

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN COLLEGE OF TEACHING - MEMBERSHIP FEES

**Mr P.D. OMODEI to the Minister for Education and Training:**

I take this opportunity on behalf of the member for Dawesville to recognise Glencoe Primary School in the public gallery today.

I refer to the letter sent to principals from Keith Newton, Acting Director General of Schools in the Department of Education and Training, relating to the deregistration of teachers who have not paid their Western Australian College of Teaching membership fees.

- (1) Can the minister confirm the direction contained in a letter that, if teachers fail to pay their fees within one month of today, "the department will have no alternative but to comply with the legislation and terminate contracts of employment of unregistered teachers"?
- (2) Will the minister confirm that approximately 3 000 teachers have currently not paid their membership fees?
- (3) How is it that his government has allowed a situation to develop that could result in the complete shutdown of our education system by the end of next month?

**Mr M. McGOWAN replied:**

- (1)-(3) The last remark of the Leader of the Opposition was unnecessary and deliberate scare mongering on his behalf to try to cause trouble in our school communities. If the opposition was so concerned about the Western Australian College of Teaching, I would have expected the Liberal Party to have voted against a bill that sets out a process by which teachers are required to be registered. If the Leader of the Opposition was concerned about not coming in here full of hypocrisy and bluster, he would have voted against it. Let us look at what the Liberal Party did: on Thursday, 25 September 2003, during the third reading of the Western Australian College of Teaching Bill, shadow spokesperson Mr John Day, member for Darling Range, said -

As I said during the second reading debate, the Opposition supports this Bill.

That support is indicated on a number of occasions: in the second reading debate, consideration in detail and the third reading. The Liberal Party voted for it in the upper house with one or two dissenters; namely, Peter Foss and Derrick Tomlinson. The Liberal Party voted for it and now the Leader of the Opposition has come in here saying that we should not have it. The truth of the matter is that the vast majority of teachers have paid their registration.

**Mr T. Buswell:** Three thousand haven't.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Let me finish. I congratulate them on taking the role they have in being prepared to pay their registration to be a member of their professional body. Both parties took to the last state election - in fact, I think it was the election before - proposals supporting a professional body compulsory for teachers to join. The vast majority of teachers are paying their fees. The fees are \$70 per annum and are tax deductible. In effect, it is a \$50 fee. Do members opposite actually think that anyone would give up their job over what is in effect a \$50 fee? No, they would not.

**Mr T. Buswell:** The department has written and threatened them.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** If the Deputy Leader of the Opposition cannot intellectually get this, I advise him to keep quiet. In effect, a \$50 fee is required for teachers to be members of their professional body. What do members opposite think all those teachers who are paying their fee, of whom there are tens of thousands, think? They think that there are a few in the profession who are not paying their fee. Of course they think that those people should be paying their fee. The fact is that all the teachers who have refused to pay are doing so on the basis there has not been an election. There will be an election among the teaching profession for the WACOT board. Once the election has been held, that issue will be gone.

The correspondence that has been referred to is telling teachers to pay their registration so that they can participate in the election. If members of the Liberal Party had such huge objections to it, I would have thought that when we debated this bill in the house, they would have voted against it.