

Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Eric Ripper; Mr Tony Simpson; Mr Terry Waldron; Ms Margaret Quirk; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Roger Cook; Mr Murray Cowper; Mr Mick Murray; Mr Rob Johnson; Dr Tony Buti; Mr David Templeman

NATURAL DISASTERS — QUEENSLAND AND WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Condolence Motion

MR C.J. BARNETT (Cottesloe — Premier) [2.02 pm] — without notice: I move —

That this house records its sincere regret at the lives and properties lost and the number of communities affected as a result of the significant flooding in many areas of Queensland, as well as the disproportionately high level of natural disasters in Western Australia during the period December 2010 to February 2011.

This nation has gone through a most extraordinary summer, with seemingly one natural disaster after the other. Of all that, and of all the distress to communities, families and individuals, I think we all acknowledge that the devastation in Queensland was of an exceptional nature. The floods in Queensland were the worst in 35 years. The Brisbane River broke its banks, and the floods and damage took the lives, tragically, of 35 people, and also destroyed critical infrastructure. Literally tens of thousands of homes were damaged, with many destroyed. It was the largest flood in Queensland since 1974. Three-quarters of the state was declared a disaster area. Many homes were knocked from their footings, cars were washed away, towns were wiped out by flash flooding and residents were forced to seek refuge in evacuation centres. Amidst the sadness and the tragedy there were amazing stories of courage and amazing stories of survival.

This nation—Australia—responded overwhelmingly to Queensland’s plea for help. The generosity of Australian people in aiding their fellow men and women was evident in abundance in donations of food, clothing and money within hours of an appeal being started.

The Western Australian government responded to this crisis by donating \$1 million to the Queensland Premier’s Disaster Relief Appeal. Also, specialist volunteers and professional staff from this state assisted during the crisis. A highly specialised team of urban search and rescue personnel from the Western Australian Fire and Emergency Services Authority went to Queensland to assist in the very difficult task of recovering and identifying bodies. Also more recently other volunteers have been working there.

Following the floods, in a cruel twist of nature, Queensland then faced cyclone Yasi. Just as the people were coming to grips with the devastation, this extraordinarily strong cyclone descended upon northern Queensland with wind gusts of up to 285 kilometres an hour. The towns of Tully, Mission Beach, Cardwell, Silkwood and Innisfail sustained severe and widespread damage. It is difficult for people to comprehend, unless they have lived through it—something I have not done—the ferocity of a cyclone and the devastation that it can cause. Cyclone Yasi rivalled the previous cyclone, cyclone Larry, which again devastated many parts of Queensland. Again, Western Australians came to the assistance of the people of Queensland. Two specialist incident management staff teams from the Fire and Emergency Services Authority went to Queensland during that period and were there in anticipation of the arrival of the cyclone. More recently, a group of 32 FESA and State Emergency Service volunteers have been in northern Queensland assisting the clean-up operations, which continue today.

On behalf of the people of Western Australia, and indeed of this house, I take this opportunity to extend my heartfelt sympathy to the people of Queensland, especially the survivors and the families of those who so sadly and tragically lost their lives. This state will remain prepared to continue to provide whatever assistance Queensland requires as it goes through a long period of reconstruction. Sadly for many people, as the Queensland Premier told me on Sunday, the shock and devastation, and the true implications that this will cause, may not become a reality for several months. People will therefore go through enormous emotional strain in the months ahead.

This summer started, of course, with the tragedy that unfolded on Christmas Island on 15 December. I do not think any of us will forget those scenes of the asylum seeker boat being smashed up against the rocks on Christmas Island. An estimated 30 people lost their lives in that extraordinary circumstance. Once again, that tragedy highlighted the perilous and at times tragic consequences of the people-smuggling trade. In that situation, again, Western Australia was at the forefront of the rescue and recovery operations; and I acknowledge and thank the work of WA Police, the emergency services, the health agencies and the many support services, including the Royal Flying Doctor Service, in responding to that incident in very difficult and harrowing circumstances.

Unfortunately, Western Australia did not escape the natural disasters that beset this country over the summer months. In this state we saw fires at Lake Clifton, Kelmscott and Roleystone; floods in Carnarvon; and damage in the wake of cyclone Bianca through many of the Mid West towns and the Wheatbelt area. The first event here was the Carnarvon floods on 18 December. The residents of Carnarvon were evacuated from their homes as the

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town was cut off, and the Gascoyne region experienced the worst flooding in over 50 years. It was a serious situation. Helicopters were called in to rescue people literally from their rooftops after the Gascoyne River broke its banks. Some businesses and properties were totally ruined. The livelihoods of many agricultural producers, growers and tourist operators were devastated, including caravan park owners. Once again, I commend and thank the spirit of Western Australians—not only the residents but also indeed the leadership provided particularly by Dudley Maslen, the shire president. State government agencies such as Main Roads, Water Corporation, FESA and Western Power, and SES volunteers, all played their role in handling the flood situation and in handling the way it was dealt with subsequently. The state government provided \$100 000 to the Lord Mayor's Distress Relief Fund for Carnarvon. We also provided a \$3 million fund to be administered by the Department of Agriculture and Food to assist Carnarvon growers to recover. Much of that money will be used in replacing soil that was washed away. If anyone saw the footage of the devastation as the flood waters retreated, they would support that.

The damage continued. On 10 January 2011, nine houses, and sheds, equipment, vehicles and the like, were destroyed in fires at Lake Clifton. Again, very fortunately, there was no report of serious injury or death despite a fire that spread quickly. Similarly, emergency assistance was provided, and the state government immediately provided a \$3 000 grant to any people who had lost their homes, so that they could deal with the immediate need to buy food, clothing and whatever else they required. Shortly after that, and in the wake of cyclone Bianca, we saw extreme and unusual weather conditions from Geraldton through the Mid West and down into the Wheatbelt. Again, those storms caused extensive damage to sheds, outbuildings and properties. Tragically, in the city of Geraldton a 17-year-old girl lost her life when she inadvertently stepped on a fallen power line. On behalf of the state government and this house I extend our great sympathy to her family and friends for that tragic and unforeseen event.

Just over a week ago, we had the extreme fire situation in Roleystone and Kelmscott. It was only a few days ago that we experienced extreme weather conditions with wind gusts of up to 85 kilometres an hour, swirling winds and a fire that, from the point of ignition, spread something like one kilometre in 20 minutes. It was an extremely dangerous and almost impossible to control situation, with 440 hectares burnt out, power supplies disrupted and the Buckingham bridge, a major bridge on the Brookton Highway, destroyed. The extraordinary intensity and speed with which that fire moved totally destroyed 72 homes. It was a very severe fire that caused extensive damage.

Remarkably, there were no deaths in those incidents. I commend the firefighters and all the emergency and support agencies for their efforts in a fire that burnt such an extensive area and moved so quickly in such dangerous winds and temperature conditions, and yet no-one lost their life. Indeed, there was only one injury associated with the fires—a firefighter injured in a vehicle accident. A further nine people were treated for smoke inhalation.

I also commend the member for Darling Range, Mr Tony Simpson, for the work that he and others did to support their communities during that situation. I visited this site, along with the Minister for Emergency Services, on the morning after the fire. I could not but be impressed by the several hundred firefighters, probably the majority of them volunteers, and over 100 firefighting vehicles of various sorts on the site. Although it was a scene of almost a war zone environment, it was very obvious that every person knew what their job was and that every person was going about doing that job in a professional way. There were instances of firefighters going out to save, for example, a house, knowing that their own houses were in danger, and in some cases knowing that their own houses were burning. I commend their courage and dedication to the job that they had to do, both the professional and volunteer firefighters.

Again, on behalf of all of us, the state government made \$3 000 available immediately to those people who had lost their homes, and has made a \$1 million donation to the Lord Mayor's appeal.

Amongst all of that, it may seem as though the severe dry season in the agricultural area has all but been forgotten, but that is not the case. Again, work continues in supporting the communities that have had a devastating year through the lack of rainfall, and I commend those communities struggling through a very, very tough summer.

In conclusion, I acknowledge and thank the Leader of the Opposition, and all members of Parliament, for their support for the actions taken by emergency services, the state government and local communities in dealing with each of those disasters within this state; and also for supporting the provision of assistance by this state, both financial and personnel, and through private donations that have been made to Queensland.

I also pay formal tribute to the Fire and Emergency Services workers, to WA Police, to State Emergency Service volunteers, to the Department of Environment and Conservation and the Department for Child Protection, and to

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various local authorities: Western Power, the Water Authority and Main Roads; and, in particular, to the residents themselves, in these various disasters. While I do not in any way pretend to be an expert, there is no doubt in my mind that in the Roleystone fire, as a result of the quick action of authorities, people decided to take the advice of those authorities and leave their homes. That would be an extraordinarily difficult thing to do, often leaving animals and pets behind, but they made the right decision. They took that advice. They left their homes—72 of which were destroyed. But, thank God, no life was lost, and for that we should be eternally grateful.

MR E.S. RIPPER (Belmont — Leader of the Opposition) [2.14 pm]: I join the Premier, and on behalf of the state Parliamentary Labor Party I offer my deep sympathies to the victims of the recent natural disasters that have ravaged this country and this state.

On 10 January, Queensland was hit with a horrific torrent of water after 160 millimetres of rain fell in a 36-hour period. Thirty-five people tragically lost their lives in the floods, including 21 from the Toowoomba and Lockyer Valley area alone. Our thoughts are with their family and friends as they grieve the loss of their loved ones. At least six people are still listed as missing, and our thoughts and sympathy must also be with their loved ones who face agonising uncertainty while waiting to learn the fate of those missing. The Queensland floods are the most costly and widespread natural disaster in this nation's history. Efforts to repair and rebuild towns and suburbs destroyed by the flooding will cost at least \$5.6 billion.

Amazingly, it was only weeks later that category 5 cyclone Yasi hit the far North Queensland coast. We all watched in horror, I think, as Yasi inched towards the coast finally hitting between Innisfail and Cardwell. The cyclone battered towns, including Ingham, Mission Beach and Tully, leaving a trail of destruction in its wake. It is an immense credit to the preparedness of Queensland government agencies and the people of far North Queensland that there were no direct deaths caused by Yasi. Our condolences, however, must go to the family of the 23-year-old man who passed away tragically in Bambaroo near Ingham after operating a generator inside a house. Yasi brought damage on top of the destruction of the earlier floods with the repair bill reaching at least \$3.5 billion. The agricultural industry in far North Queensland was savaged by the storm with likely losses of \$2 billion. Sugar cane and banana plantations were hit especially hard, and naturally we hope that farmers can get back on their feet as soon as possible. We must feel for them as the true impact of their losses sinks in.

Queenslanders face a long, tough road ahead of them as they try to rebuild what was destroyed. I am very proud of the response and generosity of people across the nation, including Western Australia, to the floods. Once again, we saw the true Australian spirit in the aftermath of such devastating losses. It is the Australian way that in times of crisis, we come together and help where we can. We all have a responsibility in this nation to assist with the massive rebuilding effort required in Queensland.

Disaster has also hit here in Western Australia. The worst floods in 50 years hit the Carnarvon region in December last year. A record-breaking 204.8 millimetres of rain fell in the Carnarvon region in a 24-hour period. It was almost a year's worth of rain and it all fell in one day. The Gascoyne River rose to a record 7.8 metres, broke its banks and flooded hundreds of hectares of fruit-growing and cattle-grazing land. Some measuring stations recorded the highest water levels since recordings began. More than 2 000 head of cattle drowned, and the damage bill could top \$100 million. Some farmers have lost entire crops—others are now dealing with extensive damage. It was extremely fortunate that there was no loss of human life as a result of floods and the response of locals and officers of government agencies must be applauded. I would like in particular to praise the swift response of Western Australian government agencies to the immediate aftermath of the floods. Fire and Emergency Services Authority and State Emergency Service staff were quickly on the ground, and we should recognise the efforts of these people in securing levee banks and making the homes and property of those affected by flooding safe. I also congratulate these government agencies on the speedy delivery of more than 5 500 tonnes of dry food, and fruit and vegetables flown in to support flood-ravaged and isolated communities. The federal government should be congratulated for its offer of \$25 000 in emergency aid to each business or farm affected by the flood, which is in line with a similar payment to those affected by the Queensland floods.

Of course, in this place we now need to ensure that support for farmers and businesses in the region is ongoing. As in Queensland, the rebuilding will take time and support, which must be available during this phase. I hope we all take a bipartisan approach to the issue, and I look forward to working with the Premier and the government on behalf of the people of the Gascoyne.

The summer had still more calamities in store for us, and this time it came in the form of fire. Fire in the Lake Clifton area destroyed eight houses and caused extensive damage to other properties. It is deeply troubling that this fire was caused by an arsonist. It should be beyond belief—unfortunately, it is not—that an individual would deliberately start a fire, which, given the danger of summer heat, high winds and tinder-dry fuel, could have easily resulted in extensive loss of life.

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The bushfire that razed 72 homes in Roleystone and Kelmscott was the worst in 50 years in this state. It took more than 200 firefighters days to bring the blaze under control, and 800 residents were evacuated, some of them learning, finally, that they did not have a home to return to. Again, it is an enormous credit to the staff of the Fire and Emergency Services Authority, and all the other emergency services workers, that there was no loss of life. Our sympathies go out to the residents of Roleystone and Kelmscott who lost homes and their cherished personal possessions and memories. They, too, will face a difficult task in rebuilding their lives, and they, too, must be supported by the government.

I thank the Labor member for Armadale for his work at this time in support of his community and neighbouring communities. I take nothing away from the member for Darling Range, but I am personally aware of what the Labor member for Armadale did. I am concerned, having visited that fire area, about some of the risks that we face in the future. It is particularly disturbing to go to a suburban street, hundreds of metres from the nearest bushland, and see one house in the midst of a row of houses completely destroyed, probably as a result of an ember lodging in an evaporative air conditioner on the roof, and that air conditioner catching fire and falling into the roof cavity and destroying the house. Clearly, there are issues for us all to think about as we struggle to manage the immense risks that we now face on the urban fringe of Perth.

I hope that these fires will see the end of this terrible summer of disasters. Lessons can be learnt from each of these disasters, and we must examine them to make sure that our plans and policies are the best possible to prevent such risks, and to manage them if they do occur. As parliamentarians, we need to take whatever steps need to be taken to provide the best protection possible for our people. Fortunately, this country is resilient and caring in the face of disaster, and I expect and hope to see all Australians, and all Western Australians, standing by those who have suffered the loss of loved ones, livelihoods, homes or businesses.

MR A.J. SIMPSON (Darling Range — Parliamentary Secretary) [2.23 pm]: I would like to add my sympathies to those of the Premier on the bushfires that occurred in the Roleystone and Clifton Hills area of my electorate. That Sunday afternoon the wind was very, very strong, providing optimum bushfire conditions. Although 72 houses were lost, there was no loss of life, and when driving around that electorate, noting how much damage there is, it is amazing that we came through pretty much unscathed, unlike other disasters elsewhere in the country.

I wish to place on the record the support provided by the City of Armadale and Mayor Linton Reynolds. They have done a fantastic job, and are still doing a fantastic job by having regular meetings with the community about the clean-up and helping the community to move on. I thank the agencies, such as the Fire and Emergency Services Authority, which did a fantastic job, as did our volunteer firefighters who turned out to help. There are a lot of stories to tell, but I will hold back from telling a few of them until my reply to the Premier's Statement. I wanted to put on the record my thanks to the wider community for coming together, and my thanks to the member for Armadale for providing his office for meetings. Mr Speaker, the community turned out en masse to help everybody affected by the fire; thank you very much.

MR T.K. WALDRON (Wagin — Deputy Leader of the National Party) [2.25 pm]: I want to support this motion and endorse the words of the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Darling Range. Our thoughts and sympathies are with all those people who have been affected by the floods and cyclones in Queensland, the floods in New South Wales and Victoria, and with our local people affected by the Carnarvon floods; the Lake Clifton, Kelmscott and Roleystone fires and other local fires; and, of course, by the recent storms that passed through Western Australia and affected so many of our country towns, including many from my own area. Just recently, we have seen some flash flooding at Warburton and Nungarin; I actually saw some of the photos from Nungarin on the weekend and what happened in that little town was quite incredible. As has already been said, it has really been an incredible summer and I think we have all seen graphic pictures from right across Australia and all feel so much for those who have suffered loss. There is no doubt that, as Australians, we are at our best when the chips are down. The help, the assistance, the support and the great community spirit shown by so many has been an inspiration to us all. The response from the general public has been outstanding and makes us proud to be an Aussie.

I just want to mention the Swan Districts Football Club for its efforts in going over to Queensland and helping out. I understand that its members were extremely well received and that the experience has had a profound effect on those young men, and I think it was a great thing for them to do. There have been so many other groups that have done similar things. Of course, we must continue to support these affected areas and the people within them, wherever possible. A special thanks to the Fire and Emergency Services Authority, the State Emergency Service, local governments, police, all our volunteer firefighters, all our agencies, and everyone who has helped get behind those communities in so many ways. I wish all of those affected people, right across Australia, a speedy and strong recovery.

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MS M.M. QUIRK (Girrawheen) [2.27 pm]: In recent times, the lives of many hundreds, if not thousands, of Western Australians have been disrupted and devastated by fire, cyclones and flood. Like our cousins in Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia and Victoria, those tragedies and disasters have disrupted and irreparably changed lives and livelihoods. They have caused widespread destruction to infrastructure, the natural environment, private property, family homes and prized personal mementos. We are thankful that no lives were lost in the fires in Western Australia; however, we mourn the loss of the life of the young girl in Geraldton who died as a result of falling powerlines in the wake of cyclone Bianca. We are mindful, however, that the property losses and destruction of houses are at unprecedented levels. We are still in recovery mode from the fires in Toodyay of December 2009. At that time, those fires were said to be some of the largest property losses in the state, but now, we must also focus on the road to recovery for the many more lives turned upside down in the recent fires, cyclone and floods.

This motion is not only an opportunity to pass on our condolences and sympathies to the families and communities in other states whose loved ones have perished, but also permits us to pledge the full support of Parliament and the community to assist those affected areas in Western Australia to recover and to rebuild. During these tragedies, we have been inspired by many acts of generosity and kindness. The Swan Districts Football Club, which has already been mentioned, travelled to Queensland and assisted in the clean-up of the floods there, and I heard today that sailors from the United States Navy destroyer USS *Shoup* are going to Roleystone to assist in the recovery efforts there. In recent times, we have witnessed neighbours who, without hesitation, courageously lent a hand. We have seen properties destroyed in a matter of minutes and all the heartbreak that that entails and yet, the house next door, for no apparent reason or logic, is spared. With that comes relief and also some guilt—relief that the house has been spared, while jubilation is subdued in deference to the neighbours who were not so lucky; and guilt, however illogical, for being spared.

We have also witnessed frustration—frustration with the elements, unrelenting and hampering attempts to mitigate loss, and frustration that resources were stretched, communications were patchy and appliances and equipment were not always available. With wonder we witnessed the effective deployment of helitacs, dousing flames and sparing property in imminent danger. On the other hand, we despaired as we saw television footage of householders desperately and vainly attempting to douse raging flames with garden hoses with failing water pressure.

A debt of gratitude must be extended to emergency services personnel, the career and volunteer firefighters and brigades, who endangered their own lives and fought the elements for days on end to quell the fires. In many cases, local knowledge and expertise were crucial in difficult and inaccessible terrain and conditions. Similarly, the efforts of the State Emergency Service teams in the Gascoyne and Pilbara, who rescued those stranded in the floods, were courageous and selfless. We are grateful to police for undertaking the role of traffic control and assisting with evacuations. We express our gratitude to council workers for their unstinting efforts. We acknowledge the important leadership role of local government mayors, and in particular I mention Mayor Linton Reynolds in the City of Armadale and Shire President Dudley Maslen in the Shire of Carnarvon. They exhibited exemplary leadership.

With disrupted power, gas and water supplies, the workers who restored essential services should not be forgotten. We owe a debt to those involved with counselling, securing financial assistance and helping locate loved ones, and to community members and volunteers who shared with evacuees the excruciating wait, sometimes for days, for news of whether their homes were still standing. To the charity and volunteer organisations that brought with them the knowledge and capacity to meet the demands and needs of the unexpectedly homeless, we say a special thankyou.

I also acknowledge the tremendous generosity of my fellow Western Australians. Their response to the fires has been extraordinary and so, too, has their response to the floods in both the Gascoyne and Queensland. I was particularly moved by the efforts of Western Australia's Vietnamese community, which raised more than \$100 000 for flood victims over a day. They saw this gesture as a way of repaying the debt they believe they owe to Australia for opening its doors to them when they fled Vietnam in the 1970s.

Through it all there have been remarkable tales of survival, but also many questions remain unanswered. It is part of the healing process that we seek those answers. This process of inquiry is not about attributing blame or pointing the finger, but about learning lessons. It is about equipping communities with the resilience to meet future challenges. We know, especially from our experiences at Toodyay, that for many the journey of recovery is not an easy one; it is a slow and tortuous one. We should not delude ourselves that, just because the fires have abated or the floods have subsided, the debris has been cleared and the camera crews are chasing other stories, things will return to normal. In the months ahead for the displaced there will be loss, grief and despair. Life will not miraculously return to normal for those who have suffered at the hands of such disasters. We need to be

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sensitive to the traumatised; the emotional scars will run deep and they will be felt for some time to come. But it will greatly hasten the healing process if the many questions that naturally arise can be squarely addressed. That is the view held by Queensland Premier Anna Bligh, and I think her leadership throughout the flood crisis in that state has been nothing short of inspirational.

In announcing a full and open judicial inquiry, with broad terms of reference, by respected Queensland Justice Cate Holmes, the Queensland Premier said —

Given the scale of the devastation and the tragedy of the last four weeks I believe this matter now needs to be thoroughly and totally forensically examined so that we can understand better how these events unfolded.

We need to honour those who have tragically lost their lives in this catastrophe and we need to do that by learning the lessons of the event.

I am sensitive to the tenor of this motion but I conclude by asking the following questions. How can we expect the victims of these natural disasters in Western Australia to recover and rebuild lives while they continue to seek answers and explanation and none are forthcoming? If we are not prepared to learn the lessons from these events, does this not devalue their struggle and human cost? Should the Barnett government not demonstrate the same openness and preparedness to tackle the hard issues as that government in Queensland? Should it not demonstrate the same leadership? Do we have wait until a death occurs before we can be confident of a wide-ranging inquiry into emergency services management in this state? Surely Western Australians deserve nothing less than a full, open and independent inquiry into one of the largest losses of property by fire in Western Australia's history.

MR V.A. CATANIA (North West) [2.36 pm]: The Gascoyne has just experienced possibly one of the worst floods that it has ever seen. The Shire of Upper Gascoyne and the pastoral stations in the shire have been devastated. Homesteads and livestock have been washed away and pubs, homes and accommodation simply vanished with the amount of water that came down through the Gascoyne. The floods caused a loss of over \$20 million to the Carnarvon horticultural industry. Businesses are on the brink of collapse and roads have been cut off, both north and south. Thankfully, no-one perished during the Gascoyne floods. I commend the work of the Fire and Emergency Services Authority, the police, government agencies—in particular Horizon Power, the Water Corporation and the Department of the Premier and Cabinet—the Shire of Upper Gascoyne and the shire's chief executive officer, Paul Rawlings, who is still working on the devastation caused by the 2010 flood and dealing with the river that is coming down towards the town as we speak. I also extend my thanks to the Shire of Carnarvon and the shire president, Dudley Maslen, the chief executive officer, Maurice Battilana, and the recovery officer, Tom Day, who worked day and night to ensure that the town of Carnarvon was saved from the devastating flood.

Thanks must go to those who have donated to the Lord Mayor's Appeal. It has been greatly appreciated. People are still donating to that appeal for the victims of the Gascoyne floods. We are lucky to have a soccer match being played in Carnarvon this weekend. Perth Glory will take on the state team in appreciation of those who have come out of the floods of 2010 and also to raise much-needed funds for the flood victims, which will be greatly appreciated by the town. I thank Perth Glory for going up to the Gascoyne.

As many members have said, sometimes floods are the easy part to go through. The devastation and the sinking in of what has occurred after the event often hits the hardest. The people of the Gascoyne are now experiencing the effects of the economy not ticking over, with the horticultural industry and the pastoral industry being totally devastated, which has a huge knock-on effect for small businesses. The hardest part is the recovery but I am sure that the Gascoyne will get there. I thank members for their support.

MR R.H. COOK (Kwinana — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [2.39 pm]: I want to make some comments about the Queensland floods and also the events that took place in my electorate during the summer. As some members would be aware, I was lucky enough to be married on the Gold Coast on 1 October last year. On 2 October it started to rain and it seemingly never stopped. When we arrived in Queensland, I think the dams were about 16 per cent full. When we left a week later, they were almost at capacity.

The level of deluge in that state was quite remarkable. I am sure we all shared the concerns of many across the country as we saw images progressively roll out in the media, particularly of the flash flooding in Toowoomba and the ongoing and relentless drive of the swollen rivers in that state. I shared the anxiety with my wife, who was anxiously awaiting news from relatives who lived in that area. A lot of trauma is associated with such a devastating natural disaster. My wife's immediate family live in Goodna and Ipswich in Queensland. Despite their distance from the Brisbane River, those places were equally inundated from the Goodna Creek that feeds

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the Brisbane River. Luckily, the topography of that area meant that the houses in which they live were spared some of the really extreme flooding that took place. The flooding had an effect on us as we awaited news. We liaised with my wife's family and sought information from them about what evacuation plans they had in place to ensure their safety. Ultimately, they were evacuated, mercifully, at the peak of the flood. They sustained only minor damage to their homes, but many homes in Brisbane and across Queensland were not so lucky. I join the house in expressing my condolences and sincere regret at the impact of the Queensland floods, and equally the impact of cyclone Yasi as it struck North Queensland. Again, my personal experience was of listening to relatives report how the cyclone was impacting on them. Strangely enough, they were more prepared and more at ease with the familiar event of a cyclone, albeit a very strong and powerful one, than they were for the episodes of being stranded or evacuated by flood. Nevertheless, it was still a very frightening experience. I join all members in expressing my sincere condolences.

The Carnarvon floods were a very good reminder of how devastating the forces of nature can be upon our lives. We are all familiar with Carnarvon and its infrastructure, which looks seemingly impervious to flood given the nature of the natural riverbank and also the roadways and bridge in the area. However, we were all surprised and alarmed to see how extreme the Carnarvon floods were. We were equally alarmed at how close those forces of nature came to us living in the city, as we saw the devastating impact of the bushfires in Kelmscott, Roleystone and Lake Clifton. I cannot begin to imagine how devastating it must be to lose one's house and personal belongings either in a flood, as they were in Carnarvon, or by fire, as they were in Roleystone, Kelmscott and Lake Clifton. I wish those families all the very best as they rebuild their lives and move forward with the support of the community, the government and other services.

I want to reflect briefly upon what might have been a similar tragic tale that took place in Kwinana in mid-January. Fires took hold not only around Challenger Avenue, Parmelia, but also further across Parmelia, in Durrante Street. Again, these fires occurred under horrific circumstances; that is, the suspicion is that they were deliberately lit. People who live in that area love it. They love the bushland and the lifestyle that it provides. The Kwinana community was rocked by the bushfires that struck the district on 20 January. I spoke to many people who were affected by that bushfire—in particular those people who lived along Challenger Avenue and whose houses backed right onto the impacted bushland. I was touched by the fact that their comments were not about the impact that the fires had on their properties but to their appreciation of and thanks to the fireys and their neighbours. None spoke at length about the damage to their properties, extensive as they were in one particular place; all spoke of their appreciation of the professional firefighters, the volunteer firefighters and the great spirit of community and support that existed on Challenger Avenue that day.

The bush around Parmelia at that time was tinder dry and the winds were very high. I am amazed that we did not lose homes. The speed with which our emergency services were brought to bear was extraordinary—both our volunteer and professional emergency services. Fire brigades from all parts of Kwinana were engaged and they quickly brought this particular fire under control notwithstanding the damage that occurred to the properties of people in the area. I spoke to one volunteer firefighter who was slightly injured in the fire, and she spoke of being confronted at one point with what she described as a wall of fire. She, one other volunteer firefighter and one unit were there to fight it. That day really required a very speedy and brave response. I think we are all, once again, indebted to the professionalism, dedication and effectiveness of all personnel involved in the incident. I also want to pay my respects to the Town of Kwinana, its rangers and officers and the speed with which they responded, and to the Deputy Premier, the Acting Premier at the time, who was able to provide me and my office with up-to-date information about how that fire was being brought under control.

I think the work of Australia's volunteer and emergency services are becoming an iconic image of the spirit of this country, of our working together and of helping each other out in times of hardship. It is dreadful that we had such a horrible summer and that we should have experienced that process right across the country, be it from cyclones, floods or bushfires. But I think, as a community and as a society, we should take comfort from the fact that we have such a strong spirit of community and such effective emergency services. I was particularly struck by the fact that residents along Challenger Avenue spoke of neighbours literally pouring through their homes as they went from the front of their houses to the backs of their houses where the fire was taking place. Despite the impending danger and, indeed, perhaps the danger to their own homes across the road, they were dipping buckets into swimming pools, grabbing garden hoses and doing whatever they could to help the people whose properties backed onto the face of that fire to defend their neighbours' homes. We take from these sorts of experiences a great sense of pride in our services, our community support and a spirit of coming together. It is tragic that we have to remind ourselves of that great community spirit on the basis of these sorts of experiences.

MR M.J. COWPER (Murray-Wellington — Parliamentary Secretary) [2.47 pm]: The Murray-Wellington electorate is no stranger to bushfires. On 10 January a fire broke out at Lake Clifton, almost on the fiftieth

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anniversary of the infamous Dwellingup fires. Also, about four years ago, fires again threatened and destroyed a number of homes in Dwellingup and through the Coolup areas. But on 10 January this year, a fire started adjacent to the new Forrest Highway in the vicinity of the John Tognela truck stop. The difference in this particular disaster was that it was deliberately lit. It was neither an act of God nor an accident; it was deliberately lit. It was an act that was intended to inflict a lot of injury, concern and angst in the community. The fire took hold at what were apparently seven fire ignition points, raced across open farmland, jumped the Harvey River and then headed up into and around the Armstrong Hills area. It threatened homes in not only Armstrong Hills but also Tuart Grove. A total of 10 dwellings were destroyed, including eight homes. A couple that were destroyed were shed-type accommodations. However, 61 properties were affected. The fire raced up the hill—for anyone unfamiliar with the terrain, a very steep hill runs up to a limestone spearwood soil ridge full of tuart trees—and burnt out quite a large area.

It is appropriate that we acknowledge the great work of the fire control officer, in this instance a gentleman by the name of John Tillman, who was ably supported by his fire control officers from the Murray, Waroona and Harvey shires. John Twaddle, the chief fire control officer for the Waroona shire, was supported by his fire control officers—Peter Thurkle from the Shire of Murray and Phil Penny from the Harvey shire.

Something like 40 brigades and SES units attended the Lake Clifton fire. I have taken it upon myself to write and thank each and every one of those brigades. I think it is important also to mention at this time the brigades and volunteers who came to assist us in a time of need; including the fire and rescue services from Mandurah and Falcon. I also ask the members in whose electorates the Manjimup Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service and the Waroona volunteer fire service brigades fall, to pass on my kindest regards and thanks on behalf of my community.

The bushfire brigade units that attended included units from the Southern Districts Bush Fire and Volunteer Brigade and the City of Mandurah; and from Augusta–Margaret River, the Witchcliffe, Grace Town, Molloy Island and Wycliffe units attended. From the Murray shire, the Yunderup–Ravenswood Bush Fire Brigade, the Dwellingup Bush Fire Brigade the West Murray brigade and the Coolup brigade attended. In Capel, the Gelorup unit turned out. In Manjimup the Northcliffe unit and in Bridgetown the Winnejup unit turned out. At Nannup the Dardanup brigade, and from Waroona the Preston Beach–Lake Clifton brigade, and from Busselton the Dunsborough bushfire brigade, turned up. From the Harvey shire, the Leschenault, Harvey Hills, Yarloop, Uduc and Myalup brigades attended. The City of Bunbury Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade attended and the Dardanup and Waterloo brigades attended from the Shire of Dardanup. There were some 60-odd units on the ground fighting this fire as it raced up the hill. It was fanned by a south-easterly wind and I am very surprised they were able to contain it in the boundaries that they did.

I was able to go with one of my constituents when he was allowed back into his property. His property sits on the top of a hill and has views to the west to the ocean and to the east over the bottom end of the Harvey Estuary. I went with this gentleman and his son because, unfortunately, his wife could not bring herself to come with us. The impact of that experience cannot be understated. We have all seen on television when people have returned home—we have seen it after the Toodyay and other fires—for the first time. However, being there in real time is a very powerful and moving moment. On this particular occasion, the gentleman was very stoic and very strong. He is a contractor and someone we could think of as fairly robust. However, spending a short time there going over his belongings that had been totally destroyed—the fire left him with nothing other than what he stood in—is something I will never forget.

I wish to comment on the way in which the fire fight was conducted. The work done by the Waroona shire needs to be acknowledged—from the shire president, Mike Walmsley, to the coordinator of the committee looking after the rehabilitation, Chris Germaine. Chris and her committee are doing a wonderful job.

I suppose something that comes out of the embers of a fire is the renewed sense of belonging in the community. I am here to tell members that these people living in a semi-rural community who perhaps like to keep to themselves, have, all of a sudden, found themselves in a situation in which they have had to make new friends and now know that when things get tough they can rely on and lean on each other, if only to borrow something. This event has demonstrated—I have seen it over the past few weeks—the capacity of people to work together for the good of the community. Some of the tuart trees in the area that have been burnt are over 500 years old and are absolutely enormous. People have not been able to remove those trees by using the equipment that they would normally use, so Charlie Hull has been going in there with his excavator to help get those trees out. The clean-up will take a considerable amount of time. I would also like to acknowledge—I know that you, Mr Speaker, are a Rotarian as well—the Rotary Clubs of Pinjarra, Harvey and Collie, which are doing some fence building for these people. That might seem like a small thing, but it demonstrates the sense of community that exists down my way.

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Although we have all been very busy with our own problems, we have obviously kept an eye on what has happened in Queensland and in Carnarvon with the floods, and, more recently, on what has happened in Kelmescott with the bushfires. Our condolences go to all the people who have been affected by those tragedies. I hope that out of this, some lessons have been learnt. It certainly confirms that the human spirit and the Aussie way of life still exist in 2011.

MR M.P. MURRAY (Collie–Preston) [2.57 pm]: I wish to add to this condolence motion and to support the words spoken. It was heart-rending to be on this side of this country and watch the flooding in Queensland, as it was beamed into our lounge rooms through our televisions, and not be able to do anything about it. As I saw people sitting on the roofs of their cars while being washed away, and the young boy who just wanted his brother to be saved, I thought about how resilient Australians are. As the previous speaker said, we belong to a very large community. I am sure we are all proud to belong to that community and to see, when these sorts of tragedies are thrown at us, how quickly we gather to look after our own. That is a tremendous part of what it means to be an Australian. I beg everyone to donate every spare coin that they have to the people who need help. If we buy three cups of coffee a day, that may cost us \$15, and we do not even think about it, but \$15 from each of us will mean a lot for these people when it is added up. I give my condolences to those people on the east coast who have suffered from this tragedy. I have friends who live in Babinda, which is just south of Cairns. They told me about the night of horror that they experienced during the cyclone. They were a bit disappointed that their town did not get a mention on television, because they said the cyclone was equally as horrific as cyclone Larry, during which most of their house was blown away.

I also want to mention, closer to home, the Carnarvon floods. It was extraordinary to listen to the stories and to find out exactly what happened there. There was a large amount of rainfall in a very short time, and that caused the river to overflow. However, because there were no follow-up rains, the level of the river went down very quickly, and the water in the flatlands then flushed back into the river and caused damage not only along the creek lines but also across roads and people's properties. The devastation was shown very well on television. However, these people have managed to get on with their lives and move forward.

I want to raise a couple of concerns that I have. I went to Carnarvon and met with the shire president, Dudley Maslen. I suppose I could say that he is a very straightforward and blunt person. He did not mention the role that he played in helping Carnarvon move on from those floods. He had dirt stockpiled in the shire yards, because it is his view that a flood follows every drought. He had, over time, stockpiled dirt for that purpose. When the floods came he was in Perth, and he rang to tell shire employees to put extra dirt on the levee banks. In that way he prevented further devastation in those areas. But he does not sing his own praises; he just gets on and does his job.

I also visited a group of growers who were absolutely unstinting in their praise for the State Emergency Service, the police and the volunteers who came to help out. They had nothing but praise for the work that had been done in their communities. They were very, very happy about what had happened there, even though they were the ones who were affected. They sang the praises of all the people who came along to help, whether they were shovelling dirt or doing any other sort of work. The people of Carnarvon appreciate the work that was done by volunteers. There were many backpackers in town, and they also got in and lent a hand; they did not just step back and move on to the next town. They got in and helped out, and I am sure that the member for North West was aware of that. However, I have seen a couple of little, niggling things that perhaps we could have done a bit better. I went to have a look at the house of a gentleman called Stan Kostanich. It was a cyclone-proof house, but the footings had washed away. All the bearers are made of concrete and they weigh a huge amount so that the house does not blow away, but they snapped. The house was on two levels. That gentleman was beside himself; all his topsoil had gone, and his mangoes were fretting and dropping onto the ground. With the amount of fruit on the ground, it smelled like a jam factory; you could not walk through the place without treading on them. There was his livelihood, disappearing like that. He was beside himself because, in my view, he was in shock. He was unsure about what to do; he is not the best reader or writer, and he was uncertain about the process, so he got angry with himself and with other people. However, instead of being offered help, he was threatened with a restraining order by a government department. Surely we can do better than that. Government departments have lost their touch, if that is the way they are going about things. It should never, ever come to that. These people are in shock; whether it is fire, flood or famine, it does not matter. It is our job in this Parliament to make sure that these sorts of incidents never happen. It really got up my nose to think that someone in the public service had decided that, because a client had yelled at him in frustration, he would take out a restraining order against him. I think that that is the lowest of the low. We can do better than that, and we should make sure that we do better than that. Stan's topsoil was washed away and he was living in a bus that was supplied with electricity by a very rough system that you would not walk within 50 yards of in case you got electrocuted. But that is now his

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home. When I was there, the humidity was probably around 98 per cent, and Stan's air conditioning did not work because most of the bus had been fused out when the waters went through. That is a side of disasters that we do not see; we see things being fixed and work taking place, but some people fall through the cracks, and we must help them.

People in the Carnarvon area are back and are working very hard to get their fruit planted and the next crops grown; but how would we feel if we got up in the morning to see enormous locusts wiping out our crops as they grow? But are the people of Carnarvon crying? No. They are getting on with their jobs and moving on in the true Australian way. Again, we need to get government departments in there to give them support until they get over the hump. That is really something we should be looking at doing. Frustrations are born out of that, and when people are frustrated they do things that, in hindsight, they wish that they had never done, so let us be on the front foot and make sure that that does not happen.

I pass on my condolences to the people of the hills areas who suffered during the recent fires. We can imagine the terror and devastation that people must have felt after getting out of there, getting to safety, and then going back to find that there was nothing left of their homes. A lot of people say that they miss the knick-knacks most of all—the photos, the medals et cetera—because everything else can be replaced. Those things cannot be replaced; replicas are never the same. I ask members to have some feeling for those people, because it will take them time to adjust. I ask members to be understanding and to not be short-tempered or to take the attitude that they have had enough time and should get on with things, because it will take some people many years to move on.

The member for Murray–Wellington referred to some people who have tended to be overlooked in the wake of the other floods and fires around the place. I am concerned for these people; they do not seem to be getting the same recognition as other people because the devastation they experienced was not on such a large scale. We have to regard them in the same way as we regard anyone else who has lost property in a fire or other natural disaster. I refer to the people of Lake Clifton. Fires went through there, and I have been down there also, but because it has not been declared a disaster zone, they have tended to be overlooked. However, we should not forget them because the process is the same. We must look after them and get them back on their feet so they can move on and adjust to a new life. It will be a new life, because their homes will not be the same as they were previously. I ask everyone in this house to think about those things when constituents come to visit them or ask them for help. I ask members to not brush them off because they are not from a particular area. It is about looking at each case as a whole, and treating each and every individual as a person, not as part of a process. I think that is very, very important.

In conclusion, to all our volunteers, regardless of what colour coat they wear or what role they play, I say: thank you very much.

MR R.F. JOHNSON (Hillarys — Minister for Emergency Services) [3.07 pm]: The graphic images that were seen throughout the world of the floods in Queensland will, I think, remain in people's memories forever; they certainly will remain in my memory and, I am sure, in the memories of all members of this house. We will all remember with great sadness the number of lives that were lost in Queensland, and our hearts go out to the families and friends of those who lost their lives.

In Western Australia we have had a bit of bad luck over the last couple of years; Mother Nature has not been very good to us. We had the Toodyay fires in late 2009; the Carnarvon floods; the Lake Clifton fires; the storm damage to people's properties in Northam and York; and, more recently, the fires in Roleystone and Kelmscott, in which 72 homes were lost, and 34 were damaged either very badly or not quite so badly.

I am very grateful for the generosity of not only Western Australians but also people throughout Australia. Somebody I know, although not very well, phoned me about the Lake Clifton fire; he has a holiday home there. He immediately offered that holiday home to any of the families who lost their homes in those fires, so they would have somewhere to live until their homes were rebuilt. He did not ask for any rent, and I think that that was a very generous and very kind offer.

I also have some people to thank more locally. I do not know much about "flash mobs", but I witnessed an event on YouTube in which a flash mob created an event in the Karrinyup Shopping Centre food hall; they spontaneously started singing *We Are Australian*. It was to raise money for the flood victims in Queensland. Once again, it was an example of Western Australians helping out their cousins in Queensland.

I attended a meeting of state and territory ministers on Friday last week—they were emergency services ministers, not police ministers—and the heartfelt cooperation displayed and the sympathy expressed for everyone throughout Australia who was affected was quite enormous. As members know, Western Australia has

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sent a lot of State Emergency Service volunteers, some of our specialist police officers and our specialist FESA personnel to Queensland to help the people there with clearing up, and, indeed initially, with trying to find bodies and identify them—all the very dreadful things that some of our volunteers and some of our career people have to do. Likewise, we were offered and were able to borrow two type 1 helicopters from Victoria. Those helicopters came over to Western Australia in the middle of last week. The Victorians have agreed to leave them with us for a bit longer because we still face some pretty terrible weather possibilities in the future. I say thank God that we had at least the two helicopters that we had because they were tremendous.

I want to endorse many of the comments that members have made about our career and volunteer firefighters. They are absolutely tremendous people. Our voluntary SES workers and our police officers have to deal with some terrible situations. I thank them, and I thank the bush fire brigades, the local authority volunteers and everyone—I mean everyone—who comes to the front when there is a crisis. We have seen a few in this state, and we have seen some in the other states. I want to say a huge thank you to those people. I know that everyone in this place recognises the tremendous work that those people do. Many of the volunteers give up their time with their families, whether it be Christmas Day, somebody's birthday or whatever, to go and help their neighbours. On Monday I travelled around the Roleystone–Kelmscott disaster area, and my heart went out to the people who had lost their homes. However, my grateful thanks and recognition went out to all the career firefighters and volunteers, who did everything they could to try to save people's properties.

These tragedies occur, and I think it is important that we acknowledge not only the devastating effect on the families involved, but also the tremendous work of our career firefighters and volunteers in all the organisations—not just FESA. There is also the Department for Child Protection, Main Roads, the Department of Health and many others. Within hours, those people are on the scene. I do not want to forget to mention the Department of Environment and Conservation, because DEC has some tremendous firefighters, and they played a very integral role in assisting FESA and the other volunteer and career firefighters in fighting those blazes. We acknowledge the tremendous work that those people do with grateful thanks.

DR A.D. BUTI (Armadale) [3.12 pm]: May I commence by offering my deepest sympathies to those families and individuals who have suffered from the Kelmscott and Roleystone bushfires. The devastation is hard to believe and beyond anything that I have experienced in the metropolitan area in my lifetime. The 72 homes that were destroyed are not in my electorate; they are in the electorate of the member for Darling Range. I thank the member for Darling Range very much for the work that he has done with me to assist our shared communities. Although the homes, including the damaged homes, are not in my electorate, they are part of my community. I live within two kilometres of the affected area, and I will be moving within one kilometre of the affected area by the end of the year.

Before continuing, I would like to endorse the views that have been expressed by the previous speakers. I thank the career and volunteer firefighters—those from the local area and from far afield. Their work is very dangerous and in some cases life threatening. For the Roleystone Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade it was a very personal fire, because many of those firefighters were fighting to save the homes of their friends. In fighting to save the homes of their friends, they did not fight to save their own homes, and some of the homes of the volunteer firefighters were destroyed. These firefighters are magnificent people, as are the helitack pilots, who of course saved many other homes.

The fire occurred on Sunday, 6 February. On Monday morning—the next day—the first of many community meetings were held at the Armadale recreation centre. The people there were in a state of shock, anxiety and confusion. However, I am very proud of how my community behaved that morning. These people had just lived through a horrendous day and night, but they were very calm; they were not angry. They had just experienced something that people who live in the hills always fear but, of course, hope they will never experience. The recreation centre was overflowing. Many people were outside because not everyone could be inside. It was a very difficult occasion because many people were standing there not knowing whether they could return to a home. There was also a very strong smell of smoke in that recreation centre—I am sure that the member for Darling Range will endorse this—the smoke that was coming from the skin and clothes of many of the people there. For many of the people there, the only possessions they had left were the clothes on their backs. Therefore, it was with great relief and delight that I heard that afternoon that the Premier had announced instant relief for those who had had their homes destroyed or suffered significant damage. I thank the Premier for providing victims with immediate access to relief funds to buy clothes and food for their families. I also thank him for declaring the fire a natural disaster, because it was a natural disaster. This declaration by the Premier kicked in additional funding from the state and the commonwealth for the provision of emergency services, temporary living expenses and house repairs, and the replacement of household furniture. As I said before, the local community was fantastic. The support provided by the local community was phenomenal. The assistance

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provided by local businesses, local communities, church groups and individuals was truly fantastic. I do not have time now to name all those people; that is for another time. However, the support of the local community reflects the community spirit of the hills and Armadale communities.

Now is not the time to ask the difficult questions; that is also for another time. At this stage I want to thank FESA, the police force and other government agencies for the work they did during and after the bushfire disaster. I would also like to thank the City of Armadale, which handled the recovery phase very well. The council is very fortunate to be led by an outstanding mayor in Linton Reynolds. Throughout the ordeal he was calm, rational and sympathetic. His CEO, Ray Tame, also stepped up to the mark, and Brian Watkins, the City of Armadale's chief fire control officer, has been fantastic and most helpful.

But, of course, it is the victims of the bushfires whom we should focus and concentrate on. I will never forget coming across Sergio Tucci at that Monday morning meeting. Sergio had lost everything. Well, he had not lost his lovely wife, Angela, or his two children, Talia and Michael, for which he will be forever grateful, but he had lost his property—his home that he had proudly built and renovated. I have known Sergio for six years. For six years he has been the coach of my youngest son's soccer team. I know him well, and he is a very kind man whose dream home had just gone up in flames. I did not really know what to say to him. He was hurting badly, and he is still hurting badly. But slowly things are happening. I was very delighted to connect him with Brendan Clark, a property agent, who has generously provided him with accommodation as he rebuilds his home.

On Monday afternoon, at the second community meeting at 5.00 pm, people were still on tenterhooks as the FESA officers started reading out the addresses of the homes destroyed or damaged. This was a terrible experience. As reported in *The West Australian* on Wednesday, hopes quickly faded as officials started to read: 23 Sunset Terrace, 100 per cent damaged; 50 Martin Street, damaged; 70 Ashley Drive, 100 per cent damaged; 24 Clifton Street, 100 per cent destroyed. People who had tried to be stoic and brave were now sobbing in the full glare of those in the hall, including the media. Although these people were, naturally, devastated, the community spirit was still there. People who were sobbing were also consoling their neighbours. I was amazed at how some people remained positive—people such as Frank Duffy, who had lost everything but the clothes and things he was wearing. I have come across Frank many times as he is the returning officer at the Kingsley Primary School polling booth for federal elections. During my role as booth captain and scrutineer, I have always found Frank to be very helpful and cheery. Even in his darkest moment, Frank was still positive. I offered my sorrow and my sympathy, but Frank said, "We'll be okay. We'll be all right." I am not sure, if I were in Frank's position, I would have responded in such a manner. The next morning I was able to take a tour of the devastated area. But, before doing that, there was another community meeting at which more homes were declared destroyed. Unfortunately, one person, Julie Clark, was none the wiser about her home. I know Julie well, because she taught two of my children at the Armadale Primary School. When Brian Watkins took me on a tour of the devastated area, I asked him if we could go down the street where Julie lived; we hoped that she still had a home. We went to the address. The home looked okay from the front. We went around the back. The fire had literally come up to the back wall and stopped there. We looked inside, and it seemed to be undamaged. It was with great delight that I telephoned Julie to tell her that she still had a home, and when I met her that evening at another community meeting, we just hugged.

On Wednesday morning, the volunteer agencies and various government departments were still at the Armadale Arena recreation centre offering support. The Governor of Western Australia and the Leader of the Opposition were present, and they were well received. The Leader of the Opposition and I then went on a tour of the fire zone with Brian Watkins. I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his visit. I also thank the Minister for Defence, Stephen Smith, the Special Minister of State, Gary Gray, and Senator Louise Pratt, who toured the affected areas with me on Friday last week. While we were on our tour, we met a young man who was surveying the parched earth, the remains of his parents' home. He had draped an Australian flag around a burnt tree. We spoke to him; he was very upset and angry. It was very sad to listen to his despair. It was also very sad to see a number of sheep suffering in the paddocks, and we should not forget about the animals, native and domestic, that have suffered and also perished.

Last Sunday I visited a number of households in Clifton Hills, which is another area that was affected. I have known many of the residents for many years. I heard many stories, and I will briefly relay three of them: the story of Phillip Cox, who went across the road to help out an elderly neighbour while his house caught fire and was destroyed; the story of Lee Mullen and Daryl Griffith, who with the help of a couple of friends, not only defended their home but four other homes in the street; and then there is the story of a lady who said that until that fateful Sunday she had not really got on with her neighbour, whose house was destroyed in the fire, but when she met her at the community meeting, she just hugged her and hoped that she would return. That is the

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stuff that makes up Armadale–Kelmscott and the hills communities; it is a special place. This disaster has been terrible, with so many losing so much, but it has also shown the strength and spirit of my community.

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah) [3.22 pm]: I wish to make a brief contribution to this important motion, and I thank the Premier for bringing it to the house. Certainly, in the last few months all Australians have been reminded of the ferocity of mother nature, be it in the floods in the north of our state in Carnarvon and in other states in the country, the recent cyclone in North Queensland, the bush fire devastation in the south east region of the metropolitan area, and of course in my region, the Peel, the Lake Clifton and Herron areas south of Mandurah. For the communities in the Peel area, the devastating effect of the bushfires was felt in all its ferocity in the Lake Clifton area, and as already mentioned by the member for Murray–Wellington, a number of houses and various other structures were lost in these fires, including, of course, livestock, pets, and other personal belongings. For all these people affected in the southern part of the Peel, these losses are devastating. I want to put on record my sincerest sympathy and support to those people affected. I also want to acknowledge and thank the magnificent emergency services personnel, the volunteers, the community members, and the agencies who responded to the fires in Lake Clifton. Those people who, ultimately, put their own lives on the line to save others and to help save other people's property deserve our deepest gratitude.

I also want to acknowledge the response from the many people and organisations in the Peel region who responded to the aftermath of that local disaster. There were numerous groups and individuals from across the community, and from outside the community, as mentioned by the member for Murray–Wellington and the member for Collie–Preston. We had groups from Mandurah, including our local Red Cross organisation, the Mandurah Murray May Day Club, local service and sporting clubs and individuals. Also, for example, there was Dot Terry-Bos, who operates the Mandurah Wildlife Rescue Hospital at Dawesville, and who dealt with domestic and native animals that had been brought there after the impact of the fire.

It is important that this house acknowledges events such as these. It is important that we offer our support and sympathy to those affected, and our gratitude to those emergency personnel and magnificent volunteers for their unyielding commitment to our community.

The SPEAKER: As this is a condolence motion, I ask members to stand in support of the motion and observe a minute's silence.

Question passed; members standing.