

SEVENOAKS SENIOR COLLEGE

634. Mr P. ABETZ to the Minister for Education:

I understand that last Saturday Sevenoaks Senior College in Cannington held a function to celebrate its tenth anniversary.

- (1) Will the minister please outline to Parliament what progress is being made at the school, which represented a new model for Western Australian schools when it was established a decade ago?
- (2) How has the success of this model shaped the future of this government's exciting independent public schools initiative, which is delivering real benefits for students and school communities?

Dr E. CONSTABLE replied:

I thank the member for Southern River for his question.

- (1)–(2) Indeed, I was very privileged to be invited to join the celebrations at Sevenoaks Senior College on Saturday. It is worth remembering that the college was specifically set up 10 years ago to respond to local conditions and local needs of students. It was set up as the first senior college in this state, I believe, for year 11 and 12 students. Indeed, it does respond to local conditions. It was set up with a measure of autonomy that no public school had been set up with previously. This has become the basis of the model for our independent public schools. Its autonomy was really the foundation of its growth. I am pleased to say that this is, as I said, the foundation of where we are going with the independent public schools initiative. It has had a range of programs responding to students at the school. It was originally thought that the school might have about 400 students, but in fact the enrolment now is 550, indicating the success of the school and how sought after places in the school are.

What has been interesting about the school over the past 10 years is the range of programs that it has had for young people, responding to their needs, with very strong links with industry. It has developed over the past 10 years the sorts of things we are seeing schools—with the increase in school leaving age—needing to do to provide the sorts of programs that they need for their children. It has developed strong links with Curtin University and partnerships with industry; it is a registered training organisation; and it is an environment where young people can learn in what one might describe as a young adult environment. It has responded very much to the needs of those young people and been extremely successful in the way that it has done that. These features and the way in which it has responded to young people in putting those partnerships and programs in place clearly set it apart from the many other schools that are now trying to do many of the same things.

Another interesting thing about the school and the way it was set up by the now Premier, when he was Minister for Education, is that it was set up with a school council. At the time the Premier, as minister, invited Lyndon Rowe, who was the CEO of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia at the time, to chair the school council. This was therefore a real innovation in Western Australian schooling. A number of quite high profile people, academics and others, were invited to be part of that council. Again, this sets the scene for what we have created in our independent public schools, where we are finding so many people from business, the community and the universities are putting up their hands to be on the boards or councils of our independent public schools. This is a feature that has been incorporated into independent public schools. It is not surprising that Sevenoaks Senior College was one of the original schools in the first intake for independent public schools.

A memorandum of understanding was signed between the director general, the chair of the council and the principal originally. This again is the model for the independent public schools, where there is an agreement signed between those parties now who are independent public schools to simplify budgeting—all of those things that have provided a model for us to build on in the development of independent public schools. I think on this occasion it is worth mentioning the first principal was David Wood, who is now the CEO of the Curriculum Council; and the deputy principal was Di Turner, who is the principal of John Forrest Senior High School. They established and set the scene for the school now. I would like to thank everyone who has been involved in the school over these past years, particularly the current principal, Kath Partridge, and the deputy, David Proctor, for the enormous contribution they have made, not only at Sevenoaks Senior College, but also in establishing some excellent directions for us in public schooling in Western Australia.