

PEEL DISTRICT — KINDERGARTEN AND PREPRIMARY PLACEMENTS

83. Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN to the Minister for Education:

I note that it is now week four of the school year and that the minister recently boasted in the media that 62 000 kindy and preprimary students were expected to start school.

- (1) Has the minister been made aware that there are children in Mandurah who attended kindy at public schools last year but who are awaiting a place in preprimary classes and have had nowhere to go for the past month?
- (2) Has the Department of Education advised the minister that it intends to set up an additional preprimary class in the Peel district for all children who currently do not have a place in the school where they completed kindy?
- (3) How long will it take until all preprimary children in the Peel district are attending school?

Dr E. CONSTABLE replied:

- (1)–(3) I thank the member for the question. There are some elements I am not aware of, and I will get that information for the member. In the pre-compulsory years of kindergarten and pre-primary, children are not guaranteed a place at their closest school. That has been the case since universal access to kindergarten and pre-primary was provided. That means that children and parents are provided with places as close as possible to home. I am not aware of the problem with the class being set up. It is not surprising, given the number of children, that one class or room would be provided for those children, because the obligation is not to provide a place at their closest school. I also point out that we have seen a huge surge in enrolments given the surge in the birth rate that has occurred, with those children now in their early years of schooling. Although we try very hard, it is not always possible to provide a place at the closest school. I will look into the specific matters concerning Mandurah and will get back to the member for Mandurah.