

ELDER ABUSE

347. Ms M.M. QUIRK to the Minister for Seniors and Ageing:

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's commitment to tackling the growing issue of elder abuse in our community. Can the minister outline to the house how this government's increase in funding will help provide more resources for those important services in the community that are working to tackle this significant issue?

Mr M.P. MURRAY replied:

I thank the member for this very important question. Although it has been raised on several occasions in this house by members on both sides, it is still an ongoing problem and will not go away easily. The McGowan government has certainly taken a really serious look at how we will go forward. We know that between two per cent and 10 per cent of seniors in Western Australia suffer from elder abuse in one way or another. It can happen in many ways. This abuse can be of a psychological, emotional, social, physical or sexual nature. It is very sad to think that it is happening in our society—it really is. Any electorate officer would have seen it over the counter in one way or another. People come in and are not quite sure about how to go about reporting it and making it an issue, because it can impact on their family unit. A son, a daughter or a grandchild may be putting pressure on an older person in any of the ways I have just mentioned. The state government made an election commitment to respond to elder abuse. That response will include an educational program to help identify and prevent some of this abuse that is going on. It was sad to see that the federal government, which made a very bold announcement that it was going to do something very special, did not do that. All it said was that it would help direct people to the elder abuse hotline, which is funded by the Western Australian government. That has been a huge letdown.

The Leader of the Opposition over there is not listening. He was asking about what may be in the budget. I can tell him one thing in the budget, but he is still not listening. It does not matter. That is normal. In this budget, \$2.3 million will be set aside to attack this awful part of our society. It will help different government departments, such as the police, hospitals and nurses—the whole lot—to identify some of those areas so we can go back to the community and say it is wrong and people should not be doing that. The helpline, which is run by Advocare and supported, I will say it again, by the state government, will provide free and confidential advice to seniors who suspect they may be victims of elder abuse. Confidentiality is very important. Otherwise, they will not try to find the help that is available and can be given by those special people at Advocare. Again, it is with great pride that today we will announce in the budget that \$2.3 million will go towards attacking this scourge in our society.