

METHAMPHETAMINE ACTION PLAN TASKFORCE — MONITORED CHILDREN

461. Ms L. METTAM to the Minister for Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence:

I have a supplementary question. How can the minister suggest that the tripling of the number of children being monitored in the south west is a good thing when this means that a number of kids are on the government's radar and we are now seeing regional WA top the list for drug and methamphetamine use in this country?

The SPEAKER: Member, you had about three tracks. In future, supplementary questions should be short and sharp. Minister, I am sure you will answer the question.

Ms S.F. McGURK replied:

I do not think it is possible to put all manner of social ills into a bucket, swirl them around and say that the child protection system or the Department of Communities is expected to address those issues in every district in every part of the state. We do what we can with the issues that are presented in the community. We understand there are families under stress. We understand that any manner of social issues are going on, including drug and alcohol abuse, challenges with mental illness and the like. We have invested record new dollars, including over \$100 million into early intervention work with Western Australian families who are vulnerable and in early intervention systems over the forward estimates to try to prevent children coming into care in the child protection system. I am very proud of the investment that we have made. We have put that into dedicated organisations working with Aboriginal families through the Wungening Aboriginal Corporation and its consortium. We have put that into intensive family support networks, as well as direct delivery of work. We have also put that into new spends in combatting domestic violence. We are doing a range of things with early intervention to try to stem the tide of children coming into the child protection system and into the formal care of the department.

If the children are unsafe with their families, we will make the judgement that they need to be taken away from their biological parents and put into the care of the department, usually through foster carers. Then we work with those foster carers and those children to see whether reunification is possible; and, if not, they are given more secure placement. I agree that it is not a good thing in the south west or any district in this state that there can be an increase in the number of allegations of harm coming before the child protection system. Of course that is not a good thing. We are allocating money to early intervention. We have active districts working with those children who may come before the child protection system. With regard to the monitored list, it means that those children are settled and doing well in their placements.