

# Community unites after storm damages store

**Rebecca Nadge**

The Wiluna community has banded together after heavy storms on Wednesday night rendered the only supermarket, fuel outlet and post office service inoperable and caused up to \$500,000 damage.

Wiluna Town Bush Fire Brigade captain Wade Bloffwitch said the damage to the Wiluna Traders store occurred about 7.15pm when parts of the roof were blown off and the ceiling collapsed into the shop.

Shop owner Peter Grundy said the store was closed at the time and no one was injured, but the shop lost power and heavy rains flooded the inside, causing most of the food to spoil.

Mr Grundy compared the force of the storm to a freight train and said parts of the roof were blown up to 100m away.

"This one was quite extensive — the wind force was extraordinary," he said.

Open daily, Wiluna Traders is the main service provider in town and also services remote Aboriginal communities.

Mr Grundy said a lot of his customers were from low socio-economic backgrounds and shopped daily because they were not in a position to store food.

It was crucial to get the store up and running as soon as possible, he said, and he was looking at running temporary services as soon as possible.

"It's extremely disruptive," he said.

Volunteers used tarpaulins and sandbags to form a temporary roof and power was iso-

lated to the undamaged section of the shop, he said.

Blackham Resources staff, the Meekatharra SES unit, Wiluna police, and residents all pitched in to help secure the roof and transfer letters from the post office, along with frozen and fresh food, to other offices in town.

Mr Grundy said about 30 people were at the store helping out and it was positive to see the community come together to assist one another.

"Just about every person who could lend a hand came down," he said.

"Wiluna's had its ups and downs but it's quite a vibrant town and it's good to see everyone come together."

However, it could be weeks before the store was fully operational, he said, because its remote location brought inevitable delays with insurance providers and builders.

Other buildings around town also suffered storm damage

Mr Bloffwitch said the roof of the new Native Title building was blown off, damaging neighbouring cars and solar panels; and shade sails and the supporting structure at the

early childhood centre were also damaged.

About 8.30pm on Wednesday, a woman was trapped in her Ford Falcon after she tried to drive through a creek crossing on Thompson Street.

Police rescued her from the vehicle but the car was left until water levels subsided.

More thunderstorms are

forecast for the coming week and several roads in the area are closed, including the Gunbarrel Highway, Wongawool Road, and Carnegie Road.

For more information, contact the Shire of Wiluna on 9981 8000.



**A storm caused extensive damage to the inside of the store.** Picture: Wiluna Traders