

FAMILY DAY CARE — SAFETY

Statement by Minister for Community Services

MS S.F. McGURK (Fremantle — Minister for Community Services) [9.12 am]: I rise to inform the house about an important milestone in our efforts to improve safety for children in family day care where pools and water features are present. On Monday, we opened public consultation on potential changes to regulations governing family day care residences that have swimming pools, spas and water features. These potential changes are being brought about as a result of a tragic event in 2015: the drowning of Lachlan Mitchell who was attending a family day care residence. Lachlan was just a few days shy of his third birthday when he died. The 2018 coronial inquest put forward recommendations to improve the safety of children in these residences in which a pool or water feature is present. Following the coroner's findings, we consulted the family day care sector and key stakeholders to seek feedback on those findings. Given that most of the recommendations require some sort of regulation change to be enacted, it is important that we now conduct broader public consultation to explore the available options. Throughout this process I have been speaking to Lachlan's mum, Melanie Mitchell, who joined me on the radio on Monday to talk about the importance of this consultation process to get the best possible outcomes for children's safety. Melanie has become a strong advocate for water safety and has been a source of valuable insight into the improvements that can be made for family day care residences. Family day care is an important part of the childcare system. In Western Australia alone, as at December last year, 36 family day care-approved providers were responsible for 1 256 homes in which family day care educators operate. Of these, 191 are currently registered as having a pool on their property. The public now has a window of opportunity to have its say about the options to improve the safety of children in family day care residences with a pool or water feature. I invite all interested parties to have their say so that we can work to ensure the safety of our littlest Western Australians.