

SCHOOL CHAPLAINCY PROGRAM

346. Mr P. ABETZ to the Minister for Planning:

Before I ask my question I would like to acknowledge the year 6 students from Yidarra Catholic Primary School from the member for Bateman's electorate.

I refer to the recent announcement that a further 179 public schools will now receive funding for in-school chaplains. Can the minister representing the Minister for Education please advise the house what this means for public schools across the state?

Mr J.H.D. DAY replied:

I thank the member for the question. The government has, of course, been very supportive of the school chaplaincy program since it was commenced.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr J.H.D. DAY: If the opposition, which is showing some latent interest in the issue, would like to listen, it will have a greater understanding about the funding that is being provided by this government. There was an issue at the end of last year, in December, when the commonwealth government discontinued \$1.45 million of funding that was previously being provided under its national school chaplaincy program. The state government stepped in to backfill that \$1.45 million and that enabled 71 more public schools to access an in-school chaplain this year. Despite this additional funding, there were still schools that missed out, so the government has now committed an additional \$2.7 million in this calendar year to fund a further 179 public schools for an in-school chaplain. I know there were concerns in quite a number of schools, including schools in my electorate, because of the fact that they had previously had a chaplain, but, because of a change in the way the funds were allocated more broadly than was the case before across all of the school sectors, some schools did miss out. The additional funding that is now being provided, which was announced a couple of weeks ago by the Minister for Education, means that every Western Australian public school that applied for an in-school chaplain will now receive funding in this calendar year and it will also continue in 2016 at a cost of \$5.05 million. This brings the total commitment by the state government for in-school chaplains to public schools for this calendar year, 2015, and 2016 to over \$9.2 million. In total, 500 public schools that have identified a need and submitted either an individual or joint application for the national school chaplaincy program will now receive funding in 2015 and 2016 through either the state or the commonwealth program. In addition to funding for in-school chaplains, the government is also contributing \$5.68 million a year to YouthCARE to provide other chaplaincy services in public schools. These services include support chaplains for schools that do not have an in-school chaplain, relief chaplains and critical incident response chaplains. I think that bears out the fact that the government recognises the important role chaplains have in those schools that choose to have that service to provide important pastoral care to students, families and also to teachers in some cases.