

Hon Colin De Grussa; Hon Stephen Dawson; Hon Wilson Tucker; Hon Donna Faragher; Hon Martin Aldridge;
Hon Steve Martin; Hon Klara Andric; Hon Pierre Yang; Hon Stephen Pratt; Hon Darren West

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

Motion

HON COLIN de GRUSSA (Agricultural — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [10.11 am] — without notice:
I move —

That this house —

- (a) notes that this week is National Volunteer Week; and
- (b) acknowledges and thanks volunteers for the contribution they make in our communities.

Obviously, it is National Volunteer Week. Moments ago we heard from the Leader of the House; Minister for Education and Training that tomorrow is P&C Day. Of course, our parents and citizens associations are also made up of many wonderful volunteers who do a great deal for our schools and kids.

I want to take the opportunity today to not just acknowledge National Volunteer Week, but also talk about some of the trends, I guess, and some of the things that are emerging in volunteer land and reflect on the contribution that volunteers make to our communities right across Western Australia. Earlier this week, Volunteering Australia put out a media release that refers to this year's theme for volunteering—Better Together. On its website, Volunteering Australia notes —

... volunteering brings people together; it builds communities and creates a better society for everyone.

Its media statement released on 18 May states —

“This year's National Volunteer Week theme is ‘better together’. Our communities have taken a big hit in recent times and yet volunteers are always there when we need them. Volunteers across the country have stepped up to help their communities through bushfires, floods, and the COVID-19 pandemic in a most practical demonstration of Australian community spirit. Volunteers contribute significantly across crisis prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery in many key roles.

“The aftermath and the impact of disasters are felt long after an event has taken place. Volunteers provide support to those affected by crises, including in mental health and suicide prevention services, which typically experience a surge in demand during and after disasters,” ...

Mental health and suicide prevention services are especially critical during major emergencies, including the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, Lifeline engages 10,000 volunteers across Australia. In 2018, these volunteers answered 739,481 calls and initiated 5,840 emergency interventions for Australians in need of crisis support.

I wanted to start my contribution today by outlining some of the statistics around volunteering. It was not that easy to find up-to-date statistics. Some of those statistics have not been updated for many years. Earlier this year, Volunteering Australia put out a fact sheet entitled “Key volunteering statistics: February 2022”. It started out by obviously defining what volunteering means. Its definition of volunteering is “time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain”. That is how Volunteering Australia defines volunteering. That is what it has assessed the level of volunteering and other statistics against.

We all know that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a dramatic impact on the lives of all of us right across Australia and it has had a profound impact on volunteering. There is no doubt that people have reduced their contribution as volunteers as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is also true that many of those people who have stopped volunteering did not come back to it after restrictions were lifted and so on. We have a little way to go to try to encourage volunteers to come back. Research conducted by the Australian National University found that Australians engaging in formal voluntary work fell from around 36 per cent in late 2019 to 24.2 per cent in April 2021. Only slightly more than half of those who stopped volunteering went back to volunteering in the 12 months leading up to April 2021. That is quite a significant drop in the number of people volunteering. Obviously, the fact sheet has been updated to reflect some of those figures.

I wanted to talk a little about the raw numbers because they are quite impressive when we consider the contribution that volunteers make. We all know volunteer groups in our communities and the job they do. It is quite an interesting exercise to look at the raw numbers. Around five million people volunteered through an organisation or group in 2020. It was nearly 5.9 million in 2019. That means 900 000 people stopped volunteering as a result of the COVID pandemic, a significant number of people by any measure. Western Australia's formal volunteering rate was 25.6 per cent in 2020 and 27 per cent in 2019. That is a little bit of a drop, though not as significant as other states. Obviously, the measures that were put in place in Western Australia to manage the pandemic kind of limited the effect that had on the community and obviously that enabled people to keep volunteering.

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The number of women volunteering has dropped a little but now men and women volunteer at the same rates. Traditionally, more women have volunteered. Informal volunteering rates tend to be higher than formal volunteering rates. In Western Australia, around 30 per cent of people were volunteering in an informal capacity in 2020, down from 35.6 per cent in 2019. Again, a big effect of that was as a result of the pandemic, but nonetheless a significant number of people still volunteer in our communities. What value do they contribute? Again, it is difficult to measure. There are many different ways of measuring the economic value of volunteering. I am not an economic rationalist, unlike the Leader of the Opposition, who certainly is. Nonetheless, the accuracy of the value is largely irrelevant; the contribution is significant. It is estimated that in 2012–13, there was a \$17.3 billion contribution to the national economy, which is significant. Nearly 3.9 million people have done 520.5 million hours of volunteering. These people made a huge contribution to Australian society, which is very much worth outlining, and we need to thank them for that contribution.

Furthermore, some of the trends in volunteering are quite interesting. I will refer to another report shortly. Obviously, the COVID pandemic has had an impact on the number of hours contributed to the community, with a decrease of around 20 per cent from 2014 to 2019. In 2020, the number of hours contributed fell by a further 18 per cent. That obviously has a big impact on our communities.

The Department of Social Services reviewed volunteer management activity and found that the population is ageing and the workforce is contracting, which will come as no surprise to people. Also, people are more discerning about how they use their time, which is a key factor that affects volunteering and our ability to find the time to satisfactorily fulfil the time demands that volunteering requires. There is growing demand for services that have traditionally relied heavily on volunteers to supplement government funding. Examples are community and aged care, and disability support services. Government programs also encourage volunteering to help people experiencing disadvantage, for example, to meet mutual obligation requirements or to help build skills and relationships with people living with a disability. Information technology is providing new opportunities for people to find volunteering opportunities that suit their interests and circumstances, and to volunteer in different ways. Like with much in our society, things are changing and the impact of technology changes the way we interact with our community, and as a result, it will have an impact on volunteering trends.

I want to talk a little about another trend in volunteering. I have a 2017 report that is very relevant because it relates to Western Australia in particular. It was produced by Murdoch University and Curtin University in collaboration and titled *Out of sight: Volunteering in remote locations in Western Australia in the shadow of managerialism*. This report refers to the effect that increasing professionalism has on volunteering. It is a bit of a trend, I guess. I will go through some of the key findings of this report, which are very much worth talking about. The report states —

Volunteer management has become significantly more professionalised since the 1990s ... This has been due to several factors both from within and outside the sector ... Within the sector, volunteer managers have sought to adopt more formalised processes, which mirror the human resources management approaches used with paid staff ... The adoption of more formalised processes has been seen as a way to raise the status of volunteer management as a career choice ...

Further on, the report states —

A further influence from outside the sector is increasing legislation to protect both clients and volunteers of volunteer-involving organisations ... Volunteer-involving organisations often find that they need to comply with a complex variety of laws ... including (but not limited to) police checks, working with children checks, duty of care, food and beverage service training and standards, and public liability insurance ... Legislative requirements also vary across each state jurisdiction, increasing this complexity.

It is important to look at that, because as legislators we are responsible for making legislation that has an impact on our volunteers. They are not necessarily considered when we make that legislation, so we need to take the opportunity to reflect on the work they do and assess the contribution they make against the potential disadvantages, if you like, of the legislation we are passing. Further on, this report notes —

We note that the increase in the professionalisation of volunteering and volunteer management (and the language used in volunteer management guidelines) is taking place alongside a growing trend towards more individualised and reflexive forms of volunteering ... Volunteer participation is declining in Australia ... and volunteers are changing the ways in which they volunteer ... Volunteer-involving organisations are caught between pressure from government and other funding agencies to become accountable and meet standards and the need to adapt their programs to attract and retain reflexive volunteers. The data reveal the key problems arising from this tension are concerned with the potential adverse impacts of attempts at over-regulation and standardisation of volunteer organisations, and the disincentives these can produce for volunteers to offer their services in regions where their work matters most.

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Further on, the report refers to some of the perceived problems that result from that. This report considers the issue in a regional context. Of course, the volunteering rate in regional areas, particularly in regional Western Australia, is significantly higher than in the metropolitan area. There are fewer people in the regions but still a great demand for the work they do, so a necessary result of that is that a higher proportion of people are volunteers.

I will move on from that to a ministerial statement from the Minister for Volunteering earlier this week. I echo my support of the minister when he encouraged members and our constituents to take the opportunity to provide feedback on the new national strategy for volunteering. This is the first national strategy on this issue we have seen in 10 years, and from the information I just read there has been significant change in the volunteering landscape. That new national strategy is critically important. As representatives of our communities, we are in touch with many volunteer organisations. I encourage members of this place and our constituents, as the minister said, to make a submission to that national strategy and make sure that our voices are heard.

I want to start winding up my remarks by recognising the role that volunteers play in all our lives and communities, whether that be in times of crisis such as natural disasters or pandemics. Of course, in the aftermath of those disasters, volunteers continue to provide that support, which does not end when the disaster ends but continues for a very long time afterwards. That work would not happen without volunteers. Volunteers contribute in many other ways too. Every weekend I see plenty of volunteers at kids' sport. They are running the water, cutting up the oranges or whatever it may be. I see it every weekend at Basketball WA with my daughter; the stadium is full of parent volunteers helping those kids out while they are playing basketball; or down at the hockey oval with my other kids, where parents are running around left, right and centre providing food, and medical assistance when there is no ambulance assistance around.

Volunteering takes many different forms. One of the most obvious forms of volunteering that we see at the moment is those many volunteers who are proudly wearing their political colours and standing at the polling booths doing their bit for democracy. It does not matter which side of politics they are on; they are volunteers doing something they believe in and are participating in Australia's democracy. They should be thanked and acknowledged for that work. Not long ago, Hon Pierre Yang handed down a report into the state's ambulance service, which again is a great example of the work volunteers do across Western Australia. The national total of ambulance volunteers is something like 7 000, with over 4 000 in Western Australia alone. Western Australia relies heavily on volunteers in the delivery of its ambulance service and the work they do is absolutely incredible. I take the opportunity to thank all those incredible people for doing what is no doubt a difficult and challenging job. We have other emergency services such as marine rescue, bushfire brigades, the State Emergency Service and many more. I am sure the minister will talk about those as well. Both the Minister for Volunteering and the shadow Minister for Volunteering are in this house. I am sure they share our collective gratitude and I look forward to their contributions later on.

I offer my thanks, and I am sure that of all members, to volunteers across our state and nation, no matter what field of volunteering they are in, whether it is sport, aged care, helping the homeless, providing food to those who really need it or dealing with people with significant mental issues or drug dependence. We thank you. We acknowledge the work you do and are very grateful for your participation and assistance in Western Australia.

HON STEPHEN DAWSON (Mining and Pastoral — Minister for Volunteering) [10.30 am]: I thank Hon Colin de Grussa for bringing this motion before the house today. I indicate that the government is very happy to support this motion. It is a very good motion, and given it is National Volunteer Week, it is a great, great issue to have before the house today. As I have said to many volunteers this week and over the past few months as Minister for Volunteering, we would truly be lost without the great work that they do right around Western Australia on a daily basis, at all hours of the day—sometimes seven days a week. We would truly be lost without that. So thank you for what you do.

As we know, this week is National Volunteer Week and it is an opportunity for us to acknowledge and celebrate the volunteering that happens in our communities. It provides a heartfelt opportunity to say thank you and to recognise the vital work of volunteers across our state. As we heard from Hon Colin de Grussa, we as a state have a strong volunteering culture. Hon Colin de Grussa gave the example of the ambulance service, but right throughout, whatever industry it is, whatever sector it is, our volunteers are very, very strong and have a great culture. The theme for this year's National Volunteer Week is "Better Together", and that refers to the strength volunteering has in bringing people together, building communities and creating a better society for us all generally. We also hope through this theme to reinvigorate volunteers who may have either had to step back from their roles or adapt how they volunteered, particularly during COVID-19 over the last two-and-a-bit years. COVID-19 has been very challenging for the community generally, but certainly for the volunteering sector. Thankfully, though, while we have had a drop in volunteering over the past little while, it has not been to the same degree as seen in other states and territories around Australia. Volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations have played a crucial role during the COVID-19 pandemic doing all sorts of things. In some cases, it has been getting shopping or essential goods for neighbours or doing

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safety and wellbeing checks. All those things have been very, very important. Our response to COVID-19 has meant, I have to say, that our volunteers generally felt safe and secure enough to step back into their volunteering roles. It is important to continue to say thank you to volunteers for their generosity, their commitment and the dedication that they demonstrate all the time, because their commitment really does make a real difference, particularly during these difficult times.

The state government acknowledges our long-serving volunteers through the Volunteer Service Awards. These awards recognise Western Australians who have dedicated over 25 years of their time to benefit our communities and allow the acknowledgement of the extraordinary contributions generally of volunteers in Western Australia. This year there were 173 recipients of a WA Volunteer Service Award in one of two categories—25 to 49 years or more dedicated to a single organisation, and 50 years or more dedicated to a single organisation. So 173 people have been volunteering for over 25 years. That is an amazing achievement. The awards happen on a yearly basis, so there are thousands of volunteers across our state who have given similar amounts of time.

I am constantly amazed by the extraordinary stories of service that I hear when I am out in the community visiting volunteer organisations. Some of the recipients this year who have dedicated an incredible 50 years or more to an organisation really just amaze me. I see that in the fire services, in particular in regional Western Australia. I go to a town, to a celebration, and I hear that someone has been volunteering since they were 14 or 16 years old and now they are 80. It is just truly amazing. Although they might not be still on a truck, they are tending the gardens at the fire station or whatever. It is just truly amazing that they continue to give back to their community. One such person I came across was Rod Blyth from the Chidlow Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade in Hon Donna Faragher's electorate. Rod began as a volunteer firefighter when he was almost 18 years old. Over the past 52 years, he has fought innumerable fires on behalf of his community, including the devastating Yarloop fire in 2021. Rod has been a great mentor and teacher to many younger members as they joined the brigade and he says he enjoys just knowing that he is helping other people. The time and effort that volunteers like Rod put in and give to our community really is to be commended.

There are so many more like Rod right around the state. Quite frankly, many services that operate in our state would not happen if it were not for the support of volunteers, particularly in regional Western Australia. Volunteering activities have been the glue holding many communities together, and that has been the case for many, many decades through the worst of times and the best of times. Anyone who has grown up or, indeed, lived in a regional town will most likely have been involved in some volunteering activity or some activity to which volunteers are integral, whether it is Landcare, the State Emergency Service, Red Cross or St Vincent de Paul. These are all examples of the volunteers and organisations whom we depend heavily on for outreach and support, particularly those who find themselves in need.

I turn to other things that government is doing. Through the Department of Communities, we partner with volunteer-involving organisations and we have provided more than \$1.5 million to develop volunteer opportunities in Western Australia and to encourage and assist people to become involved in volunteering. We fund the Volunteering Development Services program to support Western Australians to develop the capability of volunteers and organisations to respond to community needs. Another \$700 000 is provided annually, with 13 services engaged currently to provide volunteering support across metro and regional areas. We also have our Thank a Volunteer Day grant program that provides funding to volunteering organisations to host events on International Volunteer Day, which is on 5 December. Last year, grants were provided to about 29 organisations across WA. They ranged from the Wellstead Community Resource Centre in the great southern to the Mowanjum Aboriginal Corporation in the Kimberley. Right across the state, from top to bottom, east to west, there are people and organisations involved in doing great work. The grants program for this year will open very soon—next month, in June—and that intends to provide even more support to local community volunteer-involved organisations to help recognise the enormous efforts of our volunteers.

As I said, we do well in Western Australia with the numbers of people who are volunteering, but I have made it a particular focus of mine to encourage more young people to volunteer. I was able to announce recently a grant of \$440 000 to the peak body, Volunteering WA, to deliver volunteering as a pathway to job-readiness projects over three years. That is to encourage young people to get involved in volunteering and gear them towards jobs and job opportunities. The initiative is focused on people aged between 16 and 24 and aims to give them real-world experience through volunteering opportunities, because through building confidence, skills and networking, their path to employability will hopefully be made easier. A new volunteer website, www.yvolunteer.org.au, has been launched that includes an online CV builder. It has resources and some engaging stories and informative learning models for young people to access.

There are some great things happening across the state, and it is really important that we all get involved in National Volunteer Week. We need to keep showing our appreciation for volunteers. One way we can do that is by participating in the "Wave for Volunteers" social media campaign. It is as easy as drawing a smiley face on your

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hands. You just need two dots for eyes—there is a smiley face on your hand. Take a photo of yourself with your hand and upload it onto your socials using the hashtags #waveforvolunteers and #NVW2022.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas interjected.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: You do not have to speak to the hand! Just take a photo of your hand, post it on your socials and tag it so that people know that you are supportive of volunteers and you are thankful for the great deal of work that they do.

People can also follow Volunteering WA to keep up with its new initiatives with volunteering and also find that opportunity with local volunteering organisations via the SEEK Volunteer site. We need to make sure that our next generation is involved in volunteering. At so many organisations we visit, there are people who are retired, but it is equally important to get people in early. We see from people like Rod Blyth, who started volunteering as a teenager and has been doing it for over 52 years, that people who get in early keep going, so we need to get more young people involved. As I said, that will be a focus of mine.

I have had the opportunity this week to meet a number of volunteers. Last night as part of “Wear Orange Wednesday”, I made a contribution about some of our State Emergency Service volunteers. I was able to meet volunteers from the Bassendean, Cockburn and Serpentine–Jarrahdale SES units and provide some new vehicles to them. I am very thankful to them for their work. Yesterday I also had the opportunity to visit the Friends of Bold Park Bushland, the Friends of Kings Park and the Kings Park volunteer guides, who do tremendous work. Hon Donna Faragher would know, having been a minister, how dedicated these individuals are. Having been the Minister for Environment for four years in the first term of the McGowan government, I had plenty of opportunities to engage with those volunteers. I have to say, not that one has favourites as a minister, that they are truly some of my favourites.

Hon Donna Faragher: Don’t forget the Perth Zoo docents.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I love the docents, too. As a father of a seven-year-old, I continue to engage with the docents at the Zoo. The volunteers from the Friends of Kings Park and the volunteer guides have had a challenging time through the COVID-19 pandemic because many of these volunteers are older and many of the services, such as the tours in Kings Park, were put on hold. However, they are all back on track and it was great to see many of them yesterday. I also had the opportunity to present some volunteer service award certificates to five recipients who volunteer with the Friends of Kings Park: Mr Darren Harrop who has volunteered 25 years of service, Mr Ian Foster for 27 years of service, Ms Joanne Dumaresq for 27 years of service, Mr Martin Revell for 27 years of service and Dr Tony Scalzo for 27 years of service. Those volunteers have given just so much of their invaluable time to our community. It really was a pleasure to have morning tea with them yesterday and to recognise their dedication and achievement over the last 25 or 27 years. The Friends of Kings Park has over 1 300 members, 200 of which are active volunteers. They really are to be treasured. They do great work. If members have not had the opportunity, they should book themselves a tour with the Kings Park guides to see the magnificent jewels that we have right across the road at Kings Park. We have an extraordinary biodiversity right on our doorstep.

I will finish by acknowledging the motion before us. I thank Hon Colin de Grussa for bringing it before the house. It is a very good motion. We all know, because we are all engaged with our communities, about the dedication and remarkable work that volunteers and volunteer organisations do around the state. This week is a great week to say thank you to them all. On behalf of the state government I say thanks very much.

Members: Hear, hear!

HON WILSON TUCKER (Mining and Pastoral) [10.43 am]: I also rise to support this excellent motion. I thank Hon Colin de Grussa for raising it today. I would also like to place on record my acknowledgement of volunteers around Western Australia and the excellent work that they do in donating their time and effort to help others in this state. As pointed out by the other speakers, a very high percentage of people in WA donate their time and effort and they should be commended for that. It speaks to the very strong community values that we enjoy in the west, especially in a lot of the regional towns and communities where that percentage of volunteerism is certainly strong. I would also like to take this opportunity to give a shout-out to carers, whom I put in the same bracket as volunteers. They dedicate their time and effort to help family members and loved ones and they are sometimes in a position where they do not necessarily need to do that. I have been fortunate enough to meet representatives from Carers WA. A report that came out in 2015 mentioned that the effort of carers in society equates to a \$60 billion contribution to the Australian economy, so carers should be commended as well.

The timing of this motion and National Volunteer Week coincides quite nicely with the excellent report just tabled by the very powerful and illustrious Standing Committee on Public Administration—I can see a few nods of agreement—chaired by the illustrious Hon Pierre Yang. I encourage all members to read this excellent report. I certainly do not want to steal our illustrious chair’s thunder too much by going into the details of this report, but given that it is National Volunteer Week, I would like to take this opportunity to speak about one key finding.

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The report mentions the heavy burden that we place on volunteers. The ambulance service in regional areas relies heavily on volunteers to function. During the pandemic we have seen an increase in the burden placed on those volunteers. We should be doing what we can to support them as much as we can. I want to talk about a few points that the committee found. In WA, the number of volunteers per capita is decreasing. As highlighted, this is happening in not just WA, but Australia-wide. Obviously the pandemic is having a significant impact as well. Over the last six months, the average number of jobs per volunteer has increased and also the average number of emergency jobs per volunteer has increased. Western Australia has an ageing population and this is certainly happening out in the regions as well. We can conclude that that will mean more complex medical cases and a higher case load, which will put more of a burden onto the volunteer ambulance officers and the sub-centres that operate in the regions. The average number of inter-hospital patient transfers performed by volunteers has also increased over the last six months. It is a balancing act with the sub-centres and the volunteer crews. The inter-hospital patient transfers are a significant revenue stream for the sub-centres that allows them to operate under some autonomy, but there is a trade-off. When that volunteer crew is formed, they are potentially taken off the road and are not able to respond to an emergency situation. This was witnessed recently with the tragic death of a woman in Geraldton who waited for over two hours for an ambulance to be dispatched.

The committee also found that there is a heavy reliance on a small number of active volunteers. In 2021, the most active 10 per cent of volunteers were involved in 56.3 per cent of the cases. The same 10 per cent of volunteers were involved in 49.2 per cent of all country cases. This speaks to a heavy reliance on a small cohort of very active volunteers. To put it in more clinical terms and from a redundancy perspective, that is obviously a concern because if those people are sick or unavailable, that can place a lot of strain on the availability of some of these services in the regions.

Volunteer attrition has increased over the last four years. The amount of money that St John Ambulance spends to attract volunteers has generally been increasing. In 2021, the amount spent was 2.7 times greater than the amount spent in 2012. St John is spending more money to attract the same number of volunteers. If that trend continues, it will be of concern. There has also been a steady increase in the average time to form and assign an ambulance crew in regional WA. The regions and their reliance on volunteers operates under a “best endeavours” model. The volunteers are not being paid for volunteering their time, so if they receive a call and have other commitments, they have an option to not respond. Typically, if it is an emergency, those people are very dedicated and will do their best to help, but there are limited resources and a limited number of people available in the regions and the time it takes to form and dispatch a crew has been increasing over the last few years. This speaks to the heavy burden and reliance we have on volunteers in the regions. They need to be recognised and supported as much as possible. I welcome the recent announcement from the government that as part of this budget it will invest more in career paramedics in the regions, and I also appreciate the intervention in the management of St John Ambulance, especially during the incident management we are seeing and the recent tragic death.

In summary, I support this motion and thank the honourable member for raising it. I encourage all members to read the excellent report that was tabled today.

HON DONNA FARAGHER (East Metropolitan) [10.50 am]: I also rise to support the motion and indicate that I am really pleased that we are debating this today, because it is important that we, as members of Parliament and the community as a whole, take every opportunity to acknowledge, thank and celebrate the important contributions that volunteers make across not only our state, but also our country. Our community is a diverse one. As such, so are the activities that thousands upon thousands of volunteers make across Western Australia every year across all facets of our society. Indeed, if we were to take volunteers out of our community, we would be very much poorer for it. Just yesterday, as the minister indicated, it was Wear Orange Wednesday. We all put on our best orange outfits. I do not have many in the wardrobe, but I found one, because it is important to acknowledge the more than 2 000 SES volunteers who stand ready 24 hours a day to come out and support our communities in times of emergency.

There are also a number of other emergency service volunteers who work tirelessly throughout our community. Some have been mentioned today: our volunteer bush fire brigades, ambulance volunteers and others, and I certainly thank them sincerely as well. Volunteers support our community across all facets of our society. In the East Metropolitan Region, we are blessed to have many volunteer-based organisations that provide invaluable support and assistance to children and young people, our elderly, people with disability, and other vulnerable Western Australians. I also acknowledge the minister and his comments with respect to a number of government departments that rely heavily on volunteers. He is right about the environment portfolio, which I had the honour of being minister of for a period. That department relies very much on the support of volunteers right across the length and breadth of Western Australia.

We also have our wonderful parents and citizens association. The minister indicated today that tomorrow is P&C Day. That is obviously a great opportunity for us to say thanks to our P&Cs. I think Saturday will also be a wonderful way for us all to thank our P&Cs by buying copious amounts at the sausage sizzles and cake stalls. My daughter has already been asking me if we can go down and get a few cakes at our school on Saturday. That is a great way to show our support as well. I know that election day is very important for many schools.

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I think it was Hon Colin de Grussa who mentioned our local footy clubs and other sporting and recreation clubs. The simple fact is that they are run generally by parent and other community volunteers. Without the coaches, the team managers, the first aid support staff and the goal umpires, the teams would not be able to work and thousands of kids would miss out. I suppose it is in that vein in talking about young people that I would quickly like to focus my attention on a couple of organisations that are based in and around my portfolio as the shadow Minister for Youth. I have had the privilege of being both the Minister for Youth as well as the shadow spokesperson, and throughout my time in this place I have had the privilege of meeting with many organisations that provide invaluable support to young people in this state. Some of those are quite longstanding and global youth movements, such as the girl guides. I am a proud old girl guide, if you can call an old girl guide that, and my daughter is a girl guide. There is Scouts WA, and I will mention it specifically in a moment. We also have other programs, like our Cadets WA program, which has more standard cadet programs, in terms of the armed forces, but also we have unique Cadets WA units, which are uniquely Western Australian. That is something that we can be very proud of. I know that the WA cadets program is supported by all members of this house.

Those youth organisations provide incredible support to thousands of young Western Australians every year, helping them to develop important life skills and social skills, helping them to understand the importance of team work, developing leadership qualities, helping them get out of their comfort zone and to try things new. They also give them opportunities to have fun and to make new friends. They are only able to offer those sorts of programs and youth programs through the involvement of adult and youth leader volunteers. Some of the challenges in continuing to attract and retain volunteers has been talked about today. It is really important that we continue to acknowledge and value the role that volunteers play, and tell people and thank them. They do not necessarily do it for us to say thank you, thank you, thank you. They do it because they want to do it, but it is nice to be recognised.

In that vein, and in the context of Scouts WA, I caught up with the chief commissioner, Ayden Mackenzie and new CEO, Jess Karlsson, a few weeks ago and followed up with another catch up in the lead-up to National Volunteer Week with some adult and youth leaders from some units in the East Metropolitan Region. They were specifically Walliston; Bassendean, which is a newly formed unit; and Hampton Park. Jess kindly gave me a couple of figures with regard to Scouts WA. Obviously, there are many volunteer organisations, but for the purposes of today, this is just one example of the value and impact that scouts have in this state. It has 7 600 scout members. Many of those children would miss out if Scouts WA did not have adult and youth volunteers to support them. In 2021, Scouts WA had 4 532 youth leaders and volunteers. It had 1 363 adult leaders and volunteers. Through them, Scouts WA was able to provide 13 440 educational activities for children and young people. Because of Scouts WA, 1 245 young people were able to participate in overnight educational camps. I am about to provide a pretty big figure. In 2021, Scouts WA contributed 1 414 800 hours to volunteering in WA. That is a massive figure. This is one organisation that works obviously along the length and breadth of Western Australia, but Scouts WA, through its volunteers, contributed 1 414 800 hours to this state. I think we would all agree that that is a remarkable achievement.

I simply, today, in the time available, want to thank all volunteers, including Scouts WA volunteers, who give such massive support to young people in this state. I want to just add my thanks and enormous gratitude to all volunteers for their dedication, commitment, time and support that they so freely give to help others within our community and across all facets of society. I simply say, thank you.

HON MARTIN ALDRIDGE (Agricultural) [10.59 am]: I rise to proudly support the motion moved by Hon Colin de Grussa in non-government businesses this morning as not only the shadow Minister for Volunteering, but also shadow Minister for Emergency Services. As a number of speakers mentioned in their contributions and members would be very much aware, in a state like Western Australia the emergency services sector significantly relies on volunteers. In fact, outside Perth, across the breadth of our geographically-diverse state, the emergency services delivery function is overwhelmingly delivered by volunteers. I think members would be very aware of the economic value that is placed on volunteering in Western Australia. If the figure is said quickly—more than \$39 billion—I do not think people fully appreciate that it exceeds our annual state budget. Obviously, many services, functions and community groups simply could not function without the important contribution of volunteers. On that note, I thought I had anticipated every type of volunteer function or role or form in Western Australia, but then I hear a contribution from another member and it triggers me to think about all the other areas in our community in which volunteers play such an important role.

Speakers including the mover of the motion talked about formal volunteering but just as important is spontaneous volunteering, particularly during times of crisis but at other times as well. Hon Donna Faragher's contribution and the Minister for Education and Training's brief ministerial statement earlier today highlighted the amount of spontaneous volunteering that happens in our education system. Much of that volunteering was displaced because of COVID-19 and COVID-19-response policies so it is really important that we not only recognise, but also reinvigorate spontaneous volunteering in our education system. Whether it is the people willing to read to or with our children in their classrooms, school canteen volunteers, people working in our uniform shops or people supporting

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our chaplaincy services, some volunteers have spent a significant period displaced from those functions and it is important that we re-engage them in their important work.

It is also important that we understand the barriers to volunteering and appreciate what motivates people to volunteer. Too often I hear people say that our lives are getting busier, we are working longer hours, our priorities are changing and younger people are not engaging as an explanation for why we perhaps do not have the level of volunteering we once had. To be fair, I think the issues are much more complex than that. Hon Colin de Grussa touched on those issue quite well in moving this motion, but good work has also been done by Volunteering WA—I will mention it briefly later—and organisations like the Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre, which published a report in 2019 entitled *The social and economic sustainability of WA's rural volunteer workforce*. The report provides really good case studies that go to the issue of understanding the barriers for volunteering. It looks at not just the recruitment aspect, but also, importantly, the retention aspect of volunteering.

I might pause there and reflect on the good work that Volunteering WA does in its volunteer resource centres, engaging volunteers and linking them to organisations and providing skills, support and capability to organisations that manage volunteers, which is a really critical function. Obviously, today we have heard about a diverse range of volunteering opportunities so I imagine the organisations engaging or utilising volunteers are equally diverse. It is important that particularly organisations that perhaps do not have a long history of volunteering or volunteering plays only a small part in the organisation understand how volunteers should be engaged with and supported through their volunteering experience.

Members made contributions about the importance of volunteering in regional WA. We obviously see much higher volunteering rates in regional settings. As has been said in this place on numerous occasions, the services and types of activities and events that we see in regional Western Australia simply would not exist without volunteers. It is a fact some services that may well be delivered by paid employees in large regional centres or cities are generally delivered by volunteers in small country towns.

I want to offer the government some helpful suggestions in the spirit of acknowledging and celebrating volunteerism. As I said last week on International Firefighters Day, I also recognise that more can and should be done to support volunteers in Western Australia. In March, ahead of the state budget, which members now know has delivered quite a significant budget surplus, I called on the state government to contemplate an increase to the Emergency Services Volunteer Fuel Card. Members may not know the history of the fuel card. It goes back to 2015, when the Liberal–National government initiated the Emergency Services Volunteer Fuel Card program to allow brigades, groups and units—referred to as BGUs—to access a \$2 000 fuel card in recognition of some of the out-of-pocket expenses that emergency services volunteers in particular experience carrying out their roles and functions. When the McGowan government came to power, that fuel card was cut in half. Coupled with the significant increase in the cost of transport in regional Western Australia, largely driven by fuel prices, the value of that card has diminished significantly over time. If we look at the data that has been accessed through budget estimates, it shows that the fuel card is well received by BGUs. Some 93 per cent of BGUs apply for the card and one in three fully expend the card, which shows there is demand for an increase in the card's value. I reiterate my call for the government to increase and, indeed, to index the value of this card.

I would like to talk about another thing that I think the government could do easily. Governments, regardless of which party is in power, often like to hold themselves out as a model employer. Last year I attended a number of employer recognition events with the then Minister for Emergency Services, Mr Reece Whitby. I was struck by the number of employers speaking at these award ceremonies who talked about how they had formalised policies, whether that was in their corporate workplace or in the federal public service. For example, there was a fellow from Australian Border Force who was being recognised. I understand that across the federal public service there is a 20-day leave policy for emergency services volunteers. I think there is an opportunity for the state, the Minister for Emergency Services and his colleague the Minister for Industrial Relations to consider applying a similar policy to the state public service. I have heard from volunteers—I am not going to name them or the organisations they come from because there are limitations on volunteers speaking to members of Parliament—who stress as public servants the difficulty in accessing training on the weekends when they have to on a Friday afternoon travel vast distances to and perhaps on a Monday morning return from a place like Geraldton. They have to take annual leave or leave without pay from their public service roles in order to maintain their proficiency as an emergency services volunteer. When we consider the industrial arrangements for the public service, I think this is another way we could simply do something to support this cohort of volunteers in Western Australia.

I want to finish by thanking all volunteers in whatever form they come, regardless of how small or large their contribution, in this National Volunteer Week. We thank them deeply for their service.

HON STEVE MARTIN (Agricultural) [11.09 am]: I had to check that it was Thursday; it has been very civil, congratulatory and bipartisan this morning!

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Hon Dr Steve Thomas: I haven't spoken yet!

Hon STEVE MARTIN: Indeed! That is because of the excellent nature of the motion. We have had outstanding contributions from the minister and other members, and I would like to join them in thanking our volunteer community. Also, the Leader of the House made a ministerial statement about Parents and Citizens Day. Congratulations on bringing that to our attention. I would like to personally thank all the people who volunteer in our school network. I am sure that a number of members have been involved or will in the future be involved with their local P&Cs. We put some controversial legislation through this place and we have some fierce debate, but as a member and president of my P&C, I can tell members that if they ever take to their P&C an item of business to change the colour of the school uniform, they will find that that puts into perspective anything we might attempt in this place! To all those wonderful people who spend their time volunteering in our schools, thank you very much. As Hon Donna Faragher said, we will have an opportunity to support them on the weekend, so please do.

I thought it might be useful in my limited time to mention some individual volunteers I am aware of. We have heard from other honourable members about the business of volunteering, if you like, so I would like to spend some of my time talking about some individual examples of volunteering.

In the aged-care sector, I was on the board of the regional aged-care centre in Narrogin for some time before entering Parliament. It has been tough in aged care for some time, and for the staff and the people who volunteer in that sector. That organisation in Narrogin is an extraordinarily well run facility. People like Rob Maxwell, who spent 40 years volunteering his time and ended up chairing that facility, Michael Ranieri, Frank Goater and a number of others have volunteered there. That 50-bed facility, which also has an enormous number of independent living units, simply would not exist without the wonderful work of those people. Hon Darren West opened the Maxwell wing shortly after the 2017 election. It was funded by the previous government, but that is beside the point. That facility would not have been opened without the wonderful volunteering work of people like Rob, Michael, Frank and the dozens of others who contributed thousands of hours to get that facility built in Narrogin. There are 70 staff at Karinya and Narrogin Cottage Homes and they do an outstanding job, so I would like to thank everyone who volunteers their time and effort in the aged-care sector.

Earlier this year, a number of our communities were hit during that horrible weekend of fires, and we have gone over the outstanding effort that our bush fire brigades and all those volunteers made on that weekend. But I would like to mention an individual I bumped into on the Sunday night of the Wickepin fire. Clinton Hemley, a local farmer, was in his St John Ambulance gear. He had been in the ambulance all day ready to go; it would have been for 12 hours. It was dark, so it was about six o'clock. He would have spent 12 hours in his St John's gear and I happened to bump into him as I was knocking off from my shift. I said, "So, you're done for the day?" He said, "Yes, I'm done; I'm ducking home to put on the orange firefighter's vest, because I'll be out on the fire front for the rest of the night." That is just one small example. That was done a hundred times over that weekend by individuals from Denmark to Bridgetown to Wickepin to Corrigin to Bruce Rock. I am absolutely certain that the volunteering spirit is alive and well in our suburbs, but it is more obvious in the bush because there are fewer of us, so it does stand out. Those regional communities simply would not function, because they are quite small, without the enormous efforts of our volunteers. To Clinton and all the other ambos—fireys who help out on a regular basis, thank you so much. They are the best example of us on an everyday basis. They are the fabric of our communities and they absolutely make our communities stronger.

There is another example I would like to mention. Ernest Leslie Crute White and the White family were neighbours of my family in the 1960s. On 6 November 1967, Ernie White, as he was known, was volunteering for the East Wickepin brigade to do a burn-off on the main road, which is what they used to do in those days. The wild oats would grow and the local fireys would get called out to do a burn-off and clear a bit of stuff on the side of the road so that people could see around corners and so on. On 6 November 1967, Ernie White was seated in a truck when, very unfortunately, another vehicle came through the smoke and collected the back of the truck and Ernie was killed. My uncle happened to be standing on the other side of the truck and he was seriously injured but survived. The White family had tragically lost a young son in a dam drowning incident 10 years prior to that and in the late 60s Ernie was killed. The Wickepin community is very keen to recognise, all these decades later, Ernie's service as a volunteer. He made a very steep sacrifice just doing what people do—volunteering. They are attempting to put some sort of memorial in the community centre in Wickepin as we speak, and I wish them all the best with that. That example is one that we should all recognise. I am proud of the Wickepin community for doing that more than 50 years later.

In closing, as other members wish to make a contribution, I would like to join other members in thanking those in our volunteer community for the work they do and will do in the future. They are an outstanding example to all of us.

HON KLARA ANDRIC (South Metropolitan) [11.16 am]: I, too, wish to thank Hon Colin de Grussa for moving his motion today. As members of this house know, yesterday was Wear Orange Wednesday, and we saw many members of both houses in the Western Australian Parliament and people in our communities across Australia wear

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orange to celebrate the immense contributions made by our state's emergency services volunteers. This week is National Volunteer Week, so it gives us an important opportunity to thank all the volunteers who give up their time to make our communities better. They do important work, some of which is lifesaving.

More than 2 000 State Emergency Service volunteers from every walk of life play a vital role in keeping our communities across WA safe during natural disasters and emergencies. These highly skilled men and women drop everything to help when people need them the most. Over the past year, they have committed to more than 23 700 hours in responding to emergencies, and I want to take this opportunity to thank all SES volunteers who generously give up their time to help our communities.

I also want to give a special thankyou to my very talented electorate officer, Jessee Desmond. Jessee has always wanted to join the fire brigade and, from a young age, she wanted to work as a first responder and emergency services officer. However, her career took her down a different path—and I am not going to pretend that I am not extremely grateful for this! She found that volunteering in the fire brigade would be a good way of fulfilling her dream. Since moving to the south metropolitan region, she has been eligible to join the Jandakot Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade and I am very pleased to say that, on Monday, Jessee Desmond officially became a member of the brigade, which means that she will be able to help out with small fires. Following the rest of her training, she will be able to assist with larger fires later this year. I know that Jessee will do an incredible job. She is an inspirational young woman from Mullewa and I know that her contribution to the Jandakot brigade will be immense.

Today, Minister Dawson called on the next generation of volunteers to step up and do important work for their communities. Just like Jess, around four out of five Western Australians over the age of 15 volunteer every year. It is vital that this commitment to volunteering continues with future generations. Volunteering is not only good for the community, but also helps people to develop new skills that cannot be developed any other way. This is beneficial for volunteers both professionally and personally.

Yesterday was also important to State Emergency Service volunteers because SES units in Cockburn, Serpentine, Jarrahdale and Bassendean each received new general rescue utilities as part of the McGowan government's \$140 million investment in frontline emergency service vehicles.

I take this opportunity to thank all the volunteers across Australia who work all year round to provide for our communities in various ways. As mentioned by Hon Colin de Grussa, volunteers work across sectors within our communities including in sport, kitchens and, as we have recently and are currently witnessing, politics. There are incredible organisations and people in the South Metropolitan Region who dedicate their lives to volunteering and I want to make special mention of Bob and Pearl Kellar of Harvest Lakes Residents Association, who are my former neighbours and tirelessly worked to support the ecosystem and the lakes and many of the wetlands around our community, including through animal, bird and wildlife rescue. Once I even handed them a turtle because I was not sure what to do with it. They are two community members whom I have known for a very long time, and I want to make special note of them and thank them today.

Something else that I want to note is that the new occupational safety and health legislation covers some volunteers. Our community has high expectations that workers and volunteers come home safe after a day's work protecting or supporting our community. National Volunteer Week is the annual celebration to acknowledge the generous contributions of our nation's volunteers. From Monday, 16 May, to Sunday, 22 May 2022, National Volunteer Week will celebrate the significant contribution of almost six million volunteers across Australia. It is wonderful to see the community spirit across our state with so many giving back to our community. Volunteering is a beautiful and unique feature of Western Australian and Australian culture and our identity. We take pride in selflessly helping others and today I want to thank them all for their contribution that they make to our state.

HON PIERRE YANG (North Metropolitan) [11.24 am]: Thank you for the opportunity to say a few words to support this excellent motion from Hon Colin de Grussa and for whom I have tremendous respect. I think it is really fitting to have a motion in the words of the one in front of us. We have had the Minister for Volunteering and also the shadow Ministers for Seniors and Ageing, and Volunteering, commending the volunteers yesterday during members' statements and I think it is a worthwhile exercise; we should always thank our volunteers who have put in long hours for our community for our benefit and everyone's benefit in this state and in Australia.

We celebrated Wear Orange Wednesday yesterday. Members may know that I am a member of the Gosnells unit of the SES. The shadow Minister for Volunteering had a joke with me yesterday, saying I was the resident SES volunteer of the house. I want to repay that by saying he has been a volunteer with his local bush fire brigade and he was a career firefighter who has made a big contribution to our state. I want to mention that he was injured, I think, a couple of years ago during a bushfire in which he was involved. We should thank all our volunteers, including the shadow minister on the other side. I understand Hon Darren West is also a volunteer at his local bush fire brigade. Thank you, sir, for your contribution. While he is busy representing his community, he is also making a contribution to making his community safer.

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I think Hon Donna Faragher, who is on urgent parliamentary business, talked about Scouts Australia and Girl Guides Western Australia and other volunteers involved in the community who are also making a contribution. I want to give a personal account. My children are involved in the local Scouts unit. The adult leaders are volunteers and make a huge contribution to the wellbeing of our youngsters in our respective local communities. They put in long hours; they prepare the lessons and the activities. At the time of the youngsters coming to them, they ensure they look after them and then safely hand them over to the parents who probably had a bit of respite from having the children. I am sure members would agree with me that it is good sometimes to have the youngsters outside school hours and I think we have benefited greatly from sending our children to Scouts. It is National Volunteer Week. Like all members who have contributed to this motion. I want to add my appreciation to all volunteers in Australia.

HON STEPHEN PRATT (South Metropolitan) [11.27 am]: With a few minutes left, I want to make a quick contribution. We have covered a lot of the bases and it is clear the valuable work that volunteers do to make WA the community that it is. I wanted to reference some of the ones that I am aware of in my area, including in the health system. It has been touched on in relation to ambulances, but this extends to services like Silver Chain; in-hospital services like the Ladies Auxiliary at Fremantle Hospital, which raises much-needed money to go back into providing the great services there; our emergency services, which have been touched on; and patient transport volunteers who provide just another level of service that we rely on so heavily and often goes unheralded. This is the perfect opportunity to praise them for the work they do. I think two that have not been mentioned are the Lions clubs and Rotary clubs across the state who provide great contributions to the community. I acknowledge Melville Cares and Cooby Cares in my patch in Coolbellup; the Rottne volunteer guides; and people involved in sporting clubs. I make special mention of Ivo and Alenka Radonich at the Spearwood Dalmatinac Club, who make sure that that community sporting association runs so smoothly. In closing, given that it was Wear Orange Wednesday yesterday, I acknowledge some of the SES groups in Cockburn and the Kwinana Rockingham SES who are always there in our hour of need. Thank you very much to Hon Colin de Grussa for bringing this motion to the house.

HON DARREN WEST (Agricultural — Parliamentary Secretary) [11.29 am]: As has been said by other speakers, I want to give a big thanks and a shout-out to all our volunteers right across our regional communities. You are the lifeblood of our community, whether you are in the footy club kitchen, at the ambulance station or on the local P&C. I acknowledge the Minister for Education and Training's statement this morning. It is P&C Day tomorrow. I give a special shout-out to volunteers on P&Cs and anywhere in our communities.

I remember making a speech in the house several years ago. I had calculated the value of volunteering in Western Australia. I think it was comparable to that of the mining industry. All our volunteers right across the state make a big contribution. They are all wonderful. They all do a great job. I would like to reiterate the points made earlier by Hon Wilson Tucker. During the ambulance inquiry, we came across some wonderful people who do amazing work in our communities. I want to give a special shout-out to our St John Ambulance volunteers. It is difficult in the country because people often know the people who they are tasked to help. There are many harrowing stories of people in the ambulance service and police who have had to assist members of their own family and very close friends. It is very, very difficult. I thank the member for moving the motion. I will leave him with the last minute.

HON COLIN de GRUSSA (Agricultural — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [11.30 am] — in reply: In the time available, I want to thank everyone who has contributed to the motion today. It is unusual on "thirsty Thursday" that we have a reasonably sensible debate, but refreshing every now and again to do so. Again, I wanted to take the opportunity to acknowledge those many volunteers across our state and our nation for the work they do. In particular, I wish to reflect on the contribution of the Leader of the House about P&Cs this morning. We all know of the work that the parents and citizens associations do across our school system. It has been a particularly challenging couple of years for all our kids, parents and schools. I wanted to make sure we thank them all for the work they do.

Members: Hear, hear!

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.