

**NATIONAL CARERS WEEK**

*Statement by Minister for Community Services*

**MS S.F. MCGURK (Fremantle — Minister for Community Services)** [2.06 pm]: I rise to inform the house of National Carers Week 2018, which runs from 14 to 20 October. This week is an opportunity to raise awareness among all Australians of the contribution made by carers. Over 320 000 people in Western Australia are carers. They provide unpaid personal care to family and friends. The estimated value of unpaid care to the national economy is \$60 billion annually. However, it is impossible to put a price on the personal value to individuals, families and the WA community. This year's theme, "Why We Care", starts a conversation about the varied and unique circumstances of carers. Carers enable the people they care for to maintain their independence, live with dignity and remain connected with their communities. They are also advocates and experts on what works best for the person they care for. That is why it is vital that we listen to carers and ensure they are included in all elements of care planning.

Many events and activities have been planned to celebrate National Carers Week in WA. I was delighted to formally open the Carers WA 2018 Conference this morning, at which over 200 carers, support workers and advocates will share research, insights and stories about caring. At the conference I announced the release of "Have your voice heard", a self-advocacy handbook for carers. This guide will support carers as they navigate often complex situations, and it also offers advice on looking after their own health and wellbeing. The McGowan government is working to ensure carers get the recognition they deserve through the implementation of the WA Carers Strategy. This government invests \$1 million a year in Carers WA to provide statewide carer support services and programs. I offer my personal thanks and gratitude to every carer in WA and encourage everyone to get involved in this important week of celebration and recognition.