

PARKERVILLE STONEVILLE MT HELENA BUSHFIRE REVIEW — RADIO INFRASTRUCTURE

3127. Ms M.M. Quirk to the Minister for Emergency Services:

I refer to the *Parkerville Stoneville Mt Helena Bushfire Review* which recommended that radio infrastructure in the Perth Hills should be reviewed to assess whether it is practicable for radio and/or mobile phone coverage to be improved to achieve better coverage across the area and ask, can the Minister advise what actions have been taken to ameliorate the communication black outs identified in the review?

Mr J.M. Francis replied:

The Department of Fire and Emergency Services has undertaken considerable planning to ensure radio coverage issues relating to the network are clearly identified and adequate operational measures are in place for the coming season. Such measures have included thorough communications planning, pre-established radio channels and early mobilisation of sophisticated Incident Control Vehicles. See my response to Legislative Assembly Question on Notice 3130 for details.

A VHF high band repeater (channel 141) is now in service at Canning Mills to provide an additional channel in the Perth Hills area. As part of this implementation the repeater was tested to validate its coverage; the coverage maps were updated and distributed; dedicated preformed bushfire communications plans were developed; and a circular was released to communicate the above information.

The State Emergency Management Committee Secretariat has asked the Emergency Services Network Operators Group — made up of utility network and telecommunications operators — to examine the mobile phone coverage issues and ensure coverage is fine-tuned and maximised. This work is ongoing, with the realisation that network coverage in difficult hills terrain will never be perfect.