

DEPARTMENT OF FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES — VOLUNTEERS

1012. Dr A.D. BUTI to the Minister for Emergency Services:

I refer to the McGowan government's historic reforms to the state's emergency services. Can the minister update the house how these reforms, through the strengthening of volunteer relations and working with other key stakeholders, are leading to improvements in community safety?

Mr F.M. LOGAN replied:

I thank the member for Armadale for his strong support for emergency service volunteers in WA and, in fact, his attendance at the recent Bedfordale volunteer expo on preparing for the forthcoming fire season. The member for Thornlie was there; he cycled all the way up there. Well done, member for Thornlie.

As members know, on 13 April last year we announced reforms to fire and emergency services in WA, which created the Rural Fire Division. Since then we have got on with historic reforms that we are delivering across the whole of Western Australia. We promised to strengthen volunteer relations as part of the rural fire division strategy and we are getting on and doing that. Under the previous government, the tensions between government—particularly ministers—and volunteers were paramount. They knew it and the member for Warren–Blackwood knows this. All he has to do is go around and ask the volunteer groups what the relationship was like with the previous government. It was horrendous. We have turned that completely around.

As I have said in this house before, the Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner and I have travelled the length and breadth of Western Australia and spoken to 230 volunteer brigades, units and associations across the whole state, from Kununurra to Esperance and all the way through the wheatbelt.

As part of building better relations with volunteers, I promised we would set up a ministerial volunteer forum. The first ministerial volunteer forum was held with the associations themselves on 6 June this year. We went through a series of discussions about how we can grow the volunteer base in Western Australia. Attracting volunteers is a critical issue that is facing Western Australia. As members would have noticed this morning when I read a brief ministerial statement about the advertising campaign on getting behind the frontline, this was one of the initiatives that came out of the ministerial volunteer advisory forum. We held a bigger forum on 6 September when volunteers from across the whole of Western Australia came to Perth. A series of workshops were held that have created a number of initiatives the state government and I, as minister, are working on to enhance the capabilities and experience of being a volunteer.

One of the initiatives volunteers raised with me at the forums was the need for automatic external defibrillators—AED devices. I can announce that, funded by the emergency services levy for the first time, from 2020, we will roll out 780 automatic external defibrillator units so that each of the fire and emergency services trucks, whether they are volunteer or career fire and rescue service trucks, will have a defibrillator in them, which is a fantastic initiative.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: That is a great initiative.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: That idea came from the volunteers themselves and we have taken it up and have the contract in place for the supply of them.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: They can save someone's life.

Mr F.M. LOGAN: That is right, Minister for Police. We have taken up that initiative and are buying the defibrillators and training the volunteers in their use and they will be put into all those trucks across the whole of Western Australia. Just imagine what that will do for the safety of people in rural and regional Western Australia.

What was that from the National Party: "Thanks very much, minister, for rolling out defibrillators across regional Western Australia, which will help save the lives of regional Western Australians. Thanks very much. We wish, minister, that we had thought of that when we were in government. But instead, we spent our money on talking toilets and painted wooden cows."

Mr D.J. Kelly interjected.

The SPEAKER: Minister for Water, you are on three.