

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL CHILD HEALTH SURVEY

5947. Hon Shelley Archer to the Minister for Child Protection

I refer the Minister to the Report on the Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey, carried out by the Kulunga Research Network at the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research. I draw the Minister's attention to Recommendation 14 of the Report, namely, 'Current social welfare policies regarding child support, family payments and emergency family financial support should be adjusted to take account of household structural factors which appear to result in higher levels of disadvantage for some families with Aboriginal children. These include households where children are not with either of their natural parents, households where children's primary carers are aged 40 years or older, and households with three or more children', and I ask —

Will the Minister advise the House what progress has been made in respect of this recommendation?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

The Commonwealth Government is responsible for income support. The Child Support Agency and Family Payments are both Commonwealth Government responsibilities.

The Commonwealth Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs provides emergency relief funds to non government organisations throughout Australia which distribute payments to clients according to the agencies' own needs assessment, and determine the level and type of assistance that is most appropriate in each individual circumstance. The national allocation is split into State/Territory allocations calculated using data on the regional location of recipients of various Centrelink benefits and allowances. Western Australia received \$2,851,966 in funding for 2007/2008.

Various concessions are provided by State Government departments and authorities for low income households to assist in meeting costs for electricity, water and other essential services. These concessions are estimated to total almost half a billion dollars annually.

The Department for Child Protection Family Crisis Program assists families and individuals in unforeseen crisis with financial and other forms of assistance. The Family Crisis Program provided \$1.215m in support to Western Australian families and individuals in 2006/07.

Lotterywest provided \$1.71m to approximately 86 community organisations across Western Australia in 2006/2007 to deliver emergency relief to individuals and families experiencing financial difficulties. In addition Lotterywest provided funding of \$3.4m in 2006/2007 to support infrastructure programs in Western Australian Indigenous communities.