

GAMBLING MACHINES — REGIONAL AREAS

487. Ms S.F. McGURK to the Minister for Community Services:

Mr Speaker, my question is to the Minister for Community Services.

Mr A. Krsticevic interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Carine, I call you to order for the second time.

Ms S.F. McGURK: I refer to the cutting from the state budget by the minister's department of \$500 000 a year for the Beyond Gambling grants program, which deals with problem gamblers, and the revelation that the government of which the minister is a part is now considering introducing gambling machines to TAB outlets and country pubs.

- (1) Has the minister's department been approached for advice or submitted any recommendations concerning an expansion of gaming and gambling machines in Western Australia?
- (2) Has the minister done his job and advocated for the return of the funding for the Beyond Gambling program?

Mr A.J. SIMPSON replied:

I thank the member for her question.

- (1)–(2) With regard to the problem gambling fund, it is used to fund the financial counsellors my department set up last year. In the budget papers the member will see that in the out years the actual gambling fund extinguishes; it runs out. We took on a quantity of money from the problem gambling fund and put it over the three years of the forward estimates. When we put together the funding for the financial counsellors, we took some money from the Department for Child Protection and Family Support and passed it over to me, as the Minister for Community Services, and also from the problem gambling fund, to put together that package. We have committed to three years' funding and we have —

Ms S.F. McGurk interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Fremantle, I call you to order for the second time.

Mr A.J. SIMPSON: We have committed to funding three years of the financial counselling process, which we have done. That is what is in the budget for the three-year commitment. At the end of those three years, we will look at how we can continue funding that. What is more important is that this government is committed to supporting our community sector, hence why we took the financial counselling back on and moved it over. To answer the member's question, I think the Premier has already summed up quite clearly the issue of expanding gambling machines, or whatever you like to call it, outside the wider metropolitan area. It is not happening at all. The important part for me, as Minister for Community Services, is to make sure we can support our community sector and make sure we can support our financial counsellors and the great job they do. The government is committed to supporting the community sector.