

STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE — STORM RESPONSE

554. Mr P. ABETZ to the Minister for Emergency Services:

I understand that the Western Australian Fire and Emergency Services Conference was held at the weekend. Can the minister outline how emergency services have managed, given the extensive damage to Perth and the south west, in light of recent stormy weather?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS replied:

I thank the member for the question; it is a very good question.

As members would be aware, over the weekend the south west and even parts of the great southern, member for Albany, suffered some significant storm activity. In fact, the weather was pretty bad as well! On Saturday night, parts of the south west experienced wind gusts of 100 kilometres an hour and on Sunday night, 140-kilometre-an-hour winds. In fact, I was in Dunsborough on Saturday night in a tent, and I can tell members that it got pretty hairy down there by 11 o'clock. That was all to do with the weather, I promise!

Several members interjected.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: It was a Housing Industry Association function! But in all seriousness, 140-kilometre-an-hour winds caused some significant damage to houses in the metropolitan area and the south west. In fact, the State Emergency Service received over 160 call-outs to go and help people. It is also worth noting that there was an article in *The West Australian*, I think on Saturday, that stated the metropolitan SES units are —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Thank you very much! Member for Girrawheen, I call you to order for the first time. Member for Kwinana, I call you to order for the first time. If you want to have a private conversation, you are at liberty to leave the chamber.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

There was an article in the paper on the weekend and it was correct. The metropolitan SES brigades are at capacity. They have people queuing to get in and join the SES and help out their fellow community members, which is a great thing. However, it is also worth noting that some of the country SES units are struggling to attract volunteers. Therefore, I take this opportunity to send a message to all the regional MPs in this chamber right now: when they go back out into their electorates, they should do what they can to talk it up. Members need to do what they can to try to get people to think about joining the SES or even a volunteer bush fire brigade or a volunteer fire and rescue brigade in regional Western Australia where we want to attract more people who can give up their time. It is a very, very rewarding thing for people to do. They will get some training, and they will get a lot of skills that they can use in all other walks of life. At the very minimum, they will get senior first-aid training. They will also learn how to use a whole lot of different tools and get to drive a whole lot of different vehicles. It is very rewarding to be able to help people.

I want to place on the record my appreciation and, I am sure, the appreciation of every member of this chamber for the contribution that the SES made over the weekend in what were very challenging conditions. There were a number of unfortunate accidents, and in fact one person unfortunately lost his life, due to the storm in the last 48 hours. That is something we all hate to see. Therefore, if we can get more people into the SES units in the regional areas of Western Australia, that will be a good thing for the community.