

OUTCOMES-BASED EDUCATION - IMPLEMENTATION

299. Mr P.D. OMODEI to the Premier:

Before I ask the question, I thank the people of Geraldton for their great welcome last night. It is a pleasure to be here. I remind the Premier that the marina and foreshore redevelopment started under the previous government, as did the Batavia Museum, the police complex, the hospital, and a range of other things.

I refer to the unprecedented lack of support from teachers for the Minister for Education and Training as a result of her inexplicable refusal to delay the implementation of outcomes-based education in years 11 and 12. Given the concerns that teachers have regarding their ability to implement OBE and the impact that a bungled implementation will have on our young students, will the Premier now make the tough political decision and instruct the Minister for Education and Training to immediately delay the roll out of OBE until teachers are ready and confident to implement the new system?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER replied:

I thank the Leader of the Opposition very much for the question. That is what is called a Dorothy Dix: when a member bowls up a question that is so easy to answer you stand back and smack it out of the park. I join with my friend the Leader of the Opposition - I call him a friend, but he does not call me that in return - in thanking the people of Geraldton for allowing us to come to their town and for their coming in such big numbers to see their parliamentarians at work. They will find it instructive and educational.

There is one reason why the opposition parties do not like the concept of outcomes: they do not know what outcomes mean. They never delivered. There were no outcomes at all while they were in government. There were no outcomes across the board. Can members imagine any business in the modern economy not being concerned about outcomes? Can members imagine any industry not being concerned about outcomes? In other words, what is it that is being produced? The member for Cottesloe, I think, quite rightly introduced, or carried through the introduction by Hon Norman Moore, when he was education minister, outcomes-based education in years 8, 9 and 10 in secondary schools. Why? Because it is in the interests of the child for people to know what outcome results from all the work that is going on. The transition into years 11 and 12 has already started. It is in place this year. The Leader of the Opposition asked whether I would make the tough decision. In politics the easiest thing in the world is to fall in behind the critics to shield oneself from criticism. Every single change that we introduce in education engenders some degree of concern. This is my commitment, Leader of the Opposition - bearing in mind that I have four children of my own in the system and I want to make sure the system responds to the needs of the children -

Mr P.D. Omodei: How many in years 11 and 12?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: One in year 11, one in year 10, one in year 9 - I am losing count - and one in year 6, all doing well, all going through outcomes-based education. This is a commitment for those teachers who are feeling anxious and have concerns, or who feel they need more support, structure and preparation: we will give it to them. We will give them more support; we will take on board their concerns; and we will place with them the resources they need so that this process continues of changing our education system for the benefit of our children so that they will be better placed in the modern economy. The last thing any political leader should do is go weak at the knees at the sight of some sort of criticism. Do not do that. Do not go weak at the knees. Be strong. That is where we will be. However, we understand the anxiety of the ordinary human beings who make up the teaching community. There are some here among us today. We will give them the support that they need so this change can take place. It is not revolution; it is evolution. It is not a massive change; it is incremental change. We will do it properly. It has already been in place for eight years - since 1998. We will support the teachers through this other period of change.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: I call to order the members for Alfred Cove, Nedlands and Vasse.