

EMERGENCY SERVICES — BUSHFIRE RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY

5649. Mr P.B. Watson to the Minister for Emergency Services:

I refer to the Government's policy on Bush Fire Risk Management and ask:

- (a) has the Department of Parks and Wildlife (DPAW) been held accountable for their bushfire risk management programs when for the last ten years they have failed to meet their hazard reduction programs, and if not why not;
- (b) is the Commissioner for Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) responsible for bushfire risk management, and has DFES undertaken this responsibility, and if not why not;
- (c) how many bushfire risk management programs have been completed since inception of the program, and what areas do they cover;
- (d) what areas are the priority areas for bushfire management programs to be completed for the next three years;
- (e) what towns in WA have been identified as being at risk from major bushfires for this coming fire season; and
- (f) what role does the Office of Bushfire Risk Management have in monitoring and reporting on DFES and DPAW in terms of their bushfire risk management planning and treatment option being undertaken?

**Mr J.M. Francis replied:**

The Department of Fire and Emergency Services (the Department) advises:

- (a) The Department of Parks and Wildlife fall under the responsibility of the Hon Albert P Jacob MLA Minister for Environment; Heritage I would recommend the Member direct his question to the Minister for Environment.
- (b) Under the emergency services Acts, the Commissioner's legislative responsibility for bushfire risk management is set out in subsections 35(1) and (2) of the *Bush Fires Act 1954* and is limited to:
  - (i) issuing a firebreak notice to an owner or occupier of land where the local government has failed to issue a firebreak notice under section 33(1) upon request by the Minister; and
  - (ii) authorising employees or agents to exercise all the powers which the local government may exercise to ensure a firebreak notice is complied with, in situations where the local government issues a firebreak notice under section 33(1) upon request by the Minister, but has failed to enforce the notice.

Outside of sections 33 and 35, authorised officers of the Department may enter the land for the purposes of inspecting fire precaution measures taken on the land pursuant to subsection 14(1)(h) and where the officer forms the view that those measures are inadequate, request the Minister to direct the local government to give the owner a notice under subsection 33(1)(a) specifying the fire prevention measures to be taken.

The Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner has not exercised these powers in the past.

The Department currently undertakes bushfire risk management on school sites in accordance with an arrangement with the Department of Education.

Historically the Department has also carried out bushfire risk management on unallocated crown land (UCL) and unmanaged reserves (UMR) in in the Metropolitan region, the Peel region, the Greater Bunbury region, and all town sites, aboriginal settlements and rural developments, in accordance with an arrangement with the Department of Lands. This arrangement is currently under review.

- (c) The Bushfire Risk Management Project (BRMP) is a process which provides local governments with the tools and knowledge to lead bushfire risk assessment and treatment decision-making in their area in order to manage and reduce risk. It is a process which local governments have adopted as part of their ongoing commitment to locally driven community safety. Such planning will always be ongoing and be based on local priorities. There are currently 16 local governments participating in the BRMP with their tenure blind bushfire risk management plans progressing for Office of Bushfire Risk Management (OBRM) endorsement by December 2016.

The 16 identified very high bushfire risk 'priority' local governments are:

Shire of Augusta–Margaret River;  
Shire of Beverley;

Shire of Boddington;  
Shire of Boyup Brook;  
Shire of Bridgetown–Greenbushes;  
Shire of Carnamah;  
Shire of Chittering;  
Shire of Collie;  
Shire of Donnybrook–Balingup;  
Shire of Irwin;  
Shire of Jerramungup;  
Shire of Nannup;  
Shire of Northampton;  
Shire of Ravensthorpe;  
Shire of West Arthur; and  
Shire of Woodanilling.

DFES is also providing Bushfire Risk Management planning support to an additional 22 “optional” local governments which were also identified in the project as having a very high bushfire risk with sufficient resources to undertake the planning process themselves. The 22 local governments are:

1. City of Albany;
2. City of Armadale;
3. City of Bunbury;
4. City of Cockburn;
5. City of Gosnells;
6. City of Kalamunda;
7. City of Mandurah;
8. City of Mundaring;
9. City of Rockingham;
10. City of Swan;
11. City of Wanneroo;
12. Shire of Busselton;
13. Shire of Capel;
14. Shire of Coorow;
15. Shire of Dardanup;
16. Shire of Denmark;
17. Shire of Gingin;
18. Shire of Manjimup;
19. Shire of Serpentine–Jarrahdale;
20. Shire of Toodyay;
21. Shire of Wagin; and
22. Shire of York.

- (d) The 16 identified very high bushfire risk ‘priority’ local governments are the priority areas for Bushfire Risk Management plans in 2016/17.
- (e) The majority of towns within the south west land division are potentially at risk from a major bushfire. However, any town or city in WA could be impacted by a bushfire.
- (f) Functions of the Office of Bushfire Risk Management include regulating prescribed burning in accordance with minimum standards and guidelines and auditing compliance with the process for prescribed burning.

OBRM review and report on the effectiveness and efficiency of the management of bushfire related risk as undertaken across Western Australia including by the Department and DPAW.