

CORONAVIRUS — OPEN CAPTIONS

Statement by Minister for Disability Services

MR D.T. PUNCH (Bunbury — Minister for Disability Services) [9.04 am]: I am pleased to update the house today on the Premier's recent commitment for all future COVID-19 television advertisements related to public health or emergency information to be supported by open captions. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the Western Australian government has aimed to deliver accessible and clear public health information at all times. This includes providing closed captions on our digital audiovisual materials and, as we are all familiar with, providing Auslan interpreters at Western Australian government media conferences. Unlike closed captions, which can be turned on or off by the viewer and are provided by television broadcasters, open captions are always in view and cannot be turned off. Providing open captions will ensure that all deaf and hard-of-hearing people can access important information in times of crisis and that the information can be conveyed to viewers who may have muted the audio on their television.

As members will be aware, on 3 December 2020 the WA government launched *A Western Australia for everyone: State disability strategy 2020–2030* outlining our commitment to building inclusive communities that support and empower people with disability. Ensuring WA government messaging is accessible to all members of the community is consistent with the principles of the strategy.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mr Barry MacKinnon, president of the Deafness Council of Western Australia, for his advocacy in this area. I was able to meet with Mr MacKinnon yesterday to thank him personally for his work on this issue and for his ongoing support for Western Australians who are deaf or hard of hearing. It is great to see that Mr MacKinnon and his colleagues at the Deafness Council of Western Australia are promoting this initiative nationally as best practice in public service announcements.