

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION —
FIREFIGHTING REVIEW AND DIRECTOR GENERAL'S ABSENCE

363. Hon HELEN BULLOCK to the Minister for Environment:

I refer to the review of the Department of Environment and Conservation's firefighting capabilities initiated following the Boorabbin coronial inquest and conducted by Mr Euan Ferguson, AFSM.

- (1) Given that part of the terms of that inquiry includes a review of equipment and resources, why is it that DEC recently put out a tender for the services of six or seven fixed-wing aircraft with pilots and support for fire suppression activities before this review has been completed?
- (2) When does the minister anticipate that she will receive this report; what is its anticipated cost; and, does the minister intend to table it?
- (3) Why did the Director General of the Department of Environment and Conservation, Mr Keiran McNamara, not attend estimates hearings in the Legislative Assembly in May this year to supply information about this and other matters?
- (4) In the event that Mr McNamara was on leave, did the minister approve the leave and when was the leave application made?

Hon DONNA FARAGHER replied:

I thank the member some notice of this question.

Before I answer this question, I will put on record a matter that relates to bushfire suppression. I advise the house that for the first time in five years, the Department of Environment and Conservation has met its target for prescribed burning of more than 200 000 hectares. That target was reached last week. That is a very, very important component of our bushfire prevention activities and I think that should be acknowledged by all members of this house.

- (1) The current DEC contract for fixed-wing water-bombing aircraft expires in the latter half of 2010. It is necessary to ensure fire suppression resources are in place in the south west of the state in advance of the bushfire season to maximise the protection of communities and assets from bushfires.

Hon Jim Chown: And lives.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: And lives—exactly. I am sure that the opposition agrees with that. The answer continues —

- (2) The review will be completed prior to the end of 2010. Mr Ferguson's salary and on-costs will be borne by the South Australian government. The Western Australian government will meet Mr Ferguson's costs associated with travel, accommodation and meals incurred as part of the review. Other costs incurred in the administration of the review will be met by the Western Australian government. It is anticipated these costs will total less than \$20 000.

I will table the report arising from Mr Ferguson's review.

- (3) The Director General of the Department of Environment and Conservation, Mr Keiran McNamara, is on leave to attend his son's graduation with a doctoral degree from Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Boston, USA. I hope that the member appreciates that that is an important family occasion. The department was very well represented at the estimates hearings in the Legislative Assembly by the acting director general; two deputy directors general for parks and conservation, and environment; the director, regional services; the director, nature conservation; and the chief finance officer.
- (4) I approved the leave that Mr McNamara applied for on 2 March 2010.