

DEPARTMENT FOR CHILD PROTECTION AND FAMILY SUPPORT — EMMA WHITE

Statement by Minister for Child Protection

MS S.F. MCGURK (Fremantle — Minister for Child Protection) [9.04 am]: Today I would like to pay tribute to Ms Emma White, the outgoing director general of the Department for Child Protection and Family Support. Ms White has told me that she is changing pace, doing some travel and returning to study. I admire anyone who makes that choice, but it is particularly significant given what Ms White has achieved in her time at the department. Ms White was appointed director general of the department in August 2014 and instantly became the legal guardian of over 4 500 children and young people in care in Western Australia, which is a great responsibility in a critical area of government. Ms White began her service 11 years earlier, working in the West Kimberley and East Kimberley regions before transferring to the district director role within the Fremantle district in 2010, and then on to the role of executive director of country services in 2012. Previously, she was a social worker with significant experience in government and non-government frontline service delivery, both here and overseas. Throughout her career, Ms White has been committed to working alongside Aboriginal people and supporting their aspirations for the benefit of all. Never was this more evident to me than when she accompanied me on a visit to the Kimberley earlier this year. It was clear that departmental staff appreciated her guidance and leadership in what are sometimes incredibly challenging circumstances. I also observed how acutely in touch Ms White was with the issues facing her staff at every office we visited. I was told the same by many services I have met with over the last few months. In 2015–16, 4 658 children were in out-of-home care in Western Australia. More than half of them were Aboriginal children. Child protection in Western Australia is undergoing two significant reforms to safely prevent children entering care, support them to return home to their parents whenever possible, and improve life outcomes for children who remain in care. These reforms are now well underway, in no small part due to the guidance, skill and leadership that Ms White has shown. I thank her for her service to vulnerable children in Western Australia and for improving the lives of so many. I wish her all the best for what is ahead and sincerely hope that she will one day return to continue her contribution to the people of Western Australia.