

Speeches 14.6.2012

SCHOOL AMALGAMATIONS

Adjourned debate on motion of Hon. R.B. Such:

That this house calls upon the Minister for Education and Child Development to review the decision to amalgamate junior primary and primary schools involving the loss of leadership positions and the consequential negative impact on student learning and behavioural outcomes.

(Continued from 1 March 2012.)

Mr BROCK (Frome) (12:57): I take this opportunity to talk on the motion of the Hon. Bob Such that this house calls upon the Minister for Education and Child Development to review the decision to amalgamate junior primary and primary schools involving the loss of leadership positions and the consequential negative impact on student learning and behavioural outcomes.

I know that I only have a couple of minutes at this stage, but certainly, when the minister made her recent comments, she said that the schools that were involved were in the metropolitan area of Adelaide. The minister went out for some consultation to the school communities and, out of those school communities, I do not have the exact number but, well and truly, the majority voted not to amalgamate those particular schools.

I understand that you are not always going to please everybody but, certainly, with the majority of people not in favour, I would have thought that progressing with the amalgamations of those schools may have been deferred or taken into further consideration. My issue is that I know this is going to be a saving to the government of the day and I consider that to be a very minimal saving in the long run.

This will assist, I understand, with balancing out the budget, no matter who the government of the day is, but what will be the cost of the quality of education for future generations of our students? I still am not convinced about amalgamating schools, unless it is the very, very clear desire, after lots of consideration, of the school communities to go forward with it.

Let me say that, when I first came into this place during the government's previous term, the minister at the time, Jane Lomax-Smith, was going to amalgamate schools in Port Pirie, but, to her credit, she reviewed that decision and went back to the school communities. The minister then deferred the decision to have further and in-depth discussions with the school communities. That has not happened and I will be fighting very strongly to ensure that, if any amalgamations go forward, they will be at the request of the school communities and the parents.

The federal minister for education, the Hon. Peter Garrett, was on TV just recently, responding to an internet survey by 25,000 recipients about how accurate people are at spelling. I seek leave to continue my remarks.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

[Sitting suspended from 13:00 to 14:00]