

PUBLIC SERVANTS, PAY INCREASE

1336. Mrs C.L. EDWARDES to the Premier:

I refer to Labor's pre-election commitment that no public sector employee will be worse off as a result of Labor's industrial relations reforms, and, further, to the Minister for Consumer and Employment Protection's following statement to this House on 19 February 2002 -

The system for negotiating industrial agreements has . . . been improved by implementing a system of good faith bargaining that will encourage parties to negotiate openly and honestly.

- (1) How does the Premier reconcile these statements with the fact that some public servants have not had a pay increase for three years?
- (2) Why has the much-vaunted system of good faith bargaining with public servants, teachers and school bus contractors apparently collapsed?

Dr G.I. GALLOP replied:

I begin, if you will allow me, Mr Speaker, by indicating that the Young Western Australian Cyclist of the Year, Steven Wilkinson, is in the Speaker's gallery. I welcome him to State Parliament.

[Applause.]

Dr G.I. GALLOP: Turning to the answer -

- (1) We are very proud that the Government's policy on labour relations in the public sector is being implemented in Western Australia today. As a result of that policy, over 1 000 Western Australian workers who were on short-term contracts have been rolled over to become permanent employees in the public sector, which gives them the security they need. Also, the Government is reducing the disparities that existed under the workplace agreements system established under the previous Government. Our policy was an agreed strategy with the work force. As a result, in time, some workers who were well ahead of the game are now closer to those catching them up. The Government makes no apologies for that policy, which it took to the election and is being implemented. It is true that as part of our parity policy, some workers who were in an advantageous position of disparity have had less of a pay increase than others. This is part of the desire to get rid of the disparities that created anomalies, dissent and unhappiness in our workplaces.
- (2) The Government has also carried out its commitment to create a framework for proper negotiations. The Government of Western Australia made an offer to public servants, and that offer was improved only this week by focusing on the low paid in the public sector. That approach indicates where the Government's priorities lie. Also, the Government focused on the relationship between family and work, an issue raised by the public sector. Statistics indicate that fewer than 700 out of 30 000 public servants in Western Australia went on strike today. Western Australia is open for business, and I hope to seek more business when I visit the United States tomorrow.