

SCHOOLS — YEAR 7 TRANSITION TO HIGH SCHOOL

7152. Mr P. Papalia to the Minister for Education

With reference to the Minister's decision to relocate Year 7 public school students into secondary settings from 2015, I ask:

- (a) what were the cost estimates on which the decision was based;
- (b) will the costs be reflected in the 2012–13 State Budget and forward estimates;
- (c) what net effect will the decision have on State payments to non-Government school students in total, and on a per student basis;
- (d) what net effect will the decision have on quantum of Commonwealth grants to Western Australia for non-Government school students;
- (e) what effect will the decision have on the workforce demand and supply projections for secondary teachers for the 2015 school year and beyond;
- (f) what effect will the decision have on workforce demand and supply projections for primary school teachers in 2015 and beyond;
- (g) will any primary school staff require redeployment or retraining to fill positions in secondary schools, and if so, how many;
- (h) will there be any effect on the supply and cost of country Government employee accommodation;
- (i) has the Minister received representations about the likely impact on students of that age (formerly primary age) travelling long distances by bus to district high schools, and if so, how has the Minister responded to those representations;
- (j) what is the greatest distance by bus that a Year 7 student will travel to reach a district high school;
- (k) was the Minister's decision based on an independent review, a report or a departmental recommendation;
- (l) did the Minister receive a full cost–benefit analysis, including educational merits, before making such a significant decision, and if so, when did she receive that analysis; and
- (m) did the Minister consult the Rural and Remote Education Advisory Committee before making the decision?

Dr E. CONSTABLE replied:

This decision was made by Cabinet for educational reasons and in the best interests of children, not solely based on cost.

- (a)–(c) Estimates of the capital and operating costs of transferring Year 7 students to secondary schools will be released as part of the 2012–2013 State Budget.
- (d) The Australian Government will be requested to adjust their funding mechanisms from 2015, when Year 7 students become secondary students.
- (e)–(h) This impact will be considered in the 2012–13 State Budget.
- (i) I received a number of letters and have consulted with parents in rural about this issue. In recognition of the particular challenges faced by some families in country areas, special consideration is available, on a case-by-case basis, for children to attend the local primary school until they complete Year 7. This option is available in 2015, 2016 and 2017. Parents seeking special consideration for those years should approach their school principal.
- (j) The criterion for travel by bus is based on a time limitation. The maximum time by bus that a Year 7 student will travel is 1 hour and 30 minutes, a policy which has been in place since at least 1972.
- (k)–(l) The decision to relocate Year 7 students was made by Cabinet, informed by wide consultation and analysis.
- (m) I discussed the issue with the Rural and Remote Education Advisory Committee Chair before the decision was made by Cabinet.