

WORLD AUTISM AWARENESS WEEK

Statement by Minister for Disability Services

MR D.T. PUNCH (Bunbury — Minister for Disability Services) [9.13 am]: I am pleased to rise today to talk to members of the house about World Autism Awareness Week 2022. The week is a time to come together to help make a difference to the lives of people with autism and celebrate embracing difference in our community. Autism Awareness Week ran from 28 March to 4 April 2022 and focused on sharing information about autism to spread awareness, acceptance and understanding, and to help make the world a more inclusive place.

I know that autism touches many people in this Parliament, including my colleague the member for Victoria Park, Hannah Beazley, who shared her personal insights on Facebook earlier this week as part of Autism Awareness Week. The member and her son, who has autism, are passionate about raising awareness in our community.

Western Australia has long been a leader in promoting positive change in the lives of people with disability. A key priority of the McGowan government is to create inclusive communities in which people with disability are involved in a range of recreational, social, art and cultural opportunities. The McGowan government is committed to all people with disability and aims to promote opportunities for the whole community to work together to achieve transformative change.

I am also pleased to announce today that grant funding totalling nearly \$2.5 million has been extended to seven organisations to support projects that improve the economic and social wellbeing of people with disability in Western Australia. This funding is provided under the state disability strategy's innovation fund, which was established to stimulate innovative ways to enhance independence and quality of life for people with disability at home and in the community, including increasing employment opportunities. Amongst the five successful grant recipients, the Autism Association of Western Australia is to receive \$460 000 over the next two years to assist people with complex communication needs, such as those with autism. Resources such as customised toolkits and a variety of training sessions, all identified by people with autism, will be developed to help build individual capacity. These resources also include specialised training designed for Aboriginal people in our Pilbara region. The whole community benefits when everyone has the opportunity to be included. The initiatives funded under the innovation fund will promote and foster new and exciting ways to facilitate the inclusion and participation of people with disability in the community.