

ACTIV BUSSELTON BUSINESS SERVICE CENTRE — CLOSURE

384. Hon ADELE FARINA to the Minister for Disability Services:

I refer to the recent announcement by the Activ Foundation to close the Busselton business service centre, requiring its 26 employees with disabilities to travel to Activ Bunbury for employment, and to the minister's meeting with the Activ Foundation last week.

- (1) What action is the minister taking to ensure that the Activ Busselton business service centre does not close?
- (2) Will the government direct government departments and agencies located in the capes area, including the Busselton Water Board —
 - (a) to engage the services of Activ Busselton for collating and paper-shredding tasks, rather than sending these jobs to businesses in Perth as is currently the case; and
 - (b) to identify other tasks and/or jobs that can be performed by Activ Busselton's employees and to engage Activ Busselton to perform these tasks and/or jobs?
- (3) Is the minister aware that Activ Busselton employees will be required to pay their mobility allowance to fund a bus service for travel to and from Bunbury for work, leaving them with no mobility allowance to meet travel costs for medical appointments and social and other activities?
- (4) What action is the minister taking to protect the mobility allowance of Activ Busselton employees from this grab by Activ, which will severely restrict their mobility—for other than work purposes—due to their limited financial means?

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN replied:

I thank the member for some notice of this question.

- (1) On Friday, 18 June 2010, I travelled to Busselton to meet people with disabilities and their family members affected by the proposed closure of the Activ Busselton business service centre. I also toured the Activ workshop to get an understanding of the type of work being done there by employees with a disability, and spoke with Activ's chief executive officer, Tony Vis. As employment services for people with disabilities is a commonwealth responsibility, I have already alerted Bill Shorten, the federal Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Children's Services, to the situation in Busselton.
- (2) Later that afternoon, the member for Vasse and I met with members of the local shire and the local business community in Busselton. We talked about identifying work opportunities and links to the Activ workforce. I understand it is likely that Activ will put the closure of its Busselton business service centre on hold for the time being to examine any new business opportunities in Busselton.

Hon Adele Farina: They announced this afternoon that they would hold it off for six months.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: I am glad that we got through to them on that.

The Barnett government's amendment to state tendering requirements means that government agencies in Busselton may direct work to Activ Busselton, as it is an Australian disability enterprise; and they will be encouraged to do so.

- (3)–(4) Although the payment of mobility allowances is a commonwealth responsibility, I have asked the Director General of the Disability Services Commission to explore a range of solutions to difficulties that may arise from employees of Activ Busselton and their families—including use of mobility allowances—as a result of the Activ proposal.