

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS — PREPAREDNESS FOR FIRE SEASON

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

Mr Speaker —

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Albany, I call you to order for the first time.

**Mr F.A. ALBAN:** As we approach the fire season, can the minister please update the house on the measures the government has taken to ensure that local volunteer firefighters have a greater level of preparedness?

**Mr J.M. FRANCIS replied:**

I thank the member for the question. I know that a large percentage of his electorate is an area that regularly faces the threat of bushfire, and I appreciate his genuine concern on this issue.

This government is getting on with the job of delivering its election commitments to provide increased protection for volunteer firefighters and increase the readiness and preparedness levels of the state for the coming fire season, as well as implementing the Keelty report recommendations. There is a lot going on in this field at the moment and it is worth noting some of the things that are happening in order to help make this state more prepared for the coming fire season. Programs include, for example, the capes enhanced delivery program, with \$7 million invested by the Liberal–National government over the next four years to provide additional fire appliances and Department of Fire and Emergency Services staff for the lower south west corner of Western Australia, which is obviously one of the higher threat areas of the state for bushfires. Another program will provide new appliances for south west cape, such as a 3.4 urban tanker for the Dunsborough Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service Brigade and new equipment also for Busselton and Margaret River fire brigades. An allocation of \$12.3 million will provide new protective equipment, which is very important for firefighting vehicles, and will upgrade the 667 vehicles in the fleet with items such as fire blankets and spray bars.

Extensions to the south west brigade stations have already been completed. A number of brigades in the south west have had significant extensions done to their fire stations. We are spending \$5.6 million on the Aurora fire-tracking system, which will provide bushfire protection and detection, simultaneous tracking and early warning for bushfire threats across the state. Construction of the new Kambalda fire station is pretty much complete. I was out there about a month ago. It is a stunning building and has a great group of blokes out there volunteering with the Kambalda Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service Brigade. An allocation of \$15 million of funding over four years for the new emergency services rescue helicopter for the south west will provide a brilliant asset package and will actually make a difference in saving the lives of people to the south of Perth. The bushfire risk management planning process is well and truly underway.

Lastly, I make the point that no fire season is ever without its risks or challenges. Nothing is for sure in this particular game. There are no guarantees when dealing with the lottery of life that is dealt out by Mother Nature. It is not just about the state getting ready and readying its resources; it is also about individuals taking responsibility for their own property as well, and that they have done everything to ensure that their houses, premises and equipment are as defensible as possible in case the unfortunate bushfire comes. I therefore have one message for the people of Western Australia who are in fire-risk areas: if you think you have checked everything, go out and check again as you can never be prepared enough for the risk of bushfire.