

SCHOOLS OF ISOLATED AND DISTANCE EDUCATION — ENROLMENT POLICY

331. Mr P. PAPALIA to the Minister for Education:

I refer to the Department of Education's announcement that from next year students older than 17 years who do Schools of Isolated and Distance Education courses will no longer be enrolled at SIDE and will be forced to attend one of only four inner metropolitan campuses.

- (1) How many students will the minister force to pay for extra transport and other costs, such as child care, to attend these four schools rather than undertaking SIDE courses?
- (2) Has the minister considered the cost-of-living impact on young mothers who are currently enrolled in SIDE to complete their secondary education?
- (3) Will this decision impact the many prisoners across a range of prisons who are currently trying to reform themselves through SIDE courses; and, if so, how will the minister cater for these prisoners?

Dr E. CONSTABLE replied:

- (1)–(3) I thank the member for the question. There has been some misunderstanding about the enrolment policy of the department. Any person who is enrolled in a school now, be it SIDE or any other school, and becomes of adult age beyond school age, can remain in that school; they do not have to move just because their age changes. Schools have been told that they cannot take new enrolments in schools if someone is beyond the age of 18 years or the school-leaving age. I am not aware of very many prisoners being educated through SIDE and I would be surprised if there were many, so I will have to check the member's statement, because I am not sure whether it is correct.

Mr P. Papalia: They have also been told, minister, that they cannot enrol them if they are going to turn 18 from next year.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: No, they have not. That is not what they have been told. I have checked that policy. If already enrolled in a school —

Mr P. Papalia: Are you sure about that?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I am absolutely certain. If a person is already enrolled in a school, they can continue their enrolment, but a school cannot enrol someone new in the school if they are 18 years of age. They would then have to go to one of the other colleges. But someone does not have to change their enrolment just because their age changes; they can stay within the school they are enrolled in.