

BUSHFIRES IN PAST YEAR — STATISTICS

1368. Hon Nigel Hallett to the Minister for Energy representing the Minister for Emergency Services

With reference to the 7 000 bushfires contained in the last year, I ask —

- (1) How many of the fires were, —
 - (a) under one hectare;
 - (b) between one and 10 hectares; and
 - (c) over 100 hectares?
- (2) In each of the above cases, what proportion of the fires were controlled by, —
 - (a) metropolitan brigades;
 - (b) volunteer bushfire brigades;
 - (c) Department of Environment and Conservation personnel; and
 - (d) other persons?
- (3) How many of Fire and Emergencies Services Authority (FESA) personnel have bushfire field experience?
- (4) What is the present cost of employing FESA staff in rural areas?
- (5) Are members of volunteer bushfire brigades invited to FESA training courses?
- (6) If yes to (5), who chooses the participants — FESA, the concerned Local Government body or the bushfire brigades?

Hon PETER COLLIER replied:

- (1)-(2) A total of 6959 bush, grass or scrub fires were recorded during 2008-09.

The number of fires where "controlled by" is defined as the service responsible for providing Primary response is as follows:

- Bush Fire Service — 1502;
- Career Fire and Rescue Service — 3998;
- Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service — 1234;
- Volunteer Emergency Service — 125;
- Volunteer Fire Service — 50;
- Private — 20; and
- Other — 30.

Unfortunately due to the time restraints it is not possible to interrogate the fire management data in which to provide the level of detail required.

- (3) All of FESA's Career and Volunteer personnel are engaged in controlling thousands of bushfires around the State each year. FESA's personnel have extensive and long standing experience in fire management activity gained through controlling incidents over many decades.

FESA's extensive expertise in bushfire management has been recognised by the Victorian fire authorities who have invited FESA to train Victorian staff in Major Incident Management for Incident Controllers prior to the fire season.

- (4) The present cost of employing FESA staff in rural areas is approximately \$17.65 million.
- (5) Yes.
- (6) Annual calendars of training courses drawn from the Volunteer Firefighter Training Program (VFTP) are made available to volunteer bushfire brigades on a regional basis. Individuals are able to nominate through their brigade captains, and are then recommended and prioritised by both their local Chief Bush Fire Control Officer and FESA manager/supervisor. Prioritisation to participate is based on brigade profiles, which identify the level of trained volunteers required in each brigade to enable it to deal safely and effectively with the kind of incidents likely to arise in its area of response.