

POST-COMPULSORY CURRICULUM, STANDING COMMITTEE INQUIRY

200. Hon BARRY HOUSE to the Minister for Education and Training:

I refer to today's announcement that the Legislative Assembly Education and Health Standing Committee will conduct an inquiry into the proposed changes to the post-compulsory curriculum in Western Australian schools.

- (1) Does the minister acknowledge the widespread concerns and confusion that have led to this type of review, which, incidentally, the opposition called for in recent weeks?
- (2) Given that certain courses, including English, are due to start at the beginning of the next school year - just eight months away - and the inquiry will take 12 months, will the inquiry not be a waste of time, effort and money if the government does not intend to wait for the report and any recommendations that might stem from the inquiry before introducing the curriculum changes?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH replied:

I thank the honourable member for that question, albeit without notice.

Hon Derrick Tomlinson: That is what you are here for.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I know.

- (1)-(2) The post-compulsory review that was commenced in 1998 was actually completed in 2002. It really was the direction that was endorsed by the Western Australian government. The new framework reforms that we currently have are reforms that are not something someone has conjured up over the past few weeks or months. The simple fact is that these reforms were initiated a long time ago. There has been ongoing consultation on the particular framework and there has been quite a lot of anticipation that the framework will be implemented.

This is the biggest reform in secondary education in the past 20 years. I did not for a moment think that the reform would occur without somebody having a different view and without someone having a different opinion. Quite frankly, in the school system there are 250 000 public school students, well over 20 000 staff and parents of all the students. We live in a democracy, where everybody is entitled to exercise a view. This is a significant reform.

Let me make it quite clear, and let there be no doubt about this: my first priority is the education of students. I have not heard a peep from the students.

Several members interjected.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Quite frankly, I need to be forward thinking to make sure that education is relevant to the needs of students for the next 50 years. That is my objective. It is not to be steeped in an education system that is limited in time and space. It is to look forward and to recognise that opportunities need to be broadened.

Point of Order

Hon BARRY HOUSE: I wonder whether the minister would like me to repeat the question. She has not attempted to tackle the question at this stage.

The PRESIDENT: Order! There is no point of order, but it sounds to me that the minister has provided an adequate answer.

Questions without Notice Resumed

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I am prepared to provide an answer to the specifics. Yes, there is an inquiry. Yes, it is due to be concluded by 30 June 2006. As far as I am concerned, the implementation of the framework will proceed; it will go ahead. There is no doubt about that.