

WEAR ORANGE WEDNESDAY

Statement by Minister for Emergency Services

MR J.M. FRANCIS (Jandakot — Minister for Emergency Services) [12.07 pm]: I start by acknowledging the very polite and well-mannered boys and girls in the public gallery today from St Thomas' Primary School in the Premier's electorate of Cottesloe.

I take this opportunity to inform the house that today is national Wear Orange Wednesday. It is a day when we take the opportunity to wear orange in tribute to our orange-clad State Emergency Service volunteers who sacrifice their time and their safety to help people in need. This morning I watched SES volunteers, selected Department of Fire and Emergency Services staff and other interested parties abseil down the enx100 building on St Georges Terrace in Perth's CBD. This impressive sight was an exciting demonstration of the diversity of skills of SES volunteers. I can inform the house that Lisa Barnes from radio 6PR is still recovering but is otherwise okay!

Tonight, prominent buildings in Perth, including Council House, Trafalgar Bridge and the Swan Bell Tower, as well as the Kalgoorlie and Boulder Town Halls in regional WA, will be lit up with orange lights. Twenty-one SES units around the state will host thankyou barbecues for volunteers and families. These barbecues will show our appreciation for the significant contribution these volunteers make to our state in times of need. They also provide a unique opportunity for members of the public in local communities across Western Australia to meet SES volunteers under more pleasant circumstances rather than on a cold, stormy night. Today also marks the halfway point of the national State Emergency Service Week, observed this year from 11 to 17 November. In the past year, SES volunteers in WA have donated more than 21 000 hours of their time, in difficult conditions, to help communities. SES volunteers spend many more hours away from families, friends and work, training, updating skills, and learning how to execute technical and dangerous activities in the name of protecting the community and potentially saving lives. The SES responded to more than 1 580 requests for assistance in Western Australia in the past financial year, including one incident that required the response of 17 SES units to search for a missing person. Volunteers, whether they wear the orange of the SES, the yellow of the bush fire brigades or the blue of the Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service, all share the same commitment to their communities. I thank SES volunteers across Western Australia for the invaluable support they provide to our community in times of need.