

**FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE — MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITIES**

*Grievance*

**MS J.M. FREEMAN (Mirrabooka)** [9.47 am]: My grievance is to the Minister for Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence. I thank the minister for taking this grievance. The minister recently launched the report produced by the Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre on family and domestic violence in multicultural communities. Members in this house would know that I have previously raised the issues affecting multicultural communities. The report on family and domestic violence issues affecting service delivery and relevance for women from multicultural communities was written in response to concerns in the Mirrabooka and surrounding communities that family and domestic violence may be more prevalent and reported in the multicultural communities, which particularly came out of discussions held with police. The Mirrabooka–Balga area was taken into account in the research, which reflected that the highest number of humanitarian entrants from 2010 to 2015 settled in the Cities of Stirling and Wanneroo. The City of Stirling had the highest level of humanitarian entrants, and the Wanneroo area—the areas of Koondoola, Alexander Heights and Girrawheen—had the third highest level. It is also important to note that 53.2 per cent of the Balga–Mirrabooka population were born overseas, and 40.6 per cent of the population speak a language other than English at home, which is vastly above community averages.

The report set out to ascertain whether there was under-reporting of family and domestic violence. A family and domestic violence group was put together to guide research and frame the report. The steering committee consisted of representatives from Western Australia Police, the Department for Child Protection and Family Support, MercyCare, the Ishar Multicultural Women’s Health Centre, the City of Stirling and the Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre, which facilitated the report.

The report raises concerns that both government and non-government service providers may not be providing culturally competent services, and that information is confusing. There was a general consensus that the Australian model of service provision and the legal foundations were quite alien to multicultural communities, and a perceived threat that, if a woman did not leave a violent relationship, children risk being removed. A view held by one section of the ethnic community was that Australian laws promoted the separation of families. Another ethnic community argued that preventing males from isolating their wives would assist in preventing family and domestic violence. The report also identified pushback from ethnic males in the community who argued that their traditional role is being undermined. The report calls on the Western Australian government to convene a forum on family and domestic violence with multicultural communities and service providers to explore ideas for improving service delivery to women and children from multicultural backgrounds. It also calls on the Western Australian government to ensure that agencies receive appropriate cultural competency training.

Currently, the Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre has been delivering this training into quite a few agencies in the WA public sector and I am keen to know whether this will continue into the future, if the minister is aware of that. However, the report is clear on the need for community education for migrants, particularly those from refugee backgrounds, run by representatives from those communities. That will need to be facilitated by a service provision agency, and it is my view that the Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre is well placed to deliver and facilitate that, given its work in the area. One of the issues that needs to be addressed is the strategies the government intends to apply to ensure that Mirrabooka residents from multicultural backgrounds know their rights, and that under-reporting is addressed.

Further to that, yesterday the minister celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Ishar Multicultural Women’s Health Centre. A report, carried out by Murdoch University, summarised the services delivered and illustrated the return on social investment in services to CALD women in the areas of domestic and family violence. The Daring to Speak project summarised in the Murdoch report found that, for every dollar invested, the social return on investment analysis was estimated to be \$7.11. Every dollar spent in that area realised a vast return. Given this and other information I have raised previously in this house from other states that have run projects particularly focused on women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, it is clear that the importance of specific services for this vulnerable group in our community has been established. With the commitment of this government to address the issues of family and domestic violence in our community through ensuring a standalone ministerial position and a voice in cabinet, I am keen to hear what the government will do to ensure that the needs of this vulnerable group are met. I am sure that that is a priority for this government.

The report by the Ishar Multicultural Women’s Health Centre discussed the creation of a safe and trusted space where women feel respected and welcomed. I think the Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre and Ishar do this very well. The report also shows that in the case of the Mirrabooka Neighbourhood Mother’s Program, which visited women before and after they had had children, and was funded by the Mental Health Commission, for every dollar invested the estimated social investment analysis return was \$9.47. It is clearly of benefit to our community to focus on these communities in determining future strategies on domestic violence. In particular, the Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre is well respected and well considered in the community and would be well placed to assist in this.

**MS S.F. McGURK (Fremantle — Minister for Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence)** [9.54 am]: I appreciate the opportunity to address the issues raised in the grievance of the member for Mirrabooka, because I think they are important issues facing our community. We know that more than 50 000 reports of family and domestic violence are made to police in this state every year. That number needs to be reduced, and we need to prevent family violence altogether. We are not going to be effective in doing that unless we understand the circumstances of the families and communities where that violence occurs.

As the member for Mirrabooka points out, in her electorate and throughout the state the circumstances of women and children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are different from those of families in mainstream communities. In Aboriginal communities, the situation facing regional communities is different from that in remote communities. We need to properly understand the situations in which violence is occurring if we want to respond effectively. That response needs to be around service provision, which is partly what the member was addressing, to ensure there are adequate services for women and children experiencing family violence, so that they have a safe place to seek assistance. We need to understand the circumstances in those communities so that we can start to do effective preventive work to stop the family violence, so that the message is very clear throughout our community that family and domestic violence is a criminal act and will not be tolerated, and perpetrators will be brought to account.

The member drew to the attention of the Parliament a couple of recent reports that highlighted the particular issues in Western Australia. In other states, the issue of unacceptably high levels of family violence has been the subject of quite a bit of public debate and discussion, although not so much in Western Australia. The McGowan Labor government wants that to change. We want the community to understand that this issue needs to be addressed effectively. By having a dedicated minister and some dedicated attention across the field, we are well placed to start to respond a lot more effectively.

The member for Mirrabooka raised the joint report by the Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre, MercyCare, a number of local governments, the department that I am responsible for—the Department of Communities—and Ishar, that looks at the particular issues facing CALD women. The points she makes about a safe entry point for women, as they have experienced in her electorate through the Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre or Ishar, is crucial. That was highlighted to me when I visited the Women’s Health and Family Services centre in Northbridge, where women could use a medical appointment as a really safe entry point to discuss other issues. For many women that is where they have the opportunity to talk about violence and how they might seek further services. It is a safe point for women to come in, and behind those sorts of services—the women’s health services, Ishar, and the Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre—they can access a range of services that are appropriate to them.

The particular report that I was present for the launch of in June this year makes a number of recommendations about how we might improve services so that those service providers, whether they are women’s refuges, medical practitioners, police officers or courts, properly understand some of the barriers facing women from CALD backgrounds seeking assistance.

The member pointed out that we said in the package that we took to the election that if we want to be effective in our response, resources need to be dedicated specifically to culturally and linguistically diverse communities. The budget will be handed down in a few hours. My intention, and the intention of the McGowan government, is to honour all our election commitments. I look forward to seeing what is in the budget. I also look forward to working with local members to ensure that we have a good understanding on the ground of how we can effectively meet the needs of the community. To reiterate, that involves not just the provision of services. We also need to have a conversation with community leaders about their role in sending the message that violence is not acceptable. Women are valued members of our community. We expect that standard to apply throughout Western Australia, and, indeed, Australia. Government certainly has a leadership role, and this government takes that role very seriously. The important message that I gave at the launch of the report to which the member referred is that the government, local members and community leaders all have a role in sending that message to women and men and girls and boys throughout our community.