

PILBARA — FLOOD WARNINGS

342. Mr V.A. CATANIA to the Minister for Emergency Services:

In light of the flood warning issues in the Pilbara region in the past 48 hours, can the minister update the house on how residents can prepare themselves and their communities for a flood event?

Mr J.M. FRANCIS replied:

I thank the member for North West for the question. I know that the member knows firsthand the damage that significant floodwaters can inflict upon a community, and having been to Carnarvon, where the member lives, and having looked at the situation some time ago —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Right. The minister.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS: Can I place on the record that I share the sympathy of all people in this place, I am sure, for the people of the Pilbara, who are currently undergoing what is a fairly major flood event. We are at near record rainfall; in the past 24 hours, some 209 millimetres, or 21 centimetres, of rain has fallen on Karratha alone. It is a significant amount of water. This is a timely reminder to all Western Australians to be aware of the dangers presented by floodwaters. In fact, members might like to know—it is an unfortunate fact—that the biggest cause of loss of life during significant flood events is people in cars who are trying to cross flooded roads and flooded causeways and are washed away. That is actually the biggest contributor to the loss of life during flood events. It is worth noting some of the things people can do to prepare for an oncoming flood. Early preparation is obviously essential, and it is essential to monitor local news and TV and radio stations and to prepare an emergency kit. People should think about very basic things such as torches, batteries, food, drinking water and pets and livestock. They should move livestock to higher ground early rather than at the last minute when it is probably too late. People should not try to escape danger by putting themselves in greater danger—a very important principle to remember for people in a community that is about to be impacted by floodwaters.

In the north overnight, nine people were rescued from floodwaters. I think every single one was in a car, and four of them were children. Those nine people are very lucky to be alive because they risked their lives trying to cross floodwaters and had to be rescued. I place also on the record my gratitude to the police officers, the State Emergency Service and other emergency service workers who are on the ground right now in the electorate of the member for Pilbara, in the north of our state, doing everything they can to protect human life. Once again I emphasise, I am sure, the sentiments of everyone in this house that we wish and pray for all the best for the people of the north west.