

Hope given on child counsellor

THE State Government will consider the urgent need for a child-specific counsellor in Manningham as part of a wider welfare review, says Doncaster state Liberal MP Mary Wooldridge.

Ms Wooldridge said the availability of funds for a child counsellor at Doncare would be looked into during a \$100,000 study into the area's health, youth and community services.

"The study will examine what additional local services are required to meet the needs of Doncaster residents," she said.

Doncare chief executive Doreen Stoves estimated such a program would cost \$80,000 a year. She was pleased the Government was supportive and hoped a counsellor would start by the end of the year.

"It's absolutely critical that it happens," Ms Stoves said.

"If we're really serious about children and their development then we do have to attend to it now because if we don't these children will grow up very damaged."

A school-focused youth services needs analysis survey last year found that fam-



Doreen Stoves says the city needs a child-specific counsellor. N40DT123

ily issues such as divorce and violence and emotional issues such as stress and anxiety were the most frequent problems for children across 71 schools in Manningham and Maroondah.

Ms Stoves said the counselling service would

tackle every issue pertinent to children.

"It's all linked," she said.

"Perhaps they can't cope with a family conflict and so they become anxious.

"A counselling service will be part of a strategy of positive development for them."