

“ARE YOU BUSHFIRE READY?” CAMPAIGN — PUBLIC RESPONSE

59. Mr F.A. ALBAN to the Minister for Fire and Emergency Services:

Before I ask my question, I acknowledge in the gallery the primary school children from Our Lady of Lourdes Primary School, Nollamara, in the member for Morley’s electorate.

As we near the end of a hot, dry summer, can the minister please update the house on the public response to the “Are You Bushfire Ready?” awareness campaign?

Mr M.P. Murray: I love my yellow coat!

The SPEAKER: Member for Collie–Preston, you must look very bright in that yellow coat. I call you to order for the first time.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS replied:

I thank the member for Swan Hills for the question, and can I again pass on, I am sure on behalf of every single member of this house, my sympathies to the 57 families in the member’s electorate who lost their homes during that massive bushfire at the start of the year—a significant event that required an unprecedented amount of resources.

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Armadale, I call you to order for the first time. Minister, carry on, please.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I have not even started, Mr Speaker.

If the member for Swan Hills would convey our sympathy to those families, I would very much appreciate it. I am sure we all feel deeply for them.

Obviously we have spent an awful lot of money on resources to prepare for what was always going to be a very challenging fire season.

Ms M.M. Quirk interjected.

The SPEAKER: Thank you very much, member for Girrawheen. I call you to order for the first time.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: That is a wonderful example for the children in the gallery!

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: We spent an unprecedented amount of money —

Mr F.M. Logan interjected.

The SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Cockburn. I call you to order for the first time. Minister, through the Chair, please.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: We spent an unprecedented amount of money preparing resources so that we could respond to what was going to be a very challenging fire season, and it proved to be every bit as difficult as we expected, with two major bushfires, one in Parkerville and one in Banjup in my electorate.

Part of our preparation was to try to encourage residents to do their bit and get their blocks ready and do some fire risk mitigation, and we ran a significant campaign on that. I appreciate the contribution of Western Power in the “Are You Bushfire Ready?” campaign, led by our Victoria Cross winner Ben Roberts-Smith.]

It is worth noting the significant response to that campaign. The website traffic is traceable —

Ms M.M. Quirk interjected.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: She is not going to ask me a question, I know that.

We know that from 1 December until this day, 26 000 people have visited the website. In December, 37 per cent of people who visited the website downloaded the checklist, which related to people taking positive action, getting the information —

The SPEAKER: Member for Girrawheen, I call you to order for the second time. Minister, speak through the Chair and speed it up, please.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: Until the Parkerville fire, 37 per cent of people downloaded the information. After the Parkerville fire, the percentage of people who visited the website and downloaded the checklist rose to 67 per cent. Over 80 per cent of visitors to the site were first-time visitors, which equates to 21 000 people who obviously live in a bushfire-prone area and who are now better informed about the responsibility of getting their property ready for the fire season. We are not at the end of this fire season—there is still some time to go. Bush

fire preparation is a year-round task. It cannot be left until the start of summer or until there is a fire; it is done all year round. If people live on a block in a bushfire-prone area, they should take action all year round to get ready for the fire season. The website statistics tell us that people took action and got ready. It is great that the government has taken some positive action in this area and encouraged people to take some responsibility and get their block ready because we never know when —

Mr P.C. Tinley interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Willagee, I call you to order for the first time. Minister, wind it up.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: We never know when a bushfire might come to our area—it is very unpredictable. A bushfire does not listen to laws of the Parliament; it listens to the laws of nature. I know that many people downloaded this information and it was very beneficial. Again, I thank the member for Swan Hills for passing on that message to his constituents and I acknowledge the contribution of Western Power to this campaign.