

Parliament to debate WorkCover changes

INDUSTRIAL Relations Minister Michael Wright introduced changes to the State Government's proposed WorkCover legislation, aimed at making the system fairer.

Mr Wright said the State Government was committed to fixing WorkCover so the scheme was fully funded, fair to workers and was affordable to business.

Improvements to be introduced by the Bill would include:

- Reducing weekly payments to 90pc of pre-injury average weekly earnings (PIAWE) after 13 weeks. The weekly payments will be adjusted to 80pc of PIAWE only after 26 weeks.

- Allocating \$15m to a return to work fund, to fund initiatives helping retraining, rehabilitation

and return to work programs and initiatives.

- Enabling the WorkCover ombudsman to review a decision to cease weekly payments during a dispute where the decision is unreasonable.

- Streamlining the Workers Compensation Tribunal by removing the arbitration process.

- Retaining the 7.5pc levy cap instead of the proposed 15pc.

- Increasing the WorkCover ombudsman's powers to ensure employers meet their obligation to provide suitable employment for injured workers, which will be further strengthened by a new penalty of up to \$25,000 for any breaches.

- Not proceeding with the proposal to provide lump sum payments for psychiatric disability.



O'Connor House supervisor Marnie Roberts and support worker Kathy McCallum prepare a healthy meal for the children who live there under the care of the minister.

Safe house funding push



BY ANELIA BLACKIE
anell.blackie@adelaide.com.au

A MOUNT Gambier welfare organisation is hopeful it can establish a safe house for homeless children who are currently "falling through the gap".

Anglican Community Care had to turn away at least 20 children seeking refuge in January and February as they did not meet the criteria for emergency accommodation.

Anglican Community Care program coordinator John Wylie said only children who qualified to come under the care of the minister once their domestic circumstances had been assessed, were cared for in Mount Gambier's O'Connor House.

"They live there for up to a year while we arrange reconnection with their parents or foster care, but other children in crisis are falling through the gaps of existing support services," Mr Wylie said.

He said there was a desperate need for emergency accommodation for these children.

"They end up living in volatile situations, some are couch surfing - staying a night or two on the couch of a friend before moving on - or end up living with people

who have a bad influence on them," he said.

"They could become healthy, participating community members with the right support."

The welfare organisation is hopeful of obtaining government funding to rectify the situation.

They aim to utilise the staff and skills of O'Connor House to set up a safe house for children between 14 and 17 years who did not fall under the care of the minister.

"We estimate about 50 children are homeless or living in at risk situations in the Lower South East and we are ideally positioned to assist these children," Mr Wylie said.

The children in O'Connor House, who are often troubled and display behavioural problems, are cared for by 15 trained staff members.

When necessary, they also receive counselling from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services.

Anglican Community Care is awaiting a funding decision by Federal Housing Minister Tanya Plibersek after State Senator Anne McEwen visited Mount Gambier in December and made a proposal to the Minister.

More than \$500,000 is needed annually to run a fully staffed safe house 24 hours a day.



O'Connor House supervisor Marnie Roberts believes it is important to create a homely atmosphere for the children who live there. She wants to create the same atmosphere in a much needed safe house for children if government funding is obtained.

Pictures: ANELIA BLACKIE.

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	am	pm	am	pm
Mt Gambier	8.15	2.45	11.45	2.45
Millicent	8.52	3.22	12.22	3.22
Beachport	9.19	3.49	12.49	3.49
Robe	9.56	4.26	1.26	4.26
Kingston SE-arr	10.25	4.55	1.55	4.55
Kingston SE-dep	10.30	5.30	2.30	5.30
Meningie	12.35	7.05	4.05	7.05
Adelaide	2.30	9.00	8.00	9.00

VIA COAST

FROM ADELAIDE	MONDAY-FRIDAY	FRIDAY	SUN
	am	pm	pm
Adelaide	8.15	5.30	2.45
Meningie	10.15	8.05	4.45
Kingston SE-arr	11.45	-	6.15
Kingston SE-dep	12.20	19.35	6.50
Robe	12.50	10.05	7.20
Beachport	1.28	10.43	7.58
Millicent	1.56	11.11	8.26
Mt Gambier	2.30	11.45	9.00

VIA INLAND

TO ADELAIDE	MON-FRI	FRI	SAT	SUN
	am	pm	am	pm
Mt Gambier	8.15	5.15	8.15	2.45
Penola	8.53	5.53	8.53	3.23
Naracoorte	9.30	6.30	9.30	4.00
Bordertown	10.30	8.05	10.30	5.35
Keith	11.35	8.35	11.35	6.05
Tintinara	12.00	9.00	12.00	6.30
Adelaide	2.30	11.30	2.30	9.00

VIA INLAND

FROM ADELAIDE	MON-FRI	THURS & FRI	SAT	SUN
	am	pm	am	pm
Adelaide	8.15	5.30	8.15	2.45
Tintinara	10.45	8.25	10.45	5.15
Keith	11.10	8.50	11.10	5.40
Bordertown	12.15	9.30	12.15	6.45
Naracoorte	1.15	10.30	1.15	7.45
Penola	1.53	11.08	1.53	8.23
Mt Gambier	2.30	11.45	2.30	9.00

All times subject to traffic and road conditions

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Input sought on state-wide education reform

THE State Government yesterday released its second legislative reform discussion paper.

Education Minister Jane Lomax-Smith is inviting the community's views about changes to legislation that registers and regulates schools and children's services in South Australia.

"This is the next stage in our progressive four stage agenda to update the current 36 year-old Education Act and 23 year-old Children's Services Act," Dr Lomax-Smith said.

The discussion paper follows significant legislative reforms passed in State Parliament since 2002 including:

- A higher school leaving age of 16.
- A new Teachers Registration and Standards Act 2004.

- A Bill to require young people to be in school, work or training until they turn 17 from 2009.

- An update to the 25 year-old SSABSA Act to support a \$54.5m revamp of the SACE.

"Our government is into the most com-

prehensive reform to the state's education system in many decades," Dr Lomax-Smith said.

"We are updating the SA Certificate of Education, overhauling school buildings through Education Works and placing the spotlight on early childhood development through new children's centres.

"Effective reforms to date must be established on a firm legislative foundation - one that reflects the aspirations of the community while being flexible and relevant for today and the future."