

CYCLONE EMMA - HELP FROM VOLUNTEERS AND AGENCIES

Statement by Minister for Police and Emergency Services

MR J.B. D’ORAZIO (Ballajura - Minister for Police and Emergency Services) [2.12 pm]: In Western Australia, 2006 has been a busy year when it comes to cyclones and the flooding associated with them. First there was tropical cyclone Clare, quickly followed by tropical cyclone Daryl, and then at the start of this month tropical cyclone Emma. While we have been fortunate not to experience the likes of tropical cyclone Larry that has devastated parts of Queensland, Western Australian communities have had their share of heartbreak.

I acknowledge the work of a number of agencies and volunteers involved with the aftermath of tropical cyclone Emma. Tropical cyclone Emma dumped record rains on a number of towns in the Pilbara and Midwest regions, which resulted in the largest volume of river water seen in the Murchison basin in 45 years. It was recorded that the river had swollen to over 20-kilometres wide in parts normally only 500-metres wide. Eleven stations received early warning, advice and assistance. Unfortunately, the homesteads of four of these stations were inundated with water. All of the other stations reported water encroaching into outbuildings such as shearing sheds and living quarters.

The township of Kalbarri fared better after a coordinated effort, and plenty of hard work resulted in minimal damage. Credit must be given to all involved. A large number of volunteers, local government and government agencies - WA Police, the Water Corporation, Western Power, Main Roads WA, the Department of Conservation and Land Management, the Department of Water and the Flood Warning Centre - along with community members and business, worked together on the preparations at Kalbarri. This included 60 State Emergency Service volunteers from Carnarvon, Eneabba, Morawa, Geraldton and Kalbarri, 18 volunteers from Kalbarri Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service, the Volunteer Marine Rescue Service and the Bush Fire Brigade, along with residents and visitors. In total, 35 rolls of black plastic were used in the construction of levees in Kalbarri and at homesteads. Over 9 000 sandbags were used in Kalbarri, with a further 4 000 used at homesteads. The constructed levees in Kalbarri were successful in saving the Western Power electrical station, which, if damaged, would have resulted in half the town losing power and sewerage for up to three weeks.

Help was also provided via the state government with the announcement that communities with damage caused by flooding as a result of tropical cyclone Emma were eligible for financial assistance under the Western Australian natural disaster relief arrangements. Initial estimates are that the cost will be in excess of \$1 million. Final costs will not be known until the floodwaters recede. Applications are still being received for assessment.

Whilst the recovery process continues, on behalf of the state government I would like to say a heartfelt thankyou to all the emergency services volunteers and members of the local communities and government agencies for all they have done. Their actions embody the meaning of community.