

## **GRIEVANCE**

**Hon Paul Papalia MLA representing Hon Sue Ellery MLC**

**Minister for Education and Training**

### **FUNDING CUTS AND THE PRIVATISATION OF ACCESS TO ROSSMOYNE AND WILLETTON SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS**

- I am responding today on behalf of the Minister for Education and Training.
- It's important to state, for the record, that this Government completely disagrees with the premise of this grievance.
- To suggest that Western Australian public schools are being privatised is completely false and misleading.
- No public school in Western Australia is being 'privatised'.
- We have had to assume, given the Member's media commentary, that his issue is with the Department of Education's plan to increase the number of international students able to study at WA schools through the selective entry program.
- There is nothing new about Western Australian schools enrolling fee-paying international students.

- In fact, both primary and secondary public schools, have enrolled international students since 1984.
- Students living in the local intake area will continue to be guaranteed a place at their local school.
- Enrolment is also guaranteed for students selected for a Gifted and Talented Program at a particular school.
- These guarantees have not changed.
- What is new is this – unlike the previous government, we have a plan to improve and expand international education in this State.
- International education creates jobs; it helps diversify our economy; it promotes cultural diversity and acceptance.
- Having overseas students in our schools helps students build international relationships, learn about other cultures and gain global perspectives.

That's why, for the first time in WA, we have a plan to actively market and promote WA schools internationally with a range of different programs to support the growth of the international education sector in WA.

- This Government has listened to feedback from the international education sector, including Study Perth and education agents, who often raised the issue of lack of access to Western Australia's top

performing public schools as a barrier to expanding international education at the school level.

- On 31 October, Executive Director, StudyPerth Phil Payne said:
  - *“The Department of Education's initiatives aim to grow this number, incrementally and judiciously, to ensure that all parties benefit.*
  - *“One initiative will offer a very limited number of places to international students to study in one of seven of the Department’s most sought after schools. It is anticipated this initiative will be very popular with international students and their families, and will strengthen the brand of WA international education in overseas markets.*
  - *“Lack of access to the state's top performing public schools has been a barrier to the much-needed expansion of international education in Western Australia.”*
- Under the selective entry program, a maximum of five international students will be admitted each year, depending on the availability of places at each school.
- If the school does not have capacity, the intake will not occur.
- Local students will not be disadvantaged.
- The Member should also be aware that schools do not make a profit from the enrolment of international students.

- The fees charged are formulated on a cost-recovery basis of what it costs to educate them.
- In 2019, there are 312,000 students enrolled at public schools in Western Australia. In Semester 1, there were 774 international enrolments. That's 0.25 per cent of total enrolments. Hardly an over-reliance on fee-paying students.
- School principals will manage student intake into this program – they will be able to clearly determine if they have places available.
- No intake will occur at all in any year if there is no capacity. Schools will make this assessment based on the Act and Regulations.
- For some reason the Member does not have faith in the Principals of Willetton and Rossmoyne to manage that.
- Given this semester the Principals are currently managing enrolments of more than 2100 students at Rossmoyne, and more than 2400 at Willetton, I have absolute confidence that they can.
- The Member also raised 'funding cuts' to Rossmoyne and Willetton.
- Before I respond to that part of the grievance, it's timely to remind the House that this is the former Treasurer whose legacy is leaving the State with the worst set of finances since the Great Depression.

- It's laughable that Mike Nahan is lecturing this Government about how to spend taxpayer money.
- However, I will explain to him and the House the changes we made to make school funding more equitable.
- The student-centred funding model was introduced by the former Government.
- A key issue identified with this model was that schools were either advantaged or disadvantaged based on school size.
- Bigger schools with more students attracted more funding, giving them increased flexibility to manage their operations, such as offering more subjects and options compared to smaller schools.
- This led to more parents opting to send their children to these schools, meaning big schools continued to grow and their funding continued to increase. Smaller secondary schools were disadvantaged.
- The McGowan Government acted on that evidence. We responded to these concerns by introducing an equity adjustment for large senior high schools with enrolments greater than 1 200 from 2018.
- The method still provides additional funding to large senior high schools but at a slower rate of growth. They can still meet all fixed costs and generate discretionary funding, but at a level similar to schools with lower enrolments.

- In 2019, for those schools with more than 1 200 students, the per student funding reduction is \$1 157 for each student above the 1 200 students.
- All schools continue to receive funding for every student and additional funding for Aboriginal students, students with disability, students from low SES and students with English as an additional language.
- Earlier this year, the equity adjustment was endorsed as the correct measure to implement in the evaluation of the Student Centred Funding Model by Nous Group and the Centre for International Research on Education Systems.
- This adjustment will now be embedded in the model from 2020.
- The Member should be reassured that Willetton Senior High School's total budget is the second highest in Western Australia.
- In 2019, it's total operating budget is \$23.8 million.
- Rossmoyne Senior High School's total budget is the fifth highest, and it has a total operating budget this year of \$20.4 million.
- In regards to capital works, as the Member for Riverton well knows, Willetton Senior High School did receive a major upgrade of \$53.5 million for new buildings.
- Stage 1 and 2 of the works included a lecture theatre, a new arts and media and music building and new performing arts area, a new science

building including an observatory, English and VET classrooms and a medical centre.

- While Stage 3 was identified to complete the redevelopment of the school, this was deferred to accommodate upgrades and improvements in schools of a similar age and under similar enrolment pressure.
- About 50 per cent of the State's public schools are more than 50 years old so, as Members in this House would well know, there is a long list of requests for school upgrades, maintenance and new builds.
- Given Mr Nahan as Treasurer blew the boom and wrecked the State's finances, all capital works had to be under review.
- We had to make tough decisions about what infrastructure projects were an immediate priority, however I have no doubt that the new state of the art teaching facilities the school has already received holds them in good stead to continue to excel.
- The McGowan Government is committed to providing a high quality education for all students in Western Australia, regardless of their postcode.
- Unlike Mr Nahan, I have absolute confidence in the outstanding staff and school communities at both Willetton and Rossmoyne senior high schools to continue to excel.

**END**

