

MINIMUM WAGE, INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS COMMISSION'S ADVICE

314. Hon C L Edwardes to the Minister for Labour Relations

I refer the Minister to the ALP's Direction Statement and the proposal that the Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission will set the Minimum Wage rate under the Minimum Conditions of Employment Act 1993, and ask -

- (a) did the Minister seek advice from the Commission before announcing the increase of the figure to \$400.40 on 8 March 2001;
- (b) if so, was the advice received in writing and will the Minister table that advice;
- (c) if the advice was verbal, will the Minister advise who that advice was from and outline that advice;
- (d) if the Minister didn't seek advice from the Commission, given your supposed commitment to a greater role from the Commission, why not;
- (e) on the last increase proposed by the former Minister to be effective from 1 March 2001, is it true that this increase was recommended by the Industrial Relations Commission after taking submissions from stakeholders, and the former Minister acting on that advice; and
- (f) isn't it therefore the case, that you have ignored the advice from the Industrial Relations Commission?

Mr KOBELKE replied:

- (a) No.
- (b) Not applicable.
- (c) Not applicable.
- (d) Section 14 of The Minimum Conditions of Employment Act 1993 only requires one recommendation to be made by the WAIRC to the Minister for Labour Relations in each year by 31 May. The previous Minister for Labour Relations received the annual recommendation of the WAIRC on 3 January 2001.

There was an urgent need for the Government to increase the minimum weekly rate of pay to ensure the low paid in Western Australia received a fairer rate of pay than they had previously been receiving. Under the Coalition Government the minimum rate of pay was \$50.80 behind the rest of the country when compared on the basis of a 38 hour week.
- (e) I cannot comment on the decision making process of the previous Minister which led to an announcement of an increase to take effect from March 2001. I confirm that the Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission recommended an increase of \$16.50, which was equivalent to the increase announced by the previous Minister.
- (f) No. I considered the advice of the Western Australian Industrial Relations Commission and determined a statutory minimum wage equal to the rate set by the Commission for awards, which is \$400.40 per week. The previous Coalition Government did not accept the Commission's advice on the majority of occasions and made no attempt to move the minimum weekly rate towards the community standard.