

GAMBLING — FINANCIAL COUNSELLING

818. Mrs A.K. HAYDEN to the Minister for Community Services:

I refer to the Premier's promise to always oppose the proliferation of gambling in our communities. Is the minister aware of any concerns from the Western Australian Council of Social Service, the Financial Counsellors Association of Western Australia, the Australian Medical Association, Centrecare or any other organisations regarding the Premier's now broken promise on Trackside; and, if so, what were their concerns?

Ms S.F. McGURK replied:

I am very happy to confirm that the Western Australian Council of Social Service and the Financial Counsellors Association of Western Australia have not raised any concerns with me at all about these issues. They have both made public comments, but they certainly have not raised any concerns with me. We have a very constructive relationship and I regularly speak to WACOSS and the Financial Counselling Network and the Financial Counsellors Association. Of course, they understand our credibility in this area because under the Barnett government there would have been a complete dismantling of financial counselling advice in the metropolitan region. It is no good the member shaking her head because that is exactly —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Minister for Sport and Recreation, I call you to order for the first time.

Ms S.F. McGURK: That is exactly what the Barnett government wanted to do; it wanted to abolish all financial counselling in the metropolitan area. It was only after a concerted campaign by the community, supported by members on this side of the house, that we were able to get some of those financial counsellors reinstated in the metropolitan area, but not all of them, under the previous Liberal–National government —

Mrs A.K. Hayden interjected.

The SPEAKER: Listen to the answer.

Ms S.F. McGURK: We were able to reinstate them completely once we were in government. I am very proud of the commitment that we made to financial counselling throughout the state. By supporting that sector, we have been able to increase the sophistication of the response. A call centre now operates that can deal with calls as they come through and there is increased training and the like. As a result of extra funding from our government, the association has a scholarship system whereby people can be trained in financial counselling. I am very pleased about that. To answer the member's question, none of those concerns about problem gambling have been raised with me as a minister.