

ELIZABETH QUAY — BARRACK STREET JETTY BUSINESSES

466. Mr P. PAPALIA to the Minister for Transport:

It was a blistering attack!

I refer to the financial crisis experienced by small businesses at the Barrack Street jetty due to the ongoing construction works at Elizabeth Quay and the announcement in estimates last week that new businesses in direct competition with those at the Barrack Street jetty will receive rent subsidies for up to two years.

- (1) Has the minister discussed these rent subsidies with the Minister for Planning?
- (2) Will the minister guarantee businesses at the Barrack Street jetty the same rent subsidy period as those new businesses they will be competing with at Elizabeth Quay?

Mr D.C. NALDER replied:

- (1)–(2) I am glad the member asked that question, I really am, because I can tell him that what we have offered to the existing traders—because that is who he is asking the question about—is the same offer we made in October and November last year, would members believe. There were some delays in getting some offers processed because there are subtenants and some of them do not come through the Department of Transport; they are done through the Swan River Trust. I have made sure we have captured everybody. To start with, last year when they put an application in, we gave them an upfront three-month rental subsidy just while we work through the process to give them time to get their financials in, and there was no clawback. We said that if they can demonstrate that they have incurred a loss, we will waive rent until the practical completion of the project. I thought that was a fair deal. A couple of tenants put in a claim but were not able to substantiate an economic loss. In the conversation I had with the traders last week I said that we could not go on handwritten financial advice. It needs to be audited accounts or a tax return, because we will need to be able to substantiate to the community any claims of loss they have—I cannot just give taxpayers' money away.

Point of Order

Mr P. PAPALIA: I asked two very specific questions: one, has the minister discussed the rent subsidies of the new businesses to be built at Elizabeth Quay with the Minister for Planning; and, two, will he guarantee the same rent subsidies period to the existing businesses at the Barrack Street jetty?

Questions without Notice Resumed

Mr D.C. NALDER: I am answering this. Two businesses were making a lot of noise and suggesting that proper process had not been followed. I have explained it to them and we have made sure that any businesses that have not got the advice in are getting a three-month extension in rental subsidy and being given time. However, people have said that things got worse, so I have said that I am more than happy to continue to review the financials to ensure that we capture everybody. I have not offered anything to the new traders that I have not offered to existing traders, so I am not sure where the member is going with that. I have not offered anything to new traders that I have not offered to existing traders.

Ms R. Saffioti: Yes, you have.

Mr D.C. NALDER: No, I have not. All the existing traders have been offered exactly the same thing.

Mr D.J. Kelly interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Bassendean!

Mr D.C. NALDER: We are talking about practical completion and that is what we are doing.

With regard to the Minister for Planning, the Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority is actually funding this rebate in lease, not the Department of Transport. As I said, this has been discussed across departments and my department is doing the administration for it. I have wanted the department to continue to act with them and we will meet again with a group of all of the existing traders there in August. I have agreed to meet with existing traders in August. We will continue to work with those people to ensure they get a fair deal. I really do not see what is wrong with that and I think we are being responsible and fair, but we will not provide subsidies if they cannot substantiate an economic loss. We cannot and I think that is fair enough.