

REGIONAL CHILD CARE

577. Mr R.S. LOVE to the Minister for Community Services:

My question concerns regional childcare funding. I refer to the minister's answer during Legislative Council estimates in which she stated that no operational grants would be issued under the regional community childcare development fund. How can childcare centres in regional WA keep their doors open when the minister has ripped the option to apply for operational grants away from them?

Ms S.F. McGURK replied:

I thank the member for the question. I am surprised that there has been a series of questions around this fund because it was only ever meant to be a fund that looked at the viability of childcare services in different areas. Two different programs are being undertaken—one in the south west and one in the wheatbelt. It is not a service provision fund. It is not to provide childcare services. The state government does not provide childcare services; we regulate those services.

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Moore!

Ms S.F. McGURK: In case the member did not know, the commonwealth government provides financial assistance for child care. The purpose of that fund, which we have maintained, is to ensure that a viability study is done to see what sort of childcare services can be put in place for regional areas so that they are ongoing in the long run. For instance, community child care is a model that is undertaken like a parents and citizens association. A community body, largely of parents or local community members, sits on the governing committee of a childcare centre that runs as a not-for-profit. Those centres often run very successfully. That might be surprising to those on the National and Liberal side of the chamber because in government they withdrew accommodation support for many of the community-based childcare centres. When we met with some of those centres, the member for Carine, and others on that side of the chamber from the Liberal and National Parties, were surprised that there should be any community-based child care at all or that the government should provide any sort of assistance to community-based child care.

Mr A. Krsticevic interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Carine!

Ms S.F. McGURK: The member for Carine, who is interjecting across the chamber, said —

Mr A. Krsticevic interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Carine, I call you to order for the second time.

Ms S.F. McGURK: When we met at Sudbury House in Mirrabooka —

Mr A. Krsticevic interjected.

Ms S.F. McGURK: The member insists on yelling across the chamber because he does not want it clear —

The SPEAKER: I call the member for Carine to order for the third time.

Ms S.F. McGURK: The member could not understand the logic of a community-based service in which community members and parents participate in the running of a not-for-profit centre. The member said that when we met at Sudbury in Mirrabooka to discuss the accommodation cuts.

Point of Order

Mr A. KRSTICEVIC: The member is misleading the house. We never met in Mirrabooka; we met in Duncraig. The member is misleading the house and does not know what she is talking about.

The SPEAKER: Member, that is not a proper point of order. You are on three; I would be very careful.

Questions without Notice Resumed

Ms S.F. McGURK: The reason I talk about community-based child care is that it is precisely that sort of model that this fund is intended to try to facilitate. It is not designed to provide services itself, but to set up a model under which regional communities that have trouble attracting for-profit childcare services on an ongoing basis might be able to look at a more flexible arrangement, such as community-based child care or other arrangements such as family day care and the like, to ensure that those sorts of services are available to those communities in regional Western Australia and that working parents can continue to participate in the workforce, as they should, but also have their children cared for. That is a challenge for small communities in regional centres because there is not the

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Mr Shane Love; Ms Simone McGurk; Mr Tony Krsticevic

scale there. The fund the member asked about was a facilitator fund. We have reinstated that money, but it is not intended to be a service provider.