

PEEL REGION — FINANCIAL COUNSELLORS

7608. Mr D.A. Templeman to the Minister representing the Minister for Child Protection

I refer to proposed changes to the funding by the Government of financial counsellors in Western Australia and the impact of such on financial counselling services in the Peel Region, and ask:

- (a) how are current and future service levels to be maintained in the Peel Region when Anglicare Western Australia will be withdrawing one Full Time Equivalent Financial Counsellor from the region as of September;
- (b) how can the current services maintain their accredited Financial Counsellors when there is uncertainty about continuity of contracts and funding levels;
- (c) how can the existing services in the Peel Region be maintained, in addition to catering for increased demand when there is no new funding proposed for such services in the region; and
- (d) what other actions are proposed by the Government to assist an increasing number of people in the Peel Region who face financial crisis, but will not be able to be serviced by current financial counselling services, due to long waitlists and because these clients do not fit the criteria for assistance?

Mr J.H.D. DAY replied:

- (a) No recurrent funding has been withdrawn from Anglicare WA. Current service providers are participating in a preferred service provider process for the provision of ongoing financial counselling services. With the increase in funding provided in July 2011, and the changes to the government procurement processes with the not for profit sector, organisations are at liberty to determine their own staffing and service model within their funding amount.
- (b) There is no uncertainty about recurrent funding for these new contracts and funding levels. New signed agreements commenced on 1 April 2012.
- (c) There is continued service provision for financial counselling with the two existing service providers in the Peel region. In addition, there is a financial counselling Helpline provided by the Financial Counsellors Association of WA which provides financial counselling services to people unable to visit a financial counsellor.
- (d) In addition to the funded services and the financial counsellors Helpline, a number of initiatives have been implemented to provide more responsive assistance to people in financial hardship. The Hardship Utilities Grants Scheme has been enhanced to allow for a more accessible and a more timely response through a second entry point where applicants can apply directly to most utilities in the first instance for a grant. Financial Counselling services are available to individuals and families experiencing financial hardship. .