

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, EXTRA-COST OPTIONS

747. Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Education:

I thank the parliamentary secretary for his answer to my question of 8 November and for drawing my attention to the School Education Act 1999.

- (1) When did it become Department of Education policy to allow schools to seek a confirmation charge or enrolment deposit of up to 50 per cent of the total cost of extra-cost optional components?
- (2) Which optional components are identified in regulations, pursuant to section 99 of the Act as extra-cost optional components?
- (3) Under what authority are schools allowed to exclude students who do not or cannot pay the enrolment deposit from nominating an extra-cost optional component as their preferred option for the following year?
- (4) Is provision made in the secondary school assistance scheme to enable students from low-income families to participate in extra-cost optional components?
- (5) Is the enrolment deposit for extra-cost optional components refundable to students who are granted secondary school assistance?

Hon G.T. GIFFARD replied:

I thank the member for some notice of this question.

- (1) The Director General of Education approved the policy of allowing schools to seek a confirmation charge for special options in 1998, for implementation by schools in 1999. The policy setting was contained in the director general's letter to principals in 1999.
- (2) Regulations relating to section 99 of the Act relate to only non-optional and optional components and do not relate to extra-cost optional components.
- (3) Section 100(7) provides that the participation of a student in an extra-cost optional component is conditional on payment of the costs of that component.
- (4) The secondary school assistance scheme is provided to ensure students can choose an educational program that satisfies the requirements of the curriculum framework. It may cover some extra-cost options but would not extend to all high-cost extra-cost subjects.

Hon Derrick Tomlinson: Is that discrimination against low-income families.

Hon G.T. GIFFARD: Does Hon Derrick Tomlinson want the answer?

Hon Derrick Tomlinson: Please go ahead; I am enjoying it.

Hon G.T. GIFFARD: To continue -

- (5) No, the confirmation charge for extra-cost optional components covers components different from those covered by the secondary school assistance scheme.