

**MS LOIS GATLEY, CARERS ADVISORY COUNCIL**

*Statement by Minister for Disability Services*

**MR R.C. KUCERA (Yokine - Minister for Disability Services)** [12.10 pm]: I announce today that family carer and consultant Ms Lois Gatley has been appointed chair of Western Australia's first Carers Advisory Council. The council has been established as part of the Carers Recognition Act 2004 to monitor agencies' compliance with the legislation and provide advice to the minister on issues relating to carers. Ms Gatley was chosen from a strong field of more than 40 public nominations. She is a primary carer and a strong advocate for carers' interests, and her range of knowledge and skills are extensive. Since 1978 her social work within the health, welfare and disability sectors has taken her into all rural regions, centres and local communities as well as metropolitan Perth. Her community work includes serving on a range of advisory councils and committees, including the Western Australian Women's Advisory Council, the Western Australian Council of Social Service and the Disability Services Commission panel of independent standard monitors. In the words of Ms Gatley -

I made a decision years ago to become what is now called in our community - a Carer! I did not make the decision at a conscious level, I did what so many people in my circumstances do, stay with someone you love and work with them to get through each day. As a matter of fact in my mind the label Carer did not fit for me for many years.

If we want a society in which carers are respected and their views considered - as the new state government Carers Recognition Act promotes - each and every one of us must recognise carers, show them respect for what they do and touch their lives in some simple and useful way. The Carers Recognition Act 2004 came into effect on 1 January this year and is the first act in Australia to enshrine standards of care in legislation. It formally recognises and supports more than 200 000 carers in Western Australia and those in their care. The Carers Advisory Council will provide an important function in upholding this legislation. The act requires agencies to comply with a carers' charter that provides clear direction on how carers should be treated and consulted in the delivery of services. The Carers Advisory Council will be responsible for ensuring that agencies comply with this charter. We need to ensure that the 200 000 people who selflessly give their time, love, effort and care to those with less mobility, intellectual capacity and other life challenges are afforded the respect and dignity they deserve and, more importantly, are actively engaged in decision-making processes.

To highlight this, I table as part of this statement a speech that was made by Lois Gatley to the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Western Australia on 16 June. Every member should afford themselves the opportunity to read this speech, as it touches the real essence of a carer.

More broadly, the state government has been calling on the Howard government to increase its support for carers for several years, and we also call on the opposition to show its support for the work being done to encourage the Howard government to increase its support for carers.

[See paper 778.]