

FOSTER CARERS, SUBSIDY INCREASE

663. Mr A.P. O'GORMAN to the Minister for Community Development, Women's Interests, Seniors and Youth:

I understand that foster carers were told today that they would receive a subsidy increase. Will the minister please provide further information on this initiative?

Ms S.M. McHALE replied:

I thank the member for his question. Foster carers do a great job in our community in helping to protect the vulnerable children who come into the care of the State. The Premier and I were this morning privileged to attend the annual Mother's Day morning tea of the Foster Care Association of Western Australia. We were proud to inform the association, as I am proud to inform the House now, that there will be an increase in the allowance paid to foster carers. It is the first increase that foster carers have received in a decade. This Government is delivering to foster carers. This increase is a key part of the Government's strategy to tackle social disadvantage. More than \$14 million, an increase of 33 per cent, will be invested over the next four years to boost important subsidies and allowances to the State's approximately 1 000 foster carers. This subsidy will enable foster parents to cover the costs of food, travel, hobbies, minor education expenses, and other things such as chemist items for the children in their care. Foster carers do a fantastic job in our community. The member for Joondalup was a foster carer, so he understands the difficult role foster parents play. This is one significant way in which we can say thank you to foster carers. This is a significant financial investment in a very important element of our community. The Gallop Government wants young Western Australians to be safe and to grow up in a safe and supportive environment. It has refused to turn a blind eye to some of the problems that confront young people in our community, and is prepared to face up to some of the unpalatable realities and make a proper investment in our young people.