

GRAHAME SEARLE — RESIGNATION

Statement by Minister for Community Services

MS S.F. McGURK (Fremantle — Minister for Community Services) [12.12 pm]: It is with regret that I rise to inform the house of the resignation of the director general of the Department of Communities, Mr Grahame Searle. Mr Searle has led the Department of Communities since the machinery-of-government changes last year. Appointed as director general in January this year, he brought together the former Department of Child Protection and Family Services, the Housing Authority, the former Disability Services Commission, the communities component of the former Department of Local Government and Communities, the regional coordination aspects of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and the Regional Services Reform Unit. Bringing these components together and breaking down the many silos that existed for years was no easy feat, but Mr Searle used his extensive experience and skill to do just that.

Mr Searle has been a public service leader for a long time, having served both in this state and in Victoria for a total of 47 years. He was director general of the former Department of Housing from 2008 to 2015 after having previously been the chief executive officer of Landgate from 2004 to 2008. It was his work with the Regional Services Reform Unit that shed light on the issues faced by Western Australians living in regional and remote locations, particularly those of Aboriginal Australians. He knew, however, that he could not do this genuinely as, and I quote, “an old white guy based in Perth”, which is why he packed up and moved to Kununurra. It is this dedication to public service that has seen Mr Searle become widely respected in government and by Aboriginal leaders for his ability to facilitate collaboration and achieve results.

As minister, I am grateful for his advice, experience and knowledge, and his focus on achieving important outcomes for the most vulnerable members of our community. I wish Mr Searle all the best, good health and thank him for his service to Western Australia.