

WOMEN'S INTERESTS FORUMS

Statement by Minister for Women's Interests

MRS L.M. HARVEY (Scarborough — Minister for Women's Interests) [9.10 am]: I take this opportunity to share with members an exciting development in the women's interests portfolio. At the last election the government made a commitment to enhance the role of this significant portfolio. On 30 November 2013, the term of the Women's Advisory Council expired. The Women's Advisory Council has fulfilled an important role by providing advice to government on issues affecting women and by exploring alternative mechanisms to consult on key issues relevant to women in Western Australia. The council has been instrumental in developing an online resource that I will unveil next week, which precedes International Women's Day on 8 March. This resource will prove to be an invaluable tool for women who want to gain board positions.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge Maria Saraceni, the council chair, and all the members of the council who have given their time and expertise to assist the state government. It is now time to move forward and further advance this portfolio with a more targeted approach to remain in line with, and assess the best method of delivering on, the identified "Women's Interests, Strategic Directions 2011–2014" policy document, which directs the work of women's interests across the following four priority areas: health and wellbeing; safety and justice; economic independence; and, women in leadership. With this in mind, a new format for community engagement has been agreed to. A series of forums will be conducted with each forum targeting issues within the priority areas. I will co-host these forums with the Premier. Each forum will focus on a specific topic relating to the identified needs of Western Australian women. Members for each forum will be selected based on their area of expertise and ability to influence policy outcomes within the broader community as "champions of change". The first forum, with the theme of law and justice, is scheduled for March. Given that the membership will change with each forum, this model will remain flexible and responsive to shifts in policy priorities. To ensure achievable outcomes, the forums will be highly structured and facilitated. The aim of each forum will be to address the issues and the enablers and barriers of the topic at hand. We will be seeking industry "buy in" from participants who have a commitment to tackle identified issues in their own organisations. At the same time, we will be asking key stakeholders to share examples of best practice policy that they may have already implemented in their organisations.

I am very pleased to be progressing the government's election commitment to my portfolio. I look forward to positive changes for women in Western Australia.