

Question on Notice

No. 517

Asked on 15 March 2007

Mr Rickuss asked the Minister for Education and Training and Minister for the Arts (Mr Welford) —

QUESTION:

With reference to the introduction of Prep in Queensland—

- (1) What was the total cost to government of providing a Smart State water bottle, cap, certificate and personally signed letter by the Premier and Minister for Education to all 2007 Prep year students?
- (2) Would such funding have been better spent providing full-time teacher aides or in ensuring that all Prep facilities are adequately designed and resourced?

ANSWER:

I am pleased the Member is taking an interest in the historic Prep Year although it appears he is begrudging our youngest school students an all-important water bottle and sun safe cap. I would suggest to the Member that this was in fact a very valuable investment in the safety and well being of our new students and a significant part of their education.

The Member may not be aware that in addition to these investments in the welfare of our children, our Government conducted four years of trials and invested more than \$350 million dollars in readiness for the statewide delivery of Prep. These extensive preparations included the largest ever capital works programs in Queensland education.

Following a successful four-year trial and phase-in program involving more than 120 schools across the State, 416 new specially-designed classrooms were built and a further 420 were refurbished to ensure schools were ready for some 32,000 young Queenslanders who commenced Prep in January 2007. There were also over 1000 minor upgrades of pre-school classrooms and small schools.

Principals, prep teachers and teacher aides in state schools undertook specialist training to deliver the specially developed Early Years Curriculum Guidelines for Prep, with more than \$2 million allocated for professional development programs and \$15.8 million for curriculum resources. About 100 new teachers were employed and an additional 10,000 hours of teacher-aide time allocated to support the introduction of Prep.

Initial reports show the implementation of Prep has gone smoothly, with schools reporting high levels of satisfaction with their preparedness for Prep. My department is continuing to closely monitor all aspects of the state-wide implementation, including facilities, human resourcing, school management, professional development, curriculum resources and teaching and learning.