

Legislative Assembly

Thursday, 2 June 2011

ESTIMATES COMMITTEES A AND B

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Dr M.D. NAHAN: I refer to page 475 of the *Budget Statements* and the heading "Details of Controlled Grants and Subsidies". The funding for small business centres, operational grants, has increased substantially—by about 20 per cent—between 2010–11 and 20101–12. Can the parliamentary secretary indicate what that increased funding is for?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: That represents a \$500 000 increase in funding to our small business centres. It is an 18 per cent increase. This is the first increase that the small business centres have had since 2005. It is a significant increase. The small business centres have needed a boost to assist with the running of their centres and the provision of services to small businesses. That extra funding of \$500 000 is the reason for the difference in the allocation from 2010–11 to 2011–12.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Where are the small business centres located? Does the parliamentary secretary have that information?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: The small business centres are located across the metropolitan area of the state, and they meet a range of differing needs. Their funding allocation varies from \$90 000 a year to about \$165 000 a year. Some of them are in the Pilbara and some are in the Wheatbelt, and there are also some metropolitan centres. I will ask Chris Finlayson to provide further information on that.

Ms J.P. Finlayson: There are 25 centres in the state. Nineteen of those are regional, and six are metropolitan. They range from the Kimberley to the Goldfields–Esperance and the Wheatbelt.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: So if someone came to me and wanted to know where they could go to get information about how to start up a small business, as the local member, I should advise that person to go to one of those centres?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: What is interesting about the small business centre network is that different centres perform different functions. A program that is being delivered in one centre may not necessarily be delivered in another centre. An example of that is the dry seasons assistance program, \$500 000, which the SBDC is delivering through the Wheatbelt small business centre. That service delivery is obviously not required in the other centres.

There is quite a wide variation in what each centre offers and what each centre does. Some of the centres also have partnerships with the federal government to deliver federal programs. If a person wanted to get information about how to start up a small business, most of the centres would be able to adequately equip that person with what they would need to know.