

**MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

*Motion*

**HON ALAN CADBY** (North Metropolitan) [2.00 pm]: I wish to acknowledge the presence of Minister Tom Stephens. I have not seen him in the House for a while. I move without notice -

That this House -

- (1) expresses deep concern at the apparent inability of the Minister for Education and Training to recognise the critical issues pertaining to education and training;
- (2) notes the minister's demonstrable failure to plan and act strategically, particularly in those areas of known systemic weaknesses and failures; and
- (3) regrets that the minister has adopted a "never admit, never accept, it's someone else's fault" attitude to his critics with the result that his planning and strategic skills have come under serious question.

I notice Hon Tom Stephens has now left, so obviously I did not hold him here for very long at all.

Hon Graham Giffard: This is urgent parliamentary business. Be clear about that.

Hon ALAN CADBY: I accept that. I am very pleased that the three monkeys on the other side of the House are here today.

Hon Graham Giffard: Who has been coaching you?

Hon Norman Moore: He has been reading the *Hansard* from when you were in opposition.

Hon ALAN CADBY: I am so pleased I have unlimited time.

It gives me no pleasure to move that motion. After working for many years in all areas of education, I am disappointed and somewhat angry that this minister has, as his main focus, a policy of doing nothing except boosting his own popularity with a particular section of the community, which maybe has a left-wing or socialist doctrine. In reality, he has not offered any real vision, has done nothing for students and teachers in the classroom and has blamed everybody else for every problem that is currently in our system. It is time he looked seriously at the educational issues facing our community and came up with strategies to improve the educational environment in our State. The responsibility is his and his alone. The minister should move beyond the use of gimmicks and start making a difference - or, in educational jargon, add value to our education system.

In education, particularly school education, what are some of the major issues? I have written down about 10, and there are many more. I will talk about some of these today. There is the quality of our teachers and their ongoing professional development; the recruitment of teachers in mathematics, science and information technology; the retention of good teachers, particularly in the first five years; and, related to that, career structures for teachers. A large number of teachers will retire in the very near future. I think the average age, depending on where the data comes from, is about 47 or 48 years. There is also the nature of the curriculum and curriculum expertise, which we seem to be losing. It surprised me to hear quite recently that some schools in the north of our State are still using the unit curriculum. There is a problem with our pedagogy. It does not seem to have changed much. I must admit that I could walk into a classroom today and I would notice no difference from the way I taught 31 years ago - except in my own classroom, of course. There are problems with a shortage of male teachers in primary schools. We have issues with the equity of educational facilities and opportunities for non-metropolitan schools. We need to have a community shift towards the valuing of education and the concept of lifelong learning beyond it being just a term that we use as jargon, and we need to make provision for the application of this concept. Of course, we also have boys' education. I will start today by dealing with boys' education.

In October 2002, a report called "Boys: Getting it right" was published. It was concerned with boys' education and basically stated that schools are failing boys. There was considerable evidence that boys are not achieving academically as well as girls. We seem to have this argument around January and February every year after the tertiary entrance examination results are known, but nothing seems to get done. I will read some extracts from "Boys: Getting it right: Report on the inquiry into the education of boys: House of Representatives: Standing Committee on Education and Training". The executive summary refers to school and post-school outcomes and states -

Boys are not achieving as well as girls across a broad spectrum of measures of educational attainment and this is a pattern which is reflected in almost all other OECD countries.

It refers to the key indicators of the failure of boys. There are five of them, which state -

- measures of early literacy achievement, where in 2000, 3.4% fewer Year 3 boys and 4.4% fewer Year 5 boys achieved the national benchmarks than girls;
- school retention, where the retention rate of boys to Year 12 was 11 percentage points lower than retention rate of girls in 2001;

It goes on to deal with the results in subjects at years 10 and 12 and states -

- . . . the gap between boys' and girls' total marks has widened markedly (for example, in NSW the average Tertiary Entrance Score for girls has been up to 19 percentage points higher than for boys);
- admissions to higher education, where approximately 56% of university commencements are females . . .
- other indicators such as suspensions and expulsions which involve many more boys than girls.

It goes on to deal with post-school outcomes and states -

Current indicators of equity in education are usually limited to the labour market outcomes and incomes of young adults. This overlooks the longer term impact of low achievement and the resulting restriction of some males to lower skilled employment.

The report asks: if we have known it for so long, why have we not done something about it? The report further reads -

Resistance to addressing boys' education issues has often argued that rather than gender, the focus should be on "which boys and which girls?"

I agree that we should look at the learning difficulties of girls and boys, but the evidence is clear that boys are achieving a lot lesser results than girls in general. Action is needed. The report then refers to curriculum and pedagogy, which is the science of teaching or how we teach a particular subject. It reads -

Curriculum and pedagogy, although distinct in theory, merge in practice in the classroom. Boys are more likely than girls to respond negatively or overtly to irrelevant curriculum and poor teaching.

. . . Boys tend to respond better to structured activity, clearly defined objectives and instructions, short-term challenging tasks, and visual, logical and analytical approaches to learning. They tend not to respond as well as girls to verbal, linguistic approaches.

The report then outlines that good teachers should have this awareness. I remember a research paper by a guy called Dr Howard Gardiner in which he referred to seven intelligences and the different ways people learn. Teachers should take account of different learning styles within a classroom. Not everybody learns in the same way. Teachers may not be aware of this. If teachers have an average age of 46 or 47 years, many will be unaware of this aspect as it was not part of their teacher training. They need substantial in-service training on learning styles in general, and particularly for boys. The report then refers to assessment as follows -

However, there are indications that because of the changing assessment methods, boys with relatively poor literacy skills are disadvantaged across much of the curriculum. More research is needed on the impact of assessment methods on the educational achievement of boys and girls.

About three years ago, I had some concerns about the applicable mathematics examination for year 12 students. I shared a concern with the head of mathematics at St Hilda's Anglican School for Girls; I was head of maths at Hale School at the time. We found several questions that relied considerably on the reading ability of students. If one were not able to digest what the question was asking, one could not do the mathematics. We were so concerned that we wrote a letter to the Curriculum Council and the examiners, who happened to be women. In reply, all we were told was that our letter was full of grammatical errors.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: That was the response from your Government!

Hon ALAN CADBY: No, it was not.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: It was three years ago.

Hon ALAN CADBY: The Curriculum Council is an independent body. Hang on, dear - get the facts right! The member will have to jump in and make a contribution in a moment.

I was concerned with this response, so I decided that when I became a member of Parliament, I would ring up the Curriculum Council and ask whether any research had been done on gender bias in examinations. The answer was no. Nothing was being done, but something would be done in the future thanks to the letter from me and my colleague from St Hilda's. It is a worry the way testing students depends considerably on their reading skills. We know that boys' reading skills are not as good as girls' aged at 16 or 17, and maybe even at 15. The report states that we have a problem with boys' education.

That has been localised. Ian Lillico is the principal of City Beach Senior High School; I happened to teach with him at Newton Moore Senior High School in the 1970s and early 1980s. He has been accepted as a guru in boys' education in Western Australia. An article in *The West Australian* of Thursday, 28 November 2002 appeared under the heading "Boys to get \$4m boost in schooling". That funding boost was from the Commonwealth, not the State. The article outlines that the real concern is not that boys were doing worse than girls, but were doing worse than boys were performing a generation ago. It reads -

Only 65.6 per cent of WA boys finished Year 12, compared to 77.6 per cent of girls. The gap between the Year 12 results of girls and boys has grown in all States since 1990.

A number of strategies could be used to address this problem, but Ian Lillico stated in the article -

... teachers needed more training in the different ways that boys and girls learnt and how boys responded to discipline. Schools needed to tackle the culture among boys that portrayed learning as weak or nerdy.

In *The Australian* of Tuesday, 5 November 2002, under the heading "How a level playing field became a schoolboy minefield", Angela Shanahan commented on the same parliamentary report. She outlined that if half the population were failing, one would be concerned, but because they are boys there is very little concern. The article reads -

Head of the Australian Education Union, Dennis Fitzgerald is - like most representatives of teachers unions - in denial. "It is part of a worldwide crisis in masculinity," he said last week. This vague, psychosexual crisis theory is gobbledegook pandering to feminist prejudice. Fitzgerald implied that boys are failing because of something innately wrong with them, not with the education system and the teachers who teach in it, which would put the ball firmly in his court.

Dennis Fitzgerald claims that boys have a problem as part of their maturity. In reality, that is not the case - it is a problem with our education system, our teachers and our training and our in-service support. I do not blame the Labor Party for the problems, but it is now in its court and up to the minister, who owns the problem, to respond. He must find a resolution to the problem, or start to do so as he will not cure it in his final two years as Minister of Education and Training.

Hon Derrick Tomlinson: If he lasts that long.

Hon ALAN CADBY: Indeed. *The West Australian* editorial on Wednesday, 23 October read -

The discrepancies between the achievements of the two groups suggest that boys face disadvantages in the way in which schools operate now, though the differences in the rates at which boys and girls develop towards maturity should also be taken into account.

The onus is on people who run school systems to redress the balance.

The person who runs all the schools is Minister Carpenter. *The West Australian* of Tuesday, 22 October, under the heading "Schools fail boys: report" by Ben Ruse, refers to failure and the fact the State Government had not done much. Ben Ruse referred to some recommendations, such as high salaries for teachers and increased spending to reduce class sizes. However, it is possible to serve boys better without increased spending. The article stated -

The report said all students, but especially boys, benefited from having both male and female teachers as role models but this was proving difficult with a big drop in the number of men taking up primary school teaching.

One would think that this is something new. The Scottish Executive Education Department put out a report titled, "Gender and Pupil Performance in Scotland's Schools" in September 2001. It makes fairly good reading and states that -

Lower average attainment by males compared with females has been evident since 1975.

And further to that -

- Studies of gender differences in other countries report similar trends and issues to the literature in Britain.

This says that we have known of this problem since about 1975. One would think that something would be done about it by now. The research literature has identified gender difference in attitudes, confidence, behaviour and classroom interaction. The report goes on to refer to all the factors associated with the problems and makes some recommendations. However, one thing is quite interesting. It stated that -

- Gender differences in performance emerge in the pre-school stages and are evident throughout primary education.

One may wonder why I mention these things. All will become clear when I draw this part of my speech to a close. The report continues -

- There is a need for greater awareness in primary schools of gender differences in performance.

It goes on to say -

- The gender imbalance in the staff profile in primary schools was viewed with concern, because of the lack of male role models available to pupils.

The report then makes conclusions and recommendations. It refers to the factors influencing gender difference and states that they are complex and include -

- teacher-pupil relationships and classroom interactions;
- the interaction of teaching and learning styles;
- curriculum content and assessment methods;
- the promotion of equal opportunities in schools;
- wider school ethos;
- the attitudes and behaviour of peers;
- parents' attitudes towards education, their views on gender roles and their own roles in the family and the workplace;
- . . .
- cultural views of male and female roles represented in the media;
- existing inequalities by gender in the family and workplace, including within schools;

It is clear that there is an acceptance worldwide that something must be done about boys' education. What does our minister say? I will read from his press release of 21 October 2002 titled, "Report into boys education Released." While I read this, members should remember that the problem with boys' education has been around for a long time. It is widely accepted that we need to do something about it and it seems to affect every educational system throughout the world. However, not in Western Australia! The press release states -

"Whilst it will take time to fully review the recommendations, it appears that Western Australia is already ahead of the game," Mr Carpenter said.

We are ahead! We are world leaders! We are doing everything we need to do! It continues -

"The WA Labor Government has already implemented initiatives to address numerous education issues including the education of boys."

If it is so good, I suggest that the minister start a new career and go around solving all the problems in all the countries of the world. If he can do it in fewer than 12 months that will be wonderful. However, let us consider what indicators he has used to determine why we are ahead of the game? In his press release he referred to -

- the launch of the State's biggest ever teacher recruitment campaign to recruit more than 2,300 new teachers in Government schools for the beginning of 2003, with an emphasis on attracting male teachers into primary schools as a major priority;

Has he been successful? Later on I will read out some of the statistics. Let us say that 1 000 male teachers will leave university in three years. Where will they be placed? There are not that many vacancies yet. The minister must think about policies to get male teachers into schools. He should not just train them up but actually get them jobs. It is all very well to have 1 000 male teachers ready to teach; if there are no vacancies they cannot get into the schools. That is an area that the minister must work on. Once again, he does not understand the problem very well. In his press release the minister then referred to a -

- \$28 million *Behaviour Management and Discipline* Strategy to improve behaviour and discipline in Years 8 and 9 in 44 targeted schools . . . To date the strategy has been incredibly successful, . . .

What about the other 700 schools? Do they not count? Boys are not found in just 44 schools but in all the, I think, 760 schools throughout Western Australia. He then refers to a -

- \$27.8 million *Getting It Right* Literacy and Numeracy Strategy. Over 4 years, there will be an extra 200 literacy and numeracy specialists to focus on those students in the early years that need additional help in their reading and writing;

I applaud that strategy. It will help those students in years 1 to 3, but what about those in years 4 to 12? Do they not count? Do we have to wait 10 years for the effect of that strategy to pass through the system? We could do many other things. We could start by training our teachers. In his press release the minister also referred to -

- an extra 347 teachers from the start of 2003 . . .

I applaud that also. However, getting extra teachers is not the solution. Training and professional development must be a large component of any strategy to overcome the problems with boys' education.

There is nothing in the minister's response about the real issues relating to boys' education. Perhaps he does not understand the problem. Perhaps he does not want to upset the radical feminists that seem to congregate in Silver City and the Australian Education Union. Certainly he is doing nothing to tackle the real problems we are facing with boys' education. In the early 1990s I was involved in the "Girls Count" campaign. I am sure some of the members here are young enough to remember that. That campaign pushed girls into the areas of maths and science. An enormous amount of money was spent at a federal and state level on that campaign. Carmen Lawrence and her sisterhood were at the forefront in those days. I applaud her for that campaign because it needed to be done. However, it does not seem that boys get the same support. There does not seem to be an advocate in the Labor Party for boys' education. Certainly, there is considerable discrimination in this area.

How can we solve the problem? I do not have the answer. There at least needs to be considerable professional development of teachers in all aspects of boys' education. Numerous reports worldwide - I have read two - on boys' education say that there is a problem. What is our minister doing about it? The latest I heard was that he had commissioned the writing of a report on the reports on boys' education. His action is to get somebody in Silver City to read all the reports and write a report on boys' education, as if we do not have enough of them! What is he waiting for? He knows it will be expensive. Is he waiting for two years when we come back into government and have to pay for this? He should take action now and not just write a report on reports. Once again, it is a case of there being no problem, which leads to no understanding, no planning, no strategy, no action and, of course, in the best ocker tradition, no worries.

I will speak briefly about the Minister for Education and Training's crash or crash-through policy. Related to boys' education is the minister's dream to raise the school leaving age to 16, then 17 and probably 18. I am not sure of the date by which that is to occur. Is it 2008?

Hon Graham Giffard: I am not sure of the date either.

Hon Derrick Tomlinson: It is 2008.

Hon ALAN CADBY: It seems that when Ministers of Education meet, they wear little badges which say how many students in their State stay at school beyond the compulsory school leaving age. Those badges say such things as, "I'm a 62 per center" or "I'm a 64 per center". That is the reason for this push for the crash or crash-through policy. It is not being done to meet the needs of students. I do not want to harp on this matter because someone else will talk on it, but I will read a letter from Dr Norm Hoffman, the former Assistant Director General of Education. The letter was published in *The West Australian* of 24 February. I know Norm Hoffman quite well.

Hon Derrick Tomlinson: So did Geoffrey Miller.

Hon ALAN CADBY: He was a very good mathematician. His favourite subject was vectors.

Hon George Cash interjected.

Hon ALAN CADBY: That is right. He was a well-respected former head of Carmel Adventist College and a former lecturer at Edith Cowan University in maths education. He is also a trainer of Maths Olympiad students. He has a very good reputation in education circles in Western Australia. What he says actually has some value. His letter states -

THE attitude of Education Minister Alan Carpenter is astounding. He states, categorically, that the Government will proceed to raise the school-leaving age. He also states that legislation must precede the implementation of more relevant courses. His position ignores the following facts:

There is no push from students, parents, teachers or principals to raise the school-leaving age. If the major players don't want it, what right does Alan Carpenter have to foist it on them?

It's ridiculous to keep disaffected students at school. Let them leave, but make it easy for them to return to education when they want to. Forcing these students to stay at school can only lead to disruption in classes and truancy.

Increasing retention to Year 12 is desirable, provided that the students stay on because they want to. It's a disaster if retention is increased by compulsion. Will the Minister accept responsibility for the thousands of disaffected students who will suffer in the years between the legislation coming into force and the subsequent development, if ever, of adequate courses?

It would make much better sense for the Government to develop the courses first, before bringing in legislation.

I agree entirely with that view. I strongly believe that every student has a right to 12 years of education. However, some students around year 10 level have no interest in school. It would be better to let those students get some life experiences outside of school, but to guarantee them, as a right, two or three years of free education after leaving school.

I was in the United Kingdom from 1974 to 1978, which was two years after the introduction of a program to raise the school leaving age. In 1972 the school leaving age was raised from 15 to 16 in the UK. I think that was also done by a Labour Government. The major problem with that policy was that it was forced through without first doing the work - getting the courses or looking at the needs of students - which is what Mr Carpenter is trying to do here. The schools were hell. I was at a school of 2 500 students. A considerable number of 16-year-olds were forced to stay on at school. We did not have the finance, the courses or the expertise to cope with the large number of students who were forced to stay on, not because they wanted to but because of government policy. I am asking the minister to get the courses right before proceeding with this crash or crash-through policy. Of course, to get those courses right, he will need to spend some money. We know that, in reality, education is not immune from budgetary cuts under this Government. The Government may play a few games and take a bit of money from here and there.

Hon Kim Chance: That is just not true.

Hon ALAN CADBY: We do not know that yet. We need to wait for the budget. Is the Leader of the House providing some information on the budget?

Hon Kim Chance: You have seen successive budgets.

Hon ALAN CADBY: In real terms, I do not think the education budget was increased. Was it increased in real terms?

Hon Simon O'Brien: Absolutely not. It did not match the rhetoric.

Hon ALAN CADBY: It did not. The Leader of the House should read it.

Hon Kim Chance: If you take the commitment over the four years of the term, though, I think that commitment is not to reduce spending.

Hon Norman Moore: Not to reduce?

Hon Peter Foss: He is saying that it needs to be increased.

Hon ALAN CADBY: I am saying that it must be increased considerably. According to another article, if the minister were to do this, the recurrent cost for teachers alone would be about \$50 million a year. What about the capital cost of buildings? That was the problem experienced in the UK. They did not have the buildings to cope with the large influx of students. How much will be needed for buildings? Who knows. Does the minister believe that the education ministry would get an extra \$50 million plus a year? I doubt it. I would not mind if the Leader of the House fought for that. I would be very grateful if he did. He could become my hero. If education got more money in real terms, and the Leader of the House said that he had achieved that, he would be my hero.

Hon Kim Chance: They sound like big numbers, but when you look at that in the context of the health budget, where we have added a billion dollars over the four-year term, I do not think that it is impossible.

Hon ALAN CADBY: Okay.

Hon Norman Moore: I hope you don't do it in the same way because you have had no results from that.

Hon Kim Chance: There have been huge results.

Several members interjected.

Hon ALAN CADBY: I will take back this debate, because it is my time!

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Kate Doust): If members wish to make a contribution to the debate, they can wait for their turn.

Hon ALAN CADBY: Thank you, Madam Deputy President. In February this year, the minister ran around saying that it was wonderful as there had been a big increase in the number of students who were training to be teachers. Of course, this was mainly in the primary and early childhood areas, in which there is an oversupply of teachers. However, no change has occurred in the maths-science area, where there is a considerable shortage of teachers. A review of teacher education was published in 2003. It is an interim report, titled "Attracting and Retaining Teachers of Science, Technology and Mathematics". The executive summary states -

In that context, the quality of our schools and, most importantly, our teachers is fundamental. Teaching is a crucial profession that requires talented, knowledgeable, enthusiastic and dedicated people. It is a matter of the utmost social importance that sufficient numbers of such people are attracted to, and retained in, the teaching profession. More than ever, coordinated planning and action by governments, employers, higher education institutions and the profession itself are required to ensure that enough high quality teachers are available to lead and facilitate the best possible learning for all our children.

It continues -

While there are adequate numbers of primary teachers in Australian schools, more needs to be done to ensure that science, technology and mathematics is prioritised in primary schools and that primary teachers are effectively prepared and supported to ensure quality student learning in these areas.

That is a very important statement about primary schools. I have a long-held belief that primary schools are the foundation of a good education system. If we do not get that right, education is the big loser. I have said before that more money must be pumped into primary education. Page 41 of the report states -

Whilst most primary teachers have an excellent understanding of how students learn, they do not, as a general rule, have a good content knowledge of science, technology or mathematics.

That is an interesting statement. I asked the Minister for Education and Training whether it was his view that although most primary school teachers have an excellent understanding of how students learn they do not, as general rule, have a good content knowledge of science, technology and mathematics. The minister replied that he did not agree with that. I wondered why he did not agree. I found that interesting. The report by the Department of Education and Training titled "Submission Number RTTE 102: Review of Teaching and Teacher Education - Strategies to Attract and Retain Teachers of Science Technology and Mathematics - Response to discussion paper", states -

Whilst most primary teachers have an excellent understanding of how students learn, they do not, as a general rule, have a good content knowledge of science, technology or mathematics.

The minister is in dispute with his department. That was stated clearly by his department. Once again, the minister, from his ivory tower, has said that he thinks he knows better. He said that the Department of Education of Western Australia does not know what it is talking about, but that he does. I wonder how many other disputes the minister has with his department. Are we to say that this paper, which was presented by the Western Australian Department of Education, is not the official paper? Did the minister read the submission? It does not appear that he did.

Hon Simon O'Brien: He is an arrogant minister. He is out of step with his department.

Hon ALAN CADBY: I overheard somebody say that the minister is a dill. That is not my quote, and I would not say it here.

I will keep focusing on primary schools. Earlier, I mentioned that primary education is the foundation of a good education system. It has also been identified as one of the problem areas for boys' education. I looked at some school statistics. In Western Australia, 84 government primary schools do not have a male teaching staff member and 33 government primary schools do not have any male teaching staff, including the principal. In other words, 117 primary schools do not have a male teacher. Some 103 government primary schools have one male teaching staff member and 86 government schools have one male teaching staff member, including the principal. Therefore, 306 primary schools have one or no male teachers on their staff. What is the minister doing about this? How will he create positions for males in primary schools? What could he do? The number of primary schoolteachers aged 55 years and older number about 1 200, or eight per cent of the total work force of 13 353 schoolteachers. The number of primary schoolteachers aged 50 years and over number about 2 700, which is about 20 per cent of the total work force. What policies are in place to make it easier for men to become primary school teachers? Could we do what was done in the United Kingdom and offer early retirement to teachers aged 55 and above? That would provide 1 200 places. Could we use those teachers in another way

to create positions for males? We could, but we are not, or if we are, I have not heard about it. This is what the minister should do but he is not doing it.

I rang Edith Cowan University, which teaches the most number of primary education teachers, and asked how many students were enrolled in primary education. At 10 March, 765 first-year students were enrolled in the primary education course. Those figures are derived from the broad field of education; therefore, they may not all be focusing on primary education. I asked the university how many male students were enrolled in the primary education course, and was told that 183 of the students are male. In other words, 24 per cent of first-year university students enrolled in the primary education course at the university are males. If 90 of those males pass the course - there is a big drop-out rate in the first year - will positions be available for them? There will not be unless we create policies to make those positions available in our primary schools.

Often the minister attacks the private schools as a smokescreen. He used that smokescreen during the election campaign and he uses it on a regular basis when he is under pressure from people telling him that he should increase funding to government schools. He says he would love to but, of course, the independent schools get most of the money. Why are independent schools so successful in the eyes of the public? The answer could be because they have more local control, it could be the learning environment, or it could be the co-curricular program. What is the minister trying to do? He is trying to drag independent schools down to the same level of mediocrity as some of the government schools. It is not the teachers. Government schoolteachers are highly -

Hon Graham Giffard: Are you saying that government schools are mediocre?

Hon ALAN CADBY: I did not say that.

Hon Graham Giffard: Yes, you did.

Hon ALAN CADBY: I was about to start talking about government schools.

Hon Graham Giffard interjected.

Hon ALAN CADBY: That is what the member would like me to say.

Hon Graham Giffard: Is that the official opposition line on government schools?

Hon ALAN CADBY: Do not be stupid. I thought the member listened.

Hon Graham Giffard: I did listen.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon George Cash): Order, members! I am trying to listen.

Hon Graham Giffard: The member is running down the government schools.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order, member! Hon Graham Giffard will get his chance to contribute to the debate. In the meantime, I want Hansard to be able to record what Hon Alan Cadby says.

Hon ALAN CADBY: Non-government schools have a high reputation for the way they teach their students and for the tertiary entrance examination results the students achieve. That is not the be-all and end-all of a good education. Why do parents choose to send their children to non-government schools? Is it because non-government schools have better teachers? The answer is no. From where do most non-government schools recruit their teachers?

Hon Derrick Tomlinson: From the University of Western Australia.

Hon ALAN CADBY: UWA students who are employed in the government school system get enticed into the non-government school system. The quality of the teachers is the same. It is more to do with local control and the ability to respond to the needs of students. That is why non-government schools are so popular at the moment.

Hon Graham Giffard: There are lots of reasons.

Hon ALAN CADBY: I said there are lots of reasons. I think that local control is one of the major ones.

Hon Graham Giffard: It relates to discipline.

Hon ALAN CADBY: Is the member saying there is no discipline in government schools?

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon George Cash): Order! Hon Alan Cadby will address his comments to the Chair.

Hon ALAN CADBY: I was simply reacting to his comments in the same way that he reacted to mine, which I am sure you, Mr Deputy President, are aware of. I will now stop doing that.

Minister Carpenter suggests that students who go to these schools are rich. He uses extremes. He may consider a school like St Hilda's Anglican School for Girls to be a very rich school - which, in fact, it is not - and say that



as rich people send their children to that school it does not need any money. Most students in non-government schools attend low-fee Catholic or Anglican schools. They are certainly not rich. Large numbers of state schoolteachers send their children to non-government schools. We could ask why. It seems that the minister is using the private school education system as an excuse for the lack of success by government school students in the tertiary entrance examinations. Of course, as I said earlier, success in the TEE is no measure of the quality of education a student receives. The minister is not telling the truth when he talks about funding for government and non-government schools. I cite some figures to make clear what are the funding arrangements in Western Australia. It is quite difficult to work out the costs, and I am grateful to the Parents and Friends Federation of Western Australia for this information. Government secondary schools receive \$8 640 from the State and about \$660 from the federal Government for each student. On average, it costs about \$9 300 to educate a student in a government school. That is recurrent expenditure, not capital expenditure. The State gives Catholic schools \$2 100 for each student, saving the State Government \$6 540 a student. Catholic schools also receive \$3 880 from the federal Government. In total, Catholic schools receive funding of about \$6 000 for each student and save all levels of government about \$3 300 a student. However, they save the State \$6 540 a student. The State gives independent schools - that is, non-Catholic schools - \$1 554 for each student and the federal Government provides about \$2 000 for each student, a total of \$3 600. In other words, every student who goes to a non-government, non-Catholic school saves the State Government an average of \$7 086. The total saving to government of students going to independent schools is \$5 654. There is a considerable saving for the State Government's coffers if students go to Catholic or independent schools. If that 30 per cent of students decided - as Minister Carpenter wishes because of his doctrine - to turn up at government schools, the system would not cope. The minister needs to accept this and, rather than be critical of non-government schools, praise those parents for their choice to send their children to either Catholic or independent schools.

Hon Paddy Embry: The fees are not even tax deductible.

Hon ALAN CADBY: That is true.

I could talk about lots of other things. I could talk about the way the minister stacked the registration board with union members, but I think I have done that several times.

Hon Robyn McSweeney: Do it again and remind them.

Hon ALAN CADBY: I could talk about how senior staff are leaving the Curriculum Council and how its funding for the trial courses is very misleading. I asked this question in the House not long ago -

How much money has been allocated in 2003 in preparation for the implementation of the 10 new upper school courses?

The answer was \$2 103 500, which is very interesting. My follow-up question was -

How much of the \$2 103 500 allocated in 2003 will be spent on the professional development of teachers?

The answer was \$95 000. It sounds impressive: \$2.5 million for the first-year trial of these new courses. However, according to a table I have - I do not know where I got it from - \$1.5 million of that money is for modifications to and maintenance of the system database.

Hon Barry House: Hasn't the Centre for Excellence in Teaching been scrapped?

Hon ALAN CADBY: Yes, it has. I wonder who scrapped that. That is an interesting point. The College of Teaching has referred to its major role in the professional development of teachers. It wants teachers to excel; yet, the first thing the Government did was cut the Centre for Excellence in Teaching at Fremantle. It is also interesting that in its submission to the review of teaching and teacher education, the College of Teaching referred to the importance of professional development and a closer liaison between the Department of Education and the professional associations. However, not one professional association member is represented on the College of Teaching. I find that idiotic. We would assume that if this College of Teaching is to have a greater involvement in the professional development of teachers, someone from a professional association would be on the board. No-one like that is on the board. Every one of the 11 teachers on the interim board was nominated by the unions. We can see what sort of College of Teaching we will get. I think it will be an arm of the Australian Education Union. I have a great fear that the college has nothing to do with the professional development of teachers and a lot to do with the control of the teaching profession by the union.

I will start to wrap up so that other people can become involved in this debate. I know they are very keen to do so. I finish by suggesting that a major issue facing education today is the curriculum. It is too full. There is not enough time for students to learn and embrace the skills of education and reflect on what they have been exposed to. There is no time for students to be nourished and encouraged. If students have all the decisions made for them by the system, they are not empowered to think critically. Too often a measure of a good school is a

school's TEE scores or the number of students entering university. This does not reflect the true ability of the students or the schools; nor does it reflect the students' capacity and potential for further learning. The TEE score measures only students' ability to perform well under pressure and in an exam situation, a skill that has no relevance outside the academic environment. Thankfully, due to the policies put in place by a Liberal Minister for Education, Hon Colin Barnett, we are moving towards a much broader and more comprehensive measurement of the success of schooling and students' potential for further and full educational learning. We need to examine the content of the curriculum and resulting pedagogy to provide students with opportunities to achieve outcomes as opposed to the force-feed approach we have currently.

Hon Barry House: He was the best Minister for Education this State has had for the past couple of years.

Hon ALAN CADBY: Hon Norman Moore.

Hon Barry House: And Hon Colin Barnett - both of them.

Hon ALAN CADBY: Yes, both of them. I think Hon Norman Moore had some fantastic ideas, but the trouble was that he was 20 years ahead of his time.

Hon Derrick Tomlinson: He was putting them in place.

Hon ALAN CADBY: He certainly was. In discussing the future direction of education, we must examine the content of the school's curriculum, what content is essential and how much of the content is decontextualised; hence, students may never see or use it again. The future of education lies in creating self-reflective and critical-thinking students. The curriculum needs to allow time for students to express their own opinions, create a sense of community, undertake real-life research and critically assess their own methodologies and review and change them if necessary. Education is not about amalgamations, administration, percentages at university or staying on at school, political games, press releases and gimmicks; it is about designing policies that will encourage creativity, independent thought and a relevant curriculum taught by dedicated, respected teachers who have ongoing professional development to induce pedagogical change to meet the students' current and future demands within a community context.

This minister has failed to do so, and I see no light at the end of the tunnel with this media-focused Minister for Education and Training. Our education system is being run by an uninformed ex-journalist who masquerades as the Minister for Education and Training. I think his heart is in the right place, but I am afraid that his brain is disengaged on educational matters. The education system depends more and more on the dedicated, professional teachers who, despite bureaucratic interference and unwise, jerk-kneed, political policy-making decisions, have made our educational system second to none in the world.

**HON GRAHAM GIFFARD** (North Metropolitan - Parliamentary Secretary) [3.02 pm]: I thank Hon Alan Cadby for his contribution and for moving the motion to express deep concern regarding education and training. I note that Hon Alan Carpenter was appointed the Minister for Education and Training in January this year, having picked up the portfolio of training, so I was interested to hear the approach that Hon Alan Cadby intended to take in light of that development. I note that his contribution focused on the minister's performance primarily as the Minister for Education. I am sure on some subsequent occasion we will hear a similar speech from Hon Alan Cadby about what he perceives to be Hon Alan Carpenter's failings in the training portfolio.

Hon Alan Cadby: Give him time and I am sure I will.

Hon GRAHAM GIFFARD: Once the conservatives have discovered training, they can give us a speech about how the Government has got it wrong there, too.

Hon Norman Moore: You will not have to wait long for that if I get a chance to talk about it during private members' time.

Hon GRAHAM GIFFARD: The Leader of the Opposition's mate spoke for over an hour.

Hon Norman Moore: This is private members' time. You are not required to make a long speech.

Hon GRAHAM GIFFARD: And the Leader of the Opposition's mate has just spoken for over an hour.

Hon Norman Moore: In our time.

Hon GRAHAM GIFFARD: I will take this opportunity to respond, so the Leader of the Opposition should have a Bex and a lie down.

Hon Norman Moore: I do not need a Bex and a lie down. Have some respect for the fact that this is private members' time.

Hon GRAHAM GIFFARD: I do have respect for the fact that it is private members' time, and if the Leader of the Opposition stops interjecting, I will get on with my speech.

Hon Norman Moore: Good.

Hon GRAHAM GIFFARD: I thank the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon Derrick Tomlinson: And when you are finished, we will do you over.

Hon GRAHAM GIFFARD: Good on the member.

As I was saying, I was not precisely sure what point Hon Alan Cadby intended to make with his motion, because it was not clear what issues he had in mind when he moved it, so it was difficult to anticipate what he might say. Essentially, I will address the motion itself. I thought that if the motion expressed deep concern about what has happened generally in education and training, it would be an opportunity to tell members about the minister's main progress over the past two years. One of the early initiatives of Hon Alan Carpenter as the Minister for Education when the Labor Party came into government -

Hon Derrick Tomlinson: He sacked the best director general of education.

Hon GRAHAM GIFFARD: He did not sack him; he left.

Hon Derrick Tomlinson: He comprehensively sacked him.

Hon GRAHAM GIFFARD: The member can allege that if he likes. It will take me a long time to make my speech if members keep making interjections along those tangents.

Hon Derrick Tomlinson interjected.

Hon GRAHAM GIFFARD: One of the first things that Hon Alan Carpenter did was commission a review of government education, which was headed by Professor Alan Robson, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor of the University of Western Australia, who is well respected by both sides of Parliament. The review was entitled, "Investing in Government Schools: Putting Children First" and highlighted the need to put the emphasis back into teaching and learning. It is important to note that the report spoke highly of the commitment, dedication and professionalism of educators in the Western Australian education system. In no way can the review be used as a criticism of their dedication. It identified, however, some basic flaws that existed in the Department of Education and its general approach. It identified that the Department of Education's central office structures did not have a strong focus on teaching and learning. The report said that the Department of Education's services and policies lacked cohesion and were confusing to schools. The report said also that many dysfunctions within the department stemmed from structural problems within the central office and cascaded to districts and schools and that although structural change was required, there was a compelling case for urgently reforming the culture of the central office.

The Robson report was well received by the Government and the Government has sought to implement its recommendations. The program of refocusing and restructuring the department as a result of that report includes the appointment of directors of schools and directors of schools and services, and, as I understand it, that is now being implemented. The focus of the department's work remains on students. The ongoing reforms of the department are designed to ensure high-quality service and support to schools, and that will continue to be done in the spirit of the Robson report. That involves consultation with schools and other key stakeholders, strengthening their focus on teaching and learning.

The most significant development in recent times in the education and training portfolio is the amalgamation earlier this year of the Department of Education and the Department of Training. In one important respect, that is in response to recognising the importance of retaining young people to year 12 or its equivalent in our schools. What I mean by that is that, in the Government's view, the education and training systems need to be made more flexible and more relevant to those young people. In our view, education and training go hand in hand. We must have greater flexibility in schools, in technical and further education and, we hope, over time, in universities. That will enable young people to move more easily between those streams.

Hon Alan Cadby: Where is the role of industry in that, because certainly TAFE has a responsibility to industry and to the students themselves to make sure they are trained to take up the jobs. If training is seen just as an extension of education in schools, where is the connection with industry?

Hon GRAHAM GIFFARD: There is a connection to industry in TAFE. For many years TAFE has developed a relationship with industry.

Hon Alan Cadby: What will happen about the connection between TAFE and industry?

Hon GRAHAM GIFFARD: I am not saying that TAFE colleges should be turned into educational institutions; I am saying that we should create the ability for students to move between those sectors much more easily. It depends on whom one talks to. Educationalists in the system now say that the situation with vocational education and training is terrible because they cannot get access to TAFE facilities and the TAFE people are

really rigid. The TAFE people say that it is terrible because the education people are really inflexible and rigid and do not allow kids time to do their VET. It is a problem between those two sectors.

Hon Derrick Tomlinson: It is a funding problem.

Hon GRAHAM GIFFARD: Funding might be a problem. However, one of the problems that I hear about on a regular basis when I talk to people in schools and in TAFE is the rigidity, the inflexibility and the lack of cooperation. One of the intended consequences of the amalgamation is to make sure that those education and training institutions talk to and cooperate with each other to make it easier for students to move between those sectors. That is what I am getting at. However, that does not fundamentally change the nature of what kids will get from the TAFE system; it just makes it easier.

Hon Alan Cadby: Did you consider bringing both departments, as separate entities, under the same minister? If you did consider that, why did you reject it and put them into the same department? You could have the two separate departments under the same minister. That would overcome the discord between the two. You have put the two departments together. Did you ever think about the other way of doing it, and why did you reject that, if you did consider it?

Hon GRAHAM GIFFARD: I am not able to answer that in detail because, as the member knows, the recommendation for the amalgamation was a result of the Costello report, which is a report to Cabinet, and not all of its recommendations have been implemented yet.

Hon Derrick Tomlinson: Did you say the Costello report?

Hon GRAHAM GIFFARD: Yes, the Costello report that was delivered to the Cabinet late last year.

Hon Derrick Tomlinson: So that has been released?

Hon GRAHAM GIFFARD: No. It is a report to Cabinet at this stage, as I understand it, and that recommendation was made to the Government. If and when that report is released, it will contain the arguments in their entirety.

Hon Barry House: That cooperation already existed where it counted.

Hon GRAHAM GIFFARD: There most certainly were examples of cooperation between those sectors. In the two years that we have been in government, and in the three years that I have been a member of Parliament, I have heard many stories about problems - I am still hearing them - with people trying to get training done and trying to get cooperation with schools. It is difficult. It will have to change, it will change and it is being changed. At a government level, we have recognised it as a priority for us, because that will help those kids stay in the system and prevent them dropping out and essentially becoming, economically, burdens on, rather than contributors to, the system.

I was at Central TAFE last week. It was really interesting. The people there gave me a run-down of what they do. Last year they had a program for a number of schoolkids in their catchment area. They defined them basically as kids at risk - I think they were year 10 kids. They had high levels of truancy, and they were kids that they considered to be on the verge of dropping out and doing nothing all day. They would drop out of school, they would not go to TAFE, and they would not have a job. Central TAFE ran some VET programs for those kids last year. They were quite innovative and different programs. The results from those programs have been remarkable, in that virtually all those kids have come back this year. According to the trend and what would have been expected of those kids, a fair proportion of them probably would have been lost, because they were at risk at high levels, and they were starting to drift out of the system. Now that they have come back to TAFE, they are focused and interested and are enjoying their education.

Hon Barry House: Why has Alan Carpenter allowed exactly the same sort of program that operated at Busselton Senior High School to collapse? That is what this motion is all about. That will be my last interjection.

Hon GRAHAM GIFFARD: I do not know the answer to that right now. If the member wants to raise that matter with me -

Hon Barry House: I have raised it.

Hon GRAHAM GIFFARD: I will take it up.

One of the important things to come out of the amalgamation of the departments will be to achieve the transition. As I said, that is really concentrated on 15 to 19-year-olds who would otherwise not be participating in meaningful education, training or, indeed, employment. As an observer, I have attended a few of the reasonably high-level meetings that the departments have had to discuss the amalgamation. I am impressed with the level of optimism and cooperation between the former Departments of Training and Education regarding the amalgamation. I believe it will be a tremendous achievement for the Government.

One of the other priorities that we set on coming into government was to increase the retention rates. For most of the 1990s, student retention rates were dropping. In 1993 they were at 65.1 per cent, and in 1996 they went down to 58.2 per cent. Obviously, they were very disturbing figures, because the retention rates were headed in the wrong direction. Last November the Government was very pleased to announce that the figures showed that students were starting to stay at school. The year 12 apparent student retention rates for government schools reached 62.6 per cent in 2002, which was an increase of 2.5 per cent on 2001. That is obviously a pleasing figure. The Government wants that figure to continue to climb. It was encouraging - I would not say it was pleasing - that the number of Aboriginal students staying at school to complete year 12 reached 25.1 per cent. That is not a pleasing figure, but it is an encouraging figure because it is the highest level for at least 15 years. We are encouraged by that. We obviously need to do more, and we will continue to do more. We do not think it is good enough to have only one in four Aboriginal students or, indeed, only three in five government school students staying on until year 12.

Hon Derrick Tomlinson: In 1975 the Aboriginal retention rate was one in 100.

Hon GRAHAM GIFFARD: It may well have been. In the 1980s, there was a strong and steady climb in those rates. Regrettably, that progress stalled throughout the 1990s, and we are hopeful and optimistic that we will be able to rebuild those figures.

Class sizes was another policy area: we wanted to concentrate on reducing class sizes in years 1 to 3 from 28 children to 24 children per class from term one of 2003. This is part of the Government's strategy to assist children who need extra help. Class size reduction was achieved with the allocation of 350 extra primary teachers to begin in term one 2003. That is the biggest increase in Western Australia's history. The difference between the class size commitment of this Government and that of the previous Government is that it had what was termed an average class-size model across the State to draw about an extra 80 teachers into the system. We funded each school on the basis that each school would be able to resource their school so no class need be larger than 24 students. Therefore, an extra 350 teachers are in the system. That is in stark contrast with the commitment given by the previous Government.

In 2002, the department launched its biggest ever teacher recruitment campaign, recruiting 2 300 teachers into government schools for the beginning of 2003. Interestingly, this resulted in a smooth start to the 2003 school year. On 3 February, only six unfilled vacancies remained. When members think of the number of teacher positions, only six unfilled vacancies is remarkable.

Hon Derrick Tomlinson: How many extra teachers did you create?

Hon GRAHAM GIFFARD: We recruited 2 300 teachers; I do not know how many extra teachers that represents.

Two of the vacant positions at the start of the school year were due to late resignations prior to the teachers commencing work

Hon Bruce Donaldson: Can you tell us where the 2 300 teachers came from?

Hon GRAHAM GIFFARD: Not right now. If the member wants that specific information, he should ask a question on notice, and if I can provide an answer, I will do so.

The smooth school-year start contrasts with the situation under the previous Government. In January 1999, a week or so before the start of the school year, 148 vacancies existed. This year, the figure was 10 at the commencement of the school year.

Hon Alan Cadby spoke about behaviour management and discipline.

Hon Alan Cadby: No, I didn't.

Hon GRAHAM GIFFARD: The member did. A \$28 million program has been implemented for behaviour management and discipline strategies for high schools. Hon Alan Cadby referred in this regard to the approach: "If you can't fix everything, don't fix anything." This program helped children with special needs. It allows for more teachers, smaller classes and specialist programs. Some of the outcomes of the strategy based on the first interim report are pretty impressive. It was launched in August 2001 with \$7 million allocated for each year for four years, and 60 additional full-time teachers were allocated to 35 high school across the State. Additional funding of \$2.5 million was allocated to 30 high schools using a formula based on the index of disadvantage and the population of years 8 and 9 students. The average class size of all schools that received funding was 26 students in 2001, and this was reduced to 23 students in 2002. These are significant and remarkable statistics about the percentage of classes that managed to achieve class sizes of 25 students or fewer in years 8 and 9. Also, 74 per cent of these schools demonstrated improved attendance in 2002, and schools have achieved a reduction in unexplained absences. A 22 per cent reduction has occurred in the overall number of days of

suspension in years 8 and 9 in 2002 compared with 2001. Ten schools have achieved a reduction of 50 per cent or more in their total year 8 and 9 suspensions.

The training provided under the program was rated as excellent or outstanding by 97 per cent of the participants; and 87 per cent expressed interest in continuing intensive training. Some of the comments from the behaviour management strategy feedback were encouraging. I refer to only two. From the Coodanup Community College: "One thing is for certain; we would not have survived without the additional BM&D resources. It's been an absolute godsend for our students." Also: "The BM&D strategy funding is the most important program to be introduced to Kelmscott Senior High School over the past 10 years." They are a strong commendation of a successful program. It was money well spent.

Hon Alan Cadby referred to the numeracy and literacy program.

Hon Alan Cadby: I applauded it.

Hon GRAHAM GIFFARD: Indeed. Two hundred numeracy and literacy experts have been appointed in primary schools, with 50 beginning in 2002. This year, a total of 120 FTEs have been allocated, which equates to 207 teachers in the program for children who need extra help.

Labor's policy of non-compulsory school fees for years 8 to 10 was implemented in 2002. The Government was not prepared to see struggling families taken to court for non-payment of compulsory school fees, which could have happened under the previous Government's policy. At the same time, we increased the financial assistance provided for needy parents from \$185 to \$215 per child in secondary school. In 2003, the Government's "100 good reasons" policy took effect; that is, all students in government secondary schools receive a \$100 subsidy towards their school fees. Every student now has 100 good reasons to stay at school longer.

For students in years 8 to 10, the government payment represents a 42.5 per cent reduction in the maximum school fee currently provided by parents. Since we won government, we have heard dire predictions from the Opposition that the school fees policy would cause chaos in the school system. It has not happened. Of the 156 government schools with years 8 to 10, only two have required additional financial assistance. That very much supports the minister's confidence in the preparedness of parents to contribute. The Labor Party said all along that if the policy and the importance of their voluntary contributions were explained to parents, they would pay. They did. We showed faith in parents, and they have returned that faith in kind.

Hon Derrick Tomlinson: What proportion of the parents didn't pay?

Hon GRAHAM GIFFARD: I do not have the proportion; I am not sure whether schools keep those figures. One of the difficulties in getting accurate figures is that the schools do not keep the figures.

Hon Alan Cadby: You answered a question about that from me about the northern suburbs schools.

Hon GRAHAM GIFFARD: Some schools may keep the information. It may be available on a district basis.

Hon Alan Cadby: It was approximately 40 per cent.

Hon GRAHAM GIFFARD: I remind the Chamber that the member for Mitchell claimed that parents would have rocks in their heads - his expression - if they paid their children's school fees. The evidence is not that parents have rocks in their heads, but that they paid the fee. No evidence suggests that the fees policy had a negative impact on school's bank balances. Let us consider whether schools suffered loss of income. Figures on the bank account details as at 31 December 2001 indicated that almost \$92 million was held in school bank balances. At the same time in the previous year, it was \$79.4 million. There was a 16 per cent increase in the school bank balances, which suggests that the Opposition's dire predictions did not come to pass.

Hon Ray Halligan: It is not a very good argument.

Hon GRAHAM GIFFARD: It is a good argument. We successfully implemented our policy of having voluntary school fees. We changed it from the previous Government's policy of having compulsory school fees. Members opposite predicted there would be chaos. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition encouraged people not to pay the fees and what happened? Only two schools needed a top-up. Despite members opposite encouraging parents not to pay and telling them that they would have rocks in their head if they did, they paid the fees because they understood the importance of it and they valued the system.

Hon Paddy Embry: Are you aware that in country schools, parents now pay a percentage of the schoolteacher's wage to retain him or her?

Hon GRAHAM GIFFARD: No, the member has not raised that matter with me.

Hon Paddy Embry: I am asking if you are aware of it?

Hon GRAHAM GIFFARD: Of course I am not aware of it. What school is the member talking about for goodness sake?

Hon Peter Foss: You seem to think that if you do not know about it, it does not exist.

Hon GRAHAM GIFFARD: Do not be ridiculous.

In addition, the Government has initiated some capital works programs. The smarter schools program for capital upgrades in government primary schools has been provided with \$30 million of funding, the first \$11 million of which is allocated in the 2002-03 budget. An extra \$10 million has been allocated to government schools maintenance as part of the Government's election commitment. A further \$6 million has been allocated to the operation refresh program for secondary schools, which is money found through savings in the Department of Education and Training and reinvested into priority areas. Those are some of the things that the Government has done to improve the quality of education that children receive in government schools and the image and reputation of government schools. It reads as an impressive list.

When I read the wording and heading of this motion, "Expressing Deep Concern Regarding Education and Training", I thought it was probably fitting that someone from the Opposition would move a motion like that. It draws into stark contrast the achievements and the progress that this Government is making, and it highlights what an absolute failure the previous Government was in delivering education and training.

**HON DERRICK TOMLINSON** (East Metropolitan) [3.33 pm]: Before I interrupt the dialogue going on between the parliamentary secretary and other members and speak in support of the motion moved by Hon Alan Cadby, I will challenge one of the propositions made by the parliamentary secretary. He claimed that there was considerable tension between the Department of Training and the Department of Education. My observation is that there was considerable cooperation between TAFE colleges and their local schools. I am not in a position to judge whether there was friction between the Department of Education and TAFE. The parliamentary secretary stated that to his knowledge many schools had difficulty in arranging courses or programs with the TAFE colleges. It was a matter determined by national policy. The member must acknowledge that the Australian National Training Agreement and the national competition policy imposed a requirement on the Department of Training in Western Australia to ensure that TAFE colleges provided programs that were competitive with the private sector and that the private trainers should be entitled to compete with the TAFE sector for their share of the training demand. The consequence of that Australian National Training Agreement and the national competition policy was that TAFE colleges were obliged to recover the cost of program delivery. When government schools sought to have their students enrol in vocational education and training programs at TAFE colleges, or alternatively for the TAFE colleges to mount VET programs for government school students, the TAFE colleges were obliged to do it on a cost-recovery basis. As government schools did not have the financial flexibility to pay the per capita cost of the VET program in an accredited college, those programs could not be mounted. While the parliamentary secretary was hasty in attributing that to a tension between the technical education sector and the school sector, those sectors were both operating under a national training agreement and a national competition policy. I might add in passing that they were both introduced by a previous federal Labor Government, but that is merely a cheap political point that I do not intend to make.

Hon Graham Giffard: I knew you would steer away from the matter. That was not the point I was making.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: However, that point needed to be made. If the parliamentary secretary is going to attack the education system by saying, "We have it better now because we have amalgamated the two systems; before that there was considerable friction between them, and part of that friction was because the TAFE colleges could not mount courses for the secondary schools", he should explore all the facts. This gets to the point of the motion. The motion states -

expresses deep concern at the apparent inability of the Minister for Education and Training to recognise the critical issues pertaining to education and training.

I will focus on the proposition announced by the Minister for Education and Training in about February this year that by 2008 there will be compulsory school attendance to the end of year 12. I will sound a word of caution and, in doing so, I sincerely hope that cabinet members will listen.

On 19 February 2003 in a radio broadcast on 720 AM - the education special - the minister, when asked about the cost of that program and whether his cabinet colleagues supported him, quite properly did not indicate whether there was any cabinet decision on it because it is not his prerogative to reveal what goes on in cabinet. However, he said that the money would have to be found. Regrettably, I do not have a transcript of that broadcast, but if anybody wishes to check the integrity of what I am saying, I have available an audio disk of the 720 AM radio program and members are at liberty to borrow it from me sometime. There is a very real cost to this. The estimate of the cost depends on how one draws the figures. According to Mr Carpenter, 13 000 young people are not served by the education system; that is, 13 000 people would otherwise be in years 11 and 12. If the figure is 13 000 year 11 students in a single year, based on the current per capita cost of educating a student

in a government school - that is, \$10 212 - the total cost would be an additional \$132.756 million. That is a considerable cost. The Leader of the House earlier said that if this figure, which I have calculated as \$132.756 million, were to be compared with the total budget, and certainly with the health budget into which a billion dollars was poured, it would be a relatively small sum. I would love to be present at the cabinet meeting at which Mr Carpenter asks for an extra \$132 million. Of course, that figure assumes that the 13 000 students would all be in year 11. If only half that number were in year 11, the cost would be something like \$61 million for a single year and \$132 million for the two years. If, however, it is 13 000 year 11s in the first year and 13 000 students in both years 11 and 12 in the following year, which would be a total of 26 000 students, the total cost would be \$265.512 million. It is a substantial cost.

However, that investment would be well and truly justified. It is highly desirable that all students be entitled to 12 years of education at the cost of the State. That is a social cost for a private gain. In other words, government pays the cost of education and individuals gain a financial benefit from that education. However, it is a social cost and a private gain that is of significant social and economic value to the community. It is a highly desirable goal to have if not 100 per cent then certainly 90 per cent of students receiving 12 years of education. I avoid saying 100 per cent because at least three per cent of the population are regrettably disabled and will never achieve that level of schooling. To get between 90 per cent and 97 per cent, which again might be desirable, is a difficult task. A realistic goal is 90 per cent.

I will look closely at something the Minister for Education and Training said on the 720 ABC radio program I mentioned earlier. According to the notes I scribbled down from that broadcast, the minister said that far too many of our able young people are encouraged to exit the education system. The figure that the minister gave was 13 000 people. He said about 30 per cent of people who were eligible for years 11 and 12 were not engaged in education at all.

I will ask one of the attendants to distribute a table that I have drawn up. It would be more efficacious for me to distribute the table than to read it out. If members can see it, it will be meaningful to them. In 1972 for the first time the proportion of girls completing 12 years of schooling exceeded the proportion of boys. Until then, the proportion of girls completing 12 years of schooling was considerably less than the proportion of males. This has nothing to do with the educational achievements of those girls. Although there was a long-held theory that boys did better than girls at schooling, an analysis of matriculation results from before 1972, when a smaller proportion of girls completed 12 years of schooling, showed that the achievements of girls exceeded those of boys. There was an assumption that males did better in maths and science subjects and girls did better in the language-based humanities subjects. An analysis of the results demonstrated that in the maths and science subjects, girls achieved equal if not superior results to boys, as well as in the language-based humanities subjects.

Hon Paddy Embry: They are marvellous creatures, aren't they?

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: They are marvellous creatures. I cannot live without one! It was argued that because fewer girls continued schooling to year 12, those who did complete year 12 were a select group, and because they were a select group, one could assume that they would be demonstrably superior in their achievements than the normally distributed number of boys. That does not hold true. We have demonstrated that, as the proportion of girls has grown, the achievement rates have been pretty much the same. Girls are better at schooling.

I distributed this table for two reasons. The first was to demonstrate the trend in apparent retention rates between 1970 and 2002 and the second was to analyse the difference in the apparent retention rates between males and females. Regrettably, the table I was able to put together does not have the total data after 1994, simply because the source that I relied upon ceased to be published after 1994 and I had to rely upon data e-mailed to me from the Department of Education and Training. Although I asked for male and female retention rates, I did not ask for the total retention rates, and because I did not ask for them, I did not get them. The apparent retention rate of females was 18.7 per cent in 1970 and 67.5 per cent in 2002. These apparent retention rates do not take into account part-time students, mature age students, overseas students or students at Canning and Tuart Colleges. If members were to look at another set of retention rates, the figures would not be exactly the same, because that body of students would not be deducted. The apparent retention rate of males exceeded that of females in 1970 in the ratio of 24 per cent to 18.7 per cent. The proportion of females completing 12 years of schooling exceeded the proportion of males for the first time in 1972. Fifty-eight per cent of males and 67.5 per cent of females who entered year 8 in 1997 were still at school in year 12 in 2002. That is a disparity of 10 per cent. Why is that important? Hon Alan Cadby spoke for a considerable time about the challenge of educating boys. That challenge is a problem not solely for Western Australian schools; it is a national and an international problem. The solution to that problem is not to compel attendance at school. Some 42 per cent of males opt out of school after year 10. In other words, they attend while they would be compelled to attend, but thereafter 42 per cent of



males opt out. The solution to the problem is not to compel them to attend. I repeat the words of Dr Nathan Hoffman, who said -

It is ridiculous to keep disaffected students at school. Let them leave, but make it easy for them to return to education when they want to.

Why let them leave? They should be allowed to leave because if disaffected 16 and 17-year-old males - they are not boys; they are young men - are kept in schools, it will be to the detriment of the education system. Keeping them at school against their will is a recipe for the creation of blackboard jungle schools.

Hon Paddy Embry: The Government wants to keep them at school because it improves the unemployment figures.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: I will speak about unemployment because I want to show the apparent relationship between not attending school and unemployment. That is an important factor that must be demonstrated. I will take up the member's interjection now. I referred to the education and training indicators from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, bulletin No 4230 of 2002. I turn to the figures on recent school leavers not in education, which is topic 32 at page 74 of the bulletin. In 2001, 38.6 per cent of students who completed the highest year of schooling - year 12 - gained full-time employment. Of the drop-outs from year 11 or below who were compelled to attend school, 28 per cent gained full-time employment. Some 46.5 per cent of students who completed year 12 were employed part time and 23.2 per cent of students who completed year 11 or below were employed part time. Some 16.3 per cent of students who completed year 12 were unemployed and 28 per cent of students who completed year 11 and below were unemployed. That is an argument for saying that disaffected students should be kept at school so that they do not become unemployed. However, if those disaffected people were kept at school, the consequence, to put it in a phrase, would be to create blackboard jungle schools. That will work to the detriment of not those young people but the students who are trying to engage in schooling, the teachers and the education system. I impress this on cabinet ministers in particular because they will make the decisions. Although it sounds like an attractive way to solve the problem - it is a serious problem that 30 per cent of young people are not being engaged in schooling - the solution is not to compel students to attend school. That would only substitute the educational function of schools with a custodial function. The custodial function of schools can equally be done elsewhere.

If the Government wants to pay \$10 500 per capita for the custody of young men and women, by all means it should do so. However, it should not look for a social or private return on the investment. These young people have already made the decision not to invest their time or the State's money in their education. If the Government decides to invest money in students' compulsory attendance, the students will give the time, but the educational outcome will be the same: they will not engage in schooling. I make that point because it is pertinent to the proposition that the Minister for Education and Training fails to recognise the critical issues pertaining to education.

When, in a radio broadcast on 19 February Liam Bartlett, the interlocutor, asked the minister whether he had thought this decision through - which is a simple question - the minister answered in a single syllable. He said, "Yep". I put it to members that the minister had not thought it through. He just saw that 13 000 young people were not engaged in schooling and decided that the answer was to make them attend school by changing the School Education Act to make attendance compulsory. By all means make attendance compulsory; however, the disaffected students will not engage in schooling. There will not be a change in the educational outcomes. The \$10 500 per capita investment will be a no-return investment. It is a social cost with neither a private nor a social return.

When the minister was justifying his decision on that radio program, he gave international and national comparisons. He said that schooling is compulsory to the age of 16 in the United States of America. No formal certificate of education is provided until students finish year 12. The compulsory age of attendance in England and Scotland is 16 years. In turning to Australia, he pointed out that the compulsory age of attendance in South Australia is 16 years. He said that Queensland was similar to Western Australia, and that the compulsory attendance age there is 16 years. In Tasmania it is also 16 years, and has been since 1948. The compulsory age of attendance in Belgium and Germany is 18 years and it is 16 years in Japan. The minister then said that Western Australia had been asleep at the wheel. To wake us up, he proposes to increase the school-leaving age. He believes that if the school-leaving age is raised to 16, which is the same as that in the other States, and is then progressively raised to 17 and 18 years, the problem should be solved.

Let us consider what the national data tells us. I will concentrate on government schools. The comparison between government and non-government schools is a wasted exercise. It is a meaningless and unfair comparison. I have a high regard for our government schools. Our government school system is equal to or better than most government school systems in the world. I am proud of our government school system.

However, it is not uniformly excellent for a variety of reasons, some of which are geographical. I will compare the retention rates of rural schools with those of metropolitan schools. I refer to the Government's data from volume 3 of the 2002-03 *Budget Statements*. Page 1029 of budget paper No 2 shows that the retention rate for metropolitan students is 66.4 per cent and 47.7 per cent for non-metropolitan students. Not even half of all rural students complete 12 years of schooling. Geography is one of the factors for the disparity amongst our schools. A committee I chaired for Hon Norman Moore demonstrated that the tertiary entrance scores of rural students were consistently 10 points lower than those of metropolitan students. Another factor is the racial factor to which Hon Alan Cadby alluded. The parliamentary secretary responded to that. The retention rates of Aboriginal students are yet another factor. The parliamentary secretary cited the figure of 25 per cent. The Government's 2002-03 budget paper says that the Aboriginal student retention rate in 2001-02 was estimated to be 18 per cent. I do not offer that as a criticism. The apparent retention rate depends entirely on the source of the data and how it is manipulated before it is calculated. Clearly, Aboriginal students in our schools do not have the same excellence of education. Socioeconomic status, the educational achievements of parents and the educational aspirations of parents are other factors. There is not uniform excellence in Western Australian government schools simply because our Western Australian government schools cater for the full range of children in society. They cater for the full range of advantaged students and disadvantaged students. There is not uniform excellence. Despite that, I am proud of our Western Australian government schools, and say that any comparison with the non-government sector is meaningless. It is like trying to compare chalk and cheese; they are two different entities and any comparison is meaningless.

Having said that, I return to the proposition that we are asleep at the wheel and the minister's supposition that if we increase the age of compulsory schooling, we will see a consequential improvement in the retention rate. He referred to other States. The minister said that Tasmania has had compulsory school attendance to age 16 since 1948. I refer to "Schools Australia", Australian Bureau of Statistics bulletin No 4221.0, dated February 2003. The retention rate for all persons in Tasmania is 72.6 per cent. Western Australia, which is asleep at the wheel because it has compulsory school attendance only until the end of the year at which a person turns 15 years, has a retention rate of 73.7 per cent. That is odd, because the minister made the claim that if we increase the school compulsory attendance age, the retention rate will increase as it has in Tasmania. Yet, when we look at the facts we find that the retention rate in Tasmania is 72.6 per cent and in Western Australia it is 73.7 per cent. How does the minister explain that? South Australia has compulsory school attendance to 16 years. Western Australia has a retention rate of 73.7 per cent, and South Australia has a retention rate of 66.7 per cent. The minister's proposition is looking pretty shaky. The Queensland figures at least provide some justification, as it has a retention rate of 81.3 per cent. After the Australian Capital Territory, Queensland has the highest retention rate in Australia. New South Wales, which also has compulsory school attendance to age 16, has a retention rate of 69.9 per cent, compared with 73.3 per cent in Western Australia. The minister has not thought his proposition through. The minister has not demonstrated that he understands the critical issues of planning in Western Australia.

The Minister for Education and Training is firing from the hip, and in doing so he has implicated the Cabinet in a decision to spend an extra \$132 million a year on a custodial function for our schools; the same custodial function we have in our juvenile detention centres. I put to members that the educational program will demonstrate the same characteristics as the juvenile detention program because young people who are not engaged in schooling will be compelled to attend school. Young people who do not want to be in prison are in prison, and they rebel. There is a solution.

Hon Peter Foss: They make it hard for all the others.

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: My word they do. We would see a deterioration in the quality in our schools.

Dr Norm Hoffman, who is a former assistant director general of education in Western Australia, made the point in a letter to the newspaper -

Increasing retention to Year 12 is desirable, provided that students stay on because they want to. . . .

He said also -

Let them leave, but make it easy for them to return to education . . .

I want particularly Australian Labor Party members to think about the most important revolution in Australian schools in the second half of the last century. It was achieved by a federal minister for education, Kim Beazley, who was guided by the Karmel report. I regard Professor Karmel's report as one of the seminal reports of education in Australia. Karmel put this proposition: every child in Australia has a right to 12 years of schooling. The corollary of that is that every Government has an obligation to fund 12 years of schooling for every child. In 1972 the national retention rate was in the order of 30 per cent. Karmel recognised that although it was

desirable to increase that retention rate, people drop out of school for many reasons. He argued that those people who drop out of school at year 10, the end of compulsory schooling - which is at age 15 in Western Australia and 16 in Tasmania - and do not complete years 11 and 12 should retain an educational credit for two years of education. If the Government accepted the proposition that a right to education imposes a social responsibility to fund it, those students would have a right to claim two years credit for education. I suggest that when the Cabinet is discussing this, Hon Kim Chance should put to Hon Alan Carpenter the proposition that instead of investing money in the compulsory attendance of disaffected students, money should be made available as a credit to people who want a second-chance opportunity for education.

Hon Kim Chance: I want to ask you a question. Is what is provided by Tuart and Canning Colleges not a recognition of that?

Hon DERRICK TOMLINSON: Exactly - Tuart and Canning Colleges. There is also Cyril Jackson Senior Campus and North Lake Senior Campus. That is exactly the thing. The retention rate at the community colleges in the Australian Capital Territory is 88.1 per cent. The adult enrolment is quite substantial, because the proposition is that they are cashing in on the two years of credit. That is a far better way to go, because people are engaging in education not because they are compelled to - people cannot be compelled to engage in education; attendance can be compelled but not engagement - but because they can do so voluntarily, at whatever age. In that way, we will get a private and a social return for the social investment.

While we are on initiatives to address that problem, let me talk about one of the reasons that retention rates improved this year. I will use the example of a school in the East Metropolitan Region - Sevenoaks Senior College. Sevenoaks Senior College came out of the process of community consultation addressing the low retention rates at Maddington and Gosnells Senior High Schools. The retention rates were such that it was difficult to justify in economic terms maintaining years 11 and 12 at those schools. It was also difficult to justify it in educational terms, because there was not a sufficient mass of students to enable a breadth of curriculum offering to satisfy the normative demands for schooling in Western Australia. It would have been an easy decision, and certainly a cheap decision, to close years 11 and 12 at those schools. An even cheaper option would have been to close either Maddington Senior High School or Gosnells Senior High School and amalgamate them, as was done in the case of Hollywood and Swanbourne Senior High Schools, not because they had low retention rates, but simply because the demographics caused a decline in the total population. The two schools were amalgamated and an outstanding school at Shenton College was created. It is a different proposition in Gosnells and the different proposition is this: the schools have low socioeconomic status students. They have low educational aspirations. They have low occupational expectations. They have a low willingness to invest in schooling. They have a low capacity to invest in schools.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to sessional orders.

*Sitting suspended from 4.15 to 4.30 pm*