

Hansard

12th November 2008

EXECUTIVE POSITIONS

The **Hon. R.L. BROKENSHIRE** (14:56): I seek leave to make a brief explanation before asking the Minister for Consumer Affairs a question about fat cats.

Leave granted.

The Hon. R.L. BROKENSHIRE: I was surprised to see on page 9 of *The Advertiser* last Saturday, particularly in these financial times when the Treasurer is on record as saying that it is scary and terrifies him when it comes to the state's potential coffers in Treasury, that the minister's department (OCBA) is seeking to create three new executive positions. Further investigation with Hender Consulting reveals that the positions in question are, in two cases, SAES1 level and the other is MAS3 level—all three positions being levels which would usually attract salaries in excess of \$90,000 per annum.

My calculations show that the recurrent cost for these three new executive positions, including a 9 per cent superannuation guarantee and indexation at a conservative 3 per cent per annum, would be \$2 million if the starting salary was \$100,000 and \$2.2 million if the starting salary was \$110,000. That is not to speak of the likely new personal assistant, credit card, government vehicle and other taxpayer-funded facilities that will have to go with these positions, which I then estimate would probably take the figure, over five years, to \$3.6 million. My questions are:

1. Does the minister share the Treasurer's fear for the current financial situation with respect to state Treasury and government coffers?
2. What is the costing over the next five years that the government calculated for those three positions?
3. Did cabinet determine on Monday, after the Treasurer's return from his scary trip overseas, to cease advertising for the three positions?
4. What will these newly created positions deliver in real terms in protection for consumers in South Australia?

The Hon. G.E. GAGO (Minister for State/Local Government Relations, Minister for the Status of Women, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Government Enterprises, Minister Assisting the Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Energy) (14:58): I thank the honourable member for his questions. In fact, the Office of Consumer and Business Affairs (OCBA) undertook an internal review some time ago. I think it commenced a number of years ago. It looked at restructuring or reconfiguring the organisation in such a way as to improve efficiencies and the effectiveness of that department. As we know, we are under increasing pressure in our society to look at consumer protection and to ensure that all aspects of fair trade are adhered to.

There is an enormous federal agenda at the moment, which is about streamlining and improving consistency of legislation and regulation across jurisdictions, and an enormous amount of work needs to be done to bring the jurisdictions into line with each other, as I said, to make things simpler and easier.

The department plays a very important role, and just today we have seen a very good example of a scratchie competition. There are always new and innovative ways of relieving consumers of their well earned money, and it is a task in respect of which we must be ever vigilant and diligent. I do not have the details in front of me with respect to the positions to which the honourable member is referring, but I believe that they are part of that proposed restructure. At this point, I am not able to say to the member whether they are new and additional positions to the department or whether, in fact, they will be filled by other positions that are changed within the organisation as a form of restructure.

As I said, at this time I do not have anything in front of me that indicates that they are all new and additional positions to the department. So, I think it is quite outrageous for the member to bring such a proposal here without even knowing how much of that (if not all) might be being subsumed from within the department. However, I am very happy to take those questions on notice and bring back a response.