

Hon Peter Collier; Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich; Hon Barry House; Hon Murray Criddle; Hon Matt Benson-Lidholm

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**Division 50: Education and Training, \$2 994 278 000 -**

Hon Giz Watson, Chairperson.

Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich, Minister for Local Government representing the Minister for Education and Training.

Ms S. O'Neill, Director General.

Mr P. McCaffrey, Deputy Director General, Finance and Administration.

Mr M. Parr, Acting Executive Director, Infrastructure.

Mr K. Newton, Acting Deputy Director General, Schools.

Mr R. Lindsay, Acting Executive Director, Human Resources.

Mr R. Player, Acting Deputy Director General, Training.

Ms C. Cook, Acting Executive Director, Curriculum Standards.

**The CHAIRPERSON:** On behalf of the Legislative Council Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations, I welcome you to today's hearing. This hearing is being held in public, although there is discretion available to the committee to hear evidence in private, either of its own motion or at the request of witnesses. If for some reason you wish to make a confidential statement during today's proceedings, you should request that the evidence be taken in closed session before answering the question.

Government agencies and departments have an important role and duty in assisting Parliament to scrutinise the budget papers on behalf of the people of Western Australia. The committee values that assistance.

For the information of members, these proceedings will be reported by Hansard. The daily *Hansard* will be available tomorrow morning. Hansard will distribute documents for correction, which must be returned on the A4 documents sent to members. The cut-off date for corrections will be indicated on the bottom of each page.

Members are asked to sit towards the front of the chamber on the opposition benches where practicable, so that witnesses will not have to turn their heads to the back of the chamber when answering questions. It will greatly assist Hansard if, when referring to the *Budget Statements* volumes or the consolidated account estimates, members give the page number, item, program, amount and so on in preface to their questions. If supplementary information is to be provided, I ask for your cooperation in ensuring that it is delivered to the committee's clerk within five working days of receipt of the questions. An example of the required Hansard style for the documents has been provided to advisers. The committee reminds agency representatives to respond to questions in a succinct manner and to limit the extent of personal observations.

At this time, I ask each of the witnesses whether they have read, understood and completed the "Information for Witnesses" form.

**The Witnesses:** Yes.

**The CHAIRPERSON:** Do all witnesses fully understand the meaning and effect of the provisions of that document?

**The Witnesses:** Yes.

**The CHAIRPERSON:** The other information I wanted to convey is that some members have supplied questions that we now have answers to. For the Department of Education and Training, Hon Peter Collier and Hon Barbara Scott both asked questions. Those questions are now formally tabled and are therefore publicly available.

With no further ado, I ask if there are members who have questions they would like to ask.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** First of all, I welcome officers from the Department of Education and Training. It is good to have them here. I congratulate Ms O'Neill on her appointment. It is a formidable task, and I am sure she will do it well. I refer to "Major Initiatives For 2007-08" on page 914 of the *Budget Statements*. The first dot point states -

Complete the development of Kindergarten to Year 10 syllabus by the end of 2007.

I refer to the Minister for Education and Training's media statement on 15 June 2007, which states -

Some of Australia's most respected academics in the fields of literacy, numeracy, science and history have been chosen to advise the Government on the development of new syllabuses for students in Kindergarten to Year 10.



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Education and Training Minister Mark McGowan said the National Advisory Panel would meet for the first time in July to review proposed content and provide advice on the working versions.

Further on, the media release states -

The Minister said the panel would meet for the second and final time in November to endorse the final versions of new syllabuses.

Can the minister explain what is plan B if the national advisory panel does not approve the new syllabuses?

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** I thank the member for that question. In respect of syllabus resources and development for K-10, I have to say that when I took over the portfolio, it became very apparent that when Colin Barnett was minister and moved the system to an outcomes-based system, one of the things that he did at the same time was get rid of the curriculum development department within the Department of Education and Training. He did so on account of the fact that he thought the teachers would go off and do their own curriculum work. There is no doubt that they do contribute in the area of curriculum development. However, to have abolished that department prior to the new system being fully implemented may not, in hindsight, have been the way to go. Anyway, it is important to recognise that an increased curriculum capacity has been re-established within the department through the development of syllabuses and practical classroom resources that will provide K-10 teachers with guidance on what content to teach to address the curriculum framework outcomes at each year of schooling. The government certainly places a high priority on reducing the work pressures for teachers. The provision of syllabuses and practical support resources will, of course, reduce the need for teachers to develop curriculum at the school level.

[10.10 am]

I am advised that 4 000 teachers have been consulted. If the panel finds issues, the department will certainly attend to them. There is no doubt that we recognise the importance of having good curriculum material and practical resources for teachers that will support the planning and assessment that is required and provide classroom-ready examples of teachers who have, I guess, not been as strong as historically they had been prior to the abolition of that curriculum branch in the department all those years ago. Four thousand teachers is a fairly good sample in that consultation process. The undertaking by the department that it will be happy to attend to any issues it finds is a good undertaking on their behalf so that we get the absolute best result possible.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Are the 4 000 teachers a broad cross-section of newly graduated, experienced, rural and metropolitan teachers?

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** I will ask the director general to comment; she is an expert in this area.

**Ms S. O'Neill:** With respect to the syllabuses, the 4 000 teachers are a broad cross-section. In addition to that consultation, we have made available the resources on line, so all teachers have been invited to provide feedback to those on line. In addition, each syllabus area will have a panel specific to that area drawn from practitioners across the state. The consultation is heavily drawn from practitioners as they have raised issues and gaps perhaps. We have attended to them, so it is ongoing. We will not wait until the end to do that.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** That is good, but my question has not been answered. The syllabuses were promised to be completed by the end of this year. What will happen in November if the panel says that the syllabuses are inappropriate or inadequate? Will there be a delay?

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** The member is asking me to speculate on something. I am not in the business of speculating. Quite clearly, the department has set a time frame by which those documents will be available. The department will be doing everything in its capacity to meet that time frame. If there are issues and delays, we will cross that bridge when we get to it. Every endeavour will be made by the department to ensure that that timetable is met. I do not think it is very good for the member, as a member of the opposition, to be quietly wishing that perhaps the timetable will not be met so that he can then go out and stir a little pot of trouble somewhere. As someone who aspires to be a minister for education, which clearly he does - I do not have a problem with that - he should be wishing that these timetables will be met because that is in the best interests of the system and the students.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Thank you, minister; it almost sounds as though the minister is back in the classroom. However, she has not answered my question. I want the syllabuses completed by the end of the year, as does every teacher. However, the government must have a plan. We do not want a teacher crisis such as the one that occurred in January this year. What happens in November if the panel says the syllabuses are no good? It is a very simple question that requires a very simple answer. Will the government say that it will delay? If the panel says, yes, there is a tick-off, that will be great. However, what if the panel says no, there are endemic problems with the syllabuses, will it be delayed? It is a simple question. I am not assuming there will be a problem; I do not want there to be a problem.



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**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** I am here in the capacity as an acting minister. What the minister will do, if there is a problem, is an issue best directed to the minister. In my acting capacity in this place, I do not think it would be appropriate for me; indeed, I think it would be most inappropriate for me, to speculate on what the minister would do.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** That is code for the minister does not know. There is no plan.

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** The member might call it whatever he likes. I am giving him a response that I think is appropriate.

**The CHAIRPERSON:** The member might want to put that question on notice if he wants the minister to answer.

*[Supplementary Information No A1.]*

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I refer to page 915 regarding teacher retention and services.

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** Which dot point?

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** It is under the service and appropriation summary. One of the issues regarding the teacher shortage is, of course, remuneration and incentives for teachers, which is how we can retain teachers in the workforce. I am sure blind Freddy would acknowledge that. One of the ways the department has done it in the past has been to provide for a level 3 teacher, which provides in itself the status and the financial remuneration. I asked a question on notice of the minister, and I received an answer on 29 May 2007 that provides the following figures: in 2004-07, of the 227 primary school teachers who applied, 94 received level 3 status; in 2005, 124 applied, 64 received status; and in 2006, 111 applied, 44 received status. Of the 102 secondary teachers who applied in 2004, 59 received level 3 status; 2005, 89 applied, 47 received status; and in 2006, 92 applied and 41 received status. At the moment, a total of 323 primary school teachers and 201 secondary school teachers have level 3 status. My concern with those figures is that it is a very small number of teachers. Where is the incentive? I appreciate that standards for level 3 status must apply; that is not an issue. However, why is it so difficult for a teacher to achieve level 3 status?

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** I thank the member for that question, which is detailed; nonetheless, we have a copy of it. The shortage of skilled workers is not unique to the education sector. In fact, in this very booming economy, which is the envy of not only the nation but also the world, there are shortages across a range of areas. There is no doubt that the government and the department are committed to addressing the skills shortages. One of the things that is complicating the shortage of teachers is the fact that we also have a very ageing demographic. This means that the vacancies created by retirements in the education sector within this booming economy are a challenge for us specifically to meet immediately. It is also something we need to keep in mind for the longer term so that we can better prepare, if we like, for that ageing demographic. The department has immediate mid-term and long-term strategies in place to ameliorate the issues of supply and demand for teachers and lecturers. Some short-term initiatives, agreed by the department and the State School Teachers' Union, are being implemented to alleviate some of the pressures being experienced in the workforce, particularly within rural schools that have been identified as schools at risk. To fill the current vacancies, the department has recruited overseas teachers. As a result of a recent expo held in Great Britain promoting the profession in Western Australia, the department has received 150 expressions of interest, and is currently negotiating employment with them. In relation to the member's very specific question about level 3 teacher status, I will ask the director general whether she can provide some additional information for the honourable member.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Great; we might get a response.

**Ms S. O'Neill:** The level 3 process is a rigorous selection process that involves peers. It is framed around the teacher competency framework the department uses. It is not the only process we use to recognise teachers. Although we use the level 3 process to which the member referred, we also have senior teachers. We recognise teachers in three ways - on merit through the level 3 process, on experience through the gradation of the salary scale, and the remote teaching service and the difficult-to-staff schools. So there are a number of ways we go about it. It is rigorous and it is capped at this stage.

[10.20 am]

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I appreciate that. Is there any intent on the part of the department to allocate more level 3 teacher positions?

**Ms S. O'Neill:** We will continue to look at it as part of the package. Obviously in response to the Gerard Daniels report, which points to attraction and retention, we will need to look at ways to recognise the work that teachers are currently doing. We have a range of ways to do that in revising the workload. The minister has already made some announcements about revision of workload, curriculum etc. With respect to the broad



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number of level 3s, we will look at whether that is part of the strategy we want to use. We are looking at all those strategies now.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I hope so, because 323 out of about 12 000 primary and 201 out of 8 000 secondary teachers is not a good number.

**Ms S. O'Neill:** It is a high standard.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I am well aware of the standards. However, it does not give much incentive to teachers. I get a lot of feedback on that.

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** We are very keen to minimise any risk of not having all classrooms staffed. To that end, and to ensure that we meet the future needs of the education sector, the government has established a task force to review supply and demand issues of the Western Australian education workforce. The task force will develop a framework that will enable WA to meet the future need for the workforce, and that report will be completed in December 2007. I know that the member follows education trends very closely. I do not want him to think that the department does nothing about these issues. The department does do something about these issues. One thing it has done, among many, is provide differences in wage incentives to ensure that all schools are covered, irrespective of where they are located, so that there is parity and consistency to the extent that is possible. That will lead to uniformity in the supply of labour in the education system across the state.

**The CHAIRPERSON:** I will give Hon Peter Collier the call but, before I do, I ask members to indicate if they have questions.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** My question is on the same issue.

**The CHAIRPERSON:** That is fine. I want to get an idea of who wishes to ask questions.

**Hon BARRY HOUSE:** The opposition will ask questions through its education spokesman.

**The CHAIRPERSON:** I understand that Hon Murray Criddle has some questions to ask. I am just flagging that.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I can assure members that I do not want to hog the entire session. I presume the report was the Twomey task force.

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** We were referring to the Gerard Daniels report.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** The minister said that a report would be handed down in December.

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** Yes, that is the one.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I have met with Professor Twomey and we had a fruitful discussion. As the minister mentioned, his report will not be handed down until the end of the year. That will be far too late to enable the strategies in that report to be implemented in 2008. What is the department doing to overcome the inevitable shortfall of teachers in 2008?

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** Professor Twomey will focus on the long-term projections and will deal with strategies. The department has a number of strategies in place. I defer to the director general.

**Ms S. O'Neill:** We had a very immediate package for 11 schools that were experiencing particular difficulty and we have since extended that to more schools. At the end of last year and this year we have had a number of national and international recruitment campaigns. There have been more than 150 expressions of interests from the United Kingdom, and there have also been some from interstate. In addition to that, we are negotiating a much earlier time frame for university graduates. We are visiting the universities earlier this year than we have in other years.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** When will that be?

**Ms S. O'Neill:** I understand that we are in universities this week. We are already making early offers to graduates. We are also giving schools additional timetabling assistance so that they can look at their timetable to ensure that they are maximising the set of resources available to them. We are looking through the Western Australian College of Teaching for registered teachers who are no longer teaching to see whether we can attract those people back into the workforce. We are also reviewing our scholarships and remote teaching service and difficult-to-staff packages. These are some of the undertakings we have implemented. Clearly, the Gerard Daniels report talked about reviewing our staffing models and structures. We have already undertaken some changes to our structure through staffing. At the moment we are looking at the staffing models. We need to give consideration, for example, to local selection, transfer and the like.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Will graduating teachers be offered positions earlier?



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**Ms S. O'Neill:** Yes, that is the intention.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** The department is visiting the universities now, but how early will graduating teachers be offered positions?

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** I will ask Rob Lindsay to provide additional information.

**Mr R. Lindsay:** We have called for expressions of interest in areas of need; that is, in rural locations. There is also a metropolitan option for graduates seeking employment with DET. They will make their nominations within the next couple of weeks; in fact, by 6 July. We will then confer with the State School Teachers' Union on the impact immediate appointments will have on those country teachers who have a right of return, and then we will make firm offers to those graduates. I expect that to happen during August and early September.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Therefore, some new graduates will be offered positions in August this year?

**Mr R. Lindsay:** August or early September, yes.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Does the department have any forward estimates for the potential teacher shortage for next year?

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** I have not seen any information in my notes on that matter.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** This year, a week before the start of the school year, we found out that we were 264 teachers short.

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** I will ask Mr Rob Lindsay to answer that question. I understand the model has been done and the forecasting is being undertaken, but there is no certainty of the numbers.

**Mr R. Lindsay:** I cannot add any more to that comment. The Gerard Daniels report and its release indicated that there were deficiencies in planning and modelling within the department. In the process of addressing that and looking at the projections for next year, that work is being undertaken.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** The department should have an idea of the number of resignations and retirements by term 3, and that is coming up.

**Mr R. Lindsay:** I hope to have that information very soon.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I would like to think that by the end of term 3 the department will have a rough idea. We can never anticipate those who will resign in term 4 or beyond. I thought that the department would have an idea by the end of the academic year to enable it to determine the number of teachers that will be needed next year.

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** The member obviously thinks that the department can create a model that has a 100 per cent certainty.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I said an estimate.

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** The decision by individuals to resign and retire can take place at any time.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** That is what I said.

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** They could have every intention of not retiring, but because of an adverse event in the family they might retire over holidays. Many, many circumstances come into play. It needs to be recognised that it is not an exact science. Even when the modelling is done, I do not think it would be appropriate for people to jump up and down and say that it is terrible if there is a variation in the projections. That is the nature of this area of work.

[10.30 am]

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** The minister was obviously not engaged in my last comments, because that is exactly what I said. I am aware that there will be issues and that some teachers will resign at the last minute and that there will be some whom the department will have no idea about. All I am saying is that the department must have some understanding of those teachers who are going to resign or retire. I would like to think that it would have a fairly rough idea by the beginning of term 4. That was all I was asking.

**Hon MURRAY CRIDDLE:** I will touch on an issue concerning Geraldton Senior College and the teaching of English in year 10. This issue was brought to me by a parent. I have provided some information to the minister across the chamber that indicates the problem that a mother brought to me. Her comment was that the level of work her child was being taught simply amounted to dumbing down this year 10 student, who is trying to go through the process to get into university. I understand that the work that I have provided to the minister is at about level 1 and that the level for year 10 is level 4. The student is not a dumb person. The mother said that the level of work is dumbing down her child. I would like the minister to make sure that the quality and standard of



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education provided at year 10 will enable people to go through the process and have an opportunity to go to university. Perhaps the minister could also outline the likelihood of getting teachers to teach children in classrooms at Geraldton Senior College rather than through Schools of Isolated and Distance Education.

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** I thank the honourable member. Given the specific nature of this question and that we are dealing with a specific piece of work, which we have before us, I will ask the director general to make some comments before passing on the question to Ms Christine Cook, who is the acting executive director of curriculum.

**Ms S. O'Neill:** Rather than talking about the individual whose work the member has provided, we will talk about the standards of year 10 overall at Geraldton Senior College. Clearly, some students in year 10 continue to struggle with their literacy and numeracy. That is the reality. Without making specific comments about this work, there would be some questions about the level that this student is ascertaining. In secondary schools, Getting it Right specialist teachers work specifically with teachers who have students who are not performing to the level to which they would aspire. We have Getting it Right, or literacy and numeracy, support in secondary schools. Alongside that we have learning support coordinators. An allocation will be provided across most schools by next year to provide individual support to teachers who have students who continue to struggle with their performance or the standard of their work. In general terms, there is support in schools to assist students and their teachers when students' performance is not up to scratch or they are struggling with their work.

On the second question, some schools are using SIDE. The number of schools using SIDE has increased because of the teacher shortage. SIDE provides a high-quality program. In fact, it is nationally renowned for the kind of work that it provides. I do not think that there is any question that students who are studying at least part of their load through SIDE - it is usually a subject rather than their total load - are well serviced. That would be fair to say. A number of schools are making use of subject-specific teachers through SIDE to support them. SIDE is also providing a considerable amount of support to schools that are having to use more relief teachers than normal to support teachers in that case.

**Hon MURRAY CRIDDLE:** The point I am making is that this student is way above that level, yet she is being taught at a level way below that at which she expects to be taught so that she can go on to university. She should be taught at a level way above that. How students can get into year 10 on level 1 when they should be on level 4 is way beyond me. They should be able to have the opportunity to make the next transition. If that is the level at which they are being taught in year 10, they will never make university. Kids in the country face enough hurdles anyway. Members have probably gathered from my attitude that I am parochial when it comes to country students. Some outstanding students have come from this area. I do not want the standard to be reduced, which would mean that we would not have the opportunity to push more students through to university. There is a new university campus up there, so we need to be able to utilise it.

**Ms S. O'Neill:** I certainly support the comment about standards. If the member's question goes to the heart of an individual student and her particular circumstances, we are happy to follow up this individual if there is a belief that the student is not being challenged to the level that the member has described.

**Hon MURRAY CRIDDLE:** That was the problem when the parent took up this matter with the school. She has been moved to another class. The problem I have is that I have been told that there are other students in that same class who need to be challenged, as the director general put it, to carry on and become far better students. There is a huge difference between level 1 and level 4 in education.

**Ms S. O'Neill:** If that is particular to a class or an area at that school, I am happy to be provided with details to follow up.

**Hon MATT BENSON-LIDHOLM:** For some years, I have taken a keen interest in the establishment of the Mt Barker Community College, a K-12 and technical and further education project being developed on the current Mt Barker Senior High School site. At the commencement of 2008, the college will officially take shape with the year 4 to 7 Mt Barker Primary School students moving permanently to that site. However, the K-3 cohort will stay put, with cost blowouts forcing a delay, I am told, of at least three or four years in the completion of the project. As the minister will appreciate, local educators and community members are concerned that the Mt Barker Community College may not eventuate for many years, particularly given that no funding has been set aside in the forward estimates. Firstly, can the minister confirm that the government's commitment to finalising the community college project still stands? Secondly, with the Mt Barker Primary School site occupying some 10 hectares of quality residential land, is it possible that funds received from a future land sale could be used to complete the community college project?

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** I thank the member for that question. I am advised that there is nothing in the forward estimates for the second stage of the project. However, I know that Mr Mal Parr, who is the acting executive director of infrastructure, keeps a very close eye on all projects. The member can imagine what sort of



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job that is, given the number of existing schools and those proposed to be added to the education infrastructure. I ask Mr Mal Parr to make some general comments. What I do know is that there is no money in the forward estimates for stage 2 at this stage, but that is not to suggest that there may not be in the longer term. However, that decision has clearly not been made; it has not gone through the seed process and there is no formal approval for that.

**Mr M. Parr:** The department remains committed to the One Community - One College concept. As has been indicated, funding is not available at the moment. On the member's second question, a preliminary valuation has been done of the existing primary school site. I do not have the precise figure with me, but it is not an extraordinarily high number. However, it would certainly represent an opportunity to contribute to the source of funds that might be required for the second stage of development at the high school site.

[10.40 am]

**Hon MATT BENSON-LIDHOLM:** I refer to the 10 hectares of quality residential land because there is a proposal to develop a 700-lot subdivision on land on the northern outskirts of the town immediately opposite the site in question; that is, the senior high school site. Although many people are moving to the great southern, they cannot necessarily afford to live in Albany or Denmark, so places like Mount Barker are becoming more attractive. I dare say that that 700-lot site will be taken up fairly quickly. The site of the current primary school would no doubt appeal to developers. I would have thought that, given the price of land in towns like Mount Barker and other inland towns, residential lots cost about \$100 000. Therefore, 10 hectares in Mount Barker could be very valuable. I would like to follow up the issue of a possible valuation.

**The CHAIRPERSON:** Would the member like to put that on notice or would he like to follow up that issue informally?

**Hon MATT BENSON-LIDHOLM:** I certainly would not mind that information being conveyed at a future date.

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** Perhaps Hon Matt Benson-Lidholm can meet with Mr Parr to discuss this matter. Mr Parr can provide the information as it currently stands and in any expanded form, if indeed it exists.

**Hon MATT BENSON-LIDHOLM:** That is fine.

**Hon BARBARA SCOTT:** My questions relate to early childhood programs. I refer to the first dot point under "Major Initiatives For 2007-08" on page 914 of the *Budget Statements*. I want to expand on the issue of developing a syllabus for early childhood years. I am not sure whether any advisors present have any early childhood expertise. Who in the department with early childhood knowledge and experience was involved in developing the kindergarten and pre-primary syllabus? What is their early childhood experience and training? Will parents of kindergarten children be consulted throughout the year prior to the finalisation of the syllabus? Will parent peak bodies, such as community kindergarten associations, be consulted? Kindergarten and pre-primary years are non-compulsory years of education, so we must ensure that the programs are appropriate. Who in the department is responsible for the delivery of the kindergarten and pre-primary programs given that there is no early childhood director? Is that person trained in early childhood experience? Given the expanding knowledge on brain development and an increased understanding of the importance of learning through play, can the minister and the department provide an assurance that the importance of play and an indoor-outdoor program will be provided - and maintained - in the syllabus for the early years? For that to occur, there must be separate playgrounds for those years and children in the upper school programs should not be restricted from playing when the bell rings at 10.30 am. Learning through play is a critical area. Many issues emanate as a result of the frustration that small children feel when they are placed in care that is too formal. That is extremely important. Will parents be given an opportunity to provide input into the development of the syllabus? If so, at what stage will that occur? Will that be recorded in the development of the programs?

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** That is one very long question, which comprises many components. I know that the issues raised by Hon Barbara Scott are important. Hon Barbara Scott has been passionate about the importance of play to children. In particular, she has been passionate about the opportunities that will prepare young children for learning so that they can maximise the benefits of their schooling. Certainly, Western Australia has led the nation. For example, all eligible Western Australian children have a place in a kindergarten, which they attend two years prior to compulsory schooling, at a school as near as possible to their home. The department has also recognised the importance of early childhood development. It established an early childhood education directorate in 2005 following a restructure of the curriculum directorate. I do not think the member was aware of that.

**Hon BARBARA SCOTT:** After a bit of pressure from us.



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**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** This is a good thing. The department is cognisant, as it should be, of the importance of ensuring that young children are given opportunities so that they can start their formal education having had the experiences and support they require.

In relation to the specific questions asked by Hon Barbara Scott, they were interlocked with comments. I will ask Chris Cook to answer those distinct questions.

**Hon BARBARA SCOTT:** Shall I simplify the questions for her?

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** That would be helpful.

**Hon BARBARA SCOTT:** Who with early childhood experience developed the programs? Will parents be involved and will the importance of play be taken into consideration?

**Ms C. Cook:** I have some notes about those elements. In relation to the directorate that has been set up, there is an advisory group, which comprises the major stakeholders in early childhood education. That includes the early childhood education associations.

**Hon BARBARA SCOTT:** Parent associations?

**Ms C. Cook:** Not necessarily parent associations, but certainly teacher associations. The director will consult with parent associations per se let alone in the development of curriculum materials. Peak bodies will be consulted.

**Hon BARBARA SCOTT:** Parent peak bodies?

**Ms C. Cook:** Yes. The officers in charge have been working for the past 12 months on the development of syllabuses, which includes kindergarten and pre-primary syllabuses. They have early childhood education experience. I am not sure about the exact nature of their training. I would have to take this question on notice.

*[Supplementary Information No A2.]*

**Ms C. Cook:** As the minister and the director general have already indicated, every effort has been made to ensure that there is an inclusive process for consultation in the development of syllabuses to get them right.

**Hon BARBARA SCOTT:** By parents?

**Ms C. Cook:** There will be as we go through the next period. There is a considerable amount of time to follow. With regard to the question about play, not only in the scope and sequence of what is to be taught, residing underneath that are practical resources that are illustrative to teachers about what to teach and how to teach. Within that description, research, and contemporary practice that makes a difference for learning will be incorporated. There will be descriptions of the importance of play and how that is a part of the learning context. I cannot answer the question about playgrounds. I will have to leave that to the capital works people or to whoever the minister wants to answer that question. Rather than labouring the point, I will very briefly say that there will be consultation with those parent bodies, there will be elements of play incorporated into the practical resources for teachers, and there will be an inclusive consultation process.

[10.50 am]

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I refer to page 915 and the "Service and Appropriation Summary". I issued a media statement based upon responses from the Minister for Education and Training about staffing and funding at central office over the past three years, which identified the fact that staffing in central office had increased by 700 and funding expenditure had increased by \$53 million. As a result of the media statement, a GWN journalist phoned me and said that she had phoned an officer from the department and the officer had said that the figures were entirely incorrect. I said that I had the figures direct from the minister and that he had signed off on them. Are the figures correct? If they are correct, how can they be justified? I can provide the minister with the question numbers if she would like them.

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** I thank the honourable member. It seems to me that the member is asking us to verify some very specific information. I do not know whether the member has put the question on notice.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I am asking why there has been such an explosion in the number of employees and the amount of funding at head office.

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** I might refer these questions to Mr Peter McCaffrey and then to the acting director general. There is no doubt that the government has significantly increased its contribution to education. There are obviously many programs coming on stream. For example, the increase in the school leaving age and the return of the mandatory requirement for all students to complete the last two years of schooling has had an impact. Obviously we need teachers to man those classrooms. There is no doubt that offering new courses of study has had an impact. Taking into account courses such as media production and design, information technology, and the breadth of new educational opportunities -



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**Hon PETER COLLIER:** That would not have an impact on this funding.

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** There are support staff associated with those changes. That would obviously be reflected in the increase. If the member is asking a specific question about central office, I will refer him to Mr Peter McCaffrey.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Firstly, are the figures correct? If they are not, the minister is wrong. Secondly, how can they be justified?

**Mr P. McCaffrey:** I recall the questions. I think the first one was in reference to what was at 151 Royal Street and what was at central office. I think the difference in the figures was mainly because there is a certain number of staff at 151 Royal Street. When we responded in the second instance, the answer included a number of associated operations that are generally referred to as “central”. Examples of those include agencies such as WestOne and the shared services centre that operates out of Bennett Street. I think that is where the discrepancy arose. I do not have the details of the figures with me, but I recall the question, “Why does it look like there are 700 employees?” There is only so much room in central office; it is actually physically impossible for any more staff to work at central office. Another thing I could mention about shared services is that the concept was to bring in a number of staff who had been fulfilling operations within TAFE colleges across the state. That was also a contributing factor to the growth in numbers, because they were previously in non-budget agencies. The figures are not anywhere near as large as they appear. The two questions came through with slightly different emphases, and an interpretation was made that probably should have been made a little differently.

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** Having looked at the figures, I will add something. The number of employees employed on a full-time basis at central office of the Department of Education and Training has gone from 1 212 in 2001 to 1 464 in 2006. There is no doubt that, apart from anything else, there has also been a significant increase in student numbers. It was necessary to implement a range of changes associated with the new syllabus. The government has had to employ syllabus writers. We have had to take them out of schools and bring them into the department so that they can perform the function that was actually removed by Colin Barnett when he got rid of some 400 curriculum writers way back during the previous government.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Good try.

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** The member seems to conveniently overlook the point as if it was no big deal. He criticises the system that has evolved as a result of the policy of his government. He criticises the area of syllabus development, despite the fact that his government abolished the unit. There are syllabus writers. A learning age directorate has been established. There are people there to support the implementation of new courses of study. Never mind the fact that the staff numbers for central office also include employees who are located at WestOne. The staff numbers also include the international education and training people. Quite frankly, this area has experienced considerable growth, which means that it requires more people to look after it. This is without taking into account the Professional Learning Institute and the Department of Education and Training shared services centre. Obviously, as the system grows, evolves and becomes more specialised in certain areas, there will be an increase in FTEs within the school system and at the central office level. I say to the member that the government is unashamed of the contribution it is making to education. In fact, education takes the biggest slice of the state budget - some 26 per cent - and there is a concerted commitment to make education and training a number one priority for the Carpenter government, as has been the case throughout our term in government.

[Hon Ken Travers took the chair.]

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** It is a shame the figures did not include the figures for task forces; they would be doubled. There are 2 231 -

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** Where are we?

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** This is the same question. Based on the answer from the minister, there are 2 231 employees at central office. The minister may have to take this question on notice. How many of those employees are seconded from classrooms? Does the minister have any idea? Would she like to take the question on notice?

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** Mr Deputy Chairman, I ask that the question be put on notice.

[*Supplementary Information No A3.*]

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** As a matter of interest, there were two successful tenders -

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** Is this a line item? Which page?



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**Hon PETER COLLIER:** We are still on page 915 and the “Service and Appropriation Summary”. The description of the tender was “provision of services from an information technology officer for the corporate applications department”. There were two of them. Both successfully gained the tender on 8 June 2007. For three months’ work, they got \$52 800. That is good work if one can get it, but can the minister justify that?

[11.00 am]

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** I will make a general comment about that. I do not know anything about this contract. It is an information technology contract. Any IT provider in the commercial marketplace would probably deem that to be quite reasonable for three months’ work.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** They are two separate contracts for two individuals. They get \$52 800 for eight months’ work.

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** At the end of the day, this would have gone through a tender process. If the member is alleging that the tender process -

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I am not alleging anything; I am just asking a question

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** And I am just giving an answer.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I am just pointing out that I am not alleging; I am asking a question, which is my right.

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** What is the question?

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I am asking how it can be justified.

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** It can be justified because it has gone through a proper tender process; and, if that was the best tender to meet the set requirements of the tender and it had gone through the appropriate process, that is the answer to the question.

**Hon GIZ WATSON:** I refer to the eighth dot point from the bottom of page 914, which states -

Develop a resources package to support the policy and standards for healthy food and drink sold in school canteens.

How many full-time equivalents are involved in the development of this project, and what is the time line for the completion of the package?

**The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:** A perfect question about the processes this morning, as I would expect from the Chair of the committee!

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** I thank the member for the question. Mr Deputy Chair, do you think the honourable member might be getting a bit peckish at this time?

First, I commend the member for taking such an active interest in the health of children. There is no doubt that the development of a resource package to support the policy and standards for healthy food and drink sold in school canteens is a very good initiative indeed. In fact, a new policy to improve the standard of food provided in schools was introduced in December 2006. Certainly, there was variability in the healthiness of the food that was served by canteens at different sites around the state. However, over the next four years, from 2006 to 2010, the government has committed \$1 million to the new nutrition standards in Western Australian public schools as part of the Australian Better Health Initiative and a Council of Australian Governments’ program to promote good health and reduce chronic disease. There is no doubt that diet is only one part of it; exercise is the other part. Of course, students are doing much -

**The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:** I do not want to interrupt, but I say this because I want to encourage members to ask similar questions to that asked by Hon Giz Watson in seeking detailed information about the budget. I encourage the minister to answer the question, and we may be able to get through a lot more questions. This session has been devoted to fairly long-winded and open-ended questions; therefore, the answers have been along those lines. However, the member asked a specific question about the number of FTEs and the time line. I would certainly appreciate it if the minister could focus her answer on that question.

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** I am sad to have to shorten my answer, but I understand that there is no specific FTE devoted to the package. Certainly, we ensured that the Western Australian School Canteen Association was appropriately accommodated within the department. That occurred last year. The policy officers within the department generally interface with that part of the organisation. Although it is not a formal part of the organisation, having those officers there to help school canteens work through policy initiatives means that they can make some good progress in this area. However, no specific FTE allocation within the department has been made to it.



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**Hon GIZ WATSON:** And the time line?

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** I will take that question on notice.

*[Supplementary Information No A4.]*

**Hon GIZ WATSON:** I refer to page 915 and the travel and training costs for apprentices. Can the minister explain why the travel cost budget is maintained despite the fact that the estimates for additional apprentices and trainees are projected to be reduced in future years?

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** I am happy to provide that information, but first I will crow a little about the increase in apprentices since we took office. There has been an 81 per cent increase since 2001. This is an area of great success for the government and it is absolutely totally committed to it. I hate to shorten my answer, but I will refer the question to Mr Rob Player because he knows everything there is to know about training, in his capacity as the acting deputy director general of training.

**Mr R. Player:** First, apprenticeships have increased dramatically over the past few years. The current level is about 34 700, which is a dramatic increase from 18 700 in 2001. The allocation for the travel and accommodation costs for apprentices is an increase in funding of \$700 000 over the four or five years of the budget, which will increase the pool for travel and accommodation for apprentices in regional areas and those who have to travel to attend their vocational training or off-the-job training.

**Hon GIZ WATSON:** I refer to page 917 and the employer satisfaction rate. Why is the satisfaction rate not measured every year and why are benchmarks not developed on that basis?

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** I will refer this question to Mr Robert Player.

**Mr R. Player:** The employer satisfaction survey is conducted nationally by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research. It carried out the survey in 1995, 1997, 1999, 2001 and 2005, so it determines the period when it undertakes the surveys. The latest figures are listed in the budget papers. On that basis, a survey should be due shortly, but it is a national survey.

**Hon GIZ WATSON:** I refer to page 917 and the aim to offer primary education programs for students from non-English speaking backgrounds. What support programs are provided to kindergarten and preprimary schoolchildren and their families who speak a language other than English as their first language at home?

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** I will refer that question to Ms Chris Cook.

**Ms C. Cook:** We have intensive language centres. Students who come from other countries and speak another language have opportunities to participate at those centres. We also have visiting teachers from the districts who can support teachers in working with those students. There are documents called English as a second language progress maps that support teachers. They are being trialled across various locations so that students can be mapped and their progress monitored in an incremental way. Minor improvements can be shown and added to, and the learning for those students can be added to by teachers so that there is close scrutiny of how they are performing, particularly in literacy obviously. Those opportunities are available for teachers and the students who are being taught by those teachers.

[11.10 am]

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** Obviously, an increasing number of subclass 457 visa holders are students who require English as a second language support. Clearly, as more people come into the country through a range of means, including 457 visas, there is increased pressure. One of the big issues we have had with the commonwealth government is that it is responsible for immigration policy. We get people from non-English speaking backgrounds from all over the world, and they make great citizens. However, the up-front cost and the investment by the system in schools are quite considerable. We have a grievance with the commonwealth government that it does not supply sufficient support services to assist young children, particularly in the preprimary years, with their English language studies. I was five and a half years old when I came to this country, and I can tell the member that it is not particularly easy, although things have improved out of sight for new migrants coming into the state. Certainly, there is more work to be done.

One of the big complications, of course, that is not understood is that children, and to some extent even Indigenous children, can be treated as migrant children from non-English-speaking backgrounds, and often it is just assumed that following whatever they learn, they go home and walk back into an English environment, whereas that is not the case. At the end of a school day, they go back to a non-English-speaking environment. Therefore, it is a case of one step forward, two steps back. This is indeed a very complex area. Certainly, if we could get the commonwealth government to provide us with the additional resources, we would be most grateful, but we do the best we can.



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**Hon BARRY HOUSE:** My question relates to secondary education facilities in the greater Bunbury education area. On page 921 of the budget papers, there are items for Bunbury Senior High School, Newton Moore Senior High School, Dalyellup senior college and Manea college. I am aware that there have been several delays and some budget blow-outs, giving the sense that nothing much is happening on the ground at the moment. Can I have an update on that situation and, perhaps to complete the picture, on the current situation with Eaton middle school? There was always the assumption that it would go to year 12 to relieve the pressures on Australind Senior High School and cater for population increases in that area. I guess I am asking for an update on the whole greater Bunbury education area, combining all those facilities. Where are we going and what is the time line?

**The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:** Hon Barry House is making members from the northern suburbs jealous!

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** Yes. I will ask Mr Mal Parr to provide an appropriate response.

**Mr M. Parr:** I will go through those projects individually. The Bunbury Senior High School project, which in large part is to provide a new library resource centre, has had some delays. They have revolved around a land swap with the City of Bunbury and land across the road from the school. My understanding is that that process has now been completed. The documentation is proceeding, and it should go to tender later this year. Dalyellup secondary college was originally announced to open in 2008. That has since been revised to open in 2009. There were delays in acquiring the site. The vendor was reluctant to sell. I am pleased to say that that has now been resolved. The site has been acquired, a contract has been let, the contractor is on site and completion of those facilities is scheduled for late 2008, with a 2009 opening. With Manea college, again there have been some delays. Similarly, it was originally announced to open in 2008 and is now scheduled to open in 2009. Part of that problem has been the location of the facilities. When it was first in the concept stage, it was envisaged that the college would be on the South West Regional College of TAFE site. That proved to have some difficulties. Subsequently, there were successful negotiations with Edith Cowan University, and the facility is to be located on its land. It is a challenging site and quite a complex design solution. That in large part explains the cost escalation. I am pleased to say that that project proceeded to tender yesterday. Cape Naturaliste college in Vasse is under construction. It is tracking on schedule and should be ready for the start of the 2008 school year. The allocation for the Newton Moore project was \$9.5 million. The pre-tender estimate was consistent with that allocation. Less than favourable tender results were received, and it was necessary to review the scope of works. That has been done in recent weeks, in consultation with the school community, and agreement has now been reached to reduce the scope by deleting the work associated with the eastern classroom block. That is considered to be the preferred reduction in scope, because the main components of the upgrade project are retained in the work. The reduction, or the elimination, of the eastern classroom block is not expected to cause any problems, particularly when one bears in mind that two secondary schools, Dalyellup secondary college and Manea college, will open in 2009 and provide some relief to Newton Moore Senior High School.

**Hon BARRY HOUSE:** What are the plans for Eaton middle school in the short to medium term?

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** I will ask the director general to respond.

**Ms S. O'Neill:** Eaton college needs to be considered in light of those schools around it. Australind is bursting. With Eaton, the plan originally was to look at years 11 and 12. We are looking at that whole region now to see what plans will work best for that population, for the demographic that is coming forward and the impacts on the surrounding schools. There is no decision yet, but it is on the board right now. We are looking at it as we speak.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I refer to page 915. My question encompasses the second dot point and also the "Service and Appropriation Summary", and is about government policy on behaviour mismanagement, and in particular the announcement last weekend of the trials of the three behaviour centres. What is the anticipated cost of those trial centres; is there a projected number of students who will be involved in those centres; and how will their success or otherwise be determined?

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** I thank the member for that question. I will ask the director general to respond.

**Ms S. O'Neill:** The recent announcement about the three behaviour centres really is in response to a very small number of students, so we are not talking about just naughty kids, but those students who probably are having multiple problems, sometimes including mental health issues. Therefore, it really is targeted at the very pointy end, I guess, as we describe it, of students in secondary schools. At the moment, in the vicinity of six full-time equivalents will be attributed to those centres, and we will look at some further support. It will really have to be on a case-by-case basis. Each area is unique. The shape of the centre in the goldfields will need to be different from the one in, for example, Canning or Fremantle. Therefore, the staffing make-up will be a bit different at each one. However, at this point, there will be in the vicinity of six FTEs. We are working with each location to see what the need might be.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I have a question associated with that. Pastoral care is a vital component of any school community, of course. In Department of Education and Training schools, what is the formula for the



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allocation of school psychologists? How many psychologists are there in total, and is there a policy on the allocation of school psychologists? I do not mind if that question is taken on notice.

**Ms S. O'Neill:** The rule-of-thumb ratio is one school psychologist to 2 000 students. That is how the overall allocation is attributed. In districts, though, it is true to say that the school psychologists work in multidisciplinary teams, so that they get the best leverage out of the various disciplines that they come from in the psychology field. They work across disciplines across schools as a team and, obviously, individually with students in various schools.

[11.20 am]

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Do any other counselling services exist in our schools for students and staff?

**Ms S. O'Neill:** Certainly, in schools there are chaplains. We make use from time to time of PRIMEPSYCH and departmental funded services when that specific capacity is needed to support our schools. The range is generally through the school psychologists, but there are other means.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I refer to the twelfth dot point on page 914 regarding the community service program, of which I am totally supportive; it is a wonderful initiative. It is a very successful program at Scotch College. The boys got an enormous amount out of it. The government allocated \$1.9 million for this program over four years, which is effectively \$475 000 a year. It seems a meagre amount of money for such a broad-based program. What will the \$475 000 be used for in delivering services?

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** Thank you honourable member; this is an interesting question. I will ask the director general of the department to make some general comments, and on the financial specifics I will ask Mr Peter McCaffrey to respond.

**Ms S. O'Neill:** We had a pilot in 10 schools. An evaluation has been run on that. We received some clear advice on the kind of target resources that would be required. As the member is aware, year 10 students in all schools are required to undertake a community service of some 20 hours before they can graduate. The program is working fairly well. As the minister indicated, Peter McCaffrey can talk about the funding.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** With regard to the community service program, who actually implements it within the schools? Is it up to the existing school staff, such as deputies and year level coordinators etc?

**Ms S. O'Neill:** The school will make that decision. Some resources were provided to the schools because there is a coordination function. Obviously, if the schools are doing a range of community service options, some coordination is involved, particularly checking that working-with-children checks and other requirements are covered. Public schools received an allocation to undertake that coordination. It was left to the school to decide the best person to undertake that role. It could be a teacher; it could be a coordinator of another sort. It is a school decision.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Are schools receiving additional funding for implementing this program?

**Ms S. O'Neill:** Yes, they are.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Does the director general have any idea how much it will cost each school?

**Mr P. McCaffrey:** When the trial was first implemented, it was intended to find out the better ways that the program could be managed. As a result of the trial, it was necessary to find additional resources. We are currently putting in about \$1.9 million a year, rather than the allocation that we were originally given. The resources are provided based on the number of students who will go through the program at each school. Those resources are, as the director general pointed out, provided to the school in addition to their normal staffing entitlement. They make the decisions about how they manage it within their schools. Those additional resources go directly to the schools to help them manage the placements.

**The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:** Do any other members here wish to ask questions who have not had the opportunity to ask a question?

**Hon BARRY HOUSE:** I have one.

**The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:** I wanted to check that there were no other members who wanted to ask questions. Hon Giz Watson has the next question.

**Hon GIZ WATSON:** I refer to the eighth dot point on page 913, which deals with fast-track apprenticeships. How do these apprenticeships differ from the usual apprenticeships?

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** Given the time, I will go straight to Mr Player so that he can give a succinct answer because you will probably argue that you did not get a succinct one from me!

**Hon GIZ WATSON:** I never said that, minister!



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**Mr R. Player:** These are specifically apprenticeships designed for people who have been in a vocation for a number of years as a trades assistant, a technical officer and so on, to take the steps to recognise their current skills, map the deficit against apprenticeship qualification and provide the training. It is for existing people who are working in unqualified positions. As at November last year, 639 people had commenced since 2005.

**Hon GIZ WATSON:** Who makes the assessment of the capabilities of someone who has been working in a certain area?

**Mr R. Player:** It is undertaken by registered training organisations; it could be a TAFE college or a private organisation that does the assessment.

**Hon BARRY HOUSE:** I refer to science education. We know that a lot of the critical areas of teacher shortage are in science and mathematics. I believe that the percentage of secondary students taking science has fallen from something like 19 per cent to something like 15 per cent in about the past decade. What measures are being taken to encourage science education in schools, which seems to need a particularly positive injection at the moment?

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** When you talk about science in that way, you are probably talking about the traditional science subjects.

**Hon BARRY HOUSE:** No; I am embracing the whole lot.

**Hon LJILJANNA RAVLICH:** We are introducing new courses of study for environmental science and computer science. There are many different fields of science. Certainly, some of the new courses that will be coming on stream will be available to students. If you do the tally on students' subject choices, you will probably find there is quite a significant improvement in the growth of interest in science and students choosing these areas. I think the director general wants to say a couple of words on this.

**Ms S. O'Neill:** In 2007, the department has made science one of the priority areas. To build on the kind of comments you are making, particularly given the economic situation, to ensure new students come through their schooling with a very strong understanding of science concept skills and knowledge, we are promoting very keenly the Primary Connections Science program. As you know, the course starts very early in developing concepts and skills. We are working particularly on that. We have an arrangement with the University of Western Australia and the SPICE program, in which teachers go the university and undertake study alongside university lecturers etc, as part of, I guess, their deeper professional learning in contemporary science. That builds on their skills and contributes to the growing body of scientific knowledge.

**Ms C. Cook:** In the SPICE program, teachers are invited to work with contemporary scientists and get the very latest in science research. They share that with their colleagues in school. The science teachers are invited to attend further professional learning about that sort of research. It is an expansive program. As the director general pointed out, we will have a secondary, primary and early childhood sequence for science and that will include the physical sciences. There will be, as I said earlier, practical resources. Those practical resources for both primary and secondary schools will be the sort that engage kids and motivate them to study science, which is absolutely imperative. In the primary schools, it will be articulated with the primary connections, as the director general pointed out. They also are very engaging materials for teachers to use with students. The secondary materials will also be articulated with the SPICE program and resources that are being developed at WestOne. They are practical resources that will engage students, and teachers can use them day by day, week by week. Every endeavour has been made to build on the systemic policy in directing schools from 2000 onward to focus on science, professional learning for primary and secondary teachers and also on providing comprehensive resources that are very classroom ready and, importantly, will engage students.

[11.30 am]

**The DEPUTY CHAIRMAN:** That concludes this session. I remind members that if they have further questions, to submit them in a written format and the department will provide a written response. I thank the witnesses for their contribution. On behalf of members, I congratulate you, Ms O'Neill, on your appointment. Your performance this morning demonstrated in a small way what a good decision it was. We look forward to seeing you at future hearings.

*Meeting suspended from 11.32 to 11.39 am*