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PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

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PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

# Sorell Emergency Services Hub

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*Presented to Her Excellency the Governor pursuant to the provisions of the  
Public Works Committee Act 1914.*

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## MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

Legislative Council

*Mr Valentine (Chair)*  
*Ms Rattray*

House of Assembly

*Ms Butler*  
*Mr Ellis*  
*Mrs Petrusma*

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

To Her Excellency Professor the Honourable Kate Warner AC, Governor in and over the State of Tasmania and its Dependencies in the Commonwealth of Australia.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY

The Committee has investigated the following proposal:-

### **Sorell Emergency Services Hub**

and now has the honour to present the Report to Your Excellency in accordance with the Public Works Committee Act 1914 (the Act).

## 2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 This reference recommended the Committee approve works to construct an Emergency Services Hub on a new greenfield site in Sorell, with Tasmanian Police, the Tasmania Fire Service and the State Emergency Service personnel to be co-located in a modern, state of the art emergency services facility. The Sorell Emergency Services Hub will allow response crews from each emergency service to be directly based in the same area, which is expected to improve critical response times and enhance community safety.
- 2.2 Sorell has an existing police station but does not have a fire station, nor a dedicated State Emergency Service facility in the area. State Emergency Services' Southern Regional unit is the closest State Emergency Service (SES) response to Sorell, located in Mornington 20km away. The nearest volunteer fire stations are located in Midway Point, Dodges Ferry, Orielson and Wattle Hill.
- 2.3 The current Sorell Police Station provides policing services to the Sorell municipality, which includes Sorell township, Midway Point, Forcett, Lewisham, Dodges Ferry, Primrose Sands and Orielson. It also services the needs of and provides backup to the one-person stations at Richmond and Nubeena and the two-person station at Dunalley.
- 2.4 The existing police station was built in 1966 as a rural police station and included a residence. Later the station became the divisional headquarters of the Sorell Division with a refurbishment undertaken in 1996. The co-located residence was absorbed into that renovation. This refurbishment was only intended to be a temporary configuration pending construction of a new station. Since the 1996 refurbishment, the building has not undergone any further upgrades.
- 2.5 The building has inadequate foundations, leaks during heavy rains and as a result suffers from structural issues. The layout is disjointed and neither practical nor functional. The facility has a lack of adequate parking and storage, particularly the lack of secure storage for the marine vessel and associated marine equipment. It also has poor disability access and suffers from regular rodent infestation. With the

region rapidly growing, the station no longer has appropriate space, layout nor supporting infrastructure to adequately allow police operations to effectively continue and doesn't have capacity to accommodate a further increase in police numbers. The deterioration of the building impacts on the efficiency, security and safety of staff working in the station.

- 2.6 The neighbouring community volunteer fire brigades located in Midway Point, Dodges Ferry, Orielton and Wattle Hill are owned by the State Fire Commission.
- 2.7 The Midway Point Fire Station was built in 1970 and is home to 25 active members. This station has responsibility of response either side of the two causeways, particularly for incidents impacting the causeway blocking vehicle movement in and out of Sorell. The station has insufficient space and limited training and storage facilities. Parking is insecure and in a residential area, with no disability access. This station is also in need of a major upgrade as it has been added to over the years incorporating a communal toilet block as part of the facilities. However the site has limited capacity for redevelopment due to the lot size and residential area location.
- 2.8 Dodges Ferry Fire Station is a newer facility, with modern fixtures and home to 35 active members. The station is able to accommodate the membership and suitable appliances to provide emergency incident coverage to the Dodges Ferry and surrounding community.
- 2.9 Orielton Fire Station is an older facility built in 1991 and is home to 16 active members and predominantly responds to vegetation fires. Similar to the Midway Point Fire Station, the Orielton Fire Station has insufficient space and limited training and storage facilities. Parking is insecure and there is no disability access. The station has reached its capacity limit due to the lot size and there is limited capacity for redevelopment.
- 2.10 Wattle Hill Fire Station is an older facility and is home to 17 active members and like Orielton predominantly responds to vegetation fires. The station has deficiencies in space and design, including limited training facilities, limited and unsecured parking, limited storage facilities, no disability access and limited capacity to redevelop.
- 2.11 The Southern Regional Unit (SRU), located in Mornington, trains in general rescue, storm and flood response, search and rescue and communications. The unit also plays a significant role in public relations for the State Emergency Service and responds to emergency calls throughout the Southern region. The Southern Regional Unit also supports Tasmania Police and Tasmania Fire Service operations as required.
- 2.12 At present the State Emergency Services SRU services the Greater Hobart area, which includes Sorell, but also services Clarence, Hobart, Kingborough and Glenorchy. This is of some concern, as the existing facility is located within the densely populated residential zone of Clarence and can face issues with resource allocation and traffic congestion on all roads exiting Hobart, particularly during peak periods. This can increase callout and response times in responding to emergency situations within the greater South East region, particularly in extreme

weather conditions, which is when they are most called upon. Consequently, the Mornington complex is not suitable to solely service the growth in the South East region.

- 2.13 The Sorell township and the immediate surrounding communities have, over recent years, experienced a demographic shift to a more residential area, with the residents largely employed outside the municipality. There is currently a restricted Road Crash Rescue (RCR) capability to service this growth trend. Currently RCR responses come from the:

- State Emergency Service's SRU located in Mornington, 20km away;
- Nubeena SES unit on the Tasman Peninsula;
- Swansea SES unit on the east coast;
- Tasmania Fire Service capability from Mornington Career Fire Fighter's; or
- Triabunna Volunteer Firefighters on the East Coast.

The Nubeena and Swansea SES units are too small and too far away to effectively back-up SES response in the Sorell area. Whilst there are volunteer fire brigades in the surrounding areas, capacity to provide emergency assistance, particularly from the Orielton and Wattle Hill brigades, within normal business hours is very limited, due to the majority of members being employed full time and largely employed outside the municipality.

- 2.14 The establishment of a purpose-built Emergency Services Hub will initially enable Tasmania Police, Tasmania Fire Service and the State Emergency Service to provide ongoing essential emergency services to the rapidly growing greater South East region. Co-locating the services into the one complex makes sound operational sense, given much of the DPFEM's emergency response work involves multiple emergency services. The site itself is ideal for shared emergency services purposes, as it is centrally located and provides plenty of space and easy access for emergency response vehicles and personnel.

- 2.15 The Emergency Services Hub design has catered for a RCR response capability as a possible combination of both State Emergency Service and Tasmania Fire Service members. It allows response crews from each emergency service to be directly based in the same area, thus greatly improving critical response times for RCR and other emergencies and enhancing community safety in the South East region.

- 2.16 Additionally, accommodating each service within the one complex will:

- Provide a modern and efficient operating environment contained within the building's functional layout, including state of the art IT technologies;
- Reduce maintenance and operating costs resulting from facility sharing and building efficiency;
- Increase capacity to deliver emergency service functions to meet the demands of the rapid growth in the South East region now and into the future;
- Create an additional location for incident management and incident staging, due to the inclusion of a major incident room/incident control centre;

- Improve the Work Health and Safety of employees and volunteers through the provision of state of the art, purpose-built facilities; and
- Improve access, safety and security for the local community.

2.17 While the current Police Station will close, the Volunteer Fire Stations and SES units in the South East region will be retained and complement the new facility.

### **3 PROJECT COSTS**

- 3.1 Pursuant to the Message from Her Excellency the Governor-in-Council, the estimated cost of the work is \$12 million.

The allocated funding provided by the Tasmanian State Government for the Sorell Emergency Services Hub development is \$12 million. This funding covers both the construction and non-construction costs, which includes architectural fees, furniture and IT plus an \$80,000 public art works component. Funding has been allocated across four years, from 2018-19 through to 2021-22.

## 4 EVIDENCE

4.1 The Committee commenced its inquiry on Wednesday, 4 November last with an inspection of the site of the proposed works. The Committee then returned to Committee Room 1, Parliament House, whereupon the following witnesses appeared, made the Statutory Declaration and were examined by the Committee in public:-

- Todd Crawford, Director Business Services, Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management (Project Sponsor);
- Jonathan Higgins, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management;
- Robert Higgins, General Manager, Sorell Council (advising on the subdivision and stormwater if required as DPFEM does not currently own the site);
- Ian Kirk, Senior Project Architect, ARTAS Architects; and
- Alan Coote, General Manager, Coordinated Engineering Services.

### Overview

4.2 Mr Crawford provided an overview of the proposed works:

**Mr CRAWFORD** - ... The Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management (DPFEM) is presenting this submission to the committee seeking approval to construct the emergency services hub at 47 Cole Street, Sorell. The Tasmanian Government has allocated \$12 million over the four years from 2018-19 to 2021-22 to establish the emergency services hub.

At present, the Sorell township has an existing police station. It does not have a fire station or a dedicated State Emergency Service (SES) facility. Volunteer fire brigades are located in nearby townships, with the nearest SES unit being the SES Southern Regional Unit located in Mornington, some 20 kilometres away.

The south-east geographic region is one of the fastest growing regions in Tasmania and the Sorell community is one of the fastest growing municipalities, with current growth rates exceeding the state average by between five to six times. As a result of the predicted growth rates, the timely provision of emergency services and associated infrastructure will become increasingly significant in the area.

The site itself is ideal for shared emergency services purposes, as it is centrally located and provides plenty of space and ease of access for emergency response vehicles, the marine police vessel, and personnel, thus potentially improving critical response times, enhancing community safety in the south-east region.

The establishment of a fire station in Sorell will provide additional road crash rescue capability in the region, as well as improving fire services within the Sorell municipality. The hub design caters for a road crash rescue response capability, being a possible combination of both SES and Tasmania Fire Service members.

Accommodating each emergency service within the one complex will improve response performance times to incidents in the south-east; provide a modern and efficient operating environment contained within the building's functional lay out, including state-of-the-art information technology; reduce maintenance and operating costs resulting from a shared facility and building efficiencies; increase the capacity to deliver emergency service functions and to meet the demands of rapid growth in the south-east region both now and importantly into the future; create an ideal location for incident management and incident staging, due to the inclusion of a major incident room or incident control centre in the facility; improve work

health and safety of employees and volunteers through the provision of state-of-the art, purpose-built facilities; and improve access, safety and security for the local community.

### **Need and Benefits**

#### **4.3 The Committee sought to further explore the need for the facility and the expected benefits for emergency services and the community:**

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - ... Why is this an exciting development? Because for the first time in Tasmania we will have the three different services together. Can you just explain to us why this is necessary, why it's ideal and why this is a good model?

**Mr CRAWFORD** - Thank you. I think you've hit the nail on the head. It is a really exciting development for exactly those reasons. This is the first time in a large, purpose-built facility like this that the emergency services have been co-located. A large number of operational responses are co-agency or multi-agency responses. This facility will provide for an increased level of inter-operability to manage those responses.

A very important inclusion in the site design is the incident control centre or major incident room, which will be capable of managing emergencies whether they be fire, bushfire, flood or police emergencies. The facility will enable staffing of those emergencies from across all of those agencies. This is a real step forward, for inter-operability across the emergency services.

It follows on from the significant investment of the Government in things like the ESCAD project, an \$18 million project inter-operability around despatch systems. We are seeing this as a natural progression in the investment landscape around inter-operability.

In a state the size of Tasmania, our view is that inter-operability across the emergency services is not only desirable but it is almost essential. This goes a long way to support that.

**Mr JONATHAN HIGGINS** - From a Tasmanian police perspective, we recreated the old Sorell division and it is now called the East Coast Division. That was done with an increase in staffing that we were able to put with the increase in police numbers. With the capability review that was undertaken alongside that we identified the need to put an inspector back in that area and make that a division. An inspector becomes the senior member for emergency service in that area, so in the south-east, right up through to Bicheno and down through the Peninsula.

The incident room there allows greater ability now to coordinate emergency management, whether it is the lead agency in TasFire for the bushfires or otherwise. It now provides a staging area, incident rooms and something in the south-east we have not had.

You would have seen from the site visit at the old police station, the current police station, that it is very difficult to undertake it from their current facility. This gives us the ability to be able to really coordinate across the services.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Could you outline for us what would happen in the incident room? Give an example of an incident and how this would benefit the people on the south-east coast in a serious incident. How the inter-operability would occur.

**Mr JONATHAN HIGGINS** - If we talk about bushfires, it has been topical in that area in the last decade. The impact is still felt in the south-east. Under a structure like that, the fire would be managed more centrally back in Hobart with the State Operations Centre and the police would have a police forward command post. The command post could be run out of that purpose-built facility now where it would have been probably an inspector's room, in our Sorell station, which you saw was no bigger than a tiny office.

From that, the coordination can be for resource for police for traffic management, evacuation centres and so forth. It also becomes a staging area, and that is what it would become, for the fire service. Whether it is people who may be there in the future or whether it is resources that could be moved from other areas, depending on the fire services needs, police needs or SES needs, that could become the focal point for the community for that staging area to respond to any one of those incidences, whether it is bushfire, flood or otherwise.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Because it is topical today with regard to road crash rescue, I see throughout the submission it is mentioned quite a few times, how would that be better managed from a facility like this?

**Mr JONATHAN HIGGINS** - On the Arthur Highway and Tasman Highway, particularly between Orford and Sorell and Sorell and the Peninsula, we see a lot of crashes. This year, we have seen the loss of life on those roads. We have the capacity to go up to 21 police at that station. There will be 13 to begin with.

If SES and fire have a capability as well, which is also enhanced by the capability they already have it there at outer stations, they are better able to respond to a crash and get there quickly. The helicopter is able to respond from Cambridge. Police, fire and SES are able to respond from Sorell. They can get to the people who need it most and potentially save lives.

**Mr CRAWFORD** - ... As we have said before, this is the first of this kind in this state. We hope it is the first of many. We see it as a model that suits the service delivery provided by the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management. It aids integration, it builds interoperability through the design of a facility such as this. On that basis, it is why we think we are delivering a value-for-money project in a holistic sense.

**Mr JONATHAN HIGGINS** - I can't overstate the level of excitement with the staff there. You probably saw that with the acting inspector today. The thought of going to something custom-built for them as opposed to put together, including an old flat they have office space in as well. For the area there and for the police in particular, it will assist in the greater morale of the police there which would then flow into the community. Most of the police in that area live in that community as well. It becomes a focal point. It is significant, and having the ability to have a purpose-built area where they can run major incidents as well from that area for the south-east is significant.

The area we took you to the back of, which I will call their crib room, is probably the area they are using now. It is the old kitchen for the flat at Sorell station. While they have been in that space for many years - and it has had one refurbishment during that time - to have a properly built police station will be significant in attracting members into the future as well.

4.4 The Committee understood the Hub had been designed to cater for future growth and that capacity could be added in future if required. The Committee asked the witnesses to provide further detail on how capacity could be increased:

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Todd, you did touch on this a little bit in your introduction but it says in the submission that KPMG estimated in 2015 the population could go from 20 000 to 90 000 extra people over 10 to 15 years. In regard to future proofing for the site, you said that the footprint could expand in the future if need be. Could you expand on that, please?

**Mr CRAWFORD** - The population projections that we've used in this report and, I suppose, the support material that's been provided through the Sorell Council has informed our design. The facility, at the moment - and referenced further into the document that it does definitely have capacity for, as we said before, 21 police - we currently have an allocation of 13 police at the Sorell station. So, it's a significant increase in capacity there that would be able to be accommodated over time.

If a career crew is put in there, we will have developed the capacity for both a day-crew, which would perhaps be the initial model, and the 24-hour crew so the facility would accommodate that without any changes, as well as a significant number of volunteers; without being able to reference exactly in the document, I think it was 50 TFS volunteers and 40 SES. That would be a very significant number and probably one of the largest in the state.

- 4.5 The Committee noted that existing Volunteer Fire Stations in the region were at capacity with limited scope for redevelopment to increase response capacity. This was confirmed by Mr Crawford:

**CHAIR** - ... I suppose this is in relation to Midway Point. The station is also in need of a major upgrade replacement as it's been added onto over the years, incorporating a communal toilet block as part of the facilities. However, the site has limited capacity to redevelop. The station also has responsibility of response on either side of the two causeways. The reason for putting that sort of detail in there, is that simply to reinforce the fact that this particular development is needed because this one can't be expanded that much?

**Mr CRAWFORD** - Yes, very much so, Mr Valentine. The location is in Midway Point. If members are aware of where its location is, it is pretty much landlocked. It's not on a huge block of land, and really no capacity to expand on that site, so this site will supplement that in a very positive way.

**CHAIR** - Okay, and Orielton is in the same situation.

- 4.6 Aside from overcoming the current facilities' recognised deficiencies and capacity and limitations of the current emergency services facilities, the witnesses indicated there would be cost benefits from locating emergency services in a shared facility:

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Chair, I saw at the top of page 12. It does say at the top 'reduce maintenance and operating costs resulting from facilities sharing in building efficiency'? Is there any estimate on what sort of savings this would generate?.....What is the benefit of having all these onsite? How will facility sharing help?

**Mr CRAWFORD** - I suppose we are paying effectively one set of bills, although it is a larger site or a combined site. We have shared infrastructure throughout that site. In terms of design we've shared those fixed connections as much as possible. The plumbing connections, all those sorts of things for shared areas, reduces the cost of one facility as opposed to building three separate facilities. We very much see that there is a potential cost saving in that space.

### **Design and Layout for Each Emergency Service Area**

- 4.7 The Committee understood the Hub had been designed to house Tasmania Police, the Volunteer Fire Service and SES and to cater for future growth in emergency response capacity. Noting that no decision had been made on the inclusion of a Tasmania Fire Service career firefighting capability, the Committee sought confirmation the building had been designed such that additional emergency response capacity could be added if deemed necessary:

**Mr CRAWFORD** - ... I suppose the key issue for the site at the moment, or for the proposed layout, largely relates to the Tasmania Fire Service component and ensuring that within the facility we build the capability for future expansion and for future growth. I know that was a concern that was raised clearly with me this morning, around future-proofing this facility. I am very much of the opinion that this facility is future-proofed, well beyond my lifetime, that's for sure. The way we have designed the functional layout at this point, does include a provision within the footprint for a potential future career allocation of staff to that location to meet the community needs, as they emerge.

There have been no decisions around resourcing or allocating career staff to that facility at this point in time. However, we believe it's prudent to design the facility with that in mind, noting the growth in the area. There may be potential in future to have a requirement for career staff, particularly during business hours. We find that with municipalities like Sorell, as they grow, the population growth is often growth that's not traditional farming communities that remain in the area. People live there and commute to the city. There are potential difficulties in securing volunteer response during business hours. Our view is that at some

point in the future it may require the allocation of career fire resources, and there is planning for that included within the footprint.

4.8 The Committee sought to understand some of the differences in design between the specific areas provided for each emergency service, and how they may be utilised:

**Ms BUTLER** - Can I ask the architect why the SES and the volunteer fire turn-out area is so much smaller than the career turn-out area? Is that because there's going to be more police and SES than career, or is that just mapping?

**Mr KIRK** - The potential is for the career firefighters to stay overnight, so that means bedrooms and infrastructure for that. They have their own turn-out area and equipment, whereas I guess the main difference is that the volunteers and SES are literally in and out. They don't stay, apart from training, on the building site.

**CHAIR** - This is not a 24-hour situation for any of the services?

**Mr KIRK** - It is potentially, for the career fire fighters.

**CHAIR** - Potentially, but at the moment there's not a 24-hour operation.

**Ms BUTLER** - Was that done in consultation with the Volunteer Association at all? The career people have bedrooms. It's markedly smaller but it might not come out like that in real life, maybe? It's a lot less turn-out area for the volunteers and the SES than it is for the careers. I'm certainly not wanting to take anything away from the careers.

**Mr KIRK** - The turn-out area so far is a required area between TFS and volunteers. It serves this area here. For the career fire, it's this area. The career fire tends to have different equipment and so they have more kit, and that's just the nature of it. That is part of it; but essentially the larger area is that you have a kitchen facility, bedrooms and an associated lounge area which is intended for longer term stays than the SES or volunteers, which are predominantly attending emergency events, in and out.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - ... ..Because we have a designated Tasmania Fire Service area and Tasmanian Volunteer Fire Service and SES areas, the Fire Service would be able to utilise both the purple and the yellow areas, wouldn't they, if they were all volunteer and career firefighter sections?

**Mr CRAWFORD** - Yes, most definitely.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - In reality, even though we mightn't have career fire servicemen initially, they would be able to use both areas and then if they need to use a bigger space they will be able to use the whole lot?

**Mr CRAWFORD** - Yes, that is absolutely correct.

4.9 The Committee also sought to understand the rationale for some of the differences between the facilities provided for each emergency service:

**Ms RATTRAY** - Ian, what's the rationale for having the purple section, which is the career firefighters, they have a kitchen and the police get a kitchenette. I am interested in what's behind that. I know there wouldn't be 21 police officers all on shift together. Is that because of the number of people moving in and out of those facilities, why one's a kitchen and ones a kitchenette, which I expect is a reduced area for preparation of meals and the like.

**Mr KIRK** - The main difference is the turn up. Obviously career firefighters are likely to do long shifts when they're stationed there. It's on and off. It's pretty much living within the building whereas with the kitchenette you do have a shift but you're not living there like a normal household or resident might be. Essentially it becomes a residence for them.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Police are often required if there's an emergency situation or significant event to hang around. Would that be fair to say?

**Mr JONATHAN HIGGINS** - Yes, it is. I could probably answer why the police side is small. The kitchenette's appropriate for the police because of the very reason that they're not living onsite but also because police on a general shift get a 20-minute break so it is literally warming up, getting something out of the fridge, and going. Because of the different functions we serve, say, police were patrolling they're mobile now with their tablets so they're doing paperwork on the road as well, whereas fires are not patrolling.

#### **Provision for a Tasmania Fire Service Career Fire Fighting Capability**

- 4.10 Noting that provision had been made in the Hub's design to cater for a TFS career fire fighting presence in the future, the Committee sought further detail on how the need for this capability would be determined:

**Ms BUTLER** - ... You were saying before that the career section at the moment won't be part of the initial project. Can I get some confirmation on that?

**Mr CRAWFORD** - No, it is part of the initial project. There isn't an allocation of career staff to that facility at the moment. The Fire Service Act tasks the State Fire Commission with allocating resources across the state for firefighting purposes. There's been no decision or submission to the commission around allocating career staff to that area, or classifying it as a career brigade. That's a process that would have to occur over time to allocate those resources.

**Ms BUTLER** - .....A decision hasn't been made yet with the career section, whether or not that will be a day capacity and a day capacity will be a 24/7 station? We do not have those decisions at this stage.

**Mr CRAWFORD** - No, there is no decision.

**Ms BUTLER** - ... I was wondering if you could run through, for the record, the reasoning behind whether there is actually a need for career firefighters coming out of that hub. You've already mentioned the road crash rescue and the assistance there. Is there any current need for there to be a career firefighter station down there? Is there any evidence to support that?

**Mr CRAWFORD** - As you've said, we've mentioned road crash rescue throughout this process and that is a key area of focus for the organisations.

The Tasmania Fire Service is undertaking a resource-to-risk analysis at present, looking to confirm and/or adapt its resource allocation model to meet current and emerging needs within the organisation. While that process is still ongoing, it will ultimately determine what the resourcing need is in Sorell, and what it looks like in terms of volunteer, or career, or a combination of the two.

I can't speak in detail on the outcomes of that, but that process is effectively what will drive it. From that there would be a submission to the State Fire Commission, for example if it was to become a career station.

**Ms BUTLER** - But there's no evidence, or data, or anything at the moment that states there is a need for career firefighters in Sorell, as opposed to having them, say, in Kingston or other areas that are populating quickly?

**Mr CRAWFORD** - No. What we're foreshadowing is that the growth in population, as I mentioned earlier, will actually cause a change in the demographic mix of the population. Our capacity to sustain a 24-hour, seven-day a week volunteer response may be impacted by that, which would be one of the considerations in deploying career staff to that area, at least during business hours.

**CHAIR** - Are you considering whether the facilities being provided here will be sufficient for a career firefighter?

**Ms BUTLER** - Potentially, or is there is an actual demand at the moment for money to be spent on the facility for career firefighters? Has there been an increase in fires, or was this a

recommendation from the Dunalley fire? Is there any evidence to support that this investment is needed?

**Mr CRAWFORD** - Concerning specific recommendations, no, I do not believe any have been referenced as career in that area. It is more internal considerations around service delivery within that broader south-eastern region, and how to best meet those needs.

### **Ambulance Tasmania**

- 4.11 The Committee noted that Ambulance Tasmania would not operate from the Hub and would continue to operate in the current Ambulance Tasmania facility in Sorell. The Committee sought further information on why Ambulance Tasmania would remain at its current base and not move to the Hub:

**CHAIR** - An overview question I have, and I raised it a little on the inspection tour this morning, is that ambulance is obviously very much a part of emergency services, and I would like you to explain why it is not in this particular proposal that has been put to us this morning. Is it simply a Departmental issue that ambulance is in a different Department - in Health, as opposed to Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management? Perhaps you would like to cover that for us?

**Mr CRAWFORD** - Yes, certainly. The lack of inclusion of ambulance isn't due to its location or that function's location within another Department. Both the Department of Health and the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management work actively to identify opportunities across the state for co-located services. However, when this was initially scoped and the funding was provided, ambulance wasn't included. I understand their facility in Sorell at that time wasn't necessarily in need of an upgrade, or wasn't high on the priority list. Our funding allocation was for a fire, SES and police facility.

**CHAIR** - Is there a lot of collaboration between the two, when it comes to road crash rescue and those sorts of things? Clearly there are the radio rooms which would interact, but in terms of the training of personnel or joint exercises, can you describe to me whether any of that takes place in the operational environment that both are working in? How is it coordinated?

**Mr CRAWFORD** - At a coordination level, yes, the radio rooms are now interoperable. The recent implementation of the ESCAD despatch system across the three services -

**CHAIR** - ESCAD is?

**Mr CRAWFORD** - ESCAD is Emergency Services Computer Aided Despatch. It was a project that was completed approximately 18 months to two years ago. It sees the same despatch system used in fire, police and ambulance radio rooms and they are interoperable. Staff can move between those facilities and have visibility over activities occurring in the other spaces. For example, ambulance officers can understand now if they are attending a residence that has a warning for a violent person at that residence. The situational awareness information from the other services is now available across all three services. There are other service delivery examples where at least two of the services, particularly police and ambulance, work closely together - the rescue helicopter being a prime example of that interoperability.

At a volunteer level, I understand there are members within the volunteer cohorts of each organisation that are 'multi-coloured' volunteers, I think they are referred to. They are volunteers for ambulance and/or SES or TFS in their local communities. The level of interoperability that occurs at the moment across those services, yes, it is relatively high. Whether there is structured training or activities or exercising, I am not necessarily aware, but I could refer to one of our operational members in the gallery to respond to that question in more detail.

**Mr JONATHAN HIGGINS** - ....Perhaps I might better answer that. Tasmania Fire Service, Tasmania Ambulance Service and SES do conduct some training together. An example, not of training but interoperability was a recent Road Safety Advisory Council launch of the 25-second clips we did towards reducing our road toll. In that we demonstrated how Tasmania Fire Service, the SES and ambulance work together in cutting a person out of a car and those

arrangements. That only comes about by those operational work areas actually understanding what each area is responsible for and doing that. So this does happen.

**CHAIR** - In relation to this particular development, you don't see any disadvantage at the moment by them being apart?

**Mr JONATHAN HIGGINS** – No....

### **Impacts on Adjoining Properties**

- 4.12 The Committee was aware the Hub was surrounded by an adjoining residential area as well as other service buildings. The Committee recognised there may be some impacts on neighbouring properties, due to the movement of emergency vehicles, as well as from the noise and light generated at the Hub building and associated facilities and sought to understand how emergency vehicle movements and the noise they generate would be managed in this environment:

**CHAIR** - ... With respect to the project site, quite clearly there are a lot of dwellings that are around it. You also have Sorell Council Chambers, the health centre, the community service centre, the RSL, the Lions Club and the Men's Shed - so there is a lot of activity happening around this site, and this is an emergency services centre.

Do you see them complementing each other, or do you see them as presenting an issue or a problem in terms of emergency vehicle movements in and through that site. How has that been taken into account, in the way the site plan has been structured? It might be a good thing to touch on here.

**Mr JONATHAN HIGGINS** - Yes, perhaps from the movement area and where it actually is, to be close to the local council is a significant advantage for the police there - particularly for the inspector. Inspectors in the regions tend to have close relationships with the various mayors, whether there's one in their division or where there are multiples, as there can be, because they're the ones that actually join forces towards the greater emergency management function and they have those responsibilities.

The movement of the police vehicles, the fire vehicles if need be, and the SES vehicles - there'll be designated areas where they're going. So, if they go out....towards an incident, they're not going past the council chambers through where members of the public would be going to. They're going through designated corridors to the main road and out.

**CHAIR** - Somebody was raising the question with regard to sirens and things like that - just the protocols of truck usage. Could you describe how that has been addressed? Anyone living close to this facility would not want to be hearing sirens go off every half an hour because someone is going off to an emergency of some sort.

**Mr JONATHAN HIGGINS** - Protocols will be similar across the operational arms in this respect. Generally, lights are used going to an emergency, and certainly we will make consideration to sirens as well, but they are not turned on until they get to the main road.

That will depend on - take the Tasman Highway, which cuts through Cole Street. For an area like that, if it is the middle of the night, it may not be leaving the station for any of the services, and it is straight into lights and sirens. Friday afternoon or a Sunday, it may be the case that they need to clear the road, so it is lights and sirens definitely used. The consideration is made by the members actually responding. Each service will have their own protocols around that. We have the Tasmania Police Manual; our requirements on lights and sirens and when they are to be used - but it is certainly not as they leave the car park.

**CHAIR** - Being in a residential area, that is something that will be considered by members of each of the services, is it fair to say?

**Mr JONATHAN HIGGINS** - Yes.

- 4.13 Aside from the noise impact from emergency vehicles, the Committee also recognised the nature and use of the facility may present other noise issues for neighbouring properties. The Committee sought further understanding on how any other noise impacts would be mitigated:

**CHAIR** - ... I was mentioning before about dwellings being on the periphery. Obviously a site like this might generate certain levels of noise, or otherwise - you tell me. How have you taken that into account in terms of the design of the centre, and whether there have been any issues in that regard. I suppose it is not immediately close, where some of that activity might happen, because there is a car park between the facility and many of the dwellings. Can you talk me through how that might have been considered, with how this site was designed?

**Mr KIRK** - ... One of the items we have considered is obviously acoustic, so we engaged an acoustic consultant. We are in a fortunate position to have those results so that it fits within the determination of the planning scheme requirements.

One of the things they have been mindful of is setback from the boundary. With the police use, it is on that side; it is a relatively quiet internal use, so the expected noise and disturbance from that is minimised.

The more active section - probably the more noise section - is to the southern side. That is where the fire trucks and so on come out, and so it has been deliberately planned so that noise is away from residents. In a planning sense and also a building sense, we have tried to reduce any interference to potential residents.

**Mr JONATHAN HIGGINS** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - ... HVAC systems will be provided to all areas deemed habitable, with the majority of areas being serviced from three dedicated roof-mounted plant areas. Roof-mounted brings to mind questions of noise. Is there any attempt to mitigate the noise that is coming from those? The way you have faced them to minimise the impact on neighbours?

**Mr COOTE** - I can perhaps answer part of that. The units selected will be vertical discharge units. So they won't be like your standard air-conditioning unit with the noise coming out the front.

**CHAIR** - So it's a fan pointing upwards, is it?

**Mr COOTE** - Yes. Also that allows us to use acoustic screens around plant as well, because you are drawing air in through the screen and then discharging it vertically up.

**CHAIR** - They will be baffles basically around the mechanical structures?

**Mr KIRK** - Yes. These will be screens. What Alan was talking about is the vertical discharge. We did consider putting the plant inside, but then there's a cost because then you need a larger footprint. It's an economical way of doing it. If we had more budget we'd have it within the building and it would be all confined. I think that sometimes an honest exposure of your services isn't a bad thing.

- 4.14 The Committee also recognised there may be light spill affecting neighbouring residential properties. The Committee questioned the witnesses on what measures would be taken to minimise the impact of light spill on the adjoining residential areas:

**CHAIR** - In the submission you mentioned levels of lighting across a proposed training area. You will have control systems in place to ensure they are not utilised during the curfew period between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m. I commented on the fact that if there are young families bordering the site, that is pretty late. Have you any comment on that? You are going into basically a residential area so it is likely that people - and it might even be shift workers or whatever - might

be disturbed. Can you give any comfort in regard to the level of disturbance that might be expected? Have you minimised light spill through blinkers?

**Mr COOTE** - With the widespread usage of LED floodlighting now, we can get very good cut-offs, and so there will be virtually no light spill over the boundary. If you're doing a training exercise, we have additional lights on the training area on the top-left corner, which will give us effectively 300 lux for training purposes if you were doing something at night.

At least we'll have that so that it can be controllable. I'm not quite sure whether others might comment about the exercises that might go on. If there were a bushfire or something, whether those lights would need to be on all night or whatever.

**CHAIR** - I think most people appreciate in an emergency situation that it's in their own interests.

**Mr COOTE** - Otherwise, they are controllable by timed clock and whatever so they can be adjusted if the curfew hours are not acceptable.

### **Containment of Pollutants**

- 4.15 The Committee was aware that given the nature of the emergency services being provided at the site, there may be potential spillage of pollutants, such as oil, fuel and chemicals. The Committee questioned the witnesses on the measures that would be taken to ensure any pollutants were captured and/or contained and appropriately disposed of:

**CHAIR** - ..... With respect again to the fall on that site, considering the fact that you have heavy trucks and the like using that site, there is a possibility of oil spillage on the site. With those sorts of hardstand areas, with the flow of water possibly polluted by oil and the like, how might that be dealt with in your systems? Perhaps Mr Higgins from Sorell Council might inform us?

**Mr ROBERT HIGGINS** - Through the plumbing design stage, each of the stormwater discharge points from the site will have a bioretention system, or a gross pollutant trap as well, not only to capture the solids before they go into our system, but also some of the hydrocarbons as well. That will be a requirement of the plumbing permit.

**CHAIR** - ... ... During the walk around I mentioned the issue of heavy metals and treatment. Earlier we heard the council has various facilities to take care of the gross pollutants and those sorts of things between it and when it gets discharged into Pittwater. From an engineering perspective and about the storage of firefighting chemicals and possible spillage on site, have those sorts of things been taken into account? Perhaps you're happy for Mr Kirk to answer; it's up to you.

**Mr KIRK** - I might answer that. Just to clarify we do have other engineers who work on this, who are working on the hydraulics. On the storage of chemicals, the easiest way of doing that is to buy things that are Australian Standard approved, and the bunded cabinets, so they comply with the necessary standards. A bunded cabinet is one that allows for spillage. It has a false bottom, so if anything spills within that, it doesn't contaminate the surroundings.

**CHAIR** - It doesn't go into the surrounding area.

**Mr KIRK** - And that's true for our chemicals or fuel and so forth. So that's the easy solution to that. With regard to vehicle wash downs, we are required to have a decontamination filter between that and the stormwater, so that's something we'd look at.

**CHAIR** - In the drawings, I notice that below each of the bays you have a drainage site. Well, certainly on the yellow one on the left.

**Mr KIRK** - There's a specific wash down area here, which is where vehicles will be brought on to -... .. If, for example, a vehicle has gone out and is covered with soot and stuff like that, it

would be washed down at that point, and then the wash down would be filtered from that area. It is not intended that the other areas become a wash down area.

**CHAIR** - Is there a process for disposal of anything that's caught there? It may not just be gross pollutants, it may well be contaminated water.

**Mr KIRK** - There are Australian Standards, which the use of these filters had to comply with.

**CHAIR** - So it all goes into the filter, and the filter is disposed of. Is that what you're saying?

**Mr KIRK** - It is captured before it goes into the stormwater, and that's a general requirement now. Once upon a time it wasn't a requirement, but we have moved on from that and it is now a requirement.

**CHAIR** - And would that be taken to a type C facility, or whatever it is called?

**Mr KIRK** - Yes, and disposed of, if required.

## **Budget**

- 4.16 The Committee understood that funding of \$12 million was committed in 2016. This funding commitment had not increased in that time, and the Committee sought to further information on the possible impact this may have had on the scope of the project:

**Ms RATTRAY** - ... .. In regard to the \$12 million allocation; I know we will get to the specifics of dollars, but this was the same amount, am I correct, as what was proposed in 2016? And there has been some refinement? Can I have some sort of response to that? Am I wrong in assuming that from the documents, or where are we with that?

**Mr CRAWFORD** - That is correct. The \$12 million allocation was based upon a broad quantity surveyor's estimate of a concept plan that was prepared initially in 2016, and the funding allocation followed that concept. We have now been working within that funding allocation to design the facility that you see before you.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Right. Are there any significant changes to what we have in front of us today as a committee, to what the concept plan is from 2016?

**Mr CRAWFORD** - The most significant change that you see before you today is the inclusion of the provision for career personnel.

**Ms RATTRAY** - So we have an addition rather than a subtraction?

**Mr CRAWFORD** - Yes, we have.

**Ms RATTRAY** - For the same amount of money, potentially?

**Mr CRAWFORD** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - ... .. The statement 'building design and framework ensures the hub is fit for purpose and will cater for the individual and combined needs of each emergency service'. It seems to have gone from a three-bay down to a two-bay. Why that has been the case?

**Mr CRAWFORD** - Mr Valentine, the reduction in a number of engine bays has broadly been driven by the project working to remain within its budget. We have not reduced the capacity of those engine bays, as we have actually extended one slightly and added an additional vehicle capacity in that larger bay now. It has increased the turning space for large vehicles in between the two bays by having two. Really, we think it's probably functionally improved, compared to the three-bay initial model which we had first put to quantity surveyors' estimates.

- 4.17 The Committee also questioned the witnesses on whether the Government's \$100,00 contribution towards the completion of a right of way link road would be funded from the project budget or a separate allocation:

**Ms RATTRAY** - Concerning 3.2 - I have a question in regard to the purchase, or the transaction, between Government and the council. On the face of it, so far, it seems a very good outcome for the proposed facilities. Does the \$100 000 that the Government will contribute to the Sorell Council towards the completion of the right-of-way link road from the council chambers to Dubbs & Co Drive come out of the \$12 million? Does it pull that back to \$11.9 million? Or is that an additional \$100 000 that the Government or the Departments collectively will find elsewhere?

**Mr CRAWFORD** - Effectively that will be coming out of the \$12 million.

#### **Future of Current Emergency Service Facilities**

4.18 The Committee was interested to understand the future role of the existing emergency service facilities in the South East region, and how these would complement operations from the new Hub:

**Mr CRAWFORD** - ... Where the consultation process needs to progress now is around the service delivery models that we've talked about before. There hasn't been consultation, for example, broadly within TFS around is this going to be a career station, or a volunteer station, or a combination of the two, and how would that work; or what would be the impacts potentially from a service response model on those surrounding stations that we've identified there: Orielton, Wattle Hill, Midway Point and Dodges Ferry. I think at a very high level we see those as still critical parts of the response model for different reasons for the different locations.

This hub, as we've talked about and tried to relay through the submission, is a hub in the truer sense of the word. We actually see people coming in to it for particular functions - training would be one of those - and then still being members of their ancillary brigades, and responding locally. I suppose those local brigades are a critical part of the community fabric, particularly in smaller communities in Tasmania, and we don't have any desire to remove that or pull that apart by building a facility and trying to suck people into that.

As the Minister and the Premier made clear a couple of weeks ago, there's no desire to be closing stations around this development. Those two are not in the same conversation at all.

**Ms BUTLER** - Midway Point is the callout brigade at the moment for Sorell, is that correct? The callout would naturally become Sorell if a fire was in Sorell, so it could place them in a position of relevance, I suppose, once this is complete.

**Mr CRAWFORD** - To some degree yes; but it also provides us with a level of redundancy that we think is necessary in that space, particularly given the causeway between the two. An issue, anything that blocks that may then prevent our response, or delay our response. We see this, I suppose, as a value add to that response model.

#### **Does the Project Meet Identified Needs and Provide Value for Money?**

4.19 In assessing any proposed public works, the Committee seeks assurance that each project is a good use of public funds and meets identified needs in an efficient and effective manner. The Chair sought and received an assurance from the witnesses that the proposed works were addressing an identified need in a cost effective manner, would be fit-for-purpose and were a good use of public funds:

**CHAIR** - Does the proposed works meet an identified need or needs or solve a recognised problem?

**Mr CRAWFORD** - Most definitely, yes.

**CHAIR** - Are the proposed works the best solution to meet identified needs or solve a recognised problem within the allocated budget?

**Mr CRAWFORD** - Yes, we believe they are.

**CHAIR** - Are the proposed works fit for purpose?

**Mr CRAWFORD** - *Most definitely.*

**CHAIR** - *Do the proposed works provide value for money?*

**Mr CRAWFORD** - *Yes they do.*

**CHAIR** - *Are the proposed works a good use of public funds?*

**Mr CRAWFORD** - *Most definitely.*

## **5 DOCUMENTS TAKEN INTO EVIDENCE**

5.1 The following documents were taken into evidence and considered by the Committee:

- *Sorell Emergency Services Hub*, Submission to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, October 2020, Department of Health.
- Sorell Emergency Services Hub – Site and Building Plan;
- Sorell Emergency Services Hub – Site Plan;
- Sorell Emergency Services Hub – Building Elevations; and
- Sorell Emergency Services Hub – Shed Elevations.

## **6 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

- 6.1 The Committee is satisfied that the need for the proposed works has been established. Once completed, the proposed works will enable Tasmanian Police, the Tasmania Fire Service and the State Emergency Service personnel to be co-located in a modern, state of the art emergency services facility, which will provide significant benefits in responding to emergencies.
- 6.2 The Sorell Emergency Services Hub will allow response crews from each of these emergency services to be directly based in the same area, which will improve critical response times and enhance community safety in the South East region. It has also been designed to create a facility that will support both the current and future individual and collective needs of these emergency services. The new facility will deliver an increased capacity to provide emergency service functions to meet current and future demand in the rapidly growing South East region, and will support the ongoing safety of the community.
- 6.3 Accordingly, the Committee recommends the Sorell Emergency Services Hub, at an estimated cost of \$12 million, in accordance with the documentation submitted.

**Parliament House  
Hobart  
7 December 2020**

**Hon. Rob Valentine MLC  
Chair**

