



The Premier Colin Barnett and Education Minister Liz Constable announcement on 8/12/2011 that all of the state's public secondary schools would cater for year 7 by 2015 has not addressed the following points.

- The full cost of implementing the scheme. The Department of Education and Training in its report *The future Placement of Year 7 Students in Western Australian Public Schools: A Study* February 2007 estimated the cost of implementing the scheme over the period 2009- 2015 at \$850m followed by annual recurrent costs of \$122m. Has there been a revision to this estimate? If so when did this occur? What is the revised amount?
- The report further stated that *There is no evidence either at the State or National levels that outcomes improve when Year 7 students are in secondary settings.* The NAPLAN results for years 3,5,7 and 9 in the disciplines of Reading, Writing, Spelling, Grammar and Punctuation and Numeracy 2008-2011 consistently place WA in the lower range of State and Territory Scores. The lower NAPLAN scores for years 3,5 and to a lesser extent year 7, has nothing to do with the new secondary setting. Year 9 NAPLAN results do not show any worse difference than that which occurs for years 3, 5, and 7, suggesting that the year 9 result may be have causes independent of any middle school structural change. Should we be embarking on an education model where insufficient research has been undertaken on the outcomes? The scheme has been introduced in Catholic schools and some independent schools however there has been no announcement as to whether the entire Western Australian education system will follow the Catholic school model. This model had no arbitrary regime for introduction and allowed a healthy degree of independence of the individual schools. The lack of detail provided by the Government is in stark contrast to that of the Queensland Government in its decision to introduce year 7 to secondary school. The Queensland Government commissioned a publically available whitepaper on the relocation of year 7's called " *A Flying Start for Queensland Children,*" sought broad consultation on the paper and ensured a large amount of information is available on their Department of Education website. Introduced year 7's into 20 pilot schools to ensure any major issues during the transition could be addressed, plus engaging in consultation with P & C Associations.
- Students entering secondary school will be 6 months younger than the current cohort in year 8. What will be the level of pastoral care? Students in primary school are engaged in a more structured setting than to what they will be exposed in secondary school. What provision will be put in place in regard to bullying and disruptive behaviour?
- What provisions have been made for additional secondary school teachers? It cannot be automatically assumed that primary school teachers can automatically be retrained to a secondary school standard. Has there been any suggestion of how primary school teachers may be trained in a non-teaching capacity.

- Children attending secondary school are exposed to a far greater degree of anti-social behaviour than that experienced in primary school. Drugs, sexual experimentation are but to name two. Are the year sevens to be segregated or what protection will be afforded to them?
- Has any research been undertaken on the impact of year 7 students commencing secondary school on rural communities? It has been suggested that no rural schools will close, but will those primary schools with falling numbers be reclassified? This will have a negative impact on school funding and attracting suitably qualified teachers to rural areas as their promotional prospects will be diminished.

A blanket decision that no school will close could lead to the ludicrous situation where at some primary schools there may be more teachers than students due to falling numbers. The qualifications of teachers is of paramount importance to children's development and desire to learn.

There will also be a significant economic impact on rural communities caused by this decision in the form of additional school fees. It is acknowledged that many private schools prefer an intake of year 7 students however a mandatory decision on year 7 students commencing secondary school will exasperate the financial wellbeing of communities.

Families are more likely to visit younger children on a more regular basis than older children away from home. With the introduction of Sunday trading rural families will have a greater opportunity to undertake their shopping in the city. A further economic drain on rural communities.

The decision for Western Australian year 7 students to commence secondary school has no logical basis apart from a follow the leader mentality. There has been no subsequent report prepared by the department of Education and Training since the February 2007 Report *The Future Placement of Year 7 Students in Western Australian Public Schools: A study to support the decision*. The introduction of the Australian Education curriculum has no time table on implementation or compliance dates. The decision has been highlighted by its lack of research and should be reversed.