

ENVIRONMENT — PRESCRIBED BURNING PROGRAM

5947. Hon Sally Talbot to the Minister for Mental Health representing the Minister for Environment

I refer to the revelation that the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) has only achieved 103,000 hectares of its annual prescribed burning target of 200,000 hectares for 2011–12 in the South West, and I ask —

- (1) How many fire-fighter staff will be deployed by DEC in the South West this fire season?
- (2) Of those —
 - (a) how many are seasonal workers;
 - (b) how many are DEC employees who only perform fire-fighter duties on a part-time basis;
 - (c) how many have been recruited in the past six months on a —
 - (i) seasonal basis; and
 - (ii) full-time basis?
- (3) How many fire-fighter personnel have left the employment of DEC in the past six months?
- (4) What is the estimate of the optimal number of fire-fighter's to adequately protect the South West and how is this calculated?

Hon HELEN MORTON replied:

- (1) Across its three south–west forest regions DEC is aiming to have available, by 1 December 2012, approximately 53 dedicated fire management officers and approximately 286 conservation employees. DEC conservation employees undertake a range of other duties, however fire management is their priority role. These numbers are supplemented by approximately 500 other DEC staff from the south–west and around the State who are also available to be deployed to undertake designated roles in incident management teams.
- (2)
 - (a) Approximately 82 conservation employees.
 - (b) Approximately 400.
 - (c)
 - (i) Twelve.
 - (ii) Seven.
- (3) Five.
- (4) The current total number of DEC personnel involved in fire suppression operations (over 800) is considered appropriate and includes new fire management positions and extensions to seasonal contracts achieved with additional fire management funding provided to DEC through the 2012/13 Budget.