

**NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK - “SEE THE CHANGE - VOLUNTEERING”**

*Statement by Minister for the Environment*

**MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah - Minister for the Environment)** [9.08 am]: This week is National Volunteer Week. The theme of the week is “See the change - Volunteering” and not only gives us the chance to acknowledge the work volunteers do, but also to draw public attention to that work and hopefully encourage even more community members to get involved. The research study “Giving Australia: Australians Giving and Volunteering 2004” reported that 37.3 per cent of Perth residents volunteered with an average of 118 hours per year and 49.4 per cent of rural West Australians volunteered with an average of 132 hours per year, putting our country people close to the top of volunteering rates across the nation. A recent survey by Newspoll reported that 77 per cent of respondents were more aware of volunteering and 80 per cent said they believed volunteering was more important for the community than it was five years ago.

It is not just the practical help that is worthwhile. Volunteering plays a vital role in ensuring healthy communities in Western Australia - communities that are connected and thrive on social interaction. The wider community of course benefits from projects made possible through the work of volunteers, but individuals also gain new life skills, make new friends and get the satisfaction that comes from making a difference. The government has a strong track record in supporting volunteering with the establishment of the volunteering secretariat in 2002. This will now reside within the new Department for Communities and will contribute to the government’s broader strategic objectives for strong communities. The Minister for Communities was pleased to announce last week recurrent funding valued at \$400 000 per annum for 16 volunteer resource centres across the state. This replaces grant funding provided since 2001 and will allow the centres to develop stability and strategic direction to meet the needs of their local communities and support local agencies. The national police checks for volunteers program run by the secretariat assists more than 800 organisations. It provides their volunteers police checks at reduced fees and in prompt fashion, and has completed more than 40 000 checks. A range of other policy initiatives, training programs and recognition activities also provide regular support.

The National Volunteer Week supplement in *The West Australian* on Monday morning gives an excellent picture of volunteer achievement in Western Australia. I was particularly pleased to see the section on government volunteering in which 12 different government agencies, including the Fire and Emergency Services Authority, the Department of Culture and the Arts, and the Department for Child Protection, to name a few, promoted the work and acknowledged the efforts of their special volunteers. National Volunteer Week runs until Sunday and various events designed to promote volunteering and recruit new volunteers are being held throughout the state. Volunteering gives us the chance to express our citizenship in a way that is meaningful to each of us. I encourage all members to use this week to acknowledge the contribution of volunteers in our community and spread the word to persuade others to take up the volunteering challenge.