

COMMUNITY SERVICES SECTOR — WAGES CAMPAIGN

**698. Hon SHELLEY ARCHER to the Minister for Communities:**

I refer to the Australian Services Union campaign for increased funding from the state government for wages to the community services sector.

- (1) Does the government concede the fact that workers in the not-for-profit community services sector have significantly lower pay rates compared with the public and private sector, with an average wage of \$35 080 per annum?
- (2) Is the government aware that a survey conducted by the ASU in February revealed that 20 per cent of respondents will be leaving the community services sector within the next three months due to being unable to live on low wages, and stress caused by increased workloads due to insufficient staffing?
- (3) Will the government commit to improving the wages of community services workers by increasing funding for wages to not-for-profit organisations that adopt the principles of fair employment as developed by the ASU?
- (4) If no to (3), how will the government ensure that essential community services provided by the not-for-profit sector are not jeopardised by an inability to attract and retain employees due to poor wages and working conditions?

**Hon SUE ELLERY replied:**

I thank the member for some notice of this question.

- (1) In general, paid workers in the not-for-profit sector are on lower wages than those in other sectors.
- (2)-(4) I am aware of the member survey by the Australian Services Union, referred to in its discussion paper “Building Social Inclusion in Australia”. The Human Services Industry Roundtable, which I chair, is exploring ways to improve the attraction and retention of workers in the non-government human services sector. These issues are not dissimilar to those currently faced by public and private employers in Western Australia, and include wage levels, family-friendly work practices and training and other staff support.

While the state government is responsible for the pay and conditions of state public servants, industrial issues for workers in the non-government sector are matters between employees and employers. The state government is committed to supporting the important work of non-government community service providers through increased funding, and has already increased its funding component of the supported accommodation program by 20 per cent since 2006-07; recently announced a \$8.9 million package to improve funding for financial counselling services across WA; provided over \$7.5 million to disability services for an additional \$33 per week in the pocket of direct care workers; and introduced the most comprehensive whole-of-government approach to providing fair indexation for non-government human services in Australia, with an increase to five per cent this financial year.