

OFFICE OF LABOUR RELATIONS, STAFF SEMINARS

590. Mrs EDWARDES to the Minister for Labour Relations:

- (1) Is almost the entire staff of the office of labour relations in the Department of Consumer and Employment Protection attending two full-day seminars this week, conducted by the Australian Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers Union?
- (2) What instructions are the public servants receiving from the union?
- (3) What is the cost of the seminar and is this a way of channelling public funds into the union?

Mr KOBELKE replied:

- (1)-(3) The imputed allegations in the question would seem to be false. As I was given no notice of them, I cannot answer in fine detail. However, it is not my understanding that half the officers are doing a training program. We have sought to ensure that the people in the office of labour relations of the Department of Consumer and Employment Protection are well trained in providing services to people who ring that office. Our wage line service is used by thousands of Western Australians who seek advice about their terms of employment, including inquiries relating to appropriate rates of pay, what holidays are due after a certain time, and a whole range of conditions. Many employers also ring that service and seek advice. We have also sought to ensure that we know what unions are doing in this area so that if they have expertise or information about how to handle matters, staff members of the office of labour relations can use that information. We want a useful exchange of information between unions working in some areas and the office of labour relations. I understand that some officers of the office of labour relations have attended a training program with the Australian Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers Union. An example is our ensuring that award conditions in the hospitality industry were enforced. I cannot remember what the award was, but we set up meetings with members of the Australian Hotels Association to ascertain the provisions in the award, including the standards members need to meet, and to make sure that the members were aware of those provisions. We also conducted a similar program with the Miscellaneous Workers Union, because we wanted the employees, the union and the members of the Australian Hotels Association to understand the standards required of them so that there is no disruption or any form of contention about those standards, and they will be properly applied. We work with both bodies. The office of labour relations then conducts inspections after these fairly thorough education programs to ensure that those standards are being maintained. We will continue to do that on an industry-by-industry basis. This approach is different from the previous Government's approach to the security industry when it found that half of the companies were disobeying the laws of this State and then did nothing. Those are not the standards that we apply. We work cooperatively with employers and employees to set standards and then try to uphold those standards.