

EDUCATION — STUDENTS WITH DISABILITY

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

I refer to the State Government's obligations under the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to ensure that persons with disabilities can access inclusive, quality and free primary and secondary educations, with effective individualised support measures in unsegregated environments that maximize academic and social development. The only education options available to many disabled children in Western Australia are in the form of segregated education support schools and centres, contrary to the State Governments obligations under the Convention. The Department of Education's Director, Disability Inclusion stated at public hearing 24 of the Royal Commission into Violence, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability that they did not know whether the Department's policies are informed by the Convention. I ask,:

- (a) will the Minister commit to ensuring that all Department policies (including Department of Education Inclusion Policy) are informed by, and consistent with, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;
- (b) is the Minister aware that access to inclusive education is a human right, and that the segregation of students on the basis of their disabilities is contrary to the United Nation Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;
- (c) does the Department have any plans to establish new education support schools and centres for persons with disabilities;
- (d) is there a plan to cease the practice of segregating students on the basis of their disabilities in favour of a model that enshrines the right of all persons with disabilities to access inclusive primary and secondary education in unsegregated environments; and
- (e) if yes to (d), will the Minister table it?

Hon Sue Ellery replied:

- (a) Department of Education policies are required to be consistent with the relevant legislation and are informed by legal and policy obligations, the strategic direction of Government and consultation with relevant stakeholders.
- (b) The Department's Enrolment in Public Schools policy and procedures state that students with disability can apply to enrol at their local school, where they are guaranteed a place if they reside in the local intake area. They may also choose to apply to enrol at a school or a centre with specialist disability provision. Inclusion is the typical experience of students with disabilities in Western Australian public schools.
- (c) The following schools are set to open new education support facilities – or receive additional accommodation for existing facilities:
 - Brabham Primary School
 - Burns Beach Primary School
 - Canning Vale College
 - Lakeland Senior High School
 - Piara Waters Senior High School
 - Kalamunda Senior High School
- (d) I do not accept the premise of the question. Students are not “segregated on the basis of their disabilities”. The Department of Education will continue to respect parental choice by providing a range of options for students with disability, ranging from full inclusion at their local school to a specialist disability program at an education support school.
- (e) Not applicable.