

DEPARTMENT OF FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES — ABORIGINAL FIREFIGHTER CADETSHIP PROGRAM

714. MR N.W. MORTON to the Minister for Emergency Services:

Before I ask my question, I would like to acknowledge in the Speaker's gallery staff and students from Waroona District High School in the member for Murray–Wellington's electorate. I have also been asked to wish them good luck in their footy grand final this Saturday.

I note that the Department of Fire and Emergency Services recently launched the Aboriginal firefighter cadetship program. Can the minister please inform the house how this will provide new opportunities for Aboriginal Western Australians?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS replied:

I thank the member for Forrestfield for his question. This is an exciting project. Last week the Department of Fire and Emergency Services launched the Aboriginal firefighter cadetship program. It is basically a pre-employment program that, firstly, will increase the number of young Aboriginal men and women who meet the minimum entry requirements to become a firefighter and join the Trainee Firefighter School and, secondly, increase the number of young Aboriginal men and women employed in the Department of Fire and Emergency Services. Basically, the government wants to see more young Aboriginal men and women from across the state of Western Australia meet the requirements so that they can play a challenging and fulfilling role as firefighters in our state. That is why we are going to provide assistance for them to gain these prerequisite qualifications. The cadetship program will start in January, and those who join up will be paid as they gain those prerequisite qualifications. They will develop new skills and be mentored. If they do not meet the minimum fitness requirements, they will be given a personal trainer to help them reach that standard and enter the Trainee Firefighter School. Last week we commenced a six-week targeted campaign across Western Australia to try to attract suitable young Aboriginal men and women to the program. In the next few days I will email all members of Parliament, from the Kimberley through to Esperance, and I hope every member of Parliament can identify a suitable young Aboriginal man or woman in their electorate and point them in the right direction to be part of a very exciting program that will help create real and rewarding jobs for young Aboriginal men and women across the state.