SCHOOLS — ABORIGINAL STUDENTS — ATTENDANCE

33. **Mr P.J. RUNDLE to the Minister for Education:**

I refer to the recent WAtoday article in which an Indigenous education officer revealed that Western Australian public schools are not effectively engaging the families of Indigenous children who are not going to school, and that fewer people are being employed to directly address this issue.

(1)   Is the minister concerned that there has been a 30 per cent drop in education officer roles in the past few years?

(2)   What is the minister going to do to improve Indigenous attendance rates, which last year dropped to 54 per cent, 30 per cent lower than for their non-Indigenous peers?

Dr A.D. BUTI replied:

(1)–(2) I am concerned if any student is not going to school, wherever they come from or whatever their background. Number one is that those kids should be going to school. The primary responsibility for that rests with the parents and the communities they live in. The former Minister for Education and Training often said that a school reflects its community. Unfortunately, we sometimes have very hard communities where it is hard to get students to school. I can tell the Deputy Leader of the Opposition that many schools are innovative in this space. Derby District High School has attendance officers—two or three—whose sole job is to try to get students to school.

We made a commitment to increase the number of Aboriginal and Islander education officers. We have provided funding for that. We are now looking at career pathways for all people who work in the education system, including Aboriginal and Islander education officers, to see whether that is a barrier or disincentive to people remaining in the education system. I can tell the Deputy Leader of the Opposition that his side of politics is the last side that should lecture this side on how we should go about getting more students, from any background, into the education system.