

MEN'S SHEDS OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

736. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Minister for Mental Health:

I refer to Men's Sheds of Western Australia, an organisation that oversees about 180 individual shed committees, including around 125 in regional WA.

- (1) Does the minister agree that the network of men's sheds provide a vital service for men throughout the state, particularly those who may be living with mental illness, isolation and lack of family support?
- (2) Is the minister aware that the organisation is struggling to survive as a result of short-term funding contracts from other government departments?
- (3) Why has the minister's department slashed funding for this important community organisation?

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

- (1)–(3) I thank the member for the question. Men's sheds are an important initiative in the community as part of an overall suite of initiatives around preventive mental health services. There was some one-off funding for men's sheds that I understand will soon be coming to an end. It mirrors the one-off funding that has been cut by the federal government. I understand and accept that at the moment there is not a good funding arrangement for them. The member is right: a whole bunch of departments and a whole bunch of different governments have kicked in. Part of the problem is the men's shed organisation itself. Nationally, it has kicked out every state branch from the organisation. As an organisation itself, there is a lot of instability at the moment. I am certainly working closely with them. I know my colleagues are working with them to see what the way forward is. It was set up in a manner that was not sustainable and from that perspective it is not surprising we now see this instability in its overall funding.

The federal government certainly has a role to play. It has funded them quite generously in the eastern states. The federal government has an important role to step up and make sure there is a sustainable future for men's sheds. The member for Kwinana and I used to have one in our area. Again, it was part-funded from the private sector, the Salvation Army had a role, it was part-funded by local government and I think it received some state government funding as well. It is not a great situation. I am determined to continue to work with all stakeholders to make sure we have a sustainable future. I should add that we are 18 months into our term and this is another one of those issues one comes across where one thinks that, surely, there was a longer-term arrangement in place. Sadly, that was not the case. We are continuing to work with all parties to make sure there is a bright and sustainable future for men's sheds.