

REGIONAL COMMUNITY CHILDCARE DEVELOPMENT FUND

200. Ms S.E. WINTON to the Minister for Community Services:

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's commitment to ensuring families have access to good quality childcare services right across Western Australia. Can the minister outline how the royalties for regions-backed regional community childcare development fund is delivering on this commitment supporting skilled childcare workers and helping to create jobs in the sector?

Ms S.F. McGURK replied:

This question is very relevant, following on from the previous contribution by the Premier because this is another example of the McGowan Labor government contributing to education in regional Western Australia—in this case, it is early childhood education. We know that those early years are so important for children's development. Of course, the state does not provide childcare services anywhere throughout Western Australia; there are no government-run childcare services. Of course what happens in the city is that if a childcare service falls over for various reasons, people move to another suburb and access services elsewhere, but that can be really challenging in regional areas where people find it very difficult if they cannot access local childcare. That has certainly been the case in the wheatbelt. The project the question refers to, backed by the royalties for regions fund, is a community childcare development organisation that has been set up to run as a peak organisation or governing committee under which there will be about 20 community-based childcare or family day care centres. For members who do not know, community-based childcare centres are not-for-profit childcare centres run in much the same way as a P&C or a P&F. There is a group of volunteers, parents and the like who run a not-for-profit centre. Of course, running a childcare centre can be quite challenging. There are, rightly, a lot of regulations and compliance. If, over time, that childcare centre with volunteers is challenged and it goes under—it falls over and cannot run any more—it can be really difficult to build up. The idea is to have a governing committee that gets the registration or helps to manage and support those childcare centres. We are hoping that this will be a self-sufficient model in the future. It needed some organisation, so there was \$1.4 million, supported by royalties for regions as well as Lotterywest, that went into organising this particular centre. Can I also thank Jill Cameron and Tegan Jameson as well as the other people from around the wheatbelt at the local shires and childcare centres, and other volunteers. It was a two-year process to go into building up a good model that, as I said, is sustainable. Child care is important not only for children but also the workers employed at the childcare centres and it is crucial for working families. We need women and fathers who want to participate in the workforce to be freed up to go to work. Of course, we want working families to be attracted to regional areas and to be supported to stay there. I commend the work that was put into this particular childcare model and, again, it represents a significant innovation and investment by the McGowan Labor government into regional Western Australia.