

EMERGENCY SERVICES — VOLUNTEER HUB

1113. Mrs R.M.J. CLARKE to the Minister for Emergency Services:

Before I ask my question, I just want to thank the 80-plus vollies and personnel who were out fighting a major bushfire in my electorate of Murray–Wellington last night. It is now under control, so that is great news.

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's commitment to supporting our emergency services volunteers, especially ahead of the upcoming bushfire season. Can the minister update the house on how the Department of Fire and Emergency Services' new Volunteer Hub will support our vollies in the important work that they do to keep our community safe, and can the minister also advise how this builds on the government's record of providing improved resources for our emergency services workers?

Mr F.M. LOGAN replied:

I thank the member for her question and for her very strong support for the volunteers not only in her own electorate but also across Western Australia. As members know, I have spoken a number of times about the commitment of the McGowan government, the commissioner and myself to rebuilding a close and collegiate relationship with volunteers across Western Australia. If members remember, under the previous Liberal–National government, the relationship between the government, and particularly its ministers, and volunteers, and particularly volunteer associations, was toxic. The government has had to turn that around and show willingness to encourage people to become volunteers in the first place, and to ensure that they are looked after once they become volunteers as well. We have done a very, very good job.

One of the latest things we have done, as the member for Murray–Wellington just indicated, is the Volunteer Hub, which is a website that went live on 31 October. The website is the work of personnel of the Department of Fire and Emergency Services who have skills in creating websites, and who received input from over 400 volunteers to determine what that website should look like and the type of information that should be held on it. The volunteers walked me through the website the other day. I must admit that it is absolutely fantastic. It really is a great tool. It is far more sophisticated than I thought it would be. I thought it would be just a platform to enable the exchange of information between volunteer brigades and units and the department, but it contains a huge amount of information, and particularly operational information that the vollies want when they are going out to a fire ground, to sea or to a rescue. The mapping systems on the Volunteer Hub are absolutely first class. That comes on top of the other work we have done with the volunteers, such as putting on volunteer liaison and relationship officers so that we take some of the administrative workload off volunteers around WA. It is also about the support we have given them when they had been ignored for so long. I will give one example: volunteer marine rescue services. For some reason, they were not funded by the previous Liberal–National government—they were overlooked when it came to emergency services levy funding. We have turned that around. New boats are now being floated out across Western Australia. Those groups are unbelievably happy with our government. They are unbelievably happy with the great relationship that has formed between our government and the people who go out there every summer and put their lives on the line to keep our community safe.