

FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES — RURAL FIRE DIVISION

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

In the minister's press release regarding the launch of the rural fire division on Friday, 13 April, he said —

“Our State is moving into an era of enhanced bushfire management with record funding that will strengthen efforts to keep our communities safe and provide even greater support for our bushfire volunteers.”

- (1) Does the minister stand by his statement of 9 May 2018 to the lower house in response to a request for his support of bushfire volunteers in Wiluna, in which he said —

I suggested that they convert to a volunteer fire and emergency services brigade so that it can be not only a bush fire brigade, but also, because of the isolation of Wiluna, trained in structural firefighting and the use of breathing apparatus, which I think will be far more appropriate for the town.

- (2) Was the minister suggesting that the McGowan government will not support local government-managed volunteer bush fire brigades when added capabilities are required unless they convert to Department of Fire and Emergency Services-managed volunteer fire and emergency services brigades?
- (3) If yes to (2), how does this translate to providing more support for our bushfire volunteers, as he claimed the RFD would do in his recent media statement?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:**

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. The Minister for Emergency Services has provided the following answer.

- (1) Yes.
- (2) No.
- (3) A key direction for a restructured DFES that incorporates the new rural fire division is the strengthening of volunteer relations across all volunteer groups in all parts of the agency's business. The minister will hold one or two volunteer advisory forums each year. The volunteer advisory committees, or a suitable alternative, will be reinvigorated or established if necessary. Two volunteer liaison officers will be employed in the office of the commissioner. One of the key functions of these positions will be to assist these committees to function effectively. There will be 11—one in each region—volunteer support officers appointed to assist brigade units, with the administration required to function effectively and enhance support within DFES.