

**FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE — PEEL REGION**

*Grievance*

**MR Z.R.F. KIRKUP (Dawesville)** [9.12 am]: My grievance is to the Minister for Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence and I thank her for taking my grievance this morning as it relates to domestic and family violence in the Peel region. A number of articles in the *Mandurah Mail* recently by Carla Hildebrandt reflect an ongoing concern in our community that has existed for some time about the rates of family and domestic violence in the Peel region. As someone who is a regular donor to Pat Thomas House, one of the women's and family refuges in Mandurah, and as a pledge member to Peel Says No to Violence, which is a community alliance against violence of all kinds in our region, I am well aware of the issues and the pressure that has been felt by community services to help deliver important support to families suffering from domestic violence in our community.

**The SPEAKER:** Members!

**Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP:** I have also held a morning tea here at Parliament House, together with the member for Mandurah, who I also know is similarly concerned about the rates of family and domestic violence in our community, and with those support services to recognise the importance of the role that they play in our community. I also recognise the government's existing commitments to respond to family and domestic violence. I am sure the minister will outline it, but \$1 million has been committed to funding Allambee Counselling in our community, which is a great effort and I absolutely applaud the government for its commitment. I think also, from what I could read, that \$1.2 million was set aside in 2018–19 for the Pat Thomas women's refuge.

As no doubt many in this place would be aware, the reality is that the Peel region, unfortunately, suffers from its record of being one of the worst regions when it comes to family and domestic violence. There is a family and domestic violence assault in my community something like every three days, which is an alarming figure. Unfortunately, this seems to be a growing trend. In 2008–09 there were 80 reports of family and domestic violence and in 2017–18 there were 143 reports. It is clearly something that is growing and, unfortunately, from our perspective, it does not seem to be abating. I am also aware that when there was a liquor licence application for a larger liquor store to be established in Falcon, Falcon was named in the related report as one of the suburbs with the highest rates of domestic violence. Falcon sits in the district of Dawesville, which I represent.

I am aware that in 2017 the government announced that a new women's and family refuge would be built in the Peel region. That is important, because Pat Thomas House women's refuge can really accommodate, I think, only 18 children and six women. It is a very constrained facility. The people there do an amazing job with very, very limited resources. I have met with them a number of times at the refuge and in my office to try to help them where I can to look at options that might exist to help them expand their accommodation onsite to try to cope with the unfortunate demand that exists for their services. The reality is that Pat Thomas House is a very constrained site in Mandurah, as no doubt the minister knows. We need to look at an entirely new facility to be built in the Peel region, and I would argue that one needs to be built in Mandurah itself as part of the access to essential services that exist there. Also, public transport is much more connected in the City of Mandurah compared with that in other areas in the Peel, but it is also important to make sure that the Peel region is properly and adequately resourced with something like this new refuge, which needs to be built.

The concern I have—this is something that has already been raised with the minister through the media—is that there appears to be a delay in getting this new refuge established. I know that it was considered to be a priority. I will quote an article that appeared in the *Mandurah Mail* yesterday, 12 September, Mr Acting Speaker—sorry, Madam Acting Speaker —

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms J.M. Freeman):** Just Speaker is fine; I do not need to have my gender identified.

**Mr Z.R.F. KIRKUP:** Thank you. The member for Mandurah is quoted in the article as saying —

“WA Labor in the lead up to the election recognised the increasing rates of domestic violence and the terrible effect it is having on local families,” ...

“That's why we committed to the construction of a women's refuge in the Peel region to better address the increase and diversity of families seeking assistance.

“This is a priority for the government and the scope of this project is being developed and will be delivered as soon as practicable.”

Unfortunately, that quote, which was reported in September—this month—was from May last year. I appreciate that the government has a significant commitment to try its best to address the concerns of domestic and family violence in our community, and it has noted that a new refuge needs to be built as a matter of priority, yet we have what can only be seen from my perspective as an unfortunate delay in getting a new facility built. All of us in this house, and indeed the minister, would be aware of the distress that that delay could cause in our community,

because we have a facility that is too small for the rates of family and domestic violence in the Mandurah and Peel community. It seems to me that there needs to be urgent priority and support for getting a new facility developed. I realise that planning takes time; I am totally aware of that. As I said at the start of this speech, I recognise that the government has committed funding already to some important services in the region. My concern, and the community's concern, is that we do not really know when the new facility will be built or where it will be built. Together with the delay, that uncertainty is causing some concerns in our community. I hope that as part of the grievance here this morning, the minister might be able to update the house on where that new refuge will be built and when it will be built, and give us some certainty on what is obviously an issue of increasing concern and crisis. I say again that I appreciate the minister taking my grievance this morning.

**MS S.F. MCGURK (Fremantle — Minister for Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence) [9.19 am]:** I thank the member for his interest in the very shameful, persistent and damaging trend in our community that is domestic violence. The member is right: worryingly, the Peel region as well as the south metropolitan corridor is an area identified as having a concentration of domestic violence, although there is no community—remote, regional or metropolitan—that does not have domestic violence. However, there are some particular sections within the metropolitan area that need attention, and the south metro area as well as the Peel region is one of them, which is why early on we identified it as an area where we would commit one of our two new refuges. The member asked where the refuge will be, and I must say, it is quite likely that he will not know where the refuge will be as we will not announce the location publicly. By their nature, they are not publicly known. As a supporter, the member might have an opportunity to go there, but generally the actual location is not publicised. I certainly take the member's point in making sure that it is accessible for the clients of that refuge and to ensure there is a school, some sort of transport, shops and the like nearby. That is something I am conscious of when we are looking at alternative locations for the two new refuges.

I can say a number of things about this issue. First of all, I will quickly go through some of the things that we have done, because it is clear to me that we have done a lot in the last 18 months since we have come to office. Having a dedicated minister has meant that we have been able to focus our efforts and we have had fantastic engagement from the sector that has worked tirelessly over decades—many of us have known those people for decades—in doing this work. I think they are really pleased that our government is taking this issue seriously at a high level in cabinet and is taking the coordination needed across government seriously.

If I look at the framework and what we have been able to achieve so far, we have talked about how our responses need to be firmly focused on victim safety and perpetrator accountability. We need a responsive justice system to make sure that the police, but particularly the courts, understand the circumstances of domestic violence, and we need prevention and early intervention. We need community education and awareness, because of course this phenomenon is preventable; societal norms have to change when the extent of this violence goes unchecked. As well as having a dedicated minister, very early in coming to office we introduced 10 days paid leave for public sector workers experiencing domestic violence. It is interesting that the member's federal colleagues talked about supporting leave for domestic violence victims and made something of that in federal Parliament yesterday. Minister O'Dwyer made something of that yesterday and the day before in federal Parliament, but of course they were talking about unpaid leave, and in fact paid leave was removed from the federal public sector system under Senator Michaelia Cash. I hope that, through the sort of discussions we have through the #MeToo movement and the high rates of homicides and domestic violence, that previous decision is challenged.

We have also entered into the national domestic violence order scheme in which a family violence restraining order automatically applies interstate. That is an important safeguard. Western Australia has committed \$4.3 million to support our implementation in that scheme. We have also allocated money for two new women's refuges—\$8.2 million in the budget.

The member referred to the \$1 million for Allambee Counselling in the Peel region, supporting victims of domestic violence. We have committed \$1.6 million to provide culturally appropriate support services for Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse women, because in any situation we need to understand the circumstances, the culture and the environment in which the violence is occurring if we want to respond to it effectively. Another initiative that we are very proud of is expanding financial counselling services, with an extra \$7.4 million in the metro area for practical supports for domestic violence victims. We have also recently announced \$1.56 million for a three-year program to improve screening rates for FD violence during pregnancy; a \$100 000 funding boost for increased sexual assault counselling services; and an additional \$850 000 for a second residential program helping perpetrators of family and domestic violence—another very practical program. We have joined Our Watch; we have given money and support to the RSPCA for its Pets in Crisis program; and of course the upper house is soon to debate the changes to the Residential Tenancies Act that will strengthen that act's consideration of how victims of domestic violence are treated. It will be interesting to see how that proceeds through the upper house. I hope it is supported and expedited through the upper house. We have also committed money to respectful relationships training in schools.

It is amazing how quickly the time for grievances goes.

Member, I am very conscious of the dynamics, particularly in the Peel region. I have visited Pat Thomas House and Allambee. We need to stay focused on providing these services and of course refuges provide services at the emergency end, if you like. I acknowledge the work of the Peel Says No to Violence project, the coming together of a community that looks proactively and outwardly at the messages it can send the community that violence and domestic violence is never okay. I look forward to continuing the work with the members for Dawesville and Mandurah to deliver a safer community for the Peel region.