

POST-COMPULSORY EDUCATION SYSTEM

111. HON DERRICK TOMLINSON to the Minister for Education and Training:

Is the minister aware of an article under the heading “School reform ‘tried and failed’” published on page 15 of *The West Australian* of today’s date in which Norma Jeffery, the chief executive of the Curriculum Council, is reported to have said of the post-compulsory education system -

I’m saying that we have got a system that’s got outcomes, content and standards.

“Maybe you should keep out of it (stop reporting about it) because it’s causing confusion.

“Trying to talk about something as complicated as this . . . it takes half a day.”

- (1) Will the minister confirm that, as the chief executive officer of the Curriculum Council of Western Australia is reported as saying, the new post-compulsory education system has “outcomes, content and standards”?
- (2) Will the minister explain the difference between outcomes and standards?
- (3) Does the minister support what Mrs Jeffery is reported as saying; namely, that the new post-compulsory education system is causing confusion and “it takes half a day” to talk about it?

The PRESIDENT: Order! I trust the minister will consider that multifaceted oration in all its aspects and respond in due course.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH replied:

- (1)-(3) Thank you, Mr President. I am pleased the member has asked me this question, because I thought I would be sitting here on my own, lonely, having missed out on a question yet again! Boy, am I glad the member is here!

Hon Derrick Tomlinson: Do not make me sad! You will not like me if I am sad!

Hon Peter Foss: The problem is you will never answer a question.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: I am more than happy to answer the question. Yes, I am aware of the article in today’s paper headed “School reform ‘tried and failed’”. I cannot account for what Mrs Jeffery is reported as having stated to *The West Australian*. However, I share some of Mrs Jeffery’s frustration in trying to get across what I deem to be a fairly simple system. Last Friday afternoon, Mrs Jeffery and Ms Adele Bradley from the Curriculum Council came to my office and briefed not only me but all my staff on outcomes standards education.

Hon Simon O’Brien: Was it a half-day briefing? Was it difficult to understand?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: No. I found it very easy to understand. In social studies, for example, for most of the past 15 years the approach that has been taken has been similar to what we are trying to introduce here; namely, that at the end of each lesson it is recorded that students have achieved certain outcomes.

Hon Derrick Tomlinson: Demonstrated behavioural outcomes.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Yes; the member knows where I am at. However, historically, the same syllabus was used to achieve the outcomes. That meant, for example, that teachers always ended up teaching the pyramids at a certain point in year 9, because that had to be matched up with the standards, or outcomes. The reason teachers are finding the new system a bit frustrating is that although the standards, or outcomes, are prescribed, we are allowing some flexibility in the curriculum in order to achieve those outcomes. The difficulty for some teachers is that all of a sudden it is not prescribed for them in absolute detail that it is mandatory that they teach a certain part of the syllabus at a certain point in time, but rather they have some flexibility. However, in my view, it is not a particularly difficult concept. Frankly, as a former teacher I believe it is great that teachers will have some flexibility in meeting the standards at the end of each lesson, at the end of each week and at the end of each term.

Hon Derrick Tomlinson: Are you talking about standards or outcomes?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: In this context outcomes and standards are interchangeable. What we are really dealing with is standards. This policy direction is strongly supported by the tertiary sector. The tertiary sector has a very similar methodology of teaching. It is supportive of this methodology because it understands that it works. There has never been a time of major change within the education system when there has not been some degree of uncertainty, and perhaps also controversy. This is no exception. Part of the reform process is that people will have an opinion and they will exercise their opinion. There will always be people who have divergent views, for a range of reasons. That does not mean that this is bad and will not work. I strongly

support a standards-based education system. I am confident that it is a positive step forward and we are on the right track. It will lead to better educational outcomes for students. It will also make it easier for those who have chosen an academic path and intend to go to university to make their transition into university.