

FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE — SUPPORT

**357. Ms M.M. QUIRK to the Minister for Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence:**

I refer to the Cook Labor government's longstanding commitment to supporting victims of family, domestic and sexual violence. Can the minister advise how the government's new investment in a flexible support program will aid victim-survivors across Western Australia and outline to the house how this program will fit into a broader package of initiatives aimed at strengthening responses to family and domestic violence?

**Ms S.E. WINTON replied:**

I thank the member for Landsdale for her question. It provides me with an opportunity to update the house on a recent announcement I made that the government will provide \$7 million in funding to the flexible support program for those affected by family and domestic violence. We all know that there are a number of great refuges and safe houses right around the state that do extraordinary work, each and every day, in supporting women and children fleeing family and domestic violence. They tell us that each woman who presents has her own set of circumstances and challenges in her particular story of fleeing violence. This flexible support package of some \$7 million will provide the funding that each of those organisations need to provide them with the capacity to support women where they need it most. It is a really critically important aspect of supporting the crisis responses that we, as the government, make.

The package will provide the organisations that do this critical work with the discretion to apply funding and supports to give tailored support to individual victim-survivors. It can be used to support victim-survivors in addressing practical barriers and in accessing the things they need to support their safety, recovery and autonomy. Importantly, as I said, the funding recognises that it is the services that support these victim survivors that are the experts in identifying what victim survivors need, and it gives them the capacity to do that important, individualised work. There are no restrictions to the amount provided, and funding is determined by the case management plan.

We know that what one person needs will be different for another. For example, a woman may have discovered that her abuser has been accessing her phone, so she may need a cleaner prepaid phone with a different phone number to make calls to access family and domestic violence services and her support network. The flexible funding package also provides for things like, but not limited to, funding for whitegoods and furniture—practical things that help victim-survivors get re-established in a new home. Some women may not feel safe living in a refuge in a small town where the perpetrator resides, and this flexible funding will allow those organisations to make the decision jointly with victims if they need to re-establish themselves somewhere else. It can also be used for travel costs to support victim survivors as they commence that important part of recovery and reclaiming their lives. We know that the program is working, with over 4 000 women having accessed the previous flexible support funding between 2022 and 2023. It is very important; this is a critical piece of funding that will support victim survivors where they need it most.

I was in Bunbury last week with my sidekick here, the awesome member for Bunbury, and we met with Harbour, formerly known as the South West Refuge. I went to the refuge previously last year. People there are so appreciative of this funding, which allows it to help the women they work with on an individual basis. We heard great examples of the real difference that it is making to women's lives.

Of course, members, this is just a specific example of the record funding that we have invested into family and domestic violence since coming to government, with \$420 million invested in this term of government alone. Behind that funding sits real-life stories of success and support for women and children fleeing family and domestic violence. This is just one example of the real differences that our investment makes, not only to support women in the important area of crisis support, but our record funding is also focused on holding perpetrators to account, challenging them and providing them with supports to change their cycle of abuse. Importantly, of course, we need to get to the root cause of the violence in our community, and we will continue to invest in primary prevention programs.

We are doing all these things on a day in, day out basis to help the services that support the women and children fleeing family and domestic violence. That is the business-as-usual work we do each and every day. But, of course, connected to that is the important system reform plan that is underway that takes the work of the taskforce, made up of key government agencies and our sector partners, to drive medium and long-term change to make improvements to the systems that seek to put victim-survivors at the heart of everything we do.