

NATIONAL CHILD PROTECTION WEEK — WHITE BALLOON DAY

Statement by Minister for Child Protection

MS S.F. MCGURK (Fremantle — Minister for Child Protection) [2.06 pm]: I rise to mark National Child Protection Week, which was held from 2 to 8 September. It is important to take some time to reflect on child protection in Western Australia as children are our most precious resource; they are also our most vulnerable. The National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect coordinates the week and supports all jurisdictions to hold events and activities. This year's theme was "Stronger communities, safer children".

The McGowan government has commenced work on implementing recommendations identified by the Royal Commission into Institutionalised Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, and making organisations child safe is a priority. We often only hear about child protection in the media because something has gone wrong. During my time as minister I have travelled to all metropolitan district offices, many country district offices and various services that work with vulnerable children. I have also had the opportunity to meet with hundreds of staff who often go unthanked, but who do difficult work, including making difficult decisions, with the best of intentions. I would like to take the time to acknowledge and thank all the staff who provide support to vulnerable children and young people in Western Australia, in either preventing child abuse or responding to child abuse.

This year I would like to acknowledge specifically the children and young people who have suffered child abuse. This acknowledgment is shared by my colleagues in Parliament today who are wearing pins in support of White Balloon Day. White Balloon Day is held to raise awareness about protecting kids from child sexual assault. Occasions such as National Child Protection Week and White Balloon Day reinforce the fact that the safety and wellbeing of children is paramount and that we all have a responsibility to help protect our children.