



29 November 2007

Hon Linda Burney MP  
Minister for Fair Trading  
Level 30, Governor Macquarie Tower  
1 Farrer Place  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

*Linda,*

Dear Minister

**RE: INQUIRY INTO BUDGET ESTIMATES 2007-2008 – ANGLICARE NORTH COAST**

I write to you in reference to your appearance before General Purpose Standing Committee No 2 on 15 October 2007. As you may recall during the public hearing the issue of the amount of funding provided by the Office of Fair Trading to financial counselling services and specifically the amount of funding provided to Anglicare North Coast was raised with you.

There was a concern expressed to you during the public hearing that the amount of funding provided to Anglicare North Coast may not be sufficient to maintain the required level of the very important service provided by this organisation to the Coffs Harbour and Grafton areas. During the hearing you also advised that you had asked the Office of Fair Trading to identify options for further increases right across the financial counselling service.

At its meeting on 21 November, the Committee considered this issue and the question of whether it should hold a supplementary hearing for the portfolio area of Fair Trading in order to, among other things, clarify the issue of the amount of funding provided to and required by Anglicare North Coast.

Anglicare North Coast has subsequently raised several concerns over statements made during the estimates hearings. They note that

- Anglicare North Coast is one organisation, (not several) which covers the coastal areas of NSW from Port Macquarie to Tweed Heads.
- The increase in demand for their service is not related to the drought, as they are not in a drought-affected area. They feel there are several reasons for the increase in demand for their service, many of which are no doubt also being experienced by other services across the state (eg small business collapses, mortgage issues, credit card debts).
- Anglicare North Coast did not receive additional funding for training, as stated by the Minister. There was no increase in their funding from the previous 3-year period.

- The source of funding (and method of calculation) for the financial counsellors program needs clarification. During the hearing the Minister initially indicated the funding source was grants from the NSW Rental Bond Board but later corrected this to indicate funding was from the recurrent budget of the Office of Fair Trading. However the 2006 Annual Report of the NSW Rental Bond Board and NSW Auditor Generals 2006 Report (Vol 5) indicate funding is in part sourced from interest paid on funds held in trust by the Board.

Rather than conduct a supplementary hearing, the Committee resolved that, in the first instance, I write to you regarding these issues. The Committee further resolved that I suggest to you that a meeting be arranged between yourself or the Office of Fair Trading and representatives of Anglicare North Coast in order to clarify the funding needs of that organisation and identify any action that may be required on the part of the Office of Fair Trading.

I urge you to consider to the Committee's suggestion. I would appreciate you advising me of your decision with respect to this matter and of the outcomes of any meeting with Anglicare North Coast so that I may report back to the other Committee members. In order to meet the needs of the Committee I request that you provide your advice by no later than 25 January 2008.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robyn Parker', written in a cursive style.

The Hon Robyn Parker MLC  
**Committee Chair**