

**SHENTON COLLEGE DEAF EDUCATION CENTRE — STUDENT CAP**

*Statement*

**HON SUE ELLERY (South Metropolitan — Leader of the Opposition)** [5.18 pm]: I rise to address an issue that I intended to include in my comments on the education motion that we debated on Wednesday but I did not get around to. I promised the people who approached me that I would raise this in Parliament, so I will do that tonight. The minister might want to listen but I am relaxed if he does not want to respond until he makes his comments on the motion when it is next before the house.

The issue is the cap on student enrolments at Shenton College Deaf Education Centre. From time to time I am contacted by family members of students who feel that they are being disadvantaged because of the cap. They cannot get their child with a hearing impairment into that school because of the cap. There are two such facilities—one is at Shenton College and one is at Belmont City College. Today I am talking about Shenton College. I was contacted by a grandmother. I am fairly sure that she has raised this directly with the minister. I am sure that she would not mind me using her name, and that is Sandra Porter. She sent me this on 7 September —

It has come to my attention that there will be some discussion/debate in Parliament ... regarding the state of education in Australia.

I am hoping that you can raise the issue of the inequitable situation Deaf students in WA (and perhaps Australia wide ) find themselves in at present.

The number of students going into year 7 high school level are at present are capped depending on how many students at the same school leave from year 12 the previous year, effectively making room for the new students.

My granddaughter finds herself unable to access the school her family prefer her to attend next year as there are only 3 placements available.

Said school (Shenton College ) offer a LOTE ( Language other than English ) class specifically in Auslan, my granddaughters first language.

At the moment, her alternative school does not offer this class.

The criteria for deciding who goes where is flawed. My granddaughter meets the physical requirement, being profoundly Deaf, but with limits on placements, the decision is made dependant on who live closest to the school “as the crow flies” which is ridiculous.

... would you please broach this subject with the Parliament and ask for the cap to be abolished. The funding is already available so it should not be a huge request. We are only talking about half a dozen students this year, and not all of them are wanting a place at Shenton College.

Myself and a small Army have worked so hard the last few months trying to change the cap rule and allow my granddaughter and others to access the specialist education on offer at their preferred school.

If this situation continues I, and my family, will be possibly having the same fight in two years’ time when my Deaf grandson is applying for school placement. He may be lucky that year, but he will be at one school and his sister at another as things stand at the moment.

We have lodged an appeal in this instance, but regardless of the outcome, this situation needs to be improved for students in the future.

I raise this and ask for the minister’s comments, when he is able to provide them—I appreciate that it might not be today—because in this year’s budget it was announced that planning has commenced for additional infrastructure, including classrooms and specialist facilities, to accommodate up to 1 000 extra students at Shenton College, due for completion in 2019 at an estimated cost of \$49.5 million.

Has consideration been given to spending any of that money on upgrading the facilities of the Shenton College Deaf Education Centre so, effectively, that cap can be lifted? Certainly, since I have had this portfolio, every now and then the issue is raised about the disadvantage and frustration that parents feel about the cap at Shenton College. Both Belmont and Shenton deaf education centres do great work, which I commend. I have visited and met students and teaching staff and education assistants from both of them. Parents are not making a judgement about what goes on in the classrooms. They live close to X—in this case, Shenton—but they do not live as close as the next person, so their children are not getting into that school. For someone living in the western suburbs, travelling to Belmont is no small feat. The issue causes great distress to parents of children who are deaf.

I ask the minister, when he is able to, to provide me with advice on whether any of the money that has been put aside in the budget for additional facilities at Shenton College will be used to ensure that the deaf centre can increase the cap. If that is not possible, I invite the minister to put on the record his views about how we might progress this matter so that parents do not find themselves distressed that they cannot get their children into the program run at Shenton College, which does a fabulous job and means that those children can be the best they can be.