

JUVENILE AND FAMILY FIRE AWARENESS PROGRAM

133. Ms M.M. QUIRK to the Minister for Emergency Services:

I refer to the minister's recent comments that the vast majority of those arrested for arson are juveniles, and to the concerns of the Commissioner of Police about the number of juvenile arsonists. Is the minister aware that the award-winning Juvenile and Family Fire Awareness program, a free, confidential education and support program for kids aged six to 16 years who have been involved in lighting fires, has over a 90 per cent success rate in preventing recidivism? The program receives only \$25 000 in funding and relies on career firefighters travelling statewide as volunteers to deliver the program. Is the minister ashamed that a mere \$25 000 is invested in what is an important measure in preventing arson among juveniles, and what does he intend to do about it?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS replied:

I am speechless. Today marks 294 days since the opposition has asked me a question on emergency services during question time in this place. Since the member last asked me a question, there have been three Prime Ministers —

Ms M.M. Quirk: We've had a few MPIs and questions on notice.

Several members interjected.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: Australia has won the Ashes since the member asked a question on 22 May last year.

Ms M.M. Quirk: Well, get on and answer it; you should be ready.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I had given up on the member asking me a question.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Bassendean, I call you to order for the first time and, member for West Swan, I call you to order for the second time. Minister, thanks for those statistics, but can you answer the question.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I will try my best, Mr Speaker. After 294 days—wow! It is such an important issue that the opposition obviously takes so seriously that it could not be bothered asking me a question.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I am very aware of the success of the JAFFA program and how it works. No-one has suggested to me that it needs to be expanded. I also point out that it is not the only program the government uses or the only resource at the fingertips of the judiciary and the police. There are many different options; for example, as part of a reform program for juveniles who have been caught playing with matches and starting fires, some of them are sent to Fiona Wood's burns unit to see the consequences of significant burns to understand the damage that fires can do to people's lives and people's property. Firefighters can visit schools and talk to kids about the dangers of starting fires. An awful lot happens in this space. The JAFFA program is adequately funded. Sure, it might be \$25 000 and have a 90 per cent success rate, but I have not seen any evidence that putting more money into it will solve any problems because I do not know that there is a deficit in the programs available to juveniles at risk of starting fires.