

FIRE EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS — COLLIE–PRESTON ELECTORATE

2107. Mr M.P. Murray to the Minister for Emergency Services

- (1) Is the Minister aware that residents and emergency workers in the areas of Noggerup, Lowden and Mumballup in the electorate of Collie–Preston have had recent experiences of poor fire emergency communications?
- (2) Is the Minister aware that the only available communication for the Fire and Emergency Services Authority (FESA) and the Western Australia Police was at the local hotel?
- (3) Is the Minister aware that these areas are poorly serviced by mobile phone and emergency communications coverage?
- (4) What does the Minister intend to do to remedy this situation?
- (5) When can the residents expect this situation to be remedied?
- (6) Will the Minister instruct FESA to provide these residents with an emergency number to seek information in the interim?
- (7) Is it the Minister's intention to improve mobile phone coverage to these areas; and
  - (a) if so, when can this be expected to occur?
- (8) What will the Minister do to assist the FESA workers in these areas to have reliable means of communication?
- (9) Will the Western Australia Police have access to the same lines of communication?

Mr R.F. JOHNSON replied:

- (1) No. Radio communication for FESA and Local Government Bush Fire Brigades is available in all of the localities mentioned.
- (2) No. Radio communications (VHF Mid band) were operable for FESA, Local Government Bush Fire Brigades and Department of Environment and Conservation resources.
- (3) Emergency Communications rely on a radio network independent of mobile telephone coverage.
- (4)-(5) Not applicable
- (6) No. When an incident threatens lives or property, FESA activates the already established Public Information system which includes:
  - FESA's recorded information line — 1300 657 209;
  - Emergency broadcasts on local ABC radio stations;
  - TV and radio news bulletins, print and online newspapers; and
  - Depending on the severity of the incident, a staff community information line may also be setup with the number publicised on the recorded information line when available. A TV crawler displaying messages at the bottom of the screen may also be used.
- (7) FESA does not rely on mobile telephone coverage for emergency communications in the operational field. Mobile telephone networks are not part of my Ministerial portfolio responsibilities.
  - (a) Not applicable
- (8) The current radio network is being further enhanced by the implementation of the Western Australian Emergency Radio Network (WAERN) project which provides for greater inter-agency communications and resilience.
- (9) WAERN is currently being deployed in the South West region and is expected to be completed by December 2010. Western Australia Police will have access to this network.