



## House of Assembly

Thursday 7 July 2011

### QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

#### KINSHIP CARERS

Mr PICCOLO (Light) (14:57): My question is to the Minister for Families and Communities. Can the minister inform the house about what the Rann government is doing to support relative and kinship carers in South Australia?

The Hon. J.M. RANKINE (Wright—Minister for Families and Communities, Minister for Housing, Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability) (14:57): I thank the member for Light for his question and I appreciate his ongoing interest in supporting some of the most vulnerable young people in our communities, and their families. Since coming to power we have made child protection a key priority and ensured that taking care of our most vulnerable children and young people is everyone's responsibility. We have also seen Families SA funding grow to almost \$300 million, compared to just \$90 million in 2001-02.

Recently, I had the opportunity to meet with some people who have taken the courageous step of caring for a child from

within their family who was unable to remain with their birth parents. Some were grandparents, some were aunts, but all had an amazing commitment and love for the young ones in their care. In South Australia we have nearly 800 family and kinship carers, almost 460 more than we did in 2005. This is good news and means that more children will have stable placements with family.

The Rann government has gone to great lengths to support these connections, which is why I am pleased that vulnerable children and families are a key focus of this year's state budget. In addition to the budget announcements, I can advise the house that \$1.6 million will be allocated in this financial year to the Families SA Relative and Carer program to employ 15 more support workers. This program supports more than 2,600 carers and children right across the state.

The support workers in this program have played an important role in increasing the number of relative and kinship carers and, ultimately, the number of young people who can continue to live with family. This additional support will help them connect with and support more families who have been thinking about caring for a young person, and with those families who have suddenly found themselves as carers.

I also recently launched a DVD promoting the role of relative and kinship care. The *Family for Life* DVD was developed to give families and relatives a better understanding of the positive role they can play in the care and support of children in their care, as well as being an important tool in training carers and staff. In South Australia, we only take children from their birth parents when it is no longer safe for them to stay there, but this

does not make it any easier or less heartbreaking for those involved. Research shows that most children who maintain links with their birth family and relatives are much better off than those who do not. These connections are even more important if the birth family is Aboriginal or has particular religious, cultural or spiritual beliefs.

Of course, just because a child is with a family does not make it any less challenging. In fact, caring for children who are related can present additional challenges, such as relationships with the birth parents and other family dynamics. As presented in the DVD, issues around relative carers not expecting to have to take on the role of carer until the need arose can be particularly challenging. This is really a life-changing situation.