

Question on Notice

No. 932

Asked on 14 June 2011

Mr Watt asked the Minister for Education and Training (Mr Dick) —

QUESTION:

Will the Minister advise of the benefits to children in the electorate of Everton from moving year 7 to secondary school?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for his question and interest in the benefits of moving Year 7 to secondary school.

On 9 June 2011, the Education White Paper *A Flying Start for Queensland Children* has released the Government's decision to move Year 7 to secondary school from 2015. The transition of Year 7 to secondary school will provide a number of significant benefits.

This paper outlined the Bligh Government is committed to and focussed on the ongoing improvement of the Queensland education system. This is the next step in a 10 year journey of education reform.

In 2007 we introduced the Prep Year, and in 2008 we raised the Year 1 entry age by six months. This brought Queensland into line with most other Australian states and territories in terms of school starting ages.

Introducing Prep has meant our students have gained an extra year of schooling. By 2015 Queensland Year 7 students will be in their eighth year of school, and this is the right year for high school to begin.

Raising the Year 1 entry age means that from 2015, students entering Year 7 will be six months older. By 2015, more than half the students in Year 7 will be turning 13 during Year 7.

Young people in this early adolescent phase are a distinct group with individual needs. Educators agree that young teenagers are ready for greater independence and the depth of learning that high schools provide.

We believe children at this critical stage of their development are best catered for in a secondary school environment.

Placing Year 7 in secondary will provide students in the Everton electorate, and across the State, with access to specialist teachers and facilities.

From 2012, Queensland will adopt the new Australian Curriculum for English, mathematics and science. With access to specialist resources like science labs and science teachers, our Year 7 students at high school will be better positioned to take advantage of the Australian Curriculum and keep pace with their peers in other states.

We know from research that the most important things for a successful transition to secondary school are for students to be challenged academically, and have effective support mechanisms to manage their social and emotional adjustment. To this end, we will introduce Junior Secondary in state secondary schools, commencing with Years 8 and 9 in 2013 and extending to Year 7 in 2015.

Junior Secondary will provide challenging educational offerings that engage young adolescents, while giving them a sense of belonging and support through the changes they face.

The decision to introduce Junior Secondary was made in direct response to the parent feedback we received from the *Flying Start* Green Paper consultations. Parents told us that we needed to strengthen our support mechanisms for students in their transition from primary to secondary school.

Junior Secondary will build on existing good practice in many of our state schools, and will be guided by statewide principles. Junior Secondary students will be encouraged and supported to develop their own group identity within the wider high school. There will be a strong emphasis on pastoral care to meet the social and emotional needs of Junior Secondary students, and parents will be encouraged to become even more involved in their children's schooling in the high school years.

While the principles of Junior Secondary will apply to all state secondary schools, local decision making will mean the needs of each school community influence how Junior Secondary is implemented in each school.

More information about the move of Year 7 can be found online at www.qld.gov.au/flyingstart.