

BUSHFIRES — ESPERANCE

**1550. Hon COLIN de GRUSSA to the minister representing the Minister for Emergency Services:**

I refer to the “Record of Investigation into Death” from the Coroner’s Court of Western Australia regarding the 2015 Scaddan bushfires.

- (1) When will the state government make a formal response to the coroner’s report?
- (2) How will the state government consult with the Shire of Esperance, Department of Fire and Emergency Services and volunteer firefighters to identify and work towards implementing the appropriate recommendations from the report?
- (3) Will the state government prioritise funding and implement the recommendations of the report?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:**

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. The following answer has been provided to me by the Minister for Emergency Services.

- (1)–(2) The state government will carefully consider the recommendations of the coronial inquiry. A formal response will be provided following the conclusion of this bushfire season, which is the current focus of the Department of Fire and Emergency Services. This will include consultation between DFES, the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions Parks and Wildlife Service, and the Esperance community, which are committed to working together on community safety in the Esperance region.
- (3) The state government has already undertaken significant reforms to DFES and prioritised record funding into bushfire mitigation and planning. This includes a landmark \$35 million investment in mitigation to reduce bushfire risk, including on crown land; a \$15 million mitigation activity fund to support local governments to undertake mitigation in high-risk areas; and another \$15 million to fund the bushfire risk management planning program, including 11 new bushfire risk management officers to identify risks and develop bushfire plans. DFES also implemented a number of reforms in the Esperance region following the 2015 bushfires, including boosting the level of local DFES management support in the region; enhancing the partnership between DFES and the Shire of Esperance by basing the Esperance community emergency services manager in the DFES Esperance office, and pre-positioning of aircraft and support personnel ahead of bad fire weather. Local aircraft providers in Esperance and surrounding areas are now registered on ARENA—the National Aerial Firefighting Centre database of aviation service providers. This database is a national system to support agencies’ management of aircraft, operator compliance and resource availability. There has also been the establishment of an interagency south east fire working group to identify and prioritise bushfire mitigation across the Shires of Esperance, Jerramungup and Ravensthorpe.