

YMCA Youth Parliament — Adjournment Debate

HON SALLY TALBOT (South West) [10.16 pm]: I draw members' attention to the forthcoming Youth Parliament. By googling "Youth Parliament", members will be taken to the Western Australian site where they will see an indication of how much people in this state are looking forward to this event. One of the first things seen is a little countdown that indicates there are 18 days to go.

In case some members are not familiar with this now well-established event in Western Australia, Youth Parliament has been running for 14 years. I will give members a flavour of what it is about by quoting directly from the Youth Parliament website. The Youth Parliament is facilitated by the YMCA. It is a nationwide project that is run in every state and territory with the exception of the ACT. According to the website —

In Western Australia the program is developed in conjunction with the Western Australian Government and aims to educate, enthuse and resource young people to take an active role in their community and contribute the views of their electorate at a state level. The Youth Parliament program is a fantastic opportunity for young people to comment on Government policy and make recommendations to the Government on what young people want, whilst engaging in a great personal development program.

The mission statement of the Youth Parliament is —

The Australian Youth Parliament Programs will educate, empower and unite young people to bring about positive social change.

The Youth Parliament organisation runs a program by which it puts an individual member into every seat in the Western Australian Parliament. There will be 57 young people, aged between 15 and 25, sitting in the Legislative Assembly between 6 and 10 July this year representing each electorate. There is a member for X and a member for Y. Young people are assigned to government and opposition. Likewise, I am told that there will be 36 members in this house. There will be six members for Mining and Pastoral, six members for South West et cetera. I have checked the website and it does not seem to have the full 36 there yet. In its objectives for 2009, it says that it will fill every seat in the Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council. This is a program that is very well publicised statewide. On the Parliamentary Library's media clip site I found articles that go back to 10 January this year. One was titled "Budding politicians wanted" in the *Echo* —

Young people in the electorates of Bassendean, Swan Hills and West Swan are being urged to become part of the Youth Parliament Program ...

In the *Hills Gazette*, the member for Swan Hills, Frank Alban, was encouraging students to nominate. There was an article titled "Youth speak" from the *Augusta Margaret River Mail*; in the *Northern Guardian* on 28 January 2009 Vince Catania was urging young people to stand up and have their say. There were articles in the *South Western Times* on 29 January 2009; the *Pilbara News*; and an article in the *Bunbury Mail* entitled "Call out to young politicians". In March, the young people who had applied to participate in Youth Parliament were acknowledged in their local media. Margaret River's Jasmine Meagher was recently selected to participate in the 2009 Western Australian Youth Parliament. The *Donnybrook-Bridgetown Mail* had an article acknowledging Janey Ip under the heading "Off to the Youth Parliament". The *Hills Gazette* had an article on Gidgegannup resident and former Guildford Grammar head boy Zach Cole. The *Bullsbrook-Ellenbrook Advocate* newspaper ran a story under the headline "Zach likes a yak", which I am sure young Zachary has cut out and sent to all his relatives. The *Pilbara News* ran a story headed "Youth to be heard in Parliament" and the *Weekend Courier*, which is a Rockingham paper, said that Comet Bay College student and head girl Ellie Whiteaker will be Warnbro's representative. The *Fremantle Gazette* and *Cockburn Gazette* community newspapers ran a story about brothers Billy and Lewis Richards. Finally, the *Cannington Times* had a story on Bill Johnston, the member for Cannington, who welcomed Chris Piggott's achievement of being involved in Youth Parliament.

Hon Adele Farina, a fellow member for the South West, has a particular interest in not only the wellbeing of young people in the south west, but also the participation of young people in non-metropolitan areas in programs in Perth. A couple of weeks ago in this place, Hon Adele Farina asked the Minister for Youth about state government funding for the Youth Parliament for this year. Specifically, she asked whether the minister was aware that 2009 would be the first year that this event had not received funding from the state government. She also asked whether the minister was aware that because of this lack of funding, the young people involved in the Youth Parliament would now have to pay an increased fee to participate and that those attending from the country would incur additional costs for their travel. It was not clear from the minister's answer what the situation was. I notice that the minister has come into the chamber tonight. It was not clear from the minister's answer whether the state government had provided funding for that program or whether there was a problem. The minister said that she knew that the YMCA, which I have acknowledged is the facilitator of the program, did receive funding from the Office for Youth. The minister said that she would get back to Hon Adele Farina with information about where that funding was up to. As of tonight, there has been no response from the minister. I

am on my feet tonight to point out to the house how very significant this program is. I hope that there has been a breakdown in communications and that at some stage in the next short while we will find out that the funding has become available.

This program deserves the support of every member of this place. As I said, it will run from 6 July to 10 July, which might turn out to be our first full non-sitting week. I realise that some members might not be in the metropolitan area at that stage, but I urge any member who is to come in and see these young people at work. I have attended every year since I have been a member and made contact with them. It can be very daunting for a young person to put his name forward for a program of this kind. I have always been impressed that the young people do not have to be studying politics or have a qualification in politics at the secondary or tertiary level in order to participate. The people who run the program will harness the young people's enthusiasm. If the young people can demonstrate that they want to share their views or be an activist for youth matters, the people who run the program will coach and mentor them while they take part in the program. It can be the most fantastically liberating experience.

Hon Ed Dermer: It is probably appropriate that it represents a mix in the same way the Parliament does.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Hon Ed Dermer is absolutely correct. I pointed out that the young people are allocated on the basis of their electorates.

Hon Ed Dermer: Where they live.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: It is where they live and also the electorate they represent. If they represent the electorate of Cockburn, they will be assigned to the opposition, and if they represent the electorate of Jandakot, they will be assigned to the government this year. They talk about a variety of things. It is a development program for young people. It empowers them. The list of alumni indicates that many have gone on to make quite a mark in this state in the field of youth activism. As I have said, I urge every member to come into this place during that time, make contact with the organisers and sit and watch the young people. Members will hear standards of oratory that are truly impressive and they will see remarkable developments in young people during the course of that week. All that young people need to participate is to be passionate about youth issues and willing to share their opinions. Members will certainly see that in action during that week. I very much hope that the government has made funding available to these young people. I very much hope that people from the regions in particular will be encouraged to come to Perth and take part.