

LABOUR RELATIONS REFORM BILL 2002, COST IMPACTS

775. Mrs EDWARDES to the Minister for Community Development, Women's Interests, Seniors and Youth; Disability Services:

I refer the minister to the Government's Labor Relations Reform Bill 2002.

- (1) Has the Government received advice from the Department for Community Development regarding the increase in wages and other costs that will result from the Government's labour relations reforms and the likely impact on government-funded service delivery in her areas of portfolio responsibility?
- (2) If so, what impact will such cost increases have on the department's funded services to the non-government sector - for example, people employed as carers and those who provide services to the disabled?

Ms McHALE replied:

I thank the member for her question. Is the member talking about specific advice? Her question seems to imply that she is aware of some advice, so perhaps she might indicate that.

Mrs Edwardes: I was hoping the minister would tell us.

Ms McHALE: I shall answer as follows -

- (1)-(2) The industrial relations agenda of this Government will be very supportive in one of my portfolio areas, which relates to women's interests. The member for Kingsley will know from her time in government that the wage rates of women in this State suffered the greatest gender gap of all States in this nation. I hope that the member for Kingsley will join with me in accepting that the situation for women and women's wages in this State was very poor under her Government. I am delighted that finally we will be restoring an industrial relations framework that will work in the interests of the wages and conditions of women in this State. Let there be no misunderstanding: our industrial relations agenda will deliver positive outcomes.

The member asked about community development. I assume that she was referring to the non-government sector. If there is to be an effect on wages in the non-government sector, I strongly believe that it will be in areas in which there are the lowest paid workers. I support our industrial relations legislation because it will redress the imbalance that was created by the previous Government's industrial relations agenda, which depressed wages for the lowest paid. I look forward to seeing that imbalance addressed.