

COMMUNICATIONS CAPABILITIES — ESPERANCE

**1357. Hon RICK MAZZA to the minister representing the Minister for Emergency Services:**

I refer to the 12 November 2020 *Farm Weekly* article titled “Govt agrees with most fire recommendations” in which the minister said that the state government would seek to undertake a review of communications capabilities in the Esperance region and investigate flexible and mobile solutions that provide digital radio communications and enhanced wi-fi and phone coverage. He added that the state government recognised that current technology was limited in its capacity to service growing demand.

- (1) When will the review into Esperance’s communications capabilities commence?
- (2) How long will the review last?
- (3) In the meantime, what is the government doing to improve communications capabilities in the Esperance region?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:**

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question.

- (1) The review and identification for an additional radio repeater site in the Esperance north east region is currently underway.
- (2) The review is scheduled for completion in June 2021, with works to commence in the 2021–22 financial year.
- (3) The state government is enhancing emergency communications networks across the state. In partnership with the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, an additional radio repeater was installed at Peak Charles in June 2020 to improve radio communications in the northern part of the Esperance local government area. The Department of Fire and Emergency Services is testing upgrading mobile satellite capabilities to improve communications in remote areas.

The commonwealth government has primary responsibility for telecommunications. The state government has raised with the commonwealth the need for improved telecommunications in WA. DFES is currently working with NBN and the Strengthening Telecommunications Against Natural Disasters program to install satellite-based wi-fi services at 21 community evacuation centres, local government buildings and emergency services buildings in high-risk isolated communities by December 2020, with a further 55 locations across the state to receive satellite services in 2021.