

EDUCATION — NEURODIVERSE STUDENTS — BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT

911. Hon Dr Brad Pettitt to the Minister for Education and Training:

I refer to the use of Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) in educational settings across the State, along with related interventions such as Pivotal Response Training (PBS) and Comprehensive Application of Behaviour Analysis to Schooling (CABAS). The ABA model uses punishment and reward processes to encourage children to comply with neurotypical behavioural norms. There is extensive academic and clinical evidence that such practices are relatively ineffective and potentially harmful for autistic children, particularly when compared to neurodiversity-affirming learning and behavioural approaches. I ask,:

- (a) does the Department of Education undertake any ongoing consultation and collaboration with neurodivergent people and people with disabilities to improve the inclusiveness and effectiveness of the education system;
- (b) if yes to (a), how is that consultation and collaboration undertaken and, who with;
- (c) if no to (a), will the Minister commit to ensuring that the Department commences active and ongoing collaboration and consultation with neurodivergent people and people with disabilities to improve the education system;
- (d) how does the Department partner with disabled students and adults to implement non-discriminatory behaviour management practices in schools; and
- (e) will the Minister commit to ceasing the use of educational and behavioural intervention and support practices that:
  - (i) punish or shame neurodivergent students for displaying neurodivergent behaviours; and
  - (ii) reward or incentivise neurodivergent students for displaying 'masking' behaviours?

**Hon Sue Ellery replied:**

- (a)–(c) Yes. Consultation and collaboration occur with a range of stakeholders dependent on the context and focus of the work, typically through face-to-face workshops and meetings. Stakeholders include peak advocacy groups, which include parents and people with disability.
- (d) All public schools are required to implement whole-school behaviour management plans and, where required, individual behaviour management plans that are developed in consultation with the parents of these individual students.
- (e) (i)–(ii) The Department of Education does not accept that the contemporary Applied Behavioural Analysis approaches adopted in some public schools punish neurodivergent students or otherwise encourage them to adopt masking behaviours. Contemporary ABA practices should not be confused with older, traditional ABA approaches that incorporated the use of punishment, which have been subject to public debate. Schools incorporate the principles of contemporary Applied Behavioural Analysis to study and modify behaviour through consistent reinforcement. The Department's Students at Educational Risk policy requires schools to consult with parents regarding the teaching and learning adjustments that are provided to students with disability. The Department of Education also recognises that behaviour in students with disability may be a symptom or manifestation of their disability. Western Australian public school teachers are provided with resources and advice to understand the behaviour of students with disability is often a form of communication, and that students need to be provided with support and assistance rather than exposed to punishment or disciplinary action.