in using big data or machine

learning to assist in speeding up and streamlining the information gathering process, and you spoke about using heat maps to assist in identifying appropriate prioritisation projects for investment?

5 MR MOON: As I indicated earlier in my comments, we certainly do have a - have broad data collection capabilities and spatial capabilities within QRA and also within Queensland Government. How you would apply the analysis of that, we haven't turned our minds nor our resources to that within QRA at this stage.

10 MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: The last thing I want to raise with you, I think it's best directed to you, Mr MacMillan. In the context of providing financial assistance, there's a question as to at what stage in the process one can best place incentives to minimise risk. To what extent is - and whether or not there are both incentives and penalties - incentives for minimising risks and penalties for risk taking, to what
15 extent is that part of the way QRIDA assists the agricultural community, for example, by the way it structures its financial support?

MR MacMILLAN: Thank you for the question. Do you mean around purely disaster recovery or some of the things that we actually do with the agricultural industries on
20 a day-to-day basis?

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: Whatever is the best way to answer the question, I suppose.

25 MR MacMILLAN: Okay. I guess, you know, we're very grassroots, so it's very, very operational what we actually do. So we will be given a scheme, so when the monsoon hits, we will have dealt with a lot of the people before, potentially not the small businesses but definitely the agricultural people we would have actually worked with before. Our role is really to interpret the scheme that is actually put in
30 place, and that's normally done between the State Government and the Federal Government, it's actually what the scheme looks like. And then really our role is to get that money - and particularly around the small businesses because we do find that a lot of the small businesses go into these events not in a great situation anyway, and that was the situation in Townsville. And, really, our role is to get that money into
35 bank accounts as quickly as we possibly can, as effectively as we possibly can.

You know, those individuals, those individual businesses are using the money as they see best fit. You know, they've got to get their businesses back up and running. You know, our evidence is they use that money wisely. And then we have loan
40 schemes, obviously. Those loan schemes are all about replanting, you know, getting the business back up and running even down to operational, you know, wages, etcetera. And particularly when people are borrowing money, our judgment is that they're actually using that money wisely.

45 MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: I might go back to you, Mr Moon. Thank you, Mr MacMillan. Mr Moon, to what extent are there conditions or structures in your

schemes of reconstruction that take into account incentivising members of the community to take risk mitigation and resilience upon themselves?

5 MR MOON: Incentivising, certainly from a State perspective, we don't incentivise through our schemes per se. There would be downstream impacts, for example. For example, the Household Resilience program, it has the potential to reduce insurance premiums for those householders who undertake those retrofitting works. We certainly do recognise the importance, as part of our grant funding process, of people
10 mitigating their risk and certainly assuming their - where it's possible, their abilities and their capacities to mitigate risks through insurance and those sorts of issues.

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: Commissioners, I'm mindful of the time. I think we did start a little bit late but I know that each of you have questions.

15 COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: We do. I want to thank both the gentlemen for their - it has been a comprehensive response that you've given us in the way Queensland recovers and the coordination side of it. I would just like to take you to a couple of parts of the question that we asked, which is probably not in the steady state recovery phase which you have covered quite well, it's probably those initial
20 recovery areas and just a couple of questions of process.

So if we can go to CLQ.001.001.0071, so it's the cover of the sheet we had up before, and if you just highlight the question, please. Question 1. So this was the question, and the submission is very comprehensive. It does provide an outline of the role of
25 the State of Queensland in facilitating recovery from the 2019-2020 bushfires and floods, including in relation to local communities and Local Government; provides other States and Territories and the Commonwealth. The bit that I'm interested in is the bit in brackets in (a):

30 *"Including processes for supporting escalation of recovery support when local capacity is exceeded."*

I note further into the submission the role of the QRA is to request when to monitor for when:

35

"Requests for assistance escalate when the capacity or resources of local governments have been exhausted."

40 And so I'm interested in how you identify that and then how you then work with the States and Territories and the Commonwealth in that sense. And so to, I guess, prompt that discussion, if we can go to page 0074 and if you highlight just the bit about other States and Territories down to ANZEMC, up, without EMC. So I'm looking at it in an operational sense, not a policy sense. And the answer, the reason I have lifted it up is, ANZEMC your answers are more around the policy and how you
45 work the policy, similar with CORS and the like. But noting own evidence from Queensland, as you are disaster central. And, in fact, I spent the last decade of my

life supporting disasters in Queensland and I have actually observed your Betterment Program as well in that time and how you work.

5 But noting that you've got Local Governments continually in recovery phases and then another disaster hits, and we've heard evidence from Local Governments around Australia about how quickly they become overtaxed and difficult for them to support. Now, you've given us in a business-as-usual steady state how Queensland recovers. But I'm interested in what's the process for identifying, from a government level, that an LGA is about to be - a Council is about to be overwhelmed? And then how you
10 then - you've got internal processes, and that's for the State of Queensland to work, but how you then request assistance from States and Territories or the Commonwealth? And that answer is very good. It talks about Queensland's experience and how you support other people, but it doesn't actually answer the question about how you do it yourself. The words that got my attention, though, were
15 the second dot point, where it says you have:

"Strong relationships with other jurisdiction offering assistance to them on an ad hoc basis."

20 I'm assuming the other jurisdictions do that back to you, or is there a process in place that provides structure to that? Does that make sense? It was a long lead-in, but does that make sense as a question?

MR MOON: I will try and answer it in two parts, Commissioner. Thank you. With
25 respect to our local disaster management groups and the operation there where we recognise that, by virtue of the scale of the disaster and the needs of that Local Disaster Management Group, are escalating quickly, and we need to bring more capability and support in there. We deal with that and we manage that, because through our arrangements we pre-position various agency representatives within that
30 Local Disaster Management Group. And they are giving us visibility of the unfolding situation. And they have, even prior to the event, a very, very good understanding of the capability of the recovery capacities, and also associated recovery groups within that jurisdiction.

35 So we're able to elevate that through to district and also through to - through to the State. We have a standing group of recovery officers at QRA who have very, very strong relationships with those Local Governments, and that is essential during the course of the disaster because they can feed us that intelligence back as it unfolds, and we can make requests for additional assistance.

40 With respect to other jurisdictions, Commissioner, we do have an MOU to share community recovery resources, and I reflect back on the north and north-west monsoon where we were able to access approximately 250 representatives of the community recovery workforce from other jurisdictions. That's managed by the
45 Department of Communities under a memorandum of understanding. We were also --

COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Can we just stop. That one actually is a good one because who is that MOU with?

5 MR MOON: It's with other members of the - the SRRG. So it is administered through or it's facilitated through CORS and --

10 COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: So if I just go up there, so for those that are watching, the last dot point there, and this will help the Commission go through, CORS is a subcommittee, Community Outcomes and Recovery Subcommittee of ANZEMC which is a policy committee, and the SRRG, I think, sits underneath that. That's the stakeholder group. Who are they? Who's that group?

15 MR MOON: They're representatives of the various agencies throughout Australia who manage community recovery, and they can be from a variety of agencies, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Okay. And so --

20 MR MOON: Here in Queensland it is the Department of Communities who are responsible for the human and social line of recovery.

25 COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Alright. So that's the SRRG. And they are facilitated by who? Obviously, the group comes together. Does someone chair it? Does someone facilitate it? How does that work?

MR MOON: It would - I would have to take advice from the Department of Communities as to who actually chairs it at this particular point in time, Commissioner.

30 COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Okay. No, that's alright. I was going to ask him about a secretariat. That's okay. I won't put you on the spot there. We're just trying to get where that all sits. Okay. So that's a policy committee. And there's an MOU. Let's lift it back up to your level again. That MOU works - how is that coordinated? Do you just go State to State, or does someone facilitate that? How does that all work?

35 MR MOON: The Department of Communities would go State to State, to access community recovery resources.

40 COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Okay. Is the Commonwealth a signatory to that too?

MR MOON: I would have to take advice on that Commissioner

45 COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Okay. No, that's alright. I don't want to put you in a position where you're not sure. Okay. So that's a process on how non-operational, non-combat, if you're firefighting or rescue - sorry, response resources, they have another mechanism, but this is the non-operational aspect of that. The people come in

early on for recovery to help that. How does that then coordinate with the Local Government Area Association? I'm just looking at counsel.

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: Council-to-Council?

5

COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Yes, we had the Queensland Local Government Association.

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: The Queensland Local Government Association provided evidence about their Council-to-Council program.

10

COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Okay.

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: Which was within the State of Queensland, and then I think --

15

COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: No, stop there. That's exactly what I wanted.

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: Thank you.

20

COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: So how do you work with an association that says that they are coordinating resources backwards and forwards between Local Government areas to make sure that - do they sit with you somewhere in that committee or do you liaise with them, or do you outsource it to them? It seems that was the case from the evidence that they gave, that they just seemed to do it between Councils and get on with it. How does that part work?

25

MR MOON: So the Local Government Association of Queensland sit on the QDMC, are an observer at QDMC and they are feeding into the operational aspects, not only of response but also of recovery. In terms of the sharing of resources in the community recovery space, the LGAQ do not provide support in that space. They will be providing support directly to the Council impacted, where - however, the actual Local Disaster Management Group is coordinating the - with Department of Communities, will coordinate recovery activities using a range of resources not only interstate but also State-based resources as well.

30

COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Okay. So in this, you may not be able to answer it, but in the response phase then, where the Local Government Council is becoming overwhelmed in that earlier bit, the association coordinates resources, not a State department or anyone like that. They let the association work that backwards and forwards and just get on with it?

40

MR MOON: Correct. We have very, very flat arrangements in Queensland where the LGAQ have visibility of the operations of those Councils and are able to mobilise support for Councils that are exhausting their own resources.

45

COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: So that's not seen as a State responsibility? Does that sound like I'm confused? But I would have thought that's a State responsibility.

5 MR MOON: Certainly under our disaster management arrangements the mobilisation of those Local Council resources can be facilitated, and is facilitated, by the LGAQ.

COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Okay. Thank you very much for clarifying that. I appreciate it. Commissioner Macintosh?

10 COMMISSIONER MACINTOSH: Thanks, Chair. Thank you both for your evidence. Two quick questions. Before you made reference to the fact that in your systems, agencies collect data and then it's aggregated up to the State Disaster
15 Co-ordination Centre. I just wondered whether the collation of those data is done in accordance with the national protocol? So what data you collect, the form in which it's collected, those sorts of things, to ensure there is consistency in the data that's collected at the State level and can be integrated at the Federal level.

MR MOON: The State Disaster Co-ordination Group would set the framework for the collection of that data. We are in the recovery space. We are very - we determine
20 which data we use to support the activation. So it's probably a question best directed to Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER MACINTOSH: Thanks for that. A follow-up question then. Before, Ms Hogan-Doran asked you a question about whether there's any penalties
25 for risk taking in the programs that you administer. Can I just give you a hypothetical? Let's just say we had two businesses built in a flood prone area. Business A took good measures to prepare the property and the business for the floods. They built barriers and built cement, had cement flooring, etcetera, etcetera. Business B didn't. And then an event occurs and both of the businesses seek
30 assistance. Is there anything in the programs that you administer that accounts for the fact that business A did things to mitigate risk and business B didn't?

MR MOON: No, Commissioner. Under the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements, which you would have visibility of, there is no such mechanism
35 within those relief measures.

COMMISSIONER MACINTOSH: Thanks very much. Thanks, Chair.

40 COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Thank you. Commissioner Bennett?

COMMISSIONER BENNETT: Yes, I've got some little clarification type of questions, if I may. Some of them mirror some of the areas already raised by Commissioner Macintosh. I will go to the last one first. You talked about the importance of people having a one stop shop to tell their story and that then involves
45 data sharing between different government agencies. And that was in the series of dot points, I've lost the page. And then above that you were looking at options about the use of live big data. I'm assuming that the use of live big data that you're

considering is about things like predictions and modelling, and not using big data for people's privately collected stories. Is that correct? I just want to clarify that point.

5 MR MOON: That is correct, Commissioner. We would use that to inform our decisions about mitigation investment and betterment investment into the future.

10 COMMISSIONER BENNETT: Yes. It's not going to be using some sort of - because a lot of people are selling data about people around at the moment. So I just want to sure that these privacy considerations, while people can consent to have their story told broadly for the purposes of recovery, that it's not being machine learned for other purposes. Thank you. That's very helpful.

15 You were also asked some questions about your investment framework and I just wanted to clarify, I think you were asked the question and I didn't quite understand, you may have answered it, but I didn't quite understand the answer. You were asked whether your framework, which referred to co-investment, was other government entities and other government funding, or whether it also included the private sector. And I'm going to ask it again because I would be interested to know whether you do bring in the private sector either by way of public/private partnerships or, for
20 example, looking to social impact investment, people who are investing in social impact outcomes. And I was just wondering whether you were utilising those sorts of private sources of funding in your recovery programs?

25 MR MOON: We haven't thus far, Commissioner. And certainly the way we administer the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements here in Queensland, it is a safety net to not only save entities but also to - to Local Government and members of the community. The private enterprise is not usually included in, in terms of reconstruction and also investment in betterment. And we certainly haven't approached them thus far on a co-investment model in our Disaster Recovery
30 Funding Arrangements and our working in recovery.

35 COMMISSIONER BENNETT: I was thinking, I must say, in that betterment space, actually. That's what triggered my thinking, that there could be an opportunity in the betterment space especially with major facilities, that there could be social impact investing or PPPs, but I will just leave that. I mean, would you reject it?

40 MR MOON: We wouldn't reject it on the surface but I would reflect that DRFA and the way we link betterment to existing essential public infrastructure, they are usually either State owned or Local Government owned. So under the existing betterment framework we wouldn't have the flexibility to invest in private infrastructure, Commissioner.

45 COMMISSIONER BENNETT: Okay. Thank you. And my last one, is coming back to a bit of the same sort of area that Commissioner Macintosh raised. I was thinking of it in terms of with the betterment and people who are insured and insured value, and I think I saw that you give 75 per cent in one particular case, up to 75 per cent of increased costs up to a maximum of \$11,000-odd if people want to - I think that was

in the cyclone house improvements. I'm thinking about house improvements for cyclones and you gave that. Now, I just wondered where insured/uninsured comes in, because a lot of people, when they're looking at building back or improvement or changing after damage, these - often the insurance costs don't meet that sort of extra betterment improvement. Is that where the State comes in generally?

MR MOON: They can --

COMMISSIONER BENNETT: I mean, the bit of a question Commissioner Macintosh asked, was about people who mitigate and don't mitigate. I'm asking insured versus non-insured and I think the answer you gave to him suggests to me it's the same sort of answer. So where is the incentive for people to (a) - two questions: where is the incentive for people to insure, and (b), if their insurance doesn't cover a betterment program, is that where the State kicks in?

MR MOON: Essentially, a decision about insurance is a matter for a particular individual. There are no incentives built into the relief measures that are currently captured under the disaster recovery funding arrangements. As I said, from a recovery perspective, the way we deal with people without insurance versus those with insurance is that those people who start to fall through the safety net, we not only provide assistance through the DRFA but there are other ways of providing assistance through the charities, and the non-government organisations as well.

And we have, over the last 10 years, been in that situation where we have people whose recovery from a particular disaster is particularly impacted because they don't have the wherewithal with which to fund their own recovery, and that is where we come in with a range of recovery options. That is not necessarily administered under the DRFA. But certainly when we are coming to the issue of how do we incentivise people to take insurance, that is very much left to the individual at this particular point in time, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER BENNETT: Well, if you end up with the same level of outcome if your home is damaged and it's going to be brought back to a level, what is the - by the State, by the recovery funding, where is the incentive either to mitigate or to insure?

MR MOON: At this point in time, our Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements have not matured to a sense where we - or to a stage where we provide incentives nor triggers for additional investment in personal assets.

COMMISSIONER BENNETT: So the two people, insured and uninsured, mitigated, not mitigated, end up with the same end result? One just gets much more funding. The uninsured, unmitigated person gets more funding to bring their property up to the same level as the person who insured and mitigated?

MR MOON: The way the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements are currently set is that those incentives are not built into those Disaster Recovery Funding

Arrangements. It is very much calibrated as a safety net for individuals and also for Local Governments. It is not a reimbursement scheme. And it doesn't take into account, in most cases, whether an individual is insured or uninsured.

5 COMMISSIONER BENNETT: Thank you very much. Thank you. They were very helpful clarifications. And all of your evidence has been of great assistance. Thank you.

10 COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Mr MacMillan, Mr Moon, thank you for joining us this morning. It has been a really good session. It's a good session to start the recovery couple of days and module off. So we appreciate that very much. Have we heard anything from those with leave to appear?

15 MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: No.

COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: No. Obviously, didn't ask hard enough questions. But we thank you both for joining us today and released from --

20 MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: May they be released?

COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: They may be released from their summons. Thank you gentlemen, we appreciate it. With that, I think we will adjourn until 11.55 Canberra time. Thank you.

25 <ADJOURNED 11:39 AM>

<RESUMING 11:55 AM>

30 COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Ms Hogan-Doran.

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: Yes, Chair, just before we call the next witnesses, I'm going to complete the tender of the opening submissions received from the States and the ACT. I'm informed that exhibit 19.17.1 was the submission of the State of Tasmania, tendered yesterday. And the exhibit 20.14.6 was the opening submission of the State of Victoria, which was included in the bundle of materials which Ms Dovey tendered this morning. I tender the opening submission of the State of Queensland of May 2020. That's exhibit 20.31.

40 COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Okay.

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: And I tender the ACT Government's submission to the Royal Commission of 29 April 2020, and that's exhibit 20.32.

45 COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Okay. We will take both of those as exhibits.

<EXHIBIT 20.31 OPENING SUBMISSION OF STATE OF QUEENSLAND DATED MAY 2020>

<EXHIBIT 20.32 ACT GOVERNMENT SUBMISSION DATED 29 APRIL 2020>

5 MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: I will just note that there's - no opening submission has been received from the Northern Territory or from the State of New South Wales. I also note there has not been, I don't think, a submission received from the State of Western Australia, but noting that the State of Western Australia provided their Letters Patent at a date - at a later point in time.

10 COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Okay.

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: To the State of New South Wales and the other States.

15 COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: All right. Thank you.

MS DOVEY: Next, can we please call recovery panel 1.2: Mr Craig Limkin, who is the Deputy Secretary, Policy and Intergovernmental Relations and State Recovery Adviser; and Ms Jenny Gale, Secretary, Department of Premier and Cabinet of Tasmania.

20 COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Mr Limkin, Ms Gale, thank you very much for joining us.

25 MS DOVEY: Mr Limkin, I understand that you will take an affirmation; is that right?

MR LIMKIN: That is correct.

30 <CRAIG LIMKIN, AFFIRMED>

MS DOVEY: And Ms Gale, I understand that you will also take an affirmation?

MS GALE: That's correct.

35 <JENNY GALE, AFFIRMED>

<EXAMINATION BY MS DOVEY>

40 MS DOVEY: Thank you. Now, the State of Tasmania has responded to the questions posed in relation to recovery by way of a witness statement. We referred earlier today to that statement having been provided voluntarily. I'm advised, in fact, that is an error, and the statement was, in fact, provided pursuant to a Compulsory Notice to Give a Witness Statement. That is correct, Ms Gale? Just to correct the record.

45 MS GALE: Yes, that is correct.

MS DOVEY: Yes. Can we please bring up document TAS.500.001.0452? Ms Gale, is this the witness statement by which the State of Tasmania has responded to the questions?

5 MS GALE: It is.

MS DOVEY: And can you confirm that the contents of this statement are true and correct?

10 MS GALE: I can confirm that. Yes, they are true and correct.

MS DOVEY: Thank you. Now, Ms Gale, you're the Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet for the State of Tasmania. Would you be able to briefly explain your role as it relates to recovery from natural disasters?

15

MS GALE: Thank you. Yes. As the Secretary to the Department of Premier and Cabinet under the Tasmanian legislation for the Emergency Management Act, my position has responsibility for recovery once an emergency has been declared. So my position is as the State Recovery Adviser, and at the moment that is delegated to the Deputy Secretary role of Policy and Intergovernmental Relations. So I delegate as I see fit, depending on the nature of the circumstances.

20

MS DOVEY: Certainly. And so, Mr Limkin, that means you're currently in the role of the State Recovery Adviser; is that correct?

25

MR LIMKIN: That is correct.

MS DOVEY: Thank you very much. Now, just to start with, I would like to go and just have a bit of an overview of the effect of bushfires in the State of Tasmania in recent years. And, particularly for Tasmania, initially I would like to go back a little bit earlier than we have for some of the other States. Can we please go to document TAS.500.001.0152 and this is a final recovery plan for the 2018-'19 bushfires which, for Tasmania, were more significant than the bushfires experienced over the most recent summer period. Is either of you in a position to talk to the effects of these bushfires on the State of Tasmania?

30

35

MS GALE: Yes, I believe we will be able to. I would just like to preface that by saying that at the time of the 2018-'19 bushfires I think I had been in this role for approximately a month to six weeks, and Mr Limkin actually was not in Tasmania at the time. So - but we do have - I do have an overview and we have the documents in front of us. So we should, hopefully, be able to provide responses to the questions or we may have to take some things on notice.

40

MS DOVEY: Perhaps I will just suggest to you, based on the document before you, that in terms of just a very brief overview, the burnt area was around 210,000 hectares or three per cent of Tasmania as a whole, which is found at page 0155.

45

MS GALE: Yes.

MS DOVEY: And this also talks to reports of psychological impact and personal distress, small business owners with significant level of distress and notes, as
5 Ms Hogan-Doran noted in the hearing, that 95,430 hectares of
Tasmania's - Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area burnt, which is about six
per cent of that area. Is that recovery --

MS GALE: Yes.

10

MR LIMKIN: Yes.

MS DOVEY: And is that recovery process still continuing?

15 MR LIMKIN: I will answer that. So, yes, there are a number of recommendations
that are being implemented. So Tasmania does a review as part of recovery. So the
actual recovery process, to help the communities and those affected has ended, but
the actual continuing onward implementation of the reviews - review findings out of
the recovery response is continuing.

20

MS DOVEY: Are you able to talk to the way in which the reviews of that process are
being implemented and fed back into your processes currently?

25 MR LIMKIN: Yes. So, the Department of Premier and Cabinet, Office of Security
and Emergency Management team has responsibility to - to manage the
implementation of the responses on a whole-of-government basis. So we partner with
agencies such as the DPIPW, which is our Department of Primary Industries, Parks,
Water, to really implement those. And so things such as the TWA review and
looking at the impact on climate change continue at this point. OSEM takes an
30 overall management role and is driving the delivery and performance of that.

Our government is really focused on taking lessons learned out of this - out of
bushfire processes to inform how we build resilient communities and protect the
State of Tasmania from natural disasters going forward. You know, you're talking
35 about a bushfire but we do that with, you know, floods, or do that with the COVID
pandemic. It will be, you know, more broadly of how we manage the system here in
Tasmania.

MS DOVEY: Okay. Thank you. Turning to the most recent bushfire season,
40 Tasmania wasn't without fires. There's an impact and needs assessment that's set out
in document TAS.500.001.0198 which is attached to the statement, in which it notes
that that fire burnt over 22,000 hectares, destroyed seven residential premises, with
an economic impact on agribusiness estimated at \$1.2 million. The witness
statement, which is TAS.500.001.0452 at 0461, sets out that the total recorded
45 spending for the Tasmanian Government recovery measures was over eight million,
and that the Commonwealth contribution is unknown until the DRF claim is

finalised. Would you like to add anything in terms of the effect and the recovery process of those particular fires on Tasmania?

5 MR LIMKIN: I think what I would say is, you know, Tasmania has had, in 2019-'20 a very small fire system. We didn't see the devastation caused elsewhere. However, that does impact people. You know, seven houses lost has impacted people here in Tasmania. And Tasmania takes a community led approach on recovery, and so we have had to work with those - those communities and those Local Government areas to really help them recover from this process.

10 I guess the point I would make is that the DRFA, the reason why our witness statement talks about we are unable to, you know, consolidate the costs at the moment is because the process to do that is actually quite long and is complex. You know, we actually have to have it audited, signed off by an auditor, submit a final claim. And so the reason why we can't provide that information to the committee is 15 the process the Commonwealth has set up is - is a lengthy process and quite a complex process.

20 MS DOVEY: Yes. Thank you. Perhaps this is a good point at which to turn and ask if you would be able to give, either Ms Gale or Mr Limkin, a brief overview of recovery coordination and, in particular, governance within Tasmania. I might ask the operator to bring up in the witness statement TAS.500.001.0452, if you could bring up the second page, 0453 and just show the diagram at the top of the page.

25 MR LIMKIN: That's better.

MS GALE: I can see it now. Thank you.

30 MS DOVEY: Could one of you please give an overview?

MS GALE: That describes - sorry, so that describes the governance in relation to the Tasmanian recovery. And you will see there - and this governance and the recovery arrangements are legislated through the Emergency Management Act, as I said earlier. So, at the very top level we will see that we have a Ministerial Committee for 35 Emergency Management which is chaired by the Premier, and then - then various layers underneath that.

So when we're talking about recovery, we do - a State recovery coordinator does form a State recovery committee. And while response is happening to the 40 emergency, then that is formed underneath the State Emergency Management Committee and it's part of the State Control Centre. And the State Recovery Committee has on each, representatives from agencies across government in Tasmania and does include the Local Government Association of Tasmania. And Craig will probably be able to give you some more detail in relation to that.

45 And then we have various working groups and so on during that response phase, which is the middle part of that governance diagram, the recovery working groups

and so on. We can also have, depending on the circumstances, there may well be a recommendation from the State Recovery Adviser to the Ministerial Committee for Emergency Management to form a recovery task force and to have a recovery coordinator. That doesn't always happen. Again, it depends on the circumstances of the particular emergency of the day. So, Craig, I don't know if you would like to add anything?

MR LIMKIN: I think --

10 MS GALE: -- any more detail.

MR LIMKIN: -- just to pick up on your last point, Jenny, that while this is our proposed recovery structure under TEMA. and the State Recovery Plan, as Jenny said under the Emergency Management Act, it is flexible. You know, each - each instance is unique. You look at, you know, and I know you're looking at natural disasters, but you look at COVID we have run a similar structure but we've expanded a recovery working group into two different ones: social and economic. So I think while this is the proposed governance, the plans give us the ability to flex and change depending on the situation and really engage in what's right for the community, you know.

We are - we are dealing with people who are affected. We are dealing with people who could have lost their homes and their land. And so it is really important that we change the governance structures and the recovery process to meet those communities; particularly, you know, you see on the screen, you will see regional social recovery committees. You know, they are - they have been key for us in these things, dealing with mental health, dealing with that. And we can stand them up individually through a region, such as the north-west, or we can stand them up across the State, depending upon what is the impact.

MS GALE: And, of course, we also, if I can just add to that, in each emergency situation being different, we also have different ways, I guess, in which recovery runs either parallel to response or separately on its own and, again, it would depend on the nature of it. I probably should also mention there that - that the recovery - the State Recovery Committee works loosely to - flexibly to the State Recovery Plan and we look at recovery across those four domains, that I think are referenced in the witness statement: the social recovery, economic recovery, infrastructure and environmental recovery. And they are each the responsibility of different agencies. And DPAC coordinates across domain recovery.

MS DOVEY: Okay. Can you describe, within those different domains, how you deal with information flows in ensuring that everybody has the information that they need for that process to work, in a streamlined way?

MS GALE: So, in an overview sense, each of the responsible agencies does take responsibility for their particular components, but - so, for example, for a State coordinated recovery, the responsible agency will work with the coordinating

agency. So in the current COVID case, for example, that would be the Department of Health. In the previous bushfire emergencies that would be the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management. So the responsible agency works with that coordinating agency to collate, analyse, interpret and report the impact assessment data for example.

And then those coordinating agencies would liaise with DPAC's Officer of Security and Emergency Management or a recovery task force, if one has been formed for that particular emergency. And then DPAC, as the lead agency for recovery, then would have responsibility for that information being reported and disseminated back up through other key stakeholders, such as the State controller, regional controllers, the State Emergency Management Committee, etcetera.

MS DOVEY: Okay. Thank you.

MR LIMKIN: I think also, as Jenny said, you know, it is also about community-led, you know, like, we may choose for long-term recovery to set up affected areas recovery committee to really provide that community's input into this, and really gain an understanding from those Local Governments and those regional areas. So --

MS DOVEY: Certainly. Now, just for the record, you referred to TEMA before, for the record, that's the Tasmanian Emergency Management Arrangements; is that right?

MR LIMKIN: That is correct, and that's required under our State - sorry, our Emergency Management Act to be prepared and maintained and reviewed regularly.

MS DOVEY: Very good. Just for the record, I'm going to read in that that - it has been provided very helpfully. It is at document TAS.500.001.0001. We don't need to bring that up. Now, you referred to the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements at the Commonwealth level. You've also provided a series of documents, being Tasmania's key - Tasmania relief and recovery funding arrangements and you've attached three of those to the response. Would you be able to describe how they operate and how they interact with the DRFA?

MR LIMKIN: So the Tasmanian Relief and Recovery Arrangements really, the outset is to provide instant relief to communities through providing support to them that they need straightaway, and so they work in partnership with the natural disaster relief funding. So, for example, after the 2019 bushfires, the TRRA was activated for affected Local Government areas. These Local Government areas incurred about 100,000 in costs, recovery to road assets, and we expect to be able to recover 45 per cent of that back through the Feds.

Having said that, we do need to make those category thresholds that are established by the Federal Government. And so, you know, these are designed to help people very quickly to support communities, and, you know, deal with that - the event really quickly. You know, another example where we've activated this is the southern

Tasmania extreme weather event in 2018 where there were several affected Councils. We provided 13.5 million worth of infrastructure recovery to those Councils to help them restore. We expect that we will cover 75 per cent of those costs, with them being able to claim 25 per cent of those costs back from the Fed.

5

MS DOVEY: Yes. And is it right that in circumstances where a Local Government area isn't activated for support under the DRFA, people in that area may be able to get support pursuant to the TRRA?

10 MR LIMKIN: Yes, that is correct. The Premier may choose to activate the TRRA based on advice from the State Recovery Advisor and, you know, there are - and I should say under the TRRA there are, as you said in your statement earlier, there are three policies: the Personal Hardship and Distress Assistance Policy, the
15 Natural Disaster Relief for Local Government Policy, and the Community Recovery Policy. So these are designed to flex - and I'm going to keep coming back to this point - we flex quite a lot, depending on what is the situation, because no natural disaster is the same, you know, and so therefore no response or recovery can be the same.

20 MS DOVEY: Thank you. In your - your response to the questions, you've referred to the Recovery Partners Network and you've attached the statement of purpose to it. Would one of you be able to speak to that network, how it came about and what its purpose is?

25 MS GALE: Well, again, it is really based, I think, on our notion that recovery happens best at the local level and with those partners who are aware of what the situation is more locally, and so therefore the Recovery Partner Network is, I guess, a manifestation of us trying to make sure that we build those networks and that we have people on the ground who are able to provide advice and work with the local
30 communities and so on. It's a bit similar to our emergency volunteer group that we have started. It is a way of making sure that we have that on-the-ground level support, and utilise best, what - what those non-government organisations and others are able to support us with.

35 MR LIMKIN: So we have - the recovery network partners - Recovery Partners Network has about 60 organisations approximately in it. They regularly talk to by our OSEM team outside of what you call peace time. There are annual forums to actually collaborate together, but I guess we do use them significantly during an emergency. You know, I can only talk about COVID because that is my first
40 emergency here, but I can tell you that, you know, I have had a dedicated team member talking to that recovery partner network exploring ways we support recovery and deliver for the community every day since we've declared a state of emergency.

45 If this was a bushfire of the impacts that we saw on the mainland, I would expect a similar system to be in talk and, you know, this is the way that we target the best capability from the NGOs to actually deliver the outcomes for the community.

I didn't know of this until I moved to Tasmania, I have not seen this before, and I think it is a fantastic way of collaborating, coordinating and delivering a great outcome for the community.

5 MS GALE: And we certainly used our recovery partner network during the '19-'20 bushfires in the - in the Huon - have I got that right or have I got the '18-'19?

MR LIMKIN: '18-'19 bushfires.

10 MS GALE: '18-'19 bushfires in the Huon, there were three or four communities, including the Huon Valley who were impacted by those bushfires and we were able to work with our non-government partners to make sure that we had, in quite dispersed areas, support through the network.

15 MS DOVEY: Thank you. In the witness statement, you discuss the way in which coordination in the recovery area is done, up to the Commonwealth. You talk about liaisons with EMA, NBRA, the CORS, which is also part of the ANZ EMC - lots of acronyms. Could I ask you to speak to that Commonwealth engagement and, from Tasmania's perspective, how well you feel that that is working?

20 MS GALE: So, here, we speak as a very small jurisdiction. And I was actually speaking with one of our - the manager of our Office for Security and Emergency Management this morning, and his - he was speaking about another jurisdiction where he believes that they have about 80 people working, staff, who are working on
25 the DRFA. We have one. We have one staff member who does that. It's almost a full-time job from emergency to emergency. Since I've been in this role and in the State service, I guess over the past five years, we have had one emergency after another every year and in some years two, and so it's a big job for one person.

30 And so our commentary in relation to this is that we would hope that we could get to the most streamlined as possible arrangements with the Commonwealth because we simply do not have the staff that we can put towards liaison across agencies. I mean, we do that and we do our best now. But, really, it would suit our purposes much better and enable us to spend our resources, both in terms of staff time as well as in
35 terms of our, you know, funding and so on, more appropriately on the emergencies and the recovery than on resources to - to work to a - an architecture, I guess, for want of a better - for want of a better word, that does not necessarily suit each agency in the same - each jurisdiction in the same way.

40 MS DOVEY: Yes.

MR LIMKIN: And I would just like to add, if I may, that we need to remember the more complex the process to talk to people and collaborate, the worst outcome it is for our community. And the longer we have to work through five or six different
45 organisations and a mountain of paperwork is the less outcome that community gets, the less support they get. And, you know, we all do these jobs of public service to

support the community and my team gets, you know, phone calls that upset people and whatnot, and so any way we can streamline that process is a good outcome.

5 MS DOVEY: We will talk in a bit more detail - I will bring you very directly to the concerns you have around the DRFA processes. But just putting that to one side for a moment, is there a specific part of that coordination that you would otherwise like to draw out that you think could be streamlined further?

10 MS GALE: So, I think that in relation to the bushfires that previously we had, for example - we would rather work with the existing relationships that we have rather than bringing in new organisations. So we have worked really productively with Emergency Management Australia and value that - certainly value that relationship. And it does - it does become, I think, less well funded when the effort is distributed across a number of groups.

15 So, for example, the ANZ EMC, so the Australian New Zealand Emergency Management Committee - sorry, the acronyms get to me as well - have been working on a national recovery framework. And we're participating in that - in that project. But we believe that it's had - it's progressed quite slowly because it has been
20 dependent on member jurisdictions being able to commit in kind resources which is, again, quite difficult for a small jurisdiction.

So we are of the view that if there were fewer organisations and they were well funded, that that would work better in - in our circumstance. So, normally if we have
25 say, for example, a really difficult fire period such as we had in 2018 and 2019, we would bring somebody down from the EMA who would work beside us. And that has been enormously beneficial to Tasmania for that to happen and - but if we wanted to - and we would prefer to leverage off that relationship that has worked well for some time now, rather than have other people arrive in the wake of a major
30 disaster, you know, such as some of the other agencies.

MS DOVEY: Yes. Thank you. Now, turning to monitoring and evaluation, you've noted the importance of evaluating recovery programs and learning from experience, and you've attached to the statement two independent evaluations - sorry, a single
35 evaluation that is attached in two parts undertaken by the University of Technology Sydney and which were recently finalised in relation to recovery support. Would either of you like to speak to the importance of evaluation, and maybe draw out any particular learnings that are coming out of this and the ways in which you can implement those going forwards?

40 MS GALE: So obviously, as Craig said, each emergency situation we find ourselves is in different. So we, the Tasmanian Government, believes that it's really important that we learn from each of those, and then build our toolkit, I suppose, for want of a better word, in relation to what might come next and, therefore, we highly value
45 independent evaluations. Sometimes we do internal evaluations as well. Obviously, it's better, in our view, to have a fresh set of eyes looking over what we have done in what circumstances and what we can learn from that.

Generally speaking, we would get recommendations from evaluations which would then go up through the government channels, and for a commitment from government one way or the other. And then once the commitment is made, then they
5 flow back down to agencies. Sometimes additional funding is required, other times not. It's just a different way of working, and we work our way through those. And that's, I guess, where we are in relation to the all of the reviews that have been conducted, whether that's a flood review, Southern Tasmania Extreme Weather Event or bushfire reviews.

10

MR LIMKIN: And I agree with Jenny, and you know - an example of that is, you know, the impact that our fires, you know, all the fires that have been here before my time. Tasmania has learnt from that and it's feeding all this is into a Tasmanian Bushfire Fuel Reduction program. And so we are using it to build more resilient
15 communities to really build back better and protect our communities going forward. And so these reviews aren't just put on the shelf. They are actually implemented. You know, I sit on the fuel reduction, you know, committee and we have - so much that we've learnt out of the '18-'19 fires get into this, and I'm advised that, you know, the work has actually helped save - save - save homes because of those learnings. And so
20 it does have a direct impact on how you manage this.

MS DOVEY: Yes.

25

MS GALE: And it comes back to, sorry, as Craig said, our valuing of resilience as a way forward for - for Tasmania. And we believe that's everybody's responsibility, not just governments but communities as and so. And those evaluations and reviews do help us to build better, or take actions that will build better resilience across Tasmania in the face of what the next crisis will be.

30

MS DOVEY: Thank you. Now, I'm conscious of the time and I just want to give you an opportunity to talk through the areas in which you've suggested that there may be improvements of coordination of recovery before I ask the Commissioners if they have any questions for you. Perhaps first we could go to the witness statement at page 0457 which, at paragraph 9, you've referred to the work currently being
35 progressed by EMA to develop a national recovery framework. Would you speak to why you think that is important and how you think it will assist recovery coordination?

40

MR LIMKIN: I guess for us, we - all jurisdictions do this. You know, we all - we all look at this. If there is a national approach it does help us to deal with these - these type of challenges, you know. We believe that being able to work with a single agency and be able to pool those resources in will help us progress - dealing with the situations quicker. So having a coordinated approach - you look at - you look at you know what happened in New South Wales and Victoria, and I'm sure my colleagues
45 will talk about this, you know, fires don't respect borders. Fires don't respect Local Government borders. They don't respect flood stones either. And so having a coordinated approach where, you know, taking a response each State's different

circumstances but principles and a high level approach will enable us to deliver better for the community.

5 And I guess that's why we do see the value in that, particularly also with the digital frontier working: you don't want each State having five different digital platforms with five different parts of information if we're trying to grapple with this on a national basis. And so, you know, there does need to be a balance. I don't want to say everything should be nationalised but there does need to be a balance and I think we do believe that a national recovery framework will help us set those policy
10 boundaries and those guidance to actually deliver on what is best for the community.

MS DOVEY: Yes. And while we're on this page I will also note that you've already spoken to it but you've included there that you believe it should be a single agency or section for coordination processes, and that is another of your suggestions for
15 recovery. Can I move to - just one moment - page 0474 at paragraph 35 and here you've suggested this - and here we're going to look specifically at the DRFA requirements in relation to the onerous nature of them and the barriers that are there to getting funding for betterment. Could you please talk to that suggestion?

20 MR LIMKIN: So I'm probably going to make some general comments first on the DRFA. It is a very cumbersome process, the assurance process, the multiple audits, the documentation, problem with getting betterment funding is onerous. I am advised that in order to get betterment funding we actually need to get the Prime Minister of Australia to approve that funding, you know. You know, it does - you know, that
25 then takes time, that then causes delays. So I guess for me, and I've said this earlier, you know, a streamlined process through the DRFA which drives community needs is critical to success nationally in my view.

MS GALE: I think we should preface that by saying that we're very grateful to the
30 Commonwealth Government's contribution to the disaster - disaster funding

COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: We took that as read but thank you very much.

35 MS GALE: But, you know, and if we take the community benefits, principle or value here, the time that it takes, particularly again small jurisdictions to meet the requirements, is a time that a bridge could be rebuilt and it could be rebuilt better, but because it would take so - and we need those bridges to be built. I do recall when we had the Southern Tasmania Extreme Weather Event we had some quite isolated communities who only had contact with the rest of the community via one bridge.
40 There was one way in and one way out.

Now, if we had to wait for a very long time to be able to build that bridge better, if we believed it needed to be then that - you know, that group or that family would be very highly disadvantaged. So it's really as well as what we can deal with as a
45 jurisdiction, but more importantly the impact that those kinds of processes have on the community and the opportunities to rebuild that are at the heart of it for - for Tasmania. So I think that that's something, you know, if we kept that at the core, as

the core principle of arrangements, be they State arrangements or Commonwealth arrangements, that that would go well for the community.

5 MR LIMKIN: And you will see it in there the Commonwealth has acknowledged at the COAG meeting our Premier and the Prime Minister had a conversation about, you know, we do need to focus on the provisions for building back better and, you know, how the balance of funding is actually towards that, you know, is it better to actually build back better or build resilience community and funding first and actually dealing with the aftermath. That work is ongoing. I've met with my Premier
10 with the chief scientists of Australia to continue that work, and so we do acknowledge the work that the Commonwealth is doing at this point in time.

MS DOVEY: Finally, I would like to go to page 0484 where you've responded to a question about the role of the Commonwealth, and whether there might be a
15 greater --

MS GALE: I'm sorry, could you just refer us to the paragraph, please?

MS DOVEY: Yes, certainly. Can we bring up --
20

MS GALE: Page numbers?

MS DOVEY: Sorry, it's page 33. It's under question 56.

25 MS GALE: Thank you.

MS DOVEY: And perhaps we could expand the answer under (a), Coordination. Thank you. Now, I understand that - the answer is here that you think that emergency management is appropriately a State Territory responsibility. Can you speak to your
30 answer here?

MS GALE: Thank you. So in relation to that we do - we believe that national coordination is important. And it's very important when we have emergencies that are of national significance and cross the borders, as Craig indicated before. So, for
35 example, and the best example of that to date that I've experienced is the current emergency, the COVID-19 emergency.

When - however, we do believe that States and Territories should continue to have responsibility within their jurisdiction for - for most of the work that happens in
40 relation to recovery that - and again it comes back to that notion that the people on the ground know best what the needs are and what the processes are and there needs to be flexibility to enable the community to be served best.

And we are not of the view that national coordination will always result in that being
45 the case. So we - yes - are strongly of the view that - that it is the responsibility of each, and should continue to be the responsibility of each State and Territory but there is an important role for national coordination, but it's not necessarily national or

I guess the Commonwealth Government taking responsibility for - for those arrangements across Australia.

5 MR LIMKIN: And I think that's why the national framework is so important. You look at, I know COVID, you know, there were a framework set up about when do you call in the ADF. And we used that when we had the north-west outbreak. And so I will come back to your earlier question, that's why the national framework is so-when you do those and what framework you do that under.

10 MS DOVEY: Yes, thank you. Commissioners, sorry, that concludes my questions.

COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: In fact, it's a perfect chance. We've been focusing on this paragraph, you would wonder. And so can we just - your answer about:

15 *"Tasmania supports national coordination as opposed to Commonwealth coordination and believes State and Territories should continue to have responsibility for supporting and engaging Local Governments."*

20 Your assumption is Commonwealth coordination steps in at the State level. I think what we're discussing is Commonwealth coordination at a higher level, at a national standard without getting into the States and Territories' business. So that - trust me, that was the context of the question. But it seems to be the answer is an all or nothing. And I'm not sure, in your opinion, is there an in between or - because I will go to the next part of the question in a second, but I'm not sure you're answering the question exactly the way the Commission was trying to get the discussion going.

25 MS GALE: Thanks for clarifying that. Yes, thanks for clarifying that. I guess the - the model that we would like to see is that we have streamlined national coordination.

30 COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Yes.

35 MS GALE: And if that's the intent, then we would support that in a way that - that enables States and Territories to - to continue with their work that provides, as you say, that higher level coordination through. So things like we've observed and we've experienced here, national coordination, for example, in using the Australian Defence Forces to support efforts in individual States and Territories currently happening in Victoria. We had fantastic support in Tasmania when we had an outbreak in COVID on the north-west coast. So at that higher level, the national coordination is, we believe to be extremely beneficial.

40 Again, though, we would hope that that would be streamlined. So we have had concerns previously about getting information about, you know, what the costs might be, what the arrangements might be. If we got to a point where that was clear that there was, you know, single point of contact where you could go to get the information that you needed, then that's the kind of national coordination that we would really value.

COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Okay. I will just --

MS GALE:

5

COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: I will just go to Commissioner Bennett, and then come back.

10 COMMISSIONER BENNETT: Yes, I only have, just because it's a follow on from that. I understand what your answer is. I didn't quite understand what you meant by Tasmania supports national coordination as opposed to Commonwealth coordination. I just didn't understand the distinction you were seeking to drive in that sentence?

15 MS GALE: So I think that if it was national coordination that jurisdictions participated in and then had an opportunity to help to shape, then that would be the type of coordination that we would value more than - and it would be the same if it was in the State and we were talking about our partners out, around in our regions, for example, rather than - and I don't necessarily mean this in a derogatory sense but a top-down, and without - a without consultation approach to the coordination. So it's
20 a participatory and - where States and Territories have an opportunity to shape the national coordination, rather than, say, having another agency or jurisdiction determining what that coordination might look like. I guess that's the distinction I'm trying to draw.

25 COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: No, we appreciate that.

COMMISSIONER BENNETT: That clarifies it.

30 COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: That's a good clarification. With that, can I take us to that document, 0456, and it's the top. It's para 5 right at the top, just that one there. This is a similar question we asked Queensland. This is the resource sharing. So it gets to that point where, you know, Local Government areas are overwhelmed, that you do need some support. And what was the- or I note that Tasmania, I think, sent people to Queensland, I think, during floods in there. Yes, so it goes both ways. And
35 the question was: what's the mechanism to do that? And you've got the guidelines for interstate assistance. We've seen those before, and it's developed by the National Social Recovery Reference Group. So the question is: who, in Tasmania, is on the National Social Recovery Reference Group?

40 MS GALE: So that - so we may need to take that on notice. I think it would be somebody from our Office for State and Security and Emergency Management, but it could - may also be somebody from DPFEM. So we will take that on notice.

COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: That's okay. You've probably given the answer I need.

45 MS GALE: We may be able to find out now.

COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: If you could find it, it would be good. They seem to play an important part. I have a bunch more questions on them but I won't go down that path. I don't think you've in a position to answer it. So you can let that deep breath out. I will go to Commissioner Macintosh for a question.

5

COMMISSIONER MACINTOSH: Yes, thanks, Chair. A quick one on the Recovery Partners Network. I just wondered how you become, and what charities are a part of it? Is it a vetting process? Are there things you have to meet, or is it just a charity wants to become a part of it, they put up their hand and they get allowed in or - can you help me?

10

MR LIMKIN: So there is a process. So how we started this? Well, we started with the organisations that we work with, Tasmania - Tasmania is a small State, so we do - do have a limited number of partners. If a new one wanted to come through, they're more than welcome to. We encourage more participants to help us. There is a vetting process obviously, because we don't want someone who's just, you know - if they're providing mental health support we want to make sure they are a registered mental health professional support process - provider. But we don't want a massive type of process because we want to encourage this to be organic and growing, but there are some checks and it depends on what they are, who they are and what their - what service they're providing.

15

20

COMMISSIONER MACINTOSH: Thanks for that. I asked the Queenslanders earlier about whether they have a protocol or a standard for data collection on losses from hazard events, and I wondered whether Tasmanians have such a protocol to ensure there's consistency in the data you collect and how you collect it?

25

MS GALE: That's a good question.

30

MR LIMKIN: I'm not aware of it.

MS GALE: No, we would need to take that on notice. We would have information about the data that we have collected but we would need to take that on notice.

35

COMMISSIONER MACINTOSH: Yes. Thanks very much. One more: in your submission you make the point on a number of occasions that you think the DRFA should be expanded to include environmental recovery expenditures, and just I wondered whether you could provide us a bit more detail about that.

40

MR LIMKIN: Thank you. You look at Tasmania, 51 per cent of our - about 51 per cent of our State is natural, natural and cultural heritage. Big - you know, area. And so, you know, we have - if there is a massive bushfire through one of those, we take a responsibility to replant and replenish that. And at the moment the DRFA don't acknowledge, enable us to actually look into that. And so we do think there is value in, you know - you know, protecting and funding recovery of environmental and cultural heritage experience, you know, knowledge experiences, you know, facts not just about, you know, buildings and roads and infrastructure.

45

COMMISSIONER MACINTOSH: Thanks, Chair. No more from me.

MS GALE: I think your - I mean the world - sorry.

5

COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: No, please continue.

MS GALE: Sorry, I was just going to say that, you know, some of our natural assets are World Heritage, and it is really important that we protect them and - and in the earlier bushfires we went to great lengths to make sure that some of our stands of really important trees, for example, weren't damaged. So we had a circuit of sprinklers around them that were operating so to protect them through that. So it really is an important part of the Tasmanian heritage aspect that we want to try to protect our natural values, and so on. So it is, you know, really important to us. And, Commissioner, if I may, we can go back: I was wrong on both counts in relation to who our members are --

10

15

COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: No, that's okay.

MS GALE: -- on that group was. It is the Department of Health actually that has representation on the human and - the Social Community Recovery Group, the National Social Recovery Reference Group, and so we do have two representatives on that group from the Department of Health. And I should have remembered this, of course, because Health has responsibility for social domain of our - of our recovery.

25

COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Okay. Thank you very much for that. I'm interested in the process but I won't - I don't think you're the right two people to ask that, so I won't put you in that position.

MS GALE: Thank you.

30

COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Thank you very much, and thank you for getting back to me with the phone a friend. That's good. Ms Dovey?

MS DOVEY: They're all the questions that we had for Ms Gale and Mr Limkin. If there's nothing further, could they please be released from their summonses?

35

COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: You can be released from your summons. Thank you for the energy that you put into this today. We've got a lot out - you've got a beautiful State and we appreciate you giving us the passion of how you support recovery in that State. So thank you very much.

40

MS GALE: Thanks for the opportunity. We really appreciate it. Thank you.

MR LIMKIN: Thank you.

45

MS DOVEY: Now, next, we're going to hear from community witnesses Kevin and Milusa Giles who you heard about this morning. They are flower growers from Sarsfield, Victoria. They lost their home, their flower bushes and their livelihood in the fires shortly after Christmas. Mr Giles tried to save - stayed and he tried to defend
5 the property. He was injured. He is fully recovered, thankfully. They're living on their property in a caravan and in a shed.

And their evidence was taken by video on their property in Sarsfield, Victoria on 11
10 June by me. The evidence has been edited. It includes several photos that the Gileses referred to in their evidence. The original footage of the evidence, along with the separate documents referred to by them are also available. What we've tendered is the edited version. The video runs for 38 minutes and I would suggest we play that video now and then adjourn when the - after the video finishes.

15 COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Okay. So we will play it and then we will adjourn after the video until 1415.

MS DOVEY: Yes.

20 COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Okay. Great. Thank you. I will just speak so people know we are still here.

<VIDEO PLAYED>

25 <KEVIN GILES, AFFIRMED>

<MILUSA GILES, AFFIRMED>

MS DOVEY: Thank you for talking with us today. Could I get you each, please, to
30 introduce yourselves and tell us your occupation?

MS MILUSA GILES: I'm Milusa Giles and I'm a flower grower.

MR KEVIN GILES: I'm Kevin Giles and I'm also a flower - flower grower, primary
35 producer.

MS DOVEY: First up, can you tell me how you came to live in Sarsfield?

MS MILUSA GILES: We came to live in Sarsfield in 1993 when we purchased
40 another business in East Gippsland, in Bruthen. And we've - Kevin and I have done lots of businesses around East Gippsland, around Bairnsdale and Bruthen. And then we decided that we wanted to work for ourselves but in a different format, not have a shop in town or a business where we had to pay rent. So Kevin decided he wanted to grow flowers. So that was our journey into becoming flower growers.

45 MS DOVEY: And tell me about the flower farm you had here prior to the recent bushfire season?

MS MILUSA GILES: Our flower farm was pretty magnificent. Kevin and I have worked it 15 years. It's been a real journey. We both started when we were both working full-time, had our girls and their friends help us plant some of the plants in the paddock.

MR KEVIN GILES: Yeah.

MS MILUSA GILES: And then just kept going from there. We made it bigger and bigger and --

MR KEVIN GILES: We had 14 and a half thousand protea bushes and leucadendrons and banksias.

MS DOVEY: I'm just going to show you a couple of photos that you've provided to us of your - can you just have a look at these and just describe what we're looking at there? These are of your farm before it was burnt?

<WITNESSES SHOWN GILES MFI-1>

20

MR KEVIN GILES: Yes.

MS MILUSA GILES: Yep. So this is leucadendrons, safari sunset. They look like we've just been pruning those.

25

MR KEVIN GILES: Yeah.

MS MILUSA GILES: And - they're spring golds there actually.

MR KEVIN GILES: Yeah, the red ones, they're ready to be harvested there.

<WITNESSES SHOWN GILES MFI-2>

MS MILUSA GILES: Yep. And then this is a beautiful rainbow over our property with all our lovely leucadendrons there. And these are leucospermum. So, at different times of the year, we would cultivate different flowers. In, say from August through to December, we grow - grew a flower called leucospermum which a lot of you might know as a pin cushion. They're absolutely magnificent. And then in, say from March through till June, we would grow proteas.

40

MR KEVIN GILES: Yeah, the proteas.

MS MILUSA GILES: So our business was very seasonal as to what flowers were available at certain times of the year.

45

MR KEVIN GILES: Yeah.

MS MILUSA GILES: And when our harvest - when we were harvesting and when we'd have a big flush, we would work up to 14 hours a day. We were just, yeah - Kevin would walk about 16 K a day picking. I would work the shed and, yeah, we had a really, really good thing going.

5

MS DOVEY: Can you tell me about the facilities that were on your property. The flowers used to be down here. There's just a couple of them still alive. Can you tell us about the facilities that you used for the flower farm on the property?

10 MS MILUSA GILES: So facilities were - we - we'd started off with just working out of a shed, out of our garage, which eventually we managed to buy a very small cool room. And then just prior to the fires we had this fantastic massive cool room that we've always been wanting.

15 MR KEVIN GILES: A five-by-six metre cool room.

MS MILUSA GILES: And three weeks prior to the fires we had had it completed and I didn't even get to insure it and, yeah, it's gone in the fires. But we - we actually have - had four employees here on the farm: two pickers and two florists. We - we had, you know, vehicles that would drive in, into to the paddock, pick and bring them into the shed. And we'd all work the shed together and, yeah, we had - we were really busy. We'd send product to Melbourne; we sent product locally.

20

MS DOVEY: And the employees are people in your local community?

25

MS MILUSA GILES: Yes.

MR KEVIN GILES: Yes, yeah.

30 MS MILUSA GILES: Yes. Very much so. They were all mums. We very much worked in with our women as far as school hours, and yeah, we had a really great thing going with our employees.

MS DOVEY: Yes. Turning to the fire season, obviously - I think we were all aware it was a bad fire season coming. Can you talk a little bit about any preparations that you made, or your awareness about the potential for bushfires?

35

MR KEVIN GILES: Yeah, we'd obviously tidied up around the house, you know, cleared - cleared trees and bushes away from the buildings and, yeah, cleaned up, whipper snipped, mowed, and all that sort of thing. But, yep, didn't have a sprinkler system on the house but --

40

MS DOVEY: And before leaving, because as I understand it, Milusa, you were away when the fires actually came over?

45

MS MILUSA GILES: Yeah.

MS DOVEY: And you made some preparations within the house?

MS MILUSA GILES: Yes. So every summer where there's always threats of bushfires here in East Gippsland - sometimes they're closer, sometimes they're further away, we've learnt over the years to try and be as prepared as we can - I always had very, you know, personal items packed, especially our business papers, our family photos. So I always have them packed. But on other years I have actually taken photo - like our pictures and things off the walls, and this year I just had this sense of a feeling that this year was going to be bad. So, prior to leaving the property on the Saturday before Christmas, I packed a car load of suitcases that I'd packed family photos and the business papers, and I took them into a friend in - in Bairnsdale in town. And yeah, Kevin stayed on.

MS DOVEY: Kevin, would you be willing to tell us what it was like? You stayed while the fire front came over?

MR KEVIN GILES: Oh yes, it was pretty intense. There was spot fires starting - or first the fire crossed the highway down towards Mossiface and that was all burning over there, down through the Eleven Mile. And then another second front came through and there was spot fires starting everywhere. There was helicopters flying around saying "Evacuate". The water bomber helicopter came in and dumped three loads on an outbreak in the shelter belt and that, sort of, put it out. Then the fire brigade came and had another go at it but as soon as they drove away that just flared up again and there was spot fires everywhere by that stage.

MS DOVEY: When you refer to the shelter belt --

MR KEVIN GILES: Yeah.

MS DOVEY: -- can you describe what you mean by that?

MR KEVIN GILES: It's a shelter - a patch of bush probably 10 metres wide by a kilometre long on our property. It's just full of native vegetation and trees and, yeah, kangaroos and wombats.

MS MILUSA GILES: Yeah, that divides our property to the neighbour's property.

MR KEVIN GILES: Yeah. Yep. So then the fire front came through just after dark. No helicopters flying then, obviously, so they can't fly in the dark. And the flames were 10 metres, flames and embers 10 metres high coming from the north-west across the highway. And yeah, I was just trying to put the fire out with a hose and fire trailer, which went out quite easily around the house, on the lawn. There was like a box, English box garden in the front which took a bit of a - a bit more effort to get that out. I got that out. And then I come around to the back of the house; that was all out around there. And got up into an eave in the back of the house and I ran out of water and ran out of power. I jack-knifed my trailer in the - in the smoke as it was that thick you couldn't see a thing, smashed a fitting out of there. So I had no water

left, so I was out of action. So then went in, rang Milusa on the phone and said, "Look, what would you want me to grab out of the house?" because it had only just caught fire so I was in the house, just trying to grab a few bits and pieces that we might, yeah, try and save.

5

MS DOVEY: And you got a bit burnt?

MR KEVIN GILES: Yes, I got a - my shirt was on fire so I got a burn on my arm. Luckily it - yeah, it wasn't third degree so I didn't have to have a skin graft or anything. It was just a trip to the --

10

MS MILUSA GILES: Alfred.

MR KEVIN GILES: Alfred Hospital. And the burns nurse there, prodding around in there with a scalpel and whatnot and they said that, yeah, should grow back. And, yeah, they were right. So yeah, so --

15

MS DOVEY: You've recovered from that?

MR KEVIN GILES: Recovered from that, yep. Yeah. So and, yeah, then obviously the fire front went through and there was all the trees were on fire. The big East Gippsland grey gums were on fire, just limbs crashing out of those and embers everywhere. And yeah, then there's gas cylinders, fridges exploding all over the district everywhere. It was like a war zone. It was just unbelievable. Yeah, so --

25

MS DOVEY: Thank you. Can you tell us what the damage was on your property? You lost the house completely?

MR KEVIN GILES: Yeah.

30

MS DOVEY: That was over behind us.

MR KEVIN GILES: Yeah, lost a house.

35 MS DOVEY: It has now gone completely?

MR KEVIN GILES: Yeah, gone completely, yep. The fire brigade did turn up and - but they turned up and said - well, it was half burnt at that stage and they said, "We haven't got enough water to put that out." So I said, "Would you like a cool drink" and they went on their way. I stayed here with the pets; I had them in the car. So, yeah, we lost the house, the hayshed, two tractors and a machinery shed. I had a boat in there. The trailer was still there, and the aluminium boat and the motor, you couldn't even see where it was, it just run out the back of the shed.

40

MS DOVEY: I'm just going to pass you a couple of photos of your cool room --
MR KEVIN GILES: Oh yeah, we lost --

45

MS DOVEY: Just talk through these.

<WITNESSES SHOWN GILES MFI-3>

5 MR KEVIN GILES: Righto. Yes, we lost our big new six-by-five metre cool room.

MS DOVEY: There's a photo there of what it looked like before you left for Christmas?

10 MR KEVIN GILES: Yeah.

MS MILUSA GILES: Yeah. Pretty spectacular.

15 MR KEVIN GILES: \$38,000 cool room to store all our flowers in, up in smoke, and that was burnt out before the house even caught on fire. It was just, yeah. As Milusa said, "Go and get some water out the cool room". I went through the door and it was already burnt and gone before the house even caught on fire. So --

20 MS DOVEY: Okay. So --

MR KEVIN GILES: I lost a little Terios as well, like a car. The other cars, they survived, I had them parked in on dirt and whatnot. But a caravan we lost as well.

25 MR KEVIN GILES: We lost about 13-and-a-half thousand producing proteas and leucadendrons and banksia plants.

MS MILUSA GILES: We lost all our fencing.

30 MR KEVIN GILES: All our fencing. We owned some - lost some - five sheep. The cows all got away okay, but a few scorched sheep we had to destroy, so --

MS DOVEY: I'm just going to pass to you a couple of photos that you provided earlier. This is, the first one, if you could just describe, is some of the plants that --

35 <WITNESSES SHOWN GILES MFI-4>

40 MR KEVIN GILES: Yeah, that's my - that's my producing protea bushes, what's left of them. So yeah, obviously there's one protea bush survived out of the whole lot and, yeah, that's it. So --

<WITNESSES SHOWN GILES MFI-5>

MS DOVEY: And I think the second one is - that's where they were?

45 MR KEVIN GILES: That's where they were. That's the clean-up in progress, pick up all the sticks and rip all the stumps out of the ground that are left and the plants that are left to burn. So, yeah.

MS DOVEY: Thank you.

5 MS MILUSA GILES: I don't think people understand the enormity of how much destruction is left behind, the work, the workload - don't you think?

MR KEVIN GILES: Mm-hm.

10 MS MILUSA GILES: Just - even like when the company came and had cleaned up the house site, just the amount of dirt and just everything that they took away, how much you have to spend to - to put your infrastructure back, you know. I mean, it sounds stupid, but it's dirt, it costs you thousands.

15 MR KEVIN GILES: Crushed rock, yeah.

MS MILUSA GILES: Thousands of dollars to bring dirt back on to your house site or your crushed rock or your gravel. All that. Everything you do costs you money and it's all stuff you already had, you know. Just, yeah, that's - I just find that, that I don't think people realise. You know, you can see it all around you. Until you've
20 actually been through it, you don't realise --

MS DOVEY: You don't realise there's value in the dirt that holds your house up?

25 MS MILUSA GILES: Yeah, exactly.

MR KEVIN GILES: Exactly.

MS MILUSA GILES: And so much - and everything you've done over the years is just totally ruined, yeah. I know it - it just sounds trivial but it's not. It's just, to us, it's
30 a lot. Like, Kev put a lot of work into this property, you know.

MR KEVIN GILES:

35 MS MILUSA GILES: I mean so have everybody else that's - that's lost things. Yeah, it's really --

MR KEVIN GILES: That piece of timber that you had that you go and use to do a job, it's not there anymore. That's all burned, gone up in smoke.

40 MS MILUSA GILES: And everything's so difficult. You just, you go and do something and you go, "Oh, we don't have that any more. Oh, we don't have that any more either". You know, every day, don't we? We just think of things that we no longer have. Yeah, you know.

45 MR KEVIN GILES: Yep.

MS DOVEY: In the period immediately after the fires when you first came back, that first period, can you just describe a little bit the support that was provided and what it was like trying to access that sort of support?

5 MS MILUSA GILES: Yep. So, at the start, I obviously stayed in Kyneton. I didn't even come back. I just couldn't bring myself. My daughter came back and helped Kevin with her husband --

MR KEVIN GILES: Yeah.

10

MS MILUSA GILES: -- to get the animals off the property.

MR KEVIN GILES: Yeah because the stockyards were half burnt down. So then you've got to try and patch up stockyards to get cows and calves in there to take them away to a - somewhere that's got fences, and sheep.

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MS MILUSA GILES: And we actually stayed in Kyneton and we found that we had to come back here. You have to be in that community so you know what's going on, so you can, you know, go to the relief centre.

20

MR KEVIN GILES: Because you --

MS MILUSA GILES: -- because you really need to be at the relief centre.

25 MR KEVIN GILES: You went to Centrelink over there, didn't you?

MS MILUSA GILES: Yeah, I went to Centrelink in Sunbury and I was basically just fobbed off. They had no idea. They basically were just so rude.

30 MR KEVIN GILES: Weren't even helpful.

MS MILUSA GILES: Yeah. So we came back to East Gippsland and, yeah, went straight to the relief centre. That was - you know, they were just fantastic. "Yep, come in this room, fill out this paperwork." And it got things rolling. You know, your Red Cross, your Salvation Army, all those. And then in week - about two weeks after that, we went to see the Services Australia. They brought a special van into the town and people that had lost - you know, whose jobs were affected or had lost their businesses were to go there and you registered with Services Australia.

35

40 MR KEVIN GILES: And they were a specialist team to deal with bushfire victims, and they were really good.

MS MILUSA GILES: Yeah, they were amazing.

45 MS DOVEY: Were they in --

MR KEVIN GILES: In Bairnsdale, in the main, yeah.

MS MILUSA GILES: Yeah. So we didn't go to the normal regional office in Bairnsdale. They brought a specialist team in a truck.

5 MS DOVEY: And was that helpful?

MS MILUSA GILES: That was amazing.

MR KEVIN GILES: They were terrific, yeah.

10

MS MILUSA GILES: Yeah.

MR KEVIN GILES: Really good.

15 MS MILUSA GILES: They were great. But then after that, that all went skew-whiff. So after that they said that they would ring me, someone would ring me, and we would start the process of getting on to the 13-week grant that was offered for anyone that was affected or had lost their job. Well, that may be the case if you're a nine-to-five worker and you have an - you're just earning an income, but it's not the
20 case for business people. We had to jump hoops like you wouldn't believe. I actually had two people from the - from Services Australia ring me at the same time, asking me for two different things. The right hand did not know what the left hand was doing.

25 And that night, as drove back from Bairnsdale to here, I thought, "I can't cope with this, I can't do this, this is getting so stupid". All these things they're asking me I'm saying to them, "You cannot take a business like this - which is a seasonal business, you have your highs, you have your lows. You need to work your" - like I have to work out my finances for the year to make sure that I can carry through my
30 employees for the year. I can't just pluck a figure out of, you know, thin air. So we had to go and see the accountant. Time after time. One person was asking for this, another person was asking for that.

35 So, anyway, in the end, I rang Darren Chester's office because I just said I can't do this. I cannot keep dealing with these people that don't understand what I'm saying. As it turned out, the lady said in the - the next day they would have a meeting and she would get back to me. Well, that morning someone else rang from Services Australia and he was amazing. He just said - he sat with me and he talked to me and we worked it all out and he got us over the line. So that definitely needs to be
40 improved in the future because that is something that you - you actually cannot cope with that, with everything else that's going on around you. You know --

MS DOVEY: That's the 13 week payment?

45 MS MILUSA GILES: That was the 13 week.

MR KEVIN GILES: It was the hardest money we've ever earnt, to get that.

MS MILUSA GILES: Which was supposed to be a very simple thing. It just was not simple at all. Honestly, we're tough and it did our head in. Like, in the end --

5 MR KEVIN GILES: They wanted - first, they wanted 2018-19 tax figures, and then they wanted the update for '19-20, and then they wanted - what was it? - the eight week projected income?

MS MILUSA GILES: Yep.

10

MR KEVIN GILES: Then they wanted --

MS MILUSA GILES: I just said to him, "I can't project my income."

15 MR KEVIN GILES: And then the previous eight weeks before the fire --

MS MILUSA GILES: Yeah, the --

MR KEVIN GILES: The goalposts just kept changing all the time.

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MS MILUSA GILES: Yeah. It was just - it was really - that, I must say, if anything is to improve for business people that it just can't be worked like that. It was - you know - and in the end --

25 MR KEVIN GILES: Yeah.

MR KEVIN GILES: -- I ended up saying to the gentleman, "Look, mate, you know there's nothing I would want more than to be down my paddock, picking my flowers and sending them to market and being - earning my own money, being independent like we always have, than to be on the phone begging for \$250 dollars" --

30

MR KEVIN GILES: Dollars a week.

MS MILUSA GILES: -- "a week." You know? Like, give us a break.

35

MR KEVIN GILES: You can see why people put their hands up and say, "I don't want to do this."

MS MILUSA GILES: Farmers, old farmers, they wouldn't do that.

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MR KEVIN GILES: No way.

MS MILUSA GILES: We're younger people. We can use computers and things. Just imagine people in their 70s, old farmers that just don't - they wouldn't do it.

45

MR KEVIN GILES: Yeah, they'd just throw it in the fire.

MS MILUSA GILES: Yep.

MS DOVEY: How long did it take ultimately to get approved for that grant?

5 MS MILUSA GILES: Seven weeks.

MS DOVEY: You said earlier it was important to be in the community to access the services, it was really difficult to access them from other places. But your house was gone. What did you do in terms of coming back to the property?

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MS MILUSA GILES: So Kevin and I were fortunate that we were able to buy a caravan.

MR KEVIN GILES: Yeah, because we --

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MS MILUSA GILES: And we met up with our - the insurance assessor and he - we didn't even know but apparently on our policy we had a 52 week, we could - they would pay our rental --

20 MR KEVIN GILES: Rent assistance.

MS MILUSA GILES: -- for 52 weeks.

MR KEVIN GILES: If the house got destroyed.

25

MS MILUSA GILES: So they were quite happy to give us a lump sum and put it towards our caravan. So Kevin and I bought a caravan. We always intended to buy a caravan. We're very independent. We didn't want to not live on the property, we wanted to come back here. And so we got the caravan and we came back here, which we - there's work to be done. Every day there's work. You can't be renting a house in Bairnsdale and driving out here every day. We're fortunate one of our sheds survived. If we didn't have that shed, it would have been a thousand times harder.

30

MR KEVIN GILES: Mm-hm.

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MS MILUSA GILES: At least we were able to go in there, get out of the sun, because you've got to remember it was still summertime. We still had warmth and --

MR KEVIN GILES: All the rubble was still here. All the house - remnants of the house and tin and everything's there blowing around, creaking in the wind and smelling of burnt plastic.

40

MS MILUSA GILES: Everything smelt.

45 MR KEVIN GILES: And --

MS MILUSA GILES: There was not a shade, no shade in sight.

MR KEVIN GILES: No shade at all, yep.

5 MS MILUSA GILES: And so, yeah, we were - that's how we - we came back to the property and able to buy a caravan. But, look, there will be a lot of people that would not have been able to afford to do that.

10 MS DOVEY: Yes. So you said the insurance money went towards that but it didn't cover the cost of the caravan?

MR KEVIN GILES: No.

MS MILUSA GILES: No, we put up some of our own money, yeah. Yep.

15 MS DOVEY: You mentioned insurance. Can you talk a bit about what the experience of getting the insurance was like?

MS MILUSA GILES: Our experience was amazing.

20 MR KEVIN GILES: Yeah.

MS MILUSA GILES: We had a fantastic company we were with, a local - a local company, and can't tell you enough how grateful we were. There was never an issue at all.

25 MS DOVEY: And you showed us earlier your plans for the new house.

MS MILUSA GILES: Yeah.

30 MS DOVEY: And so that's well in train but currently sitting with council waiting for approval; is that right?

MS MILUSA GILES: Yep.

35 MR KEVIN GILES: Yeah, yeah, still --

MS MILUSA GILES: That's correct.

40 MR KEVIN GILES: -- waiting for council approval on that one.

MS DOVEY: When can you start, once you get approval? How long will it take?

45 MR KEVIN GILES: Well, probably about two weeks later when the builder - it's the building firm it's through, so yep. So hopefully it starts very soon so it can be there before Christmas. All the kids will come down for Christmas in the new house, so --

MS DOVEY: Yes, very good. You spoke about the Centrelink payments: have you received other government support?

5 MS MILUSA GILES: Yes. Yep. So after we - that truck came to town, they were also - they had specialist people for business --

MS DOVEY: Was it Services Australia?

10 MS MILUSA GILES: Yes.

MS DOVEY: Yes.

15 MS MILUSA GILES: They had people there, specialist people, in that truck to deal with businesses and farm, like primary producers.

MR KEVIN GILES: Drought-affected farmers and whatnot.

MS MILUSA GILES: Yeah.

20 MR KEVIN GILES: We had been in drought here for four years before the fires come through and wiped us out. So --

25 MS MILUSA GILES: So they put us on to Rural Finance Victoria, and they took us through all the grants that were available for primary producers and small business. And from there we just - there was, you know, lots of paperwork, obviously. They don't fill out your paperwork for you, they just guide you. You have to come back and do it all yourself. And so that's how we started out. We started with trying to get our \$75,000 primary producer, and I must say that was one of the easiest grants that we have received.

30 MS DOVEY: So you've been successful in obtaining that?

MS MILUSA GILES: Yes.

35 MR KEVIN GILES: Yep.

40 MS MILUSA GILES: And we always said that if we got that grant, that was going to be our decision on whether we stay here or we go, because if we didn't - without that money, I don't think we could afford to keep going, you know, replanting and --

MR KEVIN GILES: Yeah, it was supposed to cover things that weren't covered in insurance; like we lost our other big shed which wasn't insured.

45 MS DOVEY: And this is a new big shed that we can see you've got --

MR KEVIN GILES: It's the replacement shed.

MS DOVEY: -- just behind you?

MR KEVIN GILES: Yeah.

5 MS MILUSA GILES: Yep.

MR KEVIN GILES: Part of the 75,000 grant. And a new tractor, yep, as well.

MS MILUSA GILES: And some fencing.

10

MR KEVIN GILES: And some fencing.

MS DOVEY: So between the insurance and the money that you've received to date, what have you been able to cover and what are you now left not - uncovered for?

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MS MILUSA GILES: So obviously we are still - we're having to access some of our money to live on because we're only getting our \$250 a week. We've managed to get onto the, what they call, the Farm Household allowance for primary producers so that we can stay on the property and try and rebuild. But, of course, you know, \$250 a week's not really enough when you've still got business expenses. We've got vehicles. We've got, you know, things to pay here.

20

MR KEVIN GILES: Insurances.

25 MS MILUSA GILES: Yeah. Yeah. So we're - I've lost my train of thought now.

MS DOVEY: Maybe if you could describe what you have managed to replace. I mean, you've got the house, the house that's coming, that's covered by insurance.

30 MS MILUSA GILES: Yes.

MR KEVIN GILES: Yeah, we've had BlazeAid. I've bought fencing materials and BlazeAid have been a great help. They've been in to put the fences up and, yeah, done a lot of work and they've been really good.

35

MS MILUSA GILES: Yeah.

MS DOVEY: And we've got the nice big shed back there.

40 MS MILUSA GILES: Yes.

MR KEVIN GILES: Yep.

MS DOVEY: But where we're sitting at the moment is where the cool room used to be?

45

MS MILUSA GILES: Yep. So we also were, very luckily, successful in getting the Victorian Small Business grant. So that comes in two \$25,000 increments. We were able to get our first 25,000 which we applied to replace our cool room because that wasn't insured. So we are - we have that money aside. Now that this big shed's built,
5 we will now put the cool room in there, ready to start. And, you know, it was really important to get that big shed because we actually can now start doing a workshop. We have ordered plants to replant and they will need to be re-potted once they come. And, yeah, so --

10 MR KEVIN GILES: So we still have internal fencing to do with the sheep are still away on agistment and the cows are still away on agistment at the moment, so there's just, yeah.

MS MILUSA GILES: We have got a grant for some of the irrigation, to replace that.
15 Most things - I mean, we've been lucky, we really have been lucky in our - in our grants because that is helping us to pay for things along the way.

MR KEVIN GILES: Yeah.

20 MS MILUSA GILES: Red Cross is still giving out grants. They are saying that there will still be more but potentially down the track. I think we're on stage - stage 3 was the last grant we've got. The Salvos are now also giving another grant which hopefully in the next couple of weeks someone will ring and assess us again for that. So all those little things help because as soon as a \$10,000 grant comes in, there's
25 always something to pay. You know, like I said about the dirt: we've paid probably \$7,000 in buying dirt, gravel, sand, all of that sort of stuff.

So as fast as those grants come in, they're going out because obviously we're not earning any income. So, for us, and for us to go and get an off-the-farm job means
30 it's going to take us off the farm to do what we need to do for the replant. So we're in a real - we're in a catch-22. We would like to potentially go and get work to make some money but we can't because we need to be here if we're serious about replanting.

35 MS DOVEY: We're very close to a little bunch of little plants over here.

MS MILUSA GILES: Yeah.

MS DOVEY: Which I understand will be ultimately going down the field a bit from
40 us.

MR KEVIN GILES: Yes.

MS DOVEY: Can you talk a bit about what's involved with the replant, how long it
45 will take before your farm is up and running again, productive again?

MR KEVIN GILES: Yeah, so we've obviously been picking up sticks and, yeah, trying to level out the - level out the ground where the bulldozer has ripped everything up and we've got to get diggers in to dig all the paddock up. Then try and level it - level it out, replant. Plant the plants. Put the irrigation lines in. Punch the
5 drippers in, in the 200 metre rows. And then hopefully the weather's kind to us and we don't have another 48 degree day because every single one of those plants will be dead if we don't have some sort of shade infrastructure over the top of it. So it's a risky - it's going to be risky to replant and try and - try and, yeah, get the business up and going because of the changing climate, so --

10

MS DOVEY: Do you --

MS MILUSA GILES: And really, sorry, just what we're talking about is the plants that can go in this year will be these little banksias. Other than that, nothing else can
15 go in because we're - we've had to order our plants. Now it takes time for them to be propagated. The first lot will come in October. The next lot will come in April. But they will only come as little seedlings and they will need to be then planted on. So we're not talking about potentially putting the majority of our plants in until next year and down, like, late next year.

20

MR KEVIN GILES: And later than that because some banksias, they've got to be grown from seed yet and they won't be able to be planted for 18 months or more.

MS DOVEY: And it's then, what, five years until they can be picked?

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MS MILUSA GILES: Yes.

MR KEVIN GILES: Three to five years. You might get a couple of blooms after three years but, yeah, then five years it starts to - starts to get into production.

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MS DOVEY: All of that work, do you have funding to cover the cost of --

MR KEVIN GILES: No.

MS DOVEY: -- working the field, buying the seedlings?

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MR KEVIN GILES: No insurance. Uninsurable, a crop like that, yep. So --

MS DOVEY: How do you --

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MS MILUSA GILES: Yeah, so that will all have to come out of some of the grants and --

MS DOVEY: So, on \$250 a week, you can't afford that, I assume?

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MR KEVIN GILES: Yeah.

MS DOVEY: So that's dependent on getting further grants.

MS MILUSA GILES: Yeah.

5 MR KEVIN GILES: Small business grants, yeah, for irrigation, yep; pumps and tanks.

MS MILUSA GILES: And in the meantime we still need to somehow get us through the next five years until we start being able to actually pick.

10 MR KEVIN GILES: So it's going to be off - off-farm work eventually after 12 or 18 months, yep, to try and keep our heads above water.

MS MILUSA GILES: And obviously Kevin - you know, we started it 15 years ago. We were a lot younger. Now this year Kev's going to be 60, I'm going to be 58. It's --

15 MR KEVIN GILES: Yeah, we were --

MS MILUSA GILES: -- it's a big task to go down there. We can't work like we used to.

20 MR KEVIN GILES: We were all set up and everything was ticking away nicely until we --

MS MILUSA GILES: Yeah.

25 MR KEVIN GILES: -- got wiped out. So --

MS MILUSA GILES: So you do have to question yourself, you know, and we have questioned ourselves so much, will we - will we do this again? But we want to. It's a lifestyle we love, and we love our property and we loved growing flowers. So we will give it a go but it will be a challenge because who - just depends how the climate's going to be. Mmm.

30

MS DOVEY: We've spoken a lot about your farm. What do you know about how other people in the community are going? Are they getting the support that they need?

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MS MILUSA GILES: Well, I think some people aren't. I know of a couple of people that are still struggling with their insurance companies, and potentially they're people that have been out working and they found it quite difficult to access things that were, like grants and things that were happening because they were at work. They weren't able to take the time off. The grants and everything that you have to put in for, takes a long time. It's a lot of work. And to work full-time and try and apply for these grants, I could imagine it would be very hard. And I know that some people haven't been able to, or they've come in too late when things have shut down, or they haven't known about things because they've had to be at work.

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MR KEVIN GILES: It's a few things like bushfire clean-up, there's properties that people are not going to rebuild on. They're just not interested, and not coming back. None of that has been prioritised for the people that want to rebuild. So the people that want to rebuild, they're still waiting to have their sites cleared up.

5

MS DOVEY: While other sites have been cleared already - cleaned up?

MR KEVIN GILES: They've been cleared and people are just putting them on the market and selling them, so where other people are waiting, which could be, yeah, obviously coordinated a bit better. There could be a tick box on there saying, "Are you going to rebuild?" Or, "Are you likely to rebuild?" Yeah.

10

MS DOVEY: With the grants that are available, I'm conscious, talking to people, that some people have income coming from a variety of sources and you guys, as I understand, your income was just from the farm.

15

MR KEVIN GILES: Yeah.

MS DOVEY: Is that a factor, do you know, in terms of other people getting access to grants and funding?

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MS MILUSA GILES: Well, obviously, the other - one of the other flower growers, her and I liaise quite a lot to make sure we're up with what grants are available, so if she happens to know of one that I don't. But you've got to - you've got to appreciate that this was such an overwhelming experience for East Gippsland. This has never happened here in this scale. Everything, every service was overwhelmed from, you know, the people that were there to help us, they'd never seen anything on such a scale. There was not enough case workers. They had to employ, you know - I don't know, hundreds of case workers to look after everyone. That all took time.

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30

Everything took time because it was such a big, overwhelming catastrophe. So, for the start of things, sometimes we knew a bit more than what was happening because we were onto it. We were speaking to our accountants. We were speaking to our - you know, the rural finance people, whereas the normal person that's just a worker wouldn't have had - they just would not have had that support.

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MR KEVIN GILES: Or the time.

MS MILUSA GILES: Yeah. And that's why I feel that we're just that little bit luckier that we were able to, because we had people from - you know, our accountants sending us emails, "This grant is coming out, that grant is coming out". Whereas I wonder if other people that are just workers would have had that?

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MS DOVEY: So without that accounting support --

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MS MILUSA GILES: Yeah.

MS DOVEY: -- it would have been much more difficult?

MS MILUSA GILES: Yeah, definitely.

5 MR KEVIN GILES: Near impossible, I would have thought, especially the
farmhouse - farmhouse grant supposed to be complete in half an hour. We had two 2-
hour sessions with our accountant and still wasn't finished.

10 MS MILUSA GILES: And, yeah, and the accountants just had to do a whole heap of
stuff for it now but, you know --

MS DOVEY: With all of those difficulties, what about the mental health aspect for
the community? Do you feel like the community's getting the help they need,
accessing the help that they need?

15 MS MILUSA GILES: I hope so. I'm having counselling because I just - yeah,
couldn't cope with everything. So, look, there'll always be those people that won't
accept counselling but I'm hoping that, you know, people are taking up the offers
because the offer is there. It definitely is there. It's just whether you're that sort of
20 person to take - take that on board.

MR KEVIN GILES: Yeah.

25 MS MILUSA GILES: And it makes a huge difference because they really do ground
you and let you see things in, you know, in perspective. And like, for instance, with
my counsellor, she has seen me, how angry I was at the start and how much we've
moved on. And I tried to - try to be very respectful of not saying to people, "Oh,
we've got this and we've got that", you know, because other people might not. Other
30 people might not be in that fortunate situation. Because if you didn't lose your - if
you were a primary producer and you didn't live on your property, you didn't get
anything. It had to be your primary residence to access a lot of these grants. So you
kind of don't like to really, you know, throw mud in people's faces and say, "Well,
we're lucky, we've got this and we've got that." But we're lucky, yeah, but bloody
35 hell, we're not lucky either, you know. Yeah, we shouldn't - I wish we weren't having
to have this conversation. I really do.

MS DOVEY: Do you want to take a break?

40 MS MILUSA GILES: No, I'm okay.

MS DOVEY: Are you sure?

MS MILUSA GILES: I wear my heart on my sleeve. I can't help it.

45 MS DOVEY: Good.

MS MILUSA GILES: Yeah, I just - it just makes me sad, you know, for everything that you have lost.

MS DOVEY: Yes.

5

MS MILUSA GILES: Yeah.

MS DOVEY: Milusa, do you have anything else that you wanted to add that you would like people to know?

10

MS MILUSA GILES: Just, yeah, I just really want people to know how hard it is and that it does, yeah, totally turn your life upside down. And it's hard enough if you're just a worker but when it's actually taken your livelihood as well. And we're not - look, we're not a café or a restaurant where we can just go and build a new - you know, a new venue and we can start rebuilding the business. We're not like that. This is a five to seven-year thing because we're not going to - what we plant this year is only a fraction of what's going to replace. We're talking about seven years, I reckon, before we're back to earning an income off - off this land. So --

15

20

MR KEVIN GILES: Yeah, we'd probably like to thank the community groups, like the Rotary that's helped us out and a number of church groups, Red Gum church group and the Billy Graham church group come from America to help us clean up around the place and - was there any other? There was lots of, lots of people come to help, it was terrific.

25

MS MILUSA GILES: Yeah.

MR KEVIN GILES: Friends had come up to help us and Glenferrie Rotary Club come up from Melbourne and, yeah, they really helped us out a great deal, which was good.

30

MS DOVEY: Thank you both for your time.

MS MILUSA GILES: Thank you.

35

MR KEVIN GILES: No worries, thanks.

MS MILUSA GILES: Thanks.

40

<VIDEO END>

<ADJOURNED 1:29 PM>

<RESUMING 2:15 PM>

45

COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Ms Hogan-Doran.

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: Good afternoon, Chair. I think we're running on time. I call Ms Margot Forster, the State Lead, Disaster Rebuilding and Recovery of the Department of Premier and Cabinet South Australia, and Ms Georgie Cornish, Director of State Recovery, Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

5

COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Ms Forster, Ms Cornish, welcome. Thanks for joining us this afternoon.

MS FORSTER: Thank you, Commissioner.

10

MS CORNISH: Thank you.

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: Ms Forster will take an oath.

15 <MARGOT FORSTER, SWORN>

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: And Ms Cornish will affirm.

<GEORGIE CORNISH, AFFIRMED>

20

<EXAMINATION BY MS HOGAN-DORAN SC>

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: Ms Forster, if I begin with you, could I just get you to explain to the Commissioners, then I will come to you, Ms Cornish, just so they have an understanding of your role within the South Australian State Recovery Arrangements?

25

MS FORSTER: Thank you. So, as you introduced me, I am the State Lead for Disaster Rebuilding and Resilience, as well as the State Recovery Coordinator, Bushfires, for South Australia. I was appointed to the State Lead Rebuild and Resilience on 16 January this year in response to the size and scale and complexity of the disaster that the State faced, and two months later I was also then - absorbed the role of State Recovery Coordinator for the bushfires.

30

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: What was your role before you were appointed in January? What was your role when you were appointed in January?

35

MS FORSTER: I was between jobs. I was - my last paid employment was as the Chief Executive Officer of the Defence Teaming Centre, and then I had three months organising the Air Force's air show here at Edinburgh.

40

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: So quite a bit of logistics experience?

MS FORSTER: Yes.

45

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: And, Ms Cornish, could you give some explanation or assistance to the Commissioners in relation to your role in relation to the South Australian State Recovery Arrangements?

5 MS CORNISH: Yes, of course. So, as the Director for State Recovery, our function is responsible for primarily three things. First and foremost, supporting State Recovery Coordinator in recovery operations, regardless of the event and whatever that might be, whether it be bushfire or COVID. Secondly, it's about building capability with Councils and communities, so that we can understand recovery operations and we can support communities and Councils to prepare for recovery in that process. And then finally, for us, it's about working with other jurisdictions and, of course, working with Commonwealth to build a better policy for recovery.

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: All right. Now, what I would like to do is to, first of all, get you to sketch - the Commissioners have had some details already in terms of, in particular, the most recent bushfires in South Australia, but to assist them, I will have PIS.424.011.0029, which is the map of major fires in South Australia from the recent fire season. And if we can have that just zoomed in so it has a little bit more clarity on the broadcast stream. And in due course, Ms Cornish and Ms Forster, I'm going to take the Commissioners to the Cudlee Creek and Kangaroo Island maps just to get some more detail.

But if you could sketch for the Commissioners so they have an understanding of the scale and resources that were impacted, so the scale of the impact and what the recovery effort has had to be as a consequence.

MS FORSTER: If I may, I will defer to Georgie Cornish to start this explanation.

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: Please.

30 MS CORNISH: Yes, of course. So the Commission would have heard from the Councils in the terms of, I guess, some of the specific implications for the Council areas. Many of you would be familiar with Kangaroo Island as a tourist destination, a significant environmental destination and tourism destination as well, but also being an island, and the thing that makes it attractive for many of us to visit is also a bit of a logistics challenge when it comes to recovery for the community and, of course, getting things that might be required to support the community in recovery to them.

40 So that has caused some challenge obviously, not surprisingly, and that's really just, I guess, by way of - you know, I appreciate it's sometimes difficult looking at a map there. South Australia is a State of small towns with significant distances between them. We are no strangers to remoteness, and I know we're not the only State that deals with those things. But, obviously, as soon as you create an island sort of scenario, it does make it very difficult for that logistics in terms of the recovery piece there.

Cudlee Creek, those at the Commission might be familiar with Cudlee Creek more so as the Adelaide Hills region. It's often an area by which people commute from to work in town. It's very close to Adelaidians' heart in that regard. Many of the communities around the Cudlee Creek fire scar will have had experiences with fire in previous events; Sampson Flat being one of those from 2015. But South Australia, we have been fortunate that we haven't had a great deal of significant fires over the years, and that's not to say that fires that occur aren't significant to individuals. But in terms of building our governance to support events that we're familiar with, this summer has been beyond our normal expectation.

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: And there were are a number of just smaller fires, although obviously not for those who are directly impacted, and there has been some detail provided about those in relation - in your responses. I want to - while we're in this document - just briefly take the Commissioners to see the burn scar for Cudlee Creek and Kangaroo Island fires. If we can go - I think they're going to be in the same document, so it will be 0030 and 0031 where there is shown on this the latest fire scars. You can get a little bit of insight from this in that you can see the quite forested area to the west of Kangaroo Island compared to the sort of grey areas which are farmland on these maps.

What I wanted to take you to is, in the context of the impact, the impacts having been on primarily agricultural land and small, very small settlements, is to get some sense for the Commissioners of the clean-up, the debris and the clean-up and the exercise that that has been involved and the logistical challenges that have been involved in that. And I think the best way to do that is to go to your Bushfire Clean-Up Progress and Schedule, which is SSA.468.017.0001 and that's at tab 11.

Now, this is quite a recent document that we're going to go to which is 29 June 2020 and this page, which is the Adelaide Hills Clean-Up Schedule, a little hard to see, but there's only about seven or so red dots which are the ones which are scheduled for still to be awaiting clean-up, but otherwise all the other ones have been completed. You can see it's really quite dispersed. And if we can then show at the same time alongside the next page, which is 0002, which has the Kangaroo Island clean-up schedule. And I will have you leave it just as they are because there's some information on that page which I want the Commissioners to be able to see.

We can see in this that the Adelaide Hills Waste Management Clean-Up has involved a commitment in the order of \$3.64 million, and the Kangaroo Island clean-up has involved a commitment for waste management in the order of \$9.7 million. And I think in your response you've indicated that the total funds expended or committed was 14.7 million, which has been jointly funded by the Commonwealth and the State of South Australia on a fifty-fifty basis. It's a very long introduction to lead to a series of questions.

The first is to get a sense of the logistics involved in managing debris across such a significant area and to what extent you've said already in your introductory remarks, Ms Cornish, that there are particular challenges in relation to an impacted area being

an island. And if I might just pause there and invite you to respond? I'm not sure which one wants to go first in those circumstances.

5 MS FORSTER: So I will kick off, and if I might just clarify the question that you're asking me.

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: Fair enough.

10 MS FORSTER: Sorry. In the context of Kangaroo Island, there were a number of challenges for the clean-up, and primarily the challenges were in relation to ensuring we took all necessary steps to protect the environment and the people from hazardous waste, specifically asbestos. And the majority of the properties that were damaged on Kangaroo Island were built in the '50s, and there was a very, very high probability that the majority of those structures contained asbestos.

15 So we took the low tolerance of risk approach and ensured that we treated every property as if it was contaminated with asbestos. When we undertook the design of how we would go about cleaning this up, we needed to take into account that, again, this is an island. And if you've never been to Kangaroo Island, the only way, unless
20 you fly in or you sail your own boat down there, the only way you can get there is by driving for about an hour and a half - a lot of that time is on a single lane road, quite windy, very narrow - to a ferry terminal, and then you catch a ferry across that does obviously takes cars and trucks, and that ferry service runs, essentially, every hour and a half.

25 So logistics is very challenging and its costs - also costs a great deal of money to - to access that service. And so the idea of taking the waste off of the island was basically logistically very challenging. So the - this recovery was led by Green Industries Australia, and the approach that they took was to use the clean-up also as an
30 opportunity to invest in recovery, economic recovery of the community. And so the approach they took, both in Kangaroo Island and in the Cudlee Creek area, was to manage the clean-up in-house because we did have the luxury of it being a vastly smaller undertaking than the eastern States. And so they chose to - we chose to deal with it internally, to manage it internally using our specialists. And they also were
35 supported by the Environmental Protection Agency, by WorkSafe, Fleurieu Regional Waste Authority and other specialists, and contracted out small packages of work to local contractors to enable them to have an income.

40 And it also afforded the opportunity to have those contractors trained in dealing with people who have undergone recent trauma, so that they were - they were empowered and confident in how they would actually deal with these people who had lost everything. We also were able to schedule small packages of work that were able to then be - we were able to make sure that the contractors were working effectively; they could be scheduled to suit the timetables of the people whose houses we were
45 clearing up.

When - when it came time to - we tested the ground before the clean-up, and again tested the ground after the clean-up, to make sure there was no residual waste, dangerous hazardous waste. That was both on Kangaroo Island and in the Hills. As I said, Kangaroo Island was mostly around asbestos being the problem, and a little bit of CCA from the Permapine posts of the wineries affected. And in the Adelaide Hills, it was very much the Permapine and the polytubes that the vineyards used for irrigation. All of that material needed to be cleaned up and we needed to test the ground to ensure it was safe for replanting.

10 And GISA, as you said in the introduction, they have just about finished the job, but they were able to also invest effort and time in separating out materials that could be recycled. And they've collected 3000 tonnes of scrap metal, 5000 tonnes of recyclable construction material. And when we cycled back to Kangaroo Island again, there's over 3000 tonnes of fencing steel, wire, that will be recycled.

15 MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: I will come to you Ms Cornish. So we can see the difference between - there's not that many more clean-up sites, it seems, in the Adelaide Hills to Kangaroo Island, but it's three times the cost to clean up Kangaroo Island than to clean up the Adelaide Hills over a relatively similar spatial area. And so I think you've picked up some of the reasons why I understand that is, Ms Forster. My understanding is that in addition to the cost that has been involved in the clean-up that you've identified, which is the debris, Kangaroo Island in particular also have the advant - or not advantage - but also had deployed to it members of the Australian Defence Force perhaps at an earlier stage of the relief and recovery effort. Were they involved in the clean-up of any of this debris or were they otherwise tasked?

MS FORSTER: I'm going to defer to Georgie there.

30 MS CORNISH: Yes, that's fine. From our point of view, as Margot noted, many of the residences on Kangaroo Island were known to have asbestos. So obviously ADF were unable to assist with that, nor would we wish them to, that's a specialist job. Where it comes to ADF providing assistance, was really around the fencing. So the rolling of wire, moving of where they weren't CCA posts - and I'm sure you've heard a little bit around the challenges of CCA posts which is, of course, toxic. So the rolling of wire and the collection of that was a big part of ADF deployment work and was most gratefully received.

40 What I would point out, those items that you have up there on the screen that you can see, just to provide some additional commentary and clarity around the colours of the dots, it's worth noting that all the residences have been cleared. So where the dots have not changed is where those private properties might still have fencing material, sheeting material. So, until GISA have a quite clear statement where - until the property is entirely clear, they will not change the colour of that dot. And they've been very upfront with that because, I guess, they don't want to miss anything, which obviously makes perfect sense to me.

What that does mean is that, indeed, anyone's home that was damaged, according to those dots where you can see a green dot or, indeed, a red dot, has been cleared.

5 MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: I see. All right. We were speaking about the Defence and Australian Defence Force assistance, and since we're on that topic I might move to that, where that's addressed in the submission of the department. The relevant Department of Premier and Cabinet submission is PCS.311.0001.0023 and I'm going to the responses to section 9 which concern the Defence and Australian Defence Force assistance.

10 When that's brought up, that's PCS.311.001.0023. Do you have that? Yes. The ADF provided a large surge capacity to support recovery operations, initially in Kangaroo Island and then Cudlee Creek. You've already mentioned two of the pieces of work that they did to assist, which was to support the CCA timber post waste collection, 15 that's the copper chrome arsenate waste timber post waste collection in the Adelaide Hills and Kangaroo Island in support of the Green Industries SA's program, and also to provide some clean-up assistance.

20 There's a couple of - it's otherwise quite a positive statement in relation to the ADF, but one of the things in that 9.3.6 is identifying an example of support where:

25 *"The ADF was expediting clean-up processes on properties but this was somewhat problematic as the assistance wasn't available consistently to all residents due to the changing parameters concerning tasks that the ADF could complete."*

I just want to drill down into that just a little bit just to get an understanding of, you know, in order so that could be addressed for the future, what that was involved there as a concern, or an issue?

30 MS CORNISH: Yes. So the example I would take around that is really what we saw in the first instance is many individuals obviously who have lost either their home or suffered damage around their home would seek assistance and would make that request for assistance through local recovery coordinators and through those processes. And ADF would, of course, be well placed to come and assist with those. 35 Whether that be tree felling or tree - once the tree has fallen, the chopping of trees. I'm sure there's a technical term for that which I don't know, I'm afraid.

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: I can't help you.

40 MS CORNISH: But - but nonetheless there was those sorts of tasks that were undertaken by ADF for those residents who were able to get onto that quickly. Residents who then either had other things to deal with or who had been away and came back and then sought to have that work done, were then sort of, I suppose, required to look for other solutions because the deployment of ADF had concluded. 45 So there was a sense across the community that not everyone had received the same equitable assistance, I suppose, in that regard.

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: I see. So what you're speaking to in that paragraph is to more the outcome, which is that not all residents were able to be assisted in this way and not a criticism of the ADF, for example, being selective in the tasks that they would be prepared to do for different residents?

5

MS CORNISH: No, absolutely your former statement.

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: Alright. Thank you. Now, there's also separately, and I will just see if you're able to assist us, activation of the COMDISPLAN by South Australia in order to access ADF assistance. Are you able to assist at all in terms of any insights as to how that was done and the kinds of considerations that were taken into account?

10

MS CORNISH: No, not really, other than to say that I know that this request - so this request isn't made specifically to ADF, this is made to the Commonwealth, and is made from - the South Australian agency that makes that request is South Australian Police. So we advised that we would require recovery assistance, and then that progresses through those means.

15

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: Alright. Now, there's two other major areas I wanted to take you to. There's a lot of detailed material that has been provided by South Australia and some of it has been summarised in the opening this morning. One of them is some of the observations that are made in relation to the disaster recovery funding arrangements and the financial assistance and the arrangements between the Commonwealth and the State. If we could go back to 0021 and question 5.

20

25

When that's brought up, this is back to page - same document, should be 0021, operator, question 5. So, in question 5, you were asked to describe any opportunities that can be identified for improving efficiencies to the existing financial assistance arrangements between the Commonwealth and the State. It's identified there that there would be benefit in reassessing pre-identified measures. And one of the examples that is spoken of in a positive sense is that there are small business grants under the DRFA that are focused upon clean-up, which captures the topic we've just dealt with, but not otherwise. I will just ask you to speak to what are the kind of things that ought to be captured by any changes to the arrangements?

30

35

MS CORNISH: I think in terms of the changes within those arrangements, part of the process is probably, to South Australia's mind, around making them more streamlined. So we have a sense of, you know, I would suggest that we've all learnt an awful lot over this summer, and there are probably DRFA assistance packages that we've rolled out in various States across Australia that we've not rolled out in previous years. There is potentially consideration around how we might streamline those and actually have some - some more discussions, and I know that they are happening more broadly - more discussions about what they look like prior to an event rather than after an event.

40

45

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: All right. That has been something that has featured in a number of the responses. I am conscious of the time. The other matter I needed to take you to was, if I can just find - would you just excuse me for one moment. I think it's in the same document. No, it's not. I need to take you to a different document. I want to talk a little bit more - so we talked about funding assistance. I want to ask you some questions about resource sharing arrangements which is detailed in the response of - if I can find it. Just excuse me for one moment. It's a different response from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet of July 2020 and that's SSA.468.056.0001.

Now, if we can go to 0008 and 0009, you were just asked to describe here the recovery resource sharing arrangements between the State of South Australia and other States and/or the Commonwealth including an example of their use, and what is identified here is a number of occasions during which South Australia provided assistance to other States, in particular Queensland, in response to natural disasters in that State.

In paragraph 4.4 the description is given in relation to the Cyclone Debbie and the Queensland monsoonal trough event. I have a couple of questions I wanted to raise with you in that. The first is: do either of you have personal knowledge of these circumstances? That is, I suspect Ms Forster may not, or perhaps maybe in a different way. No, she doesn't. Ms Cornish, are you able to speak to that?

MS CORNISH: To the specific deployments?

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: Yes.

MS CORNISH: No, I'm afraid not, no. I wasn't on the deployments.

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: And what about the arrangements for those deployments; that is, how were they initiated, the negotiation for the memorandum of understanding that sat behind or supported those deployments. Are you able to assist the Commissioners in any way in relation to those?

MS CORNISH: Yes. So from our point of view, the inter-jurisdictional arrangements were part of the Social Recovery Reference Group, and I believe that was discussed this morning in an earlier hearing session. So the Social Recovery Reference Group is a group of multi-jurisdictional groups that sort of sits under CORS, the Community Outcomes Recovery Subgroup of ANZEMC. That group pulls together the interstate or inter-jurisdictional assistance MOU, and then it is up for each jurisdiction to determine whether they sign up to that.

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: Who, from South Australia, is the representative on the SRRG?

MS CORNISH: So the primary representative is SAHA, so South Australian Housing Authority.

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: The Housing Authority, alright. How does that come about? We heard Health was on from Tasmania, Housing from South Australia?

5 MS CORNISH: So it's predominantly whomever is responsible for relief.

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: I see. Are you able to give any insight as to who was on it, or presently is on it from the other States and Territories? We can go the long way and ask somebody else, but we may as well ask you.

10

MS CORNISH: No. I wouldn't be confident in knowing their home agencies, sorry.

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: That's alright. So, as you were saying, it's within the discretion of each member State or Territory to sign up to the MOU. I take it South Australia went through that exercise?

15

MS CORNISH: Yes.

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: Who is the partner? Who is the other partner to the MOU in that arrangement?

20

MS CORNISH: So, it is about signing up to a common understanding which is as much as I really know because I wasn't part of the deployments. I think for further detail I would recommend SAHA who obviously, as the signing party to it would be best placed.

25

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: Paragraph 4.5 speaks to:

"The SRRG interstate deployment coordinators, communicated regularly while the MOU process was finalised, prior to the first deployment."

30

I think this is speaking to those two deployments. The interstate deployment coordinators, are they South Australian officers or are they from the hosting jurisdiction, or somewhere else?

35

MS CORNISH: They would be from both.

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: I see. Alright. So 4.6 and 4.7, the reference is made there to there being briefings and provision of learning material beforehand, and the deployment of staff - deployed staff identifying having had a higher level of understanding of the complexities of recovery following such a large event. How have those staff been incorporated and that learning, or that information and understanding, been incorporated into the South Australian State recovery efforts for the current - for the most recent 2019-2020 bushfire season? Are you able to assist in relation to that?

45

MS CORNISH: In the South Australian environment SAHA - and forgive me if I go with the acronym - is responsible for relief centres and recovery centres. So they facilitate those on behalf of the recovery function, if that makes sense. That also includes the outreach capability that is undertaken. So often the deployments are with an outreach focus, and that skill set that has been brought back will be utilised through those means. So, in terms of building knowledge and expertise and a capability, South Australia has a low risk profile, for which we're very grateful, as I mentioned earlier.

10 In terms of ensuring that we have a capability for where people have the skills and experience, then being able to assist other States in their times of need is obviously a useful - both useful for them and useful for us in terms of building that capability. So those individuals who have been on that deployment will be utilised for outreach or for relief and recovery functions in South Australia.

15 MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: Alright. The other matter which I think is in the other response but I don't think I need to physically take you and the Commissioners there, is the - two matters. One I raised in the opening which was that it is intended that the experience of recovery in the Cudlee Creek and Kangaroo Island bushfires will be dealt with and evaluated in accordance to the National Monitoring and Evaluation Framework. Is that work being deferred until the completion of the recovery process and, if not, if that work is under way, if you could give some indication as to how that work is progressing?

25 MS FORSTER: So the - if I might answer that question?

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: Please.

30 MS FORSTER: As you've stated in the opening remarks, we in South Australia, do follow the national guidelines for the lessons learnt, for want of a better term, for these types of incidents, and our process is covered under our State Emergency Management Plan. We will - we have not yet started the formal proceedings of running those, because we are really just coming out of the early recovery stage. But it is our intention to, within the next couple of weeks, commence the first round of engagements at the local community level, and also within the State organisation and all of the agencies involved, to capture those lessons and then analyse their - analyse them and feed them back into improvements, continuous improvements.

40 We have been capturing, or observing areas where there could be - should be improvements along the way, and have been making incremental adjustments to the way we do business throughout this journey because, again, it has been stated before, but South Australia has not experienced, and was not established in terms of capacity for an event such as the one we are experiencing now. And so we have had to expand rapidly. We've had to be very good at assessing, adapting, evolving on the run, so that we could make adjustments and do a better job, and not actually wait till the end of the event to improve things.

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: May I ask you a question in relation to that? Will that have been a self-evaluation process or are you obtaining external evaluators?

5 MS FORSTER: We will have - we will be engaging external support for the evaluation.

10 MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: Right. And you might've heard some evidence on Tuesday from Queensland and Victoria, their Inspectors-Generals for Emergency Management, of Emergency Management, and the external assurance role that they play. Is there an external assurance body or officer of some kind within the South Australian Emergency Management Framework at this stage?

15 MS FORSTER: There is not an external IGEM equivalent. We have an assurance framework that sits within SEMC, so State Emergency Management Committee and that framework is - has been established and is sort of being built and developed as we speak.

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: Right.

20 MS FORSTER: So that does exist and is external to recovery and it's within the State Emergency Management Committee.

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: Alright. Thank you. Those are the questions I had, Chair.

25 COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: The question I have I don't think can be answered in this forum so I will hold off on that for now. Commissioner Bennett?

30 COMMISSIONER BENNETT: I just have one question. You described how you had to develop so much of this because it was the first time that you have had something of this nature and extent and develop the recovery methodologies. Did you look to and/or obtain assistance from the Commonwealth in terms of advice on any of those topics?

35 MS FORSTER: Commissioner, if I might just slightly modify and say South Australia did have recovery processes, recovery plans, frameworks and experience. My comment was more to the scale and complexity, and so it was --

40 COMMISSIONER BENNETT: Sorry, I wasn't suggesting you didn't have anything, any disaster frameworks in place. I did understand with this, you know, you were talking about the scale because I think we've said earlier, you're not as disaster prone as, say, Queensland, in terms of natural disasters - not other disasters. What I was just trying to understand was, bearing in mind that, for example, Queensland has had vast experience in dealing with natural disasters, and the Commonwealth has had a lot of experience in dealing, you know, at Commonwealth level with States that have had disasters at a much greater scale than you've experienced before.

45

I was trying to short-cut it and not making too many assumptions. I just wondered whether you were able, by reason of the engagements with the other jurisdictions and/or the Commonwealth, you were able to go to them for a bit of - you know, even just talking it through, I'm not suggesting they came in and ran it, except I know you
5 got assistance from the ADF, but I just wondered whether dealing with this and having to develop a different scale of response, whether you found assistance from other parts of the country?

10 MS FORSTER: So absolutely. Our recovery team have very, very good relationships with the other jurisdictions, particularly into Queensland and into the Northern Territory and into the Commonwealth to the emergency - sorry, the EMA.

MS CORNISH: Emergency Management Australia.

15 MS FORSTER: And so absolutely we leveraged off of that. Queensland in particular was extremely helpful and I flew and spent a few days at Queensland - sorry, in Queensland, and spent some time at the QRA getting an appreciation of how they manage the scale and then, yes --

20 COMMISSIONER BENNETT: Thank you.

MS FORSTER: -- brought back knowledge of that.

25 COMMISSIONER BENNETT: Thank you. I was hoping that would be the answer. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Thanks. Commissioner Macintosh?

30 COMMISSIONER MACINTOSH: Thanks, Chair. I just wanted to ask a few quick questions about the guidelines for inter-jurisdictional assistance. When we were down at Kangaroo Island we heard a number of complaints about staff turnover in the recovery centres. And I'm not asking you two to go into great detail about that, but my question was, in retrospect, do you think you could have relied more on
35 assistance from other jurisdictions in your recovery centres, with your recovery teams, or do you think that you were adequately resourced?

MS CORNISH: I think from - I think they're probably two separate questions. There - there is a way of utilising the inter-jurisdictional assistance guidelines to provide some additional assistance. But it is really important we talk often in the
40 recovery principles about making sure any contact with those who have been impacted is at the lowest level, as in the most local level possible, so that people have a sense of really understanding the local challenges.

45 There can be challenges with bringing people in from other areas to provide that support to impacted communities. And is without - when - when they seek to - "they" being SAHA - when SAHA seeks to employ individuals into relief and recovery centres, they really focus very much on ensuring they can get someone as local as

possible to do that, to provide that local knowledge and that nuancing that is really important when it comes to the recovery piece.

5 COMMISSIONER MACINTOSH: Does the skills being used to managing highly distressed people, is that one reason why you would bring out-of-area people, because that was the sense we got from the locals. The messaging was: look, it's a really highly stressful circumstance and some of the local SAHA staff were finding it - not the local SAHA staff - the fly-in SAHA staff were finding it difficult because of the stressed environment and the stressed individuals.

10 MS CORNISH: Yes, they were. Yes, I agree. It was a complex environment and stressful environment for those who were impacted.

15 COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: So the follow on to that then is what process is in place to assess whether a Local Council is reaching capacity, and it requires assistance?

20 MS CORNISH: We have quite a different set-up from what I understand other jurisdictions might have. Local Governments or Councils, from our point of view, we partner quite closely with them. We recognise - if you think about this South Australian context, many of our Councils are perhaps smaller than some of the eastern state Councils. We have a small rate paying base in many of those Councils, and so the capacity for Councils to undertake recovery activity above and beyond their everyday can vary significantly across Councils.

25 So we work with Councils and we work with Local Government Association or LGA to make that assessment around whether that is a locally led recovery event or whether that is a State led recovery event. That's based largely on the type of the event that it might be, the level of partnership that might be required, if it's across multiple sites - last summer being a good example of that - excuse me. So from that point of view we work with Councils to identify whether something might be locally led or State led and what their level of comfort is about that capability.

30 COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Yes. From observation, you're not unique, by the way, with other States. They have similar resource issues with some of the smaller LGAs that are affected more commonly by fires and floods. So if I take that a bit further then, you identify that a Council needs help. Other States, they leave it to the Local Government Association and manage - they manage across LGAs to balance out resources. How does it happen in South Australia?

40 MS FORSTER: In South Australia, if it's a - if it is identified to be a State-led event, we will appoint a local recovery coordinator into the area. And that is a State-funded position and that's someone who's put in early, a pre-trained individual in local recovery activities who's placed into the community to try and understand really what are the most immediate issues that they need to deal with. They will establish a local recovery committee, and work from there with the Councils, and obviously community and community groups, etcetera.

COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Okay. So if the Councils are overwhelmed, it would be that position that would report back to someone, saying we need more resources.

5 MS FORSTER: That's right, yes.

COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Yes.

10 MS FORSTER: So we would typically go out and meet with the Councils very early on.

COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Okay. I appreciate that. Thank you very much. I haven't frozen, we're just thinking.

15 MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: Commissioners, given that that was a helpful clarification --

COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Yes.

20 MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: -- in that last exchange. I don't have anything further. Might these witnesses be excused? I don't think there's any contact from the parties with leave. There hasn't been.

COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Okay.

25 MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: Might they be released from their summonses?

30 COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: They may be released from their summons. Thank you very much, both of you, for joining us. You are released from your summonses and we will adjourn and reconvene at 1515 Canberra time.

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: Thank you, Chair.

35 COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Thank you.

<ADJOURNED 3:03 PM>

<RESUMING 3:15 PM>

40 COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Ms Hogan-Doran, continue with the trek around Australia, please.

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: Ms Dovey is going to take us to the Northern Territory.

45 COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Ms Dovey, please.

MS DOVEY: Our final panel today is from the Northern Territory. I would like to call Mr Len Darragh, the Director, Security and Emergency Response, Department of the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory; and Ms Fleur O'Connor, Chief Officer, Northern Territory Emergency Services.

5

COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Mr Darragh, Ms O'Connor, thank you for joining us. We appreciate you taking the time.

MR DARRAGH: Good afternoon and thank you.

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MS O'CONNOR: Good afternoon.

MS DOVEY: Mr Darragh, I understand that you will take an affirmation; is that correct?

15

MR DARRAGH: That is correct.

<LEN DARRAGH, AFFIRMED>

20 MS DOVEY: And Ms O'Connor, I understand you will also take an affirmation?

MS O'CONNOR: Correct.

<FLEUR O'CONNOR, AFFIRMED>

25

<EXAMINATION BY MS DOVEY>

30 MS DOVEY: Thank you. Now, Mr Darragh, you have provided the Northern Territory's response to the questions in relation to recovery by way of a witness statement. Could I please have NTT.500.001.0060 brought up. Mr Darragh, is that your witness statement?

MR DARRAGH: Yes, it is.

35 MS DOVEY: And could you please confirm for us that the contents of that statement are true and correct?

MR DARRAGH: That is correct.

40 MS DOVEY: Thank you. Now, Mr Darragh, would you please briefly explain to the Commissioners how your role fits into the recovery sphere in the Northern Territory?

45 MR DARRAGH: Yes, I can. I'm currently employed as the Director of Security and Emergency Recovery at the Department of Chief Minister in the Northern Territory. As part of that role and responsibility, I can be appointed by the Territory Recovery Coordinator as a regional recovery coordinator and, therefore, responsible for managing and coordinating recovery operations in the Northern Territory.

MS DOVEY: Thank you. Ms O'Connor, would you similarly explain to the Commissioners your role in relation to recovery?

5 MS O'CONNOR: I have a quite minimal role. I'm the Chief Officer of the Northern Territory Emergency Service. The dedicated recovery function sits with the Department of the Chief Minister; however, in terms of my role, it is in relation to seeking Commonwealth assistance.

10 MS DOVEY: Okay.

MS O'CONNOR: Requests, yes.

15 MS DOVEY: Thank you very much. Is your role also associated with that short-term relief period which is, sort of, a middle ground between the response and the recovery phases?

MS O'CONNOR: You are referring to impact assessments?

20 MS DOVEY: No, no, no. I'm just wondering if, while an emergency might be underway, people might need relief support by way of evacuation and those sorts of matters, and I was just wondering if you could let us know if you have any involvement in those sorts of operations?

25 MS O'CONNOR: Limited. Limited.

MS DOVEY: Thank you. Now, just to start with, I thought it might be good to give everyone a bit of a sense of the extent of bushfires, or wildfires as they're referred to in your response, in the Northern Territory. I'm just going to quickly call up two images which have been provided by the Department of Primary Industries and Resources in the Northern Territory. The first is showing fire scars from 2019 and it's
30 PIT.500.001.0006. And, as I understand it, that's the fire scar across the Northern Territory from 2019. Does that sound about right to you, that that's the extent of the fires?

35 MR DARRAGH: It does.

MS DOVEY: Yes. And, similarly, if we could go to PIT.500.001.0007. I understand that this is a similar image for 2020? Is that also about right?

40 MR DARRAGH: Whilst I haven't seen these pictures before, I believe so, yes.

MS DOVEY: Yes. Your statement at 0087 sets out some figures in relation to the 2019 bushfire season that there has been 5.7 million hectares burnt, which is 4.2 per cent of the Northern Territory. I note that you set out there that there has also been a
45 further nine million hectares in 2019 affected by planned fuel reduction burning,

which is 6.7 per cent of the Northern Territory. Can you speak to those figures? Is that normal for the Northern Territory?

5 MR DARRAGH: I can speak to some of those figures but those figures have essentially been provided by Bushfires NT and other authorities. But certainly last year the 2019 certainly was an extended and protracted bushfire season. It is not uncommon each year that we go through our normal sort of burn-off season where there is risk reduction activities or mitigation strategies put in place to reduce the fuel loads.

10 MS DOVEY: And that 6.7 per cent, do you have any idea whether that's a normal amount of the area to be burning in any given year?

15 MR DARRAGH: I couldn't answer that question. I would have to take it on advisement.

MS DOVEY: No, that's fine. Thank you very much. I would now like to turn to the question of recovery coordination within the Northern Territory. You've helpfully provided a diagram which I would like to call up, which is at NTT.500.001.0117, and perhaps we could zoom into the diagram part of that document. Thank you very much. Mr Darragh, would you be able to give a brief overview of recovery coordination in the Territory?

25 MR DARRAGH: Yes. I suppose emergency management is governed by the Emergency Management Act 2013. Within that particular Act itself, it outlines a requirement for plans at three levels: at Territory, regional and local level. Also, within that plan, it actually appoints the Police Commissioner as the Territory Controller and also the CEO of the Department of Chief Minister as the Territory Recovery Coordinator. Also shown within the Act is the function and role of the Territory Emergency Council. That has a key role as in terms of directing and providing resources; also reviewing and overseeing the plans and operations of emergency events within the NT.

35 Obviously, within that construct that's shown in front of you at the moment, obviously TEMC, or the Territory Emergency Management Council is a co-chaired arrangement between the Territory Controller and the Territory Recovery Coordinator and they may both appoint, under that, regional controllers and local controllers to undertake respective tasks in the response and recovery areas.

40 MS DOVEY: Thank you very much. Can I ask you to talk a little bit about recovery coordination between the States and Territories; so assisting other States and Territories and then if you need inter-jurisdictional support coming into the Northern Territory. Can you speak about the arrangements for that sort of interstate inter-Territory assistance?

45 MR DARRAGH: Yes, I can. The Territory has supported Queensland on two separate occasions: in 2014 for Cyclone Debbie and last year in 2019 as part of the

tropical monsoon event that occurred. In both those occasions, I suppose outreach teams were sent to Queensland to support those functions. At the moment, there are, or through the Social Reference Recovery Group which is a subcomponent of the Australian New Zealand Emergency Management Committee, currently leads or provides guidelines for that assistance; and that was only recently approved, I suppose, at the end of last year.

The Northern Territory, given its experience in those two events, has also been working on the development of its own policy documents in terms of how we actually mobilise; how we select and choose staff to deploy to those areas; how they will be integrated into that particular jurisdiction; how they will operate whilst they are there; and when they actually return, what the debrief requirements and the evaluation that needs to occur. So we're working very hard to obviously finish off those sort of policy documents, but certainly the Social Reference Recovery Group is a big part of that, and they have certainly coordinated those, I suppose, inter-jurisdictional support arrangements in the past.

MS DOVEY: Certainly. And the Social Reference Recovery Group, who, from the Northern Territory, sits on that group?

MR DARRAGH: We have a representation from the Territory Families, which look after the welfare and social aspects.

MS DOVEY: Okay. Thank you. Can I ask you now to describe your, or the Northern Territory's, coordination at a Commonwealth level in terms of recovery, in terms of seeking assistance and your interaction with bodies at a national level in the recovery space?

MR DARRAGH: Yes, sure. Obviously, we have a very close relationship and association with the Emergency Management Agency and during both response and recovery events, Emergency Management Agency will normally send a liaison officer to the Northern Territory and they will actually be embedded into the emergency operation centre. So we have direct contact through them back to the emergency management agency. They play an important role as in terms of understanding some of the pressures and some of the operational issues that we're dealing with at the time. And if we are, I suppose, constrained by resources or need additional resources to support that response and recovery efforts, we can obviously facilitate that through to EMA a lot quicker.

Obviously, that's done through the normal sort of representation from Defence, also in the Emergency Operations Centre which is undertaken by the joint operations support staff in the Northern Territory. So the arrangements are very good, have worked well in the past and we've had no particular issues.

MS DOVEY: Okay. Thank you very much. In the Northern Territory --

MR DARRAGH: Sorry, if I can --

MS DOVEY: Yes, go ahead.

5 MR DARRAGH: If I can just amplify: that covers the operational space. But in a non-operational sort of setting, obviously we have representation on the ANZEMC, and also representation on the Community Outcomes Recovery Subcommittee which is an important sort of forum to develop a lot of that policy work and doctrine in the recovery space.

10 MS DOVEY: I think the Chair has a question for you.

15 COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: I was going to hold off but you have mentioned the ANZEMC and the like. That's a policy committee and the like, and I understand everyone has participation in that and the subcommittees and the like. But during the emergency ANZEMC doesn't sit, I don't believe, to coordinate the efforts of a particular State or across States and Territories. So during the emergency or during the initial part of the recovery, what's the mechanism if you find that you need assistance; you're reaching capacity. You're not going to go to the Commonwealth or you might have some from the Commonwealth but you're looking to either seek
20 assistance from States or, in the case of Queensland, say Cyclone Debbie or the next cyclone that will come this year, I'm sure. You want to offer support. What's the mechanism there for working that so that it can be coordinated across jurisdictions?

25 MR DARRAGH: Yes, Commissioner. I suppose in the first instance we do have that Defence representation, both in the Territory Emergency Council and also within the Emergency Operations Centre or the Recovery Operations Centre. So, from previous experiences, most of our external support that has been provided to the Northern Territory has been Defence assistance. So that gives us a direct link into the Defence; and then we obviously can process applications through them which then pass to the
30 military support commitments, and they have a direct line I believe to the emergency management agency to allow that sort of resources and support to be provided.

35 If we are looking at supporting another jurisdiction, we certainly still do it through the Social Reference Recovery Group. So I think they do have an operational focus because they certainly coordinate jurisdictional, sort of, I suppose mobilisation in that sort of regard. So they are, I suppose, a conduit for receiving requests from a jurisdiction, reaching out to other jurisdictions, as in terms of the support they might be able to provide. So I know those guidelines are under development or have been developed and agreed by the jurisdictions at the end of last year. So I think the
40 Emergency Management Agency does have a small role in the operational space as well.

45 COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Okay. And so just going back to the SRRG, it's more than just providing welfare support. It's more, anything other than Defence seems to go through the SRRG; is that right? If you are looking to coordinate other aspects like Local Government support to another jurisdiction or various other support

mechanisms they might need, from a governance sense you go through that SRRG; is that right?

5 MR DARRAGH: I think the SRRG certainly has a social welfare orientation, and certainly the sort we've provided in the past has been welfare or outreach teams. That's where we provided support in the past. I don't think that there is a clear mechanism at the moment for receiving recovery assistance or support other than that, than approaching maybe the jurisdiction themselves. I know that for response agency there is certainly a policy in place for that, but I don't think we have a policy
10 at the moment for recovery.

COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Okay. Thank you. That's what we're trying to clear up. In fact, that's been the whole discussion today about where SRRG actually sat. Was it just in welfare or was it more broader? And so the question there is: how do
15 you approach SRRG? Do you go through EMA? How do you enact that operationally, because they are actually a policy group, advising the CoRS in ANZEMC, but they obviously have picked up this operational role. So how do you approach them? Are they a standing group or how does that work?

20 MR DARRAGH: I think they are a standing group and they meet regularly, and particularly during events they do delve into the operational space. We certainly have representation on that particular committee through our welfare or our Territory Families. We're also well informed by them as in terms of what effort might be recovered - sorry, required in other jurisdictions. And when that form of request
25 comes at that sort of forum it's considered on its merits, and then we go from there. So the whole mobilisation and projection to another jurisdiction is undertaken through goodwill, a certain extent.

COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Okay. So does SRRG come to you or do you go
30 through someone and say: we need to enact the SRRG so that we can then sit down and work the issues that we need. We've got this recovery starting to come. We're going to need assistance. Do you, as a Territory or State, initiate that to stand it up? How is the process - what is the process for it?

35 MR DARRAGH: My understanding is, and I haven't read the recent guidelines, is that --

COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: I have and it didn't help me. That's why I'm asking
40 you. Sorry.

MR DARRAGH: Okay. Well my understanding is that that forum is used, and I believe a jurisdiction may table a request through that forum for support from other jurisdictions.

45 COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Okay.

MR DARRAGH: And I think, based on that, we then consider whether we're in a position to do so; and certainly approval is sought through the Territory Recovery Coordinator and that's how we've mobilised and sent people from there.

5 COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Okay. Thank you very much for that. Ms Dovey?

MS DOVEY: Thank you. Can you give some examples of occasions on which you've sent support to other States and describe the kinds of support that you've provided in other States?

10

MR DARRAGH: Just in a recovery sense?

MS DOVEY: Yes, in a recovery sense.

15 MR DARRAGH: Yes. Those two examples I think I provided earlier, I stated earlier, was in 2014, which is Tropical Cyclone Debbie, and for last year which was that monsoonal trough that came through. Both of them were essentially forming eight to 10 person teams that were projected forward, and were used in an outreach capacity where they went out into remote areas or into localities where they actually were, I
20 suppose, engaging with the community to see how they were actually coping, providing them additional information. They were essentially working out of the recovery hubs.

25 MS DOVEY: Yes. Thank you. Can I ask you to speak to your experience with seeking disaster recovery funding and that interaction at the Commonwealth level through the DRFA?

MR DARRAGH: Yes, I can. Obviously our Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements are managed through the Department of Treasury and finance. We're
30 aware, obviously, of the four categories that are available. In recent years we haven't really used categories C and D which I believe are at the approval or the - of the Prime Minister. We certainly have used category A in most disaster events, which is the hardship payments, to provide those initial, you know, essential items that they need, emergency accommodation.

35

We haven't used category B extensively over the last few years. We have actually noted that that is an area for improvement. We can only have the Department of Trade, Business and Innovation and Department of Primary Industry and Resources both looking at how they can set up that sort of framework to assist our small
40 businesses and our pastoralists for future events. So that work is underway right now.

MS DOVEY: Can I ask the response document NTT.500.001.0060 to be brought up at page 0101. In the response at this page, you have described the experience of using category B payments to achieve betterment. Let me just see where we are. One
45 moment, I will just find the - there we are, at the bottom of the page, 196 and 197. And is this an example of being able to use category B to build back better, to build more resilient facilities? Is that right?

MR DARRAGH: I think at the moment that the DRFA is under review by the Emergency Management Agency. They're looking at how they might be able to simplify the process and provide some sort of standardisation. I believe at the
5 moment that the Build Back Better component actually resides in category D. One of the key, I suppose, areas that they are looking at as part of the review is how they might move that build back - or the betterment component of it into category B which gives you better utilisation to undertake that work.

10 MS DOVEY: Do the paragraphs here not refer to the use of category B measures to build back using different construction methods which are more resilient?

MR DARRAGH: I think they do. I would have to take that on advisement.

15 MS DOVEY: Okay.

MR DARRAGH: And seek, yes, some advice from the Department of Treasury and Finance.

20 MS DOVEY: Okay. Ms O'Connor, is this something that you can speak to, this particular part of the response?

MS O'CONNOR: No.

25 MS DOVEY: No, okay, that's fine. I will move on. Can I ask you to speak to the key challenges that you've come across in recovery coordination, and perhaps particularly in light of the way in which recovery takes place in the context of a very broad geographic area with very limited population spread across that area?

30 MR DARRAGH: Yes, sure. Recovery in the Northern Territory does provide many challenges giving the vast distances and the large number of remote communities. Certainly, for us, recovery starts in the response phase where we try and gain a situational awareness and understanding of what's happening during an event. As
35 part of that process we're obviously participating in the emergency committee meetings; and also, where we can, get involved in the planning type as we shape some of the recovery outcomes further down the line.

As part of that is the development of a recovery action plan, as part of that is really engaging Local Government and those other key stakeholders - and for us in that
40 case sometimes it's industry, some of the miners, so some of the Local Councils - to really make sure that when we do, I suppose, develop a recovery action plan it is community led which is really important for us. There's many challenges for us with the vast distances in terms of evacuations and repatriation, and that's where we have sought, in the past, Defence assistance to do that. But it's all logistics in terms of
45 doing that; it does present many challenges for us.

What we have done is, in terms of when we appoint our local recovery coordinators, we have moved to a system now we're using our regional executive directors who are part of the Department of the Chief Minister. And they represent six regions within the Northern Territory: they're Darwin, the Top End, East Arnhem, the Big Rivers, Barkly and Central Australia. Now, these representatives from the Department of the Chief Minister are invested into those particular areas. They are always working with the Local Governments, the land Councils and key stakeholders, and are best placed to do that.

10 So that puts us in a good position as in terms of coordination, having already a good relationship with the key stakeholders in that area, and really getting the best outcomes for those communities. But certainly the distance, the remote infrastructure, as in terms of roads - many of the, I suppose, infrastructure, like aerodromes, are affected by weather events in the Northern Territory and really hinder our ability to provide recovery support.

MS DOVEY: Okay. Thank you. I would like now to move to your suggestions for improvements to promote successful recovery. Can we please pull up page 0073 of the response. At paragraph 69 you've identified a need for improvement in the collection and assessment of impact data. Can you please speak to that improvement?

MR DARRAGH: Yes, sure. Obviously, when we move from response through the relief phase and into recovery, certainly in the relief component we've got that initial survey and rescue component that takes place and then that initial impact assessment that is undertaken. Given the vast distances are normally the areas that are affected within the Northern Territory they're normally done by aerial assets; in particular, rotary aircraft to get around to do that for us. They're also done using IT devices, iPads per se. That information is then gathered and taken back. And it's just how we can go about that a little bit better in terms of getting that information back.

That gives us the initial assessment as in terms of the broader or bigger picture as in terms of those areas that have been affected to the extent of the damage and the debris. And then it really helps to shape the recovery action plan and the work that we need to do. And then moving on to the next phase is the more comprehensive assessment, and a lot of that is currently done by a lot of our NT Government agencies, and how we go about that and maintain a common operating picture. So certain agencies have their own devices and mechanisms for doing that. And for us to maintain some sort of common operating picture to gather all of that information, to bring it in, to analyse it and then to fully understand it and to make sure that we've actually got processes in place, an economy of effort is what we're really trying to achieve. I just think this is an area that we can work out a little bit better right from the point where we do the initial survey and rescue component to the initial assessments, right through to the comprehensive assessments that occur after that.

45 MS DOVEY: Yes. If we can stay on that page and move to the following two paragraphs. You've suggested a need to amend the DRFA triggers. Can you please describe what improvement you're proposing here?

MR DARRAGH: Once again, this information was provided by the Department of Treasury and Finance. But what I think we're looking at is the, I suppose, understanding what triggers that need to be put in place. We understand that there are
5 certain thresholds and how you go about registering for a particular emergency event. I know that the - for a small disaster or event is about \$240,000. And then there are certain other thresholds as you move through some of the other categories, category B and above.

10 So it's just really simplifying how we can do that through the Emergency Management Agency. I think this is one of those key areas that's under review, how we might simplify that process. At the moment I think it's quite bureaucratic and I think anything we can do to reduce the time lags that have been associated with that, will greatly assist in terms of getting that sort of money back in terms of undertaking
15 those recovery tasks.

MS DOVEY: Certainly. At sub-paragraph (c) you've referred to:

20 *"Creating equity in measures available to ensure those affected in the same way have access to the same type and level of assistance regardless of geographic location."*

Are you talking within a State, across the nation? What's the concern and how do you see it affecting people the way it is at the moment?

25 MR DARRAGH: I think it encompasses both, both within and externally, and certainly across borders. We certainly experienced that during Tropical Cyclone Trevor where the event didn't have a severe impact on the Northern Territory but the monsoonal trough that eventuated from that particular cyclonic event obviously caused widespread flooding and significant damage in Queensland. So Queensland
30 quickly put in place a number of, I suppose, grants and subsidies in place. But those same grants and subsidies weren't available in the Northern Territory.

So when we had our people that were affected, when they were looking across the border and trying to do a comparison against other States - and this also occurred in
35 Western Australia at the same sort of time - it kind of raised eyebrows as in terms of: why aren't we able to access such, I suppose, grants and subsidies? I think that's the work that I spoke about earlier in terms of category B and how we might be able to enhance that and make that available to our communities, and that work is being undertaken by the Department of Business, Trade and Innovation for the small
40 businesses and for the Department of Primary Resources and Industry for pastoralists.

MS DOVEY: Thank you. If we could please go over the page to 0074, you've pointed out further assistance to support communities to be more resilient and
45 allowing for betterment projects. We've mentioned a couple of times that category D does allow for betterment in certain circumstances and we heard from Queensland this morning that they've had success in getting funding for betterment projects. In

your view, is category D sufficient for that sort of work, and in what ways do you think it should be amended?

5 MR DARRAGH: Are you able to zoom in on the particular area that you're referring to, please?

MS DOVEY: My apologies for that. Can we please zoom into E and F at the top of the page.

10 MR DARRAGH: I think when we talk about the betterment projects, because most of the events that we've had in the Northern Territory in the recent years hasn't really moved into category C and D. And at the moment the betterment projects really reside within the category D area. So therefore I think the - as part of the review where they are considering moving into category B, I think that's going to open up
15 those opportunities to undertake betterment projects which we see would obviously build resilience back into our communities.

If we look at some of the housing that we've had from previous events that were caused during Tropical Cyclone Lam and Nathan, I believe back in 2015, there has
20 been a number of, I suppose, projects and repairs and - undertaken in infrastructure, as in terms of housing, and they built back better structures. That wasn't necessarily available back then at the time. I know there is a - a - I suppose an effort at the moment through our Department of Treasury and Finance through the
25 Commonwealth to get some of that acknowledged at the moment and that's moving forward. But I think at the moment it has sat or previously had sat in D and if it moves into category B it will offer up some of, that I suppose, fundings.

MS DOVEY: Okay. Thank you. Just finally, and then I will ask the Commissioners if they have some questions for you, can we just go to page 0110 at paragraph 227, in
30 which it's suggested that there be merit in sharing recovery data and information between jurisdictions. You spoke earlier about room for improvement opportunities for improvement in data collection at the Territory level. Can you speak to this suggestion and what it might look like?

35 MR DARRAGH: I think what I'm talking about there is that I think as jurisdictions we're all faced with many challenges in the emergency management space, and in particular recovery. I think any information that we can share across jurisdictions which will assist us in enhancing our policy, our tools and the way we do business just makes sense. I know that there's a lot of effort. I certainly appreciate the work
40 done through the Australian New Zealand Emergency Management Committee and those subcommittees that sit under that, particularly the community outcomes recovery subcommittee.

45 And it's really through those forums that we really get to find out what other jurisdictions are doing, the work that it's using. I just think that in terms of economy of effort and sharing similar sort of problems, the more we share knowledge and

material, and particularly through our evaluation or after-action review process, it just allows us to consider those and make adjustments to our own policies.

MS DOVEY: Thank you very much. Commissioners.

5

COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: That was a great summary right at the end there. Thank you very much. Commissioner Bennett.

10 COMMISSIONER BENNETT: Yes, just that last answer, just thinking about it, you say - I understand what you're saying, is that you need - it's a wonderful opportunity to share or have available to you information from other jurisdictions who have gone through it. So I'm just thinking now about what the potential role for the Commonwealth is because, bearing in mind that a lot of the funding - the financing for the recovery comes from the Commonwealth and the fact that the
15 Commonwealth - well, is there a role, I mean, sorry, and to change another thing, a comment was made from one of the other jurisdictions that, of course, there are specific problems and issues with each jurisdiction, because no two jurisdictions are exactly the same in terms of, you know, the - even down to the framework of large cities, small cities, pastoral, non-pastoral. The Northern Territory, as just been
20 pointed out to us, has a slightly different topography compared to the other jurisdictions in the country. But why is it only a sharing of information that you're thinking about, rather than having an overarching collation of material nationally that the individual jurisdictions could feed into and then utilise individually for their own purposes?

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MR DARRAGH: I think Commissioner, look, I definitely do advocate for having national sort of frameworks and templates that are available and then they can certainly be tailored and used for, you know, certain jurisdictions and their different nuances that they may have. There's definitely merit in that. The sharing of
30 information that I was talking about is exactly that. When we do undertake work and produce documents and databases, how we go about sharing that more broadly.

I think at the moment we can do those through those national forums, but if we had that sort of work being done at the national level, and a lot of it is done, that's
35 fantastic, but also through the national disaster risk reductions sort of framework currently going at the moment and through similar other funding sort of programs, there's a lot of work being done and it's sharing, I suppose, some of the outcomes of that work that's being achieved.

40 Certainly under the National Disaster Risk Reduction program we undertook 51 projects within the Northern Territory to enhance emergency management arrangements. We're going to move into the next five years under the risk reduction framework and undertake a similar number, a high number of projects which enhance that. So certainly anything that's done at the national level which can
45 standardise our practices and procedures provide the tools that we need is really important, especially for smaller jurisdictions.

At the moment we only have a very small, I suppose, cadre of staff that work in the recovery, you know, management space. I know that some of the larger jurisdictions have recovery agencies so they are in a better position to do that. So if we can leverage off a lot of the work that they do, if they're willing to share that information, the tools that they use as they move forward, I think it would be good and better for national outcomes.

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COMMISSIONER BENNETT: Thank you. I think you've given it a very useful perspective. Thank you very much indeed.

COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Thank you. And thank you both for joining us this afternoon. That was very beneficial. Ms Dovey, is that --

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MS DOVEY: They're all the questions we have for these witnesses, and if they could please be released from their summonses?

COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: They may be released from their summonses and, once again, thank you for being able to join us. We appreciate it.

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MS DOVEY: Just to confirm we've checked and we have - no one with leave to appear has any questions.

COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Thank you.

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MR DARRAGH: Thank you, Commissioner.

MS O'CONNOR: Thank you.

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COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: Okay, with that --

MS HOGAN-DORAN SC: That's all we have for today.

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COMMISSIONER BINSKIN: All we have for today. We will adjourn until 10 am tomorrow morning, Canberra time. See everyone then.

<ADJOURNED 3:52 PM TO FRIDAY, 10 JULY 2020 AT 10 AM>