

TEACHERS — *FACING THE FACTS: A REVIEW OF PUBLIC EDUCATION IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA*

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

I refer to the release of the *Facing the facts: A review of public education in Western Australia* report, the culmination of an independent review of the WA public education system chaired by Dr Carmen Lawrence, and note the consistent findings that WA teachers are overworked and undervalued.

- (1) Is it acceptable that teaching staff have had to rely on an independent review to tell us what has been known about the public education system for years?
- (2) Does the minister agree with Dr Lawrence that significant change is urgently needed if we are to continue to provide quality public education?

Dr A.D. BUTI replied:

- (1)–(2) The member did not mention, though, who commissioned the report—the State School Teachers’ Union of WA. The member was there yesterday for the launch. I went up to him because I know how stressed he is at union situations. I was worried!

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please!

Dr A.D. BUTI: I was really worried for his health. He looked really agitated; he was sweating. I said, “It is okay. You know they will not jump on you and they will not eat you.” We know that he is a well-known union hater, as I mentioned before. I think it was when we were discussing the Casino Legislation Amendment (Burswood Casino) Bill 2022 that we talked about who was going to head the Gaming and Wagering Commission. He said that he had concerns if anyone had a link to government or unions. I asked him the question: “What if they had been a High Court judge or a Supreme Court judge but had once been a union official?” He would not give any assurance that that would not be a concern for him. His concern was if they had been a union official.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please!

Dr A.D. BUTI: He now wants to quote from a report that has been commissioned by a union, a very good union. I applaud the fact that the union felt the need for a review of public education because we all on this side of the house have a commitment to the public education system.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please!

Dr A.D. BUTI: I look forward to the member’s support of union reports and union activity. When we were debating the Liquor Control Amendment (Protected Entertainment Precincts) Bill 2022, he said —

I cannot believe that there will be a defence because the person needs to go into the precinct for union activities. I find that quite bizarre, to be honest. That is one of the weakest points of this legislation.

It is really quite interesting that he now wants to rely on this report. Has the member read it yet?

Mr P.J. Rundle: Most of it.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Most of it; that is good. I find it interesting he is using *Facing the facts: A review into public education in Western Australia* to try to make a political argument. I will tell the member that I will give this report due consideration because I respect unions that have concerns for their members and for the system that they work under. I have great respect for the State School Teachers’ Union of WA and for the union movement as a collective. It is really fantastic that the member for Roe has now come over to our side of the debate because we know there has been a lot of fluidity on the other side with movement between parties and ideologies. It is great he now has the bug and has come onto the union side.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please.

Ms R. Saffioti: He’ll need another hat!

Dr A.D. BUTI: He will need another hat—he will need two: union hater and union lover! Regarding that review, it is only one review I am considering. There are many reviews in the public education system. There is the national teacher workforce action plan and the Australian Universities Accord Interim Report. There is also the report that will be discussed by education ministers in December, by Dr Lisa O’Brien, about creating an equitable and just public education system throughout Australia. They are all very important reports and reviews and I will give due consideration to *Facing the facts: A review into public education in Western Australia*, chaired by Carmen Lawrence.

I will not say no to it because it was commissioned by a union. I will not say that, which is what the member would say normally. But, because it serves his political purpose at the moment, he wants to start quoting from a union report. I find it fascinating that the National Party would bar a former High Court judge from serving in an important position because they had once been a union official. I think the member for Cockburn in that debate talked about a person who had been a shop assistant at 18 years of age but was later a High Court judge and that would bar them from being appointed by the government. The member would not say that would bar someone. It is quite amazing. He has no credibility when it comes to using union reports or reviews on anything. I do have credibility because I respect the union and I will consider all the recommendations.