

PREMIER'S AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE IN PUBLIC SECTOR MANAGEMENT - DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION AND TRAINING

1130. Hon MATT BENSON-LIDHOLM to the Minister for Education and Training:

Will the minister advise the house whether any agency in her portfolio was a finalist in this year's Premier's Awards for Excellence in Public Sector Management?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH replied:

As usual, another good story is to be told, and I am very pleased that the honourable member has asked me this very important question. I could have died 50 times over waiting for the opposition to ask a decent question. I am grateful that we have had a very good question from a member who always shows an interest in what is happening in education.

I am pleased to report that the Department of Education and Training was a finalist in the regional development category in the Premier's Awards for Excellence in Public Sector Management. I am doubly pleased to advise that the expert judging panel saw fit to award the department the prize for the regional development category. The judging panel comprised some very distinguished people in Mr Greg Wall, chief executive officer of State West Credit Society; Professor Barry Marshall, the 2005 winner of the Nobel Prize in Medicine; Professor Philip Jennings, the president of the Conservation Council of Western Australia; Ms Rae Walter; Ms Maria Saraceni; Emeritus Professor Lesley Parker; and Ms Shirley McPherson. I do not want members to think that it was an internal agency with its people providing favours.

Hon Norman Moore: We know about the awards; we brought them in in the first place.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Okay, but I do not want people to have the wrong impression, because this is a great achievement for the people concerned. This prize was for the department's program called "Follow the Dream", a secondary school aspirations strategy for Aboriginal students. The award recognises the tremendous effort and the tremendous success of the program that has been delivered to more than 600 students across the state in 15 regional centres as well as 10 locations in the metropolitan area. This program was conceived with the support of the Gordon inquiry's call for enhanced retention of Aboriginal students to year 12 and is on track to achieve that retention increase by up to tenfold since its inception in the number of Aboriginal students who are staying on in secondary school and gaining entrance into university. This program also provides students with a very supportive learning environment and is delivered by local people at a local level with a very strong focus on building the capacity in regional communities. I commend the Department of Education and Training and the people involved in the program. It is a fantastic program; I have seen it in operation first-hand. It is great to see it being recognised by such a distinguished award.