

FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE — RSPCA PETS IN CRISIS PROGRAM

**311. Ms L.L. BAKER to the Minister for Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence:**

In reference to the link between family and domestic violence and cruelty to the family pet, what is this government doing to ensure that people who are seeking to escape from violent partners can be confident of finding a safe place for their family's companion animals?

**Ms S.F. McGURK replied:**

I thank the member for the question. I was very pleased to join with the RSPCA and the Women's Council for Domestic and Family Violence Services recently at the RSPCA's pet shelter in Malaga to announce the fulfilment of another election promise of the McGowan Labor government—that is, to support a program to accommodate pets of families who are experiencing family violence so that the women, usually, who are escaping family violence can get on with securing their own safety and looking after their children knowing that their pets will be accommodated. The state government has committed \$100 000 for 12 months to extend the RSPCA's pets in crisis program and accommodate about 30 families and their pets. We know that Australian pet ownership is very high, at over 60 per cent. We also know that about one in four Australian women will experience physical or sexual assault by an intimate partner. Sadly, we know that the number of formal reports arising from that are really understated. To provide support for the victims of family violence, we need to make sure that it is easy for them to escape a violent situation. Making sure that their family pet will be accommodated is part of doing that for two reasons. The first is that if they need to leave the family home and they do not know what they will do with their pet, they can place the pet with the RSPCA and it will be looked after. The other reason is that we know that, at times, pets are used by perpetrators and that violence is inflicted on those pets as a form of abuse towards the family, often the women and their children. This initiative gives people peace of mind that their family pet will be looked after. I was pleased to be with Lynne Bradshaw and David van Ooran from the RSPCA, and Anne Moore from the Women's Council, at the release, and also the lovely Bambi, who was a very accommodating rescue dog. I nearly took her home myself from the RSPCA shelter, just as an aside.

This is an important issue. As members know, in 2015–16 there were more than 53 000 cases of reported family and domestic violence incidents. We need to do more. This government is getting on with a range of different initiatives to support victims of family and domestic violence, to make sure that our court and police systems are responsive and to do some work in preventing family violence. Just yesterday the Attorney General introduced the Domestic Violence Orders (National Recognition) Bill 2017, which is an important step in improving our violence restraining order systems. I was particularly disappointed to hear the member for Carine on the other side of the chamber say last night that he thought the time spent yesterday in Parliament was “filibustering and talking about nothing”. That is how the member depicted our debate in the Parliament yesterday.

**Mr A. Krsticevic** interjected.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** That is what you said last night.

**The SPEAKER:** Minister, through the Chair.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** That is what the member said last night.

**Mr A. Krsticevic** interjected.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** That is what the member said we were doing in Parliament when we were introducing —

**Mr A. Krsticevic** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Carine!

**Mr A. Krsticevic:** That never happened!

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Carine, I call you to order for the second time.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** The member for Carine said that we were filibustering and talking about nothing when we were talking about the National Violence Restraining Orders Scheme. This government is serious about this issue. We will support victims of family and domestic violence.

**Mr A. Krsticevic** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** I call you to order for the third time, member for Carine.

**Mr A. Krsticevic:** Thank you.

**The SPEAKER:** If you keep saying, “Thank you”, I will give you an extra one, if you are that happy.