

EDUCATION — ABORIGINAL STUDENTS — TRI-BORDER ATTENDANCE STRATEGY

12. Mr I.M. BRITZA to the Minister for Education:

Can the minister please inform the house about the new strategy that has been put in place to better meet the educational needs of children in mobile Aboriginal families in the north of the state and across state borders, and how schools in these areas are working together to better cater for these students' educational needs?

Dr E. CONSTABLE replied:

I thank the member for Morley for the question. This goes to the heart of one of the most difficult issues that we deal with in order to provide the very best education for children in remote areas. Mobility of families and children in remote areas has been a major challenge for schools for a very long time. What has been put in place is what has been called the tri-border attendance strategy, which is managed by our Department of Education and includes schools in South Australia and the Northern Territory. Members will be pleased to know that recently this particular strategy received two awards in the Australian Learning Impact Awards. It received the Australian Regional Winner award and also the People's Choice award, which was to recognise outstanding application of technology when it addresses significant challenges in education. This is a first in Australia.

There are 285 schools involved in this particular strategy and the program collects information about children's attendance as well as learning programs. It means that when children move from one of these schools to another, each school has access to that attendance information and information about the child's —

Mr T.G. Stephens interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Pilbara!

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Each school has access information about the child learning program so that the teachers at the second school can very quickly pick up on what that child's learning program is and adapt their work to assist that child. This strategy has been extended to the Kimberley—we are hoping to extend it also to the goldfields and the Pilbara at the present time—and includes not only government schools and public schools, but also Catholic schools, particularly in the Kimberley.

Mr T.G. Stephens interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Pilbara!

Dr E. CONSTABLE: This particular work is designed to enhance children's education. We know that these children are mobile with their families. For instance I could give some information that shows that between February 2009 and December 2011, 140 students attending these schools attended more than five schools; 552 students attended four schools; 2 270 attended three schools; and 641 attended schools across three borders. There is no way we will stop those families being mobile, but we can ensure that we provide the schools they attend with the very best education programs. We can do that by tracking those children's attendance at school and ensuring their learning program goes with them to the new school and that it can be picked up very quickly. Those children can then continue to learn.