

**MENTAL HEALTH — “TALK TO A MATE!!”**

*Statement*

**HON DARREN WEST (Agricultural — Parliamentary Secretary)** [6.26 pm]: I acknowledge some guests that I hosted at Parliament yesterday. I was fortunate enough to host the Regional Men’s Health Initiative committee. They are a group of dedicated individuals who work tirelessly across the wheatbelt and are proudly supported by the McGowan and Cook governments, and the Gallop government for that matter, in funding the work that they do.

How we most often recognise this group is the slogan “Talk to a mate!!” This group of people focuses on men’s mental health and want men to reach out and share their experiences, talk to a mate and get support. It is that pre-primary mental health care. It has been very effective. I think it has saved many lives across the wheatbelt as we grow our focus more and more on mental health. As we know, men are more vulnerable and, as we know, regional men are more vulnerable.

It was a great pleasure yesterday to host Ross Ditchburn, the chair—many may know Ross through his days of playing the highest level of football. Ross has used his profile to further progress the importance of mental health and talking to a mate. We also had Sally Naughton, the secretary of the organisation; Owen Catto, the executive officer; and board members Chayce Creedy, Steve Carr and Wayne Barnden and Goomalling’s own Rod “Rocket” Shemeld in Parliament yesterday. The committee held its meeting here. We had lunch and a great discussion about the work the initiative is doing. This is a truly dedicated group of individuals. The group has wonderful staff who are perfect for the roles and get around in their red utes with “Talk to a mate!!” and have progressed that message particularly well.

Members, I hope we can do this each year and get “Talk to a mate!!” to Parliament because I think it is something that we all need to remember and focus on. We need to spread the word in our day-to-day work around the electorate.

Thanks very much to the Regional Men’s Health Initiative committee for coming down and thanks very much for the important work you do.