

**CORONAVIRUS — DEPARTMENT OF FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES —
URBAN SEARCH AND RESCUE TASK FORCE**

Statement by Minister for Emergency Services

MR F.M. LOGAN (Cockburn — Minister for Emergency Services) [9.04 am]: I would like to take this opportunity to inform the house about the Department of Fire and Emergency Services' Urban Search and Rescue Task Force and the truly admirable role it has played during the COVID-19 response. The USAR task force is a specialised group of 65 predominantly career firefighters who are highly trained to respond to complex and long-duration incidents. Since 2019, USAR members have been deployed to Samoa, China, Darwin and locations across Western Australia to assist the Department of Health to contain the pandemic. They are currently part of the Australian Medical Assistance Teams helping Victoria with its COVID-19 crisis within aged-care facilities. The response to this pandemic has also seen career and volunteer personnel step into a different role to assist the Western Australia Police Force.

It is fitting to recognise the USAR task force's integral role in assisting the Department of Health. USAR has dedicated more than 4 000 hours to performing difficult roles in challenging circumstances. I will mention just a few examples. A task force member was deployed to Halls Creek for 21 days to help protect remote Aboriginal communities from the spread of COVID-19. A career firefighter crewed the local ambulance alongside a special operations paramedic. He worked with Halls Creek Aboriginal elders to update the community and supported healthcare staff.

Six task force members were deployed to the Manigurr-ma mining camp in Darwin, where Australian citizens repatriated to Australia from Wuhan and the *Diamond Princess* cruise ship were held in isolation. Ten USAR task force members helped with the disembarkation of 800 passengers from the *Artania* cruise ship, which lasted 29 days and was successfully completed without a single outbreak. Three task members were deployed to Rottnest Island to help with the management of repatriated Australians. The task force members worked closely with local authorities to ensure emergency response and evacuation procedures were safely developed.

Although this is just a snapshot of the role that the USAR task force members performed, they also helped with logistics, decontaminated ship corridors and assisted with the set-up and dismantling of tenting. I am extremely proud of the efforts of everyone involved in these deployments. I am sure that all members in this house will join me in acknowledging members of the USAR task force for their role in helping to protect the community throughout the COVID-19 response.