

COLLIE SCHOOL STUDENTS — TRANSPORT COSTS

147. Mr M.P. MURRAY to the Minister for Education:

I refer to reports that students in Collie will have to pay up to \$80 per week to travel to school.

- (1) When was the minister first made aware of this issue?
- (2) What actions has the minister taken to address the issue?
- (3) Is the minister aware of any other example in WA of students who have been refused transport concessions?

Dr E. CONSTABLE replied:

- (1)–(3) I thank the member for Collie–Preston for his question. The matter that he has raised is very serious. I visited Collie Senior High School with him some months ago. There are very good programs there. It turns out that some students want to go to Manea Senior College because some of the programs offered there are not offered at Collie. I understand that, in the main, those students are bypassing Collie Senior High School to go to Manea. In that case there is a disconnect between the policies of the Department of Education and the Department of Transport. The Department of Transport's policy is that students should attend the school that is closest to where they live. With students now required to stay on in years 11 and 12 to either partake in an academic program or a vocational education and training program, more and more students are attending schools that are not the schools closest to where they live. I became aware of this only a couple of weeks ago. I understand that my office has been working with the Department of Transport and the Minister for Transport's office for a month or so to look for a way to resolve the problem. I do not know of any other school at which this is happening. Implied in the member's question is the need to resolve this issue, and we are certainly looking to do that. With more and more young people staying on at school to do years 11 and 12, and with a range of courses being provided at schools that are not closest schools but are the next school, we must ensure that students have access to those programs. The transport system should not get in the way of students attending those schools. Hopefully, we will resolve the issue as soon as we can.