

## State Recovery Controller Communique #16



### Message from Deputy Commissioner Melissa Pexton

During October I travelled parts of the Mid West region and met with local government CEOs and councillors from Perenjori, Mingenew, Morawa, Chapman Valley and Northampton. It was wonderful to hear local recovery stories. What has been achieved by the local governments in the 20 months since the cyclone is significant. It was clear to me that the local governments have valued the recovery support that State Government has provided to date and are ready to drive long-term recovery initiatives for their respective communities.

State Recovery is currently focusing on some key areas to ensure a well-considered and needs-based transition over the next six to 12 months. At the November meeting of the Cyclone Seroja State Recovery Coordination Group, a coordinated exit plan was discussed and agreement on the areas of community focus and how to achieve an effective transition.

Welfare and mental health support for cyclone-impacted individuals is one of the key areas of focus for long-term recovery. The Cyclone Seroja Community Welfare and Outreach Program managed by the Department of Communities has been supporting vulnerable residents affected by the cyclone through on-the-ground support from staff and Australian Red Cross officers. It has been achieved through a case management approach and the establishment of a network of local service providers specialising in areas of mental health, domestic violence, and financial counselling. State Recovery recognises the continued need for these supports once the recovery program concludes in June 2023, and discussions are being held with the WA Country Health Service about how long-term needs can remain supported.

Personal resilience building is another area of focus. Many community members have recently attended "Be Disaster Ready" workshops held in cyclone-impacted towns. These workshops were created in response to local governments identifying a need for practical and psychological disaster preparedness information for their communities. They are being delivered by Department of Fire and Emergency Services Community Recovery Officers and the Australian Red Cross Resilience Officers. Research shows the better prepared you are, the better your chance of survival in a natural disaster. People attending the workshops walk away knowing how to make their emergency plan, what to put in their emergency kit, what actions to take when there are warnings, and how to emotionally prepare.

With the end of the year nearly upon us, I sincerely thank all stakeholders involved in the Cyclone Seroja recovery effort to date. The past 20 months have been a collaborative effort across all levels of government, not-for-profits, businesses, community groups and individuals. Your contribution, whether direct or indirect, is making a real difference for the communities living through the recovery process. I look forward to your continued support throughout 2023.