

WAROONA–YARLOOP BUSHFIRES — FERGUSON REPORT

**427. Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN to the Minister for Emergency Services:**

Before I ask my question I would like to acknowledge the tremendous students from St Joseph's College in Albany on behalf of the member for Albany.

I refer to the Waroona fire special report and the many recommendations involving the Department of Fire and Emergency Services.

- (1) Why has the government consistently failed to meet its burn-off targets, and does the minister support DFES taking over these responsibilities?
- (2) Why did the minister and Commissioner Wayne Gregson not accompany the Premier to the event in Harvey this morning?

**Mr J.M. FRANCIS replied:**

- (1)–(2) Let me answer the last question first. If I was in Harvey today, members opposite would be screaming that I was avoiding the scrutiny of question time.

Several members interjected.

**Mr J.M. FRANCIS:** You would be saying, “Why was the minister down there? The Premier's already down there. Euan Ferguson's down there. What was he doing down there?” You cannot win; you just cannot win! I am here so that I can answer the member's questions. That is why I am here and not down there.

The other question as far as burn-off targets is concerned —

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Members! Member for Cockburn.

**Mr J.M. FRANCIS:** Unfortunately, they tend to do this from time to time; they ask the wrong minister. The Minister for Environment is responsible for prescribed burning.

**Mr M. McGowan:** You are here to answer the questions. You just said that.

**Mr J.M. FRANCIS:** About my portfolio. If it is about the Minister for Environment's portfolio, members opposite should ask him.

**Mr M. McGowan** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Leader of the Opposition!

**Mr J.M. FRANCIS:** He is sitting right here. The member asked the wrong minister. Oops, you've done it again!

**The SPEAKER:** Through the Chair!

*Point of Order*

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** The question was very clear: does the minister support his own agency taking over that responsibility? It was not a question to another minister.

**The SPEAKER:** Right, thank you.

*Questions without Notice Resumed*

**Mr J.M. FRANCIS:** To come to the question seriously, what I do support is the same position as the Leader of the Opposition. To quote the Leader of the Opposition from his media release, it deserves mature consideration. I agree with the Leader of the Opposition. That is what the government is going to do.

**Mr D.J. Kelly** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Sit down. Member for Bassendean, I call you to order for the first time. Minister, quickly.

**Mr J.M. FRANCIS:** What I would say is that one of the key recommendations in that report, if not the biggest recommendation, was about whether we should establish a rural fire service. I know that the Leader of the Opposition asked the Premier about that on Tuesday. It is not an easy answer. As members will have seen from an article in *The West Australian* today, there are a lot of different views on this. Before we can consider who should take over what responsibility and whether there should be a rural fire service, we have to ask: what is the primary aim of what we are trying to achieve? Obviously, if it is going to make the state a safer place, we would have to give it some consideration. If the primary role of such a service is to ensure that we get a more coordinated approach around different agencies and across different levels of government—state, local and federal—and to play a role in mitigation and hazard risk reduction, obviously we need to give that some serious consideration. With all due respect to the Leader of the Opposition, he knows that it is not a question that can be answered that simply.