

**FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE — REFORMS**

*Statement by Minister for Police*

**MRS L.M. HARVEY (Scarborough — Minister for Police)** [9.11 am]: Family and domestic violence continues to be a significant issue for the Western Australian community. In 2013, the Law Reform Commission of Western Australia was asked to report on enhancing the laws in relation to family violence. The Liberal–National government has been engaged in work on matters covered in this report. Police orders and violence restraining orders to protect victims of family violence are regularly made under the terms of the Restraining Orders Act 1997. The Attorney General and I recently announced an overhaul of that legislation as part of a comprehensive reform package to better protect family violence victims. It includes the introduction of specific family violence restraining orders, or FVROs. FVROs will adopt a more modern definition of family violence, moving away from the concept of a victim having to provide evidence of an act of abuse, towards behaviour intended to intimidate, coerce or control. The courts will be required to adopt a risk management approach to granting FVROs and consider information from government agencies and funded organisations about risks to the victim. The courts will be able to order conditions specifically tailored for family violence, such as behaviour change counselling. Another forthcoming legislative initiative is the creation of a new category of “serious violent offender” that will enable such offenders to be subject to supervision, including GPS tracking and monitoring, for up to two years after they have completed their sentence. Serious family violence offenders will be able to be supervised in this way.

A new approach to family violence in the Magistrates Court of Western Australia was announced on 24 June this year. The new arrangements provide court support for family violence victims and ensure that risk-relevant information is available to the court. Certain Magistrates Courts are already arranging their listings to ensure that criminal charges relating to VRO breaches and serious assaults that occur in family violence circumstances are heard on the same day each week. This means that officers from WA Police, the Department for Child Protection and Family Support, the Department of Corrective Services and the Family Violence Service in the Department of the Attorney General can provide advice and support to the list. The previous model allowed offenders to decide if they wanted to be involved in the specialised court arrangements, whereas the new arrangements focus on the victim of the family violence.

Improving outcomes for victims of crime generally is a priority for the government. In recent years, \$3 million was allocated for an expansion of victim support services in regional areas and a further \$600 000 a year was provided for a metropolitan legal service for Aboriginal victims of family violence. In addition, \$3 million from royalties for regions funding was allocated to provide culturally appropriate support for Aboriginal victims of crime in regional and remote communities, with services funded by this grant still ongoing. Also, in 2013 we created the office of the first Commissioner for Victims of Crime. Family violence issues are not capable of being solved by easy solutions. The complex dynamics of family and personal relationships means that there is no easy or quick solution to the circumstances in which people find themselves. It will involve generational change and, as with any community-wide issue, it will require a community-wide response.