

SCHOOL EDUCATION AMENDMENT BILL 2014

Second Reading

Resumed from 12 November.

MS J.M. FREEMAN (Mirrabooka) [10.03 am]: I commenced my speech yesterday on the School Education Amendment Bill 2014 by talking about what a school leader had coined to me as the perfect storm—that is, a reduction in state funding for education in schools, the loss of national partnership funding, losing year 7s to high schools and the changes to curriculum all, at the same time. I forgot to mention in all of that the requirement to take long service leave from schools. Currently, at a time of great change in our schools, our leaders are also being asked to take long service leave. Often leaders are required to have all their staff re-apply for their positions and go through a process, yet they are unable to be there for parts of the process and to smooth the waters on concerns post that process because they are required to take long service leave. I suppose in some ways, having been under such stress and difficulty in the past two years and anticipating the stress that the following year will present, taking leave will at least give them some respite from what they will have to deal with.

[Interruption.]

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, member!

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: However, it also means that often they are going off on leave and worrying about what is happening back in their school. A number of leaders talked to me about how stressful the process has been, but they now feel caught in a maelstrom of such change and such difficulty that it draws on all their capacity as leaders to try to deal with it.

The proposed amendments to the School Education Act in this bill really should be about getting the best possible education outcomes for all students. I have to ask myself whether the proposed amendments in the bill take into account in their implementation the particular students with additional needs. Certainly, I do not think this is the case. I think this bill is all about giving the education department greater powers that are about penalty and that are much more punitive than the requirement to work towards education outcomes for students. I believe that this bill is an opportunity lost. I understand that it is just a technical bill; however, any bill we debate for any change to education should have at its core the principal foundation of the education outcomes of students.

One of the opportunities that has been lost, which is an increasing concern in the community and has been raised with me by one of the school leaders in the electorate I represent, is the lack of money for disability services. The bill is not clear, and does not assist us in understanding what is going on with re-funding students with disabilities in the new student-centred funding model that is being discussed. It is not clear how that is being addressed and there is no engagement with parents of students with disabilities to explain what the new funding model means to them. There was a really telling article by Bonnie Christian on 4 November 2014 in, I think, PerthNow. Unfortunately, I did not reproduce it when I printed it out. Basically the president of the Western Australian Primary Principals' Association stated quite categorically that because of a lack of resources, a lot of children with disabilities are being babysat. In fact the article states —

Students with disabilities are being babysat at school rather than being given the resources and time they need to learn, Western Australia's Primary Principals' Association says.

Mr Breen went on to say that not enough was being done for students with disabilities, and he outlined that they need expert guidance, care and teaching in the area. He said —

This means that schools and teachers are receiving 5 per cent of resources for the children, but in fact there's something like another two thirds that do need resources to actually...maximise their learning, ...

I think part of the issue is that many children with learning disabilities and other disabilities in our schools are also falling through the cracks and not being assisted. Mr Breen points out that to meet the requirements of children who need additional resources, principals and administration staff have to take resources from other areas of the school. It is now absolutely the case with one-line budgets. He comments that at the moment schools are robbing Peter to pay Paul. Schools are using some of their funds for other areas to make sure that children with disabilities receive a good education. It will be increasingly difficult to do that in tight financial times. When I talk to some of the school leaders in the areas I represent, their concerns relate to the one-line budget. They believe it will only meet the delivery of classes; that no particular aspect of the budget will allow for any other discretionary funding or any other programs. There is a great concern about resources and the capacity to meet the needs of children with disabilities.

It is a great concern that we are discussing a bill that in effect has six areas of change. Those areas of change include things such as changing the onus of proof against parents. I will talk about this later, but the bill includes penalising parents for absenteeism, even though there is little proof that that policy has been effective and actually produces an outcome to the benefit of children. It basically allows the parents of year 7s in high school to be charged a greater amount for voluntary school fees. It is an opportunity lost. However, opportunities are always taken by our great schools. The public education system is great in the Mirrabooka area that I represent. Much of that is to the credit of parents in the area. I, like my other colleagues, want to congratulate all parents and citizens associations and parents and friends associations in the area. I particularly want to congratulate the Alinjarra Primary School's P&C for a fete it held a couple of Sundays ago. We all know about the organisational skills required and the time that it takes parents to deliver something of such magnitude. It takes all day to set up, and then it has to be staffed and packed up at the end of the day. It is a credit to those parents. It demonstrates the commitment by parents to the school and to the educational outcomes of their children.

There are many schools—Alinjarra Primary School being only one—in the area that I represent where those parents are absolutely committed, but they are also distressed when they see principals, leaders and teachers in their community lost from the school. They are concerned about the ramifications of the funding cuts currently occurring in education. There are many different levels of community involved, including P&Cs. Many of the P&Cs took the opportunity to ask me for a donation to run Father's Day raffles and do other activities in the area. I want to congratulate them. I want to put on record that because of their commitment to their school, they have my support and my commitment to fight for a quality education and educational outcomes for their children.

I try to attend many P&C meetings. From attending these meetings and talking to school boards and council members, I will now outline what I understand to be the ramifications of the changes to education funding. I do not want to name any schools specifically because I do not want ramifications on any of the staff or leaders. The information that I am about to present to the house is because I am an active participant in attending P&C meetings and I sit on a couple of school councils and one school board. It is from my participation at the schools and talking to parents and being on P&Cs that I am aware of the ramifications, not because any of the leaders have placed themselves in conflict with the Department of Education and this government. One school leader told me that they are very concerned. Trying to run a student-centred funding model is very difficult when the school is losing 4.5 full-time equivalent teaching staff. It is hard to say that the school is centred on students when its most vital resource—teachers on the ground—are lost to the school. Another concern is that the Department of Education is saying that preprimary students do not need an education assistant on staff, whereas they are required in kindy. We all know that early childhood education is important in addressing literacy and social issues. Early childhood education should be one of our absolute focuses as policymakers when we make decisions about the educational outcomes of children. The Department of Education is telling schools that they do not need education assistants in preprimary. If schools want that, they have to fund it from their one-line budget. Long term and committed education assistants are being lost from schools.

I am aware of the case of a young male graduate working in early childhood. That is an asset that we need—male graduates in early childhood are vital. It means we have different role models for children. In areas that I represent, which are diverse and have many different cultural backgrounds, students being in contact with male teachers in early childhood as role models is vital. Culturally, it is seen as being a role that women play in the community. For young children to have a broader understanding of Australian culture as they grow up, to be exposed to men in early childhood education and to have a relationship with someone who is in a position of responsibility in terms of educating them, can only be of benefit to their growth, understanding and wellbeing. It is a great loss. It is not only a loss to schools. I understand this young man is now seeking to leave the teaching profession. That is also a loss to the education system.

[Member's time extended.]

Ms J.M. FREEMAN: The demographics of the area that I represent make special language centres vital to the development and opportunities of the kids. It would be difficult to place many children who have arrived as humanitarian refugees or in fact children who have come from countries where English is the second language and it is not spoken at home for a variety of reasons in mainstream classes. Perhaps their parents have come to work in the mining sector. There is a large Filipino community in the area that I represent. Many of those workers contribute to the Western Australian economy through work. There are others as well. Not having English special language facilities and capacities in schools is detrimental not only to those children but also to the children who attend classes with them. It affects teaching staff in that it takes their attention away from other students while they attend to higher needs students who may come from backgrounds where English is their second language; or third or fourth language as the case may be. For many of the children in the areas I represent, it is not necessarily their second language; it is probably their fourth language by the time many of them go to school. Those special language centres are vital. Many young migrant people who are now successful

will talk about how important the special language centres were in their success, because it gave them a cohort of friends to work with to increase their language skills so that when they went into mainstream schooling, they felt included and could participate fully. It is very concerning that intensive English centres will no longer be allocated a full-time equivalent curriculum leader. It makes success difficult and reliance on other sections of staff already stressed by the cuts imperative. I am very concerned about that.

Intensive English centres used to get staffed to average. One of the issues with intensive English centres is that they do not get enrolments by the eighth week of the term; they get enrolments throughout the year because different waves of migration occur during the year. However, under this new funding model, it is very much about derrières on chairs and the numbers for the following year based on the enrolments at the end of the current year. Intensive education centres no longer get staffed to average, and staffing is based on enrolments at the end of the year. One school in my area has a current enrolment for next year of 50, but if past experience is anything to go on, the average over this year has been 150 students. That school will get staffed on the basis of 50 students for next year, but it is absolutely likely that it will have an average of 150 students, so it will have to bring in teachers part way through the year, who will have to catch up to that stage of the curriculum. That will be very unsettling for not only students, but also staff and administration people. It is a great concern that these changes will impact so greatly on those who should least be impacted by the funding cuts that are occurring.

I have an award-winning primary school in the Mirrabooka area. Many schools win awards, but a teacher at this particular school—people will be able to find it if they google it—won the award for Australian science teacher of the year about three years ago. She went to Canberra and was presented with an award by the then Prime Minister, Julia Gillard. That is not the only award the school has won; it has won multiple awards. It is always in the local newspaper, highlighting and showcasing its educational excellence. It will lose two teachers in 2014–15 because of this perfect storm when it loses year 6 and 7 students at the same time as it loses its national partnership funding and the cuts to education funding are felt.

Two other schools in my area do not have year 6 students, so they will not have the issue of losing a whole cohort of students. One of those schools has demonstrated that it does not need to lose year 7s for the impact of cuts to be serious and stressful for the community. The school will lose an ethnic education assistant, even though it has a large cohort of students with English as a second language. The one-line budget is causing great concern, because its funding means that it will be able to deliver only one fewer class than it has enrolments for. This school leader has said to me that they can use this budget and provide X number of classes, but they need X plus one because they know they will get enrolments during the year, and if they fund each of those, say, 10 classes on that model, the school will be chockers. This school leader knows that if people come into the area next year, which they will because that is the past experience, they will not be able to facilitate those people coming to the school and they will have to overload classes. This school leader is very distressed. There is no capacity for this school leader to have the flexibility that they understood the one-line budget would give. No support programs will be able to be run and no ESL teacher will be delivered to the community. Members can imagine how distressing that must be for those school leaders.

Another high-needs school will effectively lose two full-time teachers on contract. The funding is not sufficient for what it needs to deliver to its students if it is about student-centred funding. One of the really interesting things about this school is that it is seen as a target school. People might be interested in the student characteristics of the model. According to this school's student characteristics, it should have over and above the amount that it is allowed to be funded for, but it will lose \$81 000 of funding. Even though it should have over the amount that it should be funded for in its one-line budget according to all the characteristics, this \$81 000 will be distributed to other schools that will lose more even though the students do not have the same characteristics. The student-centred funding model does not even work for one school that has all the characteristics that should see it receive more. It will lose a big chunk of funds that need to be distributed. This school leader told me that they have to make decisions that undermine best educational outcomes and best educational practice because now the dollar has to come first. Sound educational philosophy has to go out the window. This school leader has to say to early childhood educators that they cannot have duties other than teaching time together to work on plans and that they have to do their professional development separately, even though it would be beneficial to do it together, because the school leader cannot afford to do it.

Another school has concerns about education programs such as phonic ability. Phonic ability helps poor readers. This school has a lot of kids with English as a second, third or fourth language. Phonic awareness uses spelling patterns and mouthing to represent them. It benefits poor readers as it gives reading strategies, and it benefits kids with English as a second language as it assists in comprehending text through mapping sounds into decoding words and aids in word recognition and reading fluency, with the added benefit of improving spelling. That is very important, but it is under threat because the funding that the school has been given is just for teachers—nothing else. There is no fat. There are no support programs. However, what is worse is that all the staff at two schools in the area that I represent and just a bit outside had to reapply for their positions because

Ms Janine Freeman; Mr Roger Cook; Ms Lisa Baker; Mr John Quigley; Mr Nathan Morton; Ms Rita Saffioti

seven teachers had to be cut from the staff. Seven teaching staff have been lost from two schools in the northern suburbs area. That is appalling. It is not because there have been much fewer students; it is because all this different funding has been lost. One of those schools will lose two education assistants and the other school five education assistants. How can this be a student-centred funding model when two schools in a high-need area such as the areas I represent lose seven teachers? Some of the staff standards have been managed by not replacing people on maternity leave, on long-term sick leave or who have retired. This is not to the benefit of the students. When I had the opportunity to raise with the minister the fact that one of the schools I was concerned about had lost seven teachers, he said to me they must have all been on contract. Hello—contracts! There are teachers in the education department who have been on contracts for 20 years because the department does not have a policy of permanency. It has a way of treating staff over a long time as though they are dispensable. We cannot have dispensable aspects to our teaching because we need to focus on educational outcomes. This is a lost opportunity. This School Education Amendment Bill 2014 is about punitive measures, not about growing our education system to the benefit of our students. The state is obliged to provide a system that is adaptable, accessible, available and acceptable. This education bill does none of that; it does not go to adaptability, accessibility, availability and acceptability. It basically just says, “You’re going to do what we want you to do or we’re going to penalise you.” Because the government has made a change to put year 7 students into high schools, it will now charge parents more.

MR R.H. COOK (Kwinana — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [10.31 am]: Madam Deputy Speaker, thank you very much for the opportunity to speak on this School Education Amendment Bill 2014. May I say before I start, Madam Deputy Speaker, that you look fantastic in blue today to acknowledge World Diabetes Day. Although I did make an effort to wear blue —

Ms L.L. Baker: Where?

Mr R.H. COOK: I have a blue shirt and there is “blueishness” on the tie, in solidarity with you, Madam Deputy Speaker; however, I cannot match that jacket, which is quite superb!

I am very pleased to speak on this bill today. I wanted to take the opportunity to reflect on some of the aspects of it and the way they impact upon my community. One of the key aspects of this bill, of course, is that it facilitates the levying of secondary fees for year 7 students moving into high school under the new arrangements, whereby we will have year 7s in the senior school.

I am enjoying this Christmas graduation season more than any other member of Parliament because I am in the Kwinana area and we have had year 7s in high school ever since the new Gilmore College campus was developed. While all my colleagues are doing year 6 and 7 graduations this year and suffering the consequences of the doubling of the number of graduations they have to attend, for those parts of my electorate in the Kwinana catchment I still have only the one graduation ceremony, and I must say that I have enjoyed the pain suffered by others!

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

Mr R.H. COOK: I will not need it, member for Armadale, because, of course, I have only the one lot of graduation ceremonies to go to. However, the schools that fall in the Rockingham area of my electorate, such as Waikiki and East Waikiki, have graduation ceremonies coming out of their ears this year, like a lot of schools.

Mr G.M. Castrilli: How many have you got—one or two?

Mr R.H. COOK: There are two high schools. There is Baldivis Secondary College, which is one of those new schools, and it is an interesting case because it has been in operation for only two years and so has only years 8 and 9. Next year it will have years 7, 8, 9 and 10, so the school population will double overnight—poor things! Keith Svendsen, the principal at that school, is doing an amazing job and if anyone wants to see what a really good-looking modern school looks like, they should look at Baldivis Secondary College. It is an amazing campus and the architects and government officials associated with the development of that senior campus have done an amazing job. Its architectural qualities make it look like something that would be seen in Barcelona or Paris—certainly not the sort of drab architecture I have come to know, and somewhat love, at some of our schools. As I said, in Kwinana we have had that year 7 cohort in our high schools certainly while I have been a member of this place. I have to let members know that there are some challenges to bringing in a whole separate additional cohort into a campus. At Gilmore College, where this was undertaken some time back in, I think, 2009—I was elected in 2008—the school was, quite frankly, overrun by the social difficulties that occurred as a result of having that extra cohort there. I know the students from that year because they graduated this year from year 12 and they are a lovely group of kids. However, I think once a whole new year of students comes into a campus, it disrupts its social cohesion in a way that I do not think people really anticipate. I provide that point as a warning to members that adding this extra year to their campuses could provide for an interesting year ahead for a whole range of high schools. I do not know whether it was a gang thing or simply because students felt they had to make their mark on the school, but by having that group of year 7s come in in 2009,

I guess some students felt they needed to mark out a patch in the school and it produced some real social difficulties when that first took place.

That is something the government needs to be aware of and it needs to be in a position to respond to it. It really comes back to the theme that many members on this side of the chamber have been touching on when they talked about the challenges over the next couple of years that will be associated with the new needs-based funding model that the government is introducing and the cuts that have impacted on that process in the 2013–14 and 2014–15 financial years. For some of the schools these are very significant cuts indeed and I share the dismay of the member for Mirrabooka when we look at schools in our electorates. By any measure at all—socioeconomic, culturally diverse, schools that might struggle with their overall ranking, be it the National Assessment Program — Literacy and Numeracy or otherwise—the schools in our electorates are associated with need. It is extraordinary that those schools are now facing the loss of significant amounts of resourcing and large numbers of staff, and as a result of that they will struggle to deal with what the teachers and leaders in those schools describe as need. It is extraordinary in this day and age that we are looking at schools having to spread meagre resources even further across the campuses. I will come back to that issue, but I say “in this day and age” because surely by now people have got the message that people such as the federal Chief Scientist, Ian Chubb, and former Western Australian Chief Scientist Lyn Beazley have been advocating for many years—that is, in Western Australia we have to adopt a knowledge-based approach to our educational and economic development if we are to survive in an increasingly global environment. That is the future for the Western Australian economy if we are to be competitive with the economies of South-East Asia, if we are going to make a significant impact on the economies of Africa, particularly east and southern Africa, and if we are to be able to take advantage of the opportunities in the expanding economies of West Asia and North Asia. If we are to be in a position to take advantage of these opportunities and meet these challenges, we have to adopt a science-based, high knowledge-based economic approach to our future. When I talk about a science-based approach, I do not mean that all of a sudden we should try to reinvent ourselves as an economy or as a people, but we have to have a natural competitive advantage by virtue of our geopolitical and natural assets and experience to make a significant impact in further research and advancement in arid agriculture, remote resource extraction, mineral processing and advances in oil and gas. We will be in a unique position in our economic, geographical and political positioning to take advantage of the opportunities associated with that and to take this economy forward. If we think that we will simply rely upon traditional farming practices and traditional mineral extraction practices and processes to deliver us a long-term economic benefit, and therefore not need to worry about the new knowledge-based economic opportunities, we are completely deluding ourselves. If we do not start to equip the young people in our community to have science, mathematics, economics and technology as strengths in our education system, if we are not breeding and developing a sophisticated, innovative student base in our schools and if we are not equipping students with the skills needed for the future, we will significantly fail to meet the economic opportunities that are currently presented.

As I said, some of these challenges are economic. For instance, if economies such as the Singaporean economy are pouring billions into biotechnology, research and so forth, we will have to move quickly to ensure that we remain competitive with those economies. If we are to remain competitive in the oil and gas sector and take advantages of those opportunities, we will have to move quickly to secure those opportunities, rather than simply thinking that because we have done all right in the past, we will continue to be all right in the future, because we will not be all right in the future. As Lee Kuan Yew said, rather famously, Australia risks becoming the white trash of Asia unless we can significantly shift the gearing of our economy towards a knowledge-based economy.

We have a situation in Western Australia in which our chief political officer is also the Minister for Science. We would think that this would provide us with extra momentum and a sense of urgency and purpose in pursuing the sciences and a high-education approach to our economic future, but, sadly, we are looking at the dumbing down of public schools in Western Australia through cuts and the needs-based funding model, which does not deliver resources to schools in need. If it delivers resources to schools in need, why in heaven are schools such as Gilmore College facing a \$250 000 cut in 2014–15? Why on earth are schools being told to cut resources and learning opportunities for their kids rather than saying that we will gear up these schools and ensure that future generations of Western Australians are high-achieving, high-learning and highly skilled people in our community who can take this economy forward? Why will schools have to make decisions about whether they can afford an education assistant to look after students with learning difficulties? Schools will have to cut those courses that will enhance kids’ learning experiences because they are not considered in that core fundamental group of subjects; they are considered to be luxuries in this low-learning, cost-cutting, low-performing education environment into which this government is putting all the mechanisms to put it in place.

One of the favourite sayings that I have heard in this place came from the member for Maylands in a matter of public interest motion earlier this year. She simply got up and declared that IPS is dead. How true that was. The concept of independent public schools is a great one—the idea of empowering good leaders in our school

communities to craft the learning experience for students in their area in a manner that makes sense to them and meets the priorities of a local and empowered school board so that they can put the staff into those areas that make sense for that school. How on earth is a school leader supposed to do that when all they are looking at is the prospect of further cuts in their school and working out how to eke out what meagre resources they have to simply cover the very basics of their kids' learning? How can we have a successful IPS program when schools have to hand money back to the government in the form of the long service leave levy? How will we have a vibrant IPS-like system when school budgets are being cut so significantly? For instance, one school in my area—Calista Primary School—will have over \$147 000 taken out of its budget in 2013–14. This is not a large school; this is a small school in the electorate of Kwinana. How is a school of that size supposed to deal with that significant cut? Having dealt with that cut, how is Calista primary supposed to deal with a further cut of \$46 000 next year? As I said, this is not a school without need; this is a school of high-need kids, yet these are the sorts of cuts that these schools are experiencing.

I have been speaking to a range of P&Cs across my electorate about the implications of these cuts to schools. The parents of the kids in my community are very concerned that their kids will miss out on those extra learning opportunities that we expect kids in schools and in an economy such as Western Australia to enjoy. For instance, next year one school in my area has to look at cutting all languages other than English courses in the school. We all know that kids learning a second language is an important part of a sophisticated society and a sophisticated economy. People with language skills are able to conquer the intellectual challenges of another language and use that language as members of the community to extend their citizenship beyond simply the shores of Australia.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr R.H. COOK: Yet in these sorts of schools, we are now looking at situations in which they will lose any opportunity to speak a second language. Imagine, member for Bunbury, if we had a situation across Western Australia in which kids were denied the opportunity to learn to speak Italian, which my daughter had the opportunity to learn in her school in Fremantle. Imagine a situation in which kids going through school will be denied the opportunity to learn to speak Indonesian and be able to communicate with people from the biggest and closest international economy to Western Australia. Imagine a situation in which kids will be denied the opportunity to learn to speak Japanese or Mandarin. Yet, extraordinarily, this is the situation that schools in my area are facing. It is extraordinary that this government, at a time when it is enjoying record revenues, and at a time when it is spending money like a drunken sailor on things such as the football stadium and the tourist precinct at Elizabeth Quay, is cutting resources to what matters most—the education of our kids. What an extraordinarily perversion of priorities this government has.

Mr J.H.D. Day: The education budget has gone up substantially.

Mr R.H. COOK: Of course it has, minister. But the minister is not talking to a press conference at the moment. We know that the student population has gone up, and that has forced the government's hand to provide extra resources for education. But is it not true that the government is now cutting resources to schools? The government is being dragged kicking and screaming to increase funding to education, because we have a growing population. That is the plain and simple fact. We all know that.

Mr J.H.D. Day: We also have the highest per capita funding in the country.

Dr A.D. Buti: Member for Kwinana, the minister is using the usual tactic of saying that in Western Australia, per student we spend more. But that is because we have so many distant schools that require greater servicing per student. That is why per capita we are spending more. But in real substance—in absolute numbers—we are not spending more. That is because it is very expensive to educate a student in regional Western Australia. That is why.

Mr R.H. COOK: I thank the member for Armadale for his interjection, because it really lays bare the distortions and the misleading way in which the government has been trying to present its position in relation to education in this state.

Mr J.H.D. Day: It is not just about funding. It is actually about outcomes. We should be focusing on what outcomes are actually achieved.

Mr R.H. COOK: The outcome for schools in my area in relation to LOTE and other what the minister would call non-core curriculum courses is zero—none—because under the government's cuts, those courses will be lost. The government can say it is proud of its record, if it likes, but I think that is an embarrassment.

Dr A.D. Buti: Member, would you mind taking another interjection?

Mr R.H. COOK: Member for Armadale.

Dr A.D. Buti: You mentioned the priorities of the government and the new football stadium. I can assure the house that I have spoken to someone very high up in the AFL, who could not believe that this state could be spending so much money on a football stadium when other cheaper options are available.

Dr K.D. Hames: I think you should campaign on that at the next election—good idea!

Dr A.D. Buti: If that is your number one priority, minister, go for it. Anyway, you will be retired by then! You will be on garden duties, as you are now.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Armadale, order! Member for Kwinana.

Mr R.H. COOK: I can assure the Minister for Health that what we will be campaigning on is a failed government, because of its lack of priorities. Although this government likes to cloak itself in glamorous items of expenditure, such as Elizabeth Quay and the football stadium, the fact of the matter is that services in the suburbs of Perth are going backwards, and that will be the legacy of this government—the failure to provide basic services to people in the community.

Dr K.D. Hames interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister for Health, order, please.

Mr R.H. COOK: The other I think very scary aspect of the current government's policy on education is that I am getting feedback from schools in my area that they now have to spread teachers further and further across classes. This means that deputy principals are being taken away from their duties and put into classrooms to cover non-core courses. One might glibly say that it is good to get deputy principals back into the classroom. But let us look at the implications of that. If schools do not have a deputy principal who is available to deal with the behaviour of difficult kids, there will be fewer resources to manage the behaviour of those kids. That means that, under the Barnett government, the number of suspensions in our primary schools and our high schools will increase, because we will not have the deputy principals to manage those kids and help them improve their behaviour and re-integrate, so those kids will simply be pulled out of the education system. The legacy of this government is that this group of kids will fall out of the system. The last thing we want is for students who have behaviour issues to be taken out of the school environment altogether. But that will be the direct result of this government's policies, because the deputy principals who would otherwise manage these difficult kids are being pushed back into the classroom to deal with these non-core curriculum subjects.

I notice that one aspect of this legislation is to increase the power of the government in relation to compulsory school attendance. I can tell members that the biggest problem we have in Kwinana around the revitalised CBD is school-age kids getting bored and running amok around the community, getting up to mischief and undertaking nuisance crime, which might be property damage —

Dr A.D. Buti: Antisocial behaviour.

Mr R.H. COOK: Yes, and low-level theft and so on. The small business owners in my community are asking me why these kids are not in school, and I have to tell them that everything is being done that can be done to make sure these kids stay at school, but the situation will actually get worse once the increase in suspensions kicks in, because these kids will be out on the streets rather than at school. The problem is also that many of these kids do not have a stable home environment that they can go to. So it is regrettable that the government should see fit to cut the very resources for our schools that can ensure that we can keep these difficult students in our education environment.

There are two things that it is incumbent on the government to grasp and undertake in the education system in Western Australia. The first is to make sure that students have the opportunity to undertake extra-curricular activities or broader curriculum subjects that will enable them to excel and make a contribution to our community and our economy. This is the STEM—or science, technology, engineering and maths—approach that the chief scientists implore us as policymakers to ensure takes place in our schools. We need to make sure that students study maths, that young women in our high schools have the opportunity to study science and engineering, and that kids can undertake LOTE, so that our students can excel and broaden the capacity of our community and our economy. These are the kids who will be impacted on by these cuts by the Barnett government because we will no longer have these broader curriculum activities, such as extra science activities, LOTE courses and opportunities to spend time away from the mainstream class to undertake higher learning, so we can continue to push our kids to be their very best.

Another important aspect of our education system is to ensure that kids who are not doing so well as part of the mainstream learning cohort get the support and services necessary to keep them in our education system so that they can continue to have the best opportunities in life. We on this side of the house believe very strongly in equality of opportunity and that education plays an important role in making sure that equality of opportunity is entrenched in our society. We believe that people should have the educational opportunities to give them the

capacity to be their very best. However, the government cannot do that if it is going to compel school leaders to cut the number of education assistants; to cut courses that fall outside the core curriculum; to cut available staff, including teaching staff; and to cut the very services that ensure that we keep these kids locked into a better education system, a better learning environment and a better future for themselves and their families.

These cuts are regrettable for the future of not only our economy but also our society. The cuts being brought in by the Barnett government under the needs-based funding model are simply dumbing down Western Australia and moving us towards Lee Kuan Yew's prediction for the broader Australian economy—that we risk becoming the white trash of Asia.

MS L.L. BAKER (Maylands) [11.01 am]: It is interesting when one stands to speak on a bill like the School Education Amendment Bill 2014 after listening to one's colleagues speak on it for nearly two days; sometimes I struggle to try to present different views so that at least I do not get bored by my own presentation! In this instance I find myself struggling to find anything to talk about that is not a repetition of the same issues, so it is with some regret that I begin my speech with an exposé of what seems to me to be the progressive dismantling of education resources in Western Australia. I should say that that is not the fault of only this government in this state; when we look at what is happening federally, it is horrendous that kids are going to have to pay hundreds of thousands of dollars for education thanks to the federal government's proposals to change higher education funding. It looks as though we are facing the unpicking of education for all, so that education will become the preserve only of the rich.

When I look at this bill, I can see that a number of areas have already been covered in this debate and I will try to add my perspective to those areas. There needs to be some variation in what is being asked for in voluntary fees. Again, the issue is that the government has said that the families of students in year 7 are going to be asked to find \$235 a year in voluntary school fees; originally, that was to be a \$60 impost. This is a fourfold increase, and when we look at this from the perspective of people in our community who are on lower incomes or who are disadvantaged, \$235 is going to be pretty much out of their reach. If we put it into the context of the cost-of-living increases that we have all experienced, it plays out in very disparate ways in the relationship between cost of living and income. It will be far more difficult for people who are already struggling to meet the cost of their water and power bills.

We know this because we know about the great increase in the number of people who have gone to emergency relief providers, seeking help to pay their power and water bills. There has also been a great increase in the number of people going to Foodbank, seeking help with their weekly groceries. We know about this from the seniors who come to our community forums and our electorate offices. I am looking at the new member for Vasse and thinking that she is going to be in for this as well, because there are a lot of seniors and retirees in her community. I am sure that they will tell her the same story about the cuts the federal government is making to seniors and the impact of astronomically increased costs such as vehicle licensing test fees and car registration fees. They may not be the ones carrying the burden of voluntary school fees, but members are also aware that the numbers of grandparents looking after children in this state has increased dramatically, and they are struggling to bring their grandchildren through school because of problems within the family and issues that have left them as the main carers for their grandchildren. They are struggling to make the rent, let alone the \$235 voluntary school fee, a fourfold increase in the cost of sending a year 7 student into the new education regime. The voluntary fee will place a great deal of pressure on people, and I am wondering why the government did not decide to phase it in gradually rather than make a greedy grab to try to plug what seems to be a bottomless deficit with income from families that can least afford it. That to me is unfair, inequitable and wrong.

The bill also deals with the issue of absenteeism, which is a vexing issue; over the past few days, other members have put on the record some of the issues around absenteeism. We know that kids are absent from school for a range of reasons. Indeed, I have a personal memory of getting on the train at Midland and getting off at, I think, Success Hill with my friend Annie in an attempt to wag a day off school and being chased by a police officer in a police car and having to hide behind a tree!

Mrs G.J. Godfrey interjected.

Ms L.L. BAKER: I was a very naughty girl! We had to hide to avoid the police, who were picking up errant schoolchildren at the time. Annie and I just collapsed with laughter and thought of—this will date me—*Division 4*; we felt like criminals in *Division 4*! Kids wag school for a whole range of reasons, but it is certainly different now from that occasion when I did it, which was done for a bit of fun; I wanted to go to Cottesloe Beach to have a day in the sun rather than a day of schoolwork at Governor Stirling! I can say that with a smile, but it is not the right thing to wag school, but I did one day, I must admit!

Dr A.D. Buti: Member, when you were trying to get to Cottesloe, was the train service operating, or was that when Sir Charles Court closed the Fremantle line?

Ms L.L. BAKER: Fortunately, the train service was operating, and I was actually able to get on the train because it was not overfull! I made it down to Cottesloe after that small interruption by the constabulary, and had a lovely day, I might add!

These days absenteeism is a different creature because of the number of fly in, fly out workers; parents' lives are much more complicated than they were when my mum and dad sent me to school. They gave me a good talking-to about wagging school that day when they found out, I might add! It is a very different world and parents sometimes struggle to find time to take their kids on holiday, on downtime, or something that in my day would have been seen as a really productive learning experience; "Let's go to Europe, let's go to Bali", or somewhere else, to have a look at a different culture. Nowadays the policy about taking kids on holiday outside school holidays is different—and for good reason. It is very difficult for parents to juggle fly in, fly out commitments, dual employment commitments, the cost of living and the day-to-day struggles and take their children on a holiday when it can be afforded. The School Education Amendment Bill 2014 will put some punitive measures in place. On the one hand, I suppose I can see the logic of the government saying that if parents do not enrol their child in school—I am referring to enrolling students, not absenteeism, because that is a different issue—it will come after them for \$2 500. The problem with that measure is that most of the kids and parents who would be directly impacted are Aboriginal students and their families. That is a really dumb thing to pursue. We are already aware of the incarceration rates of Aboriginal women and men, particularly Aboriginal women, for fines for relatively small offences. When those fines escalate for whatever reason, one of the parents is jailed for a time. I do not think for one minute that that is the intention of the bill, but there is always the capacity for those who draft legislation to not think about the worst-case scenario and what doors may be left open by certain provisions. In this case, the bill will leave the door open for fines to be advanced. That is already on record; we quite often hear stories about the number of unpaid parking fines across the state and government attempts to collect them. I am referring to all governments, not just Liberal governments, including ours during previous times. There comes a time when those punitive measures escalate because of the sheer weight of numbers.

Looking at truancy rates, according to the Department of Education 2013–14 annual report, statewide school attendance for 2013 was 91 per cent, which means that nine per cent of students across the system did not attend school on a regular basis. The rate for Aboriginal student attendance was only 76.9 per cent, which effectively means that 23.1 per cent of Aboriginal students did not regularly attend school. The attendance rate for non-Aboriginal students was 92.3 per cent as at 2013, which means that 7.7 per cent of non-Aboriginal students did not regularly attend school. If we look at those figures in the context of the 257 000 public school students in the education system, nine per cent of those students do not attend school on any given day, which means that 23 000 students are not regularly attending school. That is definitely a chronic problem that needs attention. A series of creative solutions need to be explored. I know that the Department of Education has already attempted to put measures in place, but as we have heard from many of my colleagues over the past few days, all the extra measures that were put in place to deal with complex behaviour in students and difficult children are being dismantled and will go because of funding cuts.

[Member's time extended.]

Ms L.L. BAKER: I turn now to the situation in schools in my electorate. I will talk a bit about the assistance that I have had in helping them try to manage the funding cuts that they been dealing with over the past two years. It is the most amazing subterfuge for anyone to say that more money is going into meeting the needs of each student in this state. I heard the Minister for Planning, who has carriage of the School Education Amendment Bill 2014, comment on the fact that there is more money in the system, and I heard the member for Armadale rebut that by saying that, firstly, on balance there are a lot more students in the system and, secondly, educating a child in Western Australia requires a vastly different commitment than in a small state such as New South Wales. The distances are extraordinary. I note the cuts to the School of Isolated and Distance Education, as well as the other cuts. I am not sure how that will help regional or isolated students.

I have worked with P&Cs across my six primary and two high schools, and they have been unflagging in their criticism of this government's cuts, and horrified by how they are being enacted in the loss of teachers and support mechanisms—a whole range of things. I want to run through by name the P&C chairs I have been privileged to work with as we have struggled to try to manage these changes. The 2014 president at Bayswater Primary School is Emma Bradley, and she has been vigilant in trying to combat these cuts and work around them. Members of course realise that these cuts have put an incredible impost on the fundraising activities of P&Cs. I do not know how other members have been dealing with them, but the donation requests I have received from my P&Cs have been a lot higher this year than was the case previously. I annually donate to each of my schools a bike that the P&Cs raffle to raise funds. They have had to come back to me several times seeking funding for awards and the like because there simply is no funding around; there is no money anywhere.

Durham Road School caters for children with high and complex needs, and Marnie Butler has been, again, tireless in meeting me and explaining the difficulties for her school. The students of Embleton Primary School have very high and complex needs; it is in a difficult area and attracts students who really need extra support. Paul Taman is the P&C president there, and has been struggling to try to help his school and kids through this time. Hillcrest Primary School has Gavin McGrath and, more recently, Brendan King. They have been fantastic at helping the principal of that school as he tries to juggle the budget. I will talk in more detail about the actual impact on my schools and the children who attend them shortly, but I wanted to run through the P&Cs I have been privileged to work with.

Charles Ellis is the president of the P&C at John Forrest Secondary College, which is 52 years old and named after one of our state's former Premiers. It is a school that I would hope this government would have some pride in, but it prefers to spend bucketloads of money upgrading Mount Lawley Senior High School, Kalamunda Senior High School and other senior high schools not in my electorate, rather than helping John Forrest put together an upgrade that it so desperately needs. The school has been getting a little money and a little infrastructure. It is a specialist school in art and a number of sports; its gymnasium is the original product—it was built 52 years ago. A full drum kit is about the size of two of our benches here, and the students have to carry their instruments down a flight of stairs into the gym in order to perform, and then carry them upstairs again. There is going to be an accident, and there will then be liability issues. It is time to look at John Forrest Secondary College's needs, move it up on the capital works budget and seriously spend some money on a brilliant school with a great academic record. I might say with some pride that John Forrest Secondary College's academic record has previously been better than Mount Lawley Senior High School's academic record, although not this year. I am privileged to sit on the Maylands Peninsula Primary School board chaired by Rosemary Lynch and to work with Shauna Weeks, the P&C president. These schools work very hard to make ends meet.

Before I leave my list of extraordinary people in the community, I want to recognise Greg Plumb's recent work for Hillcrest Primary School. On the weekend, in 36 degree temperatures, I was at a stall at the Hillcrest Primary School fete for most of the day. It was warm, but that did not impact on the thousands of people who came through and spent just a little money to help contribute to the school's needs in order for it to effectively educate their children. Greg organised the fete. It was an amazing display of volunteers contributing from across the community, including Bayswater, Bedford, Inglewood and Embleton. Parents came together to put on a remarkable display. I watched principal Dan Bralic get a dunking in the water chamber. I might say that he did not mind doing that this year, because the temperature was steamy. He walked around in a very wet suit. The last time I saw him, he walked past me and said, "I have to get this off before I suffer any more chaffing." He disappeared to put his shorts on, thank goodness. Hillcrest is a remarkable school. The last fete, held two years ago—it is held biannually—was stormed and galed out. There was hail falling, it was freezing and wind ripped through all the displays. This was a very different year. I had a petition on my stall; I did not plug it—I just basically sat there and chatted to parents and children. Many parents signed my petition to highlight the inequities in funding under the Liberal-National government. They were horrified and I must say very well informed. These people were aware of what the government has done; they knew then and will know at the next election—I am absolutely sure about that.

I want to comment about what has happened to school funding in my electorate in a bit more detail. The cuts were first mentioned in 2013. Before I go into the funding cuts, I would like to state on the record that I have nothing but the greatest respect for a student-centred funding model. It is the way to go and that has been known in this state for many years. It is great that the government has moved forward to implement a student-centred funding model, but it is absolutely wrong that the government has brought massive cuts to the baseline before implementing it. If the government had just based funding on the original base, we would not be having these debates. If the government had just maintained a commitment to education in this state, we would not be suffering at the moment and children would not be facing a reduced education commitment. But the government has not. On 6 February 2014, I reported \$1.0959 million was to be taken out of schools just in my electorate. Just over \$1 million was to be taken out of schools. John Forrest Secondary College estimated a loss in funding of over \$300 000 in its first year. Again, I point out that for many senior schools, these funding cuts continue over a three-year period. John Forrest Secondary College is looking down the barrel of a \$750 000 reduction to its budget over three years, and that is disgraceful.

It has been reported that nearly \$190 000 has been taken out of Maylands Peninsula Primary School—a brilliant school. As I said, I am on the independent public school board at Maylands Peninsula Primary School and I have worked closely with the school on a number of initiatives. In my role as a member of Parliament and in all of my interactions with that school, I have seen the school substantially reduce its efforts on a number of fronts. Something specifically worth mentioning when talking about Maylands Peninsula Primary School, and I am sure many other schools across the state, is the significant impact upon the school of making 457 visa students apply

to the Department of Education for funding to complete their education. I would like to put on record that when Maylands Peninsula Primary School wrote to the Department of Education and asked for funding for its 457 visa students—I think it was about \$7 000—it was told that it is not going to come forward. I am not sure why or what the story is, but I urge the government and the Department of Education to very quickly look at that school's entitlement for 457 visas and to ensure that it is funded appropriately. It appears to me that this new arrangement will result in administrative money being taken out and held by the Department of Education, and that is an absolute cock-up! It is dreadful and absolutely heinous that the Department of Education would see fit to take money out of the 457 visa grants before it passed on the whole amount to schools. The schools will not get the full amount; they will get a significant reduction, but they still have to provide that service. To clarify for Hansard's sake, when I said "cock-up", I was referring to roosters. Previously, parents on 457 visas would go to the registrar of a school, say hello, apply for 457 visa funding, and off they would go. No administrative overhead was involved. The registrar would take the information and process it there and then; there was an immediate response. The process is now convoluted and money is removed completely unnecessarily. I do not really know why they are not getting that now. It is shameful.

At the beginning of the year, Embleton Primary School reported that it would be just over \$50 000 out of pocket. That will increase substantially next year. After advice from the school P&C, I understand that that school is looking at a decrease of \$100 000 in its budget—a school in a very complicated area with very difficult and complex needs. It has had to reduce to six classes some of its intake because of that funding decrease, and next year it can accept probably only an extra two or three children. That is the impact of the government's cuts on one of the schools in my electorate. It gets worse, though, because Embleton Primary School has a large number of Indigenous children, and they have benefitted from the help of wonderful Charmaine, the Aboriginal education assistant. Her hours are being reduced. She works across two schools, Hillcrest Primary School and Embleton, and they are both struggling to keep her in situ. It is the most counterintuitive move to have assaulted those resources. It is fundamentally wrong to the education of children, and to the education of children who are most vulnerable in this state. One of the ways of keeping children engaged in the curriculum and in school and not truanting is through sports—and Aboriginal kids really love their sport. Embleton is now facing the reduction of its sports specialist teacher's hours from five days a week to three days a week. Will that help education in Embleton? No, it will not. Will it help prevent truancy and antisocial behaviour at Morley Galleria and the like? No, it will not. We will sit here and listen to the government arguing for more resources in policing, when it has really created and exacerbated the problem. Embleton will no longer have an arts program, because the school cannot afford it.

In the time that I have left I would like to quickly cover a couple of very pertinent issues for other schools. Back in 2004, Hillcrest Primary School had to reduce its assistant principals from two to one. It has had reductions in its Aboriginal tutorial assistance scheme funding, its gifted and talented program and its learning support coordinator for literacy and numeracy. That is almost four full-time equivalents who were specifically helping students with special needs. All those resources are gone. Further to that, this year, the P&C tells me, despite attempting to shove the school's administration into a round hole, when it clearly was not going to fit, the school is still overspending by \$200 000 just to run an unsustainable administrative support structure for teachers. The impact of that is quite clearly that students will not have the resources in their curricular activities—not just additional curricular activities, but core curricular activities that that school is trying to offer. This is Hillcrest, which is a fantastic school, but the children and teaching staff there will no longer have access to the resources that they need to deliver appropriate education for the children.

What the government has done to the education system in this state could not be clearer. It has taken the good concept of student-centred funding and adulterated and massacred it, and destroyed the security of funding for our schools. It has undermined the confidence that teachers have in the system and continues to put pressure on children by not being able to deliver teacher resources or the appropriate curriculum for the students in our schools. For that, the government will be shamed, and may wear it into the next election.

MR J.R. QUIGLEY (Butler) [11.33 am]: I rise to speak on the School Education Amendment Bill 2014 and education issues in the electorate of Butler, unsurprisingly. My biggest concern, and the community's biggest concern in Butler, is what is happening at Yanchep District High School. I will just pause there, and correct myself, because the community concern is about what is not happening at Yanchep District High School. Yanchep District High School has approximately 690 students, from kindergarten through to year 10, and it is in a very poor state. This is unlike any high school in your electorate, Madam Acting Speaker (Ms J.M. Freeman), or any high school that I have visited in the metropolitan area, and I have visited quite a few. Yanchep District High School was Yanchep Primary School. It commenced its life as Yanchep Primary School and when children reached year 7, they graduated to Wanneroo Senior High School. In those days, in the 1970s, the only way out of Yanchep was to go east on Yanchep Beach Road and then turn south onto Wanneroo Road, and then travel a long distance south to Wanneroo. I would say that back in those days, in the 1970s and 1980s, 99 per cent of Perth's population, including you, dare I say, Madam Acting Speaker, regarded Yanchep as regional or country.

It was a fishing village accessible only off Wanneroo Road, in the same way that Ledge Point or Wedge Island are fishing villages.

We all know the history of the area; in the 1970s, Mr Alan Bond purchased about 5 000 hectares of land from Yanchep through to Two Rocks and established a marina for the purpose of promoting the America's Cup. It was a very savvy business move and had he won it with *Australia I*, he would have been sitting on a huge pile of money. The other day I went to the opening of Yanchep Suncity Yacht Club, and representatives from the Royal Perth Yacht Club, which was the ultimate challenger for the America's Cup, attended. Crewmen on the original *Australia I* and *Australia II* recounted the long journeys from their houses in Nedlands and Mt Pleasant all the way out to country Yanchep and on to Two Rocks. With the development of Two Rocks Shopping Centre and the population increasing modestly, by 1981 Yanchep Primary School was reclassified as Yanchep District High School. It was a junior high school that ran to only year 10. Back in 1981, although the premises by that stage were old and it had a lot of fibro classrooms—it is an ancient school—because of the reasonably modest increase in size, the school could house students up to year 10.

In 2006 or 2007, Marmion Avenue was extended north from Clarkson all the way through to Yanchep. In approximately 2002, Mindarie Senior College opened; it caters for 500 or 600 students and is one of a limited number of colleges in Western Australia that has classes for only years 11 and 12. Students would travel from Yanchep to state-of-the-art Mindarie Senior College to complete their secondary education. The main feeder school for Mindarie Senior College was not Yanchep District High School; it was Kinross College, which opened before I was the member for Mindarie, so it must have opened some time in the late 1990s or early 2000s. All the students from Kinross College who did not go to private schools then went to years 11 and 12 at Mindarie Senior College. Indeed, after Mindarie college opened for years 11 and 12, so state of the art it was that people were withdrawing from private colleges in the area to get their children into Mindarie college. The other feeder school up the road is Clarkson Community High School, which suffered because a lot of people left. The parents pulled their children out of Clarkson high school and sent them to the brand-new college on the ocean, Mindarie. Quite a deal of money was spent on upgrading facilities at Clarkson high school, and that is now up to standard. As I said, Mindarie college is a sparkling institution. It is in an education precinct. The schools in the space of 200 or 300 metres are Mindarie Senior College, which caters for years 11 and 12; the premium Church of England private coeducational school in the area, Peter Moyes Anglican Community School, which caters for kindergarten to year 12, and named of course after the highly regarded and longstanding former principal of Christ Church Grammar School, Peter Moyes; and next to that is Quinns Baptist College, which also has marvellous facilities on a very big campus and also caters for kindergarten to year 12. So, we have those three campuses together.

I now return in my comments to Yanchep. Members can imagine that a facility that was made a junior high school in 1981 was already an ageing facility. However, after the opening of Marmion Avenue between Clarkson and Yanchep in 2006 or 2007, there was a great population explosion along that coastal corridor, which is—I am told reliably by Mayor Tracey Roberts and others and indeed by the statistics I read—the fastest growing metropolitan region in Australia at the moment. I know that not many members have been to Yanchep in their life or get out there these days. I have taken members of my party out there and they have been absolutely astonished at the population explosion. To give members an idea, there was an electoral redistribution before the 2013 election when our electorates were all brought back to the state average of about 24 000 constituents per electorate. Here we are halfway through the term and the electorate of Butler now has a population of 33 000. That gives members an idea of the growth. It is the biggest metropolitan electorate in Western Australia, both geographically and population-wise.

The Barnett government looked at this population explosion but did not make an election promise to be broken and torn up like nearly every election promise of the Barnett government. I refer to keeping utility prices at or near inflation—that went by the board, did it not? I think the government got up to 60 or 70 smashed promises and just said that times had changed. What did the Premier infamously say? He said that no-one really listens to all those election promises; they are only election promises.

Ms R. Saffioti: It's the vibe!

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: Yes. He said that it is the vibe—have a glass of wine and feel the vibe! They are not really something that they want to hold a government to in terms of performance; it is the vibe.

Yanchep District High School was promised a \$10.33 million upgrade. I want to stress that this was not an election promise; this was a government policy announced during 2012, well in advance of any election. It was the government's program. It could see what had happened to the ancient Yanchep District High School; it had been swamped by a population explosion and there were not the facilities there for the children. There were no science rooms or decent change rooms. The staffroom up there is also well below standard. The government promised \$10.33 million. It was not an election promise; this was part of the education department's program to

bring this school up to a basic standard so that students could enjoy the facilities that students all over Western Australia enjoy. There are no technical drawing facilities, no science rooms, no proper change rooms, no staffrooms—the school has been cobbled together. This was not an election promise; this was announced by the Minister for Education in mid-2012 as part of the government's program for this school.

This had two effects. Firstly, it lifted the morale of the whole community, especially of course the school community, but this was not realised at the time. Secondly, as a matter of commonsense, it meant that Yanchep was taken off the list of high school refurbishments. It is a rotating list so that each school in due course will have the necessary refurbishment. Yanchep District High School was taken off that list because it was going to get this \$10.33 million upgrade. We should have known! Even though it was not an election promise, it was part of the government's program. After the state election, the government got this program, quietly shredded it and put it in the bin. It did not tell the school; it did not tell anyone. That was until the school council, which was dealing with the architects and everyone who had been coming to the school and consulting with the school council as to what was required, was told, and I received a phone call saying that the whole thing had been canned. I put myself on inquiry, and that was confirmed. Although there was this big fanfare by the government and an announcement at the school about the \$10.33 million upgrade, the government quietly, at two o'clock in the morning, when everyone was asleep, turned on the shredder and fed in the plans for the Yanchep District High School upgrade. It was only through the vigilance of the council and the inquiries of my office that this was brought to light. It has fallen into this void. Yanchep is not getting its school upgrade to bring that facility up to standard—not up to something like Mindarie Senior College and not like some of the other high schools I have seen around such as Butler College, which I will come to in a moment, but just to bring it up to an average standard. That was junked by the government, and of course it was removed from the queue of high schools to get a regular upgrade. It lost out twice over. The students and the families of Yanchep have been discriminated against by this government. The community will not forget this at the next state election. The Yanchep high school is an important polling booth in that northern area. None of the parents will ever forget the betrayal of this community by the Barnett government. Their children's education has been put back by the decision taken by this government.

The next problem is that 18 months ago the government completed and opened Butler College. I can see everyone sitting on the edge of their chairs, enthralled and disgusted at what I am saying so I might need 10 minutes more to satisfy them, Madam Acting Speaker.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: The government opened Butler College. It is not yet full, because it starts at year 8 and each year it inducts another year. We have been told that, as it approaches inducting year 11 students, there will be 25 demountables on the grounds of this brand-new college in Butler. What is the explanation for having 25 demountables at a brand-new college? It is just pathetic planning. In other words, the government has told the public that it will put in a district high school, but it has put in the smallest assets that can justify it being called a senior high school and has then filled that brand-new high school site with demountables. This is like Butler station. Government members get up in this chamber and boast that they brought it in under budget, but they do not tell people that it put in only a down escalator at the station; it did not put in an up escalator. That is how it saves money. When the elderly get off the train, they have to go up the stairs.

Dr A.D. Buti: What about the vibration?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: That is another story. We all know about it; I have gone on about the vibration of the train. The government was saving money there and did not put down the anti-vibration matting and built the railway on limestone.

Now we have a further problem in that the children have to move out of Yanchep District High School for their final years, but because Butler College has been opened, Mindarie Senior College is not accepting more students from Yanchep; it has said that they have to go to Butler into the demountables. It is public education, so I have to cop that in a way, but what about if one sibling is at Mindarie Senior College and one is at Butler College? This is worsened by the fact that since the inauguration of Butler station, the bus from Yanchep no longer goes down to Mindarie Senior College; it stops at Butler station, so that students attending both Butler College and Mindarie Senior College have to catch two buses. What has happened with the inauguration of this train station? We are all grateful that there is a Butler train station; do not get me wrong. But the way that the government has cheapskated the bus system up there is deplorable. For example, I was speaking to an elderly lady at the Remembrance Day service at Yanchep Inn on Tuesday and she said that she used to be able to get the bus from Yanchep to the major shopping centre at Clarkson; a bus ran down there. Now she has to take three trips. She has to get a bus from Yanchep to Butler station, then she has to go down the escalator—thank God there is one that will take her down—and catch a train for one stop to Clarkson, and at Clarkson station, which was built by Labor, there is an up escalator that she can catch to the buses and then she has to catch a bus to go 400 metres to

the shopping centre. There are three trips and they then have to be reversed. When she goes north to go back to Yanchep, she has to catch the bus 500 metres up to Clarkson station, then board the train for one stop, then get off because there is a connecting bus to Yanchep and, woe betide, an elderly person with a crook knee or hip who cannot gallop up those stairs quickly enough to get the bus has to wait an hour for the next bus. What used to be a 15 to 18-minute bus ride from Yanchep to Clarkson is now turning into a one-and-a-half-hour excursion.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms J.M. Freeman): Member, we are debating the School Education Amendment Bill, so you need to bring yourself back to the bill.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I was trying to explain the transport problem because the students coming down from Yanchep to Mindarie Senior College have to make the same trip. They are not going to get the family shopping at Clarkson; they are going to Mindarie Senior College. They have to get the bus to Butler station. Then they have to—they are young—slide down the banister to the train, catch the train for one stop, get a bus down to school and then repeat these three journeys on the way home.

Dr A.D. Buti: That poor elderly woman has to then navigate herself around all the students!

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: We are not allowed to talk about Joyce, because she is not at school and we are talking about the education bill, but I will come back to Joyce's plight —

Ms R. Saffioti: The member for Armadale mentioned students.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: That is a good point.

I know that the president of the school council will attend Parliament this afternoon to see what can be done to get Yanchep District High School out of the crisis it is in. I cannot overplay this too much; there are no words strong enough. We all know that if we cast around any of the 59 members in this chamber and asked them to honestly say when the last time they went to Yanchep was, there would not be half a dozen members from either side who had been there in the last 12 months. It is out of sight and therefore out of mind. There is a saying: it is the squeaky wheel that gets the oil. I do not know whether I am a squeaker, but I will be here on my feet speaking as loudly and as often as I can about the government's dereliction of duty to the students of the Yanchep, Alkimos and Two Rocks areas. The government has utterly failed in its obligation to provide reasonable education assets for the children of the families between Alkimos and Two Rocks. When we have these meetings out there and talk about how the government reneged on its commitment—not an election promise—to spend \$10.3 million on Yanchep District High School for science rooms, technical drawing rooms, teachers' facilities, change rooms so the kids do not have to undress in the dunny and all these things, it is never lost on these people. They keep raising time and time again that half a billion dollars has been allocated for a pond on the Esplanade and \$1.5 billion has been allocated for a footy oval over at Burswood, yet the government cannot get together the \$10.3 million that it committed to as being critical to the educational opportunities of the families at Yanchep and Two Rocks. It is absolutely disgraceful. There will be performances like this by me right up until the next election. This speech will be going to every family in Yanchep and Two Rocks to let them know that it is not that this Parliament does not know of their plight and does not know that the children at Yanchep, Two Rocks, Alkimos and Jindowie are being ignored and prejudiced; it is just that the Barnett government does not care about them. It is not ignorance; these families know that the Barnett government said it must spend \$10.33 million on this school. It was not me or Labor but the government. As I said, at two o'clock in the morning, the government shredded the plans, betrayed the people of Yanchep and Two Rocks and, most importantly, undermined the educational opportunities and the future of hundreds of young people on the north coast.

MR N.W. MORTON (Forrestfield) [12 noon]: I rise to make a contribution to the School Education Amendment Bill 2014. I want to start by saying how constantly amazed I am by the things that I witness in schools in my local community. In fact, as recently as Wednesday—yesterday morning—I had the pleasure of being invited to Woodlupine Primary School, which is in Forrestfield in my electorate, due to an extraordinary assembly that it had organised on the back of a competition it entered called Kids Who Give. I am not sure whether members are aware, but as part of this competition, students donate and make things that are shipped to impoverished communities around the world by the Salvation Army, which is also involved. Little old Woodlupine Primary School happened to win this statewide competition. It was a fantastic achievement, not just because they won the competition but also because of what it stands for—that is, compassion and generosity. I am very proud that that school is in my electorate and that it represents the nature of the students and, of course, the staff of that school. As I said, I had the good fortune of attending the primary school assembly yesterday morning where the former Governor Hon Malcolm McCusker was present to hand over the award and a small cheque of \$1 000. Actually, it was not so small; it was significant. He highlighted the reason why he undertook this program as the then Governor—to instil generosity and the feeling of giving in young people and to encourage them to give from an early age. It was a highlight for the school community to win that award. That is just one small example of some of the great stuff that happens in schools in my local community.

While I was at the school yesterday morning, I was also introduced to a young student. I will not mention her name because I have not sought permission. I am sure you would be interested in this, Mr Acting Speaker (Mr I.M. Britza). This young student has shown such prowess in her piano playing that she has been invited to play at Carnegie Hall in New York City next year. That is a huge achievement. Although I have not heard her play—I am keen to—the former Governor had, and he said that she was talented. He was sure that she would go an extremely long way. I am sure that if this young girl was invited to play piano at Carnegie Hall at eight years of age, she has a very bright future.

Dr A.D. Buti: You could go over to Carnegie Hall with her.

Mr N.W. MORTON: I did offer to take her suitcases for her but she said she had it sorted!

Again, that is just a small example of some of the fantastic things that are happening in our schools in our local community. I have a list, and I would like to go through a few. As a member of Parliament representing the community, it is important to recognise the great things that happen locally and to put on record our recognition of the efforts of our teachers, staff, students and families.

I was at Forrestfield Primary School a couple of weeks ago. The member for Armadale was also there. It officially launched the refurbishment of a classroom that had been fitted out as a commercial kitchen. That was on the back of an election commitment of \$150 000 to enable that to be done. As the local member, it was great to see that come to fruition. The benefit for the local community was very obvious, and I am sure the member for Armadale would agree with that. They have been very successful in developing a community kitchen garden, and I was roped into doing a busy bee for that a few Saturdays back, and it was for a good cause. The refurbishment of the classroom as a commercial kitchen was to complement the community garden and enable the students to go from paddock to plate, to coin a phrase. They could understand how to grow and harvest vegetables, and complete the cycle by delivering dishes on plates, with the obvious benefits of healthy eating, understanding food groups, engaging young people to learn where their food comes from, and teaching them about recipes and the science and maths behind recipes. These are all added benefits to the literacy and numeracy of the students, through the vehicle of the refurbishment of a classroom as a commercial kitchen.

Dr A.D. Buti: I must say it is an outstanding project.

Mr N.W. MORTON: Thank you, member. I agree. It is a great outcome for that community, and I wish it all the best with that.

While I am on Forrestfield Primary School, it also has a talented and gifted arts program. I had the pleasure of inviting the principal and several of the students in that program to Parliament House for lunch a few weeks back. The reason I did that was to recognise their achievements. As part of that program, the art teacher, Mr Rob Gear—who can I say is an extremely talented art teacher—got the students to hold an exhibition in which they could sell their work. I had the pleasure of attending that exhibition. It was a fantastic event, and it was great to see the excitement on the faces of the students at being able to produce work and understand the techniques that are behind that work, and then to have the opportunity to sell their work in a real-life situation. That is obviously of great benefit to these young budding artists.

Further to that, the art teacher, Rob Gear, encouraged his students to enter their work into a national art competition which is to do with screen printing—I will not get it right, so I will not try to remember the term. A young student at Forrestfield Primary School, Callum, was fortunate to win that competition, and this young man from the Forrestfield community will now have his artwork displayed in the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra, along with the likes of Picasso and so on. That is another fantastic achievement by young people in our local schools and communities.

I also want to touch base on Darling Range Sports College. That is a unique college among Western Australian government schools in that it is a sports-specific college. Although that does not mean that it abrogates its responsibilities to academia and academic pursuits, it obviously has a strong focus on engaging students in sports. The college has several specialist sports programs, and it continues to pump out amazing student athletes, which is the term that is used at the school. As I have said, the college does not abrogate its core business, which is academic education, obviously, but it also promotes athletic ability and sporting prowess. Having worked at a high school in a previous life that had a specialist sports program in AFL—the member for Armadale would be aware of this program —

Dr A.D. Buti: And a very good program it is.

Mr N.W. MORTON: It is a very good program. The school has had a bit of success in that program. At one stage we were in a final against CBC Fremantle, and we got pipped in that game and CBC went on to win the competition that year. Therefore, I had great delight in hearing that in the footy season just gone, Darling Range Sports College made it to the final and was able to beat CBC, which is a private school. I think Darling Range

won by one point. That was a great outcome for the school, and it is, again, a demonstration of the school's commitment to develop student athletes. Darling Range Sports College has a number of past and present students who have achieved or are achieving highly, including current Kookaburras goalkeeper Tyler Lovell. There is also a young 15-year-old female student who is currently on the junior tennis tour, so the college continues to develop and pump out these extraordinary young people with extraordinary sporting prowess. I thought while I had the opportunity I would put on the record some of the achievements that are happening in some of the local schools in my community, because they are noteworthy and the schools deserve the recognition.

We have seen a lot of investment into upgrading facilities at schools in my local community; there is an upgrade happening at Maida Vale Primary School at the moment, to the tune of \$5.5 million. That was probably long overdue; the school is about 103 years old, although not on the current site. Some of the facilities at the current site date back about 75 years. In fact, I was told by staff that one classroom they used until recently was a converted American World War II aircraft hangar; God knows how that ended up in a Western Australian school, but apparently it was there! It has since been demolished and removed, and replaced by state-of-the-art classrooms. That is fantastic; Maida Vale Primary School has always been a very good school, punching well and truly above its weight, and to complement its academic outcomes it now has some fantastic facilities that are, as I say, probably long overdue. The refurbishment is well-deserved and should serve that school community well for many years to come. I am very proud to have been able to deliver that for the school.

Dr A.D. Buti: Member, do you know old Wattle Grove Primary School?

Mr N.W. MORTON: Yes.

Dr A.D. Buti: Do you know what's going to happen to that site?

Mr N.W. MORTON: Yes, I have had a few queries about that. While we are talking about Wattle Grove, it is a fantastic new primary school that has been delivered for the community, but the old site referred to by the member is, I think, being used by the Department of Education for supplementary services and I believe some demountable classrooms are being stored there, but I would have to get further advice from the Minister for Education on that.

Mr J.H.D. Day: I remember being told they were using it for the training of cleaners and gardeners, I think.

Mr N.W. MORTON: Yes, and some other educational support services.

Mr J.M. Francis: It's also used as a dog training facility. I've used it as a dog training facility on weekends.

Mr N.W. MORTON: Okay; there you go. Anyway, I will get back to what I was talking about, which was the upgrading of schools in my community.

In addition to the Maida Vale Primary School upgrade, we are also seeing the completion of a new year 7 block at Darling Range Sports College, to the tune of, I think, \$3.6 million. I had the pleasure of taking the minister out there a few months ago to inspect the works. I drive past that site often and I can see that it is nearly completed. The external structure has been built and they are doing the fit-out as we speak, so that should be operational for the beginning of the new school year when the year 7s will be welcomed. That is a great outcome and a great new facility to house the year 7s as they venture into the high school environment. It should help to contain them somewhat for the purposes of pastoral care, which I think is a great outcome.

Furthermore, we managed to get \$200 000 for East Kenwick Primary School to deliver what is known as a stop and drop, or a Kiss 'n' Ride; I do not know—"stop and drop" almost sounds military! Members who know the lay of the land at that school will know that having such a facility will be very good because it will streamline the dropping off and picking up of students, so that is another great little outcome for the school community. I have already mentioned the \$150 000 we have delivered to Forrestfield Primary School for the commercial kitchen, which is a fantastic outcome for that local community.

On top of that, we made a commitment before the election for 40-kilometre-an-hour flashing signs, and I was very happy to have the Minister for Transport out several months ago to turn on the lights at Dawson Park Primary School. Again, if you know the lay of the land —

Ms R. Saffioti: Couldn't you reach it?

Mr N.W. MORTON: Apparently something is funny over there!

If you know the lay of the land, Dawson Avenue is quite a wide road with a few bends, which is probably conducive to people putting their foot on the accelerator a bit more than they should. Having the flashing lights at that location is of particular benefit to that school community, and that is also a great outcome. I believe the new Wattle Grove Primary School will receive some this year or maybe early next year, but they are certainly in the pipeline. People who work in education know the start and finish times of school and are very fine-tuned to those movements; once out of the system, and if they do not have kids to drop off at school et cetera, they very

quickly forget those times, so I find having the flashing reminder that I am entering a 40-kilometre zone very beneficial. It ensures that I adhere to that speed limit and am aware of children and the possibility that they may be crossing roads. I certainly find it particularly helpful, as do, I am sure, many people in the community. That is another great initiative, and just another way we have added benefit and safety to our school communities. As I have highlighted, there have been some great outcomes at my local schools after some great investment, and they are operating in state-of-the-art facilities that should further foster great outcomes for students in my local community.

I also wanted to talk a little about some of the reform that this government has undertaken. Some changes are probably more obvious than others, but given my experience of having been a teacher and deputy principal in a high school environment, I am interested in the changes to the Western Australian Certificate of Education. The situation has been that students could get to year 12 and, effectively, if they were not pursuing an Australian tertiary admission rank or tertiary education, leave with stage 1 courses, or a combination of maybe a certificate I or stage 1 courses. That did not really set them up, after 13 years of education, for further training or education. The WACE changes we see coming through now will ensure that students are on one of two pathways: either a pathway of ATAR, which means they are moving, I would assume, through to tertiary education; or a minimum requirement of a certificate II in training. That means that when kids finish their formal education, they will be either on a pathway to university education or a pathway to further training or the workforce. They will be well placed, and will walk away after 13 years with something to show for their time at school. I have been in the system and seen how it worked.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr N.W. MORTON: Students were finishing year 12 with, potentially, not a lot to show for it. With this reform students will leave on either a pathway that will enable them to go to tertiary education or one that sets them up for further training or the workforce. I think that is a really good outcome.

A lot has been said about independent public schools. I am a strong supporter of IPS, and I heavily made reference to that in my maiden speech. I think the idea of one-size-fits-all is quite antiquated, and I think that giving control of a school community's destiny to it is a great outcome. After the last round of IPS, five more schools in my electorate will operate as IPS come 2015. I am honoured to have been invited onto a couple of those school boards. I am really excited about being involved with the school community at the grassroots level to try to deliver better outcomes for those kids; I think it is fantastic.

I turn to some of the other things this government has achieved. We have the highest paid teachers in the country and the highest per-student allocation for resourcing in the country. Of course, the teacher shortages that were common under a Labor administration are now a thing of the past. I was there during those years and saw the workforce's disillusionment with how the curriculum implementation was mucked up and the lack of desire to remunerate teachers effectively. Teachers are the single most significant and important resource in our schools, and remunerating them effectively is extremely important. As I have said before in this chamber, an effective teacher can teach a class under a gum tree. I think ensuring that we have high-quality, well-paid teachers in front of our students, who are our future, is absolutely the number one thing that any responsible government should try to deliver.

In my last few minutes, I will talk about a couple of things in the bill. I am very happy to see that the parent and child centres are being rolled out. I would not think that too many members in this place on either side would argue with the positive outcomes that these centres can deliver for our students. Early intervention is obviously the key in many different ways. It is important that we give our kids the best opportunities in life for education, because it enables them to have choice and freedom. Having child and parent centres operating in our primary schools, which hopefully the government will continue to roll out across the community, is a fantastic way to ensure that the government is doing everything it can to ensure that our kids can contribute to and engage with their education. These centres can identify, deal with and treat hearing and speech defects and the like. I have dealt with a number of sad stories in my time. A teacher may be dealing with a 15-year-old student in year 10, and it is only through intervention because their behaviour or attendance is bad that the teacher realises, following referrals to specialists, that the student has a hearing problem and that that is the reason they have not been able to engage properly, which has manifested in behaviour and attendance issues. At the age of 15, we have failed that student. We need to engage with those kinds of kids at the earliest possible point so that we can enable them to achieve their potential. That is what a good community and a responsible state government should be doing. I am buoyed that this bill will enable the rolling out and operation of those centres.

There is a bit of anxiety in the community about the year 7s moving into high school, but it will ensure that we are the same as any other state in the country. It will allow our year 7s, who are a bit older now given the half cohort, to have subject-specific education in a high school context. Again, having been in the system, I am yet to speak to a school staff member or principal who has said that they have not thought about ensuring that they are

Ms Janine Freeman; Mr Roger Cook; Ms Lisa Baker; Mr John Quigley; Mr Nathan Morton; Ms Rita Saffioti

aware of needs of the year 7s as they transition to high school. I have every confidence that our high school teachers, principals and administration staff will do everything they can to ensure that these kids have a very safe and successful transition to high school. Certainly, that has been my experience in dealing with and speaking to my former colleagues. I have every faith that they will endeavour to deliver that for the students. Obviously, transition points are important for kids, and it is important that due consideration is given to that. I have every confidence that our schools will do that.

Finally, I want to talk about school attendance and ensuring that we do everything we can in that area. The second reading speech for the bill states —

... enable attendance panels to advise parents to enter into responsible parenting agreements as a means of obtaining parental engagement and commitment to school attendance.

One of the biggest issues that I had when working in high schools was disengagement. More often than not, trying to engage with the parents of kids who just did not attend school was equally as hard as trying to engage with the kids. Strengthening the capacity to engage with the parents and bring them to the table is essential to ensure that we get these kids engaged and give them every opportunity to be contributing members of our society. This is a broad-brush approach, looking at all the different facets to address school attendance of the kids who are already in the system. Importantly, we are also trying to address early intervention so that when the kids get to, say, 15 years of age, those issues are not as readily present and manifest in our school community. Hopefully, they have been identified and dealt with and things have been put in place so that these kids can achieve. I think that is probably the end of my contribution. I support the bill and will now take my seat.

MS R. SAFFIOTI (West Swan) [12.25 pm]: I rise to speak on the School Education Amendment Bill 2014 and welcome the opportunity to make a contribution to the education of our children across the state, and also to reflect on both the bill and the current education issues confronting my electorate of West Swan. Whenever we deal with legislation, I always look to the poor advisers who sit in the Speaker's gallery, and I note that the two advisers who have been sitting there patiently are not looking too excited about our contributions, but I am sure that they will be happy to see this bill pass through this place.

This bill will do a number of things, and a key thing it will do relates to school fees. I reiterate the concerns of this side about the increase in and the collection of school fees. I read with some concern a newspaper article about a matter that was addressed by the shadow Minister for Education, which concerned the appointment of an interstate debt collector to chase an outstanding debt of \$17. I mention that and contrast it to what is happening around the state and some of the priorities of this government. While we hunt down a family who has \$17 outstanding, we continue to pay millions of dollars to large developers in this state to underwrite apartment buildings. I think at this point in particular while we are discussing education, it is important to highlight the priorities of the government. As I have said in this place a number of times, this government has lost its way. It is so preoccupied with monuments for itself that it has lost focus on the core issues it needs to address—that is, the education and wealth of the community, creating a safe environment and making sure housing is affordable. I recall when cuts to education, education assistants and funding to deal with many of the problems our schools face were announced in October or November last year, within the same week there was an announcement that radios would be installed in the toilets at the new stadium. In the same week that the government announced cuts to our schools, the government announced that the new toilets at the new stadium will have radios in them so that people would not miss a second of the game. What an incredible description of what is happening in the state currently! The government has lost the priority of people and it is obsessed with the monuments it is building. What does the government talk about when it talks about local government boundaries? It does not talk about creating communities or communities of interest; it talks about wanting all the big stuff in one City of Perth and all the big buildings in one local government boundary. The Premier does not really understand modern Western Australia; he thinks that we are all seeking massive monuments to ourselves—well, we are not.

Dr A.D. Buti: Well, he is.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Sorry, he is. Many of the people behind the Premier understand the difference between his outlook and the outlook of the rest of the community. Modern Western Australia is a complex place and we need a government that is focussed on addressing the key issues. It is not about three-word slogans that the Abbott government has introduced and this government is following. The idea that independent public schools will be the solution to education as we know it is absolutely false. By overselling the key lines, the government is ignoring the key problems in our community. The bill talks about attendance and creating greater obligations for all parents. The key issue is that schools are not equipped, staffed or funded to know which kids are not there. This was evidence given to the Education and Health Standing Committee last year or the year before. Basically, the ability to track down and understand truancy at schools has diminished under this government. There is no doubt about that. What bothers me most about this debate is that when we talk about truancy or absenteeism, people talk about Bali, as if that is fundamental to the problem of kids not going to schools. The idea that parents

take their children out of school for a week to go to Bali is somehow the massive issue confronting our schools. Of course it is not. The issue is kids slipping through the gaps and the cracks, basically. I know a number of educators in schools who were designated to deal with children who slip through the gaps, and I have been told that the problem is increasing, and our schools are not geared up for it. Slogans stating that independent public schools are the solution to everything are not the answer. We really need to understand that both modern society and our schools that reflect it are far more complex. The problems are very difficult to address, but we must be making a better effort. We have children who are not engaged and continue not to be engaged under the IPS system, and whatever slogan this government has. They continue not to be engaged, and as a result we lose them, in many cases forever, but in most cases for a long time.

Debate on this bill is an opportune time to look at some of the cuts made to the school system under this government. I understand the member for Armadale read out some of the letters from particular schools about the cuts that have been made, and I will read out a couple more. One is about Huntingdale Primary School. I think this was sent last year. Maybe the member for Armadale can confirm that.

Dr A.D. Buti: No, this year. They were released around August or September of this year.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Thank you, member for Armadale. These were released in August of this year. This letter reads —

The cuts to public education have affected our school by...

- Education Assistant time for Year One & Literacy Support reduced.
- SPPRA Fund cut to Outdoor Play Behaviour Support cut
- Learning Support Co-ordinator Time reduced

...

- Lost Development & Training Funds ...
- Lost Level Three Teacher Time ...

The cuts to public education have affected our school by...

- SPPRA cuts ...
- School grant frozen for three years ...

I have another one from Darlington Primary School, which the member for Kalamunda might be interested in. It states —

Our EAs have lost preparation time in the Early Childhood Area.

We have lost funding for support programs in school There are no support programs in our school now.

The letter states that the school has 20 more students and basically the same funding. As we can see from schools around the state—I just picked two schools in that example—the school cuts have had a significant impact. I want to talk specifically about a school in my electorate—that is, Ballajura Primary School. I want to refer to the cuts that have been made at that school. These have been out there publicly, and they were spoken about at a school graduation last year. There has been a significant cut in the education support at that school. I want to read from an article that was released in February this year. The article states —

IT'S been dubbed "The Little School That Could".

But parents at Ballajura Primary School now fear that mantra is under threat from cuts, which they warn could see vital programs go.

Michelle Ellis, the president of the school's parents and citizens association, said school staff had worked tirelessly to make significant improvements, including in NAPLAN results.

"We have a morning reading school which starts before school begins," she said.

"The resources we need to keep this program running will not be available to us with the budget cuts. This program has greatly assisted students who are struggling with reading and comprehension.

"The students are eager to be at school early and willing to learn. The results have been tremendous. To lose this program will be a huge step backwards."

Another parent, Suzana Sansalone, said Ballajura was "the only school in WA in 2012 and 2013 to achieve improvement of more than one standard deviation in every tested element of NAPLAN".

"The changes implemented at our primary school are working and the results speak for themselves," she said.

“Premier Colin Barnett’s decision to cut funds won’t solve the literacy problems our school encounters; a change in the way we deliver teaching will.

“Cutting funds will only threaten the success and ongoing delivery of programs to Ballajura Primary School, which clearly have proven successful to date.”

In a letter sent to Minister for Education Peter Collier, she said. “‘The Little School That Could’ will become ‘The Little School That Can’t’ because our government won’t support our school.”

She warned that students who fell through the cracks could end up getting in trouble with the law.

That is a very good description of what these cuts mean. Although people on the other side talk about the great work of teachers and educators in our system, and I support that sentiment, when we cut the resources that allow schools to deliver programs to assist our children, we undermine their success and the work they do. As described by the Ballajura Primary School P&C and educators at that school, these cuts have really reduced the ability of principals and educators to deliver those programs.

The member for Maylands made a good interjection when the member for Forrestfield was on his feet talking about independent public schools being a great initiative, but when we cut all the funding that gives them the flexibility to deliver programs such as reading before school, we undermine the IPS system. When the government says, “These funds allowed you to run programs that fitted your school’s requirements, and here is IPS”, but then takes away those funds, it restricts the ability of those schools to deliver those programs. In Ballajura Primary School’s case, it developed programs that were really targeted at before-school learning to ensure that kids who were not keeping up in the normal classroom environment received extra assistance and were able to read and write at the required level. Cutting that funding puts enormous pressure on the school to continue to achieve. I know that the principal and every teacher at that school wants to achieve, but when we take away those resources and flexibility, we inhibit their ability to continue to achieve that success.

I want to talk about Ballajura Primary School and a couple of other schools in my electorate; I will take this opportunity to outline the significant work that they are undertaking. I truly believe that we need to continue to invest in our principals, the leadership teams of our schools and our teachers, to ensure that we progress and get the outcomes that we as a Parliament want to achieve, but we are not doing that to a sufficient standard. As I have said in this place before, we continue to expect a lot from our schools; whenever there is a social problem, whether it is bad eating habits or significant behavioural problems, we look to our schools to fix it. Schools are a great collection point in the community, as all kids compulsorily attend our schools. However, we are putting more stress and more obligations on our school system. We need to strip it back and look at what our schools are meant to do and give support to our educators to deliver outcomes. Many schools, particularly those in fast-growing areas, face basic enrolment issues, some with 10 to 20 kids starting each week. It is very hard to manage an increasing number of students and at the same time the delivery of outcomes. Those stresses are felt by schools in areas of high growth, whether it be in inner suburbs such as Mt Hawthorn or in the outer suburbs. A significant growth in enrolments adds enormous pressure.

I want to talk about some of the successes in the West Swan electorate. I mentioned the cuts to Ballajura Primary School and the significant pressure the cuts have placed on that school. I refer to an article in *The Australian* of 12 December 2012 that highlighted the success of Ballajura Primary School over the previous seven or eight years. It states —

When David Wanstall arrived as the new principal at Ballajura Primary School in Perth six years ago, he found a below-average school he believed could perform a whole lot better.

“I think we had cajoled ourselves into believing 25 per cent of our kids couldn’t read at a functional level and that was OK,” Mr Wanstall said.

“What we now understand is that every child can learn to read.”

About 30 per cent of Ballajura’s students were failing to meet minimum national standards in literacy and numeracy; today it’s as low as 3 per cent and the proportion of students scoring in the top 20 per cent of the nation has at least doubled in the past three years.

Mr Wanstall said the school’s rapid improvement came from the adoption of effective and explicit teaching strategies, and teachers having high expectations of their students, starting from the premise that every child could learn.

The turnaround came with the help of Melbourne private school Haileybury, which effectively has established its own teacher training institute, the Haileybury Institute, led by deputy principal John Fleming.

Ms L.L. Baker: As in Halle Berry?

[Member's time extended.]

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I do not know whether my pronunciation of it is right; probably not. I am sure it will be corrected in *Hansard*! The article continues —

Mr Fleming spends four weeks in every term travelling around the country, working with more than 100 mostly government schools, coaching their teachers in using strategies to improve students' skills.

That included Ballajura. It continues —

The results nationwide have been phenomenal. Mr Fleming cites the example of one of South Australia's lowest achieving schools at Whyalla, where only 26 per cent of its Year 3 students met the minimum numeracy standard in 2010.

This year, 93 per cent of the Year 3 class met the minimum standard, ...

As I said, Ballajura Primary School is under the leadership of Mr Wanstall and, I have to say, the leadership team. When I go to schools I often get the sense that they perform well, and I see not only a strong principal but also a strong leadership team, and that creates great leadership throughout the community and helps to reinforce some of the principal's objectives. The achievements, therefore, at Ballajura Primary School have been significant.

At the other end of my electorate, on the Ellenbrook side, is another school that is setting the standard nationally in its leadership and its teaching—that is, Ellenbrook Primary School. The Grattan Institute report of February 2014 highlights some of the significant improvements and changes made at Ellenbrook Primary School under the leadership of Dr MacNeill. I will go through them in a second. Basically the report states —

In 2008, students at Ellenbrook Primary School on the edge of Perth were often substantially below the national average in all areas of literacy and numeracy. Today they are equal to, and in some cases slightly above, the national average.

...

These and other turnaround schools improve by consistently implementing the same five steps: strong leadership that raises expectations; effective teaching with teachers learning from each other; development and measurement of student learning; development of a positive school culture; and engagement of parents and the community.

I will go through the Ellenbrook Primary School example. It states —

The school principal, Dr MacNeill, has high expectations of his students and the teaching that enables them to perform at their best. He has a pragmatic approach to strategy; his vision is uncompromising but he adapts to changing circumstance ...

But the principal insists on the vital role of his leadership team. He says two highly effective deputy principals have led change in the school. "Too often we elevate the status of the school principal to the detriment of establishing effective leadership teams," he says. "The quickest way to kill change is to put a single effective leader in a toxic culture." A strong leadership team is always required for successful turnaround.

...

Ellenbrook has introduced explicit instruction methods (a highly structured teaching approach) alongside a greater focus on literacy and numeracy. These methods have been implemented in a way that allows teachers to learn new skills on the job. Leaders among the teaching staff have volunteered to try new explicit techniques, been given time to view them in other schools, and then to gradually introduce them in their classrooms. Staff make presentations detailing the changes they have made and success is celebrated. Other teachers are then invited to help develop the new teaching practices.

In relation to curriculum change at Ellenbrook Primary School, I note a particular change that occurred there. The report states —

Dr MacNeill improved the curriculum and introduced higher learning expectations early in his tenure of school principal. In 2010, his students were substantially behind some eastern states in mathematics ... He compared the textbooks from their provider with what the company provided in NSW and found Year 3 textbooks he had been given were equivalent to Year 2 textbooks being provided in NSW. By 2012 Australian standards were in place and this problem was gradually overcome. With an improved curriculum and new teaching techniques, the school's maths students are now learning at a faster rate than the rest of the country.

Ms Janine Freeman; Mr Roger Cook; Ms Lisa Baker; Mr John Quigley; Mr Nathan Morton; Ms Rita Saffioti

These examples continue to show that it really is not only about investing in our schools; it is also about investing in the leadership and in the educators of our schools, and making sure they have the time and the resources to implement the changes that they see as being required to improve outcomes. One of the last comments I will read from the Grattan Institute report is the step entitled “Engagement of parents and the community”. It states —

Every morning Dr MacNeill and one of his deputy principals stand at the school gate to greet students and their parents, and to talk about their children’s progress.

I have visited Ellenbrook Primary School a number of times. It is one of those schools where the principal basically knows everybody; he communicates very effectively with every child in the playground. The paragraph goes on —

Ellenbrook is committed to engaging parents and the community in a professional relationship.

For students with specific problems, staff may visit the home and provide help when the connection between school and home is weak. The school is also very strong in protecting staff from inappropriate parental behaviour.

Over time, parental engagement has played a critical role in achieving change. Parents have reinforced the change process and highlighted the improvement the school is making. Parents regularly tell teachers that their children are advancing more quickly than children they know at other schools; through positive reinforcement, success breeds success.

The Grattan Institute has picked up on Ellenbrook Primary School.

Mr F.A. Alban: Member for West Swan, are you aware that Dr MacNeill is one of the architects of our state’s IPS system?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: I understand that.

Mr F.A. Alban: It is to his credit.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: There was some improvement. The point is that independent public schools in themselves are not the change.

Mr F.A. Alban: But he is a good example of how IPS works.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: It is a slogan. If we look at other independent public schools, they will be very different from Ellenbrook Primary School. To say that independent public schools achieve results is not the key. Many of them turn around, particularly Ballajura Primary School, which happened before IPS. It really goes to leadership and what governments can do to support the leadership and the educators of our schools. Ballajura Primary School is an independent public school. When flexibility is cut, which would have allowed them to deliver the outcomes that IPS designated, we will not get the results. The debate about independent public schools is interesting, but what happens to the non-independent public schools? That is something that the government has never really addressed. What happens to those other schools?

Mr F.A. Alban: They become IPSs as well.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: However, the government has said that not every school will become an IPS. The IPS debate is interesting, but, as I said, I do not think three-word slogans achieve success in any public policy area. It is about looking at the key examples. As I said, the fact that Dr MacNeill greets those students is not an initiative of IPS; it is an initiative of that principal. I refer to Ballajura Community College under the former principal, Steffan Silcox; what he did happened before IPS, and it is continuing. He knew the name of every kid in that school.

Mr W.J. Johnston: He was a good leader.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: He was a good leader.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

[Continued on page 8133.]