

INVESTING IN OUR SCHOOLS PROGRAM - FUNDING ROLLBACK

**125. Mr P. PAPALIA to the Minister for Education and Training:**

Will the minister comment on the recent rollback of funding available under the federal government's Investing In Our Schools program?

**Mr M. McGOWAN replied:**

I will. I am agog at what the commonwealth government has done. The state government's \$1 billion capital works budget over four years is building new schools and additional facilities for schools all over Western Australia. The commonwealth government's Investing In Our Schools program has allocated \$1 billion for all schools in Australia over four years. When that is averaged out, if Western Australia receives its fair share, we will receive \$25 million. Of course, Western Australia never gets its fair share. We will receive less than \$25 million. The state government's average capital works budget per annum is more than \$250 million. The commonwealth's contribution to Western Australia is less than \$25 million. It gets worse. Until recently, a commonwealth program offered schools grants of up to \$150 000 per application. A couple of weeks ago midway through the program it lowered the amount from \$150 000 to \$100 000. Schools applying for funds for small projects are now limited to \$100 000.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** I call the members for Murray and Roe to order.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** It gets even worse for us here in Western Australia. A letter to the federal Minister for Education, Science and Training, Hon Julie Bishop, dated 15 March 2007 that was written by our colleague the member for Bunbury has come into my possession. He wrote to the federal minister a couple of weeks ago about this particular program.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** How did you get it?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** He sent a courtesy copy to me. The member for Bunbury wrote -

I write on behalf of a distraught group of parents and educators in Bunbury in regards to a recent rejection of an Investing in Our Schools application for Round Three.

In the letter he indicates that the school applied for just over \$50 000. The member for Bunbury will like this: one of the things that the school applied for under this program was some shade structures. The school was knocked back by the commonwealth government because it said that the school was not allowed to have shade structures as part of its application. It could not have shade over playgrounds etc as it was outside the criteria. However, having received the letter from the member for Bunbury in good faith, I looked at the commonwealth government's Investing In Our Schools website. It shows a picture of students playing under a new shade structure at Solway Primary School. It states -

Slipping, slopping, slapping and staying in the shade were the focus at the recent unveiling by federal Treasurer and local MP Peter Costello of the much awaited shade structure at Solway Primary School in Victoria.

Schools in the leafy eastern suburbs of Melbourne in the federal Treasurer's electorate can receive money for shade structures but schools in the member for Bunbury's electorate, the federal electorate of Forrest, are ineligible. It is further evidence of the commonwealth government's lack of concern for Western Australia, lack of concern for Bunbury - it hates Bunbury - and its complete disregard for shade structures in schools in Western Australia.