

funds, including the use of overtime, occurs in accordance with the financial accountability framework. These strategies have been employed to contain the year-on-year increases I have just spoken about without direct impacts on service delivery to the community.

The introduction, though, of the reserve roster initiative will also provide an alternative staffing solution to using overtime to backfill positions and will allow QFES to backfill absences utilising our reserve firefighters employed in a permanent position, significantly offsetting overtime expenditure. Obviously for the future, the reserve roster is what we anticipate will significantly reduce that overtime again.

Mr MANDER: Can you tell me what the salary is for a senior firefighter?

Commissioner Carroll: I understand it is around \$60,000 but I will take that on notice and get back to you with the exact amount.

Mr MANDER: Is it possible as well—and I am not sure whether it is—to know what the average firefighter receives considering the overtime allocation they receive every year?

Commissioner Carroll: It would be possible for me to go and look into what their wage for the year is and know exactly what their wage is and what they earned in overtime, yes.

Mr MANDER: That would be great if you could take that on notice, please. I think the member for Beaudesert wants to ask a question, Chair.

Commissioner Carroll: Member for Everton, \$60,000 is correct.

Mr MANDER: Is that the salary for a senior firefighter or a basegrade firefighter?

Commissioner Carroll: A basegrade firefighter.

Mr MANDER: Thank you.

Mr KRAUSE: My question is for the minister. Minister, in 2014 a budget allocation was made to construct a joint auxiliary and rural fire service shed at Rathdowney. Since the change in government in early 2015 there has been very slow, if any, progress on the proposal. Could you please tell us if the funding is still available and when the project will proceed?

Mr BYRNE: I am advised that the Rathdowney Rural Fire Brigade and the Rathdowney Auxiliary Brigade will share new premises. The planning work is being undertaken, with the work expected to commence on the Rathdowney project in early 2017.

Mr MANDER: Minister, can you tell me whether you have considered the request from auxiliary firefighters to increase their mandatory retirement age, because many of them are happy to continue in that role beyond the current limit of 65 years?

Mr BYRNE: The issue of mandatory retirement ages is one that is often raised with me from a variety of my portfolio areas. I know from my previous working life that people do work beyond their mandatory retirement ages. I had examples of that when I worked for Defence and with Army. Very experienced army people worked beyond 65 years of age because of their very specific and hard-to-acquire skills, particularly in some of the things we were doing, like airspace management. It is not something that a lot of people understand and are able to do.

I have had discussions—I would not say formal representations—with a variety of people from those bodies who are approaching retirement age. Given the nature of people these days, they tend to be fitter and more active and want to continue to work. I have had discussions with police officers who would like to continue beyond 60. I know that some who are approaching retirement want to continue to work.

I have not had deliberate discussions with firefighters of any description about retirement ages. That does not mean that I am not in principle supportive of the idea that people can make a contribution beyond mandatory retirement. As I have seen it happen in a previous life, people can retire and come back and work in another capacity or a part-time or temporary capacity, although perhaps not in a front-line capacity. You do not find 65-year-old infantry soldiers running around the bush; what you do find is people sitting behind, setting them up and passing on their knowledge and skills. I have had discussions. There have been no formal representations that I am aware of. I am not in principle opposed to the idea but it would have to be consulted with the broader workforce if we were going to consider that.

Mr MANDER: By your answer, you sound quite sympathetic to it then?

Mr BYRNE: I know in my own working life where people beyond 65 make a very valuable contribution and one that cannot be found easily from others who are available in the right time and