

ELDER ABUSE

794. Ms S.E. WINTON to the Minister for Seniors and Ageing:

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's longstanding commitment to tackling the prevalence of elder abuse across Western Australia. Can the minister update the house on how this government is supporting organisations to respond to elder abuse and raise awareness of this important issue?

Mr M.P. MURRAY replied:

I thank the member for the question. As many members are aware, elder abuse is a crime that, sadly, is emerging in society. It is sad and debilitating to a family. The abuse may take many forms, such as psychological, physical, sexual or financial, but, unfortunately, in the public arena, only physical abuse is recognised.

We have to educate the public that it is not all right to not only financially abuse seniors in our society, but also abuse them in other ways. Many times it is about family against family. That also is very sad, because it is very hard for a mother to say, "One of my family members is abusing me" or for a father to say, "My daughter has ripped money out of my bank account; what do I do?"

What have we been doing? We have been working with many groups and we had a summit at which we asked the providers what we should do. The 40 people at that meeting came back with some recommendations. Some of those recommendations are very good and some will be very hard to implement, but it is still about educating people to report the issue. Advocare has been very much at the forefront of helping people understand what elder abuse is. A phone service is provided, and we provide the funding for it. It is with great pleasure that the McGowan government has extended by 12 months the funding for that service. The use of that service has absolutely trebled in the last 10 months. We understand that people are starting to have knowledge about where they can ring and get help from. I encourage every member in this house to refer those people to a group such as Advocare.

The form of abuse can include not allowing a grandparent to see their grandkids if they do not give their child a couple of hundred bucks for the weekend. It can even be as simple as the child doing the shopping for mum and then using the card for personal issues. They are the types of things we have to work with in this society of greed. The Advocare people go over and above what they are funded for. We have added another \$25 000 so that they can say publicly, "We are a group that people can ring and you can have that response from us that will help you without being very public about it."

The police are also being educated. Sometimes when they get a call and go to the door, an older person will come to the door and say, "It's all right now; it doesn't matter." That abuse has already happened and they do not want their son or daughter to be locked up. We have to have that advice from people such as those at Advocare. Today we have extended that funding. We are working with Advocare, which is doing a tremendous job and I thank those people. We are putting in another \$25 000 to let members of the community know where they can ring.