

YEAR 7 STUDENTS - SECONDARY SCHOOLING

**334. Hon MURRAY CRIDDLE to the Minister for Education and Training:**

In recent times concerned parents, teachers and primary school principals have talked about year 7 students moving to secondary colleges.

- (1) What considerations has the minister or her department given to this?
- (2) If any, when will the results of the considerations be published?
- (3) Will parents, teachers and primary school principals, particularly those in country areas, be consulted?

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH replied:**

I must be really popular. They missed me yesterday, but I am back.

- (1)-(3) The first point I will make on the issue of whether year 7 students should remain in primary school or be moved up to become part of the secondary school structure is that research is divided about the benefits and arguments for and against. One school of thought is that if students are moved up with more senior students, they will mature more quickly. There are also other benefits. The other school of thought is that we could be forcing students to mature and accept additional responsibilities. The educational benefit is at question here. It is not as though there is clear-cut research that definitively demonstrates that students will benefit through a 30 per cent improvement in their academic achievement. If that sort of information were already available, it would obviously be a compelling reason to consider the move in a perhaps more serious light. However, because it is not compelling, I certainly have some reservations. It has been pushed to some extent by some independent top-fee-charging schools, as their capital infrastructure is structured in such a way that enables them to do that quite easily, as they usually run K-12 schools anyway. The capital infrastructure in government schools is structured differently. We usually have separate preprimary schools, K-7 primary schools and schools with either a district high component or with years 8 to 12. In terms of the financial implications, there would certainly be major significant capital costs associated with moving students into that sort of structure. There is some work ongoing on a range of issues, but I am told that, in addition to the additional capital costs that would be required, there is no body of research that indicates kids would be that much better off. That means that, as minister, I am not rushing to make a policy decision in respect of this matter. Regional and rural parents will be consulted as a part of the work that is currently being done by the department.