

SURFACE MINE EMERGENCY RESPONSE COMPETITION

Statement

HON KEN BASTON (Mining and Pastoral) [10.11 pm]: I want to say a few words about a function I attended last Sunday evening in Kalgoorlie. It was a dinner presentation for the Surface Mine Emergency Response Competition. The competition had been going for three days. It involved 16 teams, with each team having six members. It was run by the Eastern Regional Council Mine Rescue Committee. I believe it is the largest competition of its type in the southern hemisphere.

Regular competitions of this nature have been run in the goldfields since 1911. They are used to keep up the skills of the various teams, physically and mentally, and their rescue capabilities. The teams were tested on many skills. I will not go through all of them but they included such things as firefighting, first aid, confined space rescue, hazardous chemicals and rope rescue etc. The function was held at the Australian Prospectors and Miners Hall of Fame. It is a magnificent building. I attended its opening some five years ago. The building was certainly suited to the function.

The competition was very keenly contested. The overall winner was BHP Billiton Iron Ore from Newman, and it was the first time that team has won the competition. The second team was Barrick Gold Plutonic, which was only half a point behind the first team. Placer Dome Kalgoorlie was third. Interestingly enough, the best captain award for the 16 teams went to a mere slip of a girl, Ms Cindy Lewis. I had the pleasure of talking to her afterwards. When she was on the stage she had huge, bulky gentlemen standing behind her. I asked her how she controlled them. She told me that she had a very loud voice! That was the first time a female had won the best captain award. That was quite significant. Mr Kevin Broadbent, the emergency services coordinator for BHP Billiton at Leinster, was awarded the Harry Steinhauser Award in recognition of his long contribution to mine rescue in the north eastern goldfields. By all accounts, that was a very popular decision. Many other awards were presented, but I will not go through them as the list is very long.

The function was made even more meaningful because the Beaconsfield miners were trapped at the time. That was certainly felt by the people in the room and everyone was very much aware of the situation. I take this opportunity also to reflect on this morning's miraculous rescue of Brant Webb and Todd Russell. It was sad that the funeral for Larry Knight, who died in the accident, was held today. I pass on my condolences to his family. I feel for his family and the trauma they would have gone through leading up to the funeral today.

On that Sunday an open day was held at the Australian Prospectors and Miners Hall of Fame. Some 2 500 visitors went through the magnificent Hall of Fame and viewed the competition. All in all, the dinner was a magnificent function. It was fantastic to see so many young people working, enjoying themselves and benefiting from the prosperity of the mining industry in the goldfields region. I also thank the numerous volunteers who helped to organise the event for the time they put into making it a memorable event for all those in the competition. I certainly look forward to attending the event again next year, when I hope I have a little more time to spend there than just the time attending the dinner.

House adjourned at 10.16 pm
