

COMMUNITY LANGUAGES PROGRAM

286. Mr I.M. BRITZA to the Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests:

Mr Speaker —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members, the previous question is finished. Member for Morley.

Mr I.M. BRITZA: I understand that the review of the community languages program has been done and that changes —

Ms M.M. Quirk interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Girrawheen, I call you to order for the second time. Member for Morley, start again, please.

Mr I.M. BRITZA: I understand that a review of the community languages program has been done and that changes are being made to allow the program to meet the growing language needs of our community. Could the minister please update the house on what is happening?

Dr M.D. NAHAN replied:

I thank the member for his question, for his commitment to multiculturalism in general and specifically for his assistance in promoting the support for two budding language schools teaching the Hindi Samaj language spoken by the Hindi community and the Swahili language spoken by members of the African community.

When I became responsible minister, and indeed even before, I knew there was something wrong with the community language program. The community language program has been around for about 30 years and it is designed expressly to assist community groups to teach languages after school outside the formal education system. At that time the program was under the purview of the Minister for Education, and I asked him about the program because of questions from the member for Morley and others why people could not get access to this program. We inquired about it. There was \$1 million sitting there, but new programs could not get access to it. Old programs that had not been operating for a while were capped. Since the issues that need to be addressed sit primarily under my areas of responsibility, the minister transferred the program to me and the first thing I found out was that there had not been a review of this program for 30 years. So, I had a one undertaken.

Ms R. Saffioti: You're wrong.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: I am right. The review was undertaken. As members might know, the member for West Swan is participating in a campaign to stop the changes I am making and perpetuate inequalities in allocations. I encourage everybody to look at this report.

Mr W.J. Johnston: Table it.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: I already have, but I will again. I table it—good!

The review showed that \$1 million was allocated to the program.

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Warnbro!

Dr M.D. NAHAN: Eighty per cent of the funding goes to one group and one language. The member for West Swan wants to perpetuate that. All other languages have to make do with 20 per cent and all new languages trying to come in are excluded. Is that fair? She wants to perpetuate that. Not only that, in Western Australia we fund our public and private schools, particularly the Catholic schools, very well. We give them billions of dollars in the case of public schools and hundreds of millions dollars in the case of Catholic schools.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members! Member for Warnbro.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: That money is given to those schools to teach various subjects including —

Ms R. Saffioti interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for West Swan, I call you to order for the third time. You have two minutes to finish this, minister.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: That money is given to those schools to teach various subjects, including languages other than English—six or seven languages are taught. Seventy per cent of the funds for the community language program, which is meant for after-school community education, is put as supplements to the money already provided to the Catholic and public school systems. She wants to perpetuate that.

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Warnbro, I call you to order for the third time.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: The member for West Swan wants to perpetuate an inequality for one group that she is campaigning with to get 80 per cent of the money.

Point of Order

Dr A.D. BUTI: I believe the minister has been here long enough to refer to someone as the member by the seat, not as a “she” or a “he”.

The SPEAKER: All right—minister.

Questions without Notice Resumed

Dr M.D. NAHAN: The member for West Swan wants to perpetuate an inequality, with one group getting 80 per cent of the money for a program designed for all. She wants to cut out access for new community groups and others. We have changed that. We have done a number of things. First, we have increased the funding to the program by 25 per cent or \$250 000—that is the first increase in a long time—and we will provide equal access to all. Multiculturalism is an essential part of our community and part of it is that people have to step outside their own tribe. I ask the member for West Swan to do that. I table the review of the community languages program.

[See paper 2848.]