

QUESTION WITHOUT NOTICE

Questions – Multi-School Organisations

ASKED BY: Hon Meg Webb

ANSWERED BY: Hon Jo Palmer, Minister for Education

Multi-School Organisation - Trial

Ms WEBB question to MINISTER for EDUCATION, Ms PALMER

This question follows the answer provided to the member for Hobart. It also aligns with the questions I had planned.

It's on the multi-school organisation trial. In relation to consultation, the minister provided a fairly long list of instances of people who were contacted. It is important to distinguish between consultation and briefings - or consultation and information provided, or consultation and engagement in co-developing something - and just telling people what's happening.

With that proviso, my question is: in terms of consultation on the multi-school organisation trial, was there a proposal developed and described - in, say, an issues paper or a background paper - and put out for consultation with the relevant groups, many of whom were listed in that previous answer, but specifically teachers, principals, the AEU, the Tasmanian Association of State School Organisations? For example, was a multi-school organisation trial a definite model put to them? Were their thoughts gathered and considered before we arrived at the proposal that's now being taken forward under a trial? Did that form of consultation occur, or were there just meetings and briefings along the way?

ANSWER

Mr President, I thank the member for the question. I need advice about what the department distributed in a written form. The briefings I was involved with were very much question and answers. We had the Grattan Institute come and do presentations, then we had Matt Hood come here, who is an MSO expert from the United Kingdom. We made sure that he had the opportunity to have those formal and informal discussions with stakeholders to take them on the journey.

We did all that we could to ensure the shadow education spokespeople had the opportunity to ask questions in one-on-one set-ups, and to ensure there was an opportunity for there to be lots of questions asked as part of the presentation. It certainly wasn't someone up the front saying, 'This is what we're going to do'. It was very

much an interactive engagement with all those stakeholders, certainly in the ones I was involved with.

I know the department is now having sessions set up where principals can come online and ask questions, whether that be of the secretary - and looking at ensuring they can ask questions of our three amazing principals, who are so enthusiastic, having seen in the UK the advantages to this model.

We have done everything we can to make sure that has been interactive. That consultation will need to continue all the way through the five-year trial. We are just starting with our preschools for five years. That will need to continue through the five years. We will be beginning the evaluation of this program up front. We would like to engage a number of these education stakeholders in that evaluation process so that they are not just part of it right now - learning about it and consulting on it - but they are part of that evaluation the whole way through. We think that's really important.

Multi-School Organisation - Consultation Process

Ms WEBB question to MINISTER for EDUCATION, Ms PALMER

Following on from that, just to be clear, it sounds very laudable to be providing information in a whole range of ways. I'm not taking away from what was done, but consultation isn't providing information and being able to answer questions. Consultation is inviting people to have input into something being developed.

My specific question was - and I'd like to, if I may, ask for the provision of actual documentary information, either here in the Chamber or separately to me directly, but I think shared publicly would be good: Was there, in fact, a documented consultation process for people to share their views and input, thoughts or questions, concerns, or additional suggestions, into the development of this model?

Everything described so far doesn't sound like that. It sounds like providing information and answering questions. That's not consultation in the sense that we fully understand it, like there would be on an exposure draft bill, for example: put the bill out, people make submissions, things may get tweaked as a result, but we're getting an ultimate bill. In this sort of trial, was there something put in writing that people were able to respond to in writing to provide consultation into the space prior to the decision being made to fully and finally go ahead with it? Is that available and can you make it available to us?

ANSWER

Mr President, I will take that on notice and get that information. I will also say that we set up a steering committee at the very beginning of this process. On that steering committee, we had one of the researchers from the Grattan Institute. We have a former principal, a retired principal, and other very senior educators who went on the steering committee that was established right up front and they have been quite integral in

feeding advice into what this could look like and how this could work for Tasmania. Let me get that information for you and I will bring that back to the Chamber.

Multi-School Organisation - Differences to Previous Model Trialled

Ms WEBB question to MINISTER for EDUCATION, Ms PALMER

I'm interested to understand how the model that's being proposed for the MSOs differs from the model trialled in Tasmanian schools around 2011, where we had learning federations formed in what seems like a very similar way. I'm wondering, has that previous experience fed into, have we learned from it, was it evaluated, has it been considered in light of the MSOs? I'm particularly interested to know what differentiates the MSO concept from the previously trialled learning federations.

ANSWER

Mr President, I'm not as familiar with that model from 2011. I'm happy to make myself familiar with that. I don't know that I can comment on that. What we've done is that we had seen the issues that our schools are facing and, as I say, teachers can't work any harder. Our kids are brilliant; we're resourcing them. We have an incredible infrastructure spend in our schools.

We have done some amazing reforms in literacy and phonics, but still the Report on Government Services (RoGS) data and the National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) data come out and it's not where we want it to be. Our state has problems with literacy across our age groups.

If we're looking at amazing reforms, great resourcing, amazing staff, you have to look at the service delivery. I know one of the criticisms that has been fed back to me in the 18 months I've been Education minister is that in our schools, they feel there's a disconnect from what's happening with that service delivery with the agency and what's actually happening on the ground. A common complaint is, 'I don't know who to call or I call eight people before I find the person in this enormous agency who can actually help me with my problem'. This is taking the agency and saying you have to be closer to our schools and that's where we see the grouping of schools and then the dial up around that tight alignment with MSO 1.

Ms Webb - For clarity, Mr President: minister, you're not aware we had a previous iteration 15 years ago called Learning Federations that is quite similar.

Ms PALMER - I have certainly heard of it, but I don't have intimate knowledge of it.