

**ACTIV BUSINESS SERVICE — BUSSELTON**

*Statement by Minister for Disability Services*

**HON SIMON O'BRIEN (South Metropolitan — Minister for Disability Services)** [10.02 am]: I would like to inform the house about developments at the Activ business service in Busselton. The Busselton business service is an Australian government-funded employment service for people with disability. Many of the 26 employees have been working at this location for years, and are also residents of Activ accommodation facilities in Busselton. They are valued members of their local community.

On Thursday, 3 June 2010, I was advised that the management of Activ had announced the closure of the Busselton workshop and that current employees would be offered alternative work in Bunbury. The reason given for the planned closure was there was insufficient purposeful work available for the employees. Upon receiving this advice, I immediately sought a meeting with Activ's chief executive officer to question him on this decision. I met with him on 9 June 2010 to express my deep concern about the decision by Activ to close the workshop. The next week I travelled to Busselton to visit the workshop and to hold a series of meetings with a range of people associated with the Busselton business service. One of these meetings was with leaders from the local Busselton business community who expressed their interest in keeping the workshop open, as well as their willingness to explore opportunities that could be offered to maintain employment at the workshop.

I have been advised that the board of Activ has agreed to hold off on the closure of the workshop while it explores alternative work contracts that may be suitable to the business service. I am also aware that steps are being taken within the local community, driven by a concerted media campaign, to generate sustainable work contracts that can be presented to Activ. Disability Services Commission staff based in Busselton are also exploring new employment opportunities that can be considered by Activ, including government agency jobs that can be contracted out to Activ. I am receiving regular briefings from the Director General of the Disability Services Commission, Dr Ron Chalmers, on developments in Busselton. Dr Chalmers has recently met with the chief executive officer of Activ and with the chair of the Activ board to discuss the workshop issue, and future meetings are planned. Dr Chalmers has also initiated discussions with senior officers from the Australian government's Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, known as FaHCSIA, to advocate for the Busselton business service to continue operating. There is strong community support for continued operation of the Busselton business service. Dr Chalmers and the chair of the Disability Services Commission's board, Mr Bruce Langoulant, will be meeting with the full board of Activ on Monday, 23 August 2010 to discuss the Busselton workshop issue.

**The PRESIDENT:** Hear, hear—if I may say.

Consideration of the statement made an order of the day for the next sitting, on motion by **Hon Ed Dermer**.