

TEACHERS POSTED TO RURAL AND REMOTE AREAS

**649. Mr M.P. MURRAY to the Minister for Education and Training:**

Will the minister advise the house of the incentives adopted to assist teachers posted to rural and remote areas of Western Australia?

**Mr A.J. CARPENTER replied:**

I thank the member for Collie for his question and his advocacy of education in his electorate. One of the benefits of having very good local regional members and of holding cabinet meetings in regional centres is that we become aware of the current issues in regional Western Australia. Given regional cabinet meetings have been held at almost every major location, we have become aware of common themes that have been concerning school teachers throughout Western Australia about Government Employee Housing Authority housing and the ability of teachers to obtain some sort of mortgage support. As a result of that information coming to us, we lobbied the Australian Tax Office to change the rulings to allow benefits relating to GEHA housing, mortgage payments, private rent and so on to flow to teachers around Western Australia. I can announce to the Parliament and the people of Western Australia that we have had some success, which will deliver to approximately 8 000 schoolteachers around Western Australia an after-tax benefit of up to \$3 000 a year.

Mr N.R. Marlborough: Well done.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I think so too; I thank the member for Peel. Rural and remote teachers will receive this boost thanks to the Department of Education and Training taking this matter to the tax office. They will now be able to salary-package GEHA rent, private rental payments and home loan interest, which will be deducted from pre-tax earnings, resulting in more take-home pay. Eligible teachers and support staff of state schools can now salary-package their GEHA rent. Private rental payments and home loan interest will be able to be salary-packaged from the beginning of 2005. However, teachers need to know that the benefits are variable. The department will indicate who is eligible, but the benefits are variable and staff are advised to seek independent financial advice on how much benefit will accrue to them as individuals. To be eligible, staff must live at least 40 kilometres from a town with a population of 14 000 or more, as determined by the 1981 census - I am not sure why the tax office has used the 1981 census figures. In other words, in Western Australia the only people excluded from that advantage are those who live in Albany, Bunbury and Geraldton or within a 40-kilometre radius of those towns or within 100 kilometres of Perth or a centre with a population of 130 000. Teachers and support staff living in more than 150 towns are eligible, including those who live in Kalgoorlie because this system is based on the 1981 census. Other eligible towns include Busselton, Broome, Esperance, Manjimup and Southern Cross. The list is comprehensive. I am sure that all members of the Chamber would congratulate the Government, as I do, for bringing this benefit to people in places such as Augusta, Babakin, Badgingarra, Balingup, Ballidu, Beacon, Bencubbin, Beverley, Binu, Bodallin, Boddington, Bolgart, Borden, Boulder, Boyup Brook, Bremer Bay, Bridgetown, Brookton, Broome, Broomehill, Bruce Rock, Buntine - I can go on, and I will until you stop me, Mr Speaker - Busselton, Cadoux, Calingiri, Carnamah, Carnarvon, Cascade, Cervantes, Collie -

Mr A.D. Marshall interjected.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: I was waiting for that. What happens when there is good news? *The West Australian* escapes; its journalists take off, because they are not the slightest bit interested. However, I note that *The West Australian* has taken the liberty of describing one of the greatest Western Australians as a sad, bitter drunk in its reporting of the unfortunate death of that wonderful athlete, Shirley Strickland, in the southern suburbs. That was an absolute disgrace. The paper dived into the gutter to describe that person in that way. It has taken reporting in Western Australia to new depths. It is very interested in negative reporting. I wonder whether it will report the collapse in crime statistics that we have just heard from the Minister for Police. I notice that when we gave *The West Australian* the opportunity to report this matter, there was a small reference to it in the early edition before it was pulled, because it is good news. I am sure that most members of the Parliament want to hear about it. Members of the Opposition are not interested in anything positive. They are the negative face of Western Australia. Does anybody in either the Chamber or the public gallery believe that any member opposite really cares about anyone in Western Australia or about crime?

Several members interjected.

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Does anybody really believe that? Does anybody believe that the Leader of the Opposition has one bone of humanity in his body? Does anybody believe that the member for Nedlands actually cares about the people she talks about in this Parliament? Fair go! Of course she does not. She uses them for crass political gain.

*Point of Order*

Mr A.D. MARSHALL: I think the minister is using question time as if he were on a soapbox on the Fremantle Esplanade -

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr A.D. Marshall interjected.

The SPEAKER: I call the member for Dawesville to order for the first time. I have warned members that I will call them to order if they use points of order to break contributions from the member who is speaking. I urge the minister to quickly bring his answer to an end.

*Questions without Notice Resumed*

Mr A.J. CARPENTER: Collie, Condingup, Coolgardie, Coorow, Corrigin, Cowaramup, Cranbrook, Cue, Cunderdin, Dalwallinu, Dampier, Dandaragan, Darkan, Denmark - I have a list of more than 150 towns. I table it.

[See paper No 2924.]