

BUSHFIRE-PRONE AREAS — LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION'S COMMENTS

469. Mr F.A. ALBAN to the Minister for Emergency Services:

I understand that yesterday, in response to the Parkerville fire report, the Leader of the Opposition promoted taking personal responsibility to prevent fires. Can the minister please inform the house how that aligns with existing government policy and any alternative views he is aware of?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS replied:

I do not normally agree with very much of what the Leader of the Opposition says, but I must say, having read and heard what he said on Geoff Hutchison's program yesterday, I agree with him on this one. He essentially said, when asked about people taking responsibility when they live in bushfire-prone areas —

But everyone has a responsibility and if authorities, which have put in place reasonable rules and that sounded reasonably ... reasonable, if you like, to me, well then people should abide by it.

I agree with the Leader of the Opposition. He said —

And what they are trying to do is save lives and save property and people need to play their part in doing that as well.

He went on to say —

... in a general sense, people need to take responsibility.

The Leader of the Opposition is absolutely right. However, members, the problem is that that is not a view shared by all members of the opposition. In fact, the shadow Minister for Emergency Services has a completely different view when it comes to people taking responsibility when they live in bushfire-prone areas. Every single time we talk about preparation being a shared responsibility, we are accused by the member for Girrawheen of trying to shift the blame. Every single time we try to encourage landowners to do their bit, we are accused of deflecting responsibility.

Mr M. McGowan: You're just trying to intimidate her because she caught you out.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I absolutely agree with the Leader of the Opposition on shared responsibility; the problem is that his shadow minister has a very different view from that of the Leader of the Opposition.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, I am going to call you now to order for the first time. Member for Warnbro!

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: We have learnt this week that we just can no longer believe a single thing the member for Girrawheen says in this place. We just cannot believe it. Until we go out and find out otherwise, she just cannot be trusted. On this issue, obviously she can no longer be trusted either. In fact, I am not sure whether there is a standing order on lazy people putting questions on notice, but if there were, I am a little sick and tired of reading questions on notice from the member for Girrawheen who does not even know the name of the agency for the portfolio on which she is meant to be the opposition spokesperson. I am a little tired of reading questions on notice in which she refers to the agency as the Fire and Emergency Services Authority; even as late as last week she still refused to believe that that agency has not existed for more than three years. She is still cutting and pasting questions from four years ago; she does not —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Warnbro, I call you to order for the first time. Minister, I want you to wind this up.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: The point is that when someone behaves like this, they are either lazy or incompetent. I say to the Leader of the Opposition that I absolutely agree with him: people need to take responsibility, and right now that starts with him taking responsibility for the shadow Minister for Emergency Services.