

SCHOOL FEES, GOVERNMENT'S POLICY

Hon BARRY HOUSE to the Minister for Education and Training:

- (1) Will the state government adopt the commonsense policy advocated by the Liberal Party to eliminate school fees in 2006 for all Western Australian state school students and compensate them from the education budget; and, if not, why not?
- (2) How does the government plan to supplement the loss incurred by many schools which in some cases receive as little as 30 per cent of eligible fees?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH replied:

(1)-(2) Neither I nor any of my colleagues has any intention of adopting the opposition's policy.

Hon Barry House: I am pleased to hear you say that.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: The member may well be. The day that we follow the opposition down any path, we might as well give this game up. The simple fact is that we do have a voluntary school fees policy and that policy will stay. I want to put on record that the other day I asked the department for an overview of moneys held in school accounts. I asked for that information because, quite frankly, I am getting a little sick and tired of some schools jumping up and down about their lack of resources and teachers who run the line that their schools will not buy photocopying paper and other supplies and that, therefore, in some way the government should give a top-up. I was interested to learn that most schools have a reasonably healthy bank account.

Hon Norman Moore: Do you have the list?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: That list is publicly available, probably.

Hon Barry House: Yes, to some members of the public.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: It is no big deal. It is obviously available to some members of the public.

It is a bit rich for the member to come in here and run the line that we should be following the Liberal Party policy. Hon Barry House must have been asleep during the election campaign, because we have a fantastic policy for education and training. We have 50 election commitments that have never been put on the agenda before. We have a story that we are proud to tell. We have a story about a major injection of 39 new schools and a major injection into the training agenda. For the member to trot out a question like that shows just how out of touch the Liberal Party really is. Why would we follow the Liberal Party policy? We have very good policies. We have devised these policies on our own. The government, and I in particular as the minister responsible, will be looking to implement each and every one of the 50 election commitments that form the basis of the Australian Labor Party's policy on education and training.