

ELDER ABUSE

448. Ms J.M. FREEMAN to the Minister for Seniors and Ageing:

I refer to the potential increase in risk that older Western Australians have faced during COVID-19 due to some of the requirements of isolation and social distancing. Can the minister update the house on how the McGowan Labor government is supporting the important work of community organisations to combat elder abuse in the community?

Mr M.P. MURRAY replied:

I thank the member for Mirrabooka for the question and I certainly acknowledge the work that she does. This is the second question this week on this issue. As I said earlier this week, Monday was World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. Sometimes we forget about elderly people in our community, as they go back to enjoying the lifestyle they should have towards the end of their time on this Earth. Some people in our community are just so nasty to elderly people, and in many cases it is their family members. We recognise that fact. The fact is that seven per cent of our elders suffer elder abuse—seven per cent! That is a huge amount. It is a disgraceful amount, to say the least. It is a complex social, health and human rights issue, as elder abuse violates the rights of people in our community. It is carried out by Western Australians of all backgrounds. Unfortunately, as I have said, many of those people are family members who take advantage of older people. I do not care whether it is for \$10 or \$10 000—it is cheating older people who are vulnerable.

I am pleased to announce that the McGowan government will provide \$130 000 in funding to the Northern Suburbs Community Legal Centre to deliver the elder abuse peer education scheme. The scheme will connect specially trained older volunteers with older members of the community and provide connection, information and support. I think most members in this house would understand that there are always scams aimed at older people in our community. I am sure that everyone gets a phone call on the odd occasion from someone who is not sure what has happened or about an email that has stitched someone up to pay money. That is elder abuse at its worst, because it takes the opportunity to abuse older people in our community who sometimes do not have the skills to participate in things such as emails.

To further show the McGowan government's commitment to our older citizens, I am pleased to announce that the Council on the Ageing Western Australia will be provided with \$240 000 in funding to become the peak body for vulnerable seniors. As the peak body, COTA will develop and raise awareness of measures that can protect seniors, particularly for groups such as Aboriginal people with disability and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. These measures are more vital now than ever, given the requirements for isolation during physical distancing due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Some seniors have been left to their own devices, with no-one to call on, and family and friends have not been calling around, so now COTA will fill that spot. I am pleased about that. Some people will say that they have heard it before; however, this is about a group of people who have done their bit for Western Australia and it is great to support them.