

Mick Gentleman MLA

Manager of Government Business

Minister for Planning and Land Management

Minister for Police and Emergency Services

Minister for Corrections

Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety

Member for Brindabella

RESPONSE TO QUESTION ON NOTICE**Questions on Notice Paper No 26****Friday 10 February 2023****Question No. 1042**

MR BRADDOCK: To ask the Minister for Police and Emergency Services —

- (1) Can the Minister provide details of any management decision to increase the number of ACT Fire and Rescue Peer Support firefighters since 2020.
- (2) For each decision referred to in part (1), can the Minister provide (a) the date of the decision, (b) the number of Fire and Rescue Peer Support firefighter roles before and after the decision, (c) whether recruitment and appointment of firefighters into those roles had occurred and (d) how many ACT Fire and Rescue Peer Support firefighters were in position, as at (i) 1 January 2020 and (ii) 1 May 2022 and (iii) 1 September 2022.
- (3) Did the Commissioner, ACT Emergency Services Agency, state at the public hearing of the Select Committee on Estimates 2022-2023 on 1 September 2022 that “They are, first and foremost, an expansion of the peer support program that I mentioned earlier, so increasing the number of peer support officers”; if so, on what basis was that statement made.

MR GENTLEMAN MLA - The answer to the Member’s question is as follows:

- (1) – (3) At the hearing of the Select Committee on Estimates 2022-2023, Mr Milligan asked about what was being done to provide mental health and wellbeing support to firefighters.

As stated at the hearings, the ESA has developed a cohort of Peer Support Officers (PSOs) that are trained and available in each Service across the Agency. PSOs are volunteers or staff in their respective Service who are available to their peers for support. Assistance can be requested by the individual or through a notification process by their manager or Service. All Services in the ESA have access to PSOs, of which currently 12 are members of ACTF&R.

Across the ESA, the number of available PSOs fluctuates regularly for various reasons, including when relevant officers join or leave their Service. There are also times when for their own mental health and wellbeing, PSOs decide to take breaks away from the role. However, even factoring in these fluctuations, the ESA (including ACTF&R) currently has enough trained and available PSOs to meet the demand for these services within the Agency.

All ESA personnel also have access to three volunteer Chaplains who provide denominational and non-denominational support across the whole of the ESA. The Chaplains provide an important and valued support service to the frontline workers and are available both during and immediately after significant events or incidents. The Chaplains also provide facilitated alternate therapy sessions for workers and their families.

The ESA also works closely with Fortem Australia. Fortem is an evidence-based community support organisation that offers Australia's national security officials and first responders (working as employees or volunteers) and their families comprehensive and integrated wellbeing support.

All these services are in addition to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) which offers free, professional, and confidential services to support ESA personnel and their immediate family members through both personal and work-related issues.

Approved for circulation to the Member and incorporation into Hansard.


Mick Gentleman MLA

Minister for Police and Emergency Services

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This response required 4hrs 20mins to complete, at an approximate cost of \$429.61