

ELDER ABUSE — FUNDING AND PREVENTION STRATEGY

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

I refer to the responsible financial management of the McGowan Labor government that has meant more funding and more support for those vital services that work tirelessly to address elder abuse in our community.

- (1) Can the minister update the house on the funding certainty that this government has provided to elder abuse prevention services?
- (2) Can the minister outline to the house how this government's elder abuse prevention strategy will help provide further support for our vulnerable seniors?

**Mr M.P. MURRAY replied:**

I thank the member for the question and I thank her very much for her ongoing interest in the area of seniors. The member for Girrawheen is certainly one of the people who stand out in that area in the northern suburbs.

- (1)–(2) Last Saturday, the McGowan government released for public comment the strategy to respond to the abuse of older people, with \$1.42 million in this year's budget to deliver the final strategy priorities. As we know, elder abuse is one of those hidden scourges within our community. I notice that every time I stand to talk about this, Parliament is very quiet because most people know of something that has happened in their electorate or, at times, possibly closer to home.

For the first time, WA will have a clear way forward in tackling the growing scourge of elder abuse in our community. As I said earlier, I would like to thank the Attorney General for the leadership role he has played in this over the last 12 months or so when he has led the pack of all Attorneys in Australia on this issue. I thank the Attorney for the work he is doing. Along with that, the Minister for Community Services, who is a very quiet lady at times, is getting a lot done in the background to make sure that older people have comfort in their later years.

The strategy itself identifies four key priority areas. They are raising awareness and early identification; prevention and early intervention; integrated and coordinated responses; and improved availability of data and evidence. With that comes the confidence of people to speak out to others about their problems in later life, which, in some cases, other members of the family might say is a perceived idea. However, elder abuse takes many forms. I will say it again and again until people get the gist. Elder abuse does not always involve physical abuse. Elder abuse occurs in many different ways. One of the main ones is financial abuse. Certainly, it is a very difficult issue to bring up in a family situation. It might involve \$100 or \$100 000, but it is very difficult for people to ask for an investigation into the conduct of their own siblings or other family members. We have to work very hard to make sure the community is aware of and educated about these problems.

The strategy itself is open for consultation until 24 July, and I encourage service providers, stakeholders and members of the public to get involved in the consultation period and help determine further mechanisms to combat elder abuse.

To show that the McGowan government is certainly keen on helping these people, we have recently provided some funding. Advocare will receive increased funding, with a funding guarantee of \$150 000 a year for five years to enable the organisation to continue to provide free conditional advice to vulnerable seniors and to continue operating the elder abuse helpline after the federal government—we cannot believe this—refused to help those groups. We are out there and the Labor Party is showing that we care.