

PROSTITUTION CONTROL BOARD, COSTS

**675. Mrs C.L. EDWARDES to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services:**

I refer the minister to the 2002 annual report of the Queensland Prostitution Licensing Authority, which shows that the State Government's total contribution to that authority is \$1.8 million over two years and the licence fees collected total just \$210 000.

- (1) Will the minister outline the anticipated cost of establishing and maintaining the Prostitution Control Board, and has this been included in the forthcoming budget under the Prostitution Control Bill 2003, which is before the Parliament?
- (2) In the development of these costs, what amount has the Government estimated it will receive from licence fees for brothels, prostitution agencies and prostitution managers?
- (3) How will the board's independence from the Police Service be guaranteed and where is the board likely to be located?

**Mrs M.H. ROBERTS replied:**

- (1)-(3) If this legislation passes through both Houses of Parliament, responsibility for it will rest with the Minister for Health. The Prostitution Control Board will be answerable to the Minister for Health. That probably answers the last two questions. The figures for the fees are currently being worked out.

There has been a lot of misrepresentation about our legislation and its comparison with similar legislation in Queensland and Victoria. Our legislation is very different from the Queensland legislation. A number of things that the member for Kingsley complained about yesterday evening during the second reading debate have been removed or are not included in our legislation; they were in place only in Queensland. Interestingly enough, the Queensland legislation, which the member says is unworkable, allows two girls to work together in a business. The Queensland Government did not give approval to existing brothels. That is one of its major problems and that is one of the amendments that we have made to our legislation. The system we will have in place addresses that issue and most of the other issues that arose in Queensland. We do not propose to have anywhere near the same level of regulation that is in place in Queensland.

It is anticipated that the costs of running the Prostitution Control Board in Western Australia will be significantly less than the costs in Queensland. It is hoped that we can put in place a system whereby people who pay for licences for brothels will cover the costs of the Prostitution Control Board so that a burden will not be placed on the taxpayer.

It has been interesting listening to the Opposition during the second reading debate. The Opposition has been exposed for having no policy on prostitution. It has dealt itself out of the equation. It did not put forward any proposals. We have heard at least a dozen different positions from members opposite; they have no unified position. The Opposition has become irrelevant in this area. It has failed to indicate to the community any position at all.

We have heard from members opposite that on the one hand we have not satisfied the church groups and on the other hand we have not satisfied the street workers. We were never going to satisfy those people in the church groups who hold very strong and extreme views. We were never going to totally ban prostitution or brothels. Banning brothels would not work and would lead to the exact end that a number of members opposite have criticised; that is, it would drive the industry underground. It is not a practical solution.

Mrs C.L. Edwardes: That is not what Archbishop Hickey says.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Perhaps we should look at the Opposition's record. In a press release issued in 1995 the then Minister for Police, Bob Wiese said -

... the need for suitable controls and safeguards for the sex industry in Western Australia was recognised.

In reference to the then Opposition, he said -

"The Opposition's attempt at producing a discussion paper on legislation to control the sex industry in WA is nothing new, but simply stoking the coals on a controversial issue they should have extinguished with proper laws years ago," the minister said.

In 1995 members opposite accused the former Labor Government of not introducing legislation on prostitution.

Several members interjected.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Members opposite do not want to hear this. In 1995 Bob Wiese said -

“I have publicly stated that the containment policy in this State is inadequate. A review of legislation and suitable controls is taking place and will be presented to Cabinet in due course.”

In 1997 the member for Darling Range is reported to have said -

“Since the Coalition Government came to power there has been a move towards introducing effective control of prostitution in WA and I commend the former Police Minister Bob Wiese for his commitment in addressing this difficult issue,” he said.

I urge people to look at the Opposition’s commitment. It is not proposing a single sensible amendment to the legislation. It is not putting forward a position. Members opposite are the same people who criticised the Lawrence, Dowding and Burke Governments for not dealing with the issue. Every one of their police ministers stood up in here -

Several members interjected.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Members opposite do not want to hear it. What a bunch of hypocrites! They do not want to hear it. Every one of them knows that every police minister in the coalition Government said that the containment policy did not work and that it led to corruption and so forth. Every one of their police ministers said they would introduce legislation but none of them did. Members opposite are saying that neither end of the spectrum supports the Government’s position. I will neither enforce the banning of brothels altogether, because that is nonsense, nor remove all regulation and control. That is what people at the other extreme want. They do not want sex workers and kerb crawlers banned from the streets; they want us to say that we will remove those antiquated laws of living off the earnings of prostitution and having premises for the purpose of prostitution and not replace them with anything. That will not happen.

The SPEAKER: I call to order for the first time the members for Nedlands and Perth.