

Commissioner's Foreword



Darren Klemm AFSM

Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner

The Department of Fire and Emergency Services' purpose is to help create a safer State for the people of WA. We work in partnership with community and government to protect lives, infrastructure, our environment and the economy.

Over the last year we responded to more than 29,000 incidents across the State. This is testament to the dedication and commitment of our people supporting the community.

Staff and volunteers battled a number of significant fires threatening country and city communities. This included combatting bushfire in over 230,000 hectares within the Great Southern and Goldfields regions, as well as responding to a bushfire which came close to homes and businesses in the Forrestdale area.

In March 2019 Severe Tropical Cyclone Veronica, one of the largest cyclones in a decade, formed off the northern WA coast. Expected to impact Port Hedland and Karratha with potentially devastating consequences, communities in the Pilbara were subject to one of the longest recorded Red Alerts. Working with the local community and our emergency management partners, our staff and volunteers were able to assist in reducing Veronica's impact. Thankfully no lives or homes were lost.

On water, our volunteers often do amazing things in challenging times. The rescue of a missing kite surfer in Geraldton last January and then the rescue of two fisherman 28 kilometres off the coast of Hopetoun in February illustrates the important role of marine rescue in keeping our community safe on the water.

Our focus this year has been on three key priorities:

- **Culture and community** – enhancing our culture and engagement with the community.
- **Emergency Management** – broadening our attention from response to emergency management.
- **Volunteers** – valuing the expertise and contribution of our volunteers.

Our cultural reform journey has entrenched our approach to a more inclusive and diverse workforce and strengthened relationships with our volunteers. We have continued to support local governments and community members to build their resilience, and in doing so, reduce the risk of the wide range of hazards for which we are responsible.

Broadening our remit to support people before, during and after emergencies has meant taking on new responsibilities. This includes greater involvement in State recovery, mitigation, risk profiling and providing Secretariat support to the State Emergency Management Committee.

In 2018-19 we also made great progress towards establishing a world leading Bushfire Centre of Excellence. This important State Government initiative will create a centre of strategic advice for the management and mitigation of bushfire as well as enhancing research and training. Through the work of our Rural Fire Division we have increased our capacity in fire behaviour analysis, improved our bushfire prone maps and continued to develop bushfire risk management policies.

A highlight this year was hosting the national conference for Australia and New Zealand's National Council for fire, emergency services and land management in Perth. A prestigious emergency services conference, this event brought emergency management people from across Australia and overseas to share ideas, experiences and to network – continuing to provide opportunity for us to improve.

As I reflect on my role as Commissioner, I would like to acknowledge and thank all emergency management staff, volunteers and partners, who give their time to ensure a safer WA. Without them, the vital work we do for our communities would not be possible. I look forward to the coming year as we look to our future and how we can work together to build a safer State.

