

OUTCOMES-BASED EDUCATION, TEACHERS' CONCERNS

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

Following the minister's recent meeting with the State School Teachers' Union of WA at which she was presented with its survey results indicating that nearly 80 per cent of state schoolteachers have either decided to quit or are contemplating it as a result of the stress being placed on them by the outcomes-based education system, and given that the majority of teachers report considerable increases in workloads as a result of phase 2 of the curriculum improvement program, and that there is a lack of satisfaction with the way in which teachers' questions and concerns have been addressed, will the minister finally acknowledge that there are major problems with the disastrous implementation of curriculum changes in Western Australia; and, further, will she explain why she seems to be the only person still insisting that the further introduction of curriculum changes should proceed without delay or review?

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH replied:

The survey was undertaken against a backdrop of enterprise bargaining agreement negotiations. We are moving into a period of negotiation with the State School Teachers' Union of WA. Having said that, I did not meet personally with the State School Teachers' Union; it had a meeting with senior officers in my office. I am aware of the survey and I understand that about 600 survey forms were sent to union members. There were about 180 responses. There is no doubt that there is a level of dissatisfaction in a pocket of membership of the State School Teachers' Union.

However, the State School Teachers' Union held an election recently, which was basically on curriculum changes, and outcomes and standards in education. The current Secretary of the State School Teachers' Union - who has been the secretary for some length of time, has sat on the Curriculum Council and has been involved in the development of new courses and a range of issues related to curriculum changes - was overwhelmingly returned, with an increased majority. I put on record that the notion that I should abandon an eight-year reform program and deny opportunities to Western Australian students because of 180 responses to a survey of teachers is just breathtaking. I am amazed that Hon Barry House thinks that I would turn around an eight-year reform program on the basis of 180 survey responses. The simple fact is that students will, for the first time, be able to undertake a course of study that is entirely relevant to them. We know - everyone knows - that historically years 11 and 12 have been geared to the 30 per cent of students who intend to attend university. We know that the curriculum has not been adequate in meeting the needs of all students. Why would I deny students in years 11 and 12 in the next few years the opportunity to undertake courses in aviation, engineering, media, production and analysis? Why would I deny Western Australian students the opportunity to undertake courses in applied information technology, computer science, music and a range of other studies, including vocational and education training options that will give them qualifications recognised by the Australian qualifications framework? They will be able to conclude up to two years' of an apprenticeship in years 11 and 12. They will be able for the first time to leave year 12 with half an apprenticeship under their belt, and that will be a qualification that is transferable across the nation and recognised nationally. Why would I, as the Minister for Education and Training, want to deny opportunities to Western Australian students?

Hon Barry House: Because the implementation has been a disaster.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: How ridiculous Hon Barry House must look. I must prepare students for the twenty-first century, not leave them locked back 30 years in time. For goodness sake, Hon Barry House should get real and get his head around it. The world has moved on. These students need to be prepared for a productive life and I am going to give the students of Western Australia every opportunity to succeed.

Hon Simon O'Brien: You are just a bag of wind! Stop the rhetoric! Sit down and let us get on with the business of the house. Put away your little folder and let's get on with business.

Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH: Hon Simon O'Brien is a disgrace!