

**CHILD PROTECTION — STAFF ATTRACTION AND RETENTION PACKAGE**

*Statement by Minister for Child Protection*

**MS S.E. WINTON (Wanneroo — Minister for Child Protection)** [9.20 am]: Since I became the Minister for Child Protection six months ago, one of the best things about the role has been meeting child protection workers throughout WA, including in our regions. What they do is difficult and extraordinary. The most vulnerable children in our community need them, the children's families and carers need them and they step up to work tirelessly to keep those children safe and supported. Like many workplaces and industries, WA's child protection workforce is not immune from the impact of the tight labour markets and the competing demands for those qualified or experienced to be child protection workers. I know members understand that not surprisingly, and for a range of factors, those impacts are often most felt in the regions.

That is why I am so pleased to inform the house that the Cook government will invest \$3.7 million in a temporary staff attraction and retention package to boost critical child protection workforce numbers across five regions. This package further builds on a range of strategies that the state government has already implemented to boost our child protection workforce, particularly in our regions. From 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024, these incentives will be available to existing and new employees in critical positions in our child protection workforce in the Kimberley, Pilbara, midwest–Gascoyne, goldfields–Esperance and wheatbelt regions. Eligible staff will be able to access payments of up to \$13 000 in the Kimberley and Pilbara regions; up to \$10 000 in midwest–Gascoyne region; and up to \$6 000 across the goldfields–Esperance and wheatbelt regions. The payments will be in addition to existing allowances. These incentives will provide increased support for our existing child protection workforce by helping to attract and retaining workers in these regional communities.

Attracting new people into child protection roles can be the start of a rewarding career in the public service, supporting and responding to the needs of children and young people in communities across Western Australia. Our child protection workforce fulfils such an important role in the lives of vulnerable children. The Cook government values what they contribute to our community, which is why it is important we support them as best as we can. I look forward to these incentives supporting the great work done by our child protection workforce in regional WA.