

RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (FAMILY VIOLENCE) BILL 2018

1008. Ms J.M. FREEMAN to the Minister for Child Protection:

I refer to the historic amendments to the Residential Tenancies Act passed by this house in June.

- (1) Can the minister outline to the house why these changes are so important for supporting those experiencing family and domestic violence?
- (2) Can the minister advise the house whether there are any impediments to this important legislation passing through Parliament before it rises for the year?

Ms S.F. McGURK replied:

I thank the member for this question. I know it is an issue that she has followed very closely in her electorate. Before I go into specifics, I want to thank all members of this place who are supporting the 16 Days in WA campaign. Obviously we need to prevent this violence happening in the first place, and that is what 16 Days is about. More than 100 people attended Government House this morning, including government, community and business leaders, along with the Governor and the Premier, to send the message that we will continue to work to lower, if not eliminate, violence against women.

- (1)–(2) In the meantime, we have a significant problem in our state. As I have said in this place many times, we have the dubious distinction of having the second highest rate in the country of physical and sexual violence against women. This is not what we want to be known for and we need to make sure that we can respond to those levels of violence and ensure that women and their children are kept safe.

The amendments to the Residential Tenancies Act organised by my cabinet colleague the Minister for Commerce and Industrial Relations will ensure that victims of domestic violence are kept safe and that we have a rigorous process for ensuring that our laws are amongst the most progressive in the country. What is significant about those amendments is the support that has been achieved by industry, the Real Estate Institute of Western Australia, and advocate organisations such as the Women’s Council for Domestic and Family Violence Services, Shelter WA and the Western Australian Council of Social Service. I commend the Minister for Commerce and Industrial Relations for doing this work.

As the member said in her question, the amendments were passed in June and are now before the upper house. We are looking forward to any amendments negotiated in the upper house being progressed through that house in time for us to ratify the legislation and progress the changes before Christmas. We will need them in this house before the end of the day. As we said, it has gone through all the normal required processes of government in cabinet, the Legislative Assembly, the Legislative Council and the Standing Committee on Legislation. A number of amendments that were suggested by the legislation committee are being accepted by the government, so we are hoping, with the force of support from industry, advocacy groups and the public, who understand that we need laws that are responsive to these high levels of violence, that there will be no further delays and that we will see a bipartisan approach to providing the best standards of support we can for women and their children who are experiencing domestic violence.