

FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

129. Ms J. FARRER to the Minister for Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence:

I refer to the more than 55 000 reports of domestic violence incidents last financial year. What is this government doing to support victims of family and domestic violence?

Ms S.F. McGURK replied:

I thank the member for Kimberley for the question.

Before I answer that question, on behalf of the member for Cockburn, I acknowledge the students of Mater Christi primary school who are here today. Welcome, and I hope you find this question time instructive, or at least entertaining—one of the two!

The prevention of family and domestic violence is an important and crucial issue. We know that women and children in our communities bear the brunt of the cost of family and domestic violence. I have mentioned in this house before that WA has the second-highest rate of reported violence perpetrated against women in Australia and is second only to the Northern Territory. Today the Premier announced that this government, as the largest employer in this state, would be providing its employees experiencing family and domestic violence with access to 10 days' paid leave a year. It is an important commitment that we took to the election in a suite of commitments to respond to the considerable issue we have of family and domestic violence. As WA's first Minister for Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence I am very honoured to take on that issue.

I am proud that, as an employer, this state government is showing leadership on this issue by giving employees leave when they need it most. That paid leave sends a clear signal that the McGowan government is taking domestic and family violence very seriously. This particularly goes for those public sector workers in regional areas who might need to take leave for an extended period to seek legal advice, attend court appearances, or get medical assistance and the like, when they are particularly in need of that assistance, so this leave will come in useful.

I was surprised to hear the Leader of the Opposition say that the announcement of this leave was a rushed announcement. Of course, the former government had eight and a half years to support victims of family and domestic violence and did nothing. If fact, it was 2010 —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Girrawheen, your own member is on her feet.

Ms S.F. McGURK: It was 2010 when the first provision was made for family and domestic violence paid leave as a workplace entitlement. This government had its entire period in office of eight and a half years to support victims. Even when we look at other employers who put in an entitlement to paid leave, the former government had over seven years to support victims of family and domestic violence as a model employer, but it did nothing. We are the last state in the country to support its employees in that respect. We are the last state to give them that support. The Leader of the Opposition might say, "Goodness me, the McGowan Labor has been rushed in its implementation of support for family and domestic violence paid leave", but the former government had eight and a half years in government, and seven years from the first implementation of paid leave, and it did nothing. I know it is a novel idea to honour an election commitment, but that is what we are doing today, and I am very proud to announce it.