

FORUM ON ELDER ABUSE

Statement by Minister for Seniors

MR R.C. KUCERA (Yokine - Minister for Seniors) [2.06 pm]: I take this opportunity to congratulate Ben Cousins on his magnificent Brownlow Medal win. Also, on behalf of all Western Australians, I wish the West Coast Eagles the very best for this weekend.

Mr Speaker, last Friday a very important forum was held that will have a marked impact upon the future of this state's ageing population. The forum examined the growing trend of elder abuse and was targeted to improve awareness of and response to this issue in Western Australia. Some 60 dedicated service providers and policymakers were at the forum organised by the Office for Seniors Interests in partnership with the Alliance for the Prevention of Elder Abuse. The alliance is an initiative of this government's active ageing strategy and brings together key organisations that support older people who are experiencing elder abuse. Over the weekend I read some criticism of our handling of this issue and calls for a select committee to examine criminal checks on carers of the elderly.

Mr Speaker, I would not seek to waste the Parliament's time with an issue that is already being well handled by the department and when the international community is lauding our active ageing strategy as the model for others to emulate. The broad membership of the alliance - including representatives from the indigenous community, health, disability services, legal aid, seniors, the public advocate and Public Trustee, Western Australia Police and the non-government agency AdvoCare WA - is indicative of how consultative and broad ranging this government is when it deals with issues such as elder abuse. The alliance will raise awareness of elder abuse issues and influence current attitudes, policies and practices to ensure every person has the ability to live safely and without fear of abuse, neglect, violence or exploitation. I fully support this principle and fully support the alliance and its work. It is an important step in safeguarding every senior's right to protection from harm.

The elder abuse forum involved Dr Alexandre Kalache, head of the World Health Organisation's ageing and life course team. He told the forum that the initiatives of our active ageing strategy optimised opportunities for health, participation and security. This enhanced the quality of life for Western Australians, and elder abuse prevention is an important part of that strategy. The Gallop government will use the forum and the alliance to assess comment on issues such as services, community education, legislation and education and training in our ongoing plans to improve the quality of life for seniors in this state. I know members of this house will be interested in the work of the alliance and the consultation process, and will take every opportunity to support initiatives that will help to eradicate abuse and exploitation of older people.