

BUSHFIRES — PRESCRIBED BURNING PROGRAM — CROWN LAND

693. Hon NIGEL HALLETT to the minister representing the Minister for Environment:

- (1) What steps has the government taken to allow landholders to prepare and maintain permanent firebreaks on crown land bordering farming properties?
- (2) When does the minister intend to grant powers for land management agencies, fire authorities and bushfire volunteers to enter crown land for the purpose of extinguishing fires without fear of prosecution?
- (3) What immediate plans are there to increase the number of controlled burns on crown land?

Hon DONNA FARAGHER replied:

I thank the member for some notice of this question.

- (1)–(2) These questions should be directed to the Minister for Emergency Services.
- (3) The Department of Parks and Wildlife’s enhanced prescribed burning program was established following the O’Sullivan and Lower Hotham bushfires in January 2015. It is a four-year, \$20 million investment that began in 2015–16, funded through the royalties for regions program, with the aim of enhancing protection of south west communities from bushfire. The enhanced prescribed burning program has been integral to the department’s achievement of 154 149 hectares for 2015–16. The nominal annual 200 000 hectare target may well have been achieved but for early and unexpected autumn rainfall in 2016, which significantly reduced burning opportunities. As a result, more than 40 000 hectares of prescribed burning planned for May 2016 has now been postponed until spring 2016. Despite these prohibitive weather conditions, the associated preparatory works for these prescribed burns and others planned for 2016–17 have resulted in the completion of more than 720 kilometres of burn boundary preparation and burn security works. This means that the department is well prepared for the 2016–17 prescribed burning program.