

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION — REGIONAL SCHOOLS

490. Hon DARREN WEST to the minister representing the Minister for Regional Development:

- (1) Does the Minister for Regional Development support the reduction in the number of education assistants in regional schools planned by his government?
- (2) Does the Minister for Regional Development support the increase in class sizes in regional schools that will result from his government's staffing changes?

Hon KEN BASTON replied:

I answer on behalf of the Minister for Regional Development, and I thank the member for some notice of the question.

- (1) The Liberal–National government has increased funding for public education by \$300 million in 2013–14. Since 2007–08 funding has increased from \$2.8 billion to an estimated \$4.4 billion in 2013–14. Education assistants perform valuable roles in our schools, but the way they are distributed to schools is not always effective. The number of education assistants has increased from approximately 4 500 full-time equivalents in 2004–05 to around 7 500 full-time equivalents in 2013. WA is among the least efficient in student to school support staff ratios compared with other states and territories. The changes we are implementing will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of funding allocations to deliver better and more targeted student outcomes. The changes include a more effective system to manage students with anaphylaxis; a better funding model for the allocation of education assistants in kindergarten to year 2 classrooms, whereby funding is provided on a per student, rather than class size, basis; and an alteration to the formula for allocation of Aboriginal and Islander education officers, which has traditionally provided a different level of support for students depending on their year level, resulting in an inequitable resource allocation to Aboriginal students.

No permanent education assistant will lose their job. The reductions will not be immediate. Some will be achieved through completion of fixed-term contracts, others through redeploying staff into other positions in their current or nearby schools and others through retirements or resignations. All students with a genuine need for an education assistant will continue to have access to that support.

- (2) The overall number of teachers employed in 2013 will be maintained in 2014. Although some schools will have increased class sizes, they will remain within appropriate industrial settings. The maximum allowable class sizes will not change.