

FINANCE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (EMERGENCY RELIEF) BILL 2021

Second Reading

Resumed from 8 September.

MR P. LILBURNE (Carine) [10.44 am]: I would like to continue my contribution in support of the Finance Legislation Amendment (Emergency Relief) Bill 2021. I was speaking about the events of 11 September 2001; we are approaching the twentieth anniversary of that event.

The collision caused a massive explosion that showered burning debris over surrounding buildings and onto the streets below. A total of 2 996 people were killed in the attacks, including the 19 hijackers aboard the four aeroplanes. Citizens of 78 countries died in New York, Washington DC and Pennsylvania. The Australian government declared that the attacks in New York City and Washington DC constituted an attack upon the United States within the meaning of articles 4 and 5 of the Australia, New Zealand and United States of America defence treaty, and fully justified the Australian government's commitment to support, within Australia's capabilities, US-led action against those it deemed responsible for those tragic attacks.

During my career in the Department for Child Protection, now known as the Department of Communities, I worked under legislation that protected Western Australians during times of state emergency. My roles at DCP were classified as district emergency services officer and local emergency services officer. In my district emergency services officer role, I oversaw preparations within the Midland, Kalamunda and Mirrabooka districts. In the event of an emergency, I was tasked with overseeing the establishment of emergency evacuation centres. I was also tasked with coordinating the Fire and Emergency Services Authority, the Western Australia Police Force, the Department for Child Protection and Family Support, the Red Cross, the Salvation Army and other agencies, at both federal and state levels.

Australia's ability to respond quickly is the critical component of the Finance Legislation Amendment (Emergency Relief) Bill 2021, put forward by the Minister for Finance. The Western Australian Labor Party is determined to keep Western Australians safe, and this bill will continue to facilitate the COVID-19 relief the government considers necessary, as well as other measures, into the future. I commend the bill to the house.

MS E.J. KELSBI (Warren–Blackwood) [10.47 am]: I rise to speak to the second reading debate on the Finance Legislation Amendment (Emergency Relief) Bill 2021. Emergency services providers across my electorate of Warren–Blackwood, including a huge number of volunteers, help keep us and our environment safe. They are a huge part of the heart and soul of our communities. Our volunteers are frontline, dealing with distressing and sometimes volatile situations, including bushfires, floods, earthquakes and, now, COVID-19. These volunteers come from all areas of our communities: local business owners, teachers, tradies, scientists, kitchenhands and truck drivers. They help rebuild our communities, stronger than ever, in the face of hardship.

Whether it is bushfires, droughts, flooding or, more recently, the public health emergency of the COVID-19 global pandemic, unforeseen disasters occur when we least expect them, and often without warning. The Finance Legislation Amendment (Emergency Relief) Bill 2021 will be vital in helping to swiftly deliver financial relief to those in our regions affected by such disasters, and will help relieve the financial or economic impacts of declared emergencies.

The bill seeks to amend the Taxation Administration Act 2003 and the First Home Owner Grant Act 2000, and will allow the Treasurer to declare the tax or grant relief measures considered necessary in the face of emergencies and disasters. The government requires flexibility to respond in a timely fashion to those who are affected in times of need. Amending the Taxation Administration Act 2003 and the First Home Owner Grant Act 2000 will allow the Treasurer to do exactly that—declare the necessary tax or grant relief measures in record speed, ultimately minimising the anguish or stress felt by affected businesses and individuals at times of need.

This sense of loss, devastation and intense anguish was felt close to 10 years ago when blazing fires tore through picturesque Margaret River in the Warren–Blackwood region. On 23 November 2011, people in Margaret River woke to a clear blue day, but within days, 39 homes had been destroyed and damage had been done to 26 others. At the time, it was the second-highest number of houses lost in a single fire. Members of the community in that region have been piecing their lives back together in the years since and say that without the support of their community, they would not have made it through the testing times of the rebuilding.

In 2018, bushfires also threatened my friend and colleague the member for Albany's region and its surrounds. I can remember sitting at a home on one side of Frenchman Bay watching the hills on the other side of Frenchman Bay going up in flames. It was pretty scary to watch. At the same time, Peaceful Bay in my electorate, and Stirling Range and Porongurup Range, were also under direct attack from fire. Homes, livestock and sheds were lost as well as 17 000 hectares of land burnt in the Porongurup area. Not only was the habitat burnt, but also many wildlife were injured. It was very distressing.

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Thursday, 9 September 2021]

p3735b-3747a

Mr Paul Lilburne; Ms Elizabeth Kelsbie; Ms Jessica Shaw; Ms Lisa Baker; Mr Stephen Price

Recently in 2021, severe rains, winds and floods hit Albany, Denmark and surrounds, with disaster assistance provided to many in the community for flooded homes, farmland and community buildings, and lost livestock. Significant damage was caused to roads and the coast. Over 100 millimetres of rain was recorded; trees were felled and powerlines were down. Over 15 500 homes were affected. Major remediation works continue on the roads around Denmark, and at Ocean Beach to address the coastal erosion.

I give my heartfelt thanks to the emergency services workers and volunteers who support our communities. They save lives and also coordinate disaster relief so that we are able to get back on our feet swiftly. Their work is invaluable. I am proud to be part of the emergency response team as part of the Denmark Surf Life Saving Club. My role is one of communications. I help the team stay in touch with the families of those out on searches, working with police divers and other emergency service agencies. It is rewarding, but also stressful.

I offer my personal thanks to some of the emergency service providers, career and volunteer, across my electorate, including volunteers from 10 volunteer bushfire services in the Shire of Denmark—11 in Plantagenet; 10 in Bridgetown—Greenbushes; nine in Nannup; 25 across Manjimup; 12 in Donnybrook—Balingup; 10 in Augusta—Margaret River; and 16 in the lovely Boyup Brook. I thank also the marine rescue service volunteers from Denmark Volunteer Marine Rescue Group, with which I work closely; Walpole Volunteer Marine Rescue; Windy Harbour Volunteer Marine Rescue; Peaceful Bay Sea Rescue Group; Margaret River Volunteer Sea Rescue Group; and the Augusta Volunteer Marine and Rescue Group.

A huge number of volunteers are also part of the lifesaving services in Margaret River and Denmark, both with emergency response teams. I offer thanks to State Emergency Service volunteers from Bridgetown SES, Denmark SES, Gnowangerup SES, Manjimup SES, Mt Barker SES and Walpole SES. I personally have worked with the people from Denmark SES and they are absolutely outstanding in delivering those services to the local communities. I offer thanks also to our health service and volunteers across the WA Country Health Service and St John Ambulance. I thank the police services across the region. Recently with Minister Papalia, I met the officers at all the police stations in the south west of my electorate. They are doing an amazing job. That is not to forget the animal welfare volunteers who in times of crisis are there to rehouse and rehabilitate, as well as coordinate services, to ensure that not only our pets, but also our wildlife are looked after and supported.

As people who live in the regions know, community resource centres are imperative, and in times of crisis they are often the lynchpin, assisting to coordinate drop-off points for clothing, food and the like, and providing more broad support for people who may find themselves homeless. Passing this bill quickly will ensure the government can respond effectively and efficiently to emergencies in our state. Those affected by natural disaster or public health crises need any relief they can get, and they need it quickly. This bill will help limit anguish and concern in times already riddled with stress and trauma. A tax relief measure means a waiver of tax, a reduction in tax rate, an exemption from tax, or a deferral of the due date for lodging payroll tax returns, which members can imagine would be a huge support for those in a time of crisis. These amendments are important and include safeguards to ensure declarations can be used only in limited circumstances and tax relief can be declared only in connection with a state of emergency or an emergency situation declared under the Emergency Management Act 2005 or a public health state of emergency declared under the Public Health Act 2016. The Treasurer's declaration must be specific and must state and describe the relief measures that are to apply and articulate the period for which they apply. The declaration must also specify to whom the measures will apply.

The First Home Owner Grant Act 2000 will also be updated to allow the Treasurer to declare an increase to the grant or cap amount to alleviate the financial or economic impacts of a declared emergency. I bought my first house in Spearwood. We accessed a first home owner grant. Without it we would not have been able to step up onto the homebuyer ladder. I was pregnant at the time with my eldest, Amy. We moved into the house in the December, before she was born at the end of January 1997. I loved our home in Spearwood. It holds so many great memories. It is where my daughter Amy used to play in the backyard on a warm summer's evening. She had a swing in one of the backyard trees. She used to eat lemons from a neighbour's garden and play happily in her paddling pool. One of my favourite memories of my home in Spearwood is of my mum, who sadly passed away just before Amy turned three. Amy was in a high chair—a little one that sits on the ground—diving into an entire watermelon that my mum had bought her. She was covered in it. They both had the best day. Once she had finished scoffing the watermelon, we hosed her down. That is a memory that will always stay with me. But without the opportunity of that first home owner grant, I would not have those memories because we would not have had our own home.

Many people seek the financial support and assistance of first home owner grants. These amendments will allow the Treasurer to declare an increase to the grant to alleviate the financial or economic impacts of a declared emergency. To reiterate, the Finance Legislation Amendment (Emergency Relief) Bill 2021 will enable the government to better support communities financially in a timely manner when faced with times of declared emergency. I commend the bill to the house.

MS J.J. SHAW (Swan Hills — Parliamentary Secretary) [10.58 am]: I rise to speak in support of the Finance Legislation Amendment (Emergency Relief) Bill 2021. Like me, the member for Geraldton has also recently experienced a tragic, catastrophic event in her community, and this bill is very pertinent to us. We have just passed the six-month date from the Wooroloo bushfire. That underscores the importance of not just immediate relief that is provided to communities, but also the enduring supports that need to be provided to communities that have experienced disaster. The care, custodianship and support needs to last long after the sirens have gone, the dust has settled and the crack teams that were assembled have moved away. This bill facilitates forms of support that can be provided through the state government that are integral to recovery and response relief. I will briefly run through what this legislation will facilitate and, with your indulgence, Madam Acting Speaker, talk about the sorts of ongoing support that has been provided.

I have spoken on several occasions now about the incredible first response and the fabulous volunteer bush fire brigades and all the agencies that were right in the thick of it. However, many agencies are now contributing to the recovery effort and it is important to acknowledge their work. I think sometimes that people do not realise just what an effort is involved in rebuilding communities. Before I go into that, this Finance Legislation Amendment (Emergency Relief) Bill will amend the Taxation Administration Act and the First Home Owner Grant Act to allow the government to respond quickly to emergencies and will facilitate the Treasurer to declare tax relief measures that he or she considers are necessary to provide relief from the financial or economic effects of a declared emergency. Those measures could include a waiver or partial waiver of tax, a reduction in a tax rate, an exemption and a deferral of a requirement to lodge a payroll tax return, which can be invaluable to a business in a bit of strife. The powers can be declared only in response to a state of emergency, so they cannot be used willy-nilly; there needs to be a trigger. As I say, it will go some way towards supporting communities that experience disaster. Indeed, those communities require quite a lot of support, so I will take some time to, I suppose, acknowledge all the organisations that have been assisting my own community as we have recovered from the Wooroloo bushfires.

I sit on the state recovery coordination group partnership forum, which meets on a monthly basis and goes through every agency that has a touchpoint in this disaster. We all go through and give our perspectives on what we see in the community, what we perceive are needs, how we are working together, what we can do to assist one another and what enduring supports are required. As I say, I have acknowledged my fire brigades and indicated my deep eternal appreciation to them for their work and that of all the first responders who were present at the evacuation centres. The efforts of other agencies also require acknowledgement and today I indeed want to acknowledge them. The first person I want to acknowledge is Dr Ron Edwards, the State Recovery Controller. Ron was appointed in the aftermath of the fire, and ever since then he has been pulling us all together, advocating for my community and speaking with me at length about the sorts of support I can provide. He has been a mentor and guide to me. He has been a very willing ear when I have raised issues with him that I have considered need addressing. Indeed, we have worked hand in hand to support our communities. I am very grateful for his leadership; he really has done an absolutely fantastic job. Thank you, Ron. You do not know how much I appreciate all you have done.

Mr D.A. Templeman: He's a good man.

Ms J.J. SHAW: He really is, minister. Indeed, the minister and I bumped into him the other day. It was lovely to see him and his wife taking a well-earned couple of days out. It is remarkable—they were back in the saddle yesterday for our state recovery coordination group partnership forum meeting. As I said, it is convened every month by Dr Edwards. He has been fabulous.

The Western Australia Police Force was also involved, immediately managing the roadblocks and ensuring that the community felt safe. I will come back to the work the Minderoo Foundation has been doing. I acknowledge the Department of Communities, the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation and the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development. The community recovery support officers of the Shire of Mundaring and the City of Swan have been amazing as, obviously, has the Department of Fire and Emergency Services. Disaster Relief Australia is a really interesting organisation. I first met its people immediately after the fire who were flown in to provide some support, given its incredible efforts in response to bushfires on the east coast. It has recruited a whole series of volunteers as part of DRA. The efforts it has undertaken to assist the communities to recover have been amazing. In fact, my old next-door neighbour, as it turns out, is now working for DRA. He has been coordinating the drone program. It facilitated the recovery effort and the review of the state of properties through drone surveillance, which has considerably fast-tracked the assessment of fire damage and has helped to coordinate recovery efforts. DRA has done a great job.

The Housing Industry Association has been right in there. I wrote to it when it became apparent that we were facing tradesmen shortages and said to the Housing Industry Association and the Master Builders Association that we would really struggle to secure trades to rebuild homes. I asked them to advocate to their members. Everybody knows we are in a bit of a building boom at the moment. My folk in Gidgegannup in particular, where there has been a very significant loss of properties, could do with the HIA and the Master Builders Association encouraging

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p3735b-3747a

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their members to prioritise the reconstruction of homes in the Perth hills. I certainly thank the Housing Industry Association and the Construction Training Fund, which has come to the party to see what can be done to promote the building trades' support for the recovery efforts. The Insurance Council of Australia has also been involved. I will say that in the early days, there were some real issues around insurance. I am aware that about \$93 million worth of damage has resulted in 1 039 claims being received by insurers associated with the Wooroloo fires. Seven hundred and seven of those claims have been closed, which is about 65 per cent; 385 claims remain open; and 30 are going through a dispute process. It has been good to see that although there were hiccups to begin with, the insurers have largely been fantastic in supporting the community. In fact, I was evacuated myself; the fire got to the boundary of my neighbour's property and when I went to the evacuation centre, pretty much the next morning insurance companies were there with teams available helping people to navigate through their claims and the Insurance Council of Australia was there. It was great to see the support provided by the Insurance Council and the insurance companies themselves.

The Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage was also there assisting people to understand the planning requirements that will apply as indeed were the staff of the shires and the City of Swan. The Business Council of Australia was there too to understand what can be done to support small businesses that had difficulties, particularly those that lost tools and other equipment they needed to do their jobs. We do not think through the implications of these sorts of events on communities and small businesses. All these organisations now have these enduring touchpoints with community.

Western Power came to the party and in a remarkable way rebuilt the electricity network that had been decimated throughout Wooroloo and Gidgegannup. Where it was economic to do so, it replaced some of the distribution network with microgrids, which, of course, is very dear to my heart and certainly something I have been advocating for, particularly in Gidgegannup. It was really pleasing to see that Western Power does not just talk the talk; it walks the walk. Where the opportunities were presented to roll out sustainable affordable microgrid technologies, it did so. It was great to see the innovation there.

The Department of Health was there assessing water. People do not think about water running off rooftops into water tanks. Where planes have been over and dumped fire retardant, it can present issues for the safety of water supply, so the Department of Health and the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation were involved in that, so our thanks go to them. The City of Perth was right there with the Lord Mayor's Distress Relief Fund. It participated in every meeting and talked about how it could quickly get funding into the Gidgegannup and Wooroloo communities. In fact, its rapid-response grant of \$25 000 got into the pockets of property owners out there with lightning speed. People were genuinely in severe distress, thinking, "What on earth are we going to be able to do?", and \$25 000 was given straight to them to determine what sorts of emergency accommodation relief would be most appropriate for their circumstances. They were able to make those decisions and certainly I am very grateful to the City of Perth for the administration of that fund. One of the things people were very worried about when we were undertaking fundraising efforts in the community was whether the money would get right where it needed to be. We have heard that in response to other disasters funding has come in but has not necessarily gone to the front line, instead being absorbed by the overheads. The City of Perth came to the party and said that every dollar donated to the Lord Mayor's Distress Relief Fund would get to the people concerned. The City of Perth absorbed the administration and overhead costs of running the fund, and we are deeply grateful. That support has endured and the vast majority of that funding has now been dispensed into the community. I hope that the people of Western Australia, who are so remarkably generous in their support, take great comfort in knowing that every dollar that they donated has gone directly to the people who need it most. That is something that we should be very grateful for.

The Mental Health Commission has been right in there, monitoring the ongoing mental health impacts of a disaster like this on my community and providing ongoing support and counselling. The Department of Communities and the Red Cross have been involved in these enduring supports that are required. The Small Business Development Corporation has been talking to small businesses about how they can recover and pivot, and how it can assist them to rebuild. The Australian Defence Force is on this working group, and has looked at what sort of logistical support it could provide in the immediate aftermath and all the way through the recovery and rebuilding process. The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development is in there looking after the animal husbandry elements. Tragically, a lot of horses, cows and sheep were affected and it sometimes took some time to identify where the need was. DPIRD was right in there. WA Wildlife is looking after our native fauna as well, and with the Australian Veterinary Association responded by establishing the state's very first animal bushfire emergency centre out at Mundaring oval. I visited that centre and it was absolutely fantastic. In terms of ongoing guidance and support, as we have understood more deeply the impacts on domestic livestock, our pets and our native fauna, the Australian Veterinary Association has been right there. The Western Australian Local Government Association is part of this recovery group. A remarkable enduring effort is required to assist a community through a disaster, far beyond the supports outlined in this bill, which I absolutely welcome, but we need to put on the public record just what remarkable work has been done in an enduring fashion.

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[Member's time extended.]

Ms J.J. SHAW: I want to talk through how the recovery effort is going after the Wooroloo bushfires, because remarkable progress has been made in the last six months. I want to give a shout-out to a few individuals who have gone above and beyond. I want to give everybody an update, because, as I said, it is not just about the immediate response. The Wooroloo Bushfire Coordinated Residential Clean-up Program is close to completion. Of the properties registered with the scheme, 98 per cent, or 132 of the 135 registered properties, have now been cleared. That is a remarkable effort. I know it has been a frustrating and traumatic process, but I have spoken to people who are involved in the recovery on the east coast. When we compare what is happening there with what we are seeing in response to the Wooroloo fires, the amount of work that has gone on here has been incredible. I commend everybody who has been involved in the residential clean-up program. I thank them as well for the sensitivity with which they have handled the clean-up program. Minister Whitby and I visited Cherry Alford, who lost her property in Gidgegannup. I have visited a lot of people's properties in Gidgegannup, but I will not name them, because they are going through some quite traumatic experiences. Whenever contractors have come on site, they have been remarkably sensitive. They will sift through the debris on the properties, and when they find tea cups or little china trinkets, they collect them and then walk the owners through the property and present them with stuff. They have been remarkably sensitive and compassionate. I have heard nothing but high praise from all the residents who have worked with the clean-up organisations. I want to thank them for their sensitivity and compassion. No doubt, as I have, they have also spoken to people and had to give a sympathetic ear to some really quite tragic stories from people who have lost lifetimes of valuables and who wake up every day and see the devastation of their properties. I know the clean-up folk have been remarkably compassionate. I want to sincerely thank them.

I want to acknowledge our amazing local recovery staff from the City of Swan and the Shire of Mundaring who have led the community effort in recovery. They have been the touchpoints for people in the Shire of Mundaring and the City of Swan. They have gone above and beyond by helping to draw all these different agencies together, identify needs and deploy resources. I want to particularly acknowledge Adrian Dyson, Karen White and Karen Dore at the Shire of Mundaring, and Heath Stenton, Ian Robinson and Telia Reilly at the City of Swan. They have been welcoming, friendly and familiar. They really brought people together. They have attended community events and provided emotional support. They have been buoyant, supportive, compassionate and sympathetic. I want to thank them for their remarkable efforts. I acknowledge them and put on the record the gratitude that we feel. I also acknowledge the 25 organisations and agencies that attended the evacuation centres that were set up in response to the Wooroloo fires. There were a lot of charities and community groups. It was like a village sprang up overnight in Swan View. As I said, I was there and those agencies were remarkable. Nothing was too much trouble. It was just absolutely remarkable.

The process of recovery goes on. I want to quickly outline the support services that are being provided. A lot of social supports are required. Both individuals and families need access to recovery and support services. There is an ongoing need for the monitoring of people's mental health and wellbeing. Certain people have reached out and sought quite specific counselling help, and in response to that need, funding of about \$1.5 million was delivered to the Wooroloo bushfire community recovery and outreach program by the Department of Communities. I thank the Minister for Community Services, who is sitting in front of me. Her staff have been outstanding. I want to express my gratitude to her team in their purple shirts. They are always at community events and are absolutely fantastic. We did not realise what a bow wave of evacuees we were going to deal with. I was on the phone with the minister, and within half an hour another evacuation centre was being set up; her staff were remarkable. I want to thank the minister and her agencies for their support during the fires. Of course, the City of Swan, Shire of Mundaring and Red Cross have also been involved in the Wooroloo bushfire community recovery and outreach program. That program has funded five community recovery officers and a whole heap of activities to facilitate positive community connections, such as morning teas, dinners, community recovery seminars, outreach events and quiz nights, involving a whole heap of agencies. They are great fun. It has been lovely to see what an opportunity that has created for people who live in Gidgegannup and Wooroloo who had never met one another before to come together. It has been a great privilege to have been part of those events and see community building in real time.

I was a little worried when I saw the impacts of the bushfires and spoke to people over east about how they had managed the recovery efforts. People told me to brace myself, because in six months' time, many people would not come back and most people would leave. They said that people see the devastation, cannot face the idea of rebuilding their homes and decide it is easier to sell their property and leave. In Gidgegannup and Wooroloo, some people have made that choice. Of course I understand that, but when I have talked to people and asked how it is all going, everyone says, "We love the community here. We want to stay." I was particularly a little worried about Gidgegannup Primary School. We have a cracking little primary school up there. The principal, Michael Kovalevs, is a wonderful principal. I said to him, "How's it all going? Are you seeing kids leaving? Are you seeing families go?" and he said, "No; they're staying." The board chair of Gidgegannup Primary School, Maureen, lost her home in the fires. I can tell members that she is an amazing, stoic and resilient woman. Even though her home had been devastated, she wanted to stay to support that school community and make sure those kids are all right.

It was interesting. For the kids in particular, the fires happened, and there was obviously a lot of upheaval for those children, but then the school term started and the kids could all go back to school and be with their friends again. However, it was then school holidays, a fair time after the fires, and the kids were home all day. For those families who had been relocated to their properties in the Minderoo pods—again, my gratitude to Minderoo Foundation for the 42 pods that have been deployed onto properties throughout Gidgegannup—those kids were home and wanted to run around in the bushland, as we do in the hills. Kids can get out on their quad bikes and go feral, and that is part of the reason that we love the hills lifestyle. However, all of a sudden, the kids were in this nuclear zone of absolute devastation. The kids had come home to that, and their parents were seeing that every day. I know that has put strain on the school community. However, through the support that has been provided through the Department of Education and the various agencies associated with counselling for school communities, we have not seen an exodus of people despite that hardship. That is because of the community spirit in Gidgegannup. It is because of the support that has been provided by these agencies. I am so pleased that so many people have stuck it out.

Red Cross has been amazing. People from Red Cross even doorknocked my house to make sure that I was all right, because I was in the red zone and had been evacuated. They doorknocked all the homes in the whole red zone of the Woorloo fires, including the areas that had not had any property damage. Red Cross is providing incredible support. As recently as 14 August, Red Cross hosted training for recovery staff and volunteers covering practical aspects of community recovery, such as psychological first aid. These are, again, long-term supports that are provided and that are needed in communities as they recover.

The natural environment is an interesting one. Obviously, we have beautiful forests all the way through the hills. That is part of the reason that we love living there. There is a hyper-consciousness in my community from those who have seen destruction in their properties about not only rebuilding their homes, but also recovering their properties in an environmentally sustainable and sensible way that is sympathetic to the natural environment and seeks to reinstate the flora and fauna species that existed previously, control weeds, and look for nesting sites for the birds that have lost their homes. In fact, at one of the Gidgegannup dinners that I attended, we heard from Simon Cherriman. If members ever have an opportunity, they should hear one of Simon's presentations about his work with wedge-tailed eagles. He gave a remarkable presentation about the impacts on our wedge-tail eagle population right through the Woorloo fires footprint, and the proactive steps that people can take to redesign their properties to encourage the wildlife to recover. Indeed, planting days are going on, and nurseries are donating seedlings for property recovery. There is enduring support, work that will take years—decades—but that we should be supporting on an ongoing basis.

Speaking of landscaping and environment planning, on Saturday 31 July, I went to a community bushfire-prone landscaping forum, along with Hon Lorna Harper from the other place, and our amazing candidate for the federal seat of Hasluck, Tania Lawrence. Tania is a hills local. She lives in Mundaring. She is a member of a community that also faces bushfire risk. She was very keen to come with me to that forum. There was a whole heap of local community and industry leaders, and television personalities, looking at how to establish sustainable properties, fire-wise gardens, and fauna and habitat rehabilitation. A range of forums were delivered. One was called "How to know, feel and heal country". That was all about: What does our ecosystem look like across the hills? How can we rebuild our ecosystem? How can we be sensitive to the history of the place, not only the western history but also the tens of thousands of years of Aboriginal history in that place? There were forums on sustainable gardening, and on designing and creating a fire-wise property. In fact, tomorrow I will be meeting Chris Ferreira, who delivered that forum.

Ms S.F. McGurk interjected.

Ms J.J. SHAW: Chris is great, yes. Chris and I have worked a lot on fire-wise property design. He will be popping in tomorrow to have a chat about more work that we are doing on fire-wise property design. There are some really tricky aspects as well. Seminars were presented on bushfire property standards. The City of Swan and Shire of Mundaring now both have dedicated resources available to help people understand bushfire attack level implications on their home designs if they want to rebuild. It is practical advice. It costs a lot. It is now available to people affected in the hills for free, and will provide long-term enduring support in the aftermath that will have a significant impact on helping my community to recover.

One final thing I will mention—because there is a chance that someone might watch this speech!—is that I want to thank the Minister for Fire and Emergency Services for his support, and in particular for engaging with me and my constituents and providing me with every support through his office as we have tackled the recovery effort. People should be aware that the terms of reference for the independent bushfire inquiry have been announced. I strongly encourage community members to prepare submissions into that process. I have gone around the traps quite a bit and have met with most of the bush fire brigades in my electorate as part of the debrief process. I have also taken meetings with individual firefighters, first responders, property owners, council employees and not-for-profit organisations, who have all given me their views. Some of them do not feel comfortable about making submissions in their own right. I am preparing a submission that I will be putting into the independent inquiry. I will be very happy to do what I can to assist people to put their viewpoints forward into that process. I can anonymise feedback. We need to learn from this as a community and as a state government. Please feel free to contact my office for any assistance.

On that comment, finally, Lynn Grierson in my office retired recently. She was an absolutely outstanding staff member. She was the point person in my office bringing all this together. That placed her under remarkable stress. She was absolutely amazing in the support she gave me and the support she gave my constituents. I congratulate her on her retirement and thank her for the efforts that she went to in helping my community through the Woorooloo fires. I commend the bill to the house.

MS L.L. BAKER (Maylands) [11.28 am]: This is my first opportunity to speak on the Finance Legislation Amendment (Emergency Relief) Bill 2021, a bill that has been brought into the house by a very good friend of mine, the Minister for Finance. It is a great pleasure to have an opportunity to put some words into this discussion. I will not be long, but I wish to raise a few points on this bill so that it will be part of the *Hansard* record. The Finance Legislation Amendment (Emergency Relief) Bill will allow the state Treasurer to declare tax or grant relief measures considered necessary to relieve the financial or economic impacts of a declared emergency.

Can I say at the start that not only is this a bill that I am very proud to speak to, and one that was brought into the house by a friend of mine, it also a bill that really demonstrates what a Labor government is all about. It is all about supporting the most vulnerable in the most difficult circumstances. I am very proud to be part of this Labor government, which has brought so many innovations forward and continues to do so. I look forward to the budget being brought down this afternoon. We have already heard about the inclusion of social housing commitments, which have been a long time coming in my view. I sat through years of the Liberal–National government, which did very little in this area. I am so proud that we are now seeing such a significant commitment from the McGowan Labor government into proper social housing that is co-designed and well developed and will hopefully address some of the incredible need. I have spoken about homelessness in this place for many years. People understand the plight of the homeless in our state. Vulnerability and social exclusion are two incredibly difficult and complex problems in our society. They are increasing; they are not going away. As a developed country, we should be ashamed of the plight of the homeless in our state. The package of housing commitments in the budget is remarkable and timely. I am very proud that this Labor government has made that commitment.

I return to the finance legislation amendment bill. It is all about emergency relief for people who are finding it very tough because of circumstances that more often than not are completely out of their control. Passing this bill quickly will ensure that the McGowan government can provide further COVID-19 relief as it considers necessary or, similarly, we could give tax or grant relief in response to state emergencies. Over my lifetime, emergencies in this state have pretty much been restricted to bushfires, cyclones or damage caused by wind. A big hailstorm also caused damage some years ago. The emergence of a pandemic has changed all of our lives. Like me, I assume that it has changed everyone’s opinion about what constitutes an emergency and what is required legislatively by the leadership in a community to make significant contributions towards not only addressing an emergency situation, but also working on the ground with individuals to see them through very difficult times.

I want to talk briefly about some of the emergencies that we have seen in this state, since I have been in this house anyway. I recall the Roleystone fires that occurred some years ago, which were devastating for many people in the Perth hills. They created havoc and took away the livelihoods and homes of many residents. The minister who brought this bill to the house would remember them because they were in his electorate. We learnt from those fires. Independent reports were written, which were handed down before our time in government. I hope that some of the lessons were carried forward.

Back in January 2014, I was very closely involved in the response to the Parkerville fires. Within 10 years, we had another state disaster. The Parkerville fires took away 57 homes from residents in the Perth hills. Some of them were owned by friends of mine. I particularly want to mention Paul and Alanna Randles-Freeman, who lost their home in the January 2014 bushfires. I remember distinctly pulling out onto Great Eastern Highway on the morning of those fires, looking to the left up the highway and seeing an immense mushroom cloud forming. I said to the friend who was in the car with me, “I don’t think that’s a good sign. I think we might just go back to the property in Mundaring that I own and keep an eye on things”, and we did. Not long after that—about two hours later—Alanna, my friend, arrived with her horse float full of ponies, dogs, a cat, chickens and a whole bunch of other stuff. She arrived on my doorstep because people who live in fire-prone areas have a network and they are ready to respond quickly if their friends need help. When she arrived—she did not have her children with her; she sent them off in a different direction in the spare vehicle—she was very concerned to get her animals to safety, assuming that her children would be safe. Her horses stayed with me for a couple of months, but she was able to take her dogs and the cat back home fairly quickly. Watching the process that then ensued when people had lost their properties was coloured for me on a drive through a fire-prone area after a bushfire. We see a level of bushfire that is breathtaking in its complete annihilation of everything that we are used to seeing as trees, grass, plants and animals—everything is gone. It is just black and white and horrible. To see friends’ houses reduced to that level as well, again, is dreadful.

As a result of that fire, 57 properties were lost and 1 000 acres were burnt out. It was a truly dreadful situation. I should point out that there was very little coordination or response for the animals that were caught up in the Parkerville

fires. I remember Alanna and Paul getting home and having no access to water and power. They found it very difficult to get out of what was left of their home to get diesel to put in the generator because of the police roadblocks. I want to pick up on that point in a minute.

I would like to bring members forward to something that the member for Swan Hills spoke about in detail—the Wooroloo fires. After the Parkerville fires, independent reports put forward a number of suggestions, some of which the government took on board. I want to draw members' attention to the fact that after a major emergency bushfire, a report is done, and we should learn from it. The subject of roadblocks is a vexing one. I want to talk about that in relation to not only Roleystone and Parkerville, but also Wooroloo. In relation to Wooroloo, some friends of mine were quoted in an article that was published in one of the local papers several months ago, and also in the *Countryman*, talking about the Wooroloo fires. They were in the direct line of the fires on 1 February. I will paraphrase the article that appeared in the newspaper. I ask members to indulge me while I scroll through the article on my telephone. This couple was in the direct line of fire on 1 February. They stayed at home and managed to save it, although it suffered substantial damage, including two caravans, excavators and other equipment. Their business is home based, and a lot of that was taken out. Four of their close neighbours lost their homes, and the whole experience was incredibly scary. When they tried to get access to things like diesel so they could run their generator, they were told that they could not get through roadblocks to get hold of that diesel. There was no relief for them in terms of having firefighting pumps on or anything like that because they simply ran out of petrol. Members may remember that the fire went on for several days. They needed to respond to that threat level over several days. They needed to keep the generators going, but they could not get out because they were not allowed to cross the roadblocks.

I turn to the recommendations in the Ferguson report—the big inquiry into the Waroona–Yarloop fires that happened some time ago. The first lines of chapter 12 are about traffic management, and state —

During the course of the Special Inquiry the single most common complaint was around the operation of Vehicle Control Points ... People already traumatised by the damage the fire had caused, were obstructed from returning to their homes to start to deal with the stock and property losses.

Others were thwarted from carrying out their livelihood.

Recommendation 14 at the end of that chapter states —

The State Emergency Management Committee to review the policy for traffic management at emergency incidents so it reflects national 'best practice'. This includes the production and issuing of an aide-memoire to guide traffic management, emergency and incident management personnel.

The policy should provide a practical balance between risk to life and the public value of enabling the timely restoration of livelihoods and the movement of critical resources, (including essential services, critical business and livestock welfare services), through traffic management points.

That does not appear to have been the case from the evidence of those who were on the ground during the Wooroloo fires. It clearly shows that we still have a way to go in this area. I encourage the Minister for Emergency Services and the agencies involved in an emergency response to look closely at chapter 12 of the Ferguson report and ensure that, after consultation with the people who were on the ground and have been through the experience, that we respond in a timely way. Having personally been through a bushfire—it did not take out my property but burnt around the sides of it—and then being refused entry to my property, which was about two kilometres away, I am totally aware of the stress levels of not being able to access my home. This stress is particularly heightened by bunches of gawking people, who drive to the end of the road that you live on, park their car and block your way because they want to have a look at the fire. I understand that human nature is a complex thing, but when there are so many people in the way and all you can think about is trying to get home to save the creatures that you care about and are responsible for or to help the people who live on a property, it is very stressful. I urge the government to fully implement chapter 12 of the Ferguson report in consultation with the people who have a lived experience in this area.

Perhaps on a more positive note, one of the great highlights in the State Emergency Management Committee's advances in dealing with bushfire emergencies was when Dr Garnett Hall led the Animal Emergency Response Group to attend the Mundaring and Wooroloo fires. Like my friend the member for Swan Hills, I was delighted to visit the area to see the tens of veterinarians, tens of veterinary nurses and the many rescue and emergency care groups that arrived to help. These groups all needed coordinating. Since I have been in this role, there have been four bushfires for which I have received a barrage of offers to help. I am sure that members would understand, given my work in animal welfare has made me, I suppose, the go-to person on a lot of these issues, that people from all over the world in some cases have phoned and said, "How can we help?", "What can we do?", "How can we donate?" It is easy to refer them to the Lord Mayor's Distress Relief Fund, but many people want to make a specific donation to help injured animals. It was a source of concern that there was no coordination of this stuff. For example, some practitioners wanted to make available some veterinary medicines to help the wounded animals, but because of

some of the legal restrictions in place in Western Australia, if those medicines are not prescribed and do not go through the correct channels—for obvious reasons, of course—they cannot be passed on in an emergency situation. We need to look at how we can free up those things, because there are often cases in which medicines are on the borderline of being out of date or are just out of date, but bandages and things like that can, of course, still be used. We need a better and more streamlined approach.

[Member's time extended.]

Ms L.L. BAKER: Watching people from the Animal Emergency Response Group work on the ground was a joy to behold despite the stressful circumstances. Once they were allowed in, they walked the bush and picked up injured animals. They took them back to their centre and treated them for burns. A lot of farming and companion animals on people's properties were in great pain. The owners of the properties were not allowed to go to their homes, but the vets, nurses and emergency helpers, through careful management, were able to find these animals and very often put them out of misery by euthanising them. Euthanising injured animals is a complex issue because nobody can just walk onto a property and euthanise a creature; they need the right permission to do that. Horses are often worth what their owners think they are worth. From my understanding having worked with horses, some of them are worth hundreds of thousands of dollars, if not more, so letting somebody onto a property to let them to make the call about whether an injured horse needs to be euthanised is a pretty tall order when we are talking about a quarter of a million dollars' worth of horse flesh. It is a pretty tall order to take that on, so the right checks and balances need to be in place. Of course, a severely injured horse needs to be put out of any pain and suffering, but we need clear lines of accountability and responsibility so that vets can do their work, animal owners can be confident that their animals are being properly treated and there is no inherent liability involved for anyone who is just trying to do the right thing.

I got a message back from my colleague Dr Garnett Hall, who led the response, which was the first such response of its kind in Western Australia. I very much congratulate the State Emergency Management Committee for its work in this area because what we actually saw on the ground was remarkable. Another thing that is well worth commenting on is that I have been in many discussions over a long period with the Minister for Community Services about Communities' response to companion animals in emergency situations. The department previously had quite an unrealistic response and said that people could not take their companion animals to a shelter during an emergency situation. People in other countries and other states of Australia have died because of that rule. If I had to leave for an evacuation centre during an emergency and I was told that I could not take my companion animal, there is no way that I would go. The Department of Communities has shifted its position and now has a twenty-first century view about the role that companion animals play in many people's lives. Its policy is to now allow some animals to be taken to shelters if they are properly managed. Not everybody has a pet guinea pig, dog or cat. Some people keep snakes and all sort of things for pets and we probably do not want them running or slithering around unsupervised in an evacuation centre! But given the right conditions, companion animals should be allowed to be evacuated with their families.

One of the lessons that I have been asked to pass on from volunteers and those from the Animal Emergency Response Group is the need to practise how to do this. It is not complicated. If we were to offer a fast emergency response, it would require some forward planning. I would like to call on the relevant authorities to put some annual planning together, and some training, that brings all agencies to the table and on the ground practically working out how these emergency animal response centres can be run more effectively. There are policies—I have mentioned one—about how to dispose of an injured animal without incurring any liability. There is a structure and there are policies and equipment, all of which needs to be brought together in a more coherent fashion. We are at the gates, we are ready to start, but we need a bit more focus on this. I ask all those involved to do some strategic planning every year, and some training, for the agencies to make sure that they can deliver this kind of service promptly and effectively.

Another thing I will mention from that experience is that the vets also requested that I consider whether the government should look at phasing out the branding of horses and replacing it with microchipping. It seems that in order to try to identify where horses live and where they came from, microchipping is a much faster and more effective way to do that because the vet can just run handheld equipment over the animal and find out where its home is. Branding does not work like that. Horses are branded when they are very young. Horses may have changed owners three, four or five times since they were branded. A microchip is current and can be updated. It is a far more effective way of tracing horses and making sure that they are being properly cared for, and being able to reunite them with their correct owners in times of emergency. I put that out there. I would really like the government to look at microchipping all horses. I am sure that my industry, the equestrian industry, would look at it favourably. I will be more than happy to work on that in the future.

Before I finish mentioning the emergency animal response centre that was set up in Mundaring, I should recognise the Shire of Mundaring and the wonderful staff from the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, along with the City of Swan, for setting up the centre and organising for Garnett, the vet, and others to come along. They did an amazing job. I thank them so much on behalf of the many people and animals who were affected by

the Wooroloo fires. They set up three animal feed distribution centres. Another huge issue in this kind of emergency is how to get food and water to animals that are suffering, or have not had access to food and water for several days. They set up three stations: one each at Chidlow and Gidgegannup; I cannot remember where the third one was—maybe it was Stoneville. The three centres took in food donations and allowed them to be distributed across the fire zone. They did an amazing job in my view. I am very thankful to the City of Swan, the Shire of Mundaring and the DPIRD staff. I met some of the DPIRD staff when I was at the evacuation centre. They are amazing and committed individuals. It was heartening to see their commitment. Of course they were there Saturday, Sunday, Monday and Tuesday. They staffed that centre around the clock to make sure that the animals that came in were properly cared for. I thank all the wildlife rescue groups that were involved in that effort for their remarkable work. Thank you so much.

I am sorry, but my next topic has nothing to do with the Finance Legislation Amendment (Emergency Relief) Bill 2021! We have just come out of the Olympics. Before I sit down, and I promise to be very quick, I want to recognise the work of the Australian Paralympics team and just say how inspirational and remarkable all of those elite athletes are. For those interested, it was the twenty-fifth anniversary of the introduction of para-equestrian events at the Paralympic Games. For those members who do not know, the word “Paralympics” is short for “parallel Olympics”. I ask members to remember that. It is not about a disability; it is about a parallel Olympics. I also put on the record that all four Australian riders, for the first time ever, finished in the top 10 for their respective grades. It was the very first time that Australia had achieved this. It is only the twenty-fifth anniversary, and Australia is still young in this field because we did not come on board with a para-equestrian team until quite recently.

I recognise the incredible work of Western Australian Sharon Jarvis from the iconic Donnybrook. Sharon has represented Australia a record three times in the Paralympics, including Beijing in 2008 and Rio in 2016. Sharon Jarvis and her horse Romanos did an amazing job for us. I am so proud to call her a friend. The work that she does is remarkable. I also recognise Amelia White and her beautiful international horse Genius. Amelia is based in Europe, not in Australia. She did an amazing job. She is someone to watch in the future. Amelia is an incredible elite athlete. Victoria Davies and her beautiful PRE—pura raza espanola—chunky boy Celere, was one of the hot-ticket items for the television cameras at the Games! He is a very good looking stallion; a beautiful boy.

Ms M.M. Quirk: Do you think the “neighs” should have it!

Ms L.L. BAKER: I think the “neighs” had it, well and truly!

Finally, I acknowledge Emma Booth. It was Emma’s second Paralympics. She also rode for Australia in Rio in 2016. Her horse Zidane, and Sharon’s horse Romanos, are both retiring; as is Sharon, I might add. We are looking for some new para-equestrian athletes to take us through to Paris. I have just been announced as a member of the national high performance panel for the para-equestrian discipline. I am very proud to be part of preparing for Paris 2024. Elite athletes and their horses train every day, every week of every month, to achieve this outcome for Australia. Thank you for your persistence, commitment and dedication. I thank all of those athletes and their wonderful horses for the work that they have done to really put Australia on the international map. I look forward to working with my colleagues Danielle Fraillon, Sally Francis and Anna Muldoon, with support from Stef Maraun, on the national high performance panel to move the para-equestrian discipline forward on the international stage and see Australia go from strength to strength into the future.

MR S.J. PRICE (Forrestfield) [11.57 am]: I, too, would like to start by congratulating our Paralympic team on the wonderful Paralympics they have just completed. I certainly look forward to hearing about some of the para-equestrians the member for Maylands just spoke about in the future. It was wonderful to hear.

It gives me great pleasure to stand in support of the Finance Legislation Amendment (Emergency Relief) Bill 2021. I would like to acknowledge the great work of the Minister for Finance in ensuring that this bill came to the house as quickly as it did. We are in strange times. I often wonder what future members of Parliament will think when they look at some of the legislation we have had to pass over the last 18 months because of the really unusual situation we find ourselves in, in dealing with a global pandemic. Who would ever have thought that this emergency would take the shape of a global pandemic in the form of the COVID-19 outbreak that we have seen over the last couple of years now, and still with a long time to run. We are quite familiar with dealing with other emergencies. Cyclones have been a fairly constant part of life in WA, depending on where people live. More recently, cyclone Seroja came further south than any other cyclone that we have experienced in WA. Cyclones have normally been confined to the Pilbara. A change in weather patterns is affecting a number of different situations that we deal with. Cyclone Seroja certainly highlighted that fact: we had a cyclone that came a long way south, causing devastation, and mainly because of our building codes. Historically, identified cyclone areas have had additional building requirements to prepare buildings and houses for cyclones. When extreme events happen outside places that we traditionally associate them with, we get the outcomes that occurred in the midwest during Seroja. It means we really have to stop and think about where we are going in the future in terms of dealing with different emergencies.

Historically, we have also had to deal with fires. We have heard a bit about the devastating impact of fires, and I will talk a little more about that as well, because I have a bit of a background in that area. The government announced yesterday, I think it was, the protection of our native forests from logging, and that is part of recognising that climate change is happening and that we will have to deal with the effects of it. As I said earlier, it has a significant impact on the weather events we have to deal with, whether they are storms, declining rainfall, increasing summer temperatures or increasing fire activity.

The member for Darling Range spoke about his personal experience of bushfires in the area where he lives. Unfortunately, we are seeing an increase in unpredictable bushfire behaviour. I will touch on a few examples of the bushfires that I have experienced. In a past life I was the deputy chief bushfire control officer for the Shire of Dardanup. I was a member of the West Dardanup Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade from about 2000 to 2007—something like that—and for the last couple of years I was captain of the brigade. Dardanup is a lovely rural town just outside Bunbury. It has a lot of semirural properties that are exposed to fire events, including larger, fully fledged farming properties, and smaller five-acre lots and subdivisions. There is a lot of fire risk in the area, and through my involvement with the volunteer bush fire brigade I developed a pretty good understanding of fire behaviour and the things that need to be done to mitigate fire risks.

When there is a serious fire incident in Western Australia, volunteer brigades from all over the state travel to different areas to help out with the response. Through that, volunteers get to experience different fire behaviours in different parts of the state. What happens in Margaret River, for example, will be different from what happens in Albany, and what happens in Albany will be different from what happens in the Perth hills, which will again be different from what happens out in Kalgoorlie. There are different fuel loadings and fire behaviours, depending upon where you are in the state. I experienced quite a lot of different fire behaviours, which was a very good learning curve.

I was also one of a number of people who were sent over to New South Wales in, I think, 2005, for the fires in the Blue Mountains. That was quite an experience. We were cutting firebreaks with rake-hoes; if members do not know what a rake-hoe is, it is an instrument that is a combination of a rake and a hoe—hence the name! It is a tool that is used to scrape a bare-earth firebreak. We were putting firebreaks in terrain that you actually could not walk through; it was mountain goat country. If a fire were to come through there, you would not be there anyway, because it would be too dangerous to put anyone in that situation to try to fight the fire. What you can do is to cut a firebreak and then back-burn off it, to put a larger buffer in the area to protect it. That is what we were doing, and we spent two weeks climbing up and down these mountains, cutting firebreaks, which was an interesting experience.

Fires have obviously impacted on communities more locally. The member for Maylands touched on some of the improvements we have been able to make with regard to animal welfare over the years. It is great that we now consider them in our emergency responses, and I fully support her request that we do some forward planning for how we handle extreme situations when we have a large number of animals that need to be moved out of an area for their protection.

As everyone, including the Acting Speaker (Mrs L.A. Munday), is probably aware, I grew up in Harvey, and I spent a lot of time in Yarloop. The member for Collie–Preston spoke about the devastating fires that went through Yarloop. One of the buildings that burnt down there that the member forgot to mention was the Yarloop tavern—a place where I spent quite a bit of time, from a very young age, actually! I used to go and play cricket at Yarloop when I was a young teenager.

Ms C.M. Rowe: From 18 onwards, member!

Mr S.J. PRICE: That is correct! We would always end up in the tavern after a game of cricket, but I also spent quite a number of years working for Alcoa at the Wagerup alumina refinery as well. It was a long drive from Wagerup back to Dardanup, where I was living at the time, so we used to drop in there quite regularly to get a couple of cans of Coke for the trip home! There was a lot of history in that old tavern.

I was up in Kalbarri when the fire went through Yarloop, but my mother still lives in Harvey. Harvey was a little under threat at the time as well, so I was constantly on the phone to her, suggesting that she should probably go down to her sister's place in Australind. Not long after that we were allowed back through Yarloop, and when I drove through for the first time it was actually very, very devastating. I was surprised at the impact the fire had had. All the places I knew there were gone; it was almost like a bomb had hit the place. It was absolutely terrible. Friends' houses were not there anymore, and tragically there were a couple of fatalities as well.

The impact of the fires was incredible, but the really interesting thing about it was the fire behaviour that was experienced. The fire came out of nowhere. It was initially a long way away, and it was always a risk, but it changed direction in a matter of minutes and ran across the town. It did not stop until it was almost out to the coast. If you drive down Forrest Highway, you can see all the regrowth out towards Preston. Nothing was going to stop that fire, and that was fire behaviour that we had not seen before. We have had fires in the hills around Harvey, Yarloop and Waroona in the past, but nothing like what happened on that day.

That is symptomatic and reflective of how things are changing; that fire should not have done what it did. I think more than 160 houses were lost in the hour or so it took for the fire to run through the town; it was not very long. The devastation is still there today. If you go through Yarloop now, it is not the same. It is back—the resilience of the Yarloopians is well known, and it is to their credit that Yarloop is back and happening—but what the member for Collie–Preston said about all the shops and buildings that are no longer there is true. It is devastating to see what happened to that town.

The City of Kalamunda is a bushfire-prone area. I live in Wattle Grove, which is a semirural part of the city in the foothills as you head up towards Lesmurdie. We have a lot of risk and exposure to bushfires in that area. The year before last there was a small fire in the foothills, in Forrestfield, and it ran up towards Lesmurdie in a matter of minutes. If not for the great response from the aerial support of the Department of Fire and Emergency Services, the outcome of that fire would have been a lot different. Because of the terrain, there was no way vehicles or people could have got anywhere near where that fire was going, but because aerial attack is now available, DFES was able to control that fire and stop it from doing damage to properties. It really drove home to me some of our risks.

The member for Darling Range spoke about being prepared, and he is absolutely right. If you think you know what a fire is going to do, you do not. If you think you have enough time to get out when a fire is coming, you do not. If you have to stop and think about what you are going to do, you are in trouble. People need to be fully prepared for what their actions will be when a fire happens. Where I live is interesting, and I have a bit of a background in fire exposure and risk. As I drive to my place, I start to push up the hill towards Lesmurdie, but then to get to my place I go down the hill, and then the road stops. It is not a cul-de-sac; it is actually a dead end. It takes a three-point turn to turn a car around at the bottom of the little hill. I know that in the planning for bushfire-prone areas, cul-de-sacs are supposed to be large enough to allow big fire trucks to turn around. That is the thought process behind the planning in bushfire-prone areas. However, my place has obviously been there for a quite a while. It was built under old regulations. Members should see the poor old rubbish truck man trying to turn his truck around at the bottom of the hill! It takes quite a long time. If a fire came through where I live at the moment—it is quite a heavily treed area—it would be devastating. In my view, we would not risk putting people down into that area to try to put out a fire because if it came around behind them, there would be no way out. My family knows that my fire plan is to grab the dogs, get in the car and go. I would not risk trying to protect the place myself. A lot of areas around the hills are similar to that. Kalamunda has some great emergency services—the Kalamunda Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade, the Kalamunda Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service and the Kalamunda SES—and all do a fabulous job. The fire control officers from the City of Kalamunda are very diligent in their job of ensuring that people are prepared for the bushfire season.

I had my bushfire inspection last year. My dogs were running around the backyard as they do and the guy wanted to look around the house to make sure everything was fine. I said to him, “It’s all right, mate, I’ll go and put the dogs inside.” While I was doing that, he was looking at my gutters. I had a little bit of leaf litter hanging over one of the gutters. He looked around the back and said it was all good, but as we were walking towards the front, he said, “You’ve got to clean out your gutters. You’ve got a bit of leaf litter up there.” I thought to myself that if I had only left the dogs outside, he would have come in and gone out and would not have seen that and I would not have had to do that! Anyway, I got up there to clean the gutters and I was surprised at how much leaf litter there was. My house is a brick house with a tin roof. Really, it should not burn, but with the amount of litter in the gutters at the time, if a spark got in there, it would have been a different story. I was quite thankful to him for being so diligent when checking on things. As a consequence, I had to clean them and I had to get him back to check that I had done it, which is great. People often complain about fire control officers telling them that they have to do this and they have to do that, but they are right. The more we can do to protect ourselves and mitigate the risk of a fire and their devastating consequences, the better.

DFES has a training centre in Forrestfield, and there is also a volunteer fire and rescue service there. I was fortunate enough to do a tour recently of the training centre with the Minister for Emergency Services, and it was good to see. Some of the technology that was demonstrated to us, such as the virtual reality training, is incredible. It is difficult to train someone to deal with a house fire, for example, without putting them at risk and exposing them to that. We were shown one of the virtual reality training programs for a house fire. We were sitting with the VR goggles on and this thing was extremely real. The technology being developed to train firefighters is first class.

[Member’s time extended.]

Mr S.J. PRICE: The beauty of the technology being developed is that it can be used in regional areas as well, so firefighters do not have to come up to the training centre to get exposure to it. The training centre itself is an incredible place and is used to train not only the career firefighters, but also the volunteers. In a previous life I was able to do a “hot training” session there. It was quite eye opening and certainly a worthwhile experience.

I turn to the unexpected behaviour of our weather patterns at the moment. It is climate change; it is climate change; it is climate change. Those who do not believe in climate change certainly have it wrong. The Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions looks after the majority of unallocated crown land across the state. It

is that department that does the prescribed burning. I hear people complain about the smoke that comes from a prescribed burn. They need to talk to the people who have lost their house to a bushfire and see who has the worse situation. Once again, in a previous life, when I worked for the Australian Workers' Union, we represented workers of the old Department of Conservation and Land Management, then the Department of Environment and Conservation and now DBCA. I spent a fair bit of time with those guys out on the firegrounds when they were dealing with fires, but also when they were doing the prescribed burns.

The DBCA is the world leader in fire prevention. Its knowledge of the bush in Western Australia is first class. The department sends our people to places around the world, such as America and Canada, to teach them and help them fight fires. Our knowledge and skill in prescribed burning and back-burning to deal with a fire situation is second to none. We need to do the fuel-reduction burns. That is the only way we can deal with it in a state the size of Western Australia. I do not know how people think there are other ways we can do this. With the size of the land we have to deal with, the most effective way of reducing that fuel loading is through prescribed burning. If we do not, situations will occur such as the Black Cat Creek Fire in Albany in 2012. Unfortunately, one of the ladies, Wendy Bearfoot, who worked for the then DEC, was killed as a result of a flashover in the fire truck she was in. That fire did things that no-one expected. It was also in an area that had not been burnt for 50-odd years, so there was a very high fuel loading in that area. Unfortunately, they were not aware of that at the time and when they went there, they faced unexpected fire behaviour, which resulted in the flashover and Wendy being burnt and, unfortunately, dying. We have to take opportunities to learn from those sorts of things. Fortunately, we did and a lot of improved safety equipment and procedures were put in place for the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions workers. Hopefully, should that ever happen again, it will certainly increase their chance of survival. Once again, unexpected fire behaviour caused that issue, which was a result of a lack of prescribed burning and unexpected fire behaviour due to weather elements.

There is history here. Members might remember the Boorabbin National Park fire in 2007—the one that blew across Great Eastern Highway towards Kalgoorlie. Some trucks were caught up in it and some truck drivers died as a result. There are flat plains as far as we can see yet we have fires that we cannot control.

Ms M.J. Davies: It's fast when it gets going.

Mr S.J. PRICE: Absolutely it is; it goes very fast when it gets going.

These are things we need to take into consideration as we deal with emergencies going forward.

I go back to the beginning about what is an emergency. This legislation will apply to a declared emergency but we do not know what that emergency will be in the future. We never thought an emergency would be a pandemic or that a cyclone would come so far south. We probably have some idea that an emergency might apply to a fire because we have a history of fires that we cannot control, unfortunately. However, we have to continue to do what we can to mitigate all those risks. Apart from the pandemic, which we cannot blame on climate change, a lot of the stuff we will have to deal with going forward will be impacted on by climate change. We need to be mindful of some of the issues we have to deal with. That is when, as I said in my opening statement, some of the legislation that legislators will look at in decades to come will be referenced to and as a result of a global pandemic. People will sit back and think that it is very unusual legislation. Good legislation has come through.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

[Continued on page 3762.]