

## State Recovery Controller Communique #15

**Message from Deputy Commissioner Melissa Pexton**

The Mid West and Wheatbelt field days and expos were in full swing over August and September and it was great to hear many families got a chance to attend their local event and enjoy the community spirit. These shows would not be made possible without the dedication of local volunteers, some of whom I know are still navigating their recovery from the cyclone.

Some of our locally based recovery staff attended the events, either hosting a stall or wandering amongst the crowds. The team who attended the Northampton and Chapman Valley shows created a unique way to engage with community members and ask them how best to describe their feelings about their recovery. Participants were asked to place a coloured ball in one of five buckets labelled: *Shared Sense of Survival*; *Frustration/Red Tape*; *Exhaustion/Delays*; *Seeing Progress/Feeling Hopeful*; and *A New Normal*.

A total of 134 people took part in the activity across the two shows, and the top two were *Seeing Progress/Feeling Hopeful* and *A New Normal*. One of the participants said it was “*much better than an online survey so you can think, touch, and place your thoughts, plus get to see where others are at.*” The shows also resulted in people making appointments with the recovery staff to chat about their situation and find out how State Government recovery assistance can help them.

Recently a recovery assistance flyer was included in the mail out with the local government rate notices. We knew some residents were yet to enquire about the types of support available, and as a result of the flyer, there has been an increase in people making contact for the first time to find out what help is available for their situation.

There have been some media reports recently about the number of recovery grants being paid out. I acknowledge the numbers are lower than we had hoped at this stage, but we also know many residents are experiencing challenges with their insurance claim and getting trades to undertake works, which holds up the grant reimbursement process. As a result of this, the Commonwealth has granted a 12-month extension, up to 30 June 2024, for all four recovery grant programs, to enable more time for the clean-up, repair and restoration works to be completed.

As of September 2022, over 4000 households have made contact with State Recovery staff for recovery information and assistance. This number is in addition to the homes the Australian Red Cross have door knocked throughout the Mid West to check in with residents and hear how they are recovering.

I will be visiting the Mid West in October and meeting with local government representatives to hear first-hand how their recovery efforts are going in implementing some of the activities identified through their Local Operational Recovery Plans.