



**DFES General Circular No: 17/2022**

**14 February 2022**

**MESSAGE FROM THE COMMISSIONER  
THANK YOU**

In the past weeks we have experienced some of the worst WA has to offer in the form of extreme conditions and natural hazards across our vast and varied terrain. Hundreds of career and volunteer firefighters, including Bush Fire Brigade, Volunteer Fire and Emergency Service, Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service worked incredibly hard in very tough conditions, motivated by a common desire to protect the homes and lives of Western Australian people.

I would like to thank you all for your dedication, your hard work in the most trying of circumstances and your continued commitment to protecting the community.

Facing significant simultaneous fire emergencies in Bridgetown, Denmark, Narrogin, Shakleton and Anketell coupled with severe flooding in the Kimberley and Pilbara, and still grappling with COVID – our resources have been stretched.

At least 1,900 homes were saved across the State. The town of Babakin could have been completely lost if it wasn't for the outstanding efforts of volunteer and career firefighters who battled blazes in relentless, extreme conditions and implemented operational strategies to protect homes and critical infrastructure.

On Friday 11 February, 68 new incidents arose – most of which were fires sparked by an intense series of lightning strikes. Many of those were in our Great Southern region, with several escalating rapidly to emergency warning level.

Again firefighters responded swiftly, defending lives and property as the fires were fanned by strong winds gusting over 100km/hr in high temperatures. Their efforts in Hopetoun, Newdegate, Jerramungup and Bremer Bay were crucial in minimising damage. Our thoughts are with those who have lost homes – it is devastating news for those people and we'll be working with local governments and other agencies to provide whatever support is required.

SES volunteers continue to respond to requests for assistance and helping our northern communities contend with the deluge of water, mud, damaged roads, and resupply of communities isolated by floodwaters.



Along our entire coastline, Marine Rescue volunteers have been kept busier than ever in dealing with sea searches and rescues. Throw into the mix an increased number of boats on the water, the risks of abalone season, and an unforgiving sea breeze has brought little relief for everyone.

Supporting these frontline efforts are many more emergency services personnel working behind the scenes to ensure timely and effective mobilisation, transport, logistics, food and water, first aid and vital information to affected communities.

The expertise of local knowledge has been critical in our ability to protect lives and homes. All volunteers have shown exceptional strength and resilience, as have their communities. Those who have travelled from further afield should also be commended for their willingness to give up their own time to help other communities in need.

These recent events may trigger uncomfortable and distressing memories for anyone who has experienced a past bushfire or natural disaster, and these feelings are not to be dismissed.

For those who have lived through it or been part of the response to keep others safe - be kind to yourself and remember there is never shame in asking for help. Please take care of yourself, your colleagues and family.

The [Wellness Team](#) offers a range of support services, programs and resources to help build psychological, physical and spiritual health and well-being. Such services are freely available to all DFES employees, emergency services volunteers and their immediate families. Access them through the [Volunteer Hub](#) Portal or the [Staff Intranet](#).

Thank you once again for your efforts. I feel incredibly proud of the commitment and tenacity you give to emergency services across WA.

**DARREN KLEMM AFSM  
COMMISSIONER**