

CYCLONE SEROJA — ASSISTANCE PACKAGE

59. Ms L. DALTON to the Premier:

I refer to the state government's \$2.2 million assistance package for those affected by cyclone Seroja. Can the Premier outline to the house what this assistance will mean for those residents and businesses that were impacted by cyclone Seroja, including those in communities across greater Geraldton?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

Can I firstly congratulate the member for Geraldton on her election and her very strong majority in the electorate of Geraldton at the state election six weeks or so ago. I know that she is a very, very hard community worker, as we heard from her first speech. It was an outstanding effort, as indeed were many first speeches of members of this house.

Cyclone Seroja, obviously, has been a difficult experience for communities in Geraldton and the north. We announced an additional \$2.2 million in assistance for impacted communities. That was on top of the \$2 million we provided to the Lord Mayor's Distress Relief Fund appeal and in addition to the electricity and water financial relief packages and all the support provided by the Department of Communities. Under this latest package, \$4 000 will be provided to residents and businesses who were hardest hit by cyclone Seroja. It will be targeted at those people who lost their homes or their homes suffered significant damage. For small businesses, it will be for those who suffered financially due to the cyclone and from access being shut to their communities, particularly tourism and hospitality businesses. We estimate that at least 200 businesses will benefit from this assistance and recovery. The recovery process has obviously been well managed by the State Recovery Controller, the relevant ministers and agencies, but it will be a long process. We have also put in a range of applications to the commonwealth for disaster relief funding as well as provide a range of other items of assistance to the local communities.

The recovery efforts are well underway. There has been enormous government effort. I would like to thank everyone in the agencies in particular who have been up there doing the work. It is obviously difficult and sometimes dangerous work to fix these communities. All the work that has been undertaken allowed us to open the major roads into Kalbarri as of last Thursday, which will no doubt be welcomed by local tourism and hospitality businesses. The State Recovery Controller and the state recovery coordination groups are continuing to work to support those communities. I understand it is a long road ahead; I appreciate the forbearance and patience of people involved and I thank everyone doing all the hard work up there.