

FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES — BUSHFIRE SEASON

995. Mr S.A. MILLMAN to the Minister for Emergency Services:

I refer to the McGowan government's emergency services reform and commitment to community safety. Can the minister update the house on how this government's bushfire preparedness campaign is progressing, and the benefit it is delivering to the community?

Mr F.M. LOGAN replied:

I thank the member for his personal support for Fire and Emergency Services and community safety. With the forthcoming southern bushfire season rapidly bearing down on us, it is critically important to remind people to take personal responsibility for bushfire awareness for not only their safety, but also the safety of their family and the community. More than 90 per cent of our state is a bushfire-prone area. Of course, our climate is changing. We will continue to see more disasters in the future, such as the Esperance fires that occurred in 2016 and earlier this year. We will also see more episodes of cyclonic activity such as we saw with cyclone Veronica, a category 5 cyclone that created a near miss in Port Hedland.

It is critically important that we advertise and inform the community about the need to take personal responsibility for safety. Unfortunately, the previous Liberal–National government left us with no secure funding for advertising or marketing to keep our community safe—no secure funding whatsoever. Last year, we ensured that as part of raising the emergency services levy, we allocated money to the purposes of education and advertising for the community of Western Australia. More than \$1 million has been allocated for that purpose and a further \$1 million will be allocated this year for the same purpose. I will talk about that next time we are in Parliament.

We did an evaluation of how we went in our advertising campaign last year and how it impacted on the general population of Western Australia. Prior to the new campaign, 89 per cent of people in Perth metro and 67 per cent of people in regional areas were not taking any action to prepare themselves against bushfires. In December last year, we launched a new bushfire preparedness campaign to get people to take action with the bushfire action plan. In the first year, the campaign has delivered great results, with a 16 per cent increase in the number of people recognising their personal risk. That is a great step forward. The evaluation also showed that 31 per cent of people remembered the campaign without being prompted and 39 per cent of people remembered the campaign when they were prompted. We saw a significant boost in traffic to the fire chat website with a 268 per cent increase over the course of the campaign. It was a remarkable turnaround in our campaign spend, people's reaction and getting them to the website so that they have the information and can have that fire chat and keep themselves safe.

The campaign's digital and online advertising drew more than 12.6 million impressions and a further 12.2 million impressions were reached through organic social media content through the DFES channels. Overall, our expenditure was equal to the previous expenditure that had been made by the Liberal–National government but had a far greater reach and a far greater impact. We will continue to refine the advertising campaign this year to ensure that we bring the message home to people that it is absolutely critical that with the forthcoming southern bushfire season, people must take responsibility by taking the time to go to the website, have a fire chat with their family and, when the fire ultimately comes, make the decision about whether they will stay or go.