

Question on Notice

No. 734

Asked on 11 May 2006

**MR FOLEY ASKED THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND MINISTER FOR THE ARTS
(MR WELFORD) —**

QUESTION:

- (1) In the “Education Laws For The Future Consultation Paper” does it say on page 24: “those families who choose to use the service of SDE in cases where a state school is available will be provided with a base level of service and will attract a charge for any additional services. Base level service will include course material, assessment and reporting back on returned work, and library and resource centre services”; if so, is it true that 93 per cent of respondents said that State education should be free?
- (2) Why then has the Government removed the promised base level Distance Education Program and charged a fee for the people who choose it?

ANSWER:

- (1) Under the *Education (General Provisions) Act 1989* State education is free with the exception of specialist services. Seventy-seven per cent of respondents to the Education Laws for the Future Consultation supported the proposal for state schools to have the capacity to charge for specialist programs and specific additional services, including students accessing distance education by choice instead of the local state school. This position is also supported by the Isolated Children’s Parents’ Association.
- (2) Some parents have access to a state school, but choose to enrol their child in distance education. The charge associated with access to State schools of distance education by home based, “by choice” learners is \$500 in 2006 and \$1,000 in 2007 and will be reviewed for 2008 and beyond. This charge reflects the higher cost per student of delivering distance education rather than the cost of a student’s attendance at a local State school. The average annual cost of services to a student enrolled through a school of distance education is \$10, 210 compared with \$7 426 and \$8 673 for accessing state primary and secondary education respectively. Clearly, the fee in no way represents the true cost differential – it is simply a contribution. The fee applies to all home based, by choice learners unless it is waived in certain circumstances, namely financial hardship and disadvantage through lack of educational continuity, or in exceptional circumstances.