

PUBLIC SCHOOLS — PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT

578. Mr J.M. FRANCIS to the Minister for Education:

We all know that happy and healthy kids concentrate better in class. Will the minister please tell the Parliament what the government is doing to provide playground equipment to those public schools that most need it?

Dr E. CONSTABLE replied:

I thank the member for Jandakot for his question and also for his interest in this new government initiative in the last budget to provide playground equipment, or funds for playground equipment, at older schools, particularly older schools in low socioeconomic status areas within which schools and parents and citizens associations often struggle to provide replacement equipment.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Thank you, members; spectacular progress, today! I formally call the member for Girrawheen to order for the second time today. If members want question time to continue, they might remain a little quieter.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: In the last budget \$2 million was allocated over four years to assist schools to provide replacement playground equipment for students, thereby allowing older schools with old playground equipment to modernise their playgrounds and provide more stimulating play areas for the children. We called for expressions of interest and a large number of schools put up their hands for this funding. I am really pleased that in the first round, in October this year, 27 schools will receive \$20 000 each for playground equipment, which will go a long way to providing really interesting playgrounds for children to play in. In round two, in early 2012, 25 schools will receive funding. We have brought round two forward to allow those schools to get on with providing this new equipment for children. I think this tells a story about what is really important to P&Cs. I have received a number of letters from the first 52 schools selected thanking me for the government providing this money, because it is much needed. Often, it is the relatively small things such as this that make a huge difference to parents and to children. The schools were chosen when they were able to demonstrate a need for the new equipment because the current equipment was inadequate. As the member for Jandakot's question suggests, the program will deliver new, safe play equipment to schools. The importance of play equipment in schools is that it provides students with opportunities to engage in physical activity during childhood. We know that good play equipment is good for children's creativity, physical strength and wellbeing. Children who have the opportunity to play and be very active during breaks concentrate better in class and will, hopefully, learn better. This is part of our program to have fit and healthy children in our schools. I am happy to table the list of the first 52 schools that will receive funding.

[See paper 3846.]