

HOMES FOR CARERS PROGRAM

Statement by Minister for Child Protection

MS S.F. MCGURK (Fremantle — Minister for Child Protection) [9.07 am]: I rise to inform the house that the Homes for Carers program was a joint winner of the leading innovation category for Western Australia at the recent Australasian Housing Institute Awards. Delivered by the Department of Communities and Foundation Housing, the program's success shows that meaningful and robust partnerships can deliver innovative and cost-effective solutions to community problems.

Stable and secure housing is critical to positive life outcomes for children, families and communities. However, many vulnerable Western Australians live in overcrowded or insecure housing. This can compound their disadvantage and undermine their wellbeing. This includes children in out-of-home care. When safe and possible, the government will endeavour to place children with family. However, many family carers, particularly Aboriginal carers, live in public housing that is unsuited to their changed family circumstances. These environments can undermine the best efforts of supportive family carers to nurture and heal these vulnerable children. The Homes for Carers program focuses on working with Aboriginal family carers who live in public housing that is no longer suitable, by helping them to secure private rentals that accommodate their family size and in locations where they can maintain family connections to schools, sports clubs and community groups. Participating family carers receive rent subsidies as well as support with tenancy management and property maintenance from Foundation Housing. To date, nine families have been rehoused. As a result, 23 children can remain in long-term care with family members.

The Homes for Carers partnership has achieved positive results. For some families, it has prevented the breakdown of care arrangements. For others, it has enabled them to care for more children. Homes for Carers will support good life outcomes for the families involved and the communities they live in, as well as providing an opportunity for positive social investment. I congratulate the Department of Communities, Foundation Housing, participating landlords, carers and families on this award.