

## **COMMUNITY RIVERCARE PROGRAM**

*Statement by Minister for Environment*

**MR R.R. WHITBY (Baldivis — Minister for Environment)** [9.11 am]: I today would like to update the house on the dozens of projects the state government has funded as part of its Community Rivercare program. The Community Rivercare program was launched by this government in 2017 to help fund projects that enhance and conserve the natural, cultural and social aspects of rivers, tributaries and urban drains within the Swan–Canning catchment. It has proven remarkably successful with the community since inception. That is why we committed an additional \$4 million to the program in 2021, demonstrating our government’s commitment to supporting the community to manage our state’s natural resources.

Since it was launched, the Community Rivercare program has funded 46 community groups and facilitated 89 projects. These have included bank stabilisation, habitat creation for water-dependent species, invasive weed removal and the revegetation with local plants. As of July 2022, projects funded by the program have resulted in nearly 300 000 seedlings planted, 29 hectares of waterways revegetated, more than 41 hectares of highly invasive weeds removed and 77 bird, bat and mammal boxes installed. The community has volunteered tens of thousands of hours of their time to this work, and their effort has been significant and is greatly appreciated.

The program’s funding also supports two dedicated officers to provide guidance on plant selection, weed control and community engagement. These officers are strategically located at the Chittering Landcare Centre and the South East Regional Centre for Urban Landcare to assist community groups across the Swan–Canning catchment. These officers also work closely with the community to deliver works along the Helena River at Helena Valley, Ellenbrook at Belhus, Wungong River at Champion Lakes and Bayswater Brook in Morley and Bayswater. These works are focused on removing significant weeds and replacing them with local species that will stabilise banks and provide a food source and habitat for local and native fauna.

In December 2023, I was pleased to announce the recipients of round 7 of the Community Rivercare program. More than a quarter of a million dollars was distributed across 14 groups to enable weed control, foreshore revegetation and wetland restoration work throughout key locations along the Swan–Canning catchment. In July, our government will open round 8 of the program, and I encourage community groups to apply and continue the program’s success into its eighth year. The Community Rivercare program’s success is demonstrated by the outcomes I have described today. It is proof that the community and government can work together to deliver good environmental, health and social outcomes for our state, and I look forward to its continued success in the years to come.