



Tuesday 10th October, 2006

SCHOOL SWIMMING PROGRAMS TO STAY

Education Minister Jane Lomax-Smith has ruled out any changes to swimming programs offered in the State's schools.

Back from a week-long trade mission to India with South Australian cricketer Darren Lehmann, Dr Lomax-Smith says swimming programs, including those for students with disabilities, will continue.

"Teaching children to swim and keep themselves safe in the water is fundamental in a country like Australia and swimming programs will not be cut on my watch," Dr Lomax-Smith says.

"The program teaches children a range of skills, from floating without a flotation aid to swimming strokes and survival and rescue techniques.

"The Rann Government is investing record levels in education, and will continue to ensure children learn essential swimming and water safety skills from their first years at school.

"Aquatics programs will continue until at least the end of Term 1 2007, but the department is examining the effectiveness of general aquatics activities and their role in day-to-day schooling.

"These programs involve activities like wind surfing, boogie boarding, fishing, surfing, snorkelling, sailing and other activities.

"While these water-based activities are fun and develop skills, it needs to be considered whether they are essential skills that should be taught as part of the school curriculum.

"We are putting a major emphasis in our schools on improving children's literacy and other fundamental skills, and over the years we have also added a number of programs.

"We now expect our schools to teach about crime prevention, responsible gambling, drug education, healthy eating and more, but there are only so many hours in the school day for children to learn and teachers to teach, and we cannot keep adding more and more programs.

"Existing programs also need to be considered from time-to-time to make sure they are operating in the most effective way and continue to fit with the priorities for our schools.

"Questions have also been raised about music and the department is examining, before the end of the year, the effectiveness and equity and access to the Instrumental Music Service, an additional service to school-based music programs.

"Concerns have been raised about the access to the program by disadvantaged students. Any potential recommended changes will not be introduced before the end of 2007.

"The Festival of Music, classroom music and school-based music teachers are not being examined."