

VOLUNTEERING DEVELOPMENT SERVICES — REGIONS

Statement by Minister for Volunteering

MR D.T. PUNCH (Bunbury — Minister for Volunteering) [9.17 am]: I rise to advise the house that Western Australia has one of the strongest volunteering cultures in the country, especially in regional WA, so I am particularly pleased to advise the house that the Cook Labor government has announced a new \$2.1 million commitment to support and strengthen volunteering development services programs in the regions. This latest funding injection brings our commitment to the VDS program to more than \$6 million across five years.

Volunteering services and resource centres play a vital role in boosting volunteering across WA by developing more local opportunities, upskilling volunteers and collaborating with volunteer-involving organisations to respond to community needs. Additional funding will be used to address gaps for regional volunteering services and organisations across WA's regions, including the Kimberley, Pilbara, Gascoyne, midwest, wheatbelt, great southern and goldfields–Esperance. Funding will also be directed to Peel to expand a pilot program to support people with a disability to participate in volunteering.

In addition, the state government has also committed \$346 175 to establish a new VDS contract with Centacare Family Services to support volunteering opportunities in the Gascoyne region. Centacare's service in the Gascoyne region started from 1 January 2024, under a three-and-a-half-year contract, to align with the existing 13 funded services across the state.

I was pleased to connect with a host of local volunteers at the recent Albany community cabinet and can advise the house that this funding was very well received indeed and will go a long way to supporting the invaluable work of local volunteers in our regional communities.

The Cook government is committed to supporting more volunteering opportunities, and a procurement process is underway to expand volunteering development services into all regions of WA. For more information about a local VDS program, visit volunteeringwa.org.au.