

RESILIENT AUSTRALIA AWARDS

Statement by Minister for Emergency Services

MR J.M. FRANCIS (Jandakot — Minister for Emergency Services) [9.03 am]: On 8 October, I joined the federal Minister for Justice, Hon Michael Keenan, to present the Resilient Australia Awards to this year's Western Australian recipients. These awards are sponsored by the commonwealth Attorney-General's department in conjunction with the states and territories. Now in their fifteenth year, the awards recognise initiatives that make our communities more resilient in the face of emergencies, such as bushfires, floods and destructive storms. Having resilience means that communities are able to withstand emergencies and then recover from them. A resilient community is safer and stronger and better placed to save lives and property.

The Resilient Australia Awards cover initiatives undertaken by the private, not-for-profit, education and research sectors and by local, state and territory governments, and any organisation or individual can nominate. This year's overall state winner was an initiative by the Shire of Augusta–Margaret River and the Red Cross called Get Ready. It involves a successful campaign that encourages shire residents to adopt a shared-responsibility approach to emergency preparedness. As well as preparing people for disasters, Get Ready stresses the importance of getting to know one's neighbours and learning how to help elderly and disabled neighbours in an emergency. It is an approach that all communities should embrace. Evaluation of the project revealed a big increase in the number of residents who now have an evacuation plan and an emergency kit. In addition, two-thirds of the recipients have exchanged contact numbers with their neighbours. Well done to the Augusta–Margaret River shire and the Red Cross!

The winner in the state government category was a bushfire education program devised by the Department of Fire and Emergency Services and the Western Australian Department of Education called Bushfire Patrol. The award winner in the not-for-profit category was the Western Australian Local Government Association. It was recognised for developing a special emergency preparedness and response training program for all local government emergency management personnel, including volunteers. The Western Australian Resilient Australia award winners are now in the running for the national awards, which will be presented in November. I commend all those who were nominated for this year's awards and I applaud the finalists. These awards reflect a growing recognition of the concept of shared responsibility when working to make our communities safer. Governments, local communities and individuals all have a role to play in disaster preparedness, survival and recovery and in creating a more resilient Australia.