

REGIONAL DIGITAL COMMUNITY SAFETY RADIO NETWORK

463. Mr D.C. NALDER to the Minister for Police:

I note that the minister was recently in Geraldton to roll out the new digital communications network for WA Police and the Departments of Corrective Services and Fire and Emergency Services. Can the minister please inform the house how this new radio network will benefit the region, as well as the police officers and emergency staff working in it?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY replied:

I thank the member for Alfred Cove for this question. This project is indeed one of the great achievements of this government. This achievement has come out of royalties for regions with a \$94.5 million project to fund the community safety network—our regional radio network. Ultimately, this network will achieve far better communications between emergency services throughout the regions—that is, the WA Police, the Departments of Fire and Emergency Services and Corrective Services and the Fire and Rescue Service of Western Australia. The tranche of the project that was released —

The SPEAKER: A number of private meetings are going on in the chamber. Can members just listen to the minister's answer?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

Ms R. Saffioti interjected.

The SPEAKER: I call the member for West Swan to order for the first time.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: In Geraldton last week, I opened the second tranche of this project, which involves \$5.1 million of royalties for regions funds to expand our regional radio network by an additional 4 000 square kilometres, covering the area from Geraldton to Dongara, Greenough and out to Walkaway. The communication system that some of our emergency services workers have been putting up with in the regions has meant that it is not unheard of, for instance, when police officers attend crash scenes, for one police officer to secure the scene while the other officer drives to the top of a hill to try to get a radio connection to get the right emergency services support to assist them, such as an ambulance, additional police officers or the jaws of life. That is why this digital radio network is so important in the regions.

I understand that members opposite have no interest whatsoever in the expansion of our community safety network.

Mr W.J. Johnston: Boring again.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: However, in November 2012, we rolled out the first tranche of this project in Kalgoorlie–Boulder. This enables our officers to do a number of things. An example was given to me in Geraldton, and this was replicated late last year in Kalgoorlie. At the communications tower on the edge of town in Geraldton, a corrective services officer used a handheld radio to connect to Casuarina Prison to speak to the coordinator, and it was as though they were standing right next to each other. That kind of communication is exactly what is needed in the regions when we have a critical incident such as a bushfire, a flood emergency, a cyclone emergency or a road crash emergency. This reliable communications network is critical infrastructure. I am very pleased to say that the royalties for regions fund has contributed \$94.5 million to the expansion of this project, and I look forward to opening the next tranche that pushes us further north with this far better communication and connectivity for our emergency services.