

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT — ELECTORATE OFFICES AND STAFF

Statement by Member for Collie–Preston

MR M.P. MURRAY (Collie–Preston) [12.56 pm]: A cost-cutting directive from Colin Barnett and the Department of the Premier and Cabinet will result in the Collie–Preston electorate office having to close periodically. A memo to all members of Parliament and electorate staff last week advised that relief staff would not be employed at parliamentary electorate offices to cover any leave periods taken unless the absence was greater than one month. This means that at times my office will have only one staff member in attendance if the other person is away sick, on holidays or taking personal leave of any kind. We are a busy office and, as the government has systemically cut services in the region, we have picked up the slack. This is particularly true with public housing; my office informally operates as its local agency.

It is unfair to expect my electorate officers to man the office by themselves if I am attending Parliament in Perth and at the same time trying to complete two jobs because the other person is away. There will be times when the door will have to be locked so they can attend to pressing issues as well as taking designated breaks. I intend hanging a sign in the window stating that the Premier is the reason for this office being shut. Quite often staff have to deal with people who could become confrontational. There were safety and security concerns about this cost-cutting measure, which would leave a person on their own in the office.

I apologise in advance to my constituents in Collie–Preston that our usual high standards of service will be compromised. We have always aimed to help each other and every person who asks for assistance but this ill-conceived budget cost-saving measure will mean that at times we will not be able to provide the same level of service. I am not willing to compromise the safety of my staff. So much for the Premier's statement that there will be no cuts to front-line services.