

ASHFIELD FLATS — DEPARTMENT OF FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES REPORT

80. Mr D.J. KELLY to the Minister for Emergency Services:

I refer the minister to the fire at Ashfield Flats in my electorate on 5 March 2015 that came perilously close to destroying homes, and to my correspondence to him during 2015 asking what action the government, as the major landowner, intended to take to prevent a similar fire from occurring again.

- (1) Why, in a letter dated 22 October 2015, did the minister say he could not provide me with a copy of the Department of Fire and Emergency Services' report into the fire because it was "still in draft format" when in actual fact the report, which I obtained later through freedom of information, was completed in May 2015?
- (2) Why, in the same letter, did the minister advise me that he could not provide me with a copy of the report into the fire because it was "currently subject to discussions with the relevant landowners" when the Town of Bassendean had not even seen the report until I gave it to it in December 2015?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS replied:

Happy new year, opposition—it is my first question for the year!

- (1)–(2) Yes; a number of different letters have gone back and forth over the past 12 months about that particular fire in that location in the member for Bassendean's electorate. I wrote to the member saying that the report was still being finalised. It was in a draft format.

Mr D.J. Kelly: In draft format!

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: Correct. That was the advice that I was provided with by the Department of Fire and Emergency Services. I do not know what happens when the other side is in government, but in a ministerial office in this government we do not conduct reports into incidents such as that particular fire; we let the departments do it. We relayed that advice. The advice I was given was that it was still in a draft format, and I gave the member that advice. I accept that the advice from the department was incorrect and I apologise —

Mr D.J. Kelly interjected.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: What—because the department gave me the wrong advice? What a stupid thing to say! Anyway, I accept that, and I have apologised for that because there was a delay. At the end of all this, what really matters is what happened after the report was finalised.

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Cannington, I call you to order for the first time. Is it the first time? I am very surprised, member for Cannington!

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: What really matters is what happened once the report had been finalised. It identified that a number of significant fire risks remained in the area. It is only right that the Department of Fire and Emergency Services then consult the landowners, whether it be a government landowner or a private landowner, before they further release that information. They did that. I heard the member for Bassendean say on radio before Christmas that not enough had been done. But straight after the ABC radio interview—I think it was ABC; it might have been 6PR—the head of the government authority at Lands, which owns that particular bit of land, went on and smashed him out of the ballpark! They have obviously got the report. They have conducted all the firebreaks and they have conducted all the fuel reduction that was recommended in the report. They have done every single thing that was recommended by the Department of Fire and Emergency Services to address the issues of fire risk in that park. Every single thing had been done, and the member has been written to since then to be informed about that. Right now I do not see what the issue is. There was a fire in a park in the member's electorate and an incident report was done by the department. It came out and it was discussed with the government landowner under the authority of the Minister for Planning, I understand, and the issue has been rectified.