

BUSHFIRE SUPPRESSION — WATER-BOMBING

274. Hon RICK MAZZA to the Minister for Environment:

I refer to the minister's response to my question without notice 56 on 15 March 2018, which stated that although no analysis of the cost-effectiveness of water-bombing is made for individual bushfires —

At the end of a bushfire season, overall operations are reviewed as good practice to ensure they are safe and efficient.

- (1) Will the review examine and compare the cost-effectiveness of water-bombers used in different categories of fire, namely —
 - (a) small fires burning under mild conditions; and
 - (b) large, high intensity fires?
- (2) If no to (1), why not?
- (3) Are cost-efficiency targets set for the use of water-bombers during a bushfire season; and, if so, what are they?
- (4) If no to (3), why not?
- (5) When is the review likely to be completed?
- (6) Will the review be made public?
- (7) If yes to (6), will the minister undertake to provide me with a copy?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of this question.

- (1)–(2) As referenced in my response to question without notice 56 on 15 March 2018, the review is of overall operations only, and is not conducted at a finer scale. The cost-effectiveness of water-bombers has been studied and reported on by the CSIRO in a report titled “The effect of aerial suppression on the containment time of Australian wildfires estimated by fire management personnel”, which I will table.
- (3)–(4) There are too many variables, including fire locations, vegetation and fuels, water availability, and season and contract length, involved in bushfire suppression for such targets to be meaningful. Aircraft are dispatched according to pre-established risk criteria and their effectiveness is then constantly monitored by ground and aerial operations staff in real time. It is standard practice for the air attack supervisors to provide feedback to the ground regarding effectiveness of aerial operations as outlined in section 8.10 of the “Aerial Fire Suppression Operating Procedures”, which I will table. Effectiveness is also reported on by the AAS post-incident as part of the flight log that covers a range of operational matters, and I will table this.
- (5) It is expected that the review will be completed by the end of this financial year.
- (6)–(7) It would not be appropriate to release the review publicly as it will contain commercially sensitive information related to contractors. However, the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions is willing to provide a briefing for the member on its operations and the review process.

[See paper 1285.]