

**ACTS AMENDMENT (HIGHER SCHOOL LEAVING AGE AND RELATED PROVISIONS) BILL
2005**

Second Reading

Resumed from 19 October.

HON BARRY HOUSE (South West) [3.28 pm]: The opposition supports this legislation because it is desirable for 16 and 17-year-olds to be in education and training if not in employment or in some other useful activity. However, the bulk of this debate will centre around the resourcing and the implementation of these measures.

The bill sets out to do three things. First, it seeks to raise the compulsory school leaving age - incidentally, for the first time since 1966 in Western Australia - to 16 from 1 January 2006, and to 17 from 1 January 2008. That part of the bill will not be proclaimed until 2008. In effect, this means that all students currently in year 10 or below must continue in schooling or participate in another accredited activity to year 11. It also means that all students who are currently in year 8 or below must continue in schooling or participate in another accredited activity until year 12. The effect will be that approximately 2 500 extra students will enter year 11 next year.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: It will be 2 200 and something.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: It is slightly fewer than that, is it? A vital part of the legislation is that between 2 200 and 2 500 extra students are, by and large, currently disaffected by the school environment and are not engaging in upper school. This will have some implications for the future. Most of the debate in this chamber will centre upon how the government will handle that.

The second part of this legislation deals with a range of exemptions from and alternatives to full-time schooling. These can best be summarised through a series of single options. Firstly, there is an option for a student to be involved in a full-time higher education course under proposed section 11B(1)(a)(i) or (ii). That would be rare but it is not unheard of. There have been examples of child geniuses going to university when they are 14 or 15 years old.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: I think about 130 year 11 students are sitting their TEE this year. Twelve year 10 students and one year 9 student are sitting at least one tertiary entrance exam. It does happen.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: Another option may be for the students to be involved in a full-time VET program under the Vocational Education and Training Act. That is more likely to involve a number of students. They could be involved in an apprenticeship or a traineeship or in full-time employment, which is subject to approval under proposed section 11G. The other option is to be involved in a full-time course prescribed under proposed section 11B(2) by order of the minister and published in the *Government Gazette*. A few are already involved in that sort of activity at the moment. My understanding is that this is for the most difficult students, disruptive students with major behavioural problems and perhaps those in juvenile detention centres.

The most interesting aspect of this legislation is that it involves a combination of the options, which may include part-time school studies under proposed new section 10(2), a part-time higher education component, a part-time VET program, part-time employment or a part-time course prescribed under proposed section 11B(2) by order of the minister and published in the *Government Gazette*. Duty of care is one of the major issues that will come out of the discussion on this bill and our consideration of those sorts of options.

The legislation will also establish a student record or database on education participation from years 8 to 12. That will be done by the Curriculum Council and will be welcomed by everybody involved. As I said, the opposition supports the legislation because it is desirable to retain 16 and 17-year-olds in a meaningful activity rather than allow them - this is the government's terminology - the option of doing nothing. Such activity would preferably be education or training but could also be employment or some other useful activity. That is why we agree with this initiative.

To get a feeling for the views of other stakeholders in the education industry, I have canvassed quite a few institutions and people involved in education. I wish to share some of their responses with members of the house. They have been universally supportive in principle. A letter from the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Western Australia, Alan Robson, states -

I strongly support raising the school leaving age. I believe young people need the structure of a school to best pursue an apprenticeship, vocational learning or preparation for university. A requirement is that the nature of the later years of school need to change to have the flexibility to permit the development of all students. However, there is clear evidence that health and social outcomes are positively correlated with completing twelve years of schooling.

The Western Australian Council of State School Organisations put together a submission to the government when framing this legislation as a result of a review at its 2004 annual conference. A letter from the president, Robert Fry, states -

The issues raised in the submission surrounded adequate resources, participation and provision of opportunities to enable multiple pathways for young people to engage in combinations of work, school and TAFE training. One of the main concerns of course was the ability of disadvantaged families to fund any extended learning beyond Year 10.

I will go into the detail of some of the provisions later. I am sure other members will also expand on some of the issues surrounding the implementation of this legislation. A letter from Audrey Jackson, the executive director of the Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia, states -

The Association of Independent Schools supports the Government's intention to raise the school leaving age progressively to 17 years of age and to allow students to be engaged in education through a variety of options. The Association's main concern will be that the detail of the Bill, and the subsequent regulations, must ensure that the requirements to comply with the Act for schools, parents and teachers are as simple as possible. In other words, all parties need to understand what their responsibilities are in relation to continuing education for 16 and 17 year olds.

This amendment will require significant data collection and also considerable thought to be given to the tracking of student engagement. It is in this area that the association has the greatest concern.

I am sure the minister will address some of these areas when she responds. Ron Dullard, from the Catholic Education Office of Western Australia, states -

The Catholic Education Office of Western Australia fully supports the threefold intention of this Bill to raise the school leaving age from 15 years of age to 17 years of age, to ensure that there is legislative provision for the broadest possible range of participation options for the young people affected by the raised age and to provide for a database of student records which will ensure that accurate information on young people's participation in education, training and employment is maintained from the eight to twelfth years of the extended compulsory education period.

Professor John Yovich, Vice-Chancellor of Murdoch University, states -

Murdoch University supports the move to raise the school leaving age to 17 by the year 2008.

Murdoch University with Challenger TAFE and Mandurah Senior College is successfully doing innovative work on breaking down the barriers between the sectors by creating a 'net' of connecting courses across the sectors to prevent students dropping out. The City of Rockingham Chair in Education also has an ARC grant in partnership with the Department of Education and Training to consider some of these issues of retention.

I will enlarge later some of the models that are already in place and the others that are being developed that will facilitate these changes. A letter from Mike Keely, the president of the State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia, states -

The Union has a Youth policy which recognises the importance of continuing support for young people through education, training, employment and financial support to ensure they have equitable access to life opportunities particularly those who come from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Although our policy does not envisage raising the age of compulsory attendance the Union has supported in principle the directions taken providing the changes are well resourced and the planning for implementation involves the Union and its members who will play a major role in putting the proposed changes to work.

A letter from Millicent Poole, Vice-Chancellor of Edith Cowan University, states -

The University agrees with the importance of ensuring a highly skilled workforce into the future. It is therefore supportive of the proposed legislative changes to raise the school leaving age.

That is very succinct. A letter from Lance Twomey, Vice-Chancellor of Curtin University of Technology, states -

The University is supportive of any initiative that will encourage education, skill development and job prospects of young people. While it is acknowledged that some young people may not be suited to a Year 12 education, our understanding is that the proposed legislation provides flexibility for students to either attend TAFEWA or to gain employment genuine long-term career prospects.

The University does not view the decision to increase the school leaving age to 17 as having any significant impact upon our business, and we are supportive of the initiative as it complements studies undertaken within Australia by the Australian National University. This study was undertaken by Dr Chris Ryan and Andrew Leigh and compared different school leaving ages across states. The study identified that those bound by laws to stay on at school for an additional year enjoyed earnings that were on average 10 per cent higher - in every year of their working lives.

...

I strongly believe that a longer period of compulsory engagement with education and training will improve the long-term economic prosperity for young people and this must be beneficial for Western Australia.

Broadly, those responses reflect general acceptance in the community of the proposals. I will also read from an e-mail I received from Associate Professor Marnie O'Neill, who is the dean and educational coordinator in the Graduate School of Education at the University of Western Australia. It is interesting that Professor O'Neill has the distinction of having her husband mentioned in the second reading speech of this legislation. Her husband is our past colleague Hon Derrick Tomlinson, who is quoted in the second reading speech as having been very supportive of this legislation. Professor O'Neill has provided me with some very insightful observation on the bill. Her e-mail states -

In principle, the extension of the school leaving age is commendable. There is a lot of research available that documents the costs to the public and private costs of kids dropping out of school. The Dusseldorp Skills Forum has provided two recent reports (2002 and 2004) on this. The 2002 particularly identifies the increased welfare and medical costs of this related to higher dole costs, lower productivity, lower tax base, increased medical costs because these non-completers are less likely to have stable employment, more likely to be involved with drugs, depressions suicide etc.

I think that the issue is more about delivery than anything else. The issues that I mentioned in my submission to the Committee of Inquiry on post compulsory are still those that concern me: -

She has listed a range of these issues. At the outset of the debate, it is worth canvassing these issues because they summarise most of the comments that have been made about this bill. The issues that concern Professor O'Neill lists are -

- * access for country kids, especially where TAFE's are not co-located with Senior high schools,
- * costs of boarding when country hostels are not linked to TAFE
- * access to Structured Workplace learning (all kids, but more a problem for rural), both in availability of places and transport to those places
- * quality of Structured Workplace learning (training programs for providers and supervisors)
- * costs to the employers who provide Structured Workplace learning - occupational health and safety requires qualified supervision in some trades, which ties up a qualified employee supervision a non-productive worker. New Apprenticeship schemes had limited success because of costs to the employer.

That is one factor to keep in mind, and I am sure that the minister will enlighten us on how the government intends to deal with those issues. The e-mail continues -

- * range of options available to kids. Curriculum Council (and the Minister, on page 3 of the Second reading speech) says that there will be a single structure of 50 courses, but then on page 5 says students will be allowed to pursue options involving school-based study with training and structured work placements with non-school providers in off-site arrangements. There are a couple of issues here; obviously not all schools can provide everything, so if kids want to do Marine Science or Aviation studies (currently 8 schools do this), they will have to travel or relocate for those courses; and the issue of quality control of those non-school providers.

Hon Ljiljana Ravlich: You would be aware that, due to grid constraints on timetables in high schools, all students cannot get all their preferred subjects in any school, as it currently stands.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: I am not disagreeing with the minister. I totally agree with the concept of introducing flexibility into upper school education. However, these are some of the issues that must be addressed by the government when this legislation is put into effect. The e-mail continues -

- * The Curriculum Council units were each to have some school assessment and external assessment; that is, examinations. It has now transpired that students will not be required to take the examinations if they do not wish to go to university. That is, they will have a different kind of result reported on their WACE, as will those who do structured workplace learning without an external exam.

There will be some differential in that. Professor O'Neill continues -

... it does take time to fine-tune a major educational change. Some people have countered my concerns by saying "Well, we have that problem now". Educational reform is supposed to be about improvement. While one might accept that it's difficult to get 100% for everyone, so you settle for what can be achieved, it's very often the same groups who continue to be disadvantaged. The education as a public good argument is a bit perilous as well, because it allows a government to spread the costs of a change across the whole community - the costs for Structured Workplace learning are shared by the employers and small businesses, and by parents who may have to provide the transport, or special drivers' licences for country kids; the costs for professional development being borne in part by professional associations, by individual teachers, by Universities asked to give credit in postgraduate programs for mandated PD over which they have no control.

Professor O'Neill sums up by saying -

Improved education and training, improved transition to the workplace, improved life chances for all? Of course it has to be supported, as long as we can be confident that those improvements are assured in the practice as well as the principle.

I have read quite extensively from that document because it summarises how most people view this legislation. We cannot oppose it; in fact, we support it, but all the issues need to be fleshed out. If members read the debate in the other place, I think they will agree that it is probably one of the better debates on legislation. We can put this down to the fact that the minister who proposed the legislation, the former Minister for Education and Training, Hon Alan Carpenter, also had carriage of the legislation during the debate in that house. He worked the legislation up while he was the minister. He was responsible for and personally involved with the public forums, of which there were about 20 around the state and which canvassed the issue extensively. I give him credit for that. He perhaps extended his privilege a little by embellishing the second reading speech in the Legislative Assembly into a bit of an ego trip for himself. In fact, I am pleased that the current Minister for Education and Training changed aspects of that second reading speech when it was introduced into this house. It was one example of second reading speeches between the houses that have not coincided. The second reading speech given in this house was far more appropriate, quite frankly, as it concentrated on what the legislation does and was not a bit of grandstanding by one minister. Nevertheless, the contribution to the debate in the other house is acknowledged.

The debate in the Legislative Assembly included a contribution from the former Minister for Education, Hon Colin Barnett, who acknowledged that he had not focused particularly on post-compulsory education during his time as minister. His focus had been mainly on the primary years of education and the models associated with delivering education, and he deserves significant credit for that. Also, the former shadow Minister for Education, John Day, was a worthy participant in that debate. We are often critical of each other in this place, but we must acknowledge that the issues canvassed during the debate in the other place were extensive and quite well handled. However, they centred around most of the issues that we want to debate. They include agreeing with the principles and objectives of the legislation, but we will be seeking answers from the minister representing the government on how some objectives will be implemented; on the nuances associated with how the system will work in schools, other learning environments and the community; on resourcing aspects associated with all of those issues; and, of course, on enforcement of attendance. Enforcement of attendance will be a very interesting exercise. It is already pretty hard for the communities in many areas to force truants to attend school. Asking people to enforce attendance on 16 and 17-year-old truants may not be an easy exercise.

The legislation is appropriate, as has been seen through the ages. The parents of many members would have left school in the early parts of the twentieth century from the age of 12 and upwards to 14 or 15 years. My father left school at 14 years. He came from the country and had one year at Guildford Grammar School, but then left at the end of what is the equivalent of year 9 now because he had to return home to help with the family farming business. His father died when he was 19 and he became the head of the family. Times have, therefore, changed. Many people with parents from that generation find themselves in that situation. During the 1950s and 1960s the focus tended towards encouraging people to complete the Junior Certificate, if at all possible; that is, the equivalent of completing year 10 these days. However, those objectives are now no longer appropriate in a technological communication age in which the skills required of people are far more important for adapting to a modern community. This applies to all ages, not just to schoolkids. Schoolkids are far more technologically

proficient than many people from different generations. My understanding is that there is a retention rate of about 62 per cent of schoolkids through to the end of year 12.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: It is even higher in year 11.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: Is it?

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: Yes.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: It is at least 62 per cent; therefore, about 30 per cent of the cohort will now remain in the education system. This legislation will place Western Australia in line with the other states of Australia, which have either already legislated or have legislation in the pipeline. There will be, therefore, a national consistency.

I have already mentioned in this place that we are talking about an extra 2 200 to 2 500 students who will continue on to years 11 and 12. Most of the students who currently are not continuing in the school system are disaffected by it and leave because they have not obtained much from it. The success or failure of this legislation may well depend on how the alternatives for students are organised, how they are structured and how they are resourced. In time we will look back and review this legislation and how it has worked. I suspect that by and large the private schools throughout Western Australia and the schools in the wealthier metropolitan areas will take the changes in their stride, as there will not be any major changes to what already occurs in those areas. I suspect that some difficulties will be encountered in other areas, for instance, low-income areas, where people are unable to afford the fees associated with attending school.

Having just sung the praises of the previous Minister for Education and Training, the policy on school fees implemented by him was quite bizarre. He virtually gave people who could afford to pay the fees an option not to pay them. Many of them exercised that option and left many schools, particularly the schools that could least afford it, without the wherewithal to finance many of their activities. The Liberal Party went to the last election with a very innovative policy in that regard. We proposed to abolish school fees and fund them from the consolidated fund, which would have cost about \$15 million per annum. The government elected to take an alternative route and hand out money to parents with, we say, no guarantee that the money would be used specifically for their children's educational purposes. It was a political route, rather than the best-public-policy route.

I guess I speculate a little, but I suggest that most of the problems with this new education system will be in those low-income areas not only because of the fee problem but also because of a lack of motivation for young people to extend their education and training. Sometimes in those areas there is no culture of learning. That will need to be developed. I also suggest that many problems will be encountered in rural and remote areas that are dominated by Aboriginal populations, where participation rates in schools, even at years 8 and 9, are very poor. I know from questions I have asked in this house that the acknowledged truancy rate at the Fitzroy Crossing school is 34 per cent. An interesting model has emerged at Halls Creek that deserves support. The community has asked Centrelink to link benefit payments to school attendance as an incentive for students to attend school, and there has been a marked jump in attendance levels from 60 per cent to 90 per cent. The community uses this approach as an incentive, and good luck to it. It is a very positive way to go, and maybe there is a lesson there for other communities.

Like other members, I will have more to say about how district high schools will operate under these proposed changes. The concerns of the schools will centre around a range of things. Firstly, the programs. Are the programs available for the extra students who will be in the school environment? Secondly, whether they have the teachers with the right skills and attitude to tackle these situations. Thirdly, basic facilities; this applies not only to classrooms but also other forms of learning environments. These environments might involve a workshop, oval or some sort of community-based facility. Schools will require some of the most basic things - for example, a car park. Seventeen-year-olds attending schools in 2008 will have driver's licences.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: You must bear in mind that we are talking about 2 200 students across the whole of the state; we are not talking about hundreds and hundreds of students returning to one school.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: Let us boil it down to one school. One school may have an extra 40 students in this cohort who bowl up in souped-up FJs, or whatever they are driving, and that will cause some concern.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: If you read the legislation, you will know they will be registered at school, but they may spend most of their time at TAFE or on a work site.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: They may do, but they will be organised and accredited from that school environment. The minister can ignore that aspect if she likes, but at some stage it will become an issue. The schools will need resources and personnel to coordinate these flexible alternatives. The minister's second reading speech indicates that 100 mentors will be provided. I suspect that extensive discussion will take place in the committee stage on

exactly what role these mentors will play and how they will go about their business. As a former youth education officer at a high school for five years, I may have a little insight into some of their activities; however, times have changed a lot since I was in that role. The modern school mentor may be totally different from what I envisage.

I wonder whether the parents of all the current year 10s in the system are fully aware that their children will be required to stay on next year to year 11. I do not know whether the community at large is fully aware that this change will actually take place next year. I hope the minister can inform us that a concerted effort is being made in this regard through the schools, particularly in the next couple of weeks. It will have to be made during this period because we are now into the tertiary entrance examination period for year 12s, and students in years 10 and 11 will be leaving school in a couple of weeks. I hope the minister will inform us that all parents of year 10 students will be fully informed that this change will affect them from 1 January next year.

One of the other issues that schools will confront is that workplace placements for vocational education courses are sometimes difficult to organise, particularly in country areas. I already mentioned that I spent some time in a semi-equivalent role as a youth education officer in which I was responsible for work experience placements. One needs the cooperation of the local community in arranging placements for students. It was very effective in Busselton where I was organising this program, and many of the young people involved made permanent associations with a particular employer or a particular career or occupation that benefited them down the track. The program is really effective, but it requires a lot of supervision and liaison. If that will be the mentors' job, they will be required to be mobile and be able to move easily around the community and not just be desk-based at a school.

If these things do not work, a lot of these students will find themselves back at school with absolutely no interest in being back at school. I hope that is not the case because such students will be bored with proceedings and be prone to be disruptive. I suspect there will be behavioural problems, and such behavioural problems with a 16 or 17-year-old student could be difficult to manage in a school environment in which a teacher is responsible for many other students. I am interested to hear from the minister how schools will be resourced and prepared to handle that eventuality.

It is my understanding from reading this legislation that responsibility for the suspension of a student will be shifted away from the principal to the minister. Can the minister verify whether that is the case?

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: Not that I am aware of. This is the first time I have heard of it. It would be totally impracticable. In any event, I suggest that if there is a change, it may be something that is delegated from the Department of Education and Training to the principal. I cannot see any reason why that should have happened.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: That is something for the minister to clarify.

The changes point very much to the models in our education system into the future. Some of these changes have already been developed and are developing very successfully. Models that tend towards cooperation between the education sectors and the community should be considered. Some of these models, which I suspect will play an increasing role in our education system in the future to cater for these changes, will result in greater specialisation in high schools. High schools already offer specialisation in the arts, music, varieties of sport, science and so on. I suspect that in future greater flexibility will allow more schools to offer specialisation. Perhaps the revamping of Perth Modern School will result in a model that focuses on the sciences.

I believe also that the middle and senior school concept will be extended. I must admit that, initially, I was not a great fan of this concept. I had some serious reservations when it was first introduced into parts of Western Australia because of its effect on individual school communities in light of their traditions and a variety of other factors. Although it is easy to see the benefits of the concept at senior college level, it is quite difficult to see the benefits of middle schooling. I think the credit for introducing this concept belongs to Hon Colin Barnett, the last coalition Minister for Education. Where it has been implemented successfully it is working well. One example is the old Hollywood High School. I am not sure what it is called now.

Hon Peter Collier: Shenton College.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: Shenton College is in a reasonably wealthy area and is therefore in direct competition with private schools. It is a successful yardstick for the public education system. I think a similar concept has also proved successful in Mandurah. I have observed the creation of a senior college in conjunction with TAFE at Mandurah, which is a great concept, as is the Halls Head middle school. Concerns were expressed about the effect of that concept on Mandurah High School and Coodanup Community College. However, by and large the concept has been successful. Reservations have been expressed about how it is working in Geraldton. I think it was also adopted in Esperance, although I am not au fait with the outcome of that experiment. The government is moving towards introducing those models in Bunbury and Busselton - areas in the south west with which I am familiar. I am sure they will operate successfully if they are implemented properly. The collocation of a senior

college in Bunbury with the South West College of TAFE is a very sensible and sought after concept. The government must be a bit careful with its intentions in Busselton because at this stage it is proposed that only a middle school be built at Vasse and, ultimately, the senior college will be centred around Busselton Senior High School, preferably in conjunction with a TAFE facility.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: The rate of growth down there is rapid.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: Although it is growing rapidly, in the past couple of years enrolments at Busselton Senior High School have declined from 1 200 to 950. In other words, the rate of enrolments is counter to the growth patterns in the area. New private schools have opened up and there is a marked drift away from public education to private education. The government has an opportunity to provide the right educational model in that area and it must be meticulous in its planning and combine it with a TAFE facility. The TAFE facility was temporarily located at Busselton Senior High School about 10 years ago in demountable buildings. I am inclined to the view that that senior college should be replaced by a TAFE campus, which would best service the region by being located near the new developments around Vasse. The middle school should be located to service the growing suburbs around Busselton and Dunsborough. That would be a better long-term model. However, that is not the model that emerged from the local area planning process, much to the chagrin of the Dunsborough community; nonetheless, I support its implementation and hope it will work. The trend in the future will be towards jointly located campuses. I have already referred to senior colleges combining with TAFE colleges, some of which exist and some that are moving towards that model.

Schools are finding that, although their primary responsibility is education, they are now saddled with a range of other responsibilities created by social issues such as parental attitudes and other community issues. To some extent, schools are buckling under the overload those responsibilities are creating. They are not only placing a burden on facilities but also creating problems with attitudes in schools. We should not forget that for some children their school or the community club, particularly the sports club in which they might be involved, provides the only forum from which they get any discipline or structure. Unfortunately, some students come from very poorly structured home backgrounds and consequently rely on schools and the community to provide some of that structure.

I refer to an outstanding example of jointly located campuses in my backyard in Margaret River initiated by the previous government. It is an educational precinct that came to fruition at the beginning of 2004 and includes the Margaret River Primary School on one side of the road and a kindergarten on the other side of the road. An essential part of the Margaret River High School's activities is its farm school, which is vitally important because it reflects the economic bases of agriculture and viticulture for which that community is best known. In the past year or so a TAFE facility has been developed next door to the high school. A tertiary facility has been developed next door to the TAFE, which consists primarily at this stage of a centre for wine excellence. What more appropriate place is there than Margaret River here in Western Australia for such a centre? It is working extremely well. The centre for wine excellence is on the path towards providing educational opportunities for people involved in the wine industry in a variety of ways. Curtin University delivers its oenology course at the centre and Edith Cowan University has some impact through some of its courses, particularly its hospitality courses on wine and tourism.

Edith Cowan University also runs a surf science course out of its Bunbury campus. This course has been held to ridicule in some sectors of the community; however, I will stick up for it. The first graduates from that surf science course will emerge at the end of this year. Surfing is a large, worldwide industry and activity these days. Curtin University of Technology has developed the course to which I referred earlier, and it uses the Margaret River precinct to deliver part of the course. There are moves afoot within the surfing community, in conjunction with the Department of Sport and Recreation, to flesh out the possibility of establishing a surf institute. That could have an exciting future. I suggest that that is the type of model we will see more of in the future. It is the type of model we will need to see more of in the future if these changes are to work properly. These types of models involve the interaction of students, staff in some cases, and particularly the parents and various sectors of the community. They involve also interaction between other parts of the local community in whatever field they are involved. Light industrial areas are particularly important to many high schools that are already engaged in vocational educational courses. High schools will become increasingly engaged in vocational educational courses in the next few years. The Margaret River centre for wine excellence has become a major attraction to not only locals, who can extend their education in their local community, which is always an admirable goal, but also people from other parts of the state. It is interesting that in some cases the trend of country children being required to move to the metropolitan area to engage in further educational opportunities has been reversed. Some metropolitan children are now moving to the country, which is a very positive development.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: Are you giving me any of the credit for that?

Hon BARRY HOUSE: No. Sorry!

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: That's all right.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: That type of model also attracts people from interstate. It is in its early days yet, but Curtin University of Technology is providing a very worthwhile undergraduate course in viticulture and marketing, which eventually might match that at the University of Adelaide's Waite campus, which is an outstanding example. Another excellent course is run at Wagga Wagga in New South Wales. The ECU model is also attracting international students, who are vitally interested in it and who are lured by the marketability of the Margaret River label. Another model, with which I know the minister is very familiar - her office is just around the corner from it - is run at the Sevenoaks Senior College, which was formerly the Cannington Senior High School. That college also is a product of some of the changes introduced by Hon Colin Barnett when he was the Minister for Education. Recently, I visited the college at the invitation of the principal, Dave Wood. It is funny how time changes people.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: He didn't teach you, did he?

Hon BARRY HOUSE: Do not tell him that! We started university together. In our first year we boarded together at Mosman Park. That is probably all I will tell members about our activities! He is heading a very interesting and relevant organisation at the college, and he is doing an outstanding job. Members cannot help but be impressed by the structure of the building, which has amalgamated a new facility with an old but renovated facility, formerly the Cannington Senior High School. Dave's approach to education at the college is based around flexibility, especially for structured workplace learning. The college has developed many options that reflect that flexibility. It has developed partnerships with industry, TAFE, other education providers and the community in general. Most importantly, the models are tailored to suit the individual needs of the students who attend the college. Some of the students may have left school when they were 13 or 14 years of age and have re-entered the school environment at Sevenoaks to pursue a course of study that has been tailored to better suit their needs. I have canvassed a range of issues that are important to the success or otherwise of this legislation and which point towards the future. The matters I raise now will become more specific during the committee stage. I have not heard an overall figure mentioned for resourcing. It is estimated that \$50 million or more will be required for these changes.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: It is \$187 million actually.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: Is that budgeted for?

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich: Yes.

Hon BARRY HOUSE: That is good. We have been told that another 280 staff will be employed, and that the training mentors will total 100. I have already discussed the facilities relating to schools. It is, of course, vital to provide appropriate courses. Some questions must be answered about the exemptions that can be provided for full-time students who enter a combination of these other courses. What will happen if a student stops training halfway through the year and drops out? Who will track those students? Will they return to a regular school environment? That could cause some difficulties for some people. There also may be some purely logistical problems involved, particularly for schools at which a student may attend for two days but spend another two days at TAFE and another day at a workplace. The schools will have to sort out the logistical problems raised by such arrangements.

Another issue is the duty of care for the students who are involved in those types of arrangements. I know we are not re-inventing the wheel; it is already happening to a large degree. Whose duty of care will it be if a student has an accident at a workplace or between the school and the workplace? How will those matters be addressed? Some clarification is needed on the obligation of parents and employers on notification that a training course has finished and that changes have been made to a training course. Some indication is required about how and where the line is drawn regarding effective employment and what is an effective alternative arrangement. For example, is working for one's parents on the family farm or in the family business an appropriate arrangement? Who will assess that and how will an assessment be conducted into whether that is an appropriate placement? A mother might tell her daughter that she can stay at home and look after mum. Who will make that determination? Students might be placed in morally vulnerable situations.

A major concern of the opposition is how it will be made to work in rural and remote Western Australia, particularly in some Aboriginal communities in which the school participation rate is currently less than 50 per cent. District high schools face a real challenge because of these changes. They will be challenged by the need to offer effective options in years 11 and 12, and to resource those options.

Another issue for parents, of course, is whether parents will lose the isolated children's boarding allowance. This is federal money that is paid to parents in those locations if their child does not attend his or her nearest school option. Many people now use this boarding allowance for their children to attend boarding schools in Perth or regional boarding colleges. That is one major issue that needs to be addressed in this legislation.

Another area of general concern is the effect that the legislation will have on TAFE colleges and how that will evolve. TAFE colleges will need new courses and new resources. In some cases, the TAFE colleges might even lose students. I am not sure how it will work out in total.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to sessional orders.

[Continued on page 6796.]