

**AVON DESCENT**

*Statement by Member for Central Wheatbelt*

**MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt)** [12.50 pm]: Last weekend, over 400 competitors participated in the fiftieth Avon Descent, a gruelling two-day, 124-kilometre race—the longest whitewater event in the world. In 1972, the Northam tourist committee evaluated the possibility of a powerboat and canoe race from Northam to Perth along the Avon River. John Izzard, Ron Bairstow, Rob Leslie and Gerry Post successfully completed a test run, planning out the race for powerboats and paddlers. The first race was held in 1973 with 49 competitors, no rules, no officials, no checkpoints and very few spectators, covering 134 kilometres of the Avon and Swan Rivers. Since then, more than 35 000 people have participated in the Avon Descent, from novice paddlers to world champions and Olympic competitors. This year's oldest entrant was Mr Charlie Elliott at the age of 83 years. Charlie competed in the first Avon Descent in 1973 with little to no paddling experience, and went on to compete in 35 Avon Descents in Canadians, slalom, DR boats, marathon K1s, and single, double and triple surf skis, mostly of his own designs. The most experienced powerboat driver on the river was Gary McNamara, who has competed for over four decades. This year he took on his forty-fourth Avon Descent alongside current teammate Josh Dewar. I congratulate all the competitors, the crews, the committee led by the legend Greg Kaeding and the hundreds of volunteers who made it a safe and enjoyable event for everyone. Thank you also to the Shires of Northam, Toodyay and Bayswater for their support as host communities and making this iconic sporting event a fabulous community celebration every year.