

ANNA STEWART TRAINING PROGRAM

Statement by Member for Fremantle

MS S.F. McGURK (Fremantle) [12.53 pm]: Today I take this opportunity to acknowledge the 30-year anniversary of the running in Western Australia of the Anna Stewart training program for women union delegates. Anna Stewart was a Victorian official in the 1970s and was involved in the early years of the Australian Council of Trade Unions' women's committee. Her life ended far too early, but her work continues on in the form of this training program, which is run in many states, including Western Australia. Over the 30 years that the program has been run in this state, scores of women union members have had their eyes opened and their skills honed, including some who are now heading up unions and some who are in federal Parliament. Despite the burley stereotype of union members, half of this country's unionists are women, and they usually work in the care and service sectors. The Anna Stewart program has provided an important focus on ensuring that women union members, and all women in their workplaces, have effective representation to tackle the important issues of job security, recognition of skills and workplace safety. Many of the gains that have been made to benefit women in the workforce have been as a result of women being organised and demanding—rightly—fair and equal treatment. The principles of equal pay, maternity leave and anti-discrimination laws have all come about because women have been organised and made demands at their workplaces, in their community and in their Parliament. The hard reality is that although many gains have been made, there is still a long way to go. The complex contributors to the pay gap mean that in this state, women still earn on average 25 per cent less than their male counterparts.