MINISTERIAL COUNCIL ON EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING AND YOUTH AFFAIRS

Statement by Minister for Education

MR A.J. CARPENTER (Willagee - Minister for Education) [9.23 am]: I recently travelled to New Zealand to attend the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs. The meeting was well attended by Australian state, territory and commonwealth ministers as well as the education minister from New Zealand.

The agenda for this meeting was diverse and I am pleased to report a cooperative relationship between the States and the Commonwealth. This atmosphere of cooperation allowed a number of sound and progressive recommendations to be approved including -

- the endorsement of a proposed methodology to obtain and improve the analysis of data on teacher supply and demand;
- recognition as a national priority of the need to support principals in their role as school leaders;
- the agreement to establish a specific indigenous education, employment training and youth task force, chaired by the Northern Territory, with representatives from all jurisdictions, responsible for advising MCEETYA on the national effort to improve indigenous education, training, higher education and employment outcomes, and on the wellbeing of indigenous youth;
- acknowledgment that the issue of student behaviour is a key concern for Australian schools and a call on the Commonwealth to acknowledge this in the next commonwealth budget;
- a request to the commonwealth minister to liaise with relevant commonwealth agencies to have affordable high bandwidth services to schools and other education and training institutions;
- the agreement to convene a meeting of state and territory ministers and the commonwealth minister in late November this year to seek MCEETYA agreement on any changes to Australia’s higher education system, and to provide an opportunity for the commonwealth minister to inform the States and Territories of the outcomes of the higher education review, including the results of the rural-regional impact study.

I am looking forward to progressing these initiatives when I host the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs in Western Australia next year.

I was very fortunate while in New Zealand also to be able to take the opportunity to view a number of New Zealand indigenous affairs initiatives. Earlier this year, I attended the Ministerial Council of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs and met with the New Zealand Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Maori Development, Mr Leith Comer. It was obvious from our discussions that the New Zealand Government is focusing heavily on Maori economic and cultural development. There are many parallels in the history of indigenous peoples in both Australia and New Zealand. Land tenure, the preservation and celebration of culture and economic independence are issues that the Governments from both countries are dealing with.

I was pleased to take the opportunity while in New Zealand to meet at length again with the Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Maori Development, also known as Te Punī Kōkiri. This meeting provided the opportunity for me to gain an appreciation of the role and function of the department, the place of Maori culture in the business of the department and the evolution of the department under various administrative regimes.

While in Wellington I also visited the Te Kohanga Reo Trust. The trust serves the promotion of Maori language in early childhood education and has received international recognition for its work. The Te Kohanga Reo Trust was set up in 1981 by the then Department of Maori Affairs in response to Maori concern to ensure the continuing survival of the Maori language. I am sure that members will be well aware of the same concerns held by the indigenous people of this State.

My two-day schedule of meetings and visits clearly demonstrated distinct similarities in the issues being addressed in indigenous affairs in Australia and New Zealand. I hope that my visit was just the beginning of an exchange of ideas and initiatives between New Zealand and Western Australia in the area of indigenous affairs.