

Division 73: Fire and Emergency Services —

[Supplementary Information No B22.]

Question: Ms M.M. Quirk asked: A tender was put out for a consultant to advise the department on training and capital expenditure to handle burn over incidents. Why did that expertise not exist in the department already?

Answer: The Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) advertised for tenders for a Risk Assessment on Fire Crew Protection For Various Types of Appliances on 19 October 2012. This tender did not proceed as post the Black Cat Creek incident (Death of the Department of Environment and Conservation Fire-fighter Wendy Barefoot) DFES determined that the bushfire fleet should be brought to a level consistent with practice in other Australian jurisdictions.

DFES did not go to tender seeking advice on capital expenditure or staff training in relation to burn overs.

[Supplementary Information No B23.]

Question: Mr F.M. Logan asked: What will be the impact of the public sector workforce reform on the Department of Fire and Emergency Services?

Answer: While the Department of Fire and Emergency Services recognises its responsibilities to support Government's savings goals there is limited capacity to achieve savings on salaries and wages due to the Department's low vacancy rate of 0.04%.

The Department faces additional pressures on salaries and wages given the Department's commitment to:

- meet a 4.5% increase in salaries to existing staff due to approved Award and Agreement increases;
- appoint 29 additional firefighter recruits to train in the delivery frontline services; and
- meet Government's commitment to implementing the recommendations of the Perth Hills Bushfire Report through the engagement of additional staffing resources and services.

In its limited capacity the Department will:

- not fill vacant positions, unless by exception;
- not backfill positions vacated due to HDA arrangements, unless by exception; and
- review program of works and prioritise projects.

However, it is acknowledged that this suite of measures is a short-term solution at best and will not fully achieve the savings required in the mid to long-term.

Given the majority of DFES's workforce are frontline and currently operate within a minimum crewing methodology the new salary cap approach imposes greater challenges that will undoubtedly require more significant measures over the mid to long term to sustain the new workforce reform agenda.

I have endorsed a submission from the Department, in accordance with the approved process, for the EERC to consider a partial re-instatement of the targeted savings.