

ACTIV FOUNDATION — LARGE-SCALE INDUSTRIAL WORKSITE CLOSURES

601. Mr H.T. JONES to the Minister for Disability Services:

I refer to Activ Foundation's decision to close its large-scale worksites over the next 18 months, including the Bentley workshop where my son works.

- (1) Can the minister update the house on how the state government is helping employees affected by this decision to find alternative opportunities in similar environments?
- (2) Can the minister advise the house how the government is supporting alternative Western Australian disability enterprises during this transition period, including in developing new employment opportunities?

Mr D.T. PUNCH replied:

I thank the member for his question and I acknowledge his personal interest in this matter.

- (1)–(2) It was only in May that Activ advised that it had made a business decision to cease providing large-scale employment opportunities for its 750 workers—which for some has been a lifetime commitment—giving them very little notice that they were going to be out of a job.

This government immediately acted in three ways, members. First, at the request of the McGowan government, the new federal Labor government acted quickly to provide a financial incentive for Activ to continue to maintain those workshops for 18 months, thereby providing valuable time for those workers to adjust and to look at new opportunities, together with their families and carers. That is the value of the incoming federal Labor government, because the previous government had put this whole issue in the too-hard basket and was not prepared to deal with it. That is what Labor governments do, member for Darling Range.

The second response was that in addition to that funding, the McGowan government and the new Labor federal government worked together to establish a transitional task force to guide and oversee the transition of Activ Foundation's supported employees into new opportunities. The task force has met a number of times and, most recently, had a workshop in September. It includes family members of the Activ Foundation who are part of the Activ Advocacy Action Team. They represent a strong voice for supported employees and their broader networks. The task force is working to provide support to all affected employees and their families, especially looking at alternative options. Those options may include supported accommodation with another Australian disability enterprise, opening employment opportunities. It has been great to see employers step forward and look at offering opportunities. For some, the alternative opportunities may just be to remain connected with friends and social groups as a priority as they near retirement age. The important thing is that that task force ensures a strong voice for people with lived experience of disability as the Activ Foundation transition continues.

The third part of the McGowan government's response has been to provide \$4 million to other local ADEs to help build capacity, develop contemporary service models and create work opportunities. That is so important because 750 employees are suddenly looking for new opportunities. We have to make sure the capability sits there within our remaining ADEs to be able to absorb those people who want to continue in that form of employment and assist them to look at other opportunities in terms of contracts and business continuity to provide those opportunities. As part of that funding, grants of up to \$100 000 were recently provided to other Western Australian ADEs to assist that transition as a first step. Those grants are the first instalment. They will be used to help develop information about their workplaces and the opportunities available, and enable them to provide dedicated points of contact for affected Activ Foundation employees and their families.

I had the great privilege to have a chat with one of those employees in the member for Morley's electorate who had found new opportunities within the workforce. The joy that that person had in being able to move into another workforce—working in a nursery and feeling valued and feeling that they were making a contribution—was very significant. That is what this means to those Activ employees. It was a lovely experience to share. Our aim as a government is to make sure that every one of those employees can have a similar experience, adapting to a new opportunity of their choosing. Thank you very much, member, for the question.