

BUSH FIRES AMENDMENT BILL 2022

Second Reading

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [4.06 pm]: Prior to question time, I was speaking on the Bush Fires Amendment Bill. I had come to that difficult part of the equation when we try to fill in a minute or two, so I strayed a little ahead of myself in my notes. I think I said that the bill will provide for the current fire danger system to lose two of the current indicators. I said one of those was the extreme indicator; in fact, that is not correct. The indicators will become moderate, high, extreme and catastrophic—moderate being green, high being yellow, extreme being orange and red being catastrophic. In fact, the current system has six indicators. They are low to moderate, being green; high, which is blue; very high, which is yellow; severe, which is orange; extreme, which is red; and catastrophic, which is red and black, so there will be some rationalisation of the numbers.

It is very cold in here. I am struggling to keep warm.

The bill is being brought on here in August. I am looking at a press release that was put on the Department of Fire and Emergency Services website on 12 July saying that the new fire danger ratings would launch on 1 September 2022. That is interesting, because that means it will have to progress pretty rapidly through the stages of the houses for that time line to be met. I guess there is an imperative there, because we know there will be an education campaign and people have to become used to the system. I am looking at some of the material that has already been produced, and, having just received a number of rates notices in the last week, they all seem to contain the same sort of information. The information is being put out there in the hope and expectation that this legislation will pass Parliament in good order. I am happy to report to the minister representing the Minister for Emergency Services that the opposition is supportive of the legislation. We are not seeking to in any way hold up the bill and we understand that if it is going to be in place in time for people to be educated on the changes, it is necessary to, as quickly as possible, put this bill through the parliamentary process.

I do not think that the bill itself is particularly complex, but briefings and discussions raised a number of issues, which I will put to the minister down the track. Although the changes to the legislation are not great, there will be a whole raft of differences in the way the fire risk will be assessed, including different fire districts and a different index of measurement. All that will have ramifications for everybody as they learn the new principles. We have been told that money has been provided to the department to educate the community about the changes, and I understand money has also been promised for local governments et cetera, so there will be questions around the quantum and how local governments will access the money.

I think it is instructive to run through the current fire danger rating system very quickly. There were changes in 2021 to the bushfire warning levels, and there are such things as advice, watch and act, and emergency warnings; however, recommendation 13.1 of the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements recommended that all states expedite the development and implementation of the Australian Fire Danger Rating System to ensure that there is national consistency in the visual display of warnings. Many of us are quite used to the current rating system, although it is not more than 60 years old in its entirety. The catastrophic warning was introduced following the disastrous fires in Victoria. That measure came in because, before that, extreme was the highest level of alert.

When the warning is low to moderate, or green, if a fire starts, it can most likely be controlled in those conditions, and homes can provide a level of safety to occupants. We need to be aware of how fires can start and minimise the risk. Planned burning, which is quite important mitigation burning, can occur in those circumstances.

The old “high” fire danger is a situation in which a fire could most likely be controlled in the circumstances and conditions. Homes can provide a level of safety. Again, we need to be aware of how fires can start and minimise the risk. Planned burning may occur in those circumstances if it is deemed to be safe and if permits allow.

A very high, or yellow, warning is for hot, dry and possibly windy conditions for a bush or grassfire. If a fire starts and takes hold, it might be hard for firefighters to control. Well-prepared homes, actively defended, can provide safety, but people must be physically and mentally prepared to defend in those conditions.

The severe, or orange, category is for very hot, dry and windy conditions for a bush or grassfire. If a fire starts and takes hold, it will be unpredictable, move very fast and be difficult for firefighters to bring under control. Spot fires can start and move quickly. Embers can come from many directions. Homes that are prepared to the highest level, have been constructed to bushfire protection levels—something that we have seen introduced in more recent times—and are actively defended may provide safety. People must be physically and mentally prepared to defend in these conditions. The only safe place to be is away from bushfire-risk areas.

Then we move on to extreme, which is very hot, dry and windy conditions for a bush or grassfire. If a fire starts and takes hold, it will be unpredictable, move very fast and be difficult for firefighters to bring under control. Spot

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Tuesday, 9 August 2022]

p3256b-3277a

Mr Shane Love; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Mark Folkard; Mrs Robyn Clarke; Mr Peter Rundle; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Hugh Jones; Dr David Honey; Ms Jodie Hanns; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Stephen Price

fires will start and move very quickly. Embers can come from many directions. Homes prepared to the highest level, constructed to bushfire protection levels and actively defended may provide safety. Again, people must be physically and mentally prepared to defend in these conditions. The only safe place is away from bushfire-risk areas.

The underlying descriptions about risk and actions to be taken in the severe and extreme categories are very similar. We can see why one of those categories was deemed to be redundant in the circumstances.

The final category, catastrophic, is the one I mentioned had been introduced last. These are the worst conditions for a bush or grassfire. If a fire starts and takes hold, it will be extremely difficult to control. It will take significant firefighting resources and cooler conditions to bring it under control. Spot fires will start well ahead of the main fire and cause rapid spread of the fire. Embers will come from many directions. Homes are not designed or constructed to withstand fires in these conditions. The only safe place to be is away from bushfire-risk areas.

That is what we saw with the very fierce fires that hit Victoria and Western Australia, in places like Yarloop and Woorloo. We had similar circumstances in my own electorate around Woodridge, just north of Yanchep, where very difficult conditions led to evacuations. Thankfully, not a lot of property was damaged—despite potential for a lot to be—and no-one was really injured in that circumstance.

The bill will simplify these matters. It will move to the four-level system of moderate, or green, in which people plan and prepare; high, or yellow, be ready to act; extreme, or orange, take action now to protect life and property; and catastrophic, or red, leave bushfire-risk areas for survival. They are well understood. I think people would understand exactly what the green, yellow, orange or amber, and red circumstances mean. If people see red, it is probably time for them to be planning for their survival at that point.

I ask the minister whether he can explain—in his contribution or in the wrap-up—what consideration has been given to any downstream fire plans that might exist. For instance, I know schools close in certain circumstances, and there are circumstances in which Western Power would employ different work practices. Can the minister explain what work is being done to ensure that those plans will be altered, or if they are affected by these changes, that that is well known? I understand the underlying measurements have changed and adapted, and many more metrics are now being looked at. How will that be communicated, and what effect will that have on some of the fire plans that people have already put in place? We know that even householders have been asked to have a fire plan in place, especially if they live in a high-risk area. How will we ensure that people understand what it means for their plan not only at the very unsophisticated, I suppose, individual household level, but also in larger organisations? Especially, for something like a school, it will have ramifications for parents, who might have to go home and look after their children or find somewhere else for the children to go, and it will have ramifications for transport operators and teachers et cetera.

Last summer, regional WA was once again hit with some of these severe fires. In Margaret River in December 2021, 8 000 hectares of bushland and national park burned. There were horrendous bushfires across regional WA in early February. In the great southern in Denmark, in Bridgetown and in the wheatbelt, near Narrogin, Shackleton, Bruce Rock and Corrigin, there were some very fierce fires. I believe the member for Central Wheatbelt, the Leader of the Opposition, would like to make a contribution at some point on some of these issues because her electorate was quite badly affected by the fires in Bruce Rock and Corrigin. I mentioned earlier the Woorloo fire in the Perth hills that destroyed 86 homes. It had an impact on bushland in my electorate from spot fires and the like, but, thankfully, it did not necessarily come right into it. There have been big fires out in the pastoral areas, too. Of course, we are not to forget the pastoral areas, where fires can be very difficult to control because there are neither the personnel nor the equipment, and grassfires can get to a vast scale. We know that there are real issues in many parts of the state. I mentioned during question time that that was leading to the Western Australian Local Government Association having a rethink about the appropriateness of local governments being as deeply involved in fire control management and bush fire brigades, because under the Bush Fires Act, bush fire brigades often come under their control. That is not necessarily always the case; in some areas that is not the case. However, generally, local governments have quite a considerable involvement with that. Of course, as some of the funding mechanisms are through capital grants and the Department of Fire and Emergency Services, there is probably an argument that there needs to be a rethink about the structure of the arrangements as that funding source has changed.

There are questions about the implementation costs for the department and local government, the advertising campaign et cetera. In country areas in Western Australia, and even in some of the outer urban areas, the bushfire signs with the arrow indicating the degree of fire risk on any particular day will have to be changed. The community will need to understand what that means. How much will that cost? When is it expected to be completed? How much will be recovered? I understand that some commonwealth funding will assist with that, so the minister might explain exactly where all that will come from. Again, there are the implementation plans and policies of other government departments, especially the Department of Education and Western Power.

On the time frame, it seems that we are discussing this matter at the very last possible opportunity. I wonder about the timing. Why was the bill not introduced earlier? Was it not prepared? Were some underlying discussions going

Extract from *Hansard*

[ASSEMBLY — Tuesday, 9 August 2022]

p3256b-3277a

Mr Shane Love; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Mark Folkard; Mrs Robyn Clarke; Mr Peter Rundle; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Hugh Jones; Dr David Honey; Ms Jodie Hanns; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Stephen Price

on at a federal level? If the minister could outline some of the reasons for the timing, that would be much appreciated. I do not expect a full scientific explanation, but could the minister provide an explanation of the difference between the fire danger index and the fire behaviour index—the FDI and the FBI—so that we can understand what it means and how it will impact on activities that local governments currently provide permits for, whether that be paddock burns or any other activities that they have control of, including harvest bans? I know that harvest bans are theoretically the preserve of local government, but because a lot of them are based on the fire danger index, there will necessarily have to be change to some of those measurements as well, so the community and farmers will need to understand what that means.

When the bill was read in, the video showed the minister reading a statement something along the lines of —

Pursuant to standing order 126(1), I advise that this bill is not a uniform legislation bill. It does not ratify or give effect to an intergovernmental or multilateral agreement to which the government of the state is a party; nor does this bill, by reason of its subject matter, introduce a uniform scheme or uniform laws throughout the commonwealth.

That appeared on the video, yet I am reliably informed that it no longer appears in *Hansard*. Perhaps the minister could explain whether there is a difference of opinion about whether this bill is uniform legislation; and, if so, how he intends to address that matter, because the Standing Committee on Uniform Legislation and Statutes Review will no doubt be interested to look at the bill if it is indeed deemed to be uniform legislation. I understand that it is basically up to the minister to declare, but it seems that there was a declaration on the video, but that is not the case in the corrected *Hansard*. Could the minister make some comment about what is happening there and whether there has been a change of view? It seems to be unusual that the two would be so different.

I think that has pretty well outlined most of the concerns that we would like the minister to address in his response. We are not opposed to the change. In fact, we are supportive of the change and the need to have a review of the science of these matters. We are very supportive that an understanding of fire behaviour has been developed. We know, because there is evidence of it, that the summers seem to be hotter and drier and the winds seem to be blowing harder, so there is a risk. Of course, people in electorates such as mine are moving to and living in areas where traditionally they would not have been at such risk. People have moved back into farming areas and in some cases they have revegetated a lot of cleared farm land and unwittingly contributed to the risk of bushfire in those areas. I am talking about the peri-urban areas of my electorate in the hills of Perth where the conditions at times make it very difficult to gain access to undertake control measures to ensure that proper firebreaks et cetera are in place and that there are proper escape routes out of the areas at risk of fire. I have raised with this minister and previous ministers that my great concern is that we have allowed development in areas for which there was less concern and less knowledge about bushfire mitigation and that has led to the situation in which areas of rural residential development have very few escape routes, with perhaps only one road in or a sandy track on which someone could become bogged and a disaster could occur. I have highlighted the risk of some areas, such as the rural subdivisions in Gingin. It has been brought to my attention by residents that they are not happy with the level of egress from the residential subdivisions in case of such an emergency. In other areas of the electorate, people have been building in what are now considered to be very high risk areas and at great risk. Some of the mitigation needs to be looked at in the older established areas to ensure that measures are put in place so that if there is not a safe escape route, there are at least safe points that people can get to. I have great concerns about some of the residential developments in my area. In fact, I have recently had correspondence from people in the member for Central Wheatbelt's district about an informal bush road, which it was thought would provide escape out of the subdivision, being blocked off. I might take that up with the Minister for Environment at some stage because I think that has occurred on some land under his control. That means that people who thought they had a safe bolthole in the past cannot safely escape.

Those issues have emerged as climate change and hotter conditions kick-in and there are greater risks, but it also outlines the fact that people are now living in areas they once did not. Instead of people living in traditional towns, they are now living in rural residential areas and rural areas that once had one farm and 2 000 acres of cleared grassland with lots of safeguards for the people who lived there now have dozens if not hundreds of houses and are heavily vegetated after 20-odd years or more of occupation. I am concerned about those issues.

As this is an opportunity to talk generally about bushfire and fire mitigation issues, I wish to raise the opposition's concerns about our lack of access to emergency services buildings, personnel and volunteers. This matter was highlighted recently by my colleague Hon Martin Aldridge, who, as I said, is the shadow Minister for Emergency Services. He has made several attempts to not just visit bushfire facilities, but to speak to fire and rescue and marine rescue volunteers and professionals. All those people fall under the remit of DFES, which is the organisation in charge of this legislation. I use this opportunity to raise this matter. A press release dated 9 August issued by Hon Martin Aldridge and the Leader of the Opposition states —

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Tuesday, 9 August 2022]

p3256b-3277a

Mr Shane Love; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Mark Folkard; Mrs Robyn Clarke; Mr Peter Rundle; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Hugh Jones; Dr David Honey; Ms Jodie Hanns; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Stephen Price

Opposition Leader Mia Davies said multiple attempts to meet with emergency service personnel or visit Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) facilities in Dongara, Geraldton and Esperance had been blocked since the start of 2022.

“This is a State Government refusing to allow the Opposition to meet volunteers on site, while at the same time enforcing a draconian code of conduct stopping volunteers from speaking to their local Member of Parliament,” Ms Davies said.

“Silencing our critically important emergency service volunteers from raising real concerns around disaster response, funding for equipment, or access to training is a long way from the gold standard transparency this Government promised.”

Correspondence from the Emergency Services Minister this week confirmed future access for Opposition MPs to DFES facilities would not be granted, stating:

Unfortunately, we will not be accommodating visits to DFES facilities by the Opposition in the absence of a pressing operational requirement.

Shadow Minister for Emergency Services Martin Aldridge said it was highly unusual for any government to take such a partisan and heavy-handed approach to our vital emergency services.

“Blacklisting Opposition MPs from meeting with DFES personnel, visiting new facilities, or hearing firsthand accounts about responding to events like Cyclone Seroja would have been unheard of prior to this Labor Government,” Mr Aldridge said.

“Meanwhile, Government backbenchers have seemingly unfettered access, regularly posting photos on social media with the same volunteers and staff we are barred from visiting.

“It’s a blatant double-standard which reflects poorly on the Emergency Services Minister and the State Government and must be reconsidered,” Mr Aldridge said.

The move follows the introduction of a new code of conduct for emergency service volunteers and staff in 2020, preventing communication with State and Federal MPs.

That is the situation. This issue was picked up and reported on by the ABC in May 2022 in a report that states —

Opposition politicians are being denied meetings with Western Australian’s frontline volunteers by a policy that regulates emergency service workers’ interactions with parliamentarians —

In a similar vein, there are quotes from Minister Dawson referring to refusals to allow such visits. In this report the minister said he had facilitated meetings for the opposition in the past. He stated —

“Recent examples include a briefing for the Opposition from the Deputy Commissioner on the South West fires, an organised visit to the Incident Control Centre in the Wheatbelt during a period of unprecedented number of active Level 3 Emergency events and a meeting with the District Recovery Coordinator earlier this month ...

He acknowledged that he allowed those visits on a couple of occasions, however the opportunity for opposition members to interact directly with volunteers, who are in fact the constituents of those members of Parliament, is being denied. We believe that that is inappropriate. We highlighted that in this place, as the minister will recall, in 2020. The then member for Warren–Blackwood and I outlined the situation when the policy was introduced when the former member for Cockburn was Minister for Emergency Services. At that time, we said that volunteers, by virtue of having to sign up to the DFES code of conduct, had found themselves barred from talking to federal and state parliamentarians. In part, the code says that DFES personnel must not contact or communicate with any federal or state member of Parliament regarding departmental business or invite or allow them onto any DFES premises unless authorised. They cannot talk to anyone unless they are authorised. We approached the minister for authorisation because we did not want to make life difficult for the volunteers. When I speak to people about this matter in social media posts and in other conversations, they say, “We don’t mind; we’ll just talk to you.” But if they do that, they will fall foul of their code of conduct. We will not encourage people to do that if it is going to get them into trouble, because we have seen what has happened when volunteers come forward and speak to parliamentarians.

I think the minister should consider how disrespectful it is to the people who elect us. It is not only disrespectful to members of Parliament—we have thick skins and we can probably survive a little bit of insult—but it is insulting to the people who elect us. They do not understand that we are not allowed to visit them in the local marine rescue building or volunteer fire rescue shed. It does not seem to be an issue for volunteer bush fire brigades that are still controlled by local government, but it will potentially become an issue, and it will be more so if the state government takes control over this matter. In response, then Minister Fran Logan refused to accept that there was any issue. Therefore, I would like the minister representing the Minister for Emergency Services, as he was the minister previously,

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Tuesday, 9 August 2022]

p3256b-3277a

Mr Shane Love; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Mark Folkard; Mrs Robyn Clarke; Mr Peter Rundle; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Hugh Jones; Dr David Honey; Ms Jodie Hanns; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Stephen Price

to explain the process that is followed when an opposition member requests access to a DFES facility. Does the minister seek advice from the commissioner and then accept that advice? On what basis is the denial outlined?

I go back to what was actually said in the correspondence to the shadow minister, which was that the government would unfortunately not be accommodating visits to Department of Fire and Emergency Services facilities by the opposition in the absence of pressing operational requirements. Basically, for the length of term of this government, under the current model, I as the member for Moore—with numerous volunteer fire and rescue services, SES centres and volunteer marine rescue services in my area—cannot actually go and visit any of them or I will not be allowed to visit any of them unless there is a pressing operational requirement. I find that quite bizarre. I would like to know what process took place to arrive at that particular statement, and upon whose advice it was given. If it is purely a political decision or if it is a decision that has been offered up by a department, can the government please outline exactly where that pressure is coming from? I think it is quite unprecedented. I can visit schools and health facilities in my electorate, but I am barred from going to facilities where people routinely expect me to go as their local representative. They do not understand why we are not at the opening of a facility or centre, as in the case of cyclone Seroja, to talk to the people who have come in. We do not want to interfere with the operation of the centres, but it is an important part of being a representative of an area to be able to actually communicate with people in the area.

As I say, it is not just me; there are tens of thousands of people in the electorate of Moore who vote, and like it or not, some of us are returned by popular acclamation, and people want us to represent them. In that circumstance, I think it would be very instructive if the government could explain just what the process was for it to arrive at this blanket ban for members of Parliament who are not members of government to actually visit some of the facilities under the control of DFES and to talk to volunteers. I do not think talking to volunteers is particularly dangerous; I do not think we represent some sort of existential threat to the operations of DFES. I think it is entirely appropriate. I speak as a member who represents an electorate, a very large area of which was very badly damaged by cyclone Seroja. There are other areas where people have been threatened with bushfires. I do not know what would happen if I were to go to the Red Cross centre, for example, if there were a fire. Would I have to get the minister's approval to talk and give comfort to constituents who are sheltering in a basketball court or whatever? Whose lines am I crossing in those circumstances? I really want to know, because I think it is actually fundamentally disrespectful to the people of my electorate and disrespectful to democracy, and I do not see any reason for it, apart from a political one. I cannot honestly imagine what threat the government thinks I would pose by going to talk to volunteer SES people or marine rescue personnel about the issues they face. The government must have some reason for this, but I would really like to know what it is.

With that, I will wind up my contribution. I believe there are members on the government side who wish to speak, so I will allow that to happen, but I caution that there will be a couple of other members from our side who will want to make contributions on particular aspects of this bill, especially as it might pertain to their own electorates or experiences. Thank you.

DR A.D. BUTI (Armadale — Minister for Finance) [4.44 pm]: I am contributing to this debate because in respect of bushfires, the fact is that I live in a bushfire-prone area, and I witnessed the 6 February 2011 Kelmscott–Roleystone bushfires. I want to recall those events because it brings into sharp focus the devastating effects of bushfires, which is why this government is serious about all aspects of managing and trying to prevent bushfires. That is part of the reason this bill is before the house.

In the early morning of 6 February 2011—I remember the date well, because it is my wife's birthday—we headed off to the beach from where we live in Mt Nasura. At that time, we lived probably about 3.5 kilometres from where the fire started; we now live about two kilometres away from where it started. We went to South Beach, near Fremantle. It was quite a windy day, and it was unusual because there was still quite a strong easterly wind blowing; even at the beach, we could feel the easterly on our back. We then returned, and as we got to Cockburn, I heard a fire engine behind me and then, looking towards the hills, I could see black smoke. At that stage, it looked like it was coming from Champion Lakes, but then we got closer to our home and there was a lot more smoke. We went down to Kelmscott, and it looked like a war zone; there were helicopters, police cars, fire engines et cetera. I do not think that any of the houses that were lost in the Kelmscott–Roleystone bushfires were actually in Roleystone; I think they were all in Kelmscott or Clifton Hills. They are not in my electorate, but in the electorate of Darling Range. The member for Darling Range represents a large area that is bushfire-prone, and he will also be making a contribution to this debate.

In the end, either 71 or 72 homes were destroyed and a further 39 were damaged. At that time, it was the biggest loss of property in any bushfire in Western Australian history. Of course, it has since been surpassed over the last couple of years. The fire started as the result of sparks from an angle grinder. It was a very windy day, as I said, with an easterly wind blowing. The fire basically jumped Brookton Highway, went up the escarpment and started to destroy homes. In many respects, thank goodness it was an easterly wind for most of that day. If it had been replaced

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Tuesday, 9 August 2022]

p3256b-3277a

Mr Shane Love; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Mark Folkard; Mrs Robyn Clarke; Mr Peter Rundle; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Hugh Jones; Dr David Honey; Ms Jodie Hanns; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Stephen Price

by a westerly, which often happens with the late sea breeze in the Kelmscott–Armadale area, the fire would have gone up to Roleystone, which, I am sure, would have led to loss of life. There is restricted access out of Roleystone, so thank goodness the fire was coming down the hill, so people were able to leave.

The final report on the bushfires revealed that 28 per cent of residents in Kelmscott–Roleystone left their homes just in time, many with just the clothes on their back. The fire started in Kelmscott–Roleystone, jumped Brookton Highway, went up the escarpment and also the other way to Clifton Hills. Clifton Hills is a built-up residential area that backs onto bushland. There did not seem to be any rhyme or reason for why some homes were destroyed; it is thought that sparks got into air-conditioning units, which is why some homes in Clifton Hills were destroyed. It has to be said that the City of Armadale, led by the then mayor, Linton Reynolds, was fantastic. Linton Reynolds showed absolutely brilliant leadership. People congregated in the Armadale Recreation Centre, some of them with just the clothes on their back. Some people were unable to verify for a few days whether their homes had been destroyed. I think the fire happened on the Sunday and I was able to go on a tour on the Tuesday or Wednesday. I was elected only in October 2010, so the fire was not even six months after I had been elected. I was able to go with emergency services personnel to some of the affected areas and to check up on one of the teachers at Armadale Primary School, Ms Clark, who had taught my kids. She did not know whether she still had a home. I was thankfully able to report to her that her home was still standing, but the fire had got to the back door. It was dark and we could see where the ashes were. Another person was told that their house on, I think, Robinson Road was okay and their neighbour's house was destroyed. Unfortunately, for that person, it was the other way around. When they got back, thinking their house would be standing, they found that it had been destroyed.

The member for Darling Range will speak shortly. He will also mention Sergio Tucci, who sadly passed away of cancer only a few weeks ago. Sergio was an outstanding individual who was a coach at the Kelmscott Roos Soccer Club. He coached my youngest son in soccer. His home was featured in the news that night, one of the first homes to go up very quickly. It was completely destroyed. Another prominent resident in the area, Frank Duffy, had his home destroyed. Last February, there was a 10-year reunion of some of the people who were impacted by the bushfire.

The then candidate for Darling Range is the great new member for Darling Range. I have to keep repeating this: is it not great to have such a positive member for Darling Range in this house after what we had in the last term? It is just so good. He is my neighbouring colleague.

Mr R.S. Love: Which former member for Darling Range are you referring to?

Dr A.D. BUTI: The last one.

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

Dr A.D. BUTI: No, the last member for Darling Range.

Anyway, the member for Darling Range at the time was Tony Simpson, who I get on very well with, but he went missing a bit. To be fair to Tony, at the time he and Don Randall helped provide food to residents, but he did not advocate for some of the locals later. I think most people on our side would consider Tony Simpson a nice fella. Anyway, I will get back to what I was talking about.

As I said, parts of Clifton Hills were destroyed by the bushfires. The professional firefighters and the volunteer firefighters did an amazing job. We have to remember that there was also a bushfire the day before or a day later at Red Hill, so they were fighting on a number of fronts. They were really exhausted and extended but did a superb job, and, as I said, the City of Armadale, led by the mayor, did a sterling job. People who live in Roleystone, Kelmscott, Mt Nasura and in the electorate of Darling Range live on a daily basis with the possibility of bushfires. We try not to think about that all the time, but in summer it can become more difficult. It is great to have a government and a minister, the current minister and the former minister, who has the carriage of the bill in this house, who are very, very serious about putting in the legislative framework and the services to try to reduce not only the number of bushfires, but also the impact when we have bushfires. We cannot always do that.

I think the member for Murray–Wellington will be speaking soon. Is Yarloop in the member's electorate?

Mrs R.M.J. Clarke: Yes.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Yarloop was destroyed in 2016. That is where my mother grew up. A lot of her history was destroyed. The school she went to was destroyed, the church that she and my dad were married in was destroyed and the hospital that my elder sister was born in was destroyed. But the family home, which was on the highway, was not destroyed. Bushfires can have a major impact on individuals, families and communities. I congratulate Minister Dawson and also Minister Whitby before him, who has carriage of this bill in this house, for bringing this bill to us. I look forward to the contribution of other members who will speak very shortly, particularly those who are in bushfire-prone areas.

Mr Shane Love; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Mark Folkard; Mrs Robyn Clarke; Mr Peter Rundle; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Hugh Jones; Dr David Honey; Ms Jodie Hanns; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Stephen Price

MR M.J. FOLKARD (Burns Beach) [4.55 pm]: I rise to speak to the Bush Fires Amendment Bill 2022. Unlike most of the people here, I have a level 2 incident burning in my electorate as we speak. The fire itself may have finalised, but the incident is ongoing. I will explain a bit about that. I will not talk to the particularisation of the bill, as I am certain that any flaws will be identified during the consideration in detail stage and that the minister will be able to address any issues of concern.

What people do not know is that my humble little electorate has one of the only registered mines, which is basically a quarry at the end of the freeway, still inside the metropolitan area. It is actually covered under the Mining Act. In recent times, a company has been using the area to deposit refuse from demolished houses. It is transported over and then broken up. The bricks and recyclable materials are removed from what is delivered on site, and the rest is then broken up and put on a large stockpile. This stockpile is about 10 metres high and 50 to 60 metres long. People in this room may not understand, but fire is caused by the presence of three things: a fuel source, heat and oxygen. With those three things, a chemical reaction will cause a fire. Fires are caused by usually one of two reasons: spontaneous combustion or being deliberately lit. What we think has happened is that the heat within that pile has ignited and set off a fire. It is a level 2 incident. It required a multiagency response and is burning within 900 yards of my home as we speak. I believe the actual fire itself has been put out, but I will talk to that a bit later.

Attacking this fire have been officers from the professional unit at Butler and the professional unit at Joondalup, plus the two local volunteer bush fire brigades—that is, four organisational structures involved in attacking this fire. I believe each organisation put at least 15 to 20 staff through over the past two to three weeks to try to put out this fire. What has been of concern to me and constituents around my electorate is the toxicity of the smoke. The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation has taken air samples in the precinct surrounding the fire and I am glad to report to the house that it is non-toxic. It still has values of smoke, and anyone who has chest issues, asthma or something similar should always be very aware of any smoke happening. There is no toxicity about it, which is very reassuring. I believe that testing is ongoing.

This particular location has had similar fires in the past. In November last year, a similar stockpile ignited, and it took three months to put it out. At one particular time they tried smothering it with foam. The only way to attack this fire is to break up the piles. The construction company that has been managing the site has been very amenable. I would like to recognise the work that it has done. It has been using front-end loaders and excavators to try to put out this fire. We are talking about a fire inside the metropolitan area that has been burning for a fortnight. It has been significant. There have been fatigue issues with the volunteers because of the number of hours they have put in. I have to recognise Captain Darren Bennett and the Quinns Rocks Bush Fire Brigade for the brilliant work that it has been doing over the past 10 days. People often do not realise that when we have a big fire, a lot of smaller organisational units come in. A group known as the Wanneroo auxiliary fire brigade has also been helping by providing tankers. The fire is a significant distance from the nearest fire hydrant. Therefore, the only way to get water to extinguish or take the heat out of the fire is by trucking it in. That is all done by volunteers.

When the fire first started, a significant amount of firefighting foam was used to contain it. I was reassured that PFAS is no longer used in that environment, which is great, but a heap of foam was dumped on that fire. However, the fire burnt with such intensity that that did not work. Even the vast amount of rain we have had over the last couple of weeks has not helped to extinguish the fire. There is still a hotspot there, and they are breaking it up, but the more they break it up, the more heat is released, and that lessens the potential to put the fire out. The fire is still being controlled and contained. My understanding is that it has not yet reached the point of extinguishment, but I have not had any further information in the past 24 hours, so that might have occurred.

I have been absolutely awestruck by the heroic efforts of our volunteers and professional firefighters and the way they have been working together to put out this level 2 incident. They have been monitoring the fire for 24 hours a day since it broke out. Remember the cold front that came across last Monday morning? We got 40 millimetres of rain up our way during that time. They were using an excavator and two front-end loaders to attack this pile of refuse, and even after all that rain, eight-metre high flames were still coming out of this refuse. That is interesting.

I received a magnificent briefing from the incident management team. I must commend the Minister for Fire and Emergency Services for his efforts in arranging that meeting. I was very assured about the competence and capabilities that were being put towards that fire. That was very comforting, even though, as I said, I live about 900 metres away from the fire. The smoke that was coming from the fire, depending on the breeze, was of concern to numerous constituents of mine, but, again, DWER has been doing a brilliant job in monitoring the fire and keeping everyone advised. I would like to commend all those who have been involved in this incident. The fire itself may be out, but the testing of the surrounding environment is ongoing. I am assured that the results of that testing will be known in the very near future.

As I said, my contribution will be brief. With that, I thank the house for its time.

Mr Shane Love; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Mark Folkard; Mrs Robyn Clarke; Mr Peter Rundle; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Hugh Jones; Dr David Honey; Ms Jodie Hanns; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Stephen Price

MRS R.M.J. CLARKE (Murray–Wellington) [5.04 pm]: The purpose of the Bush Fires Amendment Bill 2022 is to instigate the nationally agreed and consistent Australian Fire Danger Rating System and corresponding fire behaviour index thresholds.

Volunteer bush fire brigades in Murray–Wellington have had to deal with catastrophic bushfires, from the fires in Dwellingup and surrounds in the 1960s, to the devastating Waroona–Yarloop fire in January 2016. Only this last summer, we had severe fires in the south west, and also in Nambeelup, right next door to the newly established Bushfire Centre of Excellence. Across Murray–Wellington, I have a significant number of brigades, both volunteer bush fire brigades and volunteer fire and rescue brigades, plus State Emergency Service units. These brigades run bushfire readiness community sessions prior to the summer fire season. This is to ensure that households can prepare their properties and houses to be clear of bushfire risk and create a bushfire plan using the Department of Fire and Emergency Services' My Bushfire Plan app or a hard copy folder supplied by DFES at these meetings. The app also has up-to-date information and a link to Emergency WA that shows all incidents across Western Australia. Households are highly encouraged to spend time creating a plan in the event that a fire breaks out in or near their town.

Preston Beach, which is high risk, and which can be evacuated by only one 10-kilometre road out or along the beach, came close to being wiped out in 2016. People in Preston Beach therefore take bushfire planning very seriously. We have a bushfire ready coordinator and street coordinators to ensure that over the high-risk summer months, holidaymakers have bushfire plans in their homes, and that permanent residents are ready in times of emergency. These types of community engagement run by bushfire volunteers and DFES are vital in keeping our communities safe and fire ready.

The Shire of Murray has one SES unit, and five brigades, namely Pinjarra, South Yunderup–Ravenswood, Dwellingup, North Dandalup, and Coolup. Pinjarra Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service recently celebrated 50 years of service to the region, with many of the original vollies present at the recent celebrations. The Shire of Murray was also successful in obtaining the New Bushfire Centre of Excellence in Nambeelup.

Managing bushfire across our state is a huge task; therefore, the McGowan government has established the Bushfire Centre of Excellence to help make our communities safer. The McGowan government invested \$33.16 million for the Bushfire Centre of Excellence in Nambeelup to bring together the best research and training in bushfire management. The Bushfire Centre of Excellence is an education hub at which bushfire management personnel can come together for training and learning. A dedicated team is also examining bushfire knowledge and research, and the traditional fire practices of Aboriginal Australians.

The centre is the first of its kind in Australia. It is located in the Shire of Murray's Peel Business Park, about one hour's drive south of Perth. Plans for a Bushfire Centre of Excellence in Western Australia began after the Special Inquiry into the January 2016 Waroona Fire, which resulted in the Ferguson report. The report recommended that the Western Australian state government create a rural fire function, or rural fire division, to enhance the capability for rural fire management and bushfire risk management. It also recommended that this function would establish a centre for fire management.

In 2017, the concept of a Bushfire Centre of Excellence was discussed at the bushfire mitigation summit and the inaugural Western Australian prescribed burning forum. It was agreed that creating and capturing learnings through a centre of excellence would build bushfire capability for the future. In 2018, the state government announced a rural fire reform package in response to the Ferguson report recommendations. Changes included the establishment of a rural fire division within the Department of Fire and Emergency Services, as well as the establishment of a Bushfire Centre of Excellence. Following the announcement, DFES consulted with more than 200 stakeholders through workshops, presentations and forums. This informed the Bushfire Centre of Excellence's key functions, service delivery and guiding principles. In March 2019, the Shire of Murray was selected as the preferred centre location. The decision was made following an extensive request-for-proposal process through which local governments across the state could formally express their interest.

The Shire of Waroona has a volunteer fire and rescue service in town, and volunteer bush fire brigades in West Waroona, Preston Beach and Lake Clifton. Recently, it was great to see Captain Steve Thomas from the Preston Beach Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade appointed as chief fire officer for the Shire of Waroona. Congratulations, Steve. The Shire of Harvey includes the Harvey, Cookernup, Yarloop, Brunswick and Roelands brigades. Sadly, Yarloop lost its fire shed in 2016 in the devastating Waroona and Yarloop fires. The McGowan government ensured that Yarloop recovered, with a rebuild of its fire shed and community centre, and a new train station. There is still ongoing investment into Yarloop, with the railway museum site currently under construction.

Cookernup and Yarloop joined forces not only during but also after the 2016 fires to form the affectionately named "Cookeerloops". It was such a great sign of two towns coming together to share their burden, strength and resilience. Since the fires in Yarloop, the McGowan government has invested heavily in bushfire mitigation in the region,

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Tuesday, 9 August 2022]

p3256b-3277a

Mr Shane Love; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Mark Folkard; Mrs Robyn Clarke; Mr Peter Rundle; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Hugh Jones; Dr David Honey; Ms Jodie Hanns; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Stephen Price

including a \$900 000 fire station for the Yarloop Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade, a new \$868 000 facility for the Waroona West Bush Fire Brigade, and \$120 000 for the Shire of Harvey to treat bushfire risks. The McGowan government also spent an additional \$800 000 on the Yarloop bushfire clean-up and put \$1.75 million towards the new Yarloop community centre. The McGowan government and the Department of Fire and Emergency Services have an asset investment plan, which includes funding for facility modifications across the state for career and volunteer fire stations. On 30 December 2020, funding was approved for the provision of a new tunic room, enhanced breathing apparatus, cleaning facilities and security fencing for the Brunswick Junction Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service. On 24 August 2021, the \$320 130 construction contract for these works was awarded, with a practical completion date of 4 March this year, along with \$50 000 for a new shed for training purposes.

The McGowan Labor government has invested heavily, with a \$22 million investment to boost the enhanced prescribed burning program in the south west, \$80 million in the Rural Fire Division to enhance bushfire management across the state, \$15 million for the bushfire risk management plan program to help local governments identify and manage their bushfire risks, and more than \$50 million towards the bushfire mitigation activity fund across WA. It has also established a ministerial volunteer advisory forum. There have been upgrades at the Pinjarra Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service and the Brunswick Junction Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service, and a massive \$530 000 upgrade to the Harvey Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service. These upgrades have been well received by not just the volunteers, but also the wider community. There has also been an investment of \$50 000 for the construction of a hardstand and roadworks for the Lake Clifton Herron Residents Association and fire brigade, \$210 000 for upgrades at the Waroona Volunteer Fire and Emergency Services and \$2 million to provide water tanks to volunteer bush fire brigades across regional WA, and the provision of flood rescue boats to the Australind State Emergency Service. All of this is imperative for the support of our emergency services, in particular bush fire brigades and fire and rescue brigades.

Climate change is influencing the frequency and severity of dangerous bushfire conditions in Australia and other regions of the world, including through influencing temperature, environmental moisture, weather patterns and fuel conditions. There have been significant changes observed in recent decades towards more dangerous bushfire conditions for various regions of Australia. The current rating system in Western Australia is based on science that is over 60 years old and does not contemplate this evolution towards the more dangerous bushfire conditions that we are experiencing at an increasing rate. The new Australian Fire Danger Rating System will not only utilise modern scientific models to provide greater accuracy in terms of predicting the way in which a fire is likely to behave, but also be easier to understand for government agencies, businesses, industries, and, of course, the wider public. The Australian Fire Danger Rating System is a key component in addressing the lessons we have learnt in recent years. In particular, we know that consistent, straightforward messaging is key for the safety of our communities, because, after all, fire does not recognise state and territory borders. The Australian Fire Danger Rating System aims to improve public safety and reduce the impact of bushfires in four important ways. The government will ensure that Western Australia is a true contemporary of all other states and territories in the implementation of this new rating system. Western Australia will be better prepared for the threat of bushfires by being an active participant in this modernised system, which draws on over 60 years of scientific advances in the field. This will be the first time that all state and territory governments will use a single unified Australian fire danger rating system. I commend this legislation to the house.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr D.A.E. Scaife): The very well timed member for Roe.

MR P.J. RUNDLE (Roe) [5.14 pm]: Thank you, Acting Speaker; that is much appreciated. I want to make a brief contribution tonight. Firstly, as the member for Moore has highlighted, we will be supporting the Bush Fires Amendment Bill 2022. I think that is logical. It has come out of the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements.

As was stated earlier, the six categories in the Australian Fire Danger Rating System will be reduced to four. Severe and high categories will be removed, and activities covered under these categories will be prohibited under these ratings. Importantly, it will not be possible for prescribed burning and permits to burn to be granted unless the rating is moderate. I think that is very important in the context of some of the activities that happen in Western Australia, which, as we know, is very bushfire prone. These permits to burn and for prescribed burning are important elements of controlling fires over the summertime or controlling the fuel load, but then there are also permits to burn for our agricultural community who look to burn stubble, timber and the like. It is important that this element is taken seriously.

One of my main questions for the minister is how this will impact the harvest vehicle movement bans. We have a very large state. It is quite interesting that at different times of the harvest period, we can have, say, temperatures of 40 degrees up around Geraldton, Northampton and the like and 21 degrees down on the south coast in Esperance. We have large variability in our agricultural areas. That point of clarity would be appreciated from the minister.

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Tuesday, 9 August 2022]

p3256b-3277a

Mr Shane Love; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Mark Folkard; Mrs Robyn Clarke; Mr Peter Rundle; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Hugh Jones; Dr David Honey; Ms Jodie Hanns; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Stephen Price

Another question for the minister is: how has the Department of Fire and Emergency Services consulted with volunteer brigades and local governments? That leads me into concerns that we have previously raised in this Parliament, which the member for Moore mentioned. We are now getting feedback from our local governments and bush fire brigades. The work health and safety legislation that this government brought in—the Work Health and Safety Act 2020—is really causing some serious grief out there in the regions. I think we now have volunteers bailing out hand over fist because they do not understand and are worried about this government’s legislation and the effect it will have, and that is now flowing on to our CEOs and local governments. This government has created a scenario whereby there is a lack of clarity. We have different local governments going in different directions. Now we are waiting on the Western Australian Local Government Association to come out with its position. That is going to be difficult for WALGA, because it has some CEOs saying, “I am regarded as the PCBU—the person conducting a business undertaking—and if something happens at one of those fires, if one of our volunteers falls off the back of a truck, I could potentially be held responsible.” That is the sort of disquiet we are now seeing in our regional areas, and it is quite concerning. I have people coming up to me time after time saying, “I just want to go and put the fire out, but now I’m worried about the implications of doing that.”

I remember the Katanning fire a couple of years ago. I was out at the Darkan Sheepfest. I turned the corner at the Kojonup turn-off on the Albany Highway and there was a massive black cloud of smoke. I can assure members that when you are driving into those fires, it is quite frightening. All you want to do is put out that fire for your neighbours for those people affected. In my case, it was people in my neighbourhood only a few kilometres from my farm. That fire actually got to the outskirts of Katanning. It was just fantastic to see how our neighbouring brigades all came in and helped. They were all there at 5.30 the next morning. They were there helping, ready to make sure it did not escape again on the Sunday morning. It was a fantastic effort.

I now see a real concern that has evolved over the last couple of years with work health and safety legislation, and, as I said, the disquiet that it is causing between our local governments, our volunteers, our CEOs and anyone else involved in the industry. I have been talking to the likes of the Wagin shire, which wrote a letter to the Minister for Emergency Services the other week, and copied me into it. It pointed out that local bush fire brigades attending fires in their volunteer capacity extinguished the vast majority of fires without imposing on the resources of the state. If they do need to impose on the resources of the state or get Department of Fire and Emergency Services to come into the mixture, that is when they will take responsibility. They have concerns over the Work Health and Safety Act and the responsibility of their CEO. The shire wrote a letter to Minister Stephen Dawson proposing an amendment that could be along the following lines: that unless a local government CEO specifically issues directions that are deemed to prejudice the health and safety of volunteer firefighters in an emergency, the CEO will not be subject to a penalty as a result of actions taken in good faith by volunteer firefighters whilst attending to the urgency of a bushfire situation. To me that is a logical thing that the minister could certainly look at to potentially amend the situation there. That is something I want to point out. Many of our local governments have had a great relationship with the volunteer bush fire brigades, but, as I said earlier, now we are getting to the point at which our volunteers are starting to disappear because of this government’s legislation, loading it back onto a local level.

I did a grievance to the minister, who will remember it, back on 11 November 2021 about our volunteer firefighters and to the minister’s credit, he gave a very comprehensive explanation. My question was played on *WA Country Hour*, and the minister’s answer was also played. It provided quite a bit of clarity for many of the volunteers in the regions. But as I pointed out at the time, even Commissioner Darren Klemm said that DFES was concerned that there was potential for volunteers to be criminally liable for breaching the WHS legislation. This requirement is likely to cause anxiety for emergency services volunteers, with potential negative implications for recruitment and retention. Even the department’s own commissioner expressed concerns early, and I guess if he needed reassurance, what do our volunteers need? They just want to go and put out the fire; they just want to go down the road and put the fire out. They do not want to have to think about all those other implications. We know everyone has to act in a safe manner and do the best they can, but they certainly do not want to be loaded up with the implications. The CEOs of our local governments now also appear to demonstrate that they do not want to be loaded up either. That is going to be have to be addressed by the minister and the Minister for Emergency Services, and by Western Australian Local Government Association, which has differing opinions.

The other thing that was brought up to me by the president of Wagin shire is: What happens if a local government is prepared to continue on in the current form and then there is a fire on the boundary of two shires and the other local government has said it is not interested and it is handing all responsibility to the state? What happens when that fire runs through the boundary of those two local governments? Who is responsible? How does that work? These are the questions that are out there at the moment.

As the member for Central Wheatbelt in front of me knows, as do the members for Moore and Cottesloe, we were all out there after those Narrogin, Wickopin and Bruce Rock fires. I had fires in my electorate through Jerramungup, Bremer Bay and Lake Grace this summer. It was quite frightening. It was frightening to see the devastation that

Mr Shane Love; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Mark Folkard; Mrs Robyn Clarke; Mr Peter Rundle; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Hugh Jones; Dr David Honey; Ms Jodie Hanns; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Stephen Price

occurred during and after those fires and the effect they had on families and communities. There were articles in the *Farm Weekly* about the likes of Steven Bolt and his family from Corrigin. The member for Central Wheatbelt will be talking about families in her electorate shortly. The after-effects and the years and years of damage to those families and communities are quite disturbing. I wanted to point that out.

As I said, the member for Moore has pointed out that we are in favour of this legislation as far as the Australian Fire Danger Rating System goes, but the member for Central Wheatbelt, who will be speaking straight after me, wants to point out a few other things about how we are being affected in our regional communities. I hope the minister takes this on board as well, because this is happening at the moment out there in local government and bushfire volunteer land, and it is a real concern from my perspective.

MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt — Leader of the Opposition) [5.27 pm]: Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker, for the opportunity to make a brief contribution on this Bush Fire Amendment Bill 2022. As previous speakers from the opposition have noted, the opposition supports the legislation. I want to provide a perspective of why it is so important that we get these classifications right. As the member for Roe touched on, there were significant fire events in the electorates of Central Wheatbelt and Roe this year and that clean-up continues. It is very important that we get right the detail of the legislation and how the categorisation of the new model is arrived at, so that we have these new categories of moderate, high, extreme and catastrophic, as well as the signals that sends about how the rest of the framework works together. From my perspective, the politics on this are that we need to make sure that our communities are safe. There is the very complex issue of how that then interacts with local governments and some of the other decisions that they make, and then how that impacts our volunteer emergency services and the Department of Fire and Emergency Services. It is a complex area; no-one pretends otherwise.

I think the public wants to know that we have a joined-up way of thinking about these things before and after an event of the nature that we have seen. I am talking about the Corrigin bushfire and the Shackleton fire complex. It constituted Corrigin, Bruce Rock and then right down to Narrogin and Wickiepin and through that eastern wheatbelt, which is where that experience was. I am speaking as a local member in this case, and there are some issues I want to raise that I have raised with the Minister for Emergency Services as well. That fire, what is known as the Shackleton fire complex, burned through about 45 000 hectares of land, and at one point was around 35 kilometres long. We have different categorisations in here, but the only word I can use for the day that fire got away is that it was catastrophic. The people on the ground reported that they had never faced conditions so horrific. There had been a string of 40-plus days. We had a howling easterly and the wind was swirling. We had the remnants of the most significant harvest that the state had ever seen. There was thick stubble cover. I was not there, but from all accounts from the people who faced that situation, it was terrifying. Enormous credit goes to the professionalism of everyone involved that no deaths occurred as a result of this event. Some very experienced people on the fireground said that they were the most scared they had ever been. An inferno was fuelled by the wind, the heat and the harvest. Four homes were destroyed. We are talking about the Central Wheatbelt, so there are no big metropolises, although the community of Corrigin was under direct threat. Unfortunately, with communications going down, it was very difficult for anyone to provide a warning about the fire. We have talked in this chamber about the reliability of mobile telecommunications and how that can be improved, particularly during an emergency. Four homes were destroyed. These were people's houses that they lived in. A total of 44 non-residential properties, including sheds and outbuildings, were destroyed, and 30 properties were damaged, which required clean-up. Over 1 000 livestock had to be killed or were destroyed as a result of that event. The member for Roe is quite right; the damage that occurred as a result of the fire was obviously horrific, but the scar left on farmers or neighbours who had to destroy those animals will stay with them for a long time. It was quite traumatic and is still very traumatic.

Enormous credit goes to the local governments for their coordination and involvement post that fire. We put an enormous amount of pressure on our CEOs in local governments when the “emergency”, the immediacy, is handed back to them to do the recovery. In this case, the CEOs were the only ones really providing that coordination whilst a recovery officer was put in place. The CEO of the Wheatbelt Development Commission is now assisting to provide coordination and support, which is very welcome. There is an issue with that immediate handover. Quite often the people who are responsible for that recovery are also dealing with their own trauma and clean-up and trying to manage that situation. I give full credit to everyone who was involved at the time and those who are continuing to make sure that things are moving along.

I turn to one of the issues that has fallen out of this event. There are still many to be decided. I do not propose to go into the details because we still need to have discussions about how some things relating to this fire will be resolved. It is very clear to me—it was raised directly with me by constituents in the community—that after a fire goes through, an emergency funding package is made available, and there is usually coordination. This occurred with Seroja and fires such as those that occurred in Yarloop and Wooroloo, where some sort of assessment was made about the damage that occurred and the asbestos that was left behind. As members could imagine, almost everything in the wheatbelt is built out of asbestos. It is non-friable for the most part but once a fire goes through,

Mr Shane Love; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Mark Folkard; Mrs Robyn Clarke; Mr Peter Rundle; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Hugh Jones; Dr David Honey; Ms Jodie Hanns; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Stephen Price

it needs to be assessed, managed and removed for the safety of the community. If people are insured, their insurance will obviously take care of that.

A number of people who were impacted by the fire were self-insured but they lost a full house or a property that they utilised to house workers who work on their property. They are often unable to meet the costs. In some cases, they were quoted \$250 000 for the removal of the damaged property. There is not a huge number of them; we are not talking about a significant number of people who have been impacted. They do not have access to that kind of funding. Removal of the asbestos is required. The local governments and others go through and carry out an assessment. They tell people what they need to remove. The local government is aware of it, so it is compelled to make sure that that is adhered to through environmental regulations, which is right. The fallout of this is that a number of people simply cannot and do not have the resources to manage the removal of the asbestos and are facing big fines. I pose the following question to the minister: is there a capacity for those who have been unable to recover funding through insurance for the emergency package funding to be applied to assist them in removing the damaged asbestos from their properties?

During conversations with my colleague Hon Martin Aldridge, our shadow Minister for Emergency Services, he pointed out that there is a difference in the way that asbestos has been dealt with in different emergencies. I mentioned Seroja and Wooroloo. He was quite close to those incidents. He pointed out to me that in the case of the Wooroloo fire—I am happy to be corrected—the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation engaged contractors to remediate sites that had been contaminated, certifying back to the owner that the site had been cleared and cleaned to acceptable standards. The advice provided by the Shire of Mundaring is that the actual cost was between \$80 000 and \$100 000. In relation to cyclone Seroja, the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation seems to take a different approach, providing only nominal assistance to those who were uninsured. It would seem that that is also the same for the Shackleton fire complex bushfire.

In light of the fact that it has been raised directly with me and in trying to get a better understanding of how we do this better across the state to make sure that we do not leave people trying to piece their way through quite complex legislation, regulations and requirements at a time of trauma, I am trying to get some clarity, firstly, about how I can get some immediate relief for my constituents who have been through a pretty difficult time and, secondly, how we have that discussion around a consistent approach with the clean-up. I acknowledge that every emergency is different, so it cannot always be a case of horses for courses. We need some consistency, particularly when we talk to some of the CEOs in the immediate moments after an emergency has passed. For instance, Natalie Manton, the CEO at the Shire of Corrigin, was straight on the phone to the Shire of Esperance in those really early days trying to get some guidance about the first things she needed to do before there was a coordinated response. I am not being critical—emergencies are difficult, messy and complex; I am simply reflecting upon some of the discussions that we have had with both local governments and constituents who have been impacted. I am looking forward to getting a response from the minister to that formal letter.

I reiterate that people are faced with such devastating situations after such an impact. Anyone who was out on the fireground after that fire went through would know that it is a very different picture out there at the moment. Obviously, it is green as we have had a lot of rain. We do not have to dig too far to see and hear the scars that have been left from that very recent trauma. Any member who has been through an emergency with their constituents will also understand, that it is very, very difficult for communities to regroup. We need to try to make that easier, be reasonable and provide that framework. I come right back to the start in relation to this legislation and say that we should be supportive of anything we can do to set that framework so we have some consistency to allow them to make those decisions around harvest burns, traffic movement and other decisions that need to be made on these really challenging days across the state. I look forward to continuing to work to make sure that we can keep our community safe.

MR H.T. JONES (Darling Range) [5.40 pm]: I rise to make a brief contribution, noting that other members also would like to contribute to this important Bush Fires Amendment Bill 2022. The bill was brought about by a tragic set of circumstances and reflects recommendations made in the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements report of 28 October 2020. The Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements was established on 20 February 2020 in response to the extreme bushfire season of 2019–20 that resulted in devastating loss of life, property and wildlife, and environmental destruction across the nation. Everyone should recall the haunting images in the news, and one that has stuck in my mind was when about 1 400 tourists and residents were congregated on the beach in the fire-ravaged town of Mallacoota in eastern Victoria. Mallacoota is positioned on the south-east corner of mainland Australia, and if people are surrounded by fire, there is nowhere else to go but the ocean or to fly out, but the smoke haze makes flying difficult. There were lots of people there in various states of preparedness when they were evacuated, some with pets, including rabbits! Of course, the Navy successfully evacuated those people using MV *Sycamore*, an aviation training vessel, and HMAS *Choules*, a very capable landing ship, dock, which can of course receive amphibious and landing craft and is helicopter capable. HMAS *Choules*

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Tuesday, 9 August 2022]

p3256b-3277a

Mr Shane Love; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Mark Folkard; Mrs Robyn Clarke; Mr Peter Rundle; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Hugh Jones; Dr David Honey; Ms Jodie Hanns; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Stephen Price

is named after Claude Stanley Choules, who passed away on 5 May 2011 at the age of 110. At the time, Claude was the third-oldest verified military veteran in the world and the oldest known living man in Australia.

The Choules name lives on in Kelmscott with his son, Adrian, and daughter-in-law, Lesley, continuing to contribute to the community and advocate for the natural environment. Lesley is a good friend of my mother; they used to collaborate on animal welfare issues. Their own children and grandchildren also contribute in the area. Their forthcoming contribution is with the Kelmscott Agricultural Show on 14 and 15 October 2022—a show not to be missed!

I go back to the report. Its foreword states —

The fires started in Australia’s hottest and driest year on record, with much of the country that burnt already impacted by drought. The Forest Fire Danger Index was the highest since national records began.

We heard harrowing personal accounts of devastation and loss. Over 24 million hectares were burnt. Many Australians were impacted, directly or indirectly, by the fires. Tragically, 33 people died and extensive smoke coverage across much of eastern Australia may have caused many more deaths.

I think there has been a recent report about the effect of that smoke on people, even to this day. The report continues —

Over 3,000 homes were destroyed. Estimates of the national financial impacts are over \$10 billion.

...

The season commenced in July 2019 and was not declared over until 31 March 2020. The tremendous professionalism of Australia’s firefighters and emergency services personnel, both career and volunteer, demonstrated true Australian spirit in responding to the bushfires.

Of course, Darling Range includes areas that are extremely prone to bushfire, and in recent years we have experienced devastation, although we would not think so with the wet and cold conditions out there at the moment. The Department of Fire and Emergency Services and our volunteers know that we have another challenging fire season ahead and are recruiting new volunteers, training existing brigade members and conducting mitigation activities as the weather allows. They will also be involved in educating residents on the steps they need to take to reduce their risk and to consider the actions that they will take in the event of certain fire danger ratings and on the outbreak of fire. Minister Dawson came to Byford recently to attend a sundowner to help me thank the volunteers in the area, including emergency service volunteers. I also acknowledge the bush fire brigades and volunteer fire and rescue service in the area and wish them well for their preparation and training, fighting fires when the need arises. On behalf of the community, I thank all members of the brigades, from drivers, radio operators, planners, managers and caterers, as well as the people whose boots go on the fireground, for putting their lives and livelihoods at risk—they take time off work, with the risk of injury to keep the rest of us safe. Thank you to the women and men of the Roleystone Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service, and the bush fire brigades in Roleystone–Karragullen, Bedforddale, Byford, Jarrahdale, Keysbrook, Serpentine, Mundijong and Oakford, as well as the City of Armadale and Shire of Serpentine–Jarrahdale for the support they give those volunteers and the brigades. I also recognise the local government fire officers, the DFES officers embedded in the brigades and the district managers for leading the provisioning and management of our brave and dedicated volunteers.

I earlier alluded to the innate behaviour of the brigades to prepare for the fire season. In our area we have a recent reminder of the importance of a professional and well-managed emergency response system, which is something I have spoken about before and the member for Armadale about earlier today—the Kelmscott fires in 2011. At that time, it was the single biggest loss of houses in Western Australia in a single bushfire event, with 72 homes destroyed and 37 homes damaged. My parents and sisters lived in separate houses on Buckingham Road, where houses either side of them were razed to the ground. It was almost as though alternate houses were affected. I and the community are acutely aware of the dangers of a bushfire in the electorate.

I also take this opportunity to pay my respects to Sergio Tucci, who passed away peacefully on 11 July 2022 at the age of 51 as the result of a blood cancer. Serge was an active and loved member of the Kelmscott Roos Soccer Club as a player and coach, and his son, Michael, continues in his papa’s steps. I had the privilege of sharing some words with Serge on 19 June at the Kelmscott Roos fundraiser in his honour, unaware of how unwell he was. He was very stoic and wanted to see his son play for the last time. Sergio and his family lost their home in the Kelmscott fires in 2011, and Serge used his bricklaying skills to rebuild the family home. I also want to acknowledge the former president of the Kelmscott Roos, Mr Dennis Warwick, who delivered a very difficult and heartfelt eulogy for Serge, complete with one minute’s applause and a referee whistle! It was a variation, but was very well received by the family and other mourners. On behalf of the member for Armadale and myself, our deepest condolences to Sergio’s wife, Angela, their daughter, Talia, and son, Michael, and the wider Tucci family and friends. Rest in peace, Sergio.

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Tuesday, 9 August 2022]

p3256b-3277a

Mr Shane Love; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Mark Folkard; Mrs Robyn Clarke; Mr Peter Rundle; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Hugh Jones; Dr David Honey; Ms Jodie Hanns; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Stephen Price

As mentioned earlier, this bill forms part of the Western Australian government's response to the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements. Recommendation 13.1 of the Royal Commission urged governments to expedite the development and implementation of the Australian Fire Danger Rating System and to ensure that there was a national consistency in the visual display of the AFDRS and action to be taken in response to each rating. Recommendation 13.2 states —

State and territory governments should deliver education to ensure that the public understands the new Australian Fire Danger Rating System ratings, the potential danger attached to each rating, and the action that should be taken in response to each rating.

On 30 November 2021, this government responded to those recommendations in the affirmative, noting that Western Australia was on track to implement the system by 1 September this year.

The purpose of the bill is to instate the nationally agreed, consistent AFDRS and corresponding fire behaviour index thresholds. The current rating system employed in WA is over 60 years old and does not contemplate the evolution of bushfires or more dangerous bushfire conditions that we have seen in WA and across the country, which seem to be more severe and more frequent due to climate change. The new system will utilise modern scientific models to not only provide greater accuracy in predicting the way in which a fire is likely to behave, but also make them easier to understand for government agencies, business, industry and the wider public.

The four ratings are: moderate, under which the action is to plan and prepare; high, under which people should be ready to act; extreme, under which people need to take action now to protect their life and property; and, catastrophic, under which people need to act for their survival and leave the bushfire-risk area. From 1 September this year, the public will start to see the new fire danger ratings online and in the local community through an extensive community engagement and education campaign. It is also important to note that the fire danger rating system is a measure of the difficulty of controlling or suppressing fires once they have started and not the likelihood of a fire starting; therefore, it is about what will happen once a fire has started.

The government will ensure that Western Australia is a true contemporary of all other states and territories in the implementation of this new rating system. I threw in some Navy references earlier and will now draw attention to fundamental interoperability in the Navy—that is, the requirement for consistent and simple communication methods. Navy assets and personnel are required to use the same codes, language, terminology and systems to ensure that they can talk to each other and pass on instructions without ambiguity. It is no different in emergency management. The seemingly more frequent deployment of personnel and equipment across state borders and the movement of Australia's population, mostly because they come here to live here in WA where there is the best managed economy in Australia, necessitates a consistent and well understood fire danger rating system.

I thank the Minister for Emergency Services and his representative in this place, the former Minister for Emergency Services, for introducing this amendment bill and I commend this bill to the house.

DR D.J. HONEY (Cottesloe — Leader of the Liberal Party) [5.51 pm]: At the outset, I thank the Whip and members opposite for the indulgence in letting me speak at this time. As has been indicated, the opposition supports the Bush Fires Amendment Bill 2022. The bill will legislate for simple changes to reduce the current six ratings for bushfire to four: moderate, high, extreme and catastrophic. More importantly, the methodology behind estimating the likelihood of a fire will be modernised, going from two fuel types, being grasslands and woodlands, to eight categories and covering the state. Members will see that the website has a vastly more sophisticated forecasting system that looks at soil type, weather conditions and the like. There will be much better prediction, as indicated by the member for Darling Range, for the severity of bushfires.

I have been given the indulgence to speak, so I will not go through a lot of the detail because it has been covered well by other members. But one issue I want to raise, which has been recognised by the Minister for Emergency Services, is that existing signage will need to be changed. There is a considerable number of signs and the sooner that that can be done, the better, because it will lead to confusion among people in terms of the level of risk. However, I want to use this opportunity to thank members opposite and, collectively, this Parliament for the excellent bushfire management regime that has been a bipartisan policy in this state for a considerable time. I said to the former member for Cockburn in this chamber and privately that we in Western Australia are the people best protected from bushfires in Australia because of our bipartisan approach to managing bushfire risk and, in particular, the controlled burning program. It is a highly scientific program and is utterly pivotal to the protection of our communities. Although there have been severe and significant bushfires in Western Australia, we have had nothing approaching the severity of fires on the east coast, including last summer. That is entirely due to the outstanding work done through the fire and emergency services in conjunction with professional and volunteer firefighters who maintain that program. It is an onerous program to maintain.

Mr Shane Love; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Mark Folkard; Mrs Robyn Clarke; Mr Peter Rundle; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Hugh Jones; Dr David Honey; Ms Jodie Hanns; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Stephen Price

In the few minutes that I have, I want us to consider the fires that occurred on the east coast. When we look at the amount of fuel in forest fires that are pointed to in the papers that discuss this new methodology, we see that although forests represent a small percentage of Australia's total area, they represent a high percentage of the areas in which people live. If there are more than eight tonnes a hectare of litter on the ground in a forest, a fire will become literally unstoppable. It will not be stopped. It will be impossible to stop it. An ordinary jarrah forest drops about a tonne of litter a hectare a year on the forest floor. A karri forest drops about twice that rate of litter on the forest floor. That means that regular burning is critical in those forests if we want to control those fires. The minister knows it is not just about burning the forest; it is an extremely sophisticated program whereby the forest is burnt in diagonal strips across the prevailing winds—that is, the north-westerly and south-westerly winds, which are the strong winds that drive the most dangerous bushfires.

I was talking to a considerable expert in this area in New South Wales and Victoria who said that in a number of forests in which there were catastrophic fires, there had been more than 100 tonnes of litter a hectare on the forest floor. For those in this chamber who are old enough—I see a couple at least—who remember the 1 000-watt bar heaters that were used to heat classrooms, the energy flux from those fires on the east coast in older forests where burning had not been carried out is equivalent to 100 000 of those heaters a linear metre. That fire literally will combust things 100 metres front of it. Although burns had been carried out a few hundred metres around those towns and other areas, because the bulk of the forest had massive quantities of timber and litter on the ground, those fires could not be stopped. It was literally physically humanly impossible to stop those fires. So, minister, I congratulate your government for continuing the good practices in forest management. This bill is part of adopting uniform legislation, but I encourage that none of us in this place ever forget that the reason Western Australia has not had the horrendous level of fires that have occurred on the east coast is due to this outstanding bipartisan policy that is supported by your government.

MS J.L. HANNS (Collie–Preston) [5.57 pm]: I also rise today to support the Bush Fires Amendment Bill 2022. I start by, firstly, noting that the purpose of the bill is to make sure that there is a nationally consistent Australian Fire Danger Rating System. I will not go through that again because other members have outlined that system today. I am very pleased to see that. Obviously, the impact of that will be improved public safety and reduced impacts and risks around bushfire right across Australia. It is important that we take a national approach to this issue because, sadly, whether we live on the west or the east coast of Australia, we have been and will continue to be impacted by bushfires in future. I also note that this is the first time that all state and territory governments will use a single system. As I said, it is certainly incredibly important that the whole of Australia is brought into line.

I start by reflecting on the fires that I heard spoken about when I was young and growing up in Yarloop. My grandparents always used to talk about the Dwellingup fires. I am not sure whether anybody in the chamber is old enough to remember them—probably not—but the impact that the Dwellingup fires had on the south west community is legendary. My grandparents spoke about the Dwellingup fires with dread. It astounds me to link back to fire in a number of touchpoints in my lifetime. My grandparents ran the Yarloop general store and lost their general store in a fire—not a bushfire—so it is interesting that they were terrified by bushfires and then lost their business in a fire themselves.

Tragically, the Yarloop fire that occurred in 2016 was incredibly impactful on the south west communities of Waroona and Yarloop. I want to reflect on that in terms of the community and the people who dealt with, and continue to deal with, bushfires. The 2016 bushfire impacted incredibly upon my family and my childhood community, and sadly other people will absolutely concur with what I am about to say about the impacts on those communities. The Yarloop fire was started by lightning strikes at Lane Poole Reserve on 5 January 2016. The fire lasted from 5 January to 22 January. It burnt 70 000 hectares and, very sadly, two lives were lost. There were also 181 buildings destroyed, 166 of them in Yarloop.

In the lead-up to the fire, I was in Busselton on my annual holiday at Amblin Caravan Park. I remember sitting on the beach and looking back to where the bushfire was occurring. I had family still living in Yarloop, and they were texting to say that there was a fire and that it was spreading towards Yarloop, but that everything was okay at the moment. However, the smoke grew and I became increasingly concerned. I messaged my auntie and uncle, who live on a property to the east of Yarloop, in the hills. At that stage, they said that everything was looking okay.

That changed on 7 January, when they began to see smoke getting closer and ash falling from the sky onto their property. At the time, they were unaware that the fire was getting closer to the outskirts of Yarloop. The town water supply was impacted because the electricity supply was cut off, so close to the day of impact of the fires, local Yarloop residents were without water or electricity, which had a significant impact on the response. My auntie and uncle were quite concerned that the fire had drawn very close to their property. Were it not for a water bomber that circled back and dropped water over their property, I am sure and they are sure that their property would have been lost in the fire.

Images of Yarloop appeared on 8 January, which was the day that I woke up to the news that my childhood town had been irreparably impacted on by a bushfire. The images showed empty spaces in places where I knew buildings

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Tuesday, 9 August 2022]

p3256b-3277a

Mr Shane Love; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Mark Folkard; Mrs Robyn Clarke; Mr Peter Rundle; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Hugh Jones; Dr David Honey; Ms Jodie Hanns; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Stephen Price

had previously been. There was rubble and smouldering ash. The losses included the hospital where I was born, and where my father and grandfather had been born. The whole hospital complex was lost to the fire. Every house I ever lived in in Yarloop was also lost in that fire, including the house that we transported down South Western Highway to Station Road. The Yarloop Hall, where my grandparents courted, was also lost. A lot of people in the community had attended dances in that hall over the many, many years of Yarloop's heyday as the hub of the social calendar in Waroona and Yarloop. However, its facade was saved, and I am very pleased to say that it has been rebuilt as the Yarloop Community Resource Centre, as it is today. I thank Julie-Ann, who works at the resource centre, for all the work she did to make sure that the community of Yarloop was supported through this really difficult time.

This might not be news to the member for Forrestfield, but the Yarloop Hotel was an incredibly important place to my dad. As kids, my brother and I sat in the back of our cream Holden Kingswood in the car park of the Yarloop Hotel. We had a mattress in the back of the Kingswood so dad could go in and "see a man about a dog"! We were lucky enough to share a lemonade and a packet of Twisties back in the day while we waited for dad to negotiate the terms of the purchase of the dog. We never actually got the dog, I must say! But dad certainly enjoyed his negotiations at the Yarloop Hotel.

That is not to make light of this situation. It took eight minutes for the town that was so special to me, my dad and my grandparents to be razed to the ground. There were 161 buildings lost in eight minutes. The people who experienced the fire said that all they could see and hear was the roar of an incredible fireball going over their heads. It passed from the foothills to the coast within eight minutes. I cannot imagine what that would have been like for the people who were there at the time, but I know that an incredible man called Jim Britza from the Harvey Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service was very instrumental in keeping a lot of people safe at the Yarloop oval. I will not go into the details around that, but I know the people of Yarloop are incredibly grateful for his work in keeping them safe.

As I said, the loss of Yarloop was devastating on a personal level. My dad was devastated. I remember calling him and saying, "How are you feeling?" He said, "It's like I've lost a child." I can only agree that that would be the feeling someone would have in that situation. My nanna was 98 at the time, and in a nursing home in Waroona. They were all ready to evacuate, but they were not sure whether the whole town of Waroona would need to evacuate at that time. The decision was made by my family to not show my nanna the news footage of what had happened to Yarloop. We did not want her to see anything in the paper, either. They had generators for electricity, and things were pretty limited, so keeping that news from her was reasonably easy, but we just knew what the impact would be on her of losing everything she had ever known. She had been brought to Yarloop by her father, who came there to work at the Bunnings mill. They moved there from Menzies in 1919, when my nanna was a baby. I cannot remember the exact story, but I think there was mention of a horse and wheelbarrow bringing all their belongings from Menzies to Yarloop. As a 98-year-old, she did not know anything other than her community, and she had been very involved in the community for years, so we decided that we really did not want her to see any of it until we could take her back to Yarloop and show her, in person, the devastation of what had happened to the community. My aunts Cheryl and Marie took my nanna back through Yarloop to see the devastation, and I think it is probably something that she never really got over. She passed away at the age of 100, and that certainly stayed with her as one of the great sadnesses of her life.

The experiences of people around Yarloop and Waroona were nothing short of harrowing. I can only be incredibly grateful that I was not there. I respect and admire everyone who was there that night who helped and participated in keeping other people safe. As a community, they are incredibly resilient and have really tried to rebuild Yarloop, literally from the ashes. I wish them all the best in the years going forward. I can only imagine what the smell of smoke would do to them every time there is the hint of a bushfire, or the sound of water bombers or helicopters, or even notifications of extreme fire danger. When you talk to people who have lived through that, it is incredibly sobering.

I want to draw attention to the fact that this government knows how incredibly important it is to keep our community safe. I want to start by saying that this government has made a record investment in the emergency services in Western Australia. I want to touch on two points. Firstly, we have made some incredible funding and equipment available to improve PPE for firefighters and the appliances that firefighters tackle fires in. I also want to mention the Koolinup Emergency Services Centre, which is located in Collie. This is an initiative of the McGowan government's Collie Futures fund. Collie was chosen to serve as a level 3 incident control centre partly because of its location in relation to other areas in the south west. In the high fire season, if appliances are located in Collie, firefighters are already two hours closer to a fire in somewhere like Margaret River than they are if they try to deploy from the city. That is an incredible asset that this government has invested in. I know the people who work there are very proud of what they are doing and their role in the fire portfolio.

I would also like to mention the fact that Frontline Fire and Rescue Equipment is involved in manufacturing a large number of fire appliances within Western Australia. It received some money from the Collie Futures fund to set up a satellite manufacturing facility in Collie. It has been open for about 12 months now. I asked to have a look at the facility as the local member. I went through the facility a couple of weeks ago. I have to say I am incredibly

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Tuesday, 9 August 2022]

p3256b-3277a

Mr Shane Love; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Mark Folkard; Mrs Robyn Clarke; Mr Peter Rundle; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Hugh Jones; Dr David Honey; Ms Jodie Hanns; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Stephen Price

impressed with the manufacturing that is happening in the Collie location. The light manufacturing is occurring in a new warehouse in Collie, as part of the initiatives to employ people in Collie as we diversify our economy away from coal. It has employed 11 full-time people in that particular centre, which is incredible. When I spoke to the manager, they said Frontline is looking to employ up to five extra people to meet the contract to supply the government with appliances because the demand for what it is doing is so great. It was really great to walk in there. There were two ex-students of mine: one is a qualified tradesperson and one is a first-year apprentice. The McGowan government's investment in the fire and emergency services area is significant and impactful right across the regions in Western Australia. I am told that it is manufacturing broadacre tankers and I believe that there is a very distinct possibility that the manufacturing process of the recent Hithergreen Bush Fire Brigade tankers started in Collie, which is fabulous.

I want to mention some volunteers, who are probably the backbone of regional communities, for their contribution to keeping communities safe. In June, Minister Dawson, Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner Darren Klemm and I travelled to Beelerup. For those who do not know, Beelerup is a very small locality just outside of Donnybrook. We went there to celebrate four long-serving members at the Beelerup fire station. They were all men, so I can say servicemen. The four members were celebrating a combined 235 years of service to Western Australia. They are four very longstanding members of the Beelerup Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade and it was incredible to meet with them back in June. Colin Sharp, who is a volunteer firefighter, received a 65-year service medal and certificate. He is the longest-serving member of Beelerup. There was some conjecture about that and it astounds me to think that there was somebody in the brigade who was very close to that. His son Chris Sharp is also a member of the same brigade.

[Member's time extended.]

Ms J.L. HANNS: Bruce Hearman received a 60-year service certificate and medal. His brother Peter Hearman and local legend Tom Sheehan were recognised for 55 years of service. I think that is an incredible testament to the dedication of volunteers keeping their communities safe across regional Western Australia. I would like to thank Colin, Bruce, Peter and Tom very much for their service and efforts. I know that they have families who support them to volunteer and spend time keeping their community safe.

I would also like to very quickly mention the fact that the WA Fire and Emergency Services Awards opened earlier this year and I nominated three individuals and organisations in my electorate. I nominated the Gelorup Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade for the firefighting team achievement award and I must say that I am slightly nervous about this. Gelorup are awesome, but they are up against Broome. I am friends with the member for Kimberley and I am not sure how that friendship will end! The member for Roe has also nominated a team. They are the three finalists: Broome, Gelorup and Wagin. It is a battle of the regions for the firefighting team achievement award. I want to place it on record, despite who wins on the evening, that I think Gelorup should absolutely win!

I will say a little bit about the Gelorup Bush Fire Brigade. It has around 30 volunteers and its captain, Glenys Malatesta, is an absolute legend. I think she was nominated as the unofficial mayor of Gelorup and I think the ABC featured her recently. Over the last 12 months, people from the Gelorup Bush Fire Brigade have assisted with the Bridgetown–Hester timber mill fire, the Collie lightning strikes that occurred this year, the Mandurah–Nambeelup fire, and fires in Margaret River, Perth, Busselton and North Boyanup. They spread themselves all over the place. Whenever they are required, they get in their appliances and they are off helping not just their community, but also communities all over Western Australia.

Brigade members are also regular volunteers for community events like food truck nights and local market days. They help pack up, set up and assist with parking and crowd control in their local community. They display good humour and I want to recount a story that I put into the submission to the WAFES Awards. I am sure this will get them across the line! When they were called to get a young child's cat out of a tree, there was discussion between the members who attended about whether to use the ladder or the high-pressure hose. Thankfully, and much to the relief of the cat, they selected the ladder as the preferred method of extraction from the tree and the cat was very safely returned to its owner.

Gelorup Bush Fire Brigade's commitment to its community also extends to community education programs. Just before the fire season commences each year, it holds a community safety program at the station. In 2021, it included the Bunbury State Emergency Service, the Bunbury marine service, DFES Bunbury staff, Capel shire emergency management staff and other local brigades. Over 300 people attended, including local residents and residents from Bunbury, Dalyellup and Dardanup. The brigade advises local residents on how to properly prepare their property for fire season. Its volunteers also go out to individual home owners and landowners to give them targeted advice on how to prepare their firebreaks and prune their trees. This is incredible commitment from absolutely legendary local volunteers who give up their time to help keep their community safe.

I was very pleased to hear that the Gelorup Bush Fire Brigade was awarded more than \$1 million to undertake major upgrades to its station, which will further improve on the grand plans it has for its community. For a bush

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Tuesday, 9 August 2022]

p3256b-3277a

Mr Shane Love; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Mark Folkard; Mrs Robyn Clarke; Mr Peter Rundle; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Hugh Jones; Dr David Honey; Ms Jodie Hanns; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Stephen Price

fire brigade in a small country town, Gelorup volunteers punch well above their weight and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them and all the very dedicated volunteers in my electorate of Collie–Preston. I thank them very much for their support for our community.

I want to go back and again touch on the experiences of people in Yarloop and Waroona and why this particular bill is very important to make sure that we have a national approach to fire danger warnings. As I said, I was in Busselton in 2016 and I saw the smoke and things happening, and the impact of the fire itself in Yarloop. We packed up our caravan in the January of that year, as I had long service leave from the Department of Education. My family and I travelled across to the eastern states, back to one of our favourite places that is not in Western Australia, Apollo Bay, and we travelled the Great Ocean Road. Coincidentally, the Great Ocean Road had already suffered its own bushfires that year and was closed for a time during the period of December–January 2016. It was only when I was reading through the information about the Bush Fires Amendment Bill that I really reflected on the possibility of us being in Apollo Bay, Lorne or Wye River when those fires occurred. If there was a different warning system, it would be really problematic for tourists and visitors to a region or a state.

Reflecting on my experiences, I can absolutely see the merit of a nationally consistent approach, all with the aim of being able to respond to bushfire dangers in a timely fashion to make sure that all our communities are kept safe. I commend this bill to the house.

MS M.M. QUIRK (Landsdale) [6.21 pm]: As is customary for bills such as the Bush Fires Amendment Bill 2022, we have heard from many members who have country electorates for which emergency management and bushfire control are particularly important. I will make some observations as a member whose electorate is on the urban fringe, but more of that later.

I have had a long-term interest in emergency management. I was fortunate enough to be parliamentary secretary to the minister who introduced the emergency services levy, and we travelled throughout the state talking to volunteers and career firefighters about the impact the levy would have on resourcing the valuable work that they do. I was then shadow minister for eight years and in that capacity I travelled throughout the state talking to firefighters, the State Emergency Service, Marine Rescue Western Australia and so on. So this is an issue that is close to my heart.

During the course of those discussions and consultations, I also had to absorb the recommendations of both the Keelty report and the Ferguson report and I listened to the representations from the United Firefighters Union and various volunteer organisations. Those reports tell us that clear communication is essential so that everyone understands what the terms mean and can respond in a similar fashion when those particular terms are used. Consistency is incredibly important, and the need for consistent messaging was certainly stressed and emphasised in reports such as the Ferguson and Keelty reports. There also needs to be consistency across state borders. Given that in recent times we have quite often sent firefighters to other states to assist, and vice versa, we all need to be operating in a similar fashion.

Although the scope of this bill is reasonably narrow, it does have much broader implications, and it is important that we all communicate in a consistent way. That said, media hyperbole is never very helpful in this regard. Using the term “catastrophic” in the news bulletin may somewhat diminish or devalue the term, but that is another issue. I just make the point that things tend to escalate in the media. The use of “catastrophic” as a technical term, which is what we will be enacting through this bill, is different from the way that a layperson might use the word. I make that as a general observation.

I want to talk a bit about building resilience in our community. In view of events in the eastern states—the persistent flooding and the bushfire crises that have been prominent there in recent years—I have been reflecting on how we can make our communities more resilient, rather than just responding after the disasters have occurred. There are other financial implications with how we respond to emergencies. For example, I do not know whether it has improved in recent years, but residents in towns like Port Hedland find it very hard to get flood insurance, and I imagine similar stories are coming out of the eastern states. How can we ensure people can make prudent arrangements for their own households and properties when insurance is not readily available?

I am pleased to say that the insurance industry is proceeding down the prevention line, realising that it is cheaper to invest in measures to mitigate the damage. For example, I have had discussions with insurers that were partnering with the Queensland government to invest in levies for places that are particularly vulnerable to flooding. Of course, floods that were described as hundred-year events are suddenly happening on a much more routine basis. This is part of the climate change challenge that we face that relates to not only bushfires but also inundation through floods. I have also visited the delegation of the World Bank in Jakarta, where they were funding projects to minimise flooding.

We need to think a bit more holistically about mitigation, and that was one of the issues we raised there. We also need to think about these challenges and where we deploy our personnel. I tend to think that having only four career stations in regional Western Australia—Albany, Bunbury, Geraldton and Kalgoorlie—is not enough. It may well be that we should think about having career personnel who have more of an SES focus in some of the towns up north.

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Tuesday, 9 August 2022]

p3256b-3277a

Mr Shane Love; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Mark Folkard; Mrs Robyn Clarke; Mr Peter Rundle; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Hugh Jones; Dr David Honey; Ms Jodie Hanns; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Stephen Price

It is fantastic that we have about 20 000 volunteers who assist, but if we are going to meet the challenges, which seem to be arising more regularly, then we need to think about how we deploy our personnel.

In terms of communication, there has always been a bit of an issue about the likelihood of people who live in suburbia being the victims of a bushfire. Some people in suburbia hear the messages on television and on radio, or through Facebook, and assume that it is about the bush and people who live in Toodyay or Margaret River, and it does not apply to them. There may well need to be some refining of the messages for people who live in the outer suburbs, for example. I do not think people in suburbia absorb the messages and prepare as enthusiastically or as completely as people in regional areas who are surrounded by bush.

It also needs to be remembered that a third of our community was born overseas, and half of our community has one parent who was born overseas. I recall being told by someone who lived in Banjup, or somewhere in the southern suburbs, that they had criticised one of their neighbours who spoke Vietnamese, because when there was a doorknock and they were asked to evacuate, they did not do so, and how un-Australian this was. The bottom line is that those residents might not have readily understood what their obligations were, or the urgency of the situation. I have always thought that in those situations, a little card with community languages on it should be handed out to tell people, in a language that is accessible to them, what they should do if they are required to evacuate. That has always been something that has occurred to me for people who are not consumers of mainstream media. Certainly the communications from the Department of Fire and Emergency Services have improved markedly in the last few years.

The other issue that I want to talk to is the emergency services levy. That is very much about equipping our career and volunteer facilities with state-of-the-art appliances. However, more and more people are now paying the maximum rate of levy; therefore, it is arguable that we should set aside a bit more money for fire mitigation. It is also inequitable, because people who live near a career fire station pay a higher rate of ESL than people in the regions, who pay little, if no, ESL but get the benefit of bushfire mitigation that previously was funded out of the former Department of Environment but is now funded out of the ESL. We also need to be mindful that we do not use the increased ESL funds as an excuse to reduce the government's general appropriation. There is a lot to be done in the mitigation area. I consider that the ESL should be used for mitigation.

The last matter that I want to raise has been the subject of my representations to three ministers, so it does not fill me with any sort of pride or satisfaction that it remains unresolved. I want to relay briefly what I would describe as a Kafkaesque situation. It relates to some young first home buyers, Melissa and Vaughan. They had bought a block of land in my electorate, which, as I said earlier, is in the peri-urban fringe. They put in a planning application, and through a minor technical glitch at the council, it was sent back to them and they were asked to make a couple of amendments. By the time their application got back to the council, the new rules for bushfire attack level assessments had come into force. That meant another expenditure for Melissa and Vaughan of between \$30 000 and \$50 000, and bearing in mind that they are young first home buyers, that was out of their range.

Their block was on an otherwise settled suburban street. However, it was perpendicular to a commercial lot that was on a main arterial road and had been earmarked for future commercial development. However, because that block had not been cleared, the couple were not able to build. As I said, they now face the added burden of having to make quite extensive improvements. While they were waiting for their land to be settled and contemplating what they would do, they were also paying rent for other premises, and they were paying land tax, which the Treasurer has little discretion to remove in any event. As I said, it has a Kafkaesque veneer to it.

We soldiered on. There was extensive correspondence, and various meetings. We managed to secure the services of volunteers, and a bulldozer, to clear the adjacent land. I stress that it was not Melissa and Vaughan's land; it was the neighbouring commercial site. We approached the council with that proposal and asked what attitude it would take if the land was cleared more than was necessary to influence the BAL, and the council came back and said that it would agree to that and would reduce the BAL only if the owners of the commercial site agreed to a permanent easement over the property to enable ongoing maintenance and clearing in future years. This is bearing in mind that it was likely that the commercial premises would be developed in the not-too-distant future. As I wrote in my letter to the council —

Whilst such a suggestion is an attempt to resolve the matter, it is arguable that it goes beyond the powers which a Council can exercise under the *Bushfire Act 1954* and regulations as well as State Planning Policy ...

I then cite those powers —

Under those laws and policy the bushfire control officer can do a number of things including:-

- Issue of clearing permit;
- Postponement of burning;
- Issue of permit for burning;

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Tuesday, 9 August 2022]

p3256b-3277a

Mr Shane Love; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Mark Folkard; Mrs Robyn Clarke; Mr Peter Rundle; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Hugh Jones; Dr David Honey; Ms Jodie Hanns; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Stephen Price

- Issue of directions to clear fire breaks;
- Take water, remove fences to assist in the extinguishment of a bushfire; &
- Issue notices to clear land.

In addition to those powers the *State Planning policy 3.7* contemplates that a local government body may impose a condition on a land owner.

In other words, nowhere in the *Bushfire Act* is the imposition of a permanent easement on land authorised. Moreover under *State Planning policy 3.7*, the imposition of conditions is permitted for a landowner/applicant not on neighbouring properties.

[Member's time extended.]

Ms M.M. QUIRK: As I suggested to the council at the time, the imposition of a permanent easement on the land at 355 Alexander Drive, which is the commercial site, may not be something that the council or even the Department of Fire and Emergency Services can lawfully impose.

That letter was written in May 2019. Melissa and Vaughan were extremely patient, but, despite that, life moves on, and they wanted to get on with things, so they regretfully had to sell the block, no doubt at a much reduced price. The irony is that the commercial development, which was effectively the land that needed to be approved, has since been the subject of a development application to council and has been approved. If Melissa and Vaughan had the resources to wait a few years, they would have been in a better position, but with the land tax and rent and no end in sight, despite the very good efforts of many people, they were unable to build on that site. I raise this matter in the sense that the bushfire attack level was a relatively new system. I think the people who were making the assessments were risk-averse and maybe a little too conservative in their assessment. I actually agree with the whole system and I voted for it in this place, but the property was within 20 metres of a main road, within seven kilometres of Malaga Fire Station, fewer than six kilometres from Wangara Fire Station, 11 kilometres from Duncraig Fire Station, 15 kilometres from Joondalup and Osborne Park Fire Stations, and 14 kilometres from Kiara Fire Station. It is not as though this property was in the middle of nowhere. It had access to a speedy response from fire appliances from all those stations. It was next to a major arterial road—Alexander Drive—but, despite that, the highest assessment was put on the property. This is particularly frustrating because I was told in 2017 that the Department of Fire and Emergency Services was doing work with the CSIRO to develop a technological solution that would enable a much more precise assessment of bushfire risk on a much smaller scale, which would probably have meant that that particular block may well not have been the subject of this rather broadbrush assessment.

To conclude, as I said, I certainly commend this bill to the house. I consider that there needs to be a refinement of the way we look at bushfire risk and the application of bushfire assessments for building. It is trite to say that the cheapest property is in the peri-urban fringe, but this is where this very crisis arose. We are, of course, subject to much pressure by the building industry to build homes for first home buyers like Vaughan and Melissa, and the cheapest land tends to be on the fringe of the metropolitan area. I would welcome any progression and expedition of what has been a long-term collaboration with the CSIRO to progress, with due expedition, a more sophisticated and refined bushfire assessment process.

MR S.J. PRICE (Forrestfield — Deputy Speaker) [6.42 pm]: It gives me great pleasure to contribute to the debate on the Bush Fires Amendment Bill 2022, and I certainly fully support it. The bill itself contains a number of minor amendments to the Bush Fires Act, but practically and in reality, they are significant changes. We have heard this evening a little bit about the importance of communication. I think that simplifying the fire index and the terminology that is used is a very positive step forward in dealing with what, in my words, would be complacency when it comes to the risk of fire.

I was personally saddened listening to the member for Collie—Preston talk about what happened at Yarloop, but to go and actually physically see it as well was quite devastating. I remember that in 2016, I was on holiday in Kalbarri and everything blew up very quickly. The fire, as the member said, was started by lightning strikes in an area that we would not have thought would have created anywhere near the devastation that it did. The fire jumped the highway and razed Yarloop in a short time. I remember some of the commentary by, I think, Phil Penny, who was the chief bushfire control officer at the time. He demanded resources because of the issue of water supply. As a result of the fire going through the town, it could not be accessed for quite a while, but people could go down the South Western Highway through Yarloop and see that people's houses—your house—were just not there.

I grew up in Harvey and spent a lot of my time playing sport in Yarloop, so a lot of the places there are quite close to my heart. I worked at Wagerup for a good 10 or 11 years with the member for Collie—Preston's dad. I would say that some of it was pretty close personally. Like Col, I certainly enjoyed Yarloop Hotel! Quite often we stopped in there on the way home from work and had a couple of beers and played a lot of sport at the back of the tavern, so we were

Mr Shane Love; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Mark Folkard; Mrs Robyn Clarke; Mr Peter Rundle; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Hugh Jones; Dr David Honey; Ms Jodie Hanns; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Stephen Price

always at the back of the hotel and the shops. When the town opened up and we could get through to look at it—they were letting only residents in there for a while—I saw the devastation and the things that were gone. That was really surprising. It was the first place that I had been to that was severely impacted by bushfire where buildings had been lost to that degree. I was with Senator Glenn Sterle and a gentleman who was visiting by the name of Didier Pontzele, who works for the Belgian War Graves Service. Previously, we had been to the Western Front in Belgium, Ypres and Menin Gate with a group of Darling Range Sports College students. Didier was tied up with all that. He was visiting us and we went to Yarloop for Anzac Day in 2016. That was quite a surreal and sad moment. The whole town came out for that. It was wonderful to see the resilience of the people of Yarloop. It is one of those places, like any country small town, where the people who live there love it and the people who drive through it wonder why people live there.

Ms J.L. Hanns: I actually met Didier on the Western Front in Belgium. There we go.

Mr S.J. PRICE: He is a lovely man and does an amazing job. For members who do not know about the Belgian War Graves Service, it is funded by the commonwealth and is still finding bodies of Australian soldiers on the Western Front. The bodies are exhumed and put in one of the many, many graveyards that are around the area. It is fabulous work that still goes on today. It is amazing that farmers tilling their fields will come across a body. It is horrendous to think about, but a process is in place to collect them and honour them, which is wonderful.

I make this contribution as an ex-volunteer bush fire fighter. I used to be the captain of the West Dardanup Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade down in Dardie for a while and I was the deputy chief fire control officer down there for a little bit as well. I had a bit to do with bushfires, but, subsequent to that, when I went to work for the Australian Workers' Union, I was responsible for looking after all the Department of Environment and Conservation guys and girls at the time—the conservation workers—who did all the prescribed burning and firefighting work. They looked after all the crown land and forests and everything that we have. I had a lot to do with them. It is interesting that we continue to learn about dealing with fire behaviour, and certainly climate change is having a significant impact on the behaviour we are seeing on all sorts of weather patterns these days. In particular, the fires are certainly getting much larger than they used to be and are taking longer to control.

As I mentioned before, I come from Harvey. Harvey was pretty much a forestry town when I was growing up. That was a big part of the town. People either worked in forestry or at the abattoirs—one of the two. Unfortunately, quite often people would be killed. The dad of someone you went to school with would be killed dropping a tree for the forestry operation or whatever, so you grew up knowing the danger of the bush.

Back in the late 1990s, early 2000s, CSIRO ran a big research project called Project Vesta, which was about trying to understand the behaviour of bushfires. The researchers went to locations with certain types of fuel loadings; for example, we have different fuel loadings in the jarrah forest versus the Swan coastal plain versus the karri forests down south. The researchers went to different areas and lit fires and monitored them and recorded the behaviour and tried to make changes to the way we deal with bushfires. Project Vesta did a section of the forest in Harvey. Interestingly, when I was preparing for this debate, I saw a press release that came out from the CSIRO on 2 November 2007 that states —

The findings of Australia's most extensive study to date of the behaviour of high-intensity bushfires in eucalypt forests—Project Vesta—provides valuable new tools and information for fire managers across Australia.

Officially released today in Perth by the Western Australian Environment and Climate Change Minister, Mr David Templeman ...

One of the key things that came out of Project Vesta was the term “dead man zone”. If members have seen a picture of a fire, they will know that it is like a teardrop. It has a small front and big flanks and then it goes into a tail. Project Vesta identified one of the biggest risks to firefighters. They come off the flanks to attack the head and they do not go in front of the fire, but if there is a wind change, the flank becomes the head fire. That is a longer distance, so it becomes more volatile and risky. The project came up with methods of avoiding the dead man zone. It was a very important change to the way people handle fire and suppress fire, especially bushfires, in different typography with different types of fuel loading.

Unfortunately, part of my other experience when I was looking after the Department of Environment and Conservation firefighters was with a fire in Albany called the Black Cat Creek fire. That was on 12 October 2012, which is nearly 10 years ago. That fire was in a particularly tricky place in Kalgan. It was said that the area potentially had not been burned for 50 or 60-odd years. The weather conditions on the day were a bit tricky and it was in a difficult place high up on a hill. The unfortunate end result was that some vehicles and some DEC people got caught in a burn-over, and one in particular got burnt quite severely. Her name was Wendy Bearfoot. I met Wendy. I actually signed her up to the union. I started looking after the DEC guys in about 2007 or 2008. Albany was somewhere I liked to use to go all the time. There was Wendy; she was great. “Peno”, Tim—a few of the guys had been there for a while and had a good experience with dealing with fire in the area. They were all caught up in the fire. Four

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Tuesday, 9 August 2022]

p3256b-3277a

Mr Shane Love; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Mark Folkard; Mrs Robyn Clarke; Mr Peter Rundle; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Hugh Jones; Dr David Honey; Ms Jodie Hanns; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Stephen Price

people were injured that day, unfortunately. Wendy got severely burnt, and about three weeks later she ended up dying from her injuries. Unfortunately, they got caught in the dead man zone and the emergency equipment on the trucks at that time was not really good enough. From that, the investigation determined that we need to put a lot more safety equipment into the vehicles that we operate with our DEC and volunteer bush fire brigade guys to give them the best possible chance of survival should they get caught in a situation like that. These were experienced firefighters who got caught in a burn-over. They knew a weather change was coming. They knew the terrain they were in. They had a plan. Unfortunately, the wind changed before they could execute the plan, and they got caught. But if they had had the equipment that we are now providing all our volunteer and career firefighters and our Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions people, they would have survived.

The positive part of the story is that after Wendy got killed, a review was undertaken that identified all the additional equipment that needs to be put onto the vehicles. Today, in our caucus meeting, we heard a conversation about—we are not supposed to talk about what happens in caucus—new fire equipment, a light tanker, at the Karnup volunteer fire brigade. They have sprays, curtains, filters, air cleaners and all the stuff that they have identified that the machines need. It has taken 10 years to get there, but to hear that all this equipment is now being used and instigated as part of what we do is wonderful. It is a credit to everyone in the department who followed through in making sure that we do all this. It is an unfortunate situation. We do not have it happen very often, but as long as we learn and improve things when mistakes happen, we continue to do good stuff.

Coming back to the bill, this change is a simple and smart change. There are some questions about the application of it, but I think it is very clear. There are some great volunteer firefighters in the City of Kalamunda. The City of Kalamunda has one of the highest fire danger ratings. My advice to people is: leave early. Pack up. Have a plan. Leave early because if you think you are going to have time to do something when it is happening, you will not.

I live in Wattle Grove, which is in the foothills of Kalamunda, so I am not at the top of the hill, but that area of the city has a dense tree canopy; the whole of Forrestfield, Kalamunda and High Wycombe have a beautiful amount of trees. It is a very old, established place, so the fire risk in that area is quite significant. The City of Kalamunda has been quite diligent in the last couple of years in ensuring that everyone abides by the hazard reduction requirements in the area, which has been great. There has been only one fire of any significance in the last couple of years, which started at the foot of Lesmurdie Falls and raced up the hill to Kalamunda—very fast. If there had not been the aerial support that we now have to contain that fire, properties would certainly have been lost very quickly. Once again, it is about ensuring that we provide the most adequate equipment for all our volunteers. It is important that we have proper plans and processes in place. The aerial support we have now is absolutely brilliant.

When I was a volunteer firefighter, we were starting to get aerial support. I think we had maybe four bombers in the state. There were two in Perth and I think one in Manjimup and maybe another one down south. Depending where the fire went, they all went. If we had more than one fire going at one stage, it was very difficult. Now we have the supertanker, the big helicopter—whatever that is called—the small helicopters and the water bombers. We have a lot of aerial support for the people on the ground who are at the face of it all. We have to continue to make sure we do that, and one of the biggest thing we have to make sure of is that the firefighters do not have to worry about residents.

If people are in their way, there are people who need to be evacuated or they have to take care of something additional, it takes them away from what they should be doing. Everyone who lives in those sorts of areas needs to make sure that they have a plan. They need to make sure that everyone in their family knows the plan and they need to activate it early, because once the road is closed or the fire is upon them, it is very hard to get out amongst everything. Avoiding that situation is the best possible outcome.

The other part to this, of course, is ensuring that everyone is aware of the changes. Making sure that there is a good education program for this is extremely important. Having a clear understanding about what the changes in language will mean or the changes in the four ratings will have as an impact, for example, on vehicle movement, is very important, because fires do not happen by themselves. No-one intentionally goes out to light a fire. Most people do not intentionally go out to light a fire. Predominantly, they are an accidental outcome that people do not think about or did not intend to happen. As long as we can mitigate the number of times that happens, that is a good step forward.

More and more people are living in places where they never used to. The risk of accidental ignition happens as a natural result of population spread. It is important that we educate people. Everyone has gone for their little tree change. People are coming out of the city and are going to live in regional areas. They may not have a good understanding of the risks associated with living in those particular areas, especially as our weather patterns change. As mentioned earlier, we manage fire risk very well in WA. Our Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions guys are the best at what they do when it comes to prescribed burning and making sure that we have the appropriate matrix of fire fuel loadings across the high-risk areas in WA. Unfortunately, for those people who do not like the smoke coming across the city, bush smoke is a much better smell than house smoke. A structural

Extract from *Hansard*

[ASSEMBLY — Tuesday, 9 August 2022]

p3256b-3277a

Mr Shane Love; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Mark Folkard; Mrs Robyn Clarke; Mr Peter Rundle; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Hugh Jones; Dr David Honey; Ms Jodie Hanns; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Stephen Price

fire is worse for them. We need to do what we can to ensure that people are aware as much as possible about the requirements when it comes to these changes. On that, I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned, on motion by **Ms C.M. Rowe**.

House adjourned at 7.02 pm
