

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Matter of Public Interest

THE SPEAKER (Mr M.W. Sutherland) informed the Assembly that he was in receipt within the prescribed time of a letter from the member for Cannington seeking to debate a matter of public interest.

[In compliance with standing orders, at least five members rose in their places.]

MR W.J. JOHNSTON (Cannington) [3.00 pm]: I move —

That this house condemns the government for the political manipulation of advertising campaigns, including the “Are You Bushfire Ready?”, royalties for regions and the Bigger Picture campaigns.

I want to first go straight to the involvement of the Minister for Energy in the “Are You Bushfire Ready?” campaign. We know what his involvement was. On 2 December, the day after the launch of the campaign, the minister’s principal policy adviser emailed Western Power and said —

Could you please tell me what WP’s involvement in the Bushfire Ready program is?

He did not know anything about the campaign. He was not involved, he was not consulted and he was not part of the process; he was ignored completely. I have asked the minister one question previously on this topic. It is interesting because we know, and I knew at the time, that he actually had no involvement in the campaign; however, I want to get on to some of the issues involved. On 17 October, an interagency working group was established to talk about the bushfire ready campaign. The next day, one of the officials of the Department of Fire and Emergency Services emailed Dixie Marshall to put a pitch about how the campaign should work. He states —

I suggest we leverage the current DFES brand, “Bushfire Ready”, and use the program’s success as the story of how Western Australian Government agencies are working with the community to prepare.

In this email he went on to state —

Here are the program’s key points ...

He listed the 145 bushfire ready group facilitators and approximately 300 bushfire ready groups located across the state. The bushfire ready groups are mentioned three times in the first Keelty review into the Roleystone–Kelmscott bushfires. The review mentions that bushfire ready groups were an effective community education approach. The official also states —

... I am concerned that developing another new bushfire brand will only dilute those we already have in place.

But that is exactly what the involvement of Dixie Marshall produced. It produced a dilution of the professional advice that the government received on this important issue. Instead of following the advice of the professional people in the bushfire preparedness space, the government followed the spin doctors. That is interesting, given that in this chamber on 6 August 2013 the Premier defended the enormous wage increase that was given to Dixie Marshall after the election. He said —

... the person in charge of media is now responsible for not only government media, but also advertising right across the whole public sector, including government trading enterprises!

He said further —

The head of government media, who does the media for my office, ministerial offices and the like, also oversees all government advertising right across both the government sector and government trading enterprises. I can tell members right now that that person, because of her knowledge of the media and her expertise in placing advertisements ... has literally saved this government millions and millions of dollars.

I am indebted to Hon Samantha Rowe in the other house, who asked the Leader of the House in his capacity of representing the Minister for Energy on 19 March 2014 —

I refer to the *Are you Bushfire Ready* campaign co-ordinated by the Director of Government Media ...

... what savings was the Director able to negotiate for the advertising spend on this campaign ...

The minister’s answer was —

None. The Director of Government Media is not involved in negotiating any government campaign media purchases.

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That is exactly 100 per cent against what the Premier said. What was Dixie Marshall's role in this? She was the centre of the politicisation of the campaign. A campaign that should have been about the community and the dangers of bushfire became a campaign to convince the community that the government was doing work on bushfires; that it was the community's problem and not the government's problem. Rather than the government and the community working together, it became the community's problem. I will just read from one of the emails we received, which states —

Also, it's a subtle shift, but where the brief talks about needing help, I think we should shift emphasis to people being obligated to do their bit, and be making the point that is always the case, not just because of this season, with any potential implications that government has been caught short by a dangerous season.

At the end of the season, after 55 houses were burnt down, the government was able to say, "Well, we've done our bit; it was somebody else's fault." It is interesting, too, to see the professional advice of the people involved in fighting fires. Again, I will quote from another email that we have obtained, which states —

For your information, I've spoken to the SEMC about the State Preparedness Report. They are keen for a media event next week, and are looking at a media statement and opportunities with the presentation of the report to the Emergency Services Minister.

Again, the State Emergency Management Committee's role in this campaign disappears; it falls off. It is interesting when we read the communication strategy prepared for this campaign as it was drafted originally and compare it with what happened after Dixie Marshall rewrote the strategy. The original draft states —

There is an urgent need to educate and inform the broader Western Australian community that the threat of bushfires is a SHARED RESPONSIBILITY and that everyone in the community needs to consider what they can do in partnership with Government and the key agencies.

Dixie Marshall redrafted the communication and we can see that she has a very similar opening, but it is a bit different. It states —

Bushfires are an ever present threat in Western Australia. There is an imperative to ensure that all Western Australians are educated and informed so they understand the danger, along with the potential for loss of property and life, and play their role in preparing to minimise the risk to the community.

It is essential that Western Australians are reminded of the need to share the responsibility in minimising the risk—not only to themselves, but also their neighbours, and ultimately the broader community. The responsibility for minimising the risk to the community rests with the entire community.

Dixie Marshall changed the advertising focus away from the government to the community. When 55 houses were burnt down in the bushfires in January, the government could say, "Well, it wasn't our fault." The original draft stated that all of us are obligated to manage individual risk, to take personal responsibility and to not simply blame the government when issues arise. That has changed to —

All of us share an obligation to manage the risk of bushfires. This requires all to take personal responsibility and play their role.

We can see that she is constantly trying to shift the blame away from the government and its work onto others. We need to work out why Western Power was billed \$1 million for a campaign on behalf of the government. We know the Premier has on a number of occasions over the years spoken in the house about how government trading enterprises should not be used to promote the government and that their money should be used on their activities. It is interesting to note one of these emails that we have, which states —

I understand there is confusion about the money committed by Paul —

The CEO of Western Power —

... for the Premier's Bushfire ad campaign.

How is it that Western Power is being asked to pay for the Premier's bushfire campaign? That is contrary to the position the Premier has taken over the years in this chamber. We need to understand why Dixie Marshall is trying to manipulate this campaign to be about the Premier instead of about the people of the state.

We also have an interesting issue with Dixie Marshall trying to cut the Department of Fire and Emergency Services out of the entire campaign. It is interesting because there is a series of emails about what happens and where the campaign launch is to take place. One of these emails states —

We need to sort a venue for the Dec 1 launch —

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This email is only 10 days before the launch. The email further states —

Have had two proposals rejected ...

One of those is the police centre and the second one was the DFES centre in Cockburn. The email further states —

... because it was DFES (Dixie not happy with this)

Dixie Marshall rejects holding a launch of a bushfire campaign at a DFES facility because it is the department involved in fighting fires. Also, one of the emails states —

If you could convince Dixie about Cockburn—it would be the easy way to go—she has an issue with it because it is very clearly DFES.

I fail to understand how the Department of Fire and Emergency Services is not a suitable organisation to be involved in a firefighting campaign. It is interesting to note, but we must understand what was going on here, too, and we are very lucky that they told us in these emails what this is about. I refer to another one of the emails of 13 November, which states —

Presume the Premier will be there at 6:30. Key point is when do you want the premier to gather the troops around for a brief thank you?

When do you want the premier to serve the snaggers

Remember we are doing this for the cameras—so perhaps the calling together should come first—then the snaggers and the nattering???

I again repeat —

Remember we are doing this for the cameras ...

They were saying that they were not doing it for the benefit of Western Australians and not in the interests of fighting fires; it was being done for the benefit of the Premier.

It is interesting—the Leader of the House might like to know this—that the one of the emails states —

Darlington and Kalamunda are bloody miles away.

The member for Armadale might be interested to know that the reply to that email states —

Yup that is the problem—they are miles away—as is Armadale.

This is such an important issue and what does the government focus on? I come to an email dated 27 November, which states —

While we're into flaunting mode—I am anyway: I wonder if it is worth doing some sort of radio run through the commercial breakfast shows next week ... ie, someone turns up with a party pack made up of the collateral AND—a giant life-size image of BRS in his “bushfire ready” gear.

“BRS” is Ben Roberts-Smith. The email continues —

I know it is kind of making fun of a serious subject but it might get a bit of chatter going on the FM's especially ... particularly among the women presenters who all seem to go gaga over this guy. (Yeah yeah—I know: You can take the boy out of crass commercial media—but you can't take the crass commercial media (thinking) out of the boy ...)

Holly: Presuming that I don't get kicked off the job immediately—is there room in the budget to perhaps create 6-7 giant card board cut outs of BRS??

So that is the focus of the campaign; that is what the government is doing. I must say that this is not the only embarrassment for the government to come out of the emails the opposition has received. It is also interesting to note this email, sent by Dixie Marshall, which includes a discussion of how they are going to get television presenters to wear the paraphernalia related to the campaign. A Western Power employee says in an email that they will drop the paraphernalia off to the TV station. In her reply to the email—it is very important to listen to the time—at 7.06 pm on 27 November 2013, Dixie Marshall states —

Hold fire Heidi ... lets discuss this in the morning

Then 10 minutes later, at 7.16 pm, Dixie Marshall sends a reply email to the same people, which states —

Sorry Holl ... I misread this email (on my lap, in the car, on my way home!)

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Last time I knew, texting or using email while driving is against the law. Dixie Marshall will have to explain to the people of Western Australia what she was talking about when she said that the device was on her lap, on the way home.

Mr P.T. Miles: This is your big moment, is it?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: No. I thank the member for Wanneroo for raising that. My problem is that the government has used \$1 million of Western Power's money to improperly run an advertising campaign on behalf of the Premier of Western Australia. That is an entirely improper activity. The Premier stands condemned for that; it is entirely wrong for the Premier to use Western Power's money to promote himself.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Wanneroo, I call you to order for the first time. I want to hear the member for Cannington.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Further, there has been an attempt to cover up this document. The member for Girrawheen made two separate freedom of information applications—one to Western Power and one to the Premier's office. This document was discovered by Western Power, but hidden by the Premier's office. That is an unlawful act by the Premier's office, and it reminds me of when the Minister for Energy deliberately withheld documents about the solar panels debacle. On that occasion, the Minister for Energy withheld a document that was embarrassing to him. Is it not funny that even after an appeal by the member for Girrawheen, in which other documents were discovered, that this document continues to be withheld? That is an unlawful act. I will make a point about unlawful acts. Last week, the Premier stood in this chamber and criticised the state's school teachers and claimed that they were acting unlawfully by taking strike action. Where are the Premier's standards, when an unlawful act has been undertaken in his office?

The last document I want to talk about is a very interesting one that, perhaps, highlights one of the issues. It is an email from Dixie Marshall to a range of people in which she makes the point, I quote —

And for the uninitiated, remember three little letters—foi

This freedom of information application did not discover the phone calls or the SMS messages that took place. This is a serious issue, and instead of acting in the interests of Western Australians, the government took \$1 million from Western Power—a government trading enterprise—and used it to promote the Premier and to try to cover-up that it was not properly prepared for the bushfire season. The government spent \$1 million convincing Western Australians that things had changed, and then, when 55 houses burned down, government members gave themselves a pat on the back. That is what this matter of public interest is about; it is a disgrace and every person involved—the Minister for Energy is exempt because he was not involved—should be condemned.

Today, I was asked about Ben Roberts-Smith's involvement with this campaign. Ben Roberts-Smith is a great Australian, and he was entitled to be involved in this campaign. That is not what this is about. This is a criticism of the manipulation, dishonesty and deceit of Dixie Marshall and her coterie of friends pinched from the media, who work in a range of offices across government at taxpayers' expense and who do this sort of thing regularly. The opposition has all of the documents showing how they manipulated this campaign. We have other campaigns that other members will talk about. It is a disgrace, and the government needs to be honest and tell us why it has acted improperly in this way.

MS M.M. QUIRK (Girrawheen) [3.17 pm]: Thinking of the “Are You Bushfire Ready?” campaign, I am reminded of the metaphor —

Mrs L.M. Harvey interjected.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: Does the Minister for Police have a problem?

I am reminded of the metaphor of a frog that is put into cold water that is brought to the boil. Whereas a frog put straight into boiling water will jump out immediately, the hypothesis is that if the frog is put into cold water that is then brought to the boil, the frog will not notice the change of temperature and stay in the water and be boiled to death. So it is with the government's record of bushfire management. This summer, the Western Australian public was told that whilst there have been some losses, 400 houses have been saved, and hardly anyone questioned that. Everyone thought that was an acceptable state of affairs and was prepared to say that the losses were inevitable. But losses should not be inevitable; the truth of the matter is that since the Barnett government came to power, there have been unprecedented property losses. My rough calculations show that over 225 houses, hundreds of thousands of hectares of pastoral —

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Ms E. Evangel interjected.

The SPEAKER: Did you want to take a point of order, member for Perth?

Ms E. Evangel: I just wanted to ask the member for Midland.

The SPEAKER: You do not have to ask the member for Midland anything. I will ask the member for Midland.

Ms M.M. QUIRK: Thank you very much. Two hundred and twenty-five houses and hundreds of thousands of hectares of grazing land, pastoral properties, crops and forest plantations have been destroyed by fire. Valuable and critical infrastructure, such as power poles, has also been destroyed. The spin pervades; if the opposition even queries incident management, it is accused of a full-frontal attack on our brave and courageous firefighters. Under this government, major incident reviews are clouded in secrecy and reviews are only released after months of robust debate and wrangling under freedom of information that is usually heavily redacted. Accounts of what has actually happened are inconvenient when they conflict with the key lines. Members will be well aware from what the member for Cannington has said that \$1 million was spent on the “Are You Bushfire Ready?” campaign. That funding was sourced from Western Power after the director of government media found what she called a “pot of money”.

Was the expenditure justified? What gaps did it seek to fill in the existing public awareness campaigns? If it was about disseminating key safety information to the community, why were some media outlets snubbed and others given the inside running? How would that campaign galvanise people into action when other campaigns have failed? The advertisements themselves point viewers to a hastily created website that contains nothing other than what was already on the Department of Fire and Emergency Services website. The checklist on the website did not even include the necessity for private property owners with power to maintain their poles, one of which, of course, we now know was the cause of the Parkerville fire. Could that money have been better used in mitigation efforts? We know the whole campaign will be evaluated by Metrix Consulting, and the Premier has undertaken to make the report of that evaluation public. Let us face it, we know through freedom of information access to documents that the campaign was not about better informing the public but about pre-emptively deflecting blame or criticism that the government might face that it should have done more to avert disaster or loss of property or life in the forthcoming fire season. In the same way that the frontman for the campaign in the early mock-ups was wearing his full military uniform and medals, then dressed in civilian clothes and finally asked to roll up his sleeves so we could see his full display of tattoos, so too did the campaign evolve. The member for Cannington has already talked about this. I want to make the point that if this was a public information campaign, why did the campaign brief, which was marked “Strictly Confidential”, include a statement that, “It is critical that any advertising creative for this campaign MUST NOT be seen to distract from the information communicated in public awareness campaigns by DFES ...” The briefing notes headed “Desired tone of voice” state —

Firm insistence on the fact that people have an obligation to manage their own risk and to take these issues seriously.

Genuine and Authoritative WITHOUT sounding condescending.

As we have heard, elsewhere in the documents we see the campaign referred to as the “Premier’s bushfire ad campaign”. We also know that despite what Hon Peter Collier told the upper house, the advertising did not undergo the full tender process. Interestingly, we have heard from the member for Cannington that the director of government media did not earn her substantial salary, which I understand might have been increased recently, by negotiating any good deal for the government media purchases. If this is all above board, why does the government media director warn her colleagues, “remember three little letters—foi”?

The fundamental point of advertising like this is to have people sit up and take notice if they believe there is a real likelihood that a bushfire will affect them, in much the same way as drink-driving advertisements focus on anytime, anywhere. But in this campaign, the government did not make people aware of where the high-risk fire zones were. In fact, last year the minister refused to do that, saying that it would encourage domestic terrorism and might affect real estate values. People cannot make informed decisions if they are not given key knowledge. I was told by firefighters who were at the Banjup fires that they could not believe how many people upon evacuation said they did not think it would happen to them, so, clearly, the advertising campaign was not successful in that regard.

As I said earlier—I will conclude on this note—if it was a legitimate public awareness campaign, the website would contain a wealth of information, including information to assist the migrant community. As we know, approximately 270 dialects and languages are spoken in Western Australia. If it was about getting the message through, surely we could have expected more information rather than just T-shirts and stunts and the enlistment of footy players, though brilliant, to parrot key lines.

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The cynicism and lack of good faith in this campaign are no more starkly demonstrated than in the email we heard about objectifying the war hero Ben Roberts-Smith. A million dollars is a lot of money; it could have been spent, for example, on the Juvenile and Family Fire Awareness program, which gets a measly \$25 000 towards working to ensure firebugs do not offend, or on the provision of a coordinator for training in the south west for bush fire brigades, which are in the high-risk zone and cannot currently get training.

DR K.D. HAMES (Dawesville — Acting Premier) [3.24 pm]: I am very disappointed that the Labor Party wanted to discuss three issues—the “Are You Bushfire Ready?” campaign, the royalties for regions program and the Bigger Picture campaign—but has chewed up 25 minutes of its time dealing with just the bushfire ready campaign. I will deal largely with the area for which I am responsible, the Bigger Picture campaign, which we launched on Sunday. I was very pleased to hear the member for Girrawheen talk about websites that have a wealth of information. That is what that Bigger Picture campaign has. It refers to the \$7 billion worth of government infrastructure spending over more than 80 projects across this state. The website goes into detail about what is available in all our hospitals throughout the state and the construction undertaken by this government and previous governments. I am sure the member for Rockingham, for example, would be interested in looking at that website. I hope he has done that already and clicked on Rockingham hospital and seen the facilities available at that hospital, when it was built, when it was opened and how much was spent on it. Similarly, he can see information on hospitals throughout the state. People trying to give the impression that this website is an advertisement promoting just this government are seriously wrong.

Mr M. McGowan interjected.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition!

Dr K.D. HAMES: This is advertising a website.

Mr M. McGowan interjected.

Dr K.D. HAMES: It advertises a website.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, I call you to order for the first time. We have heard this debate in relative silence and I want it to continue.

Dr K.D. HAMES: This is about the promotion of a website that provides information to people about what is happening in their area.

It became more obviously necessary during the previous election campaign when people dishonestly put out the view in Midland that the Midland hospital was not a public hospital and that people in that area would have to pay for services if they were going to that hospital.

Several members interjected.

Dr K.D. HAMES: It was clearly wrong and clearly sought to give people the wrong impression about that hospital. In fact, elderly ladies from nursing homes rang me to ask us to please reassure them —

Ms J.M. Freeman interjected.

Dr K.D. HAMES: — because they were being told that if they go to that hospital —

Ms J.M. Freeman interjected.

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

Dr K.D. HAMES: The end of that sentence, for Hansard, is “we will have to pay”.

Ms J.M. Freeman interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Mirrabooka, I call you to order now for the second time.

Dr K.D. HAMES: This is a fantastic campaign. I give great credit to Dixie Marshall, who has been instrumental in creating this campaign to tell people about what is in their area; what people can expect to find in Fiona Stanley Hospital, for example; what services are available; and where they might go. It is a website that can be expanded in the future.

Mr R.H. Cook interjected.

Dr K.D. HAMES: We hardly spoke at all when you were on your feet.

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

Dr K.D. HAMES: People will be able to look at the Fiona Stanley Hospital site, for example, and see what is being built, the services that will be available, locations on a map, and even traffic conditions to see how to get to that hospital and to others. It describes the fantastic health infrastructure that will be available across the state.

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Members talked about savings by this government on advertising since we have been in government. I can tell members that the latest analysis shows that we have saved more than \$100 million in government advertising spending since we have been in government. That is a fantastic effort in reducing spending by this state. To give some examples of the cost —

Mr M. McGowan: If you've saved so much money, why have you blown debt so badly?

The SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, I call you to order for the second time.

Dr K.D. HAMES: The answer to that is that the money we have saved has gone back into health, as opposed to what the previous Labor government did, which was to spend that money on advertising to promote itself. I will get onto the Leader of the Opposition's personal role in that as soon as I have finished going through the savings.

In the last year of the previous Labor government, the spend on government advertising was \$36.6 million. Our figures start at 2010–11, and the amount for that year was \$22.4 million; for 2011–12, it was \$24 million and for 2012–13 it was \$24.5 million. That is \$24.5 million compared with \$36.6 million—a saving of \$12 million on 2007–08. That was seven years ago; members may have noticed that we have experienced a little inflation since then. If we compare those figures in real terms, the Labor Party's spend seven years ago in its last year in government was \$36.6 million, and our spend last year was \$24.5 million. The former government boosted its advertising spend in the two years leading up to the 2008 election; it pumped in an extra \$5 million in each of those years. What was our spend in the year before the 2013 election? It was \$24 million. That was almost no different from the previous year, which was \$22.4 million. We have been able to keep advertising spending down, as we committed to do before the last election.

I turn now to particular areas of spending reduction. For advertising spending, we are down 35.7 per cent, and for market research, 47.3 per cent. For polling—something that the Labor government used to do all the time, to see if it was doing the right thing because it could never make up its mind and just do something—the decrease was 98.1 per cent, from \$1.248 million to \$23 000. There was a reduction of 24.7 per cent for direct mail; 49.7 per cent for media advertising organisations; and 44.2 per cent for total expenditure.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Dr K.D. HAMES: The opposition is arcing up about spending and where it came from, but let us look at where the former Labor government spent all its advertising campaign money. I have some great examples. We should not forget that the Labor Party had a special committee to look after advertising campaign expenditure. Was it Sharryn Jackson who was parachuted into that position? I heard it said earlier that the committee was chaired by Eric Ripper, but the membership of that committee included Mark McGowan, Sheila McHale and Alannah MacTiernan. They were the members of the committee that was there to look at the then government's advertising, and the rule was that when expenditure got to a certain level, it had to be ticked off by the committee and then referred to cabinet. That is what led to that \$36 million spend in the last year of the Labor government.

I have an article from *The Sunday Times* by Paul Lampathakis dated 10 February 2008, titled “Bid to ‘buy’ Labor win”. It reads, in part —

Treasurer Eric Ripper, as chairman of the Cabinet sub-committee on communication —

That was the advertising committee —

has “urgently” —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Warnbro, I call you to order for the third time.

Dr K.D. HAMES: The Labor Party clearly does not want to hear this. It is going to continually interrupt so that I am unable to get out this information. I will start again —

Treasurer Eric Ripper, as chairman of the Cabinet sub-committee on communication has “urgently” asked the expenditure review committee, which he chairs, for \$5.25 million for the first half of this year and a further \$10.75 million until July next year.

Government sources said the money was to be spent on “strategic advertising campaigns”.

That is \$16 million on strategic advertising campaigns. I have a couple of examples from that advertising campaign. As then Minister for Racing and Gaming, Minister McGowan approved the Enjoy a Change of Scene campaign—what a great title! What was the cost of that? It was \$1 million. That is very much the same as what we are talking about. I can tell members that the \$1 million that is being spent on health as part of the government's Bigger Picture campaign —

Mr M. McGowan interjected.

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Dr K.D. HAMES: I will get to all of them; the Leader of the Opposition might find some others he is interested in, as well.

Mr M. McGowan interjected.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition! I call you to order for the third time.

Dr K.D. HAMES: The \$1 million for the Bigger Picture campaign is coming out of the budgets for the infrastructure that we are creating, on which we are spending a record \$7 billion in funding and which has a communications component. That communications component is funding the \$1 million Bigger Picture campaign.

Let us get onto some other advertising campaigns of the previous Labor government. Mr McGowan, again, approved \$2.4 million for an education campaign; then Minister for Police John Kobelke approved \$3.2 million for a police and community safety campaign; then Minister for Health Jim McGinty approved \$2 million for a health campaign; and \$1.5 million was approved for the On the Move campaign —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Kwinana, I call you to order for the second time. If members who have not yet spoken wish to speak, there is time at hand, but if they continually shout out, they put themselves at peril.

Dr K.D. HAMES: The last one was approved by Alannah MacTiernan for the On the Move campaign. Further campaigns included an anti-hoon campaign, with a total budget of \$941 000; an emergency departments campaign, for a total of \$2.205 million; a safer vehicle campaign, for \$1.5 million; and a nurse recruitment campaign for a total of \$1.285 million. Those are just some of the campaigns that were run by the former Labor government. I can well remember when we were in opposition that the then Minister for Health Jim McGinty started placing full-page advertisements every fortnight in local newspapers across the state, to put out information about health. We raised that as an issue and asked why the government was doing it; the answer was that it was for an information campaign. That is not much different from the information campaign that is being put out through Bigger Picture. I wonder how much that health campaign cost. That advertising was first done in 2007. Hon Paul Omodei put a question to the then Minister for Health about the campaign and what it would cost. The answer was that the campaign would include 50 fortnightly advertisements through Community Newspaper Group over two years at a cost of just under \$1 million. That was \$470 000-plus each year, once again remembering that that is in 2007 dollars, not 2014 dollars.

The opposition is criticising the atrocious spending of this government on promoting health, distributing information to the community, and trying to let people know how to better protect themselves from the ravages of bushfires. It is criticising the fact that we are promoting an information campaign that includes this government's massive \$7 billion investment in health, but also includes things that were done in the previous Labor government's time in office. The Labor Party has the gall to label that expenditure as political, when it defended ad nauseam its own spending when in government. It had a special committee to coordinate that spend and it called on massive amounts in its last year of government.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Girrawheen, I call you to order for the second time.

Dr K.D. HAMES: What did it need those massive amounts for? It spent it on promotion that was political and designed entirely to get the Labor Party re-elected in 2008. It was an absolute joke.

Mr R.H. Cook interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Kwinana!

Mr F.M. Logan interjected.

Dr K.D. HAMES: Well, no, we did not last year. If the member goes back again and looks at the spend of our government in the lead-up to the last election, he will see that it was \$22 million. For the Labor Party, it was more than \$36 million—a difference of \$14 million. The opposition has no idea on this issue; it is clutching at straws. At the recent Senate election we saw the lowest Labor vote in the history of Western Australia, and it is now desperate to find something to talk about. This rubbish is all it could find.

MR J.M. FRANCIS (Jandakot — Minister for Emergency Services) [3.39 pm]: I want to talk about the “Are You Bushfire Ready?” campaign, but before I do, it reminded me of another piece of great propaganda that turned up in my letterbox at the start of 2008—a multiple-page, glossy-cover booklet with an artist's impression of Fiona Stanley Hospital. It was even shrink-wrapped in plastic so it did not get wet in the letterbox! I cannot imagine how much that would have cost. That was just before the 2008 election. Seriously, if members opposite want to talk about government advertising rorts, that one would have to be at the top of the wazza!

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I am almost at a loss to know where to start after listening to the gobbledegook from the members for Cannington and Girrawheen. We all know that the member for Cannington is the number one ticketholder of the shoppies union in this place. We all know that the shoppies union hates successful women. Members only have to ask Louise Pratt if they do not believe me. What we heard from the member for Cannington was a long, berating, personal attack on the head of government media because, at the end of the day, he cannot stand the idea of women being successful. If members opposite want to talk about the “Are You Bushfire Ready?” campaign, if they want to stick to the facts and if they want to play the ball instead of the woman, in this case, I am more than happy to do that. The government spent almost \$1 million on the “Are You Bushfire Ready?” campaign. I do not remember it being the Premier’s “Are You Bushfire Ready?” campaign. I do not remember the Premier at all in the ads. I do not remember seeing the Premier at the launch. I do not remember the Premier having any promotion opportunities from the “Are You Bushfire Ready?” campaign whatsoever. The opposition asked why the Department of Fire and Emergency Services was not the sole agency involved in this. The answer is that it is not the sole agency involved in bushfire risk mitigation. There is also the Department of Parks and Wildlife and Western Power, which has significant infrastructure through high bushfire-risk areas. A number of different agencies are involved in this, which is why a number of agencies were involved in the advertising campaign. It makes perfect sense.

Let us look at the results. At the end of the day a dollar figure on advertising is not the best measure to gauge the success of a campaign. I have some statistics off the government website. Essentially, all the print, TV and radio media, and all the promotion was directed at people in high bushfire-risk areas, most of whom know that they live in one. They just have to look outside their windows every day and say, “Trees around my house; I live next to a park; you know what I think? I might be in a high bushfire-risk area!” It is not rocket science. We only have to look at the results of that campaign, which was to drive people to the areyouready.wa.gov.au website to download the “Prepare. Act. Survive.” brochure. The figures are overwhelming: over 27 000 people visited that website. In December and early January—before Parkerville—37 per cent of visitors downloaded the “Prepare. Act. Survive.” brochure. I said at the time that it was disappointing that it required a disaster to trigger more people into action and to share in the responsibility—I will get to that—but in the 36 hours after Parkerville, that figure rose to 67 per cent. So, 37 per cent were downloading before; after Parkerville it was 67 per cent. That is almost a doubling in the number of people downloading the brochure and the checklist—I also said it until I was blue in the face—and going through and making sure that their house was that little bit more ready in case a bushfire came through.

Of course the people of Banjup did not think it would happen to them. I know the people of Banjup pretty well. I am actually in the volunteer fire brigade out in Banjup. I know exactly what was going on. I will tell members something else that was clearly noticeable from someone who was on the ground in Parkerville and in Banjup: following the Parkerville tragedy, in which 57 houses were lost—not 55—the people of Banjup were clearly far better prepared than the people of Parkerville. I am not saying that the people of Parkerville were not entirely unprepared. Some people had done their bit; some people had not. At the end of the day it is the responsibility of private landowners to do their bit. That was the key message the government tried to get out.

What else do we know? Eighty per cent of the visitors to the website were actually first-time visitors. It was not just the same people clicking onto the website. Twenty-one thousand people were better informed about their responsibility as property owners and what they could do to prepare their homes in case of bushfire. The print portion of the campaign had an 80 per cent “recall” rate; that is, 80 per cent of the people who saw the ads on either TV or in print recalled the key message. These figures are the highest in areas, surprisingly, with the highest risk, such as the Perth hills and the south west. The TV component had an 83 per cent recall rate. Again, the bulk of this came from the south west of the state. An independent survey of over 1 200 respondents proved that 92 per cent of those in the Perth hills agreed that preparing properties for the bushfire season was very important. Everyone knew that if they owned land in that area, it was their responsibility; therefore, obviously, the advertising campaign was far reaching and very successful.

I want to put that in the context of how much the former Labor Party spent on advertising for bushfire awareness when it was last in government—\$21 000. It budgeted \$24 000 in 2007–08, but it spent a measly \$21 000. This government has done so much more to prepare the state for bushfire risk. One only has to go out and ask any person on the street what the Department of Fire and Emergency Services is like now, how much it has evolved, how much has been reformed from the old Fire and Emergency Services Authority, how much better the resources are, how much newer the trucks are, how much better the crew protection is out there, how better trained both volunteer and career firefighters are —

Mr P.B. Watson: It was really good in Albany!

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Mr J.M. FRANCIS: They are out there, and we are doing more than has ever been done before in the state. Just look at the helicopter firefighting fleet —

Mr P.B. Watson interjected.

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

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: That was a great interjection, member for Albany. Do not talk about Boorabbin! Do not talk about that. Silence, obviously!

The SPEAKER: I do not want any interjections across the chamber, please—through the Chair.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: They are happy to throw it out but they are not happy to take it back, obviously!

The point is that we have done more to prepare the state and to bring our emergency services up to the twenty-first century than has ever happened before in the history of Western Australia. As I said, we only have to look at the former Labor government's stingy spend on helicopter firefighting. The member for Midland boasted in here at the end of last year that the former Labor government invented helicopter firefighting! Its stingy spend on firefighting going into its fire seasons was less than \$2 million. This fire season we have probably spent over \$20 million. We have made a significant investment in helicopters because that is the quickest way to respond to significant bushfire occurrences.

We should also consider the fact that it is not the government itself that said, "One day we're going to have this massive 'Are You Ready?' campaign; we're going to promote the Premier." As I said, he did not even feature in the ads. Members need only refer to the State Emergency Management Committee's "Emergency Preparedness Report 2013", which I have in front of me. It is pretty simple stuff. SEMC does an outstanding job. It was something that was formed under this government, by the way, and is chaired by a very distinguished Western Australian, another successful woman—I am sure members opposite hate her—Kerry Sanderson, AO. She spoke about the need to send a message about shared responsibility. I am referring to the SEMC's report entitled "Emergency Preparedness Report 2013" —

Ms M.M. Quirk interjected.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: Interjections from the laziest member in the house —

The SPEAKER: Member for Girrawheen, I call you to order for the third time. Member for Armadale, I call you to order for the first time.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: The laziest member in the house cannot even make a contribution to the matter of public interest without reading it word for word! I refer to page 33, "Shared Responsibility". This is from 2013. The committee is referring to 2012.

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Cannington, I call you to order for the second time.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: As I said, they hate successful women.

I quote from the 2013 report —

The 2012 Emergency Preparedness Report identified the development of a shared responsibility ethos as a key objective in emergency management. Shared responsibility has —

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: He is like a rabid poodle, Mr Speaker! I repeat —

Shared responsibility has particular —

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Cannington, I call you to order for the third time. This is bogging down.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: I quote —

The 2012 Emergency Preparedness Report identified the development of a shared responsibility ethos as a key objective in emergency management. Shared responsibility has particular resonance in relation to bushfire because of the extent to which community actions can influence the frequency and outcomes of bushfire incidents. In the last 12 months, efforts have continued to raise landowner awareness both of bushfire risk and landholder responsibilities.

I am very proud of the "Are You Bushfire Ready?" campaign. I am very proud, because if we spend \$1 million and it makes two people take action in a bushfire-prone area and it saves two houses from burning, it has paid for

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itself. It saves lives, it saves property, it saves assets and it saves taxpayers' money. It is a brilliant investment to get more than 20 000 people who live in a bushfire-prone area of the state to download the checklist and take action to make sure that their properties are bushfire ready. We are very proud of that. If members opposite do not like that, that is their problem. At the end of the day, we stand by our advertising campaign; it was brilliant value for money for taxpayers. Members opposite should be ashamed for condemning it.

MR C.J. TALLENTIRE (Gosnells) [3.49 pm]: The Minister for Emergency Services has just spoken about the need to let people know about fire-prone areas. This is one of the prime recommendations in the Keelty report, yet the government has failed to deliver on it. It has failed to use the mechanisms indicated, such as using certificates of title to identify properties in fire-prone areas. He spoke about the expenditure of advertising dollars as a means to let people know. That is not an effective way to do it. That is all spin.

Mr A. Krsticevic interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Carine, if you want to make a contribution, put your name down. I think I have called you to order before. I call you for the first time.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: It is spin but no substance from this government. There has been a failure to deliver on the declaration of fire-prone areas and a failure to deliver on making sure that there is on-ground action —

Dr K.D. Hames interjected.

The SPEAKER: Acting Premier, I call you to order for the first time. I want to hear the member in silence. This is bogging down.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: There has been a failure to deliver on the sort of on-ground action that would help us reach our burn targets in an intelligent manner. This government has a target of some 200 000 hectares. That needs to be well targeted to those areas near human dwellings where lives are at risk. It should not just involve burning in state forest; it needs to be properly done.

Mr A.P. Jacob interjected.

The SPEAKER: Minister for Environment, I call you to order for the first time. If you want to speak, put your name down.

Point of Order

Dr K.D. HAMES: The motion clearly refers to advertising campaigns as the key issue. The member obviously has little time and all he is talking about is prescribed burns. I have not heard him mention the word “advertising” once.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Clearly, this is about the manipulation of advertising about the prevention of bushfires.

Ms M.M. Quirk interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Girrawheen, points of order are supposed to be heard in silence.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Clearly, this is directed at bushfire-prevention spending, and the member's argument is quite in line with that. I think there is quite a tactic by the Acting Premier to try to disrupt what the member is saying, knowing that he has only a couple of minutes to speak.

The SPEAKER: I am not going to accept that point of order.

Debate Resumed

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: If we were really concerned about making sure that people were bushfire ready, the money from Western Power that was spent on an advertising campaign could have been much better spent in a practical sense, not just some notional advertising sense, to help people take on-ground action and understand whether they are responsible for the power poles on their property or whether Western Power is responsible for them. This government has not even tidied up documents about the power pole issue. There is some ambiguity about whether the meter box indicates where the responsibility begins or ends. This government has failed to get the message across. It has failed to take on-ground action. People are at risk from bushfires because of its failure to act.

MR M. MCGOWAN (Rockingham — Leader of the Opposition) [3.53 pm]: Due to the government's cowardice, I will rise.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr F.A. Alban interjected.

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The SPEAKER: Member for Swan Hills, you are not a prophet.

Mr M. McGOWAN: It is blatantly plain that government members miss the Premier and the member for Vasse. They cannot handle the debate without the Premier or the member for Vasse being present. It is also abundantly clear from the contribution of the member for Cannington that the government hid a document that would have been embarrassing had it been released. The government hid a document and, in hiding that document, it broke the law under the Freedom of Information Act. The only reason that document came to light is that two freedom of information requests were put in by the member for Girrawheen, and Western Power released the document that the Premier's office declined to release because it was embarrassing to the government. The government broke the law. This government is addicted to cover-ups. This government hides information that is embarrassing to it. As we have seen from recent events once again involving the member for Vasse, this government hides information and covers up embarrassing things.

Mr P.T. Miles interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Wanneroo, I do not want to hear any more. I call you to order for the second time. We are running out of time.

Mr M. McGOWAN: As we saw with the member for Vasse, the government hides information and covers up. The government hid this document from the FOI process, and it should be condemned for that. That is breaking the law at the highest level of government in this state merely because the document was embarrassing to it. Fortunately, through other means, the document came to public attention. The government and its spin doctors should be ashamed of and disgraced by that because we have seen it once again.

These advertisements are blatantly political. The health advertisements that I saw on television last night were blatantly political. There is no recruitment campaign. There is no campaign for applicants for any particular process. The government's sole excuse is that it directs people to a website. I will give the government a tip. The government has a thousand websites. Does it run a \$1 million campaign to direct people to each of those websites? No, it does not. It is running this campaign to dig itself out of the current situation it is in and it is spending taxpayers' money to do so. This is blatantly political on a scale that I have never seen before. It is a style of advertisement that is clearly political.

I will briefly refer to what we also saw in the case of the National Party and the royalties for regions campaign. I want members to hear this.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Minister for Corrective Services, I call you to order for the first time. Member for North West Central, I call you to order for the second time.

Mr M. McGOWAN: I want members to hear this. In the lead-up to the state election, the government spent half a million dollars of taxpayers' money to advertise the royalties for regions program. In the three months prior to that, \$5 000 was spent, and in the period after that, no money was spent. For three months just before the state election there was a deluge of political advertising, and we must bear in mind how much that buys in the country. The government is addicted to spin, it misuses taxpayers' money, it breaks the law through the Premier's office and it is addicted to cover-ups. It is a disgraceful, dysfunctional and dishonest government.

MR D.T. REDMAN (Warren–Blackwood — Minister for Regional Development) [3.57 pm]: I want to make a couple of points. Firstly, the contribution that the Leader of the Opposition made to the matter of public interest about all things regional was made in the last two minutes of the debate. He has a substantial challenge ahead of him. He has to fill the seats from that side of the chamber right over to the seats on this side of the corridor. I am sure that he will not do that by having the subject of advertising as the lead issue in the MPI of the week, because the government gets the chance to highlight the shortcomings of his time in government and the significant increase in the cost of advertising in what was clearly a politicised campaign from the Labor Party at the time. I thought the Minister for Health made a fantastic run on the savings that have been made by this government compared with those made during the Leader of the Opposition's time in government. The Leader of the Opposition talked about hiding things from FOI. Nothing is hidden more than when advertising is decided on in a subcommittee of cabinet! The Leader of the Opposition can hardly stand and speak with any credibility about making all things public.

Advertising is a legitimate expenditure of government. I think that both the opposition and the government recognise that. There are really two core issues that can be raised on behalf of the public of Western Australia—which is why we are in this place—about that spending. The first is the cost of advertising. I think that this side of the chamber highlighted the opposition's shortcomings when it was in government compared with this government. Given that \$100 million has been saved in advertising across the board, that argument does not stack up. The other issue is around politicising the campaign. I do not accept in any measure the argument of

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politicising around the advertising that this government has done, given that we are trying to highlight the facts of what is happening in a range of government programs. It is quite legitimate to inform the community about where taxpayers' funds are being spent and what government policy is for a whole range of areas because these are key things that affect people. It is quite legitimate to explain to members of the public where they can access information should they want to find out about all those things that affect people.

The Leader of the Opposition in his last two minutes touched on royalties for regions. Since 2008 to February this year, \$4.2 billion in royalties for regions funding has been acquitted on 3 500 programs. It is making a significant contribution to infrastructure. Pilbara Cities is a classic example of that. I remember the past member for Pilbara, Hon Tom Stephens, banging on at the back of the chamber about what should or should not happen in his area. I am sure that if he went back there now—he would have to leave Perth to go to see it—he would recognise the changes from that program. We have been opening up the Ord, thereby opening up agriculture in the member for Kimberley's electorate. She is probably the only person on the other side of the house who could speak with any sort of authority on regional Western Australia, because members opposite are very quickly running out of authority in what they can talk about in respect of regional Western Australia. When we look at all the other programs for health and education services, we see key things such as the patient assisted travel scheme and the \$500 fuel card for pensioners in regional Western Australia. These are key issues that are important to people who live in regional Western Australia because they need access to core services that are fundamentally important to them. When I doorknock—I still doorknock—from time to time, I come across —

Dr A.D. Buti: Where do you live? Do you live in Perth?

The SPEAKER: Member for Armadale, I call you to order for the second time. You can get the minister's address after this, if you want.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: From time to time, I come across a country age pensioner who is not aware that they can access the \$500 Country Age Pension Fuel Card, which helps give some equity to regional people based on the access to public transport that people who live in a city have. It certainly gives me a lot of pride to be part of a government that is able to deliver those sort of services. It highlights the importance of making the public aware of public policy settings of government and decisions that this government makes to support people who live in regional Western Australia.

Mr M. McGowan interjected.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: The Leader of the Opposition gave two minutes to that. I am sure that the Leader of the Opposition has seen the "Royalties For Regions: Progress Report July 2012–June 2013", which I am holding.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members! Leader of the Opposition, there is three minutes to go.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: There are 3 500 programs —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Kwinana, I call you to order for the third time. Member for Collie–Preston, I call you to order for the first time.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: There are 3 500 programs making a difference in Western Australia. It is important that we articulate to not only regional communities, but also the broader community the benefits of what is in excess of \$1 billion spent a year. The Leader of the Opposition talks about —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for West Swan, I call you to order for the third time.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: The Leader of the Opposition talked about an advertising campaign that at one point in time was costing nearly \$500 000. Given that we are talking about a program to support regional Western Australia that costs nearly \$1 billion a year, I do not think that is in excess. I do not think that the people in regional Western Australia will see that as being in excess.

In summary, this side of the house has highlighted cost savings in advertising to the people of Western Australia, significantly in contrast with what the opposition did when it was in government. Coordinating a message to inform people in regional Western Australia about the services that the government provides to people in Western Australia is important. Members opposite would not understand that because they are seriously running out of authority when it comes to all things regional. Let me talk about something as fundamental as fire preparedness. I live in a part of the world where there is fire risk —

Several members interjected.

Extract from *Hansard*
[ASSEMBLY — Tuesday, 8 April 2014]
p2233c-2246a

Mr Bill Johnston; Ms Margaret Quirk; Dr Kim Hames; Mr Joe Francis; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Speaker; Mr Mark McGowan; Mr Terry Redman

The SPEAKER: Member for Victoria Park, I call you to order for the first time. Member for Cockburn, I call you to order for the second time.

Mr D.T. REDMAN: Highlighting our collective responsibilities to respond to fire risk is fundamental. This is about the facts of the matter. The government is advertising to ensure that people have the facts. It is a far cry from what the opposition does. I come back to my first point: the Leader of the Opposition has a challenge to fill up the seats on that side of the chamber, and that will not happen by running a matter of public interest debate on this government's advertising.

Division

Question put and a division taken with the following result —

Ayes (18)

Ms L.L. Baker
Dr A.D. Buti
Mr R.H. Cook
Ms J. Farrer
Ms J.M. Freeman

Mr W.J. Johnston
Mr F.M. Logan
Mr M. McGowan
Ms S.F. McGurk
Mr M.P. Murray

Mr P. Papalia
Ms M.M. Quirk
Mrs M.H. Roberts
Ms R. Saffioti
Mr C.J. Tallentire

Mr P.B. Watson
Mr B.S. Wyatt
Mr D.A. Templeman (*Teller*)

Noes (32)

Mr P. Abetz
Mr F.A. Alban
Mr I.C. Blayney
Mr I.M. Britza
Mr G.M. Castrilli
Mr V.A. Catania
Mr M.J. Cowper
Ms M.J. Davies

Mr J.H.D. Day
Ms W.M. Duncan
Ms E. Evangel
Mr J.M. Francis
Mrs G.J. Godfrey
Mr B.J. Grylls
Dr K.D. Hames
Mrs L.M. Harvey

Mr C.D. Hatton
Mr A.P. Jacob
Dr G.G. Jacobs
Mr S.K. L'Estrange
Mr R.S. Love
Mr P.T. Miles
Ms A.R. Mitchell
Mr N.W. Morton

Dr M.D. Nahan
Mr D.C. Nalder
Mr J. Norberger
Mr D.T. Redman
Mr A.J. Simpson
Mr M.H. Taylor
Mr T.K. Waldron
Mr A. Krsticevic (*Teller*)

Pairs

Mr D.J. Kelly
Mr J.R. Quigley
Mr P.C. Tinley

Mr C.J. Barnett
Mr T.R. Buswell
Mr J.E. McGrath

Question thus negatived.