

**RESIDENTIAL COLLEGES — NON-GOVERNMENT SCHOOL STUDENTS**

*Statement by Minister for Education and Training*

**HON SUE ELLERY (South Metropolitan — Minister for Education and Training)** [10.05 am]: I also add my welcome to the students from East Narrogin Primary School.

I rise today to make a brief statement on changes to the financial arrangements for non-government school access to places at residential colleges. For many years, residential colleges have enabled regional school students to access secondary schooling in the regions, rather than having to board in Perth. This means reduced costs for families, students are closer to home, and families are able to have more frequent contact with their children. To enable students attending regional non-government schools to also have access to residential colleges, previous education ministers entered into a number of financial agreements with non-government schools, which required the schools to purchase beds at the colleges and/or pay annual maintenance levies. These costs were usually passed on to parents.

Last year, following representations from a number of non-government schools, and from members of Parliament including Hon Laurie Graham and Hon Darren West, I asked the Department of Education to conduct a review of the financial arrangements by which students attending non-government schools access places at residential colleges. The department's review involved consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, including the Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia, Catholic Education Western Australia and the principals of regional non-government schools under these arrangements. Key findings of the review were that families in regional locations valued the opportunity for their children to live at regional boarding facilities, there was ample capacity at regional residential colleges to accommodate students from non-government schools and the additional costs to non-government schools were influential in the parents' decision to send their children to Perth to board.

Having considered the feedback from stakeholders and the key findings of the review, I am pleased to advise that from 2020 all current financial arrangements requiring the payment of maintenance levies will be discontinued. This means that non-government school students will pay the same costs and charges for accommodation as public school students. I have written to key stakeholders to advise them of these changes. This decision will support the government's key focus on regional prosperity by encouraging more regional families who chose a non-government education for their children to consider a regional school.