

**NATIONAL CHILD PROTECTION WEEK**

*Statement by Minister for Child Protection*

**MS S.F. MCGURK (Fremantle — Minister for Child Protection)** [2.13 pm]: I rise to mark National Child Protection Week, which runs from 1 to 7 September. It is important to take some time to reflect on child protection in Western Australia. During my time as the Minister for Child Protection, I have travelled throughout the state and met children and young people, their families, foster carers, child protection staff and community-based support services. I have listened to the experiences of the people who I have met with, and, in some instances, concerns have been raised. I take all concerns raised about children's wellbeing seriously, and I acknowledge that there is more we can do. I have met with many foster carers and respect their desire to be genuine partners in supporting children in care.

Today I announced that the Department of Communities will partner with the Foster Care Association of Western Australia to undertake a review looking at recruitment, assessment of carers, support to foster families, and better ways for family, carers and staff to work together to ensure that the foster care system is contemporary and draws on best practice. The McGowan government will also fund additional staff within the Foster Care Association of WA to provide direct support to carers.

Today I also announced that the Department of Communities will partner with the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care and Aboriginal communities across our state to develop a road map and action plan to reduce the number of Aboriginal children entering the care system. That road map will guide future efforts to reduce the number of Aboriginal children in care, identifying opportunities to prevent their entry into the system well before they are placed at risk, as well as providing a focus on supporting Aboriginal young people as they transition out of care and into adulthood.

The state government wants to work in genuine partnership alongside foster carers, Aboriginal families and community. We will continue to place an emphasis on building stronger relationships with all partners in care to ensure better outcomes for children and young people.