

BODDINGTON AND NORTHCLIFFE BUSHFIRES — REVIEW

**365. Mr T.K. WALDRON to the Minister for Emergency Services:**

I read today that a review to examine the bushfires that occurred in February in our south west will soon commence. Can the minister provide the house with some further details on this review?

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

I thank the member for Wagin for his question. Yes, he is correct; today, the State Emergency Management Committee announced a review of the Lower Hotham and O'Sullivan fires in Western Australia at the start of this year. They are more commonly known as the Boddington and Northcliffe fires. The review will be funded under the natural disaster resilience program. Quite frankly, I will take any money from the commonwealth I can get. If the commonwealth wants to fund the review, we welcome that commitment from it.

The review will have three key terms of reference that will examine what happened during those two major level 3 fires burning at the same time earlier this year that put significant strains on the state's resources. The three key areas include operational communications, interstate resource deployment and interagency collaboration. A number of different individuals and volunteer groups have contacted my office asking how they can have their say about the way those two fires were managed. They will be pleased to know that any organisation, volunteer, individual or community group can make a submission to the State Emergency Management Committee's review of those fires.

**Ms M.M. Quirk:** Will those submissions be made public?

**Mr J.M. FRANCIS:** That will be a matter for the State Emergency Management Committee. It will make a recommendation to me at the time and I will have a look at it. At the moment, I cannot foresee why eventually they would not be made public. No agency or individual group has a monopoly on good ideas and there is always room for improvement. That is why we do reviews of major incidents such as what happened in Boddington and Northcliffe.

To put these two fires into context, they were both level 3 fires burning at the same time and were fought with over 190 appliances, 400 emergency services personnel, firefighters and staff from organisations including—I hate listing these off because I might forget someone—volunteer bushfire brigades, volunteer fire and rescue services, volunteer fire services, volunteer emergency services, career fire and rescue services, State Emergency Service, Department of Parks and Wildlife, WA Police, the Forest Products Commission and, of course, the Australian Defence Force. They were all part of the team that combatted and assisted in those two fires that combined burnt over 144 000 hectares.

Lastly, although I am reluctant to mention any particular individuals, sometimes in this job one meets a particular person who absolutely reinvigorates one's belief in the wonderful power of humanity. Out at Boddington, I met a lovely lady called Elizabeth Hoek, who members would know. She works in the Boddington Community Resource Centre. Even after her own house burnt down, she was still there helping other members of the community. She is an absolute inspiration. I hope that during this bushfire season the number of properties lost are kept to a minimum. The loss of just one house can obviously have a significant impact on a family or an individual. It is a wonderful credit to Elizabeth Hook that even after her house burnt down, she was volunteering and helping people. It is worth noting that this is national Volunteer Week. I pass on my regards to her.