

WORLD ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS DAY

Statement by Minister for Seniors and Ageing

MR D.T. PUNCH (Bunbury — Minister for Seniors and Ageing) [2.27 pm]: I would like to inform the house that today, 15 June, is World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. World Elder Abuse Awareness Day is internationally recognised and commemorated each year to highlight one of the worst manifestations of ageism and inequality in our society—elder abuse. Elder abuse is any act that causes harm to an older person within a relationship of trust, such as by family members, friends or carers. It can be financial, social, physical, sexual, psychological or emotional abuse. It affects one in 20 older people in Western Australia. However, it is still largely hidden and under-reported.

Today, I rise to announce that the state government will provide an additional \$4 million to Legal Aid Western Australia to establish Elder Rights WA and enable increased legal responses to elder abuse. The new service will provide legal assistance to older people experiencing all forms of elder abuse, and will safeguard, and advocate for, the rights of older people.

I remind the house that in November 2019, the McGowan government released this state's first-ever elder abuse strategy. The McGowan government has committed more than \$6 million to delivering initiatives to combat elder abuse since the strategy was released. This includes continued operation of the WA Elder Abuse Helpline and information service; expansion of the Older People's Rights Service; trialling of WA's first-ever vulnerable seniors peak body to advocate for and represent the interests of vulnerable older Western Australians; and provision of the age-friendly communities social connectivity grants program.

Members may have noticed that Optus Stadium, Matagarup Bridge, Swan Bell Tower, Elizabeth Quay, Yagan Square, Perth Council House and Trafalgar Bridge are all lit up in purple today, as the symbolic colour of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. The Purple Road project is an initiative started by the Older People's Rights Service to spread awareness of elder abuse. This week, a portion of the hand-stitched road, which now measures over 30 metres in length, will be displayed at Parliament House.

The Elder Abuse is Everyone's Business symposium, hosted by the Council on the Ageing Western Australia and supported by the Department of Communities, will also be held this week. It will provide an opportunity to further understand the need for prevention of elder abuse in WA. I extend a thankyou to everyone for their efforts and collective support to prevent and address elder abuse in our state.