

NATURE PLAYGROUND — FOOTHILLS INFORMATION AND REFERRAL SERVICE

Statement by Member for Forrestfield

MR N.W. MORTON (Forrestfield) [12.52 pm]: On 9 May I attended the opening of a new nature playground constructed by the Foothills Information and Referral Service in Forrestfield. I was very pleased to present FIRS with a Lotterywest cheque for \$50 000 last September and to return eight months later to see many young children already using the playground, which will become a great asset to the community of Forrestfield. FIRS is a not-for-profit community-based organisation that is run by a volunteer board. FIRS has been operating in Forrestfield since 1992 and provides non-judgemental, non-discriminatory services to families and individuals, which include a range of ethnically diverse people. These services include financial counselling and emergency relief services, a supported developmental playgroup and referral information services to other organisations.

FIRS is committed to cultivating strong community bonds. Therefore, the general public will be encouraged to use the playground. This should also encourage more families that need support to connect with FIRS. The playground includes a track, a climbing log and sand play area. It truly is a quality space. Playing outside, getting dirty and using natural items such as leaves, nuts and twigs is good for our kids. Current research supports the notion that children who play in natural settings increase their immunity levels and it helps fight childhood obesity and stimulates all aspects of a child's development. FIRS realises how important it is to provide these kinds of services within the community. I would like to take this opportunity to place on the record my sincere thanks for the support it gives to families in the Forrestfield electorate.