

POST-COMPULSORY CURRICULUM CHANGES, SUPPORT OF STATE SCHOOL TEACHERS' UNION

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

I draw the minister's attention to a brief memo sent today to district directors, principals and curriculum managers, which reads in part -

SSTUWA STATE COUNCIL ACTION

Schools have received today a faxstream from the State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia directing members not to attend Making Consistent Judgements professional learning sections and to suspend implementation of the Post Compulsory Review.

In light of the fact that the State School Teachers' Union has withdrawn its support for the post-compulsory curriculum changes, thereby adding to the widespread concern and confusion about these changes, will the minister now acknowledge that the current implementation process and timetable is in tatters, and impose a moratorium on the proposed 2006 changes until these matters are investigated and resolved?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH replied:

Apart from anything else, if my memory serves me right, the "Making Consistent Judgements" sessions apply to years 8 to 10. What the member is talking about is the deferment of the implementation of the years 11 and 12 proposed curriculum changes. I have already placed on record that it is not my intention to postpone or delay the implementation of the changes to the years 11 and 12 curriculum, and I have stated that four new subjects will be implemented as of next year. I do not think it is too much to expect the education system to gear up for the implementation of four new subjects in years 11 and 12. I am told that teachers who have had professional development relating to new subjects to be implemented next year are satisfied with the professional development received. Undoubtedly, however, there is some anxiety among some teachers - I emphasise some teachers, as we are probably talking about a small number of teachers - in relation to the implementation of the next lot of 20 subjects. Some adjustments have already been made.

Hon Barry House: It's 90 per cent, I hear.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Hang on. The next 30 subjects were to be implemented by 2007-08, but those 30 subjects will not be implemented; instead, we will roll out over the next 18 months for implementation in 2007-08 the next 20 subjects, not the 30. The final 20 subjects will be rolled out in 2008-09.

The simple fact is that reform is never easy. It would be highly improbable that a major reform would receive unanimity on every aspect. I recognise that some people simply do not like change - that is always the case. Such people were there when Hon Barry House was in the education system, as they were when I worked within the education system. Whatever was asked in terms of change produced a negative response from certain people. Luckily, that is not the case with the majority of teachers. I was in Port Hedland a couple of weeks ago, and I have visited Newman schools and schools in the metropolitan area, and the feel in staffrooms is very positive - it is very good indeed. Has the member been to some schools?

Hon Barry House: I think they were being polite to you.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Has the member been to schools to hear from teachers and to ask some of the questions I have asked?

Hon Barry House: Yes; it might surprise you to hear.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I am absolutely surprised. I looked at the member's web site this morning and it contained only about five pieces of information. That indicates that the member is not doing as much as he could be doing, and that probably applies to school visitations also.