

BUSHFIRE MITIGATION

1037. Mrs R.M.J. CLARKE to the Minister for Emergency Services:

Before I ask my question, I want to thank all volunteers and community members fighting the catastrophic fires in New South Wales and Queensland, and also send my best wishes to the Waroona volunteers who are getting ready for deployment from my electorate of Murray–Wellington.

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's commitment to doing everything it possibly can to make bushfire-prone communities safer ahead of what is expected to be a warmer and drier bushfire season. Can the minister update the house on the significant investment this government has made in preparing for this bushfire season?

Mr F.M. LOGAN replied:

I thank the member for Murray–Wellington for that question. She is someone who knows all too well about the dangers of bushfires, given her electorate. I also acknowledge the unwavering support the member has for volunteers in her electorate.

In preparing for this year's bushfire season, of course, one of the critical things, in fact, one of the most critical things, is mitigation—preparing well before the bushfire season. As members well know—I have spoken of this in this house before—the McGowan government has committed \$35 million to perform mitigation on unallocated crown land and \$15 million for a mitigation activity fund to support local governments. That is unheard of across Australia. That is the largest investment made in mitigation anywhere in Australia. I can inform the house that 26 local governments have got their bushfire risk mitigation plans up and running, and they will receive \$6.81 million for 856 treatment activities over the next few weeks. They include mechanical, chemical, fire tracks and a whole series of other mitigation activities. I inform the house that all of the funding that has been made available to both the Department of Fire and Emergency Services and local governments has led to more than 1 000 mitigation activities and treatments being undertaken already.

I just inform the house about the volunteer briefings, and support as well, in preparation for the bushfire season. On Saturday, I attended the preseason bushfire briefing at Optus Stadium for all the volunteer captains and brigade unit managers. That included the season outlook from the Bureau of Meteorology, an update on the air fleet and also the resources available. It gave us an opportunity to thank them before the bushfire season and wish them all the very best.

I turn to technology. This year, the aerial fleet will have 38 aircraft across the two government agencies. Just recently, I was down at Jandakot to look at the technology we have available. That includes a new line scanner on a new King Air aircraft. We have infrared on helicopters, so we have forward-looking infrared technology. We have line-scanning technology. That line-scanning technology feeds straight into a geospatial information system, mapping systems, that is virtually instantly available to firefighters on the ground. We have absolutely up-to-date technology available.

I turn to community engagement and advertising. We will be spending \$1 million on preseason advertising and then right the way through the bushfire season on advertising about keeping people safe. That will be the "I Am Fire" campaign, which we ran last year. I have already spoken to the house about how successful it has been. We are going to tweak it a little bit so we keep the theme the same as last year but try to get the message home to people about taking responsibility for their own safety. Of course, that is what it is all about. At the end of the day, we can do the mitigation, we can have the technology, we can have the equipment, we can have the volunteers and the firefighters on the ground, but, ultimately, at the end of the day, we have to have people who live in bushfire-prone areas taking responsibility for their own safety. We have seen that in New South Wales and Queensland very, very clearly over the last few days. We have to get people to understand the message. People should have a fire chat with their family and their friends. They should download the bushfire plan from the Department of Fire and Emergency Services website. People living in a high bushfire-prone area should continue to monitor the danger. They should go to the Emergency WA website, go to the Facebook site of the Department of Fire and Emergency Services and listen to the radio if there is a fire in their area. Those are the things that we are pleading for people to do to keep themselves and their family safe this bushfire season.