

Response to question on notice

Questions on Notice Paper No 15

06 February 2026

Question No. 816

Ms Deborah Morris MLA: To ask the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services –

1. In relation to the test conducted on 11 December 2025 by the ACT Emergency Services Agency (ESA) of their warning system across their social media and emergency app, (a) why was this system not tested before the start of the fire season, (b) why did the Government decide to test the system on 11 December 2025, amid the destructive fires seen in Tasmania and the Central Coast and (c) can the Minister provide a table of any issues found during the test and when each issue was resolved.

DR MARISA PATERSON MLA - The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

- (1)(a) The ACT Emergency Service Agency (ESA) Warning System is called the *Single Point of Truth* system. It is a nation leading, multi hazard warning system used by the ESA to issue warnings and public information updates to keep the community safe and informed. The system is used all-year-round during house and structure fires, road incidents, storm, flood, bushfire, and other emergencies. Testing warning capability is a key requirement of the ACT Warnings Framework and the Emergencies (Alerts and Warning Systems) Commissioner's Guidelines 2025 (NI2025-274), which were made under the *Emergencies Act 2004*. This states that the ESA aims to test its warning systems annually (ideally ahead of the high-risk weather season).
- (1)(b) Testing is generally undertaken ahead of the high-risk weather season, however, there is nothing preventing the ESA from conducting testing within season. At the commencement of the 2025-26 high-risk weather season, development enhancement work was being undertaken to the warning publishing platform and its community-facing channels. It was important to conduct system performance and operational readiness testing directly after the development enhancement work was completed. Testing ahead of the high-risk weather season would not have been useful as it would not have taken the development enhancement work into consideration. Leaving the testing until after the high-risk weather season would not have allowed any issues to be identified and rectified immediately.

11 December 2025 was identified as a suitable date to conduct the testing, as it was as soon as practicable after the development enhancement work was completed. Although fire conditions were severe in other parts of Australia on 11 December 2025, conditions within the ACT were

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assessed as suitable for testing (low-fire danger). If local conditions had deteriorated, the test would have been terminated immediately. The ESA manages warnings for multiple hazards, including bushfire, floods, heatwaves, and severe weather. Conditions are assessed across all hazards, not bushfire alone.

Extensive planning, risk mitigation, and community engagement occur before any test of the ESA's warning systems to ensure preparedness. Additionally, testing is brief (typically under one hour), and procedures are in place to immediately terminate testing if an emergency occurs.

- (1)(c) Minor core functionality issues were found that were introduced through system enhancements. Minor enhancement issues were identified, which were addressed and rectified before being released into the production environment. No issues significantly impacted with how the ESA send warnings to the community. All issues could be mitigated or worked around. It is important to note that 'warning areas / polygons' is a new warning feature being piloted by the ESA, not a core warning function. This feature will be fully utilised in 2026-27.

The below table identifies the issues and their rectification date:

System	Issue	Resolved	Type
Warning System	Social Media tile issue with displaying multiple warning areas	27 January 2026	New feature
	Downgrading warnings sometimes displayed wrong warning colour	27 January 2026	Existing issue impacted by enhancement.
ESA Website	News articles was not correctly showing related warnings	27 January 2026	New Feature
	Control Status of Incident appearing on News alert page incorrectly	27 January 2026	Existing issue impacted by enhancement.
	Clipping issues for overlapping warning areas	27 January 2026	New Feature
	Minor delays between Warning appearing on Social Media and Website	27 January 2026	Existing issue impacted by enhancement.

It was identified that bushfire and flood warning polygons were not displaying correctly in the Hazards Near Me phone app (HNM), which is a managed service provided by NSW partner agencies. They did, however, display on the ESA website. As part of the ESAs commitment in ensuring cross border alignment with NSW, it is critical that the ACT and NSW utilise the same warnings phone app (HNM), noting the transient nature of our population. This ensures our cross-border communities are delivered consistent and reliable warning information during an emergency. Work is currently underway with NSW to resolve this issue and improve warning displays on HNM.

The emergency services were confident in their ability to warn the community of hazards, such as the Namadgi fires, while these issues were being worked upon. There was no impact or delay to warning the community during the January fires.

This outcome highlights the importance of testing warning systems following development work. Warning system improvements require ongoing development and refinement throughout the year, which is consistent with all other jurisdictions nationally ensuring standards are aligned with best practice.

While the information above lists some of the matters that needed to be resolved the testing also confirmed that ESA personnel, and our community, can have the highest confidence in their *Single Point of Truth* warning system.

Approved for circulation to the Member and incorporation into Hansard.

M. Paterson

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

Date: 3/3/26

This response required 1hr 50 mins to complete, at an approximate cost of \$196.47.

