

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING, SENIOR EXECUTIVES

948. Hon BARRY HOUSE to the Minister for Education and Training:

I refer to the recent movement of several senior executives within the Department of Education and Training of Western Australia. I will give four examples. Ms Margaret Banks is leaving Western Australia to take up a position in the Northern Territory. Mr Greg Robson is leaving Western Australia to take up a position in South Australia. Ms Norma Jeffery has been recycled to the position of executive director for policy, planning and accountability. Also, a person who apparently did not even apply for the position has been appointed to the position of acting deputy director general over others who had applied. Does the minister now concede that the public row about, and lack of confidence in, the implementation of the outcomes-based education changes in Western Australia is causing turmoil in senior executive positions, with a number of those people accepting jobs elsewhere before the system completely crashes and burns?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH replied:

I have to hand it to him! It is a dorothy dixer every time! Gee whiz!

I will restate the position that I stated a while back. In 2001, 411 or 412 people left the department. In 2004, 182 people, or something to that effect, left the department. People are not leaving the department in droves. Margaret Banks applied for a job in the Northern Territory. The Northern Territory has an outcomes and standards framework system. Margaret Banks was considered to be the best applicant, and she won the job of director general of the Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education and Training. Margaret Banks, who was one of the top executives in the department, has been recognised as a leader in education, and she was offered an opportunity that she would not have been offered in this state, because the current director general of education has no intention of leaving. Greg Robson has won the job of deputy director general of education in South Australia, with the view to perhaps forging even further opportunities in that state. South Australia also has an outcomes and standards framework education system; in fact, the whole of the nation does. Therefore, if the member is implying that these people are leaving because they want to move to a system that is different from the one in Western Australia, he is wrong. These people are leaving because they are very talented, and they have been given opportunities that do not come along every day. That is the simple fact of it. There can be only one director general of education in Western Australia, and that position is currently filled. The talent and high-quality work of these people have been recognised by other states, and they are being given these opportunities. I turn now to Norma Jeffery. The member went to great lengths to try to implicate me in the movement of Norma Jeffery and to suggest that I was somehow opposed to Norma Jeffery. As I explained to the member at the time, staffing is an operational matter. As a minister, I do not have the power to get involved in operational matters within my agencies. The simple fact is that there had been a change of direction at the Curriculum Council of Western Australia, and the decision was made that Norma Jeffery be moved to the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. The Department of the Premier and Cabinet, together with the director general of education, have now made the decision that Norma Jeffery has some fine qualities and great expertise, and she has been relocated back to the Department of Education and Training. As I said to the member at the time, I do not have a problem with Norma Jeffery. It is not for me to say that Norma Jeffery cannot go back and work in that department. That is for other people to determine. I do not have the power to make those types of determinations. The Public Sector Management Act is quite clear on my rights and responsibilities to be engaged in matters of operation and staffing. The notion that outcomes is causing turmoil appears to be a matter that the opposition is intent on peddling. Everyone else is just out there, as they should be, getting on with the job.