

CHILD PROTECTION — ABORIGINAL IN-HOME SUPPORT SERVICES

663. Ms J. FARRER to the Minister for Child Protection:

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's commitment to supporting vulnerable children and families before they come into contact with the child protection system. Can the minister outline what new services are available for these families?

Ms S.F. McGURK replied:

I thank the member very much for the question and for her commitment to her community and this particular challenging area of work. As members know, we work in child protection to keep children safe. Unfortunately we have a number of children who are not able to stay with their birth families and whose safety is at risk, but wherever we can keep children safe, we keep them with their families. A big part of our work—in fact, part of the work we have done since coming to government—with the Department of Communities is to provide wraparound services to work with families to ensure that children do not end up in the child protection system. Our priority is to keep families together when it is safe to do so.

As part of our reform in the new Department of Communities, we have undertaken procurement as part of a series of areas where we work with early intervention and supporting families. Those early intervention services include Aboriginal in-home support services. That is where Aboriginal-led organisations provide support to families in their home for practical support. It also includes family support networks—this is helping broker, with vulnerable families or individuals in those families, access to other services through their networks—and intensive family support. That is where an agency will go in and work really intensively with families and individuals within those families.

A priority of this government has been to work alongside Aboriginal-controlled organisations when we are working with Aboriginal families. In order to put this strategy together, we worked through a number of workshops and stakeholder engagements across the state. As a result, last year we announced the Aboriginal in-home support services for the metropolitan area. It is led by Wungening Moort Consortium, which comprises four Aboriginal-controlled organisations. That has now been rolled out around the state. I am pleased to report that as of the start of September, the full family support networks and intensive family support services are up and running across the state. These are either run by Aboriginal-controlled organisations or in partnership with other not-for-profit organisations.

As I said, in the metropolitan area Wungening Moort Consortium is working with other Aboriginal-controlled organisations and, in part, partnering with UnitingCare West. In the Pilbara, local Aboriginal community-controlled organisations Wirraka Maya Health Service Aboriginal Corporation and Mawarnkarra Health Service are working with MacKillop Family Services to provide intensive family support services. In the goldfields and great southern, Yorgum Aboriginal Corporation and Anglicare WA are working together. In the East Kimberley, Key Assets is working with the Wunan Foundation and the Ngnowar-Aerwah Aboriginal Corporation. In the West Kimberley, Derby Aboriginal Health Service and Broome Regional Aboriginal Medical Service are working with Centacare Kimberley as well as MercyCare. A number of Aboriginal-controlled organisations are working with not-for-profit organisations to provide practical, intensive support for families at risk of going into the child protection system.

So far, we have had very positive feedback from engagement and work being done with those families; so much so that Aboriginal in-home support services are currently working with over 40 Aboriginal families. These families are some of the most at risk of their children entering care. Members across the chamber and other regional members, might be interested in knowing that more than 10 towns now, representing over 60 per cent of the regional population in WA, have access to in-home intensive support as part of the Department of Communities' reforms for child protection. I think we all agree that if these programs are successful, we will all be better off as a state as well as communities and families affected.

The SPEAKER: That is the end of question time.