

EDUCATION — MANAGEMENT

Motion

MR P.J. RUNDLE (Roe) [5.04 pm]: I move —

That this house condemns the government's lack of planning and management of the state education system resulting in staff shortages and unsafe conditions for staff and students.

I must say I am concerned about the way things are going with our education system. That is the reason I have moved this motion today.

Several members interjected.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: As the shadow education minister, I want to put on the record, if I can, how important education is to all Western Australian families and how important it is for me as the member for Roe, a regional member, to always stand up for our regional families and communities. I want to point out that we get only one chance to educate our children. We have seen a trend in many of our regional schools in which some are under-resourced and struggling with student numbers in classrooms. Especially in inland wheatbelt-type towns, there is pressure on families to send their children away to bigger coastal colleges or to boarding school facilities. Quite often, a large part of the peer group actually leaves the school. Some of those children may be in the higher echelon of students. It puts pressure on that classroom that is left behind to be able to achieve results. I will always stand up for our regional communities and I will always stand up for our regional families and regional students because this is a trend that is developing.

One result from this trend is that our families are being separated. Because of the expense of boarding fees in some larger coastal towns or boarding schools in Perth—somewhere around \$25 000 a year—it is cheaper for families with two or three boarding school students or students who want to move away, or have to move away, for mum to go away with those children, but all of a sudden the family is separated. Either dad has to drive to Perth from Bunbury or Albany on weekends—farming in the meantime or whatever the occupation might be—to catch up for a day or two, and then the family is separated again. It is something that is happening more and more. It is happening because of the pressure that is on our regional schools. It is something that this government needs to address. I will be talking later about a couple of policy areas that I think the leaders in the education department need to have a good, hard think about. I have met with Pat Byrne and Matt Jarman from the State School Teachers' Union of WA. It has been really enlightening that some of the issues they raised have come to the fore. I thought they would normally roll with whatever the government's position was, but they are actually really concerned as well. I will be bringing up some of those points in my contribution.

Another thing I want to comment on is the importance of good leadership in our schools. It is not just important in regional schools; it is important in every school. I was at the Governor's School STEM Awards earlier in the week looking at the good work that some of our regional and metropolitan schools have done. It was great to see not only the students and teachers who are involved in STEM for those particular schools, but also the good-quality leaders from those schools. I will always stand up for my community. I will always stand up for the regional schools in my electorate because we see how much the local primary school, district high school or senior high school communities are affected by the health of their school. We do not want to lose our regional families to coastal areas or to Perth because they are part of the ecosystem that our schools and communities operate in. We cannot underestimate how losing a number of families can create a rolling stone effect. I wanted to make those preliminary comments.

I also want to record my appreciation for the Minister for Transport and the Minister for Education and Training in allowing the Public Accounts Committee to have a look at the school bus situation. Equity in access to schools is very important. Access to an orange school bus, whether it is in the country or on the edge of the metropolitan area, really does make people's lives so much better. I am certainly pleased to have been seconded onto that committee and I think we will do some good work. I will make sure that we will get out and talk to those communities and affected families and, hopefully, make some constructive change.

On a positive note, I think the education system has handled the COVID pandemic pretty well, to be honest. Early last year when the pandemic swept in, there were real concerns about how our teachers and students would handle it, whether our IT systems would stand up or whether we would have communication issues and so forth. We have been fortunate in Western Australia to not have had lockdowns as long as those in many other states and for most of our kids to have been able to go to school along the way. WA has been in a fortunate position with COVID and it is important that teachers and students have been able to work and learn in their schools over that period. Unfortunately, the good luck is now starting to turn against the government. I believe some of our critical services are being compromised by a lack of planning. We saw this recently with the Premier's plan for a plan that has created some uncertainty in the education sector. International students and universities still have a lack of clarity

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to some amount. The Premier mentioned the other day that the government had spoken to our university sector, which is pleasing, but I am curious to know why international students and the university sector have been dealt with but the rest of society is still up in the air as far as where we are going on that one. It seems that the university sector has been given a date in, we believe, late January or early February to assure them that international students will be able to come in so that they can start planning, but other parts of our society are waiting for that sort of confirmation. Those are some overall comments.

Firstly, I want to focus on the staff shortages that will flow on to unsafe conditions for staff and students. Currently, around 190 teacher vacancies are advertised on the jobs.wa.gov.au website, including 28 deputy and associate principal vacancies, 11 Aboriginal and Islander education officer jobs, 23 education assistant vacancies in the field of special needs, and 11 school psychologist positions. In addition to those 190 vacancies, there are 180 non-teaching staff positions advertised, including gardeners, cleaners, school officers, library officers, education assistants, and administration and finance officers in a range of metropolitan and regional schools. Recently in the other place, my colleague Hon Colin de Grussa, MLC, asked the Minister for Education and Training a question about mandatory vaccinations and how they may affect the education system. The minister responded —

... 0.6 per cent are not fully vaccinated and do not intend to apply for a medical exemption.

That equates to around 160 of 26 536 school-based staff who will not be in front of classes next year. Today I asked the Premier this question: what about the other 10 000 teachers who have not responded to the survey? That is great. We have 0.6 per cent of teachers who say that they are not fully vaccinated or they do not intend to apply for a medical exemption or will not get vaccinated. This government is operating by survey. We have been quoted lots of figures on the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Bill today. The government said, “Look at all those surveys we have done. Isn’t it great?” Then everyone tells us that they have not been consulted, including the opposition, I might add. We were not consulted until yesterday. We were given no time at all to look at the bill, but that is a side issue. Then we have the government operating by survey on the forestry industry. The government ran a survey there as well and decided to cut out logging native timbers. The government is running surveys, getting incomplete results and making decisions by survey. When I asked the Premier today about those 10 000 teachers who had not been surveyed, he gave me his usual spray, “Why don’t we support vaccination?” et cetera—which we have done. The Premier gives his usual spray but does not answer the question. My question always is: will there be a teacher in front of every classroom for the first day of term 1 in 2022? That is a straightforward question. I do not want my usual spray from the Premier, “the member for Roe this” and “the member for Roe that”.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members!

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: All I want is that this government does not operate by survey and does not give a spray about everything and not answer the question. All I want is a teacher in front of every classroom; that is what every student and every family wants. I am sure the member for Wanneroo is fully aware how concerned the State School Teachers’ Union of WA is about a number of facets of the education system, some of which I will be mentioning shortly.

Several members interjected.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: If I can go on, I assume that the 190 vacancies for teachers currently advertised on the government website is in addition to the unvaccinated teachers who will need to look for other jobs next year, so that makes it 350 teaching positions that will most likely not be filled by the start of 2022. I found it amusing earlier in the week when the Minister for Education and Training said that she seemed to think that teachers will come in from other states. New South Wales is looking at a shortage of anywhere from 1 200 to 4 000 teachers. The New South Wales government is spending \$125 million, including an advertising campaign, for its own teacher shortage and our state government is branching out and thinking it can round up some teachers from New South Wales.

Several members interjected.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Honestly, I seriously question —

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members!

Point of Order

Mr R.S. LOVE: These incessant interjections mean that the member for Roe cannot make his contribution. I ask that you intervene.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms A.E. Kent): No point of order. Continue, member for Roe.

Debate Resumed

Mr T. Healy interjected.

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The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Southern River!

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I am trying to point out the realities.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members, the member for Roe has the floor.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Thank you, Madam Acting Speaker.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Are you taking interjections?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: No, I am not.

The ACTING SPEAKER: All right; no interjections!

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I have too much to get through.

Ms S. Winton interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Wanneroo!

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I am sure we will get the member for Wanneroo's comments a bit later on. I want to make some points. The \$125 million campaign to attract teachers from New South Wales will, I am sure, bring any spare teachers into the mix. I do not see much success coming from that; in fact, I do not see why our government would advertise in that sector, especially without offering extra incentives. Apparently, our minister thinks the key attraction is that we have no COVID. That is true, but the question is for how much longer? Hopefully, it will be a long time coming, but as we know, when the borders open, it will create difficulties. The likelihood of teachers coming into WA from other states is questionable at best and non-existent at worst. We need some clarity on what will happen over the next few months for any teacher who strays into WA from another state. A short Google search will reveal that each state has the same issues as WA, with teachers leaving the sector for good and regional areas especially finding it very difficult to fill teacher vacancies. To be honest, even if we were able to recruit teachers, especially in our regional areas, where would they live? We have some serious issues with Government Regional Officers' Housing, which I will briefly talk about. I know that the member for Moore has a contribution to make on that issue as well.

One of the examples on the GROH vacancy list is Newman. The Department of Education is recruiting teachers and has advertised five vacant positions at Newman Senior High School. In May 2019, I was on a trip with the leader of the Nationals WA, the member for Central Wheatbelt. She referred to Newman and said that pockets of the mining town were like a war zone, after seeing hundreds of boarded-up corporate and state government houses, many of which had been vandalised. We know that BHP is refurbishing some of the houses in that town for their employees, but this government needs to address the housing issue there. Currently, among the houses listed for rent in Newman is a one-bedroom, one-bathroom unit for \$700 a week; a four by three house for \$900 a week; and a four by two house for \$800 a week. That will give members a sense of the problem. I do not know how many graduate teachers from the city will be falling over themselves to fill one of those five position advertised at Newman Senior High School. I hope they do, and I hope this government gives them a reason to go to Newman—some reason that will attract them there.

I will move on to relief teacher shortages and refer to an article in *The West Australian* of 19 June 2021. The State School Teachers' Union of WA said that the statewide shortage of relief teachers is the "canary in the coal mine". An early warning by the SSTUWA that a shortage of relief teachers was looming appears to be proving true, with fewer graduates available and no access to overseas recruits. We have seen this in not just teaching but in almost every occupation—they are feeling the five, 10 or 15 per cent drop in overseas people coming into the mix. Relief teachers are being snapped up for full-time positions, so the pool of relief teachers is significantly reduced and it is putting additional pressure on existing teachers.

As members know, a lot of schools have large class numbers. Those teachers are not getting the duties other than teaching time they were perhaps used to. I know the member for Southern River and the member for Wanneroo understand the stress of teaching a large class all day, every day. I know the demands on teachers. It will be felt even more so by our teachers with the looming shortage of relief teachers. I hope the government and the Department of Education have some strategies to increase the number of relief teachers and take the pressure off our teachers. I know that in some of our regional towns, teachers are having to travel hundreds of kilometres. I heard an example today of a relief teacher who travels to five different schools in a radius of around 350 to 400 kilometres a week. It puts extra pressure on these teachers who have to leave home an hour before everyone else just to get to a school. We also hear anecdotal stories about leave approvals being revoked for next year. I am concerned that teachers are being told to reconsider leave they had lined up for next year. That will certainly create dissatisfaction in the sector.

I want to continue my reference to the state of the schools report of the State School Teachers' Union of WA. The report shows that 82 per cent of teachers and 79 per cent of principals reported high or very high stress levels. They are drowning under massive workloads. It referred to some of the key contributors as lack of relief, reporting

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and assessment, lack of classroom support, class sizes and red tape. The report gave some of the reasons for teachers considering quitting. They include concern over personal health, 61 per cent; school violence, 21 per cent; salary issues, 16 per cent; and, of course, safety concerns around COVID, eight per cent. Probably the statistic that really worries me that I have heard over the last couple of years is that 25 per cent of graduate teachers are leaving the sector within five years. That is a real worry. I heard today some stats coming from Victoria, where 20 per cent of graduate teachers do not register as teachers upon graduating. These are some of the issues that this government needs to address. I have said this before to a few people: we have a health crisis, and I am worried about an impending crisis in our education sector. Day 1 of term 1 in 2022 will see that come to the fore.

Another article in *The West Australian*, dated 11 August, talks about early educators leaving the industry due to excessive workloads and low pay. This is from the United Workers Union polling—if you don't mind! The article said that the United Workers union polled almost 4 000 current and former early educators Australia-wide. It stated —

More than a quarter of current educators reported they plan to leave the sector within the next 12 months and of those educators who do plan to stay, almost half (46 per cent) think about leaving 'all of the time' or 'most of the time'.

As I said, the government looks at these surveys, but it needs to take notice of that survey, because a real trend is appearing. Nationwide, this sector needs 40 000 more staff over the next two years. We are at breaking point. It is not just Western Australia that has that problem, but also New South Wales and Victoria. The salary cap is interesting. We have significant pressure. Once again the State School Teachers' Union of WA is doing plenty of work in the background and putting it out there, member for Wanneroo. Pat Byrne said —

“We are very concerned that if public sector wages don't keep up with the increases expected in the private sector, we will lose teachers and lecturers at a time when we can least afford it,” ...

Now, the public school principals are demanding a pay rise of more than 15 per cent over three years to bring their wages into line with their peers on the east coast. The SSTUWA is also seeking endorsement from its members for a pay increase of four per cent a year for two years. This is what we get when the Premier proudly stands up and says, “Look at us, we've frozen everyone's wages. Look at us, we've got a \$5.8 billion surplus.” Teachers want to leave the industry because they are not getting a pay rise. All they are looking for is something that is fair and equitable, but over the last five years of this government—no thanks. Now that the Premier has come out with this \$5.8 billion surplus, I am sure there are fires everywhere that he needs to put out because every union is out there negotiating. If that had been done in a more methodical and sensible way, I am sure we would have seen a lot more teachers staying in the industry.

I have concerns about mental health and the number of vacant positions that we have in our schools. As I said, 11 school psychologist positions are vacant. Where will people come from to fill those positions? In the recent budget, the Premier said that we would have 100 more school psychologists over the next four years. At the moment, we have 11 vacancies, so I do not know where those 100 will come from. I am worried about our students who need that mental health support. I do not think one member of Parliament in this chamber would deny that they are worried about the mental health of our students, given what has happened over the last couple of years. Hopefully, we can get through the next few months and the next couple of years without too much trauma. I am worried about not only our students, but also our teachers. The DETECT Schools study by the Telethon Kids Institute reported a tripling of severe distress in teenagers over the last six years. That is a 50 per cent increase from 2015 to 2019 in the number of children aged between zero and 17 years referred to the WA child and adolescent mental health service and a 104 per cent increase during 2020 in the number of children with anorexia nervosa requiring hospital admission. I know that the member for Vasse has, on many occasions, spoken of concerns about accessing Perth Children's Hospital in particular. I have seen emails sent to her office and mine from parents who are worried about accessing treatment. We have some real issues in the mental health sector. Many staff have indicated that they would like additional support for not only the staff, but also students, to cope with the pandemic. As Matt Jarman has said publicly, the stress levels of teachers are very high from dealing with the complexities of mental health and the increased workload. This is all coming to a head.

As I said, in our regional towns we have real problems with Government Regional Officers' Housing properties. We have 400 fewer homes than we had prior to 2017. This is affecting police and Department of Education staff. We have teachers and principals in caravans waiting for a property. We have heard from not only the State School Teachers' Union, but also the Principals' Federation of Western Australia. Bevan Ripp of the Principals' Federation has identified that regional housing is a key issue. I spoke to him a couple of times recently. He has identified that as a real key to attracting quality staff.

I was at the Albany show on the weekend. The Leader of the Opposition was there as well as the member for South West Region Hon James Hayward. I spoke to quite a few of the schools that had stands at the show. A couple of the principals are really worried about what incentives there are to bring regional teachers into the regions. I will

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use Narrogin as an example. Narrogin Primary School and East Narrogin Primary School teachers get staff incentives but Narrogin Senior High School teachers do not, for some reason. I am scratching my head because I cannot work out the inconsistency. The teachers at the senior high school are probably doing it just as hard, if not harder, than the teachers at the primary schools. I worry about that inconsistency.

As I said, we need incentives and an improvement in the standard of housing. We also need to see an improvement in some of the basic policy issues. I am sure that the member for Southern River is familiar with the transfer system. In this day and age, maybe it does not meet with the approval of a lot of people, but the people who I talk to say that when they went to the regions for two or three years back in the day when the transfer system was operating at its best, they got an appreciation for what it was like to be part of a good regional community and go to the tennis club, the squash club and kick a footy with the kids on the weekend. They got an understanding of what it is like to be a member of the community. They enjoyed it and a lot of them stayed longer. I am worried that there is no incentive for our graduates or metropolitan-based teachers to go to the regions and enjoy it and see what it is like to be part of those communities. This is a policy issue that the hierarchy in the Department of Education needs to have a good look at.

Another thing that frustrates me is that when I go to some of the smaller primary schools in my electorate, I see teachers who left the school seven years ago still holding a job at that school. They have since moved on to two or three other schools but they are holding back another good-quality employee from getting a permanent position at that school. We have a merry-go-round effect whereby teachers are holding positions for four, five, seven or eight years and no-one can get a permanent position at the local school that they live near. That is a real breakdown. Just about every teacher who I talk to says they are holding a position somewhere from a few years ago that they do not want to give up because they could lose their permanency. That is a real issue that the government could address. I am sure that the member for Southern River will be right onto it.

When I look at it, I see some basic policy issues that could be addressed. We have not seen much movement on them over the last five years. I congratulate the Minister for Education and Training for the clampdown on violence in schools. I think that has been a real positive. Dealing with violence is obviously a disincentive for many teachers, along with the class sizes. I commend the Minister for Education and Training for that.

I want to share a couple of stats from New South Wales and Victoria. I have a graph here that shows New South Wales' projected shortfall of teachers in 2024 is 748 teachers. That is outside what I was talking about with the \$125 million campaign to bring in 1 200 or up to 4 000 new teachers, which our government is apparently competing with. As I said, in Victoria, 20 per cent of graduate teachers are not even registering as teachers after graduating. As I said earlier, 25 per cent of our graduates have left the industry within five years. The Victorian government is offering financial incentives of anywhere between \$9 000 and \$50 000 for early childhood teachers for selected areas, and other incentives, including relocation support such as \$6 000 for those teachers moving from New Zealand. This government might want to look at that with its \$5.8 billion surplus. Let us provide some incentives.

Mr T.J. Healy: Are you aware of the current incentives to relocate?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Not too much incentive.

Mr T.J. Healy: You might be pleasantly surprised.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I look forward to the member for Southern River enlightening us on that, because I have not heard too much about our incentives. I would say that our teachers need surety, a bit like our international students and our universities. The Premier proudly reduced the skilled migration occupation list from 168 down to about 20 to protect WA jobs when he first came into office in 2017. He shortly realised about 18 months later that it was having a massive effect. We have had a skills shortage ever since then, and the Premier has now had to reinstate some of those occupations onto the skilled migration list because it is not the way to go. As I said, we have a scenario in which the number of international people who normally come across has reduced; we are feeling it in all our industries where that five or 10 per cent of people who usually come from overseas really have a big impact.

Without going on much longer, I want to say how important our quality teachers and leaders are to all our communities and all our schools. They are very much felt in our regional schools. I am pleased to see that today's vaccination rates are at 83.3 per cent for single dose and 71 per cent for double dose. When I ask the Premier a question and I get the usual spray from him every day, I am not here to undermine the Premier. I am not here to undermine vaccination. I am here to find out from the Premier what he will do about putting a schoolteacher in front of every classroom for the first day of the first term in 2022.

MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt — Leader of the Opposition) [5.43 pm]: I rise to support the motion moved by the member for Roe. It is an important motion. Education, along with health, are the fundamentals of a state government; they are the bread and butter. If we do not get them right, the foundation of our communities is not right. The questions that the member for Roe has been asking about staffing challenges and recruitment and making

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sure that we have a plan, acknowledging that we are in difficult and unusual circumstances, quite rightly should be asked by the opposition. We would be criticised if we did not ask whether there will be a full complement, or as close to full as possible, of teachers standing in front of our classrooms at the beginning of next year. We ask these questions now because we want to know what the government is planning to invest, or what the plan is, to ensure that we have those teachers and those resources in the right place.

Watching and following other jurisdictions should inform what this government is doing because we do not live in a bubble. We can see and observe that other states are experiencing similar difficulties. When we read that the government has a plan to advertise in and recruit from New South Wales, Victoria and other states around the nation, we question whether that is the appropriate strategy. New South Wales has its own teacher shortage and the article from *The West Australian* that Bethany Hiatt wrote on 11 November spoke of —

An advertisement aimed at enticing NSW teachers to WA next year offers help with relocation costs and spruiks the “great opportunities” available “no matter your experience level”.

We think Western Australia is a fantastic place to live but people need more than a good vibe and a promise of a good lifestyle. There needs to be a comprehensive plan to attract teachers across the border, especially when there is significant strategy in other states to entice and attract people into the teaching profession to fill their own shortages. The member for Roe is quite right when he raises these concerns because we know that shortages are exacerbated in a regional sense. Even the State School Teachers’ Union president, Pat Byrne, has acknowledged there will be hotspots in regional WA and areas that would struggle to put a teacher in front of every class for the start of the year. The State School Teachers’ Union, which I presume is regularly meeting with the government and regularly engaging with the minister, is identifying there will be hotspots. We will see shortages right across the state and the recruiting challenges are predicted, along with an increase in the attrition rate. The reality is that although every person in this house is doing their very best to roll up and get vaccinated, we will see attrition in relation to those who choose not to be vaccinated, because people will go on leave or leave the profession because they are under pressure and seeking other job opportunities.

We have an uptick in the mining industry, very similar to the one in the 2010s that put enormous pressure on the public service to put bodies into the jobs in front of classrooms or in our public health service, any of those other professions. All of that creates a perfect storm, so we want to know that this government is doing more than just business as usual. We talk about incentives and enticements for teachers to go country or to become a teacher in the first place, and certainly we created a number of those when we were in government. We bumped them up. We did a refurbishment program right throughout regional Western Australia of Government Regional Officers’ Housing. That has not been done under this government. That was done under our government. It has not been touched since. We have seen comments on the state of some of the Government Regional Officers’ Housing coming from the State School Teachers’ Union and also directly from teachers. This government, sitting on \$5.8 billion, has not taken care of the bread and butter, which is to make sure that we have a teacher in front of every classroom, teachers have a safe and secure place to live and they are not living in something that does not warrant the rent that they are paying, albeit it is subsidised by the state government.

It is all right and appropriate questions for the opposition to be asking these questions. We get an indignant response from the Premier and members opposite when we raise our concerns, knowing that the trend will be very difficult to recruit given that there are shortages across the nation, but we want to know what the plan is. It needs to be more than an advertisement aimed at enticing New South Wales teachers. I think the member for Roe touched on the \$125 million *NSW teacher supply strategy*. NSW has a four-year program whereby it has put in funding to ensure that it can attract new teachers and teachers who have been in the profession back to the profession. The New South Wales government is investing \$125 million over the next four years and it will try to recruit 4 600 teachers over four years.

It is a bit like trying to pin jelly to a wall without a comprehensive strategy that sets the goals and outlines the actions that need to be achieved. We cannot figure out whether the government is meeting its own targets because we do not know what they are. We do not know how to hold the government to account because there is no a plan. The New South Wales government has acknowledged that there is a teacher shortage and that it needs to do better. It has committed to funding and a strategy. I have not looked at the structure it is trying to repair. It is hard to compare the quantum of funding that is required between jurisdictions when jurisdictions such as Western Australia have peculiarities; that is, it is very difficult and expensive to get people to travel to the far reaches of our state. New South Wales is not so big and maybe there are different outcomes when the government sets up incentives. The New South Wales government has put together and released a plan. On the other hand, this government’s plan is to entice the teachers who are part of the recruiting plan in New South Wales. There is criticism of the plan in New South Wales. In a *Daily Telegraph* article of 2 November, there is a particularly interesting comment from David Shoebridge, a NSW Greens member of Parliament, in his critique of the New South Wales teacher strategy. He said that it will be a bit like the *Hunger Games* out there for teachers over the next four or five years with New South Wales

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likely to see a bunch of its highly skilled teachers being poached by Victoria, Queensland, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. He obviously does not view Western Australia as a threat, so I am not sure whether the advertisement from this side of the border is working particularly well. That says to me that we need to think outside the box and not just plan to poach staff from across the border.

The challenge is real. We are not over-egging it because it is a challenge in every jurisdiction. We want to know what the government's strategy is to ensure that we are at least keeping pace on the recruitment front and making sure that we have teachers in front of classrooms. In a regional context, there are additional challenges of recruiting in that space.

The other issue I touched on was housing. Particularly damning articles and evidence has been put forward by the State School Teachers' Union of WA and others about the current state of housing, an issue that has been exacerbated by the very low rental vacancy rate. When there is no appropriate Government Regional Officers' Housing, teachers are being housed in caravan parks. That was revealed by Briana Fiore in an August article in *The West Australian*. Teachers are being housed in caravan parks because of the scarcity of accommodation in regional WA. This is not new, but more and more teachers coming through our doors, particularly in small regional centres, are being asked to share housing. In some cases, teachers have to share a house with a school principal. I do not think that is appropriate in this day and age. There is something to be said about looking at the contracting for new houses. There has been enormous pressure on local governments, particularly in regional WA, to provide that housing. In some cases, that is an opportunity for the local government if they have the balance book or can take out a loan, but others cannot do that. They see it as a real restriction in being able to recruit teachers into their community. Certainly, there are a number of those local governments in my electorate. They do not want to be the lender or provider of last resort. A local government in one of my communities built a four-by-two house with all the bells and whistles. It is an absolute cracker of a house with a theatre room, double garage, security—the whole shooting match—but the Department of Education said that the house, which was a brand new house, did not meet its specifications, so it could not and would not rent it from the local government. Members might say that it should have spoken to the Department of Education before building the house—perhaps that is right. But when we are trying to recruit and retain teachers in the regions, perhaps a more proactive approach should be taken by those in charge. That decision really blew the minds of councillors and the community who knew just how good the house was. In some instances, the standard and stock of housing in community towns is less than enticing. I find it simply mind-blowing that this house was rejected because it did not meet the standards. That happened in one of the communities in my electorate. We need to do better when it comes to working collaboratively with the department in the provision of housing, because that is absolutely one of the things that teachers look at when they go regional. That does not apply to just teachers, because I know police —

Mr T.J. Healy: Did you say which town in your electorate that was?

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I can provide you with that information.

Mr T.J. Healy: I will put the question on notice. There is speculation. I was not sure whether I heard you say which town it was.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: No, I will not name it. It is one that is referred to by the Minister for Local Government on a regular basis! I do not want to get it into trouble when it did the right thing.

Mr T.J. Healy: There is speculation and then there is doing something about it.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: The local government did. It tried to work with the Department of Education, but, honestly, it was enough of a setback for it to raise the matter with me. Ordinarily, CEOs in regional WA deal directly with the department. Quite often the department will contact them and say, "Will you build a new house? We need someone to build a new house." There has been a complete shift in the department's management of building Government Regional Officers' Housing. We have seen the number of properties that have been disposed of, which has also exacerbated this issue. There is no government desire to build these houses. Much like when a local government takes on the responsibility of paying for a doctor in its town when it should not have to, and paying for the doctor's house, car and surgery, it also feels an obligation to make sure that it has appropriate housing in town to attract teachers. Local governments know that once they do not have teachers, that will impact their school quality, which will see parents decide, because they only get to do their kids' schooling once, to move their kids on to another school. It is a vicious cycle. There are some really simple solutions to this issue. Given that the government has a \$5.8 billion surplus, some of those things can be fixed relatively easily. We can make sure that we have appropriate housing and a pipeline of housing to take the pressure off local governments from being the provider of last resort accommodation. Of course, some local governments will want to do that because they will see it as an opportunity. But many local governments in smaller towns always feel that their schools are under threat. We could make it a lot easier for them.

The number of houses that have been sold is a real concern. A question asked by Hon Peter Collier in the Legislative Council revealed some figures. The biggest decline according to those figures is in the south west with

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GRO housing plummeting by 23 per cent. That was followed by the midwest, Gascoyne, great southern, Pilbara and West Kimberley. The government needs to address these issues. It is not the be-all and end-all, but we need a holistic strategy to make it clear that the government is absolutely serious about bringing teachers into the fold. The government needs to be recruiting and upskilling teachers, providing appropriate housing and giving teachers the opportunity to come back and teach in key areas. We would certainly welcome that.

Mr T.J. Healy: Is the Nationals' policy against selling GRO houses?

Ms M.J. DAVIES: We have seen a significant sell-off of houses, but that has halted at the moment. The government needs to halt it, bring those houses that are still in the system up to spec and invest in new houses. That is what we would welcome. The government has to invest in that housing stock. There was a significant rollout of housing under the royalties for regions program very early on when the Nationals WA and the Liberal Party came to government in 2008 because we identified that housing was one of the issues that was making it incredibly difficult for us to recruit teachers, nurses and police into regional Western Australia. I am quite sure that the same level of investment has not been made. A lot of those houses would now need to be either significantly refurbished, replaced or turned over. There is a challenge there.

It is not just us saying this. The State School Teachers' Union of WA has called for better housing for regional members, and that the housing scheme needs to be updated. It is really nerve-racking when members report to the State School Teachers' Union that they do not feel safe in their GROH accommodation because there have been break-ins or attempted break-ins due to a lack of security in their homes. People in regional and remote communities do not have police present in their communities all the time. They might have a two-person police station, but I can tell members that we do not have two police officers in all our towns, and they certainly are not just sitting there waiting to turn up; they might be out and about supporting other operational matters in the district. That, in itself, is a challenge. All these things go towards the attraction and retention of teachers. We are talking specifically from a regional perspective, but this is also an overall state perspective.

[Member's time extended.]

Ms M.J. DAVIES: This is being exacerbated by the rental vacancies rates in regional Western Australia. The latest reports I have seen are that Perth had a rental vacancy rate of 0.9 per cent in October 2021, while in Albany it was 0.4 per cent; Broome, 4.9 per cent; Bunbury, 0.5 per cent; Busselton, 0.0 per cent; Geraldton, 1.1 per cent; Kalgoorlie, 1.3 per cent; Karratha, 1.3 per cent; and Port Hedland, 2.4 per cent. There is not actually an alternative to GROH if housing is unable to be provided. To me, that is of serious concern. We need greater explanation from the government about how it will deal with that and the other issues that we know are compounding these shortages in Western Australia. It is not an unreasonable ask to have a clear and succinct plan ahead of the start of term 1 next year to ensure that there is a teacher in front of every classroom and that we have done everything we can to not only get them, but also keep them.

Sitting suspended from 6.00 to 7.00 pm

MR T.J. HEALY (Southern River — Parliamentary Secretary) [7.00 pm]: I rise on behalf of the Minister for Education and Training as the parliamentary secretary for the education portfolio to respond to a number of claims made earlier during the debate on this motion. Obviously, the government will be opposing the motion—I will say—forthwith. I am also very happy to say that I am very proud to be part of the McGowan Labor government, whose priority for education is to give every Western Australian the best possible opportunity to succeed. It means that we have the best schools, educators, support staff and infrastructure. The government has had a very strong record of investing very heavily in infrastructure and government supports.

I want to say, at the beginning, that the debate on this motion has so far consisted of members of the Nationals WA berating the education sector and undermining our schools and the good work that has been done by the 55 000-plus Department of Education employees, families, schools and all educators. First and foremost, I want to say, member for Moore—I am sure he would agree, but he may not have the ability to agree with me—that it is very easy to whinge and complain. I have not yet heard a contribution from the member for Moore; I believe he will speak next, so I will listen in earnest. In the contributions from the member for Roe and the member for Central Wheatbelt, there was a lot of complaining and some broad speculation without relevant facts and references, but I will get to that.

There is an opportunity first and foremost for the Nationals WA to assist in promoting a positive vaccination message to ensure that school communities in metropolitan and regional Western Australia get a very clear vaccination message from this Parliament. There are a number of things I will address. First of all, I will address what we are doing with our very comprehensive strategy to address supply. Then I will go into a number of aspects in response to some of the things that were raised and then I will give the Nationals a couple of ideas of things they could do if they would like to support schools in Western Australia.

First of all, we are in term 4. A number of contributions in the previous debate focused on the fact that there are a number of unknown vacancies in areas to fill. As a former teacher, as are many members in the chamber, I know

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that term 4 is almost job season. Schools are now making their appointments for next year. People are looking to transfer to other schools or to move upwards or downwards in roles within their schools. As a parent, I was recently surveyed by my school asking whether I planned to be here or elsewhere next year. Student numbers are dictating whether students move to different campuses or schools. Staff then reflect the number of students within a classroom. The middle of term 4 is the opportunity for school leaders and principals to engage in discussions with their school communities about their needs in term 1 the following year. Do we know that teachers are under a lot of stress right now? Absolutely. It is a unique time; there is a pandemic. There are a lot of pressures on a number of schools. Do we believe that there is a shortage? There are a number of vacancies now and that will change during term 4, while schools make inquiries and assess what they are doing. Further, as promotions and job vacancies change and job offers are accepted, there will be, as there is every year, a number of movements. Schools are making their appointments now.

A member interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr D.A.E. Scaife): I should say, member for Kalamunda, that it is technically disorderly to interject when you are not in your seat.

Mr T.J. HEALY: I am happy to take an interjection when the member is in his seat.

Schools are making their appointments now. Teachers will move around a little bit, but what we are doing—remember, this is not a government that sits and ignores the community; this is a government that engages—is engaging our strategies. We are doing different and active things now. We are taking extra measures now to make sure that we have enough teachers.

There are a couple of things to remember. A few years ago, universities changed the way that teachers are created or produced, if we look at it like a factory setting. When I did my diploma in education, it was a one-year course. A few years ago, the majority of universities shifted to a two-year diploma in education. Now, generally, someone will do a Bachelor of Education or a diploma in education, which is after the usual undergraduate studies. The change in enrolments happened in about 2017 or 2018, when there was a drop. Commencements started to pick up only in 2020. That meant that when people were deciding to do their graduate diploma of education, there was a clear drop everywhere. When we came to government, we commenced a very comprehensive and detailed strategy to engage the community and inspire a number of different programs for young and mature age people to get into the sector. Again, teacher supply changed when the graduation qualifications changed.

We currently have an advertising campaign. It was detailed earlier. It is a three-year campaign. We are in the second year; it started in 2020. It is not something that happened just a little while ago. We are in the second year of a three-year advertising campaign to bring skilled people with teaching qualifications to Western Australia. There has also been a pandemic. I do not need to go into too much detail, but the movement of people has changed. When I was a teacher, before I had a family, it was not simple but I could be more mobile. Teachers can teach in London or a remote community for a period of time. Again, the pandemic has created unique circumstances.

The government also has other arrangements and a number of strategies to assist teachers who have been out of teaching for a while, including help with re-registration by making the process faster, smoother and easier. That is available for teachers who have been out of the system for a little while and are considering coming back in. A lot of work is going on in a number of programs. Teach for Australia is a brilliant program designed to get industry professionals from business and other sectors to engage in a Master of Teaching. There is the Leap program. A number of programs work with initial teachers and graduate teachers to support them to get work and to be available for relief teaching calls and others. There is the Horizons programs and other pathway programs.

It is very, very important to note that we have 860 schools with a number of different demands. As members know, the government is very committed to regional education. I want to commend the teacher flying squad for its role in responding to the different needs of different communities. There is leave for when people get sick and maternity leave. There are promotions and changes—life happens—and different circumstances are available.

I also want to talk about the criticism of our desire to say to teachers in the eastern states, “Come to Western Australia and teach.” Everywhere in Australia is dealing with all those factors that I mentioned. Changes in teacher initiation and commencement, and pressure on the sector is widespread. Of course, everyone has also experienced the pandemic. We say that we have an incredible product in Western Australia. I would like members to imagine that they were a teacher in a Sydney primary school or a Melbourne high school during the last 18 months. Whether members have a family or not, I want them to think about the teaching scenario that they would have been in during that period, such as the amount of remote learning they would have done. Not everyone in this country has had access to Mark McGowan’s leadership as Premier and a Western Australian community that has stood together to crush the virus. I am not saying that teachers in schools in Western Australia have been without stress, but they have not experienced the at-home learning scenario or restrictions on young people’s external programs and the

ability to exercise on weekends. People in Western Australia have not had the restrictions that the rest of the world has experienced over the last 18 months. I think we experienced nine days in lockdown in Western Australia.

We have an incredible product in Western Australia. Do we have a recruitment campaign to tell qualified teachers in the eastern states how easy it is to have a conversation about moving with their family to teach in Western Australia? Absolutely. I commend the recruiters. I think Hays is one of the recruitment companies. We do not have to sell Western Australia. We do not have to show people pictures of Kings Park, Cable Beach or the beautiful wheatbelt to sell Western Australia. I think people understand, and have always accepted, that Western Australia is incredible. Obviously we will soon move into the next phase of dealing with COVID. We are all ready to move into and experience that higher vaccination period. But it is true to say that a single teacher would look at Western Australia and say, "If I were to relocate to Western Australia for six, 12, 18 months or longer to work in a regional community or the metropolitan area, I would be able to teach, practice my craft and engage with young people in a way that I cannot in most other places in Australia." That is a given. We have a great product and we make no apologies for having a long-term, multilayered strategy and campaign to attract people to Western Australia.

I will address some of the issues raised earlier. There is a great amount of assistance if someone is seeking to relocate to Western Australia. I will talk directly to the people clearly watching at home from the eastern states! If you are thinking about coming to Western Australia to teach, we would love to have you; there is no doubt about that. Please ignore the contributions from the opposition. It is not a doom and gloom state. This is not a place where you will be disrespected as was foreshadowed by some of the members opposite. This is not a place that is under-resourced. It is a great state and a great place to learn. There is the McGowan government's investment in education infrastructure and school support services. I think we have a 3.9 per cent unemployment rate. The state is booming. It has always been a great place, but there has never been a better time to come. There was a question asked earlier. I was asked by interjection how people find this information. I said to the member for Roe during the estimates process that he could google "Teach in WA". If members or anyone watching at home google "Teach in WA", they will find a fantastic website. I will also suggest teachinWA@education.wa.edu.au.

If someone is thinking about moving here and wants to have a chat about the relocation assistance packages, they are there. If we can find a qualified teacher in the eastern states a match with a designated vacancy, as a skilled person under the G2G PASS migration process, we can assist them through that process. The state government packages will assist with the cost of home quarantine and of relocating their family to Western Australia, be it to a metropolitan area or the regions. There are some incredible incentives. We can assist with airfares. There are registration fees and other things. The state government will assist people. These are a number of the things we will do. We do not apologise for promoting that. We have an incredible team of recruiters and they do a great job. To be honest, I think it would be great to be a recruiter right now. The product we sell to the east coast to be a teacher in Western Australia is fantastic. I am not sure whether I would like to be a recruiter for the National Party preselectors. That is a bit of a harder sell! If someone wants to come and teach in Western Australia, this is a really good opportunity.

Vaccination was raised and some incorrect figures were floated. For the purpose of *Hansard*, I will correct them. We are currently doing a number of surveys. I think we were criticised for a survey. We were criticised for discussing things with our sector, for discussing things with our community. The opposition was criticising us about discussing a training package with the forestry industry. It was criticising us for consulting about Aboriginal heritage. It was criticising us for consulting with teachers about whether they have been vaccinated or not. Mandatory vaccinations require us to ask all our staff: "Have you or have you not been vaccinated?", or, "Do you intend to vaccinate or not?" We have some fantastic statistics. The figures are growing every week, because more and more Western Australians are rolling up for Western Australia. They trust the government's central message of getting a vaccination. Again, it would be great if the opposition supported that. One Facebook post, member for Roe, or others, member for Moore, would be brilliant. If members were to share, it would be an incredible symbol for them to promote the vaccination rollout. I come back to the point. Almost 79 per cent of our education workforce are already double-vaxxed. They have already done that. Another 20 per cent have said they are partway and plan to vaccinate. A small percentage have indicated to the department that they seek to get a medical exemption or not to access the vaccine when it is available to them. The example of the aged-care sector was very, very clear. At the end of the day, that 0.6 per cent went and got the vaccine. Most people just went and got the vaccine. We do not expect it to be a significant issue. Are we saying it is not going to be an issue? No. We do not expect it to be a significant issue.

I would like to run through a couple of things raised by the member for Roe. The member might like to feel free to place his questions on notice. He said that a number of schools were under-resourced, with no specifics. There are number of schools in his electorate. Primary schools were announced in his electorate and in Central Wheatbelt. The government has provided the infrastructure, STEM classrooms in district high schools, and a maintenance blitz. I am not saying that every single school has been completely rebuilt or is brand new, but when the member makes random comments people listen to them, especially teachers from over east or elsewhere. When the member

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for Roe says WA schools are under-resourced, it is an affront to those schools and the good work those school communities do. If the member has specific questions, he can put his questions on notice. The member for Roe also said the Department of Education and education leaders need to have a long, hard look at education. He discussed vacancies in schools. I have written down what the member said; I am not quoting *Hansard*. The member said that 160 staff will not get vaccinated. I am not sure of his link for this information. He criticised the government's recruitment strategy.

The member made a number of comments. He said that he was concerned about mental health in schools. He gave no acknowledgement that the government is employing a number of school psychologists and has increased the chaplaincy services in schools. Will that address every single concern? No, but it is moving in the right direction. The member must remember that I was a teacher under the Liberal-National government. I know what was done under your government, and it pales in comparison to the initiatives of this government. The member also said the government will not help relocate educators. We know that is not the case.

It is very, very simple to whinge. I do not envy the opposition—in one sense I do, because you guys do not have anything to do, so you should be better prepared! When we are elected to Parliament we have opportunities and we can access many things. I commend the Parliamentary Library. They can assist members opposite with facts, figures and research. Members opposite have awesome staff in their electorate offices, but, unfortunately, in debates in the chamber, they struggle for real facts and figures.

Several members interjected.

Mr T.J. HEALY: An acknowledgement —

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Southern River, if you could just pause for a moment. Let us try to keep things orderly for *Hansard*. Also, member for Vasse, you might reflect on the advice I gave the member for Kalamunda a little earlier.

A member interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Vasse!

Mr T.J. HEALY: I am happy to take the interjection.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Southern River, I am not entering into a debate about this.

Member for Vasse, after I have given you advice, I do not expect to hear you yelling across the chamber to a minister. If you want to interject, move into your seat. Those are the conventions of this house.

Mr T.J. HEALY: I will wrap up on this point. It is very simple to whinge. There is no need to whinge and criticise our schools. We have so many incredible regional and metropolitan schools, and school leaders. There is no need to criticise the school appointment process. We have a large number of principals. We have an independent process of appointing principals to schools that is governed by the Public Sector Management Act. It is a very simple process that does not involve me or the member for Roe. However, we have an opportunity to talk about how great schools can be and schools can be even greater if we all work together and present a consistent vaccine message.

I acknowledge that within the opposition team there are people like Hon Nick Goiran, who puts out a different message about vaccinations. I am not sure who controls the member for Roe's Facebook page, whether he does or someone else, but one post promoting the importance of vaccination would be an important symbol to the community. The member for Roe might think that people are not watching, but they are. It is important. Maybe Hon Nick Goiran is the member's Facebook page administrator and, if he asks him and he gives permission, the member can share a couple of posts with his school communities that teachers are essential and important; and, whether it is mandatory or not, that vaccination is important to ensure that next year, when we move to the next phase and we are dealing with COVID, it will be an important symbol that we can do together. I pledge to do that.

I would like to refer to a media release from 12 November. In reference to questions the opposition was asking the Premier in question time, the opposition said that instead of answering questions —

... he digressed into a rant about the vaccine mandate.

That is from a National Party media release from 12 November. Media releases and statement like this, and the absence of a strong statement from all members of the Liberal and Nationals opposition, are dangerous. However, this is so easily rectified. Like I said, a number of things could be said. It is very simple to promote vaccination rates. I will finish on this point.

Dr D.J. Honey interjected.

Mr T.J. HEALY: The member for Cottesloe might be interested in this as well. Would we like more teachers in Western Australia? Absolutely; they are brilliant. We would love more teachers to be able to teach in our schools.

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Do we have teacher shortages in terms of the vacancies that are available in schools? We will work that out soon. It is important that schools can do the work now to assess their vacancies. We will keep working nonstop. This government is not lazy or arrogant about these things, like the former government was. We will continue working through term 4, assessing and then meeting through summer to discuss all this. Is there a shortage of teachers? It is interesting. As a result of the former government's actions in 2008–09, there is a bit of a teacher shortage because they are here on the Labor backbench now. We have the member for Hillarys, the member for Collie–Preston and the member for Wanneroo. At the same time, because of the former government's actions, it certainly took me out of the classroom. On that same note, it is probably helpful that the former member for Warren–Blackwood Terry Redman is available to teach now! Thank you very much. Perhaps the former member for Churchlands could be deployed to some schools now that he is not held back by the chamber. A number of people could now take up teaching. The comment I was going to make to the member for Cottesloe is that I understand from a media release I mentioned in *Hansard* in the previous week in Parliament that there is currently a motion to censure Hon Nick Goiran and Hon Peter Collier. One person would perhaps be available if Hon Peter Collier is censured and fired from his role— if he is perhaps happy to resign this week from Parliament, as has been suggested —

Dr D.J. Honey interjected.

Mr T.J. HEALY: The member for Cottesloe can pass on to him that I would be very happy to pay his teacher registration out of my own pocket. I am sure we would love to find a role for him next year, in 2022.

MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [7.27 pm]: I want to make just a few quick comments because I am sure the member for Wanneroo will have some things to say that will no doubt be of a great deal of interest to the chamber because we are aware of her background in teaching.

I believe that the member for Southern River is the lead speaker for the government, and what we heard from him was nothing but disregard for the very important —

A member interjected.

Mr R.S. LOVE: The member for Southern River had 60 minutes, so he is the lead speaker. What we heard from him was a disregard for all the concerns that the opposition has laid out, both in this discussion and in the questions we have been asking over the last week or so on the plan for the transition of our schools when COVID becomes a reality in the community. We want to see a plan that keeps teachers in front of classrooms. We want to see a plan that gives students continuity of education. We want to see a plan that will ensure that our children in the younger cohorts, who are not able to be vaccinated at this stage, are kept as safe as possible with decent ventilation and arrangements for the physical environment in which they work and study. We have had no assurance from the government that any of those matters have been taken in hand. In fact, we know that things like ventilation have been looked at only very recently. We are coming up to the school holidays and Christmas break. We know there are already pressures on industry to provide infrastructure right throughout the state. The likelihood that every classroom is going to be assessed and the ventilation addressed to make sure that classrooms will be as clean and safe as possible for children is very remote. In fact, it is next to zero. The government has left it too late to put in place a plan to ensure that the infrastructure is in place to have a safe workplace for the teachers and for our children to go to school.

We have also been asking what is being done to ensure that a teacher will be put in front of every classroom. Members opposite laugh. They think that is a joke. It is not a joke. The reason that it is not a joke is that the Labor Party has form in this area. During the last Labor government—the Gallop–Carpenter government—it could not put a teacher in front of every classroom. That is one of the reasons that it lost government in 2008. It also could not keep the lights on in Perth, which is pretty essential. I remember Varanus Island and the terrible brownouts that were happening across the state. The very man who is fronting this government was the then Minister for Education and Training. I have an ABC news article reposted on 4 February 2008. I think members will recognise this person: it is the Premier. The article states —

The Minister for Education, Mark McGowan, says the teacher shortage should drop to 50 by next week.

At that stage, New South Wales was not recording how many cases of the virus there were. In Western Australia, the topic was how many teachers short we were in the classrooms. There was no virus and there were no closed borders, but the then government could not keep teachers in the classroom. The Premier, when he was the Minister for Education and Training, could not plan properly to keep teachers in front of the classroom. That is why it lost government in 2008.

Several members interjected.

Mr R.S. LOVE: The Labor Party has learnt nothing about planning to ensure that education is appropriately resourced in this state—nothing. The very man who could not keep teachers in front of the classroom in 2008 is now heading for the same disaster for our kids in 2022 as it did in 2008.

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Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order, members! Minister for Finance and Deputy Leader of the Opposition, I am mainly concerned for Hansard at the moment. They have a very difficult job to do at the best of times and this is not the best of times. If we could keep it a little more orderly with the interjections, I think that would help Hansard do their job.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Thank you, Acting Speaker.

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: If the Minister for Finance continues on like that, I will start calling him to order. Members should know that when I start calling members to order, things can get away from them fairly quickly.

Mr R.S. LOVE: I know for certain that members on the other side do not like facts being served back at them. They like to make up stories about people on this side not supporting vaccination, for instance. I am unsure why those members who spend their time trawling through people's social media, which it appears they do, have not seen that my picture is framed with Roll Up for WA. The member for Central Wheatbelt, as Leader of the Opposition, has put out multiple posts to ensure that people are getting vaccinated, and we have all taken up that message from her. Members who spend their time trawling through social media obviously have too much time on their hands because they are not doing their jobs properly by planning for the future of Western Australia. They have not actually picked up on the fact that we have been pushing for vaccination. Look at the posts the Leader of the Opposition has put out. Look at this article from 2008 with the now Premier, when he was the Minister for Education and Training, announcing that the teacher shortage should drop by 50 in the next week. Wow! That is great progress. The article also states —

Last week, Mr McGowan announced there were 130 vacancies, but when students headed back to the classroom ... the shortage in public schools had dropped ...

In 2008, he could not put teachers in front of the classroom. It is no wonder that we have no confidence in the government's ability to put teachers in front of classrooms in 2022. We heard the member for Roe outline issues about what he said was causing some of the staff shortages. He had discussions with the State School Teachers' Union of WA. A wide range of issues is affecting the government's ability to put teachers in front of classrooms.

We know that the situation with Government Regional Officers' Housing is dire in many communities in regional Western Australia. How can we attract a teacher to a town if they are going to be put in a box that stinks? Some people were asked to go into a place in my electorate that reeked of vomit. In one of the towns that I represent, a young teacher with a child was asked to live in a local hotel—I am not talking about the Ritz but a country pub with a pretty rowdy downstairs bar—for the best part of a year. That teacher lived in one room in a country hotel, which gets pretty rowdy at times, with a young primary school-aged child for a year. During that time, there were empty GROH houses in that town. They just happened to be with a different agency. There is something wrong with a government that cannot put a woman with a child into a place of safety in a town that had empty houses that could have accommodated her. They belonged to the government but they happened to be hypothecated to the nurses or the police—I forget which group—instead of the teachers. That is the type of situation that we see in regional WA from a government that does not care about regional WA. Why do we know that this government does not care about regional WA? We only have to look at what happened in the other place last night. The government silenced the voices of regional WA forever.

Dr A.D. Buti: How?

Mr R.S. LOVE: Because the government denied regional WA a position in the Parliament. The government not only put in a position of one vote, one value—that is one part of the argument—but also took away the idea of any regional members being in that place. There will be no regional boundaries. There will be one state boundary. Models were advanced that could have meant there would still be regional representation so that people knew what was going on in country and remote towns in Western Australia, in places as far flung as Fitzroy Crossing and elsewhere. The people in those areas could have been represented in that place. That will not happen now because over time, more and more people from Perth will come into that place.

Point of Order

Ms S.E. WINTON: I am struggling to find the relevance of electoral reform to this discussion about our state education system.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr D.A.E. Scaife): There is no point of order.

Debate Resumed

Mr R.S. LOVE: Thank you very much.

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I want to hear from a couple of Labor members. I want them to put on record what they think of the situation. I am deeply concerned that no plan is in place to ensure the safety of our students in 2022. I say that as a grandad of four little kids who are too young to be vaccinated. I have a deep concern for their safety. That is a genuine and heartfelt concern. It is so important that this is planned properly and classrooms are safe—that there are proper ventilation systems, proper social hygiene systems and rapid antigen testing to ensure that people have some level of confidence that they do not have a disease before they go to school. These are the types of things the government has to take on board. The government has to start to plan and lay out the plan. All we get at the moment is the view that the Premier has something in the back of his head—some sort of mud map but not a road map. It is a bit of a mud map. Nobody articulates it so that we can look very clearly at the steps that will be taken along the path.

Mr D.T. Punch interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister for Fisheries!

Mr R.S. LOVE: Let me talk; have some respect. We need to ensure that we get to a position whereby we can open up safely. We do not have any confidence in that because the government does not share those things with us. It has not laid out a path for the people of Western Australia so they can have confidence in the future. We will continually call for the government to ensure and guarantee that it can put a teacher in front of every classroom because the man that it has in front of the government failed to do so in 2008. He failed to do that when there was no COVID and the borders were open. He failed then and it is our fear that he will fail again. We are asking him to guarantee that he will not repeat the mistakes he made in the past. We want to ensure that our education system is fully staffed and our education environment is safe. We also want to ensure that we have continuity of education for our children into the future.

MS S.E. WINTON (Wanneroo — Parliamentary Secretary) [7.39 pm]: I, too, rise to make a contribution to the debate on this motion. I do not support this ridiculous motion; in fact, I rise, as I seek to do on every occasion, to support the state education system in WA. What a great system it is.

The Mark McGowan Labor government backs our state education system. We here on this side of the house—I should not say “here on this side” when it is most accurately described as 89.9 per cent of this house—support the Mark McGowan Labor government’s position on and contributions to the state education system. We back public education because we know that a strong public education system is the best way to ensure that our Western Australian children can be the best people they can possibly be. We want to provide them with opportunities.

The last two years have been challenging for all of us. The pandemic has been challenging for a variety of sectors, including the education sector. The pandemic has been no more challenging than in our schools. At the outset, I pay tribute to the extraordinary work and dedication of our teachers, support staff and broader school communities in their extraordinary efforts over the last two years. The efforts of our teachers and school staff throughout the pandemic, whether it has been during lockdowns or as they manage to keep kids in our schools safe, have been quite extraordinary, from teachers at Wanneroo Primary School dressing up in a drive-through situation to give kids their take-home packs when we were in lockdown to the extraordinary and creative work that they managed to do in providing for online learning. One thing that has overwhelmingly occurred throughout this pandemic is that the standing of our teaching profession has increased phenomenally as parents better appreciate the efforts of our teachers and school staff. They are resilient, dedicated, creative and passionate.

This government continues to make record investment in our public schools. We have invested more than \$5.6 billion in the 2021–22 budget—\$5.6 billion—which represents an increase of \$162 million or three per cent from the previous year. We are rebuilding the schools that the Liberal–National government left to fall down. I do not want to acknowledge the contribution of the member for Moore other than to say that when we on this side try to remind members what happened under the previous government—the Liberal–National government that directly preceded us—we are constantly told, “Act in the present”, yet here we have members opposite referring to what happened in 2008. From now on it is fair game for us to revisit what happened under the former Liberal–National government without opposition. Schoolteachers well remember that when Hon Peter Collier was the minister, he cut hundreds and hundreds of teaching staff from our schools. We will not talk about that. I can tell members how he cut the number of level 3 FTEs, which effectively removed more than 100 schoolteachers, but I will refrain from doing so because I think we should be talking about the present. We should be talking about how we have managed the pandemic, what has happened in our schools in the last two years and how we are planning to continue to keep our schools safe and operating in 2022.

The opposition talked about staffing and, of course, for this pandemic, workforce issues are a live issue across many sectors, and the education sector is not immune to that. Worldwide border closures have impacted on the number of teachers coming to WA. That is just a fact, as is the strength of our economy. It has been one of our strengths, but it also creates problems in the sense that we have a low unemployment rate and there are many great employment opportunities, including for teachers, to seek work elsewhere. The department continually monitors the risk of

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a teacher shortage. It is not a new thing that has just happened this year. It is a constant part of the core business that the department does.

I want to briefly touch on safety in our schools. I am very, very happy to talk about it because the safety provisions that have been demonstrated in the last two years in our schools has meant that our schools have stayed open. We had only a handful of days when kids did not go to school. We have had the safest and most productive school sector in Australia and potentially around the world. Contrast that with Victoria where students were at home for over 70 days. Whilst the opposition feigns concern for the education system, I think sometimes it is appropriate in this place to recognise good things when good things happen, and our public education system during this pandemic has fared very, very well. We have kept people safe throughout Western Australia. We have kept our educational system going and we have had continuous educational provision for our students. Compare that with New South Wales. What did it do? It grabbed a bunch of vaccines from regional New South Wales to put into the schools in New South Wales so year 12s could continue with their studies. That has not happened here.

Kids and families in this state have had a fairly normal educational experience over the last two years, and that is not going to change next year, despite the hopes of the opposition for it to come unstuck. I think the opposition wants things to turn bad so that they have something to talk about, rather than supporting the government's objectives to ensure that we continue to live a very, very normal and productive life whether it be in business or whether it be our kids going to school. I think we should really, really applaud that. Our enhanced cleaning regimes of the last two years to the tune of over \$123 million has been phenomenal and have kept our schools safe throughout this whole process. I was speaking to a number of teachers, and I do not think many people appreciate the extent to which schools have planned for potential lockdown scenarios. A huge amount of work on management plans has been done in our schools to keep the provision of education programs for our students going in the scenario of a return to lockdown.

I was talking to the principal of Wanneroo Secondary College. The extent of detail with which the department is managing and supporting schools in relation to risk management is phenomenal. She was telling me about the work that was done in anticipation of a potential lockdown during the Australian tertiary admission rank testing period. She is the one who has the ATAR papers at her school. She has been given full personal protective equipment so she is able to go to the school and access those papers so the kids can sit their exams elsewhere. The detail into which our staff have gone and the amount of energy and effort they have put into being able to continue education within our schools has just been phenomenal. The opposition, I think, could do well to recognise the work that our schools and the department and the Minister for Education and Training have done over the last two years in making sure that the educational provision for our students continues. We have a record over the last two years of making sure that that is our priority and it continues to be our priority to make sure that, as we complete the 2021 education year and go into next year, it will not change.

I quickly want to mention the vaccination program. I think that this motion is opportunistic. I did not hear a motion like this last year or in any other year. The opposition is just trying to conflate mandating vaccinations with teacher shortages. In essence, that is what it is trying to do. It is scaremongering by suggesting that there is a teacher shortage because we are mandating that teachers and school staff get vaccinated and that it is all our fault. That is exactly what the opposition is trying to do. That is wrong and ill-founded because teachers and school staff are dedicated people. They are lining up to get vaccinated.

Dr A.D. Buti: The question that they have not answered is: do they agree with the mandate?

Ms S.E. WINTON: That is right.

Several members interjected.

Ms S.E. WINTON: Sorry.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition and Minister for Finance, the member for Wanneroo has the call.

Ms S.E. WINTON: Through me, people, please!

I want to say something about mandating vaccinations. It is interesting trying to work out what the opposition's view is. I think opposition members mentioned the State School Teachers' Union of WA at least half a dozen times and read from some State School Teachers' Union reports about its concerns about various issues. But they did not mention that the State School Teachers' Union supports mandating vaccinations for teachers. It might have been nice if they had emphasised that point to support the union that supports the government in mandating vaccinations for school staff.

I am confident that school staff will step up and get vaccinated. I do not believe that the teacher supply issue is connected to vaccinations. I believe only a small number of teachers will choose not to be vaccinated and will not be available to teach. To suggest that somehow through mandating vaccinations we will lose a whole bunch of teachers

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and create problems is mischievous and playing to those radical people out in the community. The opposition does not have many supporters, so it will grab anyone it can to put on its database, including the nutters out there.

Several members interjected.

Ms S.E. WINTON: In summary, I re-emphasise what the parliamentary secretary said: this is not a them-and-us proposition. We need people to get vaccinated. That is the way that we will keep Western Australia safe, including our schools, next year. I urge the opposition to come together with schools and the wider community and back mandated vaccinations.

MS J.L. HANNS (Collie–Preston) [7.52 pm]: I rise, just like the member for Wanneroo did, to oppose this farcical notion—in fact, this farcical motion—that the opposition has put to the house this evening. As a teacher and deputy principal for the last 30 years in the state education system, I can tell members—I want to state this so it is on the permanent *Hansard* record—that the state education system has never been in better hands than it has been under the current McGowan Labor government and certainly that from 2017. The member for Southern River went through all the supports the government has provided schools to fix the problems that the opposition created —

Mr V.A. Catania interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for North West Central!

Several members interjected.

Ms J.L. HANNS: I am just going to talk over the top of this.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Just pause for a second, member for Collie–Preston. I think it is totally unacceptable behaviour to have the member for North West Central and the Leader of the House having a conversation —

Ms J.L. HANNS: It is just like being back in the classroom, I must say!

The ACTING SPEAKER: — while the member for Collie–Preston is trying to contribute to a very serious topic. We will get to the end of private members' business in silence, thank you.

Ms J.L. HANNS: In my classroom, I, too, had a system whereby I gave people three warnings and then they were sent to detention. I want to also put that on the record.

I say again that in my 30 years in the classroom and as a deputy principal, the state's school system did not receive the level of support that it has received since 2017. The coincidental factor in all that is the election of a Labor government—the McGowan Labor government.

I want to talk about my role in managing something that we are familiar with—that is, the pandemic. I was deputy principal at the time that the pandemic became known to us within schools. Immediately, the government's support for schools was in evidence. Schools were able to raise issues through their principal about the management of COVID within schools, and I have to say that both the Department of Education and the minister, Hon Sue Ellery, were incredibly responsive to the feedback from schools. Some of the issues raised were actioned very quickly, such as significantly improved funding for cleaning to happen within schools. I used to joke with the cleaner who cleaned the handle of my office door that she would have to put in a claim for RSI fairly shortly, because she was forever cleaning down the high-touch point surfaces. The school's staff did an incredible job managing and supporting the students. Teachers had to move very quickly into a mixed delivery mode. Back on 26 March 2020, when we really launched into what we were going to do to support schools, teachers had to learn very quickly about online learning, or remote learning, because some of the teachers within our schools were not in a position to run online learning classes at that point in time. It just was not really something that we had had to consider. We did not have the need prior to that. In my school, within two weeks, my role as the deputy principal was to set up our school's remote learning system on an education department program called Connect. All the parents could access information about their kids' learning, all the students could access their learning online, and the teachers could learn how to develop online lessons. All the teachers at Collie Senior High School were incredible, but a particular teacher, Miss Thomson, who teaches maths, developed a YouTube channel called "Maths with Miss Thomson". Within that period of time she intensively produced videos online to talk through a lot of the difficult maths concepts for her ATAR maths students to work on from home. Those teachers used online platforms and live lessons with their classrooms to provide feedback. It is something I am very proud of because I know it was not just happening at Collie Senior High School; it was happening at schools right across the state. Support was not only given by parents assisting with those online lessons, but also is filtering down from this government through what is being provided to schools and students.

I think that the government's management of schools meant that students could continue to learn. I would like to reference an article that was published in March 2020 by the ABC. It detailed and documented a lot of the information on how schools would be able to tackle COVID-19 in those early stages. The arrangements were staggered to allow teachers and families to adjust to the process. As I said, we consulted with schools and we looked at rolling out those

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programs. We focused on the year 11 and 12 students, who were, obviously, at the end point of their education; it was critical to keep their education on track, knowing that they were going to be school leavers. The system also meant that protections were given to very vulnerable children. Although parents were requested to keep their children at home if they could, vulnerable children were encouraged to attend school. Children who were in out-of-home care and vulnerable children in communities were looked after and cared for by those teachers while they were not only providing face-to-face learning for the students in their classroom, but also developing learning packages for students who were remote learning from home. It was an incredibly challenging and difficult time, and schools were absolutely supported by this government in that incredible role.

I would like to draw attention to the comments by the member for Moore about how we can keep our young people safe in our schools. Quite rightly, we are looking at the vaccination of people aged 12 years old and above. Our primary school students at the moment fall into the unvaccinated category. I understand that is a concern for parents, and it certainly is a concern for government. I think the best way that we can protect children under the age of 12 is to ensure that all the people who interact with them whilst they are at school are vaccinated. We know that vaccination reduces the risk of transmitting COVID-19 to other people, so if all the school staff—cleaners, gardeners, teachers and education assistants—are vaccinated, we will be doing what we can to protect those children under 12 years of age who cannot yet get vaccinated.

When we talk about mandates within the education system, I do not have a problem with that; nor does the State School Teachers' Union of WA and nor does the vast majority of school staff who work in that system. Based on the current numbers, the school staff profession is sitting at more than 90 per cent vaccinated already. They are either double dosed or will be double dosed by the time school commences in 2022. That is something that many other sectors in our society could learn from.

I would like to also talk about the fact that schools are set to face the pandemic when our community opens up—when the international borders are open, and interstate travel recommences on a large scale. I can tell members that we are leading the way. The WA government is leading the way in making sure that our schools, our school staff, our students and their parents are prepared for what is coming and are protected as much as they possibly can be. This government's track record speaks for itself. We have successfully managed all aspects of COVID, right across the community, in relation to both the economy and, particularly, schools. The processes that have in the past been used by this government and the Department of Education to plan for the commencement of school years will continue to be used to successfully commence school in 2022.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.