

## **COMMUNITY RIVERCARE PROGRAM**

*Statement by Minister for Environment*

**MR R.R. WHITBY (Baldivis — Minister for Environment)** [9.11 am]: I would like to provide an update to the house on the Community Rivercare grant program and iconic projects. The Community Rivercare program, initiated by the McGowan government in 2017, with \$900 000, has been a remarkable success. In 2021, an additional \$4 million was committed to the program, demonstrating Labor's commitment to supporting Perth's precious river systems.

The Rivercare program focuses on funding projects that enhance and conserve the natural, cultural and social aspects of rivers, tributaries and urban drains within the Swan Canning catchment. Since its inception, the Rivercare program has funded 38 community groups, facilitating 65 on-ground projects, including bank stabilisation, habitat creation for water-dependent species, invasive weed removal and revegetation with local plants. That has resulted in nearly 300 000 seedlings being planted, 29 hectares of waterways being revegetated, over 41 hectares of highly invasive weeds being removed and 77 bird, bat and mammal boxes being installed. The community has volunteered over 24 000 hours of its time, which is valued at over \$915 000, a significant and greatly appreciated effort.

The funding also provides essential support through two dedicated officers providing guidance on plant selection, weed control and community engagement. The officers support project success and are strategically located at the Chittering Landcare Centre and the South East Regional Centre for Urban Landcare, assisting community groups across the Swan Canning catchment. The officers also work closely with the community to deliver iconic projects along the Helena River at Helena Valley, Ellen Brook at Belhus, Wungong River at Champion Lakes and Bayswater main drain in Morley and Bayswater. These projects are focused on removing significant weeds and replacing them with local species that will stabilise the banks and provide a food source and habitat for local native fauna.

Shortly, I will announce round 7 of the Community Rivercare program, continuing the program's significant support for community groups as well as the ecological health of the Swan Canning catchment. The Community Rivercare program's success is exemplified by the outcomes I have described today. It stands as a testament to a partnership between the community and government to deliver environmental, health and social outcomes, and I look forward to its continued progress.