

A NIGHT UNDER THE STARS EVENT

Statement by Member for Central Wheatbelt

MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt — Leader of the Opposition) [12.50 pm]: I rise to congratulate those involved in A Night Under The Stars, a gala event held on 5 March in a paddock in Williams to raise funds for and awareness of regional mental health and wellness. Set against the most amazing backdrop—a painted blue tree, a perfect wheatbelt sunset and clear skies filled with sparkling stars—this event hosted close to 500 people. I give special mention to organisers Courtney Thornton and Kendall Whyte, who worked tirelessly in this COVID environment to pull everything together.

The event raised \$80 000 and the proceeds will be split between groups that are focused on improving access to and support for regional mental health and wellness projects, including the Happiness Co Foundation, the Blue Tree Project, the Regional Men’s Health Initiative, the Mental Illness Fellowship of Western Australia, the 6B’s and mental health advocate Nick Robinson. I commend them all for their ongoing work to highlight this most important of issues, raising awareness and gathering support for initiatives that work for our country communities.

It is true that if you live in the bush, you can be characterised as pretty tough. The phrases “she’ll be right”, “toughen up” and “just get on with it” are common, but there is really no place for this when it sweeps issues under the rug, papering over pain or distress. One in five people in Australia will experience mental health issues in any given year. In regional Western Australia, these statistics are far higher for men, and this is also the case for those completing suicide. It is simply devastating, but it is not inevitable or unavoidable. Mental illness can be treated and managed, and mental wellness can be restored. That is why events like A Night Under The Stars are so important. Thank you very much to the organisers for inviting me to join them at this very special event.