

IDA CURTOIS SCHOLARSHIPS — YOUNG PEOPLE IN CARE

Statement by Minister for Child Protection

HON SUE ELLERY (South Metropolitan — Minister for Child Protection) [10.07 am]: Yesterday, I had the pleasure to present tertiary education scholarships to a group of remarkable and inspiring young people who have been in the long-term care of the Department for Child Protection. Very often, the issue of young people being in the care of the Department for Child Protection is the matter of negative stories, so I was disappointed yesterday that, although we issued media releases, we did not get any attention because it is a good story.

The Ida Curtois scholarships were created in 1990 to provide financial assistance of \$1 000 and \$3 000 to young people in foster care who have managed to finish school with excellent results and are enrolled in tertiary education. The scholarship program has so far helped about 90 young people in Western Australia pursue their dreams. Named in honour of former foster carer and past president of the Foster Care Association of Western Australia, Ida Curtois, the scholarships help promote the value of post-secondary education and training and encourage young people in care to achieve academic success. This year four teenagers were awarded the coveted Ida Curtois scholarship for outstanding achievement. One teenager received the sports-arts scholarship, while another 11 received the Department for Child Protection's achiever awards. Their tertiary studies range from early childhood and commerce to equine management and television production. All the young people I met yesterday are an inspiration to not only the next generation of children in care, but also all young people across Western Australia. Their lives have not been as easy and as privileged as many, yet they have made it through with flying colours.

Supporting young people to be independent and self-directed is a key task of the Department for Child Protection. One of the most important ways to give care to children is to place a value on their education and to instil in them a passion for learning. In that respect, the foster parents of these young people also are commended for providing a safe and nurturing environment in which these children have thrived. These young people and their families demonstrate that with the right environment, fostering can be a rewarding and worthwhile experience.

Consideration of the statement made an order of the day for the next sitting, on motion by **Hon Ken Baston**.