

SMALL BUSINESS, IMPACT OF PENALTY RATES, GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE

1746. Hon. C.L. Edwardes to the Minister for Consumer and Employment Protection

I refer the Minister to the report in the *Albany Advertiser* of Thursday 3 April 2003 titled 'Seven-day wonderers' and to the Minister's answer to question on notice No. 1192 and ask -

- (a) has the Minister read the findings of the informal walk-round survey conducted by the Albany Chamber of Commerce, of Albany businesses, relating to weekend trading hours;
- (b) has the Minister sought comment from his colleague, the Member for Albany, on the reaction of traders on the impact of penalty rates on weekend trading;
- (c) does the Minister acknowledge that penalty rates will have a severe impact on small businesses, especially in tourist and regional destinations;
- (d) what action will the Minister take to assist small businesses in tourist and regional destinations to employ people on weekends; and
- (e) what action will the Minister take to compensate part time workers and their families, who are no longer able to be employed on weekends because of the high cost of penalty rates?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE replied:

- (a) No.
- (b) Not Applicable.
- (c) The award system incorporating an obligation on employers to pay penalty rates has been in place for decades. I have been advised that the casual penalty rates to which the Member refers apply to employees covered by hospitality industry awards. This was not an initiative of the Government, but an award variation negotiated between the Australian Hotels Association, on behalf of employers and the union, during the period of the former Government.

The abolition of workplace agreements has not had a significant impact upon the hospitality industry. Investigations by the Department of Consumer and Employment Protection, during its recent compliance campaigns, found the incidence of workplace agreements in the Hotel and Restaurant industries was insignificant.
- (d)-(e) There are many cost pressures on small business, not the least being the Federal Government's Goods and Services Tax (GST). The State Government cannot be expected to compensate people or businesses for the GST or other changes that may impact on them.