

DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT - BUSHFIRE RESPONSE

Statement by Minister for Communities

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah - Minister for Communities) [5.39 pm]: As members know, when a natural disaster such as a bushfire occurs, it impacts on the lives of many people. The fire that swept through the Dwellingup and Coolup areas last month brought heartache and devastation and destroyed property and endangered lives. It also brought out the absolute best in several tight-knit Peel communities. The way these communities responded to the tragedy was truly heart-warming, as was the way the responsible agencies went into action in the space of a few hours.

I acknowledge the wonderful work of the volunteer firefighters, as well as the efforts of government departments such as the Department of Environment and Conservation and the Fire and Emergency Services Authority, and community organisations such as the Australian Red Cross, the Salvation Army and Fairbridge. I draw particular attention to the work done by my own department, the Department for Community Development, in alleviating the hardship and anxiety of hundreds of people in the aftermath of the fires.

The Department for Community Development is the lead welfare support agency under the Western Australian emergency management arrangements. It is responsible for the management of the state welfare emergency management support plan, the state registration and inquiry plan and the state reception and evacuees from overseas plan. The department's effort was led by Mandurah manager Ken Monson and emergency service unit manager Kim Dean. A large number of staff from a range of district offices and head offices and who are members of the department's early response teams also contributed. This was their first official deployment. They and the emergency service unit worked closely with other agencies to assist people in the emergency accommodation at Fairbridge. They participated in an open information day at the Dwellingup community centre and offered information on financial support and other assistance, and are helping to distribute the funds raised from public appeals. They all deserve our warm appreciation and thanks.

Last year the government allocated \$6.9 million over four years to help support families affected by emergencies such as natural disasters or terrorist attacks. The expanded emergency services capability will provide better training, advice, support, coordination and monitoring.