

KEEPING WOMEN SAFE IN THEIR HOMES PROGRAM

851. Mr M.J. FOLKARD to the Minister for Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence:

I refer to the McGowan government's support for the crucially important domestic violence program, Keeping Women Safe in their Homes. Can the minister outline to the house how this program has been effective in supporting women, and why the federal government should reverse its decision to heartlessly cut its funding to this program?

Ms S.F. McGURK replied:

I thank the member for the question. It is particularly relevant today, 31 October, because the federal government's contribution to this program is coming to an end. Members might have heard me speak about this before. This is commonwealth funding of \$1.47 million, which, amongst other things, has supported a program called Keeping Women Safe in their Homes. Last year alone, this program supported 700 women and their families who were escaping domestic violence. It is an incredibly cost-effective program, as well as being very effective for the victims. It gives women and their children who are experiencing domestic violence a suite of options should they wish to leave a violent relationship. I was very concerned that last week in the estimates process, the commonwealth Minister for Families and Social Services indicated that the federal government funding was supplementary—those were the words he used. Women's and children's safety should not be supplementary to this government. On the weekend, a spokesperson for the same minister said it was disingenuous for the Western Australian government to argue that the money for Keeping Women Safe in their Homes was more than a one-off gap funding arrangement, and that the commonwealth is responsible for funding only primary prevention. From those two comments, it looks as though the commonwealth is walking away from programs and interventions that support safety and recovery for women and children experiencing domestic violence. That is not acceptable.

It is an interesting position for the commonwealth to take when there is a 12-year plan that started in 2010. We are in the middle of the 12-year "National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children"—it is due to expire in 2022. From today, the state government will step in and make sure that the workers who are doing that important work are not laid off and that women who are looking for a variety of options to leave violent relationships are not left high and dry. If that program were exiting the suite of options, additional pressure would be put on the rest of the system. We will step in, but we will continue our campaign to call on the federal government to reinstate that funding. I am particularly pleased to see members from the other side of the house nodding in agreement. They agree that the federal government should fund this program. The Lucy Saw Centre is one centre that offers this program; it provides services in the electorate of the member for Dawesville. What is the member for Dawesville going to do to seek that the federal government reinstate this funding? I ask that of all members in this chamber, including those across the other side of the chamber.

I want to quickly refer to Crystal. People may have seen her photo in *The West Australian*. She also spoke to the ABC. She has been a client of the Lucy Saw Centre. She used that service to escape a violent relationship that she was in for five years. She is a mother of three. She was a working mum but lost her job due to her ex-partner stalking her at the workplace and calling the office. She could not go to work due to her injuries sustained by her ex-partner. Those injuries included broken bones. He broke her nose many times and he fractured her tailbone. He is now in jail because of his assault on Crystal and his breach of restraining orders and police and court orders. However, because of the assistance Crystal was given by the Lucy Saw Centre through the Keeping Women Safe in their Homes program, she is getting back on her feet. The kids are at school and doing quite well. She is studying. When I spoke to her, she said that because of the support of the Lucy Saw Centre and that program, she and her children are back on their feet. That speaks volumes for the effectiveness of that program and the Lucy Saw Centre and the need for this federal government to step up and fund the Keeping Women Safe in their Homes program.