

OUTCOMES-BASED EDUCATION, INTRODUCTION

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

In light of the recent widespread public debate that indicates overwhelming concern and opposition to current and proposed curriculum changes in Western Australian schools from teachers, parents and the community, a rapidly growing number of education experts, private school principals, all major media outlets in this state and even the State School Teachers' Union, why is the minister persisting with the further introduction of outcomes-based education courses into years 11 and 12 from January next year and dogmatically refusing to put a moratorium on these changes while an independent reassessment into the merits and the implementation is made?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH replied:

I thank the member for the question and I am very happy to answer it. I am committed to having a world-class education system for Western Australian students.

Hon Kim Chance: Hear, hear!

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I am absolutely committed to excellence in education. Since becoming the minister over the past five months, I have made it my business to visit a total of 55 secondary and primary schools. I have walked into staff rooms, classrooms and quadrangles and I have spoken to teachers directly. If ever there was a beat-up on an issue, this is such an issue. The number of teachers in public and private schools throughout the state is 31 000. The PLATO web site has received hits from 450 regular visitors. That represents about two per cent of the teaching profession, yet Hon Barry House is telling me that there is a crisis. The only person dumbing down, talking down and causing difficulties for WA school students is the member, together with the federal Minister for Education, Science and Training, Hon Brendan Nelson, who, quite clearly, has no idea about education and what goes on in this country. It is amazing that a federal minister can say that outcomes-based and standards education is like a cancer. If he truly believed that it was a cancer throughout the nation's education system, why did he show no sign of attempting to redress it through the quadrennial funding agreement? He not only did not redress it, but also his federal department insists that all states adopt an outcomes-focused approach to education.

This is an amazing course of events. I have already explained to Hon Barry House that the Department of Education and Training is considering introducing three new subjects into year 11 next year. Aviation has already been introduced. Sixty-six per cent of students in years 11 and 12 do not intend to go to tertiary institutions. We are expanding the subject options for all years 11 and 12 students so that the 66 per cent of non-tertiary students also can have an education that is relevant to them.

Hon Barry House: They get that now.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: We offer about 40 subjects compared with the New South Wales system, which offers students about 116 subjects.

Hon Barbara Scott: That is not the issue.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: It is the issue; it is about the implementation of years 11 and 12 subjects. The member should sit there and listen. If the member is so stupid that she does not understand something as fundamental as that, she does not understand anything. I intend to continue to implement the reforms required to ensure that every student in this state receives a quality education and has his or her educational needs met.