

EXTENDED TRADING HOURS, REVIEW

1052. Mr J.J.M. BOWLER to the Minister for Consumer and Employment Protection:

Will the minister advise the arrangements made for regional Western Australia to have input to the Government's review of extended trading hours?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE replied:

I thank the member for the question. The member not only has an interest in the area, but has been advocating to ensure something is done about long working hours, particularly in and around his electorate. I thank him for his valuable contribution.

As announced previously, the Government has established an extended working hours review group to recommend to the Government how to tackle the issue to improve health and safety in the workplace. A discussion paper is currently available from the Department of Consumer and Employment Protection, and public submissions are being sought by the review panel. The submissions closing date is 31 October 2003. I expect a good response because many people, particularly those in the Kalgoorlie area who have listened to the member for Eyre on the issues involved, will make submissions to the review panel. It intends to visit some of the major regional centres, such as Kalgoorlie on 15 and 16 September, to meet a range of interest groups to take account of people's interests as it considers the matter. The panel will travel to Karratha on 30 and 31 October and to Bunbury on 10 November, and it will hold public hearings in Perth on 12 November. This is an important undertaking. Western Australia is leading the way. This issue has been forced on us because a higher percentage of people are working long shifts in Western Australia than is the case in other parts of Australia. This issue needs to be addressed. I hope the working group can provide a model to improve health and safety, as well as address the broader community issues that I know the member for Eyre has been taking up strongly.

Point of Order

Mr R.F. JOHNSON: The Minister for Education and Training has received his usual dorothy dix questions from the government backbench. The Opposition was informed that the Minister for Education and Training would not be in the Chamber today; therefore, it did not bring to the House an important question for him. The Opposition was not advised to the contrary. He is here. The Opposition has not had the opportunity to ask the question of the Minister for Education and Training that it wanted to ask.

The SPEAKER: That is a disappointing situation to have arisen, but it is not contrary to any standing order of which I am aware. I am sure the Leader of the House will ensure that it will not happen again.

Questions without Notice Resumed