

ADOPTION RESEARCH AND COUNSELLING SERVICE — ADOPTION JIGSAW

Statement by Minister for Child Protection

MS S.E. WINTON (Wanneroo — Minister for Child Protection) [9.05 am]: I rise today, on the eleventh anniversary of the national apology for forced adoptions, to recognise survivors and update the house on significant changes to support services. Today I provide my heartfelt thanks to Adoption Jigsaw, which recently ceased its services after 46 years of providing support and services to the adoption community. Since 1978, Jigsaw has played a critical role in advocating for legislative reforms and the rights of adopted adults, birth parents and adoptive parents in the WA community. In more recent years, Jigsaw transitioned to a service offering search, mediation and counselling, and conducted over 4 700 reconnections for those involved in adoptions. I want to provide special acknowledgement of Isabel Andrews, the former manager of Jigsaw. Isabel has worked in the adoption field since 1985—a steward of the sector, her absence will not go unnoticed. I also acknowledge researcher Ann Allpike and the rest of the team for their tireless efforts and wish them all the best in their retirement.

Jigsaw has walked alongside individuals and their families for decades, providing support and understanding for individuals who needed it most. The state government recognises that people affected by past adoption practices have a need for ongoing support, and that continuity of services is crucial. On that basis, I am pleased to announce that the state government has funded a new service to ensure that those affected receive the support they need. The Adoption Research and Counselling Service will receive funding for two years to provide fee-free counselling for individuals impacted by forced adoptions. ARCS is now taking referrals to this service statewide, with telehealth appointments available for residents of regional and remote communities. We know that for some people, accessing counselling can be cost prohibitive. I hope this service ensures that those in need can access ongoing counselling support.

The Cook Labor government remains committed to supporting survivors of forced adoptions through the provision of services to those affected and by progressing work from the 2018 statutory review of the Adoption Act 1994. I also acknowledge the work being undertaken by the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs in the other place that is focused on past forced adoptive policies and practices, and will consider its recommendations upon completion of its inquiries. I am working alongside community services ministers around the nation who have also reaffirmed their commitment to support survivors, making forced adoptions an area of focus for 2024.