

ELDER ABUSE

1096. Ms C.M. ROWE to the Minister for Seniors and Ageing:

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's commitment to protecting vulnerable, older Western Australians by tackling and preventing the insidious issue of elder abuse.

Can the minister update the house on how the delivery of the state's first long-term plan to prevent elder abuse will ensure that we have measures in place to tackle this growing issue?

Mr M.P. MURRAY replied:

Can I thank the member for the question, and also for the very good seniors' forum we had the other day on this issue, which was attended by 70-odd people, showing that there is concern in the community about elder abuse. The question and answer time afterwards, which was facilitated by myself, Advocare and the Northern Suburbs Community Legal Centre, was very enlightening and helpful for the people in the room. It was with great pleasure that in that meeting we announced our 10-year plan to help combat elder abuse in the community. It is something that we know has become more prevalent in today's society and we know where the work needs to be done. We are now looking at how we can do that and we are now funding organisations such as Advocare to the tune of an extra \$150 000 to help this 10-year plan. Further, we also funded an extra \$50 000 to help Advocare to go into the regions and explain where people can go for this help.

As we know, elder abuse is very, very personal at times. For most people in this room, the issue would have crossed their front counter, and they would have heard from time to time some of the horror stories of people, particularly in the financial area. I think we have got across now that elder abuse is not about physical abuse as much, but a lot of it is in financial areas, such as using mum's bank card and ripping her off in that way and thinking that is okay because she will not mind and will not complain.

Now we have a program that we are using that involves educational awareness, keeping people socially connected, supporting advocacy agencies, and better research and understanding of the issue. That means we need organisations such as the police department, banks and others to feed back to us what we can do to prevent this issue. It is great to see that the big four banks certainly attended some of the forums that we had and are getting up to speed on that. In some cases, the banks themselves will not do a transaction if they think it is a bit shifty. They will take it to a group and the tellers themselves, who have been educated in this area, will take action and not allow the transaction to go ahead if they think it may be shonky. We are getting there, but, for the first time, we have a program that will go for 10 years that will help seniors. I think I might have just joined that demographic in recent days! But it is something that is out there, and it is heartbreaking to see families split up because of abuse. It is heartbreaking to see the type of situation that I have seen on several occasions whereby senior parents have moved into a granny flat in the backyard but because they do not have the title for the property they are left out in the cold when the kids want to sell the house. Those sorts of things are happening on a regular basis. We want to get on top of that. It is not acceptable for this to happen in our society today. We are educating people around the place. The Advocare phone line is confidential, so we can help people out without them necessarily going to the police, which they are shy of doing because it generally involves family members. We are working extremely hard to make sure that people can retire in comfort.