

Tara Cheyne MLA

Manager of Government Business

Attorney-General

Minister for Human Rights

Minister for City and Government Services

Minister for the Night-Time Economy

Member for Ginninderra

RESPONSE TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Questions on Notice Paper No 3

7 March 2025

Question No. 169

MR CAIN MLA - To ask the Minister for City and Government Services:

- (1) Can the Minister provide an update on the tangible outcomes achieved since the implementation of the Bushfire Operations Plan, considering the targets were not met in 2022-2023.
- (2) How many air quality monitoring stations have been installed or upgraded.
- (3) What improvements have been made to public health warnings and advice systems.
- (4) What progress has been made in regulating environmental pollution, particularly the use of woodfire heaters.
- (5) How has the Government engaged with vulnerable communities to ensure their needs are prioritised.

MINISTER CHEYNE MLA - The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

- (1) Strategic Indicator 2.4 of the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate is the level of residual risk to life and property remaining after implementing the Bushfire Operations Plan (BOP).

Results for the last 5 years are within the target bandwidth of 35–45%, including in 2022-23.

The residual risk following the 2023–24 BOP activities decreased to 31%. This followed strategic burns from the BOP in Bullen Range, Tidbinbilla and on Black Mountain and strategic burns by NSW National Parks and Wildlife to the north-west of the ACT.



(2) There are currently three fixed site air monitoring stations in the ACT. This meets the legislative requirements of the National Environmental (Ambient Air Quality) Protection Measure for the population of the ACT.

ACT Health continues to monitor adherence to legislative requirements for air quality monitoring and conducts upgrades as part of business-as-usual operations.

(3) In October 2024, the ACT Government Health website (www.act.gov.au/health) was updated to align with the latest Health guidance on PM2.5 air quality and prolonged smoke events, ensuring public health advice is current and evidence-based as jurisdictions aim for national consistency.

- The ACT Emergency Services Agency (ESA) uses local media (digital, TV, radio), social media (X, Facebook), their website, and the Hazards Near Me NSW app to keep the community informed. They also have an Emergency Alert system to send warnings directly to phones and landlines in the ACT.
- These strategies are supported by community engagement activities like the Be Emergency Ready campaign, which encourages residents to understand their risks and prepare for emergencies. More information is available at <https://www.esa.act.gov.au/>.

(4) In response to the Commissioner's investigation into wood heaters, the EPA adopted an improved method for wood smoke complaints. The EPA observes chimney emissions for 10 minutes and takes action if smoke is visible 10 metres from the chimney for over 30 seconds. The EPA's education program advises households on wood heater use, emphasizing proper wood storage and the need to avoid burning unseasoned wood.

In 2024, the EPA audited firewood merchants and found no non-compliances. Merchants sold seasoned wood and provided EPA brochures to customers.

(5) In addition to the work outlined above in (3): The ESA works closely with the ACT community to enhance emergency preparedness. They provide support to vulnerable residents, especially those with mobility issues during evacuation planning.

The ACT Rural Fire Services (ACTRFS) engages the community through various activities, including: Embassy visits and education programs; local community information hubs; attendance at events like the National Multicultural Festival; educational materials in multiple languages.

These efforts ensure the ACT community is well-prepared for bushfires.

Approved for circulation to the Member and incorporation into Hansard.



Tara Cheyne MLA

Minister for City and Government Services

Date:.....6/4/25.....

This response required 5hrs 10mins to complete, at an approximate cost of \$528.17