

UNIVERSITY COURSES — EARLY OFFERS

563. Mr P.J. RUNDLE to the Minister for Education:

I have a supplementary question.

I thank the minister for that response and look forward to receiving that information as well.

Are there any early signs of significant changes to enrolments in teaching courses based on the early offer program?

Dr A.D. BUTI replied:

No. Does the member mean enrolments in a Bachelor of Education at university—teacher training?

Mr P.J. Rundle: Yes.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Obviously, the University of Western Australia has a different system whereby people have to do a general degree and then the master's program. That raises an interesting issue. There has been a 41 per cent decrease in teaching graduates from our universities in the last five years—a 41 per cent decrease! That roughly coincides with when we moved from the one-year diploma of education to the two-year master's degree. I thought it was a good idea when we moved from the one-year Dip Ed to the two-year master's as it would improve the status of teaching and perhaps prepare student teachers better for teaching, but the evidence is that it is not necessarily producing higher quality teachers and it may be a disincentive for people to do the two-year master's. That is particularly so for people who want a career change. Staying out of the workforce for one year to do a Dip Ed is probably manageable, but two years becomes quite problematic.

In regard to the member's question about whether the unconditional offer process has changed the number of enrolments, I do not have a specific breakdown of that. As I said, it has been difficult to get the data from the universities. I would hazard a guess that it has not, because we have not seen a massive uplift in teaching graduates from our universities.