

ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE

HON KIM CHANCE (Agricultural - Leader of the House) [5.03 pm]: I move -

That the house do now adjourn.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Ken Travers): Before moving to the adjournment debate, I remind members to take their personal documents with them when they leave the chamber tonight, as we will not be returning to this place; otherwise members would need to explain why their personal documents were found in “the other place”!

Commonwealth Takeover of Universities - Adjournment Debate

HON NORMAN MOORE (Mining and Pastoral - Leader of the Opposition) [5.04 pm]: During question time today, the Minister for Education and Training asked me a question, which was somewhat unusual, and I sought to answer by way of interjection. The question was: did I support the commonwealth taking over universities in Western Australia? My answer is unequivocally, no. However, I want the minister to understand that almost every federal government since Bob Menzies was Prime Minister has been seeking to gain commonwealth control over universities. Indeed, probably the greatest advocate of federally controlled universities was the Whitlam government. A very concerted effort was made by a federal Labor government to centralise many government functions in Australia. The Minister for Education and Training answered an interjection by saying that the state government contributes some eight per cent to the funding of universities. In other words, the commonwealth provides 92 per cent of their funding. Therefore, it is conceivable that federal education ministers want to have some control over the legislation under which they operate. I have the view, which is probably unusual, that control of universities should be returned to the states and they should accept responsibility for their funding. If that happened, we would not have this silly argument every time someone wanted to make a point. It is my view, strongly held over many years because I am a federalist, that the states should have responsibility for education, from kindergarten through to the PhD level. However, if we want responsibility for these facilities, we must pay for them. It is no good the states saying that they want to control universities but do not want to pay for them. That is more grist to the mill for commonwealth centralists to ultimately demand that they take control.

This country needs very seriously to work out which government will do what. There is no question in my mind that the states should run education and health in their entirety, and the commonwealth should run defence in its entirety, as the Constitution provided for in 1901. I support the comments the minister made today. Although I am taking a view contrary to my federal colleagues, so is she. Her federal colleagues have always been of the view that we need a central system of government in Australia. Over time, they will seek to achieve that by whatever means they can. I have no doubt that the next federal Labor government will be licking its chops at the prospect of taking advantage of the centralist decisions of the Howard government. That is a tragic reflection of the way things are going at the moment. I can understand why the commonwealth is saying those things. In Australia there are state governments at every level and, I regret to say, they are not performing brilliantly with education. It is, therefore, understandable that federal ministers are saying that they want more control. However, it is up to the state governments to get off their backsides and perform better than they are.

HON PETER COLLIER (North Metropolitan) [5.07 pm]: I fully endorse Hon Norman Moore’s comments about the role of state and federal governments in higher education. That is why I am speaking in this adjournment debate this evening. I am doing something I have not done since I have been in this place; that is, stand in defence of the federal government on higher education, particularly over criticism from the Western Australian Minister for Education and Training about university funding.

Criticism of the federal government arose about a purported - I say that because it was pure media speculation - \$20 million shortfall in the Edith Cowan University budget. An article in *The West Australian* of 15 March 2006 headed “More unis fear ECU-style cuts” reads in part -

Education minister Ljiljanna Ravlich called on the Federal Government to restore public funding to universities to avert more funding crises.

“Staff cuts at ECU will hurt this State; our education and training opportunities should be expanding, not contracting,” she said. “ECU’s \$20 million shortfall would simply not be there if the Howard Government had not cut \$50 million a year from WA’s universities’ funding.”

As I said, that is pure media speculation. In fact, the minister’s statement is manifestly incorrect and is based purely on speculation, not fact. The facts read differently. I have done some research on this matter over the past few days. ECU will be approximately \$93 million better off in the period 2005 to 2008 as a result of the introduction of the Commonwealth Grants Scheme under Backing Australia’s Future and the new student

contribution arrangements. Of this amount, \$21 million is for the provision of 1 211 new places that have been allocated to Edith Cowan University since 2004, and an estimated \$27 million in additional revenue will be raised from increased student contributions. In addition, ECU received \$11.6 million between 1996 and 2005 from the Capital Development Pool. A further \$4.6 million has been allocated over 2006-08. Also, ECU received \$2.5 million in 2004-05 for the Geraldton Universities Centre, and \$2.5 million in the 2008 round for nursing facilities at the Joondalup campus. ECU will receive \$830 000, which comprises \$372 320 for 179 new commonwealth education costs scholarships and \$157 710 for 110 new commonwealth accommodation scholarships. That is not bad for a government that is purportedly neglecting ECU and Western Australian universities.

I refer now to other Western Australian universities that have been the beneficiaries of Commonwealth Grants Schemes. Between 2005 and 2008, the University of Western Australia will be \$106 million better off, Curtin University will be \$116 million better off, Murdoch University will be \$41 million better off and the University of Notre Dame Australia will be \$27 million better off. Collectively, Western Australian universities will be \$383.4 million better off between 2005 and 2008 as a result of the Australian government's Our Universities: Backing Australia's Future reforms of higher education and the new contribution arrangements.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: Does that take into consideration how much they will lose as a result of VSU cuts?

Hon PETER COLLIER: That is a completely separate issue. The issue regarding the current situation of ECU that must be remembered is that the universities are autonomous bodies.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: I understand that they are separate issues, but one is a revenue that comes in -

THE DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Ken Travers): Order, minister! I do not think the member is inviting interjections.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I assure the minister that I do not mind interjections, but I have a lot to get through in six minutes. Universities are autonomous bodies and their financial management is entirely a matter for them. Staffing and other internal resourcing decisions are a matter for Edith Cowan University. I expect that the university, just like any other organisation, will have regard to its own circumstances when it makes strategic and organisational decisions. At this point ECU has not made an approach - I repeat: it has not made an approach - to the federal Department of Education, Science and Training. DEST has indicated that it is willing to discuss the situation with ECU to see whether it can financially assist the university. A reduction in student numbers at ECU could possibly lead to a reduction in funding, but that is not necessarily the case. The lines of communication are open between DEST and ECU, and DEST is more than willing to listen to the concerns of ECU. I am sure it will do so because of the wonderful new Minister for Science, Education and Training, Hon Julie Bishop.

My concerns about higher education in the immediate future relate to an entirely different matter; that is, whether our secondary education system is adequately prepared to provide a seamless transition for our students into tertiary education. At this stage I am not convinced that that is the case. I refer to a speech I made in this house on 13 October 2005, which states in part -

I do have a problem with the compatibility between the assessment and the courses of study. The hard part is the assessment of outcomes. The recording of this assessment and means to use these results for the purpose of progress maps that describe developmental achievement or the demonstration of outcomes were never devised. Progress maps describe the developmental continuum upon which students will progress in terms of outcomes, and these were devised as a planning tool so teachers could see where students were in terms of their learning and what was needed to determine how to move students forward from level to level. That was the aim of outcomes education. Progress maps were never devised to provide fine-grained assessment to be reported upon to determine university entrance; in that regard, 20 000 students need ranking. The use of progress maps for fine-grained assessment and for determining high-stakes entry into sought-after university courses was never in the plan when the maps were developed. It is the use of maps, or the scales of achievement, for this purpose that is causing concern among educators, and how decisions can be justified in a high-stakes environment that is stressing teachers, in what is a very litigious world.

The concerns that I articulated in October 2005 remain today. I add that they have been justified by the recent information that has emanated from the Curriculum Council. On 20 February 2006, I logged on to its web site and downloaded an assessments update, which states -

The use of marks for indirect use of the standards in the courses and the processes to determine fine-grained assessment details for students interested in qualifying for university entrance are being

assessed through collaboration with sector/systems and specialist groups working alongside the task force.

It was evident from this update that there was to be a significant shift in the attitude of the Curriculum Council towards assessment. This was based on a Curriculum Council document titled "Proposal for Council Response to Andrich Recommendations for University Selection".

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: He did a very good job.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Does the minister think he did not do a good job?

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: No, he did.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I will say he did. He said exactly what we have known for years. This document is referring to Professor Andrich, who is a Murdoch University education expert, and his recommendations that were presented at the council's 1 February 2006 meeting. I will articulate three of his recommendations. Recommendation 3 states -

Schools need to submit an analytic score for all students based on the same assessment information used for reporting the level and rating of achievement in the last pair of units completed.

Recommendation 6 states -

Enhanced up-front moderation is essential to achieve comparability of school assessment (outcome levels and bands).

Andrich recommendation 8 states -

The up-front moderation process must emphasise the importance of analytic marking keys (also termed assessment rubrics) in both school assessment and external measurement of student achievement. Automatic statistical moderation of school analytic scores by external analytic scores is required, at least in the transition years, but only for students seeking university selection (moderated school assessed level and rating for all students to remain unchanged).

Is the minister saying that fine-grained assessment was always intended for the progress maps?

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: No, that is not what I am saying.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Obviously not. Recommendation 9 states -

Analytic marking keys that arise from the specific nature of the tasks set should be used as the basis for providing feedback on achievement to students and parents.

The proposal subsequent to these recommendations was developed by a secretariat team and task force members. They incorporated these recommendations and presented them to the Curriculum Council.

Basically, we have done a complete circle; we are right back to where we commenced, and that is where the problems lie. I repeat that progress maps were never devised to provide fine-grained assessment to be reported upon to determine university entrance - never ever. The implementation of the courses of study was always going to be problematic. For example, six months ago I had a conversation with the vice-chancellor of one of Western Australia's major universities, and I asked her what she expected for tertiary entrance. She stated that the universities would be satisfied only with a four-digit figure and a ranking; that is, one through to 20 000. I refer back to my previous speech. This was always what the universities required. They have been quite unambiguous in this regard. Are there issues with the assessment procedures for the courses of study? There certainly are, particularly in determining a format for the examination for university entrance. This is the issue that should be of primary concern to the Minister for Education and Training, not a funding issue for the Edith Cowan University, which is in the extremely capable hands of the new federal education minister, Hon Julie Bishop.

UWA Perth International Arts Festival - Adjournment Debate

HON MATT BENSON-LIDHOLM (South West) [5.17 pm]: I rise today to make a statement about this year's UWA Perth International Arts Festival. For some 53 years, I am reliably informed, this has been Western Australia's premier artistic and cultural event. This year the theme was Noongar Boodja, or Nyoongah country. For those members who are not familiar with Nyoongah country, if we take a direct line from Moora to Esperance, anywhere south of that represents Noongar Boodja, or Nyoongah country.

My involvement with the festival this year focused on the art festival in Katanning, specifically in relation to what is called the *Koorah Coolingah - Children Long Ago* exhibition - a unique event that focused on the child artists of the 1940s and 1950s who lived at the old Carrolup River Native Settlement, which I am reliably informed is now referred to as Marribank. The events at Katanning certainly allowed all Western Australians

and visitors to experience the unique living conditions and strong identity that the Nyoongah nation has in its association with the land. The Carrolup story itself is ongoing. It is a very special story. It has its origins in the stolen generation period of the 1940s and 1950s. It is a story concerning a school principal of the Carrolup River native school, Mr Noel White, and his wife, Lily. They were the architects of what is now known as the Carrolup school of artists. The Carrolup school of artists has certainly been the inspiration for modern-day Carrolup artists, such as Athol Farmer, Shane Pickett, Lance Chadd, Roma Winmar and Troy Bennell, to name just a few.

It was my privilege to open one of the exhibitions on Thursday night. On behalf of Athol Farmer, I opened the Carrolup *Connections* exhibition at the start of this unique four or five days of exhibitions in Katanning. Having said that, the original child artist movement was certainly the inspiration for these contemporary artists, and it is these children about whom I will talk today. I am reliably informed that the original artists worked in charcoal, water colours and ink in rather primitive conditions. Their work went to Europe in the 1950s and was lost. However, it was rediscovered in April 2004 by Professor Howard Morphy from the Australian National University at the Picker Art Gallery at Colgate University in the United States. Interestingly, when Professor Morphy found those paintings, they were still packed in the original containers and had not been opened for nearly 50 years. I will not go into the details, but, subsequent to that, about 20 of the original pieces came back to Australia in a type of “bringing them home” arrangement and were on display at Katanning.

The Carrolup story is long and often tragic. Many of these artists suffered from alcoholism, were imprisoned or, indeed, suffered violent deaths. If the chamber will bear with me, I will quote from an article prepared specifically for the exhibition by Tracie Pushman and Robyn Smith-Walley from the Berndt Museum of Anthropology at the Western Australian University as part of the story about the Carrolup artists. It states -

But Carrolup is most often recognised for the art that came from it - the art that was being done during the late 1940's and early 50's by a group of children with barely sufficient supplies and equipment to keep the most studious child motivated. Even more astounding is that the art that developed at the 'Carrolup Native Settlement', as it was then called, was created during a time of severe deprivation in the Aboriginal community; a time where Aboriginal settlements were set up for the express purpose of segregation and exclusion.

The settlement's facilities were basic, to say the least, with poor conditions adding no comfort to a life of constant surveillance. But the artwork is not special simply because it developed in these conditions. It is not the context that gives the work its beauty, its mystery. It is the art itself. The work would hold merit if the drawings had come from the finest art houses of Europe. They would receive the same reviews had they been the accomplishments of child prodigies studying in the best private schools. The children of Carrolup were able to move the world through these magnificent images, despite the challenges that they had to face, not because of them.

...

The significance of the children's art of Carrolup is paramount to Australia's cultural heritage. They are extraordinary, moving beyond categorisation and they scream 'RESISTANCE!' The interest generated from the art of Carrolup came from across the globe. The children, while neglected, were not ignored and the world began to sit up and take notice of how many of Australia's Aboriginal children were being forced to live. Despite the best efforts of many sympathetic allies, the government was solely, and now much more publicly, accountable for the dismal conditions of their settlements.

The Department of Native Welfare closed the doors of Carrolup in 1951 after running it for eleven years as an Aboriginal settlement, the last five during Mr White's teaching. The school from which the artwork was lovingly fostered was disbanded. Plans were made to hand over the site to the Baptist Missionaries for its conversion into a vocational training centre for farm work; training in labour and religious studies was under way. The children who had connected, most intimately, our South-West to the rest of the world were sent out, the younger to other missions at best, with no promise and no means to continue their art.

However, many maintained their artistry, and what they left behind is no less than a legacy for Nyungar people, and an unanswered curiosity to the world that continues today as strongly as it had in the late 1940's and early 50's.

I could go on for quite a while but I see I have only a couple of minutes left, so I will quickly paraphrase the rest of what I was going to say. The exhibition featured work from what has become known as the Carrolup artists. I particularly refer to the artists concerned: John Cuttabut, Revel Cooper, Jimmy Dabb, Parnell Dempster, Reynold Hart, Simpson Kelly, Claude Kelly, Philip Jackson, Milton Jackson, Ross Jones, Barry Loo and Cliff Ryder. All the children who attended the Carrolup school participated in the art classes, some as young as five

years of age. Mrs White taught the younger children while Mr White looked after the older ones. The girls had made a remarkable contribution to the collection, concentrating mainly on designs of geometric patterns. Later they were forcibly removed from Carrolup, leaving the boys to continue with the landscapes and bush scenes that have become so recognisable to the contemporary art world.

Why was the exhibition important? It was important because it gave added meaning to the “bringing them home” theme. It was important for the surviving Carrolup children. I refer to Milton Jackson and Mervyn Hill, who were painters. I also refer to Angus Wallam, Freda Winmar and Sydney Jackson, of football fame, just to mention a few. It was also significant in the continuation of the reconciliation push. It was noticeable that the local businesses, community and shire all worked together. I am led to believe that it has opened the doors to bigger and better things in Katanning and the south west; indeed, even a film has been mooted.

The sponsors of the exhibition were Lotterywest, the Western Australian government, the University of Western Australia, which sponsored it all the way through, the Picker Art Gallery from Colgate University in the United States, the Great Southern Development Commission, the WA Museum and the City of Perth.

I conclude with a statement from Lindy Hume, who is the Perth International Arts Festival artistic director. I apologise to the Nyoongah people for my pronunciation, but she said - the translation is, “I’m happy to be on Nyoongah land” -

Ngaany djerap-djerap nidja Noonga Boodja

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 5.27 pm
