

SENIORS CARD, EXTENSION OF CONCESSIONS

165. Dr CONSTABLE to the Minister for Seniors:

I refer to the 1997 submission to the Government by the Association of Independent Retirees seeking extension of the concessions enjoyed by aged pensioners to low-income self-funded retirees.

- (1) Will the minister give serious consideration to the plight of thousands of low-income self-funded retirees and take recommendations in this regard to Cabinet as a matter of urgency?
- (2) If not, why not?
- (3) If yes to (1), when can the association expect to receive a definitive response to its submission?

Mrs van de KLASHORST replied:

- (1)-(3) I note with interest that the member for South Perth introduced a private member's Bill yesterday dealing with some needs of self-funded retirees. I met representatives of the Association of Independent Retirees earlier this year, and we asked the Office of Seniors Interests to consider ways to assist these people in an equitable manner. We considered the necessary funding. I met the Minister assisting the Treasurer and State Revenue Department officials last week to consider the issues involved. We are working through them to formulate a policy. The Office of Seniors Interests has not finished its work in helping these people. Self-funded retirees can be assisted.

If people are unaware, the Seniors Card can assist self-funded retirees. Anyone who works fewer than 20 hours a week, and is aged over 60 years, is entitled to a Western Australian Seniors Card. Up to \$740 a year can be obtained in discounts through the use of the card. This involves a Western Power rebate, a \$50 repayment on spectacles, \$146 off water rates, a \$20.50 saving on a drivers licence, a \$30 saving on a fishing licence, and concessions at places like TAFE and the Art Gallery. Transperth and Westrail savings are available, and the Office of Seniors Interests adds each year a number of businesses which offer discounts to people holding a card. Any eligible self-funded retiree should apply for a Seniors Card to secure these benefits. In the meantime, I will work with Treasury to formulate a proposition, which we will take to Cabinet as soon as possible.