

PARENT SUPPORT PROGRAMS

**331. Ms S.F. McGURK to the Minister for Community Services:**

I refer to the announced cutting of parenting support programs, including the reported abolition of 60 staff who have to date been providing practical support to WA families with parenting advice.

- (1) Is it true that the minister said that government programs were operating in competition with the community services sector?
- (2) If this is the case, will the minister guarantee that all money saved from cutting those programs will go directly to the non-profit community sector so that parenting advice is still available?

**Mr A.J. SIMPSON replied:**

(1)–(2) I thank the member for Fremantle for her question. Yes, correct—Parenting WA is a great program helping to support parenting. Quick research across shows that currently there are 1 391 listings for parenting program courses offered throughout Western Australia. Parenting WA, which is funded by the state government, is in competition with the non-profit sector, which is delivering those services as well. Patronage of Parenting WA services has declined. Face-to-face contact has declined by 54 per cent. Calls to the Parenting WA Line have declined by 30 per cent since 2011–12.

**Ms S.F. McGurk** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Fremantle!

**Mr A.J. SIMPSON:** In real numbers, the parenting line received 8 641 calls in 2014–15, which is 3 500 fewer than were made in 2011–12. What we are noticing more and more is that it is far better to have parenting services in the —

**Ms J.M. Freeman** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Mirrabooka, I call you to order for the first time.

**Mr A.J. SIMPSON:** It is important that we have parenting services in the suburbs and the towns where people are.

**Ms S.F. McGurk** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Fremantle!

**Mr A.J. SIMPSON:** One of the key issues here is that the non-profit sector can do this so much better. In answer to the question, member, as part of the government's ongoing commitment, we are supporting parenting with an additional \$3.5 million to be invested into the sector over four years, bringing the total investment into that sector from the department to \$5.9 million per annum.

**Ms S.F. McGurk** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Fremantle!

**Mr A.J. SIMPSON:** More importantly, we are going to set up a centre of parent excellence. That was a recommendation from the Commissioner for Children and Young People, and we are working together to make sure that we can support parents. But the face-to-face service, the ongoing support for parents, will be taken on by the non-profit sector. We have been very well supported by the Western Australian Council of Social Service, Ngala and a few other of those non-government agencies. They can do a far better service. The days of government in the sector competing with the non-profit sector delivering services are a bygone era. From a government perspective, we are getting out into the community a better quality of service. There are over 1 300 parenting services and we will add to them with \$3.5 million.