

CHILD PROTECTION — CASEWORKERS

137. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Minister for Child Protection:

I have a supplementary question. Can I take it from the minister's answer that she will not be providing an additional 200 child protection workers and that areas like the Kimberley will continue to be under-resourced and stretched while supporting these young and vulnerable people?

Ms S.F. McGURK replied:

I do not know whether the Leader of the Opposition is being wilfully ignorant or is just plain ignorant of how the child protection system works. The child protection system in Western Australia, as with other states around Australia and in comparable jurisdictions, is not there to look after every single child in the state. That is not its job. Its job is very specific; under the Children and Community Services Act it has a specific remit. Having said that, there have been cases when police have notified the child protection workforce in the Kimberley of young people out of Operation Regional Shield, and we will continue to work to follow up those cases. We continue to operate cooperatively across government agencies to deliver for regional communities, including the Kimberley.

I reiterate: since coming to office in 2017, the McGowan government has put in place over 200 FTE. I think depending on whether we are talking about case-carrying or child protection staff. Case-carrying staff, 202 FTE have been added to the child protection staff. That is vastly different from the number of staff the former government put in place. It was a pathetic addition.

Ms M.J. Davies interjected.

Ms S.F. McGURK: I am proud of the extra contributions that we have made and the resources we have added to the child protection workforce and to early intervention and working in partnership with Aboriginal community-controlled organisations. I am proud of some of the specific programs like Target 120. I notice that none of these issues magically dissolved while the Leader of the Opposition was in office for eight and a half years; they did not magically go away.

Ms M.J. Davies interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please, member!

Ms S.F. McGURK: These issues are not new. They are years in the making and we will work cooperatively with other government agencies and with the community to get good outcomes for the Kimberley and other areas in regional Western Australia.