

COMMUNITY SERVICE ORGANISATIONS

284. Ms M.M. QUIRK to the Minister for Community Services:

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's commitment to supporting those who are facing hardship in our community, which has included reinstating funding for financial counselling that was heartlessly cut by the previous Liberal government. Can the minister update the house on how this government is continuing to support hardworking community service organisations provide help and assistance to disadvantaged Western Australians?

Ms S.F. McGURK replied:

It is good to have the member back on her feet in the chamber.

Members: Hear, hear!

Ms S.F. McGURK: Apart from the issues that have been well canvassed today, which this government is tackling—innovation, jobs and protecting small business, and we often hear about transport infrastructure projects—we have not lost sight of the fact that we need to keep an eye on the whole of our community, including those who are doing it tough. One of the important contributions we made to those people was to listen to them when they were alarmed when the previous Liberal government cut financial counselling in the metropolitan area. We made a commitment to reinstate that financial counselling, which we have done. We have allocated \$7.34 million this year for financial counselling services across the state. It is really heartening to see the current model, particularly in the metropolitan area, under the Financial Counselling Network, led by Anglicare WA and UnitingCare West, which have a range of partner agencies operating on the ground, the analytics and grunt that we see in their call centre and also the back-of-house work that is really needed to understand the problem, give those front-of-house operators the support that they need and also the back-of-house data and analytics to understand the data collection that is occurring.

We have new partner agencies in Morley, Mirrabooka, Alkimos, Yanchep, Innaloo, Karrinyup, Cannington, Canning Vale, Coolbellup, Forrestfield, Byford, Kwinana and Ellenbrook, including when we went out to the community cabinet in Forrestfield and Kalamunda, meeting with the Foothills Information and Referral Service. They are really committed people with heartfelt dedication to their local community. Now they have a bit more infrastructure and grunt not only because they are doing the financial counselling because of our reinstatement of that money, but they also have some resources to back them up. That is the sort of signature help that our government is giving people in need. We are providing immediate emergency relief. For example, a couple of weeks ago I was able to present a \$1.44 million cheque to the St Vincent de Paul Society to provide emergency relief, the result of a Lotterywest grant. We are providing not only that immediate relief, but also more sophisticated analysis and backup of those frontline services.

That is the sort of approach that we are taking through our Supporting Communities Forum, a peak forum. A number of our directors general are meeting with community sector leaders to look at how we can tackle areas like our procurement policy, which we have now done, delivering our community services in partnership policy. The Minister for Finance released that, with five-year contracts being the default, joint co-design of how we develop the criteria for funding, how we measure outcomes and the like, and how we tackle important but really difficult areas such as homelessness. We are not only doing emergency relief and frontline work, but we are also doing back-of-house work in partnership with the community services sector to try to look at what is best practice when trying to tackle these really difficult social problems.

People would be well aware that we have been very active trying to tackle the important areas relating to domestic violence, the leading cause of homelessness amongst women. So far, we have invested over \$20 million of new funding into domestic violence services for victims, perpetrators' accounts, an accountable justice system and primary prevention. I am very proud of all the work that we are doing. There is a lot to do but we have a plan and we are getting on and doing that work.