

Division 25: Education Services, \$465 363 000 —

Mr I.C. Blayney, Chairman.

Mrs L.M. Harvey, Minister for Police representing the Minister for Education.

Mr R.J. Strickland, Director General.

Mr R. Miles, Director, Teacher Registration.

Mr J. Jurkowski, Chief Finance Officer.

Ms J. Taggart, Director, Education Regulation.

Mr D. Lloyd, Executive Director, Corporate Governance and Funding.

Mr T. Werner, Director, Higher Education and Legislative Review.

Miss S. Trestrail, Director, Training Regulation.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIRMAN: This estimates committee will be reported by Hansard. The daily proof *Hansard* will be available the following day.

It is the intention of the Chair to ensure that as many questions as possible are asked and answered and that both questions and answers are short and to the point. The estimates committee's consideration of the estimates will be restricted to discussion of those items for which a vote of money is proposed in the consolidated account. Questions must be clearly related to a page number, item, program or amount in the current division. It will greatly assist Hansard if members can give these details in preface to their question.

The minister may agree to provide supplementary information to the committee rather than asking that the question be put on notice for the next sitting week. I ask the minister to clearly indicate what supplementary information she agrees to provide and I will then allocate a reference number. If supplementary information is to be provided, I seek the minister's cooperation in ensuring that it is delivered to the principal clerk by Friday, 3 June 2016. I caution members that if a minister asks that a matter be put on notice, it is up to the member to lodge the question on notice with the Clerk's office.

I give the call to the member for Armadale.

[5.10 pm]

Dr A.D. BUTI: The second dot point under the heading "Significant Issues Impacting the Agency" on page 276 of the *Budget Statements* refers to the review of independent public schools. Have issues been raised about the reviewing process of IPSs, including that the monitoring lacks rigour and allows principals to self-assess without any input from other staff?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Mr Strickland will respond.

Mr R.J. Strickland: Independent public school reviews have been a very good news story. The feedback that we have had from principals has been extraordinary in the extent to which they feel that it has been adding value to what they do. The idea of them doing a self-assessment is to have a peer review. The schools have been variable in that, depending on their own state of development. Some have been doing annual reviews, so it has been quite an easy process for them; others are still struggling by the time they get to the review date. The review date is three years after school started, and it is timed to match the delivery and performance agreement, because the review looks at their performance under the delivery and performance agreement and also the business plan associated with it.

The department has a team of 43 highly skilled reviewers who have backgrounds in schooling in Western Australia; they were district directors and high-performing principals in both the government and non-government school area and they have been professionally developed and are moderated on an ongoing basis. They go out and validate the school's review. First of all, they do a desk review and then they visit the school. They talk to the school board and the staff and students in the school and they come up with an assessment of how the school has performed in improving student performance and the learning environment and how sustainable it is. They do this while they look at the school's own self-assessment; they also look at how good that has been. They come out with commendations and recommendations from the things that they have seen the school do well. The feedback we have had is that that has hit the right point and schools have learnt a lot from it. The feedback I have had from the director general of the Department of Education is that it is meeting its needs.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I have been involved in these processes through being on school boards. Basically, the principal does the self-assessment. The department sends out a team that interviews the principal, some staff members,

some board members and students. How many students and how many parents who are not part of the board are interviewed normally in a school review?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I will ask Mr Strickland to respond.

Mr R.J. Strickland: That would vary a lot depending on the school, because when the reviewers do the armchair review, they come up with lines of inquiry that might be different in different schools. There is not a set formula whereby we do exactly this in this school and exactly that in that school. What is important about the independent public school initiative is that it allows schools to meet the requirements of the context they are in and to come up with programs that are best suited to students in that area, whatever their needs might be. The extent to which the reviewers feel they need to talk to students or staff about that will come out of what they have seen in the review and what they experience when they are in the review process. I cannot tell the member that there is a set number or whatever; it will vary from school to school.

Dr A.D. BUTI: There are like schools; many schools are similar. Can the minister give us some idea of how many students are generally questioned and how many parents independent of the school board or the parents and citizens association are interviewed?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I think the director general has answered that, but Mr Strickland may have something further to add to that.

Mr R.J. Strickland: No.

Ms S.F. McGURK: My question relates to the advice that was just given that there is no set formula for assessing schools. Firstly, I wonder how schools are compared if there are no common criteria against which IPSs are evaluated. Secondly, has there been any independent or external evaluation of individual IPSs in Western Australia, as well as the overall IPS system?

Mr R.J. Strickland: Sorry; what was the first part of the question?

Ms S.F. McGURK: If there is no set formula by which the assessments are tailored to the school, how are outcomes compared across schools?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: I will ask the director general to elaborate.

Mr R.J. Strickland: The review has to look at the delivery and performance agreement, the targets in the delivery and performance agreement, the school's performance against that and the business plan that it created in trying to meet those targets. It also looks at, as I was saying, student performance and the things that would be expected such as National Assessment Program — Literacy and Numeracy results, attendance and the like; the learning environment to see what the programs are and how they have been working or not working in the school; the sustainability, culture and development of teachers; the leadership distributed throughout the school; and the performance of the board, how well it is involved in the process, and the oversight it has of what the school is doing and achieving et cetera. We do a review school by school. This is what we were set up to do. We were not set up to review the program. An initial review was done in, I believe, 2015 but it was by the Department of Education, which has that responsibility. In terms of any questions about the overall performance of the program, it is not something that the member would get out of the work that we have been doing.

Ms S.F. McGURK: The second element of my question to the minister was: has there been any independent or external examination or assessment of either individual IP schools or the IPS program as a whole?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: As the director general has enunciated, there have been assessments of individual schools. With respect to the entire program, I do not have an adviser from the Department of Education here to answer that question, so the member would need to put that question on notice.

Ms S.F. McGURK: I just repeat my question: has there been any independent or external examination of IPS? The question is whether there has been an outside assessment of how IPS is performing, not whether it has been done by the School Curriculum and Standards Authority or the Department of Education.

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: The advice that the director general has just provided me with is that the University of Melbourne did the external review of the IPS program, but the Department of Education Services is responsible for assessing individual IP schools against their business plan and their performance outcomes.

Dr A.D. BUTI: With regard to the University of Melbourne being the external assessor, for want of a better word, what has it come up with?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: Unfortunately, the Department of Education Services is not privy to that information. The review of the policy and the IPS system was done by the University of Melbourne for the Department of Education, so if the member wants an answer to that, unfortunately, the question should have been asked in the previous division. However, he can put that question on notice to the minister. I cannot answer it, I am afraid.

[5.20 pm]

Dr A.D. BUTI: How many independent public school reviews were undertaken in the 2015–16 financial year?

Mrs L.M. HARVEY: In 2015–16, 106 reviews were undertaken, and 177 reviews are scheduled for 2016–17.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Of the 106 reviews undertaken in 2015–16, how many schools did not meet the requirements?

Mr R.J. Strickland: Our own effectiveness indicator showed that 100 per cent of schools met the overall requirements, but that does not mean that we did not find some strengths and weaknesses in those schools. At times schools did not quite meet targets in their delivery and performance agreements, but that did not mean the school received an overall fail. We expected to find that schools had strengths and weaknesses, and that is what we found.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Is the department satisfied that all the reviews undertaken in 2015–16 show that schools are operating at the standard the department wants?

Mr R.J. Strickland: It was not a standards-based review, as such. The review reports are quite fulsome in their analysis and understanding of the context and what schools have achieved in terms of performance. At the end of the report there are commendations about those achievements and also some recommendations. Business planning is something that has come up a lot. I think schools learn through this process that that is an area in which to improve. We are certainly hoping in the next review round that schools that were not strong—some were very strong—will focus more on specific planning targets and the use of data analysis to show how they are going and will use that to adjust what they are doing and how their programs are working et cetera. If there was an area in which I thought we saw some commonality that more can be done, it was in business planning. The other area would probably be the extent of involvement of school boards in the oversight of the school, and its status; that is, the extent to which the community that the school is in knows about the school and what it stands for—its vision and those sorts of things. Those are areas where we made quite a lot of recommendations.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Was any mention made of the need for better assistance or service from central office or district offices in those reviews?

Mr R.J. Strickland: I do not know. The recommendations were not about that sort of thing. The recommendations were really about how the schools were performing. We send the reports to the director general of the Department of Education and the minister. The reports inform the director general about her dealings with the school and its next delivery and performance agreement et cetera. The information is used and is given to the Department of Education for that purpose.

The appropriation was recommended.