

PAYMENTS TO PARENTS OF YEARS 11 AND 12 STUDENTS

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

I refer to reports that state government payments of \$200 and \$400 will soon be distributed to the parents of years 11 and 12 students.

(1) In light of the minister's reported comments in today's *The West Australian* as follows -

"I'd like to see it spent on assisting the students in terms of the cost of education," she said. "I think parents probably will do it, I think parents . . . look to Government in defraying some of those costs, particularly of keeping their kids at school longer.

how can the minister guarantee that this money will be spent on the students' educational needs and not elsewhere?

(2) Will this payment, resulting from an on-the-run commitment during the election campaign, be a one-off, not-to-be-continued-in-future-years payment, just like the \$50 student payment following the 1989 election campaign, which the Labor government at the time cut off after only one year?

The PRESIDENT: Order! The second part of the question is clearly out of order. The minister may answer the first part but is not to answer the second part.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH replied:

Thank you, Mr President. That is just as well, because I did not quite get the second part in any event.

I thank the honourable member for the question.

(1)-(2) The government is very proud of its commitment in respect of its policy to provide an annual payment of up to \$400 for parents of 16 and 17-year-olds to help meet the costs of education and training. The honourable member would have to agree that this is unprecedented. This is in addition to the \$100 for public high school students that is paid directly to schools to assist with school fees and the like. We believe that every family in Western Australia will be better off as a result of our reforms in the education of 16 and 17-year-olds, including our innovative policy to ensure that by 2006 all 16-year-olds will stay at school, and the rolling out of our policy under which by 2008 17-year-olds will stay at school. I believe the member opposite is very upset by the fact that the previous government of which he was a member never rolled out anything in education that was remotely innovative. He would be aware that this government has placed education and training as the number one priority. It has made a \$1 billion commitment to education and training. That is absolutely unprecedented in this state, and the member knows it. In fact, the payments to parents are being rolled out as we speak.

Hon Barry House: It is not as we speak, because it has been delayed.

The PRESIDENT: Order, members! This is not a debate. This is an answer to a question, hopefully.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I want to put on record that this is a \$64.2 million initiative. It is unprecedented. The Gallop government is very proud of its commitment to vocational education and training and education generally. We have made it our priority. I do not know why the member opposite is so down on this policy decision. I would have thought that on behalf of the constituents that he represents in his electorate, he would be championing what this government has done in providing support in recognition of the fact that parents will require some financial assistance to help in the education of their children. The government has recognised that. It has not differentiated between public and private schools. It has been very even-handed with this policy. I am amazed. The member should hang his head in shame for denigrating this policy, which he knows very well is unprecedented. It is something of which this government is very proud.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I am sure we were getting onto supplementaries.