

Speaker; Mr Paul Omodei; Mr John Day; Mr Brendon Grylls; Mr Bob Kucera; Mr Max Trenorden; Acting Speaker; Mr Alan Carpenter; Ms Dianne Guise; Mr Martin Whitely; Mr Paul Andrews; Dr Elizabeth Constable; Dr Steve Thomas

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**MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING AND PREMIER - CONDEMNATION**

*Matter of Public Interest*

**THE SPEAKER (Mr F. Riebeling):** Today I received a letter from the Leader of the Opposition seeking to debate as a matter of public interest the following motion -

That this house condemns the Minister for Education and Training for her mismanagement of the implementation of outcomes-based education and condemns the Premier for his failure to show leadership and proper judgment in the management of his ministers.

If sufficient members agree to this motion, I will allow it.

[At least five members rose in their places.]

**The SPEAKER:** The matter shall proceed on the usual basis.

**MR P.D. OMODEI (Warren-Blackwood - Leader of the Opposition) [2.49 pm]:** I move -

That this house condemns the Minister for Education and Training for her mismanagement of the implementation of outcomes-based education and condemns the Premier for his failure to show leadership and proper judgment in the management of his ministers.

Twelve months ago, Hon Peter Collier recommended in the other place that the government look at the New South Wales model for the implementation of outcomes-based education. On 22 December 2005, the Education and Health Standing Committee's "Interim Report on Changes to the Post Compulsory Curriculum in Western Australia" also recommended that the New South Wales model be considered to implement curriculum changes in Western Australia. There were 182 submissions to that committee and a number of matters were raised by the committee in the report. The committee acknowledged that many teachers were not ready to implement the reforms and that a lack of certainty had led to a substantial level of anxiety among teachers who had the perception that the system was being implemented before it was fully developed. The New South Wales model was referred to by Ms Weber of the Science Teachers Association of WA. The Education and Health Standing Committee's interim report states -

... in 1999, before the first year of the new assessment system became operational (2001) the Board of Studies produced for each subject an "Examination, Assessment and Reporting Supplement" ... to show teachers and students what a new examination paper would look like and how it would be assessed.

The same system included a specimen paper, marking guidelines and draft course band descriptors, and CD-ROMs on a raft of standards packages were prepared for every course of study.

These initiatives were ignored. Three weeks ago, the minister declared in the Parliament, for the second time in two weeks, that 90 per cent of teachers and parents supported implementation next year. On Sunday, 11 June, the Premier announced changes similar to the initiatives contained in the New South Wales model. The question must be asked: why did it take so long? The minister was obviously clearly out of touch and certainly did not understand her portfolio. That information has been coming forward to members on this side of the house on a regular basis. The minister refused to debate with Hon Peter Collier on Channel Seven last Tuesday the problems with these courses of study. She failed to participate in that forum and, instead, spent four hours getting a makeover. We do not deny TAFE students the opportunity to do a makeover on the minister. However, we understand that her media adviser was desperate to get the makeover on television. She phoned the ABC and pleaded with it and in the end went to Channel Seven. When the minister should have been at the forum discussing the implementation of outcomes-based education, she was having a makeover.

It is very important that the door be left open to delay implementation of OBE. The minister has ignored the problems that have existed since March 2005. She has constantly claimed that a small minority are opposed to implementation - that being, of course, People Lobbying Against Teaching Outcomes and *The West Australian* newspaper - and that the vast majority support it. Obviously the minister is out of her depth. She has not consulted adequately on this issue. It has taken 18 months for her to acknowledge that there are problems with the implementation of OBE for years 11 and 12. Now the minister has been given six months to resolve the problems and implement a system that works.

There is no doubt that this minister must be removed from office. The opposition is not saying that as a minister she should be sacked. She is just not up to this job. The Premier should appoint someone who is prepared to consult and liaise with the education sector; someone who is prepared to go on television and explain OBE, and establish an understanding of that system of education. We on this side of the house believe that education is far

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too important to play politics with. We made an offer to the government a week or so ago that if the Premier delayed implementation for years 11 and 12, we would stand shoulder to shoulder with him and support implementation, albeit after a one-year delay. It is very rare that an opposition party makes such an offer to a government. I believe that the Premier is more concerned about the factional deals that have been occurring. What we want is someone in the government sector who is prepared to listen and prepared to represent the education sector.

The Minister for Education and Training has shown her incompetence on this issue. Every day we hear her making ridiculous statements. I will consider some of them. One was that she feels that she does so much media work that it makes it very difficult for her to then go off and address all the other issues that she has to deal with. We know that the Minister for Education and Training spent four hours having a makeover when she should have been at that media forum.

**Mr A.J. Carpenter:** She was trying to assist those kids with their program.

**Mr P.D. OMODEI:** The Premier can argue that as long as he likes. Surely, when a very public forum was being conducted by one of the major electronic media institutions, a forum comprising a lot of teachers and high-profile people, the minister could have delayed the makeover. We are not decrying the TAFE students; good on them. However, how convenient and urgent was it for the minister's minders to ensure the media were filming that makeover? She put her media engagements in front of her responsibilities as a minister. Really, we must ask and surely the Premier must question what are her priorities. Does the Premier believe she should have been at that forum?

**Mr A.J. Carpenter:** The other one was a media engagement.

**Mr P.D. OMODEI:** Should she have been at that forum? Answer the question.

**Mr A.J. Carpenter:** I just did.

**Mr P.D. OMODEI:** The Premier does not believe she should have been at the forum.

**Mr A.J. Carpenter:** It is a matter for the minister.

**Mr P.D. OMODEI:** She did not front up to the forum. She earns \$200 000 a year. She consistently ducks the issue, no matter where she is. Now the minister has obviously been demoted and the Premier has taken over the role of negotiating not only with the members of a parliamentary committee of inquiry, but also with a range of other people. Is the government really getting value for money from this minister? Have a look at her performance in past months on this issue. The Premier surely cannot be comfortable with her performance. She has stated that 90 per cent of teachers support the implementation of OBE next year. If that were true, why has the government backed down on the proposal and sought to implement the system in a different way? Again, the minister is so out of touch with the sector that she makes ridiculous comments like that.

The minister really should be addressing these forums in the community, addressing teachers and trying to convince teachers that it is possible to implement the system. We do not oppose the system. Obviously, an OBE package has been implemented in years K-10, but the following two years are obviously problematic. Why will the Premier not delay implementation for one year? Is it because he is worried about the impact on him and that his backing down will be regarded as a backflip? It defies logic that it cannot be delayed for one year when so many high-profile teachers right across the spectrum are claiming that there must be a delay because of the complexity of the issue and the lack of material available for them to implement the package. There is no doubt that in this case the Premier should stand aside the Minister for Education and Training and put somebody else in her place. Perhaps he should give the portfolio to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, although he is already the Minister for Police and Emergency Services; Community Safety; Water Resources; and Sport and Recreation. Perhaps he could take on the education and training portfolio as well; who knows? Is nobody else on the government benches capable of taking over the education and training portfolio? Perhaps the Premier should take it over himself; he has done it before and could do it again. Ultimately it reflects on the Premier that he chose poorly in selecting his ministers, whether it be the Minister for Police and Emergency Services or the Minister for Education and Training, although the Minister for Education and Training was already in the job when the Premier was appointed.

The Premier spoke about former Minister D'Orazio as a rising star. The Premier was finally dragged, kicking and screaming, into taking some action because it was so obvious that the member for Ballajura had to go. In this case the Minister for Education and Training is an embarrassment to the Parliament of Western Australia and to the education system in Western Australia. Her performance is a reflection on her. I heard the minister in the Legislative Council talking about girly things and attacks being made on someone of the fairer sex. That is a nonsense. In the end, she is a minister of the Crown; she needs to be competent and across her portfolio. By all

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her actions today, she has shown that she certainly is not across her portfolio. The Premier must admit that; everyone else in Western Australia knows it. As a minister, her diction also leaves a lot to be desired.

**Mr J.J.M. Bowler:** It is unfortunate for you of all people to adopt that attitude.

**Mr P.D. OMODEI:** Perhaps the member for Murchison-Eyre can take it on!

There is no doubt that the public of Western Australia know that the Minister for Education and Training is not up to handling the Department of Education and Training. Everybody knows that. She has been absent without leave when she should have been fronting up to the public and the media, answering questions and explaining the outcomes-based education system. She has not been seen. A whole raft of excuses have been made, so much so that the Premier of the state had to intervene in the minister's portfolio. Matters progressed to the extent that members of a parliamentary committee demanded a meeting with the Premier. It defies logic for the Premier to say that they did not discuss the matters under inquiry in that committee. That action undermined the committee system in this state, especially as the chairman of committees was also at that meeting. If the Premier believes that the report of the committee will not be compromised by that meeting, he must be living in a different world from the rest of the people in Western Australia. The Premier and his minister have failed the education system in WA, and the Premier should move very quickly to replace the minister with someone who is competent to do the job.

**MR J.H.D. DAY (Darling Range)** [3.03 pm]: This motion is strongly critical of the Minister for Education and Training, not because we seek to be critical in a personal way.

**Mr A.J. Carpenter:** You do that for a bit of fun on the side.

**Mr J.H.D. DAY:** No, not at all. The Premier is unfortunately missing the point. I do not stand in the chamber today to be critical of the minister in a personal sense. That is certainly not our motive, and it is certainly not my motive. However, we have a responsibility, as the official opposition and the alternative government in this state, to raise issues of major public concern, and to seek some serious response and accountability from the government on major policy issues. Unfortunately, that has not been forthcoming from this government and, in particular, from the minister. We are not seeking to criticise the minister on a personal basis; but, on behalf of the public, the teaching profession, the education community, parents and schoolchildren, we are raising these issues because they are real issues that need to be much more effectively addressed by the Minister for Education and Training and by the government.

I am pleased to say that I had the privilege of being a minister for four years, as did the Leader of the Opposition and a number of other members of the opposition. A crucial part of the role is to be in the public arena defending the policies that the minister has a responsibility for implementing. If the minister believes those policies are defensible and necessary, and will be in the public interest and the long-term interest of the state, the minister must go into the community and explain that through the television and print media, and on talkback radio programs on the ABC and 6PR. Unfortunately, the Minister for Education and Training more often than not has been seen running away from the issues of outcomes-based education. She has simply not faced up to the need for accountability and the need to explain to the public and defend the policies that the government is now implementing. The opposition does not pretend that everything about outcomes-based education is all bad; not at all. It has been debated in the past. The whole process started when the coalition was in government. However, there are certainly major concerns about its implementation at the moment. The government has now been in office for five and a half years, and absolutely carries full responsibility for what has happened in that time. Above all, it has a responsibility to ensure that the system put in place will be in the long-term interests of senior school students in this state.

There are real concerns about the system being implemented at the moment, and those concerns have been expressed by a number of teachers in my electorate and elsewhere. The concerns were being strongly expressed in the second half of 2004, when I was the shadow Minister for Education prior to the last election. As I have said in this chamber before, these issues would have been addressed much sooner had there been a change of government at the February 2005 election. In summary, the concerns are about the lack of specific content in many of the courses, and the assessment procedures; that is, the airy-fairy or imprecise assessment processes that will apply under the system proposed to be put in place by the government. Perhaps some of that has started to change, following the Premier's decision to finally become involved in this issue, which I have no doubt is a result of the substantial media pressure.

A third concern relates to the massive workload that will be forced upon many teachers as a result of the proposed changes. I have no doubt, and I think most other members would agree, that teachers who are doing their job well are working very hard. There is no question about that. This additional workload will be imposed

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in a short space of time, when the outcomes from a teaching point of view are not clear, and when there is major concern about the lack of specific course content, the assessment guidelines and procedures, the processes that will apply for the selection of students for universities and so on. Those issues need to be much more effectively addressed than has been the case.

A month or so ago I received a letter from a teacher who is head of department in a government school in country Western Australia. He is known to both me and the Premier. The three of us were at university at the same time, and I am happy to relay his name later if the Premier wishes. Among his comments on OBE, he writes -

The concept is seriously flawed and will do enormous damage to kids. My daughter is undertaking both English and Media in Year 11. The assessments are incredibly convoluted and it seems that the body of knowledge and skills that were once English has now become a series of tasks.

The same fate seems to await other subjects.

I have recently attended Day 2 and Day 3 of the History Courses of Study. I was so annoyed I dashed off a letter to the Minister.

He attached a copy of the letter to the minister, which I have previously referred to in this chamber. Because of the shortage of time, I will not go through it. However, there are real concerns that need to be effectively addressed, not from a political point of view, not to get the spin right, not to get all the cameras filming meetings and so on, but to ensure that children in Western Australia get a good education, one that adequately equips them for their future in a modern world.

**MR B.J. GRYLLS (Merredin - Leader of the National Party)** [3.09 pm]: The National Party supports this motion. During all my time in Parliament, which is now nearly five years, no issue has been handled as badly as the government has handled the implementation of outcomes-based education. The government is saying that we should trust it because it can get it right and that it has everyone back on board. However, if the implementation of outcomes-based education that we have seen to date is any indication of the government's ability to get this process right, we should be very worried. That is exactly the position of the Western Australian community right now. The implementation has been a disaster from day one, which is why the National Party supports this motion. The Minister for Education and Training and the Premier need to take responsibility for what has happened. Three out of four calls to my electorate office are about concerns people have with the education system in regional Western Australia.

My speech on the budget this year was all about the education system. I did not focus on any other issues, just education. Starting next year, years 11 and 12 will have to cope with 17 new courses that have not been sufficiently explained to teachers. I have heard the constant call that they have had 10 years to get it right. If there have been 10 years to get it right, how come it has gone so wrong? If members believe the Premier, they would think that only *The West Australian* is railing against outcomes-based education. I assure the Premier that it is not only *The West Australian* that has problems with outcome-based education. I am sure that every member of this Parliament has spoken to teachers in their electorates about the requirements to operate under this system in 2007 and they are very concerned about it. One example are the teachers at Merredin Senior High School. The majority broadly support the principles of outcomes-based education. However, they believe that the implementation has been a disaster, which is why the Premier and the Minister for Education and Training should be condemned. Those teachers have taken off valuable time - it is very difficult to get relief in Merredin - to come to training courses on this program. However, at that training, the person up front explaining to the teachers from Merredin the principles behind OBE has not been fully trained to deliver that training. That is the level of incompetence of this government. The minister and the Premier need to take responsibility for that.

What has happened now with outcomes-based education? A clandestine meeting was held last week between some members of the Education and Health Standing Committee, which is supposed to be reporting to the Parliament on 29 June.

**Mrs D.J. Guise:** You don't want to mislead Parliament, do you, member?

**Mr B.J. GRYLLS:** The member for Wanneroo will have her chance to speak. I have great respect for her, but there is no way that she should have been at that meeting on the weekend. She knows it and she will have to do much more to explain her position. The member for Central Kimberley-Pilbara, by his own admission in Parliament yesterday, said that members of the Education and Health Standing Committee called for a meeting with the Premier to discuss outcomes-based education. The people who attended that meeting have all said in the Parliament that in no way did they discuss at that meeting any of the issues being considered by the Education and Health Standing Committee. That is not credible.

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*Point of Order*

**Mr R.C. KUCERA:** There is a direct imputation here of improper conduct by three members of this house. The matter being referred to by the member was well debated in this house yesterday and it was found not to be the case. I ask that the member for Merredin withdraw his comments and be a little more temperate in what he is saying about the three members.

**Mr M.W. TRENORDEN:** Yesterday's debate is in *Hansard* for everybody to read. The member for Merredin is giving us a correct representation of yesterday's events and nothing else.

**Mr R.C. KUCERA:** The member implied through his remarks that there was improper conduct by the three members.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr A.P. O'Gorman):** Members, it is unparliamentary to reflect adversely on other members of this chamber or any other chamber, for that matter. I ask the member for Merredin to be very careful about how he passes judgment on people in this chamber and the comments he makes about people in this chamber. I ask him to be very conscious of the remarks he makes. I would like the house to get through this debate without an across-chamber brawl. If remarks such as the remarks made by the member continue, I am sure that the debate will disintegrate into a brawl. I ask members to be very careful about how they frame their remarks.

*Debate Resumed*

**Mr B.J. GRYLLS:** I thank you for your direction, Mr Acting Speaker. The meeting that occurred on the weekend was very disappointing to all members on this side of the chamber as it was to all members of the Parliament. The National Party has a member on that committee and we have given that member full discretion to be true to that committee. That member has never asked a question in Parliament on outcomes-based education. He is doing all of his work on this issue within the confines of the committee and we look forward to the report of that committee on what is probably the most important issue in this state at the moment when it is presented to this chamber at the end of the month. Three Labor members of that committee called a meeting with the Premier. That is what we are extremely disappointed about. It has caused the wider community - they read it in the newspaper today - to be extremely upset about what this committee is doing. We are expecting the committee to make recommendations. I put to the Premier what I believe happened. The chairperson of that committee thought that the committee was going down one path with outcomes-based education, and the minister is going down a completely different path. Therefore, he felt the government would be tremendously embarrassed on 29 June when the report is presented to the Parliament and so somehow he thought that the members needed to steer the Premier into line with the committee's thinking on the issue. That is the public's overwhelming perception of that meeting and that has called into disrepute the members who were not invited to that meeting. When will they have their meeting with the Premier to put forward their concerns? They will get their chance on 29 June through the normal committee process!

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Order! I draw the member's attention to the motion. The motion refers to the condemnation of the Minister for Education and Training and also the Premier for his failure to show leadership. The member's comments relate to the motion that was debated yesterday. I ask the member to bring his comments back to today's motion.

**Mr B.J. GRYLLS:** Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker. I am referring to the last part of the motion that seeks condemnation of the Premier for his failure to show leadership and proper judgment in the management of his ministers. That has a lot of connection to the meeting that was held between half the Education and Health Standing Committee and the Premier.

We have a unique opportunity now to sort out this issue. The government has got the teachers offside, the union offside and it certainly has regional teachers in Western Australia offside. This is a major change to the education of our years 11 and 12 students and there has been no leadership shown by the minister or by the Premier and when, finally, the Premier steps into the argument, his actions are shrouded in the mystery of what happened in his meeting with the three members of the committee, and those three members are now asking us to believe that the considerations of the committee were not discussed. That is very disappointing and the community remains concerned about the implementation of OBE.

My final point is how can the teachers and the schools of Western Australia sell outcomes-based education to the parents and the children when the government cannot sell it to the teachers? The people who will be required to deliver this program to our kids do not want it to be implemented. They suggest its implementation needs major change, which is why the Premier should be condemned and the Minister for Education and Training should pull up her socks.

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**MR M.W. TRENORDEN (Avon)** [3.19 pm]: This debate can be put into a nutshell. The performance of the Minister for Education and Training and the government over the past three weeks on outcomes-based education has reached crisis point. It does not matter whether the Premier blames *The West Australian* for what has happened. We all know the point this debate has reached. The Premier has had to take a role in the debate. However, the rest of us have been around in the past three weeks also and we know that the Premier is not the only person involved. Everyone around the Premier who is concerned about his welfare as Premier and his standing as the Premier will be in the Department of the Premier and Cabinet working like beavers to make sure that this comes out the right way. I would suggest that the Premier has had more advice in the past two months than he would previously have had in his lifetime.

**Mr A.J. Carpenter:** No.

**Mr M.W. TRENORDEN:** He would have come very close to it. There is no question that the Premier has had a team of people giving him advice on how to handle this process and how to rein it in. The government's inability to handle OBE will be a significant anchor around his neck. The Premier has gone for crisis management, part of which has involved meeting with three members of the committee, which should never have occurred.

**MR A.J. CARPENTER (Willagee - Premier)** [3.21 pm]: I am grateful for the opportunity to respond to the matter of public interest. Outcomes-based education is a significant change in education for years 11 and 12. It has been a long time coming. We have been going through the development and implementation of outcomes-based education for the best part of a decade in Western Australia and for as long or longer in other parts of the world. It is true that a level of concern has developed in Western Australia about outcomes-based education and the new courses of study that will be implemented in years 11 and 12 this year and next year. Everybody who has been involved in education, either as a minister, a bureaucrat, a policy writer, a teacher or through working at a school, would verify the assertion that making a significant change in education is very rarely, if ever, easy. It is difficult. It can easily be derailed because the fallback position is the status quo.

I maintain the position that the overwhelming majority of teachers support the direction of outcomes-based education. We clearly support it because we are the implementing agent. I have no reason to believe otherwise. In fact, my belief has been confirmed as a result of discussions I have had over the past few weeks with representatives of the teaching community, who say that the overwhelming majority of their members support the direction in which we are going. The concerns were about implementation, a lack of defined context - that is, the syllabus - and the perception of a lack of comparability between students and schools. That comparability is very, very important to teachers who are accustomed to the pedagogical technique that many of them have honed over a long career. Very, very good teachers have these concerns. We are not talking about lazy or bad teachers; we are talking about very, very good teachers who have genuine concerns about those issues. As the member for Darling Range and the Leader of the Opposition said, there were also concerns about the assessment process and the capacity of teachers to make assessments against the outcomes that they were teaching towards or their students were moving towards as they went through their courses of study. The assessment process caused some concerns as well, as did workload issues.

I believed that we could resolve those issues. I did not believe that going into a delay mode was the right thing to do. I have firmed that view after the discussions I had in the past few weeks and by seeing the response to the question of whether OBE should be repealed from years K-10. That is now being addressed. I have seen the assertion made that the Western Australian government has identified problems with OBE and that therefore raises the question of whether we should not get rid of the outcomes-based approach throughout schools. The vast majority of serious educators do not want that to happen. I can see us going towards that point if we go into a delay mode. I believe that would happen. We would all live to regret that.

We have the time, the opportunity, the capacity and the ability to address the concerns of the teachers and the educators, and that is what we are doing right now. We are addressing those concerns. It is passing strange that we are being condemned for seeking to address those concerns. Members of this Parliament who were quite rightly concerned about those issues and brought those concerns to my attention are being condemned. Assertions are being made that they acted improperly by raising those concerns. I think they acted quite properly. They brought those concerns to my attention and wanted to make sure that I understood that those concerns were genuine. It is difficult to implement reform. I said it in question time and I will not dwell on it here. The Leader of the Opposition drifted into this domain himself.

Mixed up in this whole matrix has been a personalised attack on the Minister for Education and Training. I think the Leader of the Opposition did it himself inadvertently. He started saying that even her diction shows that she should not be education minister. He should not have said that. He realises what he said and now he is trying to

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retreat from his comments. I think he said that even her diction portrayed her as being unsuitable for the position. If the Leader of the Opposition had had more time to reflect upon those words, I do not believe he would have said them. He knows it is not right. We all know in this chamber that the personalisation of the attack on the Minister for Education has been completely outrageous. I do not expect members to confirm it across the chamber, because people are watching, but the Leader of the Opposition knows it is true. It is absolutely outrageous. It is unforgivable. It is sad that we are in that position. I say to the Leader of the Opposition and members opposite that that personalised attack in politics will get worse. I think we are seeing only the beginning of it. Members know whom I am talking about. Having the journalists concerned ringing up ministers and the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and apologising for it is no excuse. Having the lame excuse that "the editor rewrote my story" is no excuse. It is disgraceful. I do not care if it is the only place to work in town. There is no excuse for it. Members have to have some integrity in their professional life. That personalised attack was unnecessary. It has come into this issue and complicated it even more. Of course there is a reaction from the person concerned; she is a human being. However, I stand by her. She has done a damned good job in these very difficult circumstances to try to make sure that this difficult reform goes ahead.

In relation to my own position, I accept responsibility for some of the problems that we have had because of the way that I have addressed the matter, ebullient -

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** Ebullient?

**Mr A.J. CARPENTER:** Whatever the word is; I am probably looking for a stronger word. The style of some of the responses that I have had -

**Mr P.D. Omodei:** Arrogant.

**Mr A.J. CARPENTER:** Does the Leader of the Opposition think I am arrogant?

**Mr R.F. Johnson:** What is stronger than bullying?

**Mr A.J. CARPENTER:** Members know what I mean. I accept some responsibility because of the way in which I have approached the issue. However, I get that way; I was brought up that way.

**Mr R.C. Kucera:** Robust.

**Mr A.J. CARPENTER:** Yes, robust. I think the Minister for Education and Training is sticking to outcomes-based education because it is in the best interests of children.

The Leader of the National Party made some comments. There was a meeting on the weekend. The members he spoke about were not involved in any clandestine meeting on the weekend. The people involved in the clandestine meeting on the weekend represented the union, the Catholic Education Office, the Department of Education and Training, the Curriculum Council, without written direction, and me, all chaired by the minister. That was our clandestine meeting on the weekend. We want to resolve the issue. I took on board commentary from all sorts of people. Friends of mine who are teachers in schools raised issues with me and suggested ways forward, and I followed those suggestions. I said in Parliament yesterday that the former Leader of the Opposition, the member for Cottesloe, made some very good suggestions. What is wrong with that? It is good to have these people come forward with suggestions. I defend the Minister for Education and Training. As for my own circumstances, if the Parliament decides that I have so mismanaged the issue that I should be officially condemned, let that occur.

**Mr M.W. Trenorden:** It may not occur.

**Mr A.J. CARPENTER:** It may not. A number of other members want to speak on this issue, so I will finish my comments by saying this: this is a reform. I thank all those schoolteachers who have raised concerns, because I think we will get a better outcome as a result. I thank Greg Williams and the People Lobbying Against Teaching Outcomes for raising concerns, because I think we will get a better result in the end. I thank all those people in the education system who have raised their concerns, because I think we will get a better result in the end. However, that does not mean that we were wrong about everything. We wanted to make sure that we got this reform through. I am confident that we will in the end and that we will get a very good system as a result.

**MRS D.J. GUISE (Wanneroo - Deputy Speaker)** [3.31 pm]: Before I begin, and given some allegations that have been made in this place, I temper my remarks by saying that any comments I make have already been made on the public record. I have the same right to contribute to the debate on this motion as the member for Churchlands had to speak about OBE during the budget debate. I take it that, as members of Parliament, we are not entirely gagged from discussing the subject.

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I will address the motion, which seeks to condemn people for alleged mismanagement and lack of leadership. This is quite a complex issue. It has been a little over 10 years in the making. Norman Moore started the proposed changes in 1994 with a broad review. Another review was undertaken between 1998 and 2002. In 2003 a post-compulsory education review of the adapted courses of study was released. In September 2005 a post-compulsory education review of the professional development plan was released. Further information has subsequently been released about the courses of study and the Western Australian Certificate of Education. The point is that this is not a simple matter; it is quite complex. The Minister for Education and Training, in recognising some of the issues that were emerging, managed to ensure that a task force was established in July 2005. In December 2005 the interim report of the Education and Health Standing Committee was released.

**Mr P.D. Omodei:** What does it say?

**Mrs D.J. GUISE:** Notably, the recommendations in that report, which are on page 13, have all been adhered to by the Curriculum Council, under the management of the same minister whom members opposite are trying to condemn for not managing the issue. That is an interesting concept.

**Mr P.D. Omodei:** What about the concerns of teachers?

**Mrs D.J. GUISE:** Some of the concerns that were raised and that were indicated in the committee report tabled in this house have been addressed. How can that be mismanagement? That is attention to the task at hand. All those recommendations have been met. Since then, issues relating to language, the content syllabus format of the new courses of study and assessment have emerged through public debate, in newspapers and through the concerns raised by teachers, union representatives and so forth. A lot of these issues relate to confidence. These issues were raised in the context of readiness by interested parties, including the State School Teachers' Union of WA, the independent teachers' union, members of PLATO and others.

**Mr P.D. Omodei:** Parents.

**Mrs D.J. GUISE:** Yes, and parents. As I have said, they have been raised in *The West Australian* and community newspapers and in meetings with people. I am sure that many members of Parliament have received information both for and against OBE. It was not all doom and gloom. Concerns might have been raised about the management of the change during the past 10 years, but there has also been a broad community of support for the implementation of the change. There is a large consensus of opinion that the intent of this change has never been questioned. The intent of opening up pathways for students to pursue in their post-compulsory years so that they are not locked out of entry into tertiary studies has never been questioned. Letters to the editor and so on from schools, parents and others have also provided feedback in a public forum. The transcript of the committee's public hearings also can be referred to.

The point I am trying to make is that there has been a lot to manage in this change, and I think the minister has addressed the issues. Can I agree to a motion that condemns a minister who has been working with the Curriculum Council and the Department of Education and Training to address all those management issues and the concerns that have been raised and who has also listened in more recent times to further concerns about building confidence and readiness? No, I do not think I can. If the minister were so out of touch, as she has been accused of being by the opposition, she would not have been doing any of those things, and she has been. Has the Premier shown leadership and supported his minister? Yes, he quite clearly has. Has he listened? Yes, he quite clearly has. Can I agree with a motion that condemns both the minister and the Premier for their management of and leadership on this matter? No, I do not think I can. How could I do so when they are actively listening to ensure that our students have the best possible outcome and when they are addressing the issues that have been raised by the very people whom the opposition is accusing them of not listening to? They are being condemned for being guilty of listening, managing and making changes and refinements, as requested by the teachers in this state who have not been engaged. Can the Premier and the minister be condemned for being guilty of listening to and making the changes asked for by the very people who have approached them? How can people be condemned for that? I do not think they can.

Having made those comments, if members read the transcript of the public hearings of the committee, they will see the concerns that I have expressed before and have just expressed again, which are now being addressed. The committee discussions and deliberations and the report of the committee are obtained from the very same views that I have expressed in-house and from those that have not been made public. Those views will be reflected fully and properly in the report of the committee, just as they should and will be.

**Mr C.J. Barnett:** Did you inform other members of the committee that you were meeting with the Premier?

**Mrs D.J. GUISE:** Mate, I do not have to. As a member of the Labor caucus, when I wish to speak to my leader as the member for Wanneroo, I have every right to do so, and every member opposite has the same right to do



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that. It would have been a committee meeting only if it had been something that had been discussed within the committee, and the member knows it. There is a very big difference between that and a breach of parliamentary privilege, and we did not do that, as I stated yesterday.

**Mr C.J. Barnett:** That is for the Parliament to determine, not you.

**Mrs D.J. GUISE:** Exactly. I am well aware of that. I might ask the same question of the member: can he look me in the eye and tell me that he has not had any discussions with any member of the Education and Health Standing Committee?

**Mr C.J. Barnett:** Yes.

**Mrs D.J. GUISE:** The member can do that absolutely? That is interesting.

**MR M.P. WHITELY (Bassendean)** [3.39 pm]: It is interesting that the opposition has displayed angst and vehemence on this issue. It is doing so not when things are going badly, but when they are going well. The opposition became engaged not when there appeared to be a problem, but when we have a solution. The opposition got involved not when people were arguing, but now when people are agreeing.

I had concerns about the performance of the minister and the Premier. They were on the public record; they were in the newspaper this morning. I raised them with the Premier and the minister. They have addressed them. They have done a brilliant job and they have brought this debate a long way in a very short time frame. They deserve to be congratulated for their performance.

I had dinner last night with two key players in this debate. In many ways, they have characterised this debate. They are two people who have been regarded as protagonists. I refer to the Minister for Education and Training and the founder of People Lobbying Against Teaching Outcomes, Mr Greg Williams. I must admit that it was a bit like chaperoning a first dinner date. I can report - it may concern the Deputy Premier somewhat - that it went very well. I am confident there will be more discussions and perhaps even a second date. I am happy to say that I played a key role in facilitating a meeting of minds. I am convinced that the Minister for Education and Training and the person who has been portrayed as her protagonist have only one interest at heart, which is the interests of children in Western Australia. They are children such as my son, who is in year 10, and who is about to make his subject selections for next year. I can assure members on the other side that my loyalty to my son is much higher than my loyalty to the Labor Party. I will not jeopardise his future and I will not compromise my views. I am pleased to say that we are seeing progress and that we are building towards a consensus. As I said last night, the players on both sides of this debate have erroneously assumed that their views are polarised. I have met with people like Greg Williams from PLATO; I first met with him 14 months ago. I met him in my capacity as a member of Parliament before the parliamentary inquiry took any evidence. It may even have been before any inquiry was called for. Similarly, I had a meeting with the Premier a couple of weeks ago in my capacity as a member of Parliament and a member of the government. I have met with Greg about three or four times over the past week. I wanted to find out what his specific concerns are and what could be done. I thought that people are so far apart on this issue that we would not be able to get anywhere. His concerns are largely my concerns. They are concerns I have put on the public record; they are in *Hansard*. One is the need to obtain a plain English syllabus. Another is the need for assessment that is simple and allows teachers to assess students in the time-honoured and old-fashioned method of having objectives and outcomes, converting them into a test, and then marking the results with a numerical scale. There are also concerns about the embedding of values that are worth up to 25 per cent in hard science courses such as physics and chemistry. The concerns are real and valid. They are coming from a range of forums. They have been my concerns as well. They are concerns that have been acted on by the Minister for Education and Training and the Premier.

Hindsight is a great thing. I am sure that everybody in this debate would have regrets about the way in which they have handled particular issues at particular times. We would all have done things a bit differently. I might have engaged earlier with Greg Williams to try to find some common ground if I had known differently. People have misunderstood this debate. It has become a debate in which each side has perceived the other as purist. PLATO made a mistake when it called itself People Lobbying Against Teaching Outcomes. Greg Williams is not against teaching outcomes; he says that teachers have always done that. He is not against assessing outcomes for children in the vocational, non-academic stream. He would concede that the PLATO title is catchy and that it has a good ring to it. I think he would concede that it is a misnomer. It is a misnomer that portrays his side of the debate as a purist side of the debate. I think the use of the term "OBE" has been wrong as well because it is not pure outcomes-based education. As soon as a scaling test is introduced and marks are adjusted for academic ability and there is a move away from assessing against education descriptors, it is no longer pure OBE. The two sides of the debate perceive the other as purist. Both are wrong. If I have become convinced of anything at all recently, it is that both sides of the debate have much more in common than they have differences.

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It is the move away from seeing the debate in a purist sense that is allowing solutions to develop. We have seen the best components of the current system embedded and protected, and we are seeing the best components of the new system introduced. It has happened later than should have been the case for a host of reasons. Public debate about important issues such as education happen in a fog of misunderstanding and misinterpretation. I am very pleased that we are at last getting some clarity and understanding. I am very pleased with the work of the Minister for Education and Training and the Premier in helping to deliver commonsense outcomes. I am very pleased and confident that my son is going forward to a bright future along with all the other children in year 10 who will be the first children through the new system.

**MR P.W. ANDREWS (Southern River)** [3.45 pm]: I went to a state-of-the-art school along with the members for Bunbury and Fremantle and the previous member for South Perth. When I say “state of the art” the only thing state of the art about it was the brand-new canes that the brothers used every single day of the week! Times change. The world is a different place today. Technology has changed; the world moves on. If we went back to 1970 and looked at what a classroom at Marist Brothers in Bunbury was like, it would be the following. A student would arrive in the morning and sit down. He would not speak all day. Writing consisted of copying poems. Learning the poems was done in a student’s own time. A student had to come into class and recite one line after the other. If the student got it wrong, he got a belting. What about science? There was a chemistry laboratory next door but there were no chemicals in it. We were not allowed to go into the building anyway. We had to learn our chemistry from a textbook without doing any experiments. Thankfully, that style of education is a thing of the past. It was a product of the time. The brothers were not trained as teachers and most of them were older chaps.

People talk about the content of courses and getting back to basics. The basics in those days were not particularly good at all. The whole emphasis of teaching in those days was the magic content of knowledge that was supposedly there. The children were supposed to go to school to learn the content of knowledge. The reality was that for most of the time I was at school we were all told to sit down and shut up.

A couple of years ago I looked at an old Junior Certificate paper. Most members in this house would have sat for the old Junior Certificate. One question in the English section was to name three poems by Banjo Paterson, as though there were some magic attached to knowing the names of the poems. The question did not ask for an evaluation of the poems or to have any critical thinking in that way. It did not ask students to comment on the context of the poems in relation to Australian history or culture. The examination was not interested in history or culture; it was just whether students knew the names of any poems. What sort of students did that produce? We would not want to use the four members from this place as examples but a lot of the guys I went to school with could not read even by the time they left school. They were made to sit down all day and stare at their books. That is what they did. That was fairly typical. The only time we got to speak during the day was at 12 o’clock when we said the rosary.

Along came the Achievement Certificate. It was a huge step forward. It meant that we had children in schools who were working towards a magic mark of 67 per cent or, in those days, 50 per cent, which was the pass mark. The setting of the mark was arbitrary. However, the Achievement Certificate was a huge step in the right direction because for the first time there was a de-emphasis on some magic piece of knowledge. Children worked on a particular project and, at the end of the project, they would have a certain set of knowledge and a certain set of skills and attitudes. In the latter part of the 1970s, values education came into being. Prior to that, it was very much the case that values was a word that was not used very much at state schools. Of course today, values teaching is a key part of education in any school, not just in Catholic schools. The achievement certificate was a huge step forward.

Then the unit curriculum came in. When I started teaching in 1977, one of the things I noted was that a teacher was given a class to walk into, and at that time there was very little in the way of a true syllabus in years 8, 9 and 10. That was because teachers were told to be innovative. In any group of teachers, it will always be found that 10 per cent are really innovative people who can get to the individual students, work out what they need in life, design individual programs and then implement those programs by tailoring them to individual needs. The vast majority of teachers - I use this expression in the right way - want to be led to the point at which they can actually implement a program. Some teachers will never reach that point. I have run out of time, but suffice it to say that I do not support this motion.

**DR E. CONSTABLE (Churchlands)** [3.51 pm]: I will take a moment or two to clarify and correct a statement made by the member for Wanneroo in her contribution to this debate. She claimed in her speech that, in my contribution to the budget debate, I spoke about outcomes-based education. That is, in fact, not correct. I think the Treasurer was in the chamber for my entire speech, which was about the financial consequences of the change in school entry age. I was talking about whether year 7 students should be in primary schools or

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secondary schools; if there was to be a change, we needed to think about the costs. The other subject I spoke about was the Australian Surf Life Saving Championships at Scarborough. It is really important that the record be corrected. The member for Wanneroo has misrepresented what my budget speech was about.

**Mrs D.J. Guise:** If I have done so, I apologise.

**DR S.C. THOMAS (Capel)** [3.52 pm]: Let us examine the outcomes-based education policy of the government. Perhaps we can rank it on a scale from 1 to 8, the way outcomes-based education is ranked. At level 1, which the government has probably achieved, is the understanding of the need for an education system. I think the government has managed that. Level 2 could well be the understanding that the changes to the system will involve the training of students in years 11 and 12. I think the government has managed that one as well. Level 3 involves the understanding of the need for staff, the majority of whom are teachers, and to get staff to do the teaching. If the government is to achieve level 4, it must help the teachers to understand how they are to teach. There are some questions about whether the government has achieved level 4. At level 5, the teachers would understand how and what they were going to teach. I am afraid the government cannot be given a pass on level 5. At level 6, there would be community and stakeholder, including teacher, acceptance of the system and preparedness for it. I am afraid that public opinion would suggest that the government has not achieved that level.

**Mr E.S. Ripper:** That sounds like gobbledegook.

**Dr S.C. THOMAS:** Well, yes - this is an outcomes-based education assessment of the scheme. An outcomes-based assessment of the government at level 7 would be that it would make the system work, because that is the ultimate test. Level 8 in the outcomes-based assessment, which everyone knows is a very difficult level to achieve, and many students will never reach it, is to make OBE work perfectly. If we assess the government on that assessment system, I suggest it is sitting at about level 3 or level 4. If we gave it an A to D assessment, which is required by the federal government, I suggest that the old-fashioned report card would have "improvement needed, could do better" written on it.

**Mr C.J. Barnett:** Repeat the year.

**Dr S.C. THOMAS:** Yes, perhaps repeat the year. That is basically what everybody on this side of the house is asking for. We say that, under the outcomes-based education system, the government has not quite got there, and should repeat the year.

Question put and a division taken with the following result -

Ayes (21)

Mr C.J. Barnett	Mr M.J. Cowper	Mr D.T. Redman	Ms S.E. Walker
Mr D.F. Barron-Sullivan	Mr J.H.D. Day	Mr A.J. Simpson	Mr G.A. Woodhams
Mr M.J. Birney	Mr B.J. Grylls	Mr G. Snook	Dr S.C. Thomas ( <i>Teller</i> )
Mr T.R. Buswell	Dr K.D. Hames	Mr T.R. Sprigg	
Mr G.M. Castrilli	Mr J.E. McGrath	Mr M.W. Trenorden	
Dr E. Constable	Mr P.D. Omodei	Mr T.K. Waldron	

Noes (25)

Mr P.W. Andrews	Mr J.N. Hyde	Ms S.M. McHale	Mr P.B. Watson
Mr J.J.M. Bowler	Mr J.C. Kobelke	Mr A.D. McRae	Mr M.P. Whitely
Mr A.J. Carpenter	Mr R.C. Kucera	Mr M.P. Murray	Mr B.S. Wyatt
Mr J.B. D'Orazio	Mr F.M. Logan	Ms M.M. Quirk	Mr S.R. Hill ( <i>Teller</i> )
Dr J.M. Edwards	Ms A.J.G. MacTiernan	Ms J.A. Radisich	
Mrs D.J. Guise	Mr J.A. McGinty	Mr E.S. Ripper	
Mrs J. Hughes	Mr M. McGowan	Mr T.G. Stephens	

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Pairs

Ms K. Hodson-Thomas	Mr D.A. Templeman
Dr G.G. Jacobs	Mrs C.A. Martin
Mr R.F. Johnson	Mr J.R. Quigley

Question thus negatived.