

NON-GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS, GOVERNMENT FUNDING

**1148. Mr A.P. O'GORMAN to the Minister for Education and Training:**

Will the minister advise the House of the decision to reorganise state government funding of the non-government school sector?

**Mr A.J. CARPENTER replied:**

I thank the member for Joondalup for the question, and I appreciate his enthusiastic support for my decision on the funding of non-government schools in Western Australia. Before I go to the detail of this matter, I want to take up some of the criticisms of my decision that have been made today by the member for Darling Range, and point him, lest he not be aware of it, to the comment from the Western Australian Director of Catholic Education, Ron Dullard, who is quoted in today's *The West Australian* as saying that "the new package was fair".

Mr J.H.D. Day: Will you also be quoting Audrey Jackson?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I will get to that. The effect of what I have done is that the 14 highest fee-charging schools in Western Australia will receive in dollar terms next year exactly the same amount that they received this year. It is arguable that that is a cut in real terms, although I notice that the Opposition does not apply that logic when it is talking about health funding from the Commonwealth. I have then reorganised the way funding is distributed to non-government schools so that the neediest schools will get the most. What sort of sin or crime has been committed here? It is no wonder that Ron Dullard, who represents the Catholic school system, which is generally funded on a low-fee basis, says the decision is fair. He says that because it is fair.

Mr J.H.D. Day: Does it apply to all Catholic schools?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Is Mr Dullard wrong in his assessment?

Mr J.H.D. Day: Mr Dullard is entitled to his views, but there are other schools in the sector as well that need to have their views heard. You are being divisive and populist, and you are engaging in a cheap little stunt to try to divert attention from the schoolteachers dispute.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I am wounded by the savage attack from the normally mild-mannered and genial member for Darling Range, but I will get over it. Audrey Jackson is the Executive Director of the Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia, which represents all of the independent, and some - very few - of the Catholic, non-government schools, including the 14 top fee-charging schools. It is unlikely that she would applaud the decision that I have made; and she has not. She has put her point of view, which is that this decision reflects my, and the Government's, personal and political views. She is absolutely right. It does. That view is that we should be fair and equitable to everybody.

We have addressed an anomaly; namely, the inequitable situation that was developed by the commonwealth Liberal-National Party Government when Dr Kemp, through a ridiculous decision that was criticised at the time by the then Minister for Education, channelled additional millions of dollars into the richest schools in Australia. That was an absolutely absurd decision. What has happened, for example, is that although the Commonwealth's increase in funding per student in Western Australian government high schools has gone up in three years by \$110 per student, the same funding for Bunbury Cathedral Grammar School has gone up by \$2 288 per student.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Let us hear from the member for Bunbury. Does he support you on this?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: The member for Bunbury supports me; I have discussed the issue with him. Anyone who supports that distribution of funding as delivered by the Commonwealth is a fool, because it opens up a massive division between the highest income earning schools and the other schools - the haves, who are supported by, unfortunately in this case, the member for Darling Range and his associates, and the have-nots, who are supported by us, and I think also members of the National Party. The member for Darling Range, in one of his criticisms, says that I, as education minister, must remember that I am representing everybody and have a responsibility for everybody. That is exactly why I have made this decision. It is my responsibility to make sure that the system is funded equitably and properly, and I have. I am proud of this decision. It is the right decision. I challenge members opposite to announce that after the next election they will return to a system that is pouring millions into the richest schools by taking it away from the poorer schools. The reason the member for Darling Range describes it as populist is that people support it.