

Division 36: Education Services, \$382 452 000 —

Mr M.W. Sutherland, Chairman.

Dr E. Constable, Minister for Education.

Mr R. Strickland, Chief Executive Officer.

Mr B. Parkin, Executive Director, Corporate Governance and Non-Government Schools.

Mr M.R. Brown, Director, Education and Training Regulation.

Mr R. Willis, Chief Finance Officer.

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

Ms J. Taggart, Principal Adviser, Office of the Minister for Education.

[Witnesses introduced.]

[12.40 pm]

The CHAIRMAN: The member for Forrestfield.

Mr A.J. WADDELL: I return to my aborted question. It relates to the first dot point on page 415 of the *Budget Statements* and the review of the independent public schools. It encompasses \$1.4 million that has been allocated for the review. It indicates that the consultation needs to be very broad and the department needs to look at all the different stakeholders involved. I would be interested to know who those stakeholders are. I would like to put that in context. I am interested to know what prospects there are for any independent school to break ranks with the system—for example, if it was in an area with a low local intake—and say that it was going to set itself up as the first gifted primary school. What prospect is there in the IPS program for that to occur and would the appropriate stakeholders therefore be consulted in this review process?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: We have had a question about the reviews, which is in this division, but the question about whether they could take that course of action was in the last division. We are a bit caught. We will do our best to deal with that question. I mentioned earlier today that there are three levels of review and evaluation of IPS, starting with a qualitative case study type of review that has recently been done on the first 34 schools. Individual reviews are being done independently of the Department of Education by the Department of Education Services. This is the department that reviews and regulates non-government schools. It has been in that space for a long time and it is used to reviewing schools. We thought it was really important that that be done independently of the department. Next year is the third year for the first 34 schools. Each school signed an agreement with the director general. Based on those agreements and the goals that were set, a whole lot of work is being done to establish how those reviews will take place. I will ask Mr Brown to elaborate on where we are at present. That has been worked out with the schools. The principals are involved in the development of how those reviews will take place. As I understand it—I may be corrected—the schools themselves will do a review and that review will be looked at and expanded on by the Department of Education Services. The schools will have an opportunity to examine what they have done, where they have been and where they might like to go on a range of variables and goals. Central to all of that will be looking at student performance as well as a range of other things such as staff satisfaction and views of principals and communities. I will ask Mr Brown to bring the member up to date with where we are at the current time.

Mr M. Brown: We consulted with the school principals and the school boards of all 34 schools towards the end of last year on what they would like to see in the overall review process. We took their advice. We have taken further advice through research analysis on school effectiveness that we have undertaken and also effective reviews. We have put that together into a draft that is currently being consulted again with the school principals and the school boards. We have sought local and interstate academic expertise in school effectiveness and we have even gone international in looking at the range of review processes used around the world to come up with a process for Western Australia. We hope to complete our consultation on the final nature of the reviews within the next month or two and bring that to the minister and the schools by about September this year. We will then develop the communication process with schools and put the whole process in place during 2012.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I think that answers part of the member's question. The member also asked about what the IPS may be able to do.

Mr A.J. WADDELL: That review would limit itself to the way things were operating now. If an IPS school simply decided that there was an opportunity within the market to specialise in something and become a select school, let us say in music, for instance, because it had a low intake within its own catchment area, what prospect is there within the IPS program for a school to simply break ranks and become a select school in that respect?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Every independent public school—this is going back to the last division but I am sure members will bear with me—is subject to the legislation, policies and so on of the department. I am now just speculating. If such a situation arose and a good case could be put and if it gelled with our statewide planning, I am sure there would be an opportunity to at least discuss that with the director general because another three-year agreement would presumably come into place once the review is done. The review might be a time to discuss other opportunities for a school. As we said earlier, there are over 100 specialist programs in schools, and many of those are music, taking the member's example, because students have chosen to study it.

I think we have a very broad mind when it comes to independent public schools but it would have to be part of the general and statewide planning of the department; it could not just be something that the school could pick up and do without going through that process with the department. Again, I think an open mind is really important.

Mr B.S. WYATT: I wish to follow that up, and I guess it flows from the question just asked. Similarly, if an IPS high school is of the view that it has the facilities available, could it start taking year 7s?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: Again, as part of statewide planning, if that was the view of the IPS and its board and principals, that would be something that they would be very open to bring to the director general's attention. In making such a change, it would need to be in the context of other things as well, not just their own context.

The appropriation was recommended.