

KIMBERLEY FLOODS — COMMUNITIES — RESPONSE

Statement by Minister for Community Services

MS S.E. WINTON (Wanneroo — Minister for Community Services) [12.16 pm]: As members know, in late December, the Kimberley suffered unprecedented flooding. In fact, it was the worst flooding that our state has ever seen—a one-in-100-year event. I lived in the Kimberley when I taught at Fitzroy Crossing for three years, and thought I had experienced challenging floods, but I had never seen anything like these floods. Its impact has been nothing short of devastating. As people often say, crisis and hardship can bring out the best in people. The affected communities have shown incredible strength, resilience and determination.

The response from service providers, volunteers, community organisations, the Department of Fire and Emergency Services and the Department of Communities—affectionately known on the ground as the purple shirts—has been incredible. These responders have worked tirelessly around the clock to provide emergency relief to flood-affected residents when they needed it most. When I visited the region with the Minister for Emergency Services and the member for Kimberley, the community was appreciative of this on-the-ground support. I want to acknowledge the member for Kimberley, who always provides invaluable local advice to me and all ministers and government, and who works tirelessly and advocates strongly for her community. I also want to thank the many local Aboriginal groups and organisations in Fitzroy Crossing that are on the front line, including Bunuba Dawangarri Aboriginal Corporation, Marra Worra Worra Aboriginal Corporation, Marninwarntikura Women’s Resource Centre, Nindilingarri Cultural Health Services, Leedal, Tarunda, Wangki Yupunanupurru Radio, and all the elders and local residents who have done so much.

We have a huge Communities team directly supporting the operational response and doing incredibly complex work following this difficult and traumatic event. An evacuation centre was stood up at the Fitzroy Crossing Recreation Centre that assisted people with accommodation, food, clothing and access to support services. Local providers were engaged to support community needs, including supplying bedding, laundry and dryer facilities. Communities and DFES worked closely to ensure that supplies of fresh food and produce were available across the region. A disaster response hotline was set up so that community members could access information, support and advice. The hotline has responded to well over 1 000 phone calls. A flood help centre, established in Fitzroy Crossing at the Tarunda supermarket, provided in-person assistance to affected residents. Significant financial support was committed, including for the cost of water and power bills, and for public housing tenants as rent relief. Increased airfare subsidies ensured that surging demand for flights between Derby and Broome could be met. We have worked together with the community and across government to provide support and assistance during this disaster. Our priority throughout this emergency has been keeping families together and on country, or as close to country as possible. That will remain during the recovery.