

COMMUNITY AND NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES

558. MR S.J. PRICE to the Minister for Community Services:

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's support for the 64 community neighbourhood centres that provide a valuable service to families right across Western Australia. Can the minister update the house on the response to this government's decision to reinstate the Liberal–National government's heartless cuts to these centres?

Ms S.F. McGURK replied:

I thank the member very much for that question. It does gall me at times particularly to hear from the other side of the chamber their concern about community centres and the like. They seem to have very short memories and forget that when they were in government they cut significant funds to neighbourhood and community-based childcare centres in the form of accommodation support. It took us some time to try to work through those issues in supporting those organisations, but we were able to reinstate \$4 million to over 64 neighbourhood and community-based childcare centres across the state.

I was particularly pleased to receive a letter from Subicare, in the member for Nedlands' electorate, congratulating and thanking us for our attention to its plight. I quote from Subicare's correspondence —

We are therefore delighted that as part of the McGowan Labor Government you continued to support our centres, as you did when the decision to terminate funding was made by the former Government. We appreciate that this was a significant commitment in the context of current budget constraints, and we will reflect this commitment to communities by passing on the benefit to local families, through ensuring our current low fee regime continues while we deliver a high-quality service.

It is fantastic to get that recognition from a great community-based childcare organisation, Subicare. Many community-based childcare centres do a great job as not-for-profit organisations run by parents and volunteers to run affordable child care, as do many other childcare centres throughout this state.

Members of the public and also members might be aware that the funding for neighbourhood centres will be going out to tender. That was a controversial decision made by the previous government, but one that we decided to continue. It is challenging for those organisations because they are small organisations running on low budgets, but we thought it was only fair that all communities—all neighbourhoods and all suburbs—get an opportunity to have a centre running in their locale. For that reason, we decided to put it out for open tender. We have gone through a very vigorous process—a process called an empowering communities program. We have consulted the sector about what the criteria should be to make sure that it is as fair as possible, importantly putting in criteria that the centres had to demonstrate a link and a building of local capacity to stop larger organisations coming in over the top of smaller bespoke organisations in local communities. That process is continuing and we are hoping that it will be finalised by the end of the year.

The SPEAKER: That is the end of question time.