

GERALDTON VOLUNTEER MARINE RESCUE GROUP — FACILITY

657. Mr F.A. ALBAN to the Minister for Fisheries:

Can the minister please inform the house how the upgraded Geraldton Volunteer Marine Rescue Group facility will support the services provided by volunteers to coastal communities in the midwest?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS replied:

I thank the member for the question. The member for Geraldton could not be here today but he is a huge supporter of the Geraldton Volunteer Marine Rescue Group. Not too long ago, I was joined by a number of members—including representatives from the Labor and National Parties—to open the newly refurbished Geraldton Volunteer Marine Rescue Group facility just opposite the iconic red-and-white lighthouse. The government acknowledges—I am sure everyone does—the magnificent job that volunteer marine rescue workers do. They give their time for free, whether they stay behind to look after the radio system or go out in boats onto dangerous seas to help people when they run out of petrol or break down. They also do lots of searches for missing people. In the last few months, a number of both recreational and professional fishermen have gone missing and lost their lives at sea. Volunteers go out and do all this kind of work out of the goodness of their hearts, for free. We put \$800 000 into refurbishing the old facility. It has new technology for internet and radio services so that the volunteers can transmit and relay messages now, including weather signals, as far as the Abrolhos Islands. There is a disabled access lift for people in wheelchairs to get up there. Just because people have disabilities does not mean they should not be able to volunteer with an organisation such as sea rescue. There is new equipment and new training facilities. It is a great group of people. We are committed to supporting volunteer emergency services workers across the state. Again, I want to take my hat off to the Volunteer Marine Rescue Group in Geraldton and the member for Geraldton for his great support of that group.