

BUSHFIRES — FUEL MANAGEMENT

Statement by Minister for Emergency Services

MR F.M. LOGAN (Cockburn — Minister for Emergency Services) [12.16 pm]: I would like to take this opportunity to inform the house about the release of the report “Summary of 2017–18 Fuel Reduction Activities in Western Australia”. This report is prepared annually by the Department of Fire and Emergency Services and provides the state’s most comprehensive summary of the planned burning and mechanical fuel reduction activities conducted by federal, state and local governments as well as private sector land managers to protect against damaging bushfires. The report contains data from 115 organisations, including 99 local governments, who performed in total 9.1 million hectares of planned burning and 65 000 hectares of mechanical fuel treatments. This is a 54 per cent increase in planned burning from 2016–17.

Mitigation activities are integral to preventing bushfires and improving the safety of the Western Australian community. The McGowan government has introduced historic reforms to the bushfire management sector. Bringing stakeholders together, strengthening volunteer relations and investing record funding in mitigation is at the heart of this government’s reforms. The reform package, which was announced in April 2018, included \$50 million to facilitate on-the-ground bushfire mitigation activities to be undertaken across Western Australia.

Importantly, the report found that 62 per cent of organisations relied on volunteer brigades, groups and units to some extent to undertake planned burning, signalling that volunteers are playing a greater role in undertaking mitigation works to improve the safety of our state.

Importantly, the report shows that responsibility for bushfire prevention is being shared, with approximately 75 per cent of organisations undertaking external engagement when planning and conducting their fuel management program; however, the report identified that seasonal and climatic conditions such as lower rainfall and a longer fire season in the south west will continue to challenge planned burning activities.

I would like to finish by acknowledging all those who have taken a proactive stance on preventing bushfires by managing their fuels. On the eve of what threatens to be a challenging bushfire season, this work is crucial to ensuring the safety of those living in bushfire-prone areas and the firefighters who will inevitably find themselves on the front line.