

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN COLLEGE OF TEACHING

458. Mr T.K. WALDRON to the Minister for Education and Training:

I refer to the Western Australian College of Teaching and its registration process for teachers wishing to teach in Western Australian schools.

- (1) In light of the current shortage of teachers, why is the WACOT registration process fraught with delays and what action will the minister take to speed up the registration process?
- (2) Has WACOT held elections for teacher representatives for its board of management; and, if not, when will this occur?
- (3) Can the minister advise what benefits teachers get for their \$70 annual membership of WACOT?
- (4) What action will be taken against those teachers who do not pay their membership fee?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

I thank the member for Wagin for his question about the Western Australian College of Teaching.

- (1)-(4) For the information of the member for Wagin and other members of the house, the WA College of Teaching was established with bipartisan agreement in Parliament. The bill was passed with the support of the National Party and the Liberal Party. The bill established a college of teaching to be run by teachers. The model we opted for was one that gave the teaching profession a professional body. I understand that the Liberal Party had a policy to that effect before the 2005 state election, and I suspect the National Party also had a similar policy. The college was created by members of both sides of Parliament.

Anecdotally, I have heard stories about some slowness in the processing of applications.

Mr P.D. Omodei: Why don't you respond to the questions from the member in the upper house, Hon Peter Collier?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, Leader of the Opposition!

Mr M. McGOWAN: Madam Deputy Speaker, I am trying to answer the question. I have heard anecdotally that on occasion some people have had difficulties with the length of the process. I have spoken to Dr Suzanne Parry, who runs WACOT, on a couple of occasions about that issue. I have said to her that I do not think the amount of time being taken is acceptable if there are processing difficulties when a person should not experience those difficulties. Sometimes there is difficulty obtaining past performance records, references, criminal record checks and so forth, and that might slow the process at some point. However, I have spoken to her and she has given me an assurance that everything that needs to be done to speed up the process will be done.

A bill was recently passed by Parliament to provide for the election to be held. I understand that the election process will be concluded before the last day of the school year. WACOT has advised me that the election will be held this year. The college is a professional body. It has been established to provide professional development for, and advice to, teachers. I have seen some of its publications and they are quite good. Members must remember that the college has only just started operating. I have heard some teachers complain about the \$70 fee, which is tax deductible, so in effect it will be a \$50 fee per annum. I have heard some teachers complain about their professional body. All I can say to them is: give it a go; it has only just started. I do not think they have given the college a fair chance to get up to speed if they are slagging it off a few months after it has started. I encourage WACOT to perform its task. Once the election process has been completed, a lot of the problems will settle down.

BUSSELTON HOSPITAL

459. Mr M.P. MURRAY to the Minister for South West:

- (1) Can the minister advise the house of the government's plans to build a new hospital for the people of Busselton?
- (2) Is he aware of any other views?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

- (1)-(2) The government has a wonderful plan to build a new hospital for the people of Busselton. It will be a \$65 million new facility, expanding the number of beds from 50 to 75 to service the needs of the people of Busselton, Dunsborough, Yallingup and surrounding areas. It is a wonderful plan put together by this government to meet the needs of the people of Busselton and the surrounding region. I would have thought that most people in this place who were to have a \$65 million new hospital built in the middle of their electorate would be kind of happy about the fact. However, that is not so.

Mr T. Buswell: It is \$77 million now.