

WOMEN'S INTERESTS PORTFOLIO — UPDATE

Statement by Minister for Women's Interests

MRS L.M. HARVEY (Scarborough — Minister for Women's Interests) [9.01 am]: I rise to share with members a number of initiatives delivered in the women's interests portfolio in recent months. Entrepreneurship is an important pathway to improving women's economic independence. Initiatives are being delivered to encourage and support aspiring female business owners. I opened the Aspiring Entrepreneurship Forum and Workshop, held in June. This event featured some inspiring women and their business successes and hoped to raise awareness of the entrepreneurial opportunities available to women across the state. On Tuesday, the fourth annual Inspiring Entrepreneurship Luncheon celebrated the successes of women entrepreneurs. Up to 200 attendees heard two prominent Western Australian businesswomen discuss how they have achieved commercial success. The event inspired and encouraged attendees to develop their own business enterprises.

Although there are many achievements to be celebrated, there is still much more to do to reach gender equity. The Committee for Perth's recently released "Filling the Pool" research report, sponsored by the Department of Local Government and Communities, provides a road map for more women to reach leadership roles in Perth. Women in leadership roles bring significant benefits to organisations, the Western Australian economy and women. A suite of women's scholarships are offered through the Department of Local Government and Communities. These include the Women in Global Business mentoring program and Curtin University's Ignition program, which have provided opportunities for more than 40 Western Australian women to develop their entrepreneurial skills, knowledge and networks. Opportunities are also offered through Women in Mining WA's mentoring program scholarships. This program supports women's career progression in fields and sectors with significant earning potential but in which female participation has historically been low. The 2015 WA Grants for Women program has enabled the delivery of projects that identify and address the unique issues faced by women. Amounts of up to \$5 000 were granted to community organisations for projects that encourage women's economic independence and/or women's leadership. In 2014–15, funding of \$83 000 was awarded to 20 community organisations. One great example is the grant provided to the Brunswick Junction Community Resource Centre to run workshops to provide women with customer service and food handling skills to increase their employment opportunities. I look forward to offering further updates to the house in this important portfolio area.