

GRANDCARERS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Statement by Minister for Community Services

MS S.F. McGURK (Fremantle — Minister for Community Services) [2.13 pm]: I rise to inform the house that the McGowan government will continue to provide the grandcarers assistance program for an additional 12 months. Grandcarers are legally, biologically or culturally defined grandparents who are at least one generation removed and have assumed the full-time primary care of their grandchild through a private arrangement. Many grandparents become carers for their grandchildren due to a family crisis or traumatic event. There are currently 3 500 officially recognised grandparent carers in Western Australia, but given that many of these arrangements are informal, the actual figures are likely to be higher.

In 2013, the previous government entered into a grant agreement with Wanslea Family Services worth \$125 000 a year for additional money to provide assistance to grandcarers, which was due to end on 30 June. This assistance has provided some respite, counselling, training and workshops, home help and education assistance. I am pleased to confirm that the McGowan government will extend the program for an additional 12 months. During this time, the Department of Communities will review all programs provided to grandcarers to ensure their needs and those of their grandchildren are met. In addition to the grandcarers assistance program, all grandcarers can apply to receive annually through the grandcarers support scheme \$400 for the first child in their care and \$250 for other children. There is also a one-off establishment payment of \$1 000 a child for informal relative carers. This money is paid only when child protection services have had involvement with the child's family and it is in the child's best interests to remain with family.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all grandcarers in Western Australia for the love and care they provide to their grandchildren after often difficult and traumatic circumstances.