

## **CHILD PROTECTION — FOSTER CARE**

*Statement by Minister for Child Protection*

**MS S.E. WINTON (Wanneroo — Minister for Child Protection)** [9.22 am]: It was recently WA Foster Carers Week, and I would like to share with members some of the ways we recognised, supported and celebrated the invaluable contributions of Western Australian foster and family carers. Foster carers are ordinary people who do an extraordinary thing when they choose to care for Western Australian children and young people when they need it most. Being a foster carer is an incredible act of compassion, patience and generosity. During Foster Carers Week, I had opportunities to meet with foster and family carers from across the state at events in Perth, Midland, Peel, the south west and Kalgoorlie, where I was joined by the members for Midland, Bunbury, Collie–Preston and Kalgoorlie respectively.

I also had the great pleasure of attending the Foster Care Association of WA’s brunch, where many carers and agency partners came together and where I launched *Who can say OK in WA?*, a resource for foster carers. It was amazing to speak with foster and family carers from all walks of life about their foster caring journey. Their journeys are very different but have one thing in common—a commitment to providing a safe and nurturing environment for the children in their care.

There are over 2 000 foster carer households throughout WA that play an important role in supporting children, but more are needed. That is why the Cook Labor government last week launched the “Become a Foster Carer—Make a difference to a child’s life” campaign. That campaign highlights the important role of foster and family carers, and aims to encourage more of us to become foster carers. The campaign highlights the different types of foster caring and how foster caring can suit a wide variety of people and lifestyles. Foster caring can be long-term or provided for shorter periods for emergency, temporary or respite care. Foster carers come from all walks of life. They can be single, partnered or married; with or without children of their own; and may work part time, full time or not at all. The state government values foster and family carers and supports them with ongoing training, free counselling, and opportunities to network with other foster carers. On behalf of all members, I thank foster and family carers for opening their hearts and homes to children when they need it most.