

Mr President,

On Thursday, 21st August 2014 the Hon. Sue Ellery asked question 866 regarding voluntary schools fees. I have further information for the Member which I seek leave to have incorporated into *Hansard*.

(1 -2) The *School Education Act 1999* provides that no student of compulsory school age can be denied access to the standard curriculum because of unwillingness or inability to pay charges or contributions. There are limits on voluntary contributions, being \$60 for primary and community kindergarten students and \$235 for secondary students. The actual value of voluntary contributions and charges sought from parents is determined by principals and may be set lower than these limits.

There are no voluntary contributions applicable for year 11 and 12 students. However, there are course charges in years 11 and 12, reflecting the higher cost of delivering particular subjects. For example, a subject may require a student to consume certain materials or allow them to own a finished article produced with certain materials. These charges are compulsory. The Education Program Allowance through the Secondary Assistance Scheme provides \$235 towards these costs for eligible parents.

In cases of financial hardship, principals may also provide payment options including instalments, deferred payments and discounts.

Notwithstanding the above, principals will ensure that all students in years 11 and 12 are able to choose an educational program that satisfies the requirements of the School Curriculum and Standards Authority, regardless of whether parents make a payment or not. This assurance provides students with a pathway to the achievement of the Western Australian Certificate of Education.

The Department of Education is currently reviewing the legislative and regulatory arrangements in this area, which have not changed since 2000.