

## TEACHER SHORTAGE

### *Motion*

Resumed from 14 November on the following motion moved by Hon Peter Collier -

That this house expresses its grave concern at the recent revelation of the Department of Education and Training that there will be a shortage of 3 000 teachers in Western Australia in five years unless some serious action is taken to remedy this significant problem.

**HON PETER COLLIER** (North Metropolitan) [11.03 am]: I am nearing the conclusion of my comments on this motion. I encourage members to support the motion. I want to comment on an article that appeared in today's *The West Australian* about the teacher shortage, an issue that has received a fair amount of media coverage. The article is headed "State to be short of 600 teachers in 2008: union" and reads -

WA is facing a shortfall of 600 teachers at the start of next year and a pay dispute with the Government is one of the reasons for the crisis, the teachers' union warned yesterday.

The State School Teachers Union president Mike Keely said teachers were becoming more despondent, with many considering early retirement to take advantage of superannuation changes. He said this year's graduate intake of more than 1000 had to be greatly surpassed next year to cope with the expected exodus.

Union vice-president Anne Gisborne said the crisis had been made worse because teachers would not get a pay rise until 2009 under the current offer, which the union has rejected.

"It (the pay offer) will not encourage people who've got choices about continuing teaching or retiring to say 'This looks good, I'll hang in for another year'," she said.

The 2007 school year started with a shortage of 264 teachers.

"It's significantly alarming if you consider there are about 750 schools," Ms Gisborne said. "That's almost one person for every school and you know from the experience that we've had in 2007 that unfortunately it's not a sharing of one person per school, which we could probably all manage, it ends up being 10, 11 or 12 in one particular school."

She said knowing what was ahead would make teachers depressed before the school year even began. The Government's "pie-in-the-sky, fairyland" strategies such as the \$100,000 a year for the profession's elite teachers had deepened teachers' cynicism. The union believes all teachers need to be up to \$8000 a year better off under the next pay deal.

Education Minister Mark McGowan was quizzed on the union's estimate in Parliament yesterday, but avoided being drawn on a shortfall figure. He said it was too soon to project next year's deficit and he was not aware of the union's claim.

"It's often not until closer to the day that we actually know exactly where we stand," he said. Several weeks out from the end of the school year, WA is still 60 teachers short.

I will make a couple of comments in response to that article. First, I fully endorse the criticism of the enterprise bargaining agreement offer, because it is an unjust offer that will not disperse a salary increase to teachers across the board. When the EBA was announced by the Minister for Education and Training, it was accompanied by a headline-grabbing statement that the state's top teachers would receive \$100 000. However, in effect most teachers will be marginally better off. If the government had really acknowledged the teacher shortage, it would have offered a significant pay increase to all teachers, and not just those at the periphery or those graduating teachers. Rather, it has said that 50 teachers will receive \$100 00 next year and a further 50 the year after that. The government must consider a pay increase for the vast majority of teachers in our classrooms, because they are the ones who are walking away from the profession for the very reasons that I articulated yesterday. For the minister to suggest a matter of weeks before the end of the year that the department still does not know how many teachers it will be short next year is naive in the extreme. The Department of Education and Training's failure to have a fairly accurate idea of what the teacher shortage will be in 2008 at the end of the academic year reinforces the concerns I mentioned yesterday about the management of DET. Either that, or the minister and the department are not revealing the truth. It is important that the Legislative Council pass this motion to reflect members' concerns about the teacher shortage.

The second point I will mention about the pay rise is the fact that a number of practising teachers are seeking early retirement, which is a shame. I mentioned that yesterday and that has been reinforced in today's *The West Australian* article. They do not want to leave the profession, but they have not been given any reason to continue teaching. The government must be bold; it must do something visionary as opposed to making headline-

grabbing decisions that, in effect, impact upon a minuscule proportion of teachers. The government must acknowledge that there is an endemic problem with teachers' morale. When the government announced its decision to pay the state's top teachers \$100 000, it did so on a Saturday, the day on which *The West Australian* achieves its highest circulation figure. The devil of that plan was in the detail and it took less than half a day for it to all unravel. We are better than that. We have a better education system than that. Surely we have a better minister than one who, with all due respect, shows contempt for the intelligence of the community and contempt for the intelligence of the teaching fraternity if he thinks that is going to suck them in. The minister needs to acknowledge that this EBA was rubbish and go back to the drawing board. He should listen to the teachers at the coalface and understand that unless teachers get a significant pay rise across the board, the 3 000-teacher shortage, which is the basis of this motion and which the Department of Education and Training itself has acknowledged is a possibility, will, in fact, eventuate. That is what we have to look at.

As I mentioned yesterday, I have not stood here for two and a half hours complaining; I have offered some very real solutions and I would like to reinforce them. As a party, we will be offering some visionary and bold policy options over the next 12 months. We will be looking at issues such as salaries and career opportunities. We have a very good proposal for career opportunities that will provide great incentives and satisfaction for the teaching fraternity. We will be looking at behaviour management, which is a vital component of disenchantment in the teaching fraternity. We will be offering some viable and attractive options. We will also look at management issues; that is, once again, the interface between the Department of Education and Training and the teaching fraternity, which is represented by the everyday classroom teacher who feels disengaged from the decision makers. We will also look at infrastructure issues. For example, I was on the steps of Parliament House this morning with my parliamentary colleague Katie Hodson-Thomas, the member for Carine, and we listened to the very real concerns of the students and parents from Deanmore Primary School. If anyone has been to Deanmore Primary School, he or she will know that it is probably on a par with Governor Stirling Senior High School: it looks like a penitentiary and is infested with asbestos and mould. Eight rooms in the school had been closed due to a horrific odour that permeates the school.

**Hon Robyn McSweeney:** Which suburb is it in?

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** It is in Karrinyup, which is in Katie's electorate. Essentially, it needs an enormous injection of funds. Infrastructure issues are becoming increasingly prevalent. Hon Robyn McSweeney mentioned the issue about Mt Barker yesterday. To digress for a moment, there was meant to be an educational precinct at Mt Barker. That would have been a very, very good initiative. The government decided that its priorities had changed. The government has decided that it will not put the years 1 to 3 students on the same campus as the rest of the school; it will keep them at the original site and the new campus will be for years 4 to 7 combined with the secondary school. It would have been a perfect opportunity to provide very good quality educational services to the people of Mt Barker and the students and parents in the surrounding areas. Again, it was a decision made and based entirely on finances. I asked a parliamentary question on this, and I know that Hon Matt Benson-Lidholm asked a similar question of the director general at the budget estimates hearing. We have really got to question our priorities if we are making decisions like that based on finance. We are not talking about exorbitant amounts of money; we are talking about a couple of million dollars, certainly in the case of Mt Barker. Funding for Deanmore and Governor Stirling schools is essential; it is a necessity. Those schools are in an appalling state of disrepair and they desperately need a massive injection of funds to rectify the problem. Quite frankly, I think we have gone beyond that. I think we need to demolish the pair of them and start again.

Having said that, for those reasons I feel that it is absolutely essential we address the teacher shortage as a matter of urgency. I encourage members to support the motion as an indication to the community that the house is cognisant of the seriousness of the situation and the implications of having nothing less than immediate and drastic policy decisions.

**HON BARRY HOUSE (South West) [11.14 am]:** Hon Peter Collier is finished already. I thought he was just getting warmed up!

I congratulate Hon Peter Collier for bringing this matter to the attention of the house and for outlining in such a comprehensive way what the issue is and for proposing some solutions to the situation and canvassing some actions that the government could and should be taking to address a very, very serious issue in Western Australia. Teacher shortages are here; they have been looming for some time. I think the former Minister for Education and Training will recall the first parliamentary question I asked of her when she became the minister and I was the opposition spokesperson. I referred to the possibilities of teacher shortages down the track. That was about three years ago. The possibility has since occurred.

**Hon Ljiljana Ravlich:** Can you remember the departmental response?

**Hon BARRY HOUSE:** The departmental response? I cannot remember the exact words, but I can check it. I think we have seen a lot of those things come to light, unfortunately. We all know that teacher shortages are due to multiple factors, which have been canvassed by Hon Peter Collier. They are due to salaries and conditions, career opportunities, the infrastructure funding in government schools in particular, issues such as student behaviour and curriculum difficulties, and housing and accommodation. All those things have also been canvassed.

It is a bit sad sometimes here when we realise that the more things change the more they stay the same. I graduated as a high school teacher in 1972. My first appointment was to the Eastern Goldfields Senior High School.

**Hon Peter Collier:** I was a student.

**Hon BARRY HOUSE:** The very prominent member who has just spoken was one of my outstanding students! I had actually been away on an intervarsity trip playing cricket, and I came back through Kalgoorlie from South Australia. It was about a week before school started. I knew that there was a letter at my residence in Perth telling me where I was to be transferred for my first teaching appointment. Nobody would tell me, so I had to drive back to Perth, get the letter, and open it. It read Kalgoorlie. That did not disappoint me too much; I was quite looking forward to going to a country destination. However, it was a bit of a scramble getting there in the next few days, I have to admit. I got to Kalgoorlie and, lo and behold, there was absolutely no housing available anywhere. There was no Government Employees Housing Authority housing. I happened to know one of my fellow teachers because I had played football with him. He and his wife were teaching at Eastern Goldfields Senior High School. I slept on their lounge room floor for two weeks. That was my first two weeks of teaching! It was not too conducive to getting a good start, I must say. Two weeks after that a few of us managed to get accommodation in Agricola College, which is now the Western Australian School of Mines. That was only temporary because its school year started and we were kicked out. A personal contact I had made through a cricket club in Kalgoorlie - the great Hannan's cricket club - who also happened to be in real estate managed to find a private rental for us. Four of us, all new teachers to the town, were in the same situation. We managed to set up house in Lamington. It was a small house and was overcrowded. I got the back converted garage as my place of residence. We moved in pretty late one evening and just dumped our things and went to bed. It was a very uncomfortable night for me - I felt itchy and scratchy. The next morning I had a good look around and discovered that the mattress I had been using had a big rat's nest in it! That was my introduction to teaching. Regrettably, 34 years later, teachers are in the same sort of situation when they are transferred, particularly to country destinations. It is not easy to start one's career in a new town with all these hassles attached to just getting established, let alone getting out and doing the job of teaching students. That is a bit of background to this issue.

We heard from Hon Peter Collier the prediction that has been canvassed that there will be a shortage of 3 000 teachers within five years. The State School Teachers' Union of WA has said that there will be a shortage of 600 teachers next year. Anecdotally, we all know of serious situations right now. All members have feelers out in their electorates. Problems are even being experienced in coastal south west towns, which, in the normal scheme of things, we would not think would have too many problems in filling teacher vacancies because they are very attractive destinations - people want to live and work there. I know of several schools that are experiencing difficulties, including Newton Moore and Busselton Senior High Schools. I visited Busselton Senior High School with Hon Peter Collier and Troy Buswell, the member for Vasse. A media report a few weeks earlier had said that the school was short of six teachers. We were told to our faces on the day of our visit that the figure was three. I remember that one of our colleagues, Hon Nigel Hallett, asked a question that very week in Parliament about Busselton Senior High School and the answer that he was given was that there were no teacher shortages at all at that school. That begs the question: what was the real situation at the school and what was the department's understanding of and take on that situation? Clearly, the department either did not understand what was happening on the ground or perhaps tried to fudge the situation a little so that it did not appear to be alarming.

The situation is most critical in my portfolio area of science and technology. I have taken a bit of an interest in this issue and how it has been looming for some time. It is not as though the problem has only just appeared; it has been looming for quite a few years. Against that background, we know that the number of students who study science in year 12 has dropped from 19.1 per cent to 15.4 per cent since 1993. That figure was reported in an article that appeared in *The West Australian* in July 2006 written by Ben Ruse and headed "Scientist shortage blamed on students". The future of the science industry in Western Australia has been an area of concern for the past decade or more. I will draw on several reports that have highlighted this issue over the years and demonstrated just how serious the situation is in this particular area of education. There have been countless reports on the problems that have stemmed from the low participation rate of students in science or the number

of people who decide to become science teachers. Problems include the retention of science teachers and science knowledge within our schools and the prospect of an ageing science teacher workforce.

Members should keep in mind that this problem comes at a time when science is becoming more and more relevant to our society. Our society is driven by technology, and science is vitally important to that. Science is vitally important in addressing the challenges and growing demands of our community in a host of areas such as energy, water, the environment and food. It also has an impact on state development. A working paper was put together by Claudia Burgio-Ficca called "The Impact of Higher Education Research and Development on Australian Gross State Product." This problem goes back to the 1990s. The research paper examined the impact of higher education research and development on Australia's productivity through a panel data set of six states between 1994 and 1999. Ms Burgio-Ficca's analysis confirmed that in addition to capital and labour, both pure and applied research and development have a statistically significant impact on the state's production output. More specifically, there is a direct correlation between science education and the number of people who choose the sciences as a career path and the production output of the state. She identified that this sector was facing a crisis, firstly in the number of students who are entering post-compulsory science courses, secondly, in the number of qualified science professionals and, thirdly, in the number of science teachers in schools. These problems were identified more than a decade ago and are still with us. In fact, they are now in a more critical phase.

Another report, "Re-imagining Science Education: Engaging students in science for Australia's future," was written in 2007 by Russell Tytler on behalf of the Australian Council for Educational Research. The report identified that the key to student learning and engagement in science was the existence of teachers who are qualified and committed. That is not rocket science. We all know that. That report tells us something that we already know. We know that the most important ingredient in any child's education is the teacher in the classroom. Technology, facilities, buildings - the environment generally - are all important and they all help, but the most important ingredient is the teacher. A teacher needs, first, to be qualified and, second, to be committed. They are the essential ingredients. This was identified in the science area way back. I am just highlighting the area of science, but we could talk about any area of education. If we want students to be motivated and excited about an area of learning such as science, we need teachers who have an appropriate background in their subject, an appropriate level of commitment and an appropriate level of education to deliver their knowledge via the education system.

The Productivity Commission released a research report headed "Public Support for Science and Innovation" in 2007. This report looked at the barriers to the future growth of human capital in science and innovation industries and found that the shortages in this industry have been accommodated by using science teachers who do not have adequate skills in these areas. Of course, the end result is that this may adversely affect student performance and engagement and may further decrease university enrolments in science. There is an obvious correlation. The report also notes that -

In teaching, price signals have not been able to respond to shortages due to the inflexible pay levels and structures.

That needs to be looked at. Some proposals have been floated for performance pay and various other mechanisms to increase the flexibility of the education system to adapt to areas of most need. I know that some difficulties are associated with some of those things, but we should not rule them out just because something is difficult. They have to be addressed and taken on board. It goes on to note that job satisfaction should also be increased by -

- longer-term funding certainty;
- carefully designing performance assessment processes that reward higher performing institutions, research teams and individuals;
- a level of academic freedom consistent with the strategic interests of the employing institution; and
- the minimisation of non-research workloads.

The HECS reimbursement scheme in the area of science is one of the measures introduced to address the problems in Western Australia. The 2007 Productivity Commission report also refers to the fact that -

. . . the Western Australia Government has offered a HECS reimbursement scheme of up to \$6000 to physical science graduate teachers upon taking up employment . . .

That is to be applauded. One might say that the government has attempted to address this issue and that it has attempted to provide a meaningful incentive for students entering the field of science. I will stand here and applaud that course of action. However, in doing that, we also have to consider how effective that course of action has been. The evidence suggests a low sensitivity of student response to changes in the HECS

contributions due to both the higher income that graduates receive and the payment being deferred into the future. Although it is pretty obvious on the surface, it is perhaps not so obvious to students at the time just how useful that reimbursement payment is. In fact, the report states that the differentiation between these two figures “would need to be substantial to have a significant effect on student numbers and other prospective entrants into teaching”. The end conclusion of that process is that although the WA government’s reimbursement scheme of up to \$6 000 for graduate science teachers is to be encouraged, it is having a limited impact in the scheme of things.

The Department of Education and Training’s 2004-05 annual report clearly indicates that a high proportion of teachers aged over 55 years and a concerning low proportion of teachers aged under 24 are teaching science. This indicates that the take-up rates of technology and science are dwindling. These issues can be seen at both ends of the demographic scale. It is predicted that the problems facing the decline in science education will exacerbate over the next decade due to the fact that science teachers, as a group, are an older workforce than that in other areas. We can expect to see many more people moving out of the teaching workforce in the next decade, and a higher proportion of these people will come from the area of science making the problem more critical. This is a reflection of the low rate of new teachers entering into the area of science teaching, and this may also contribute to the perception that the current science curriculum in our schools is outdated; however, that is another issue. Only 44 students sat for the TEE geology exam in 2005. The fact that only four government schools offered TEE geology is poor in a state that relies so heavily on the resource sector. One would think that geology would be a prime educational destination for students in schools and in higher education institutions because of the importance of the resource sector to Western Australia in terms of its core economic activity and job opportunities.

The federal Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources, Hon Ian Macfarlane, announced the “Minerals Exploration Action Agenda” in 2002. The first report of the MEAA was released in March 2003, and it stated that the standard of education and training will ultimately translate into technological breakthroughs that will lead to enormous long-term benefits to resource development. The report outlined the importance of earth sciences as part of the curriculum throughout Australian state schools, and raised concerns about the narrow and uninspiring ways that these subjects are being presented. In addition, the report criticised the fact that many teachers in primary and secondary schools do not have science degrees. Russell Tytler of the Australian Council for Education Research describes attracting talented students into science teaching as a serious challenge. He is repeating the obvious that was stated in the 1994 report that I mentioned earlier.

An independent report entitled “Who’s teaching science?” was prepared in 2005 for the Australian Council of Deans of Science by the University of Melbourne. This study was based on survey results from science teachers across Australia as well as heads of science departments. The aim of this report was to call to action all governments and education authorities on a number of serious problems that will inhibit the growth of Australia, and, as a matter of urgency, address the problems and demands facing the science education sector. Primarily, there was concern about the number of teachers who are unqualified to teach science in unrelated discipline areas, but are required to do so for various reasons.

The study had a number of key findings. It found that nearly 43 per cent of senior school physics teachers lacked a physics major, and one in four teachers had not studied the subject beyond first year. Therefore, no matter how good their pedagogical skills, teachers who lack knowledge in their discipline are, by definition, unprepared. The study also found that one in four senior school chemistry teachers lacked a chemistry major, whereas 14 per cent of senior school biology teachers lacked a biology major. The report indicated that the heads of secondary schools science departments have a clear preference for staff with a university degree in science supplemented by an education qualification, rather than a university degree in teaching with some study in science. That is worth repeating. People involved at the chalkface in schools clearly prefer staff to have a university degree in science supplemented by an education qualification, rather than a university degree in teaching with some study in science.

**Hon Peter Collier:** They are a dying breed.

**Hon BARRY HOUSE:** Yes; unfortunately they are a dying breed. Therefore, heads of secondary school science departments universally agree that in future teachers of senior science should have at least a major in the appropriate discipline area. That view is supported by the Australian Council of Deans of Science.

The report also found that the heads of secondary school science departments had concerns about the difficulty in recruiting suitably qualified staff, especially in light of the age profile of existing staff. More than one-third of male science teachers are at least 50 years of age. The report also outlined that there is a need for teachers to have effective career mentoring early in their career. It is very hard to effectively mentor new teachers if there are insufficient staff bodies in the school - full stop. The overall conclusion that is relevant to Western Australia was the finding that this state had the lowest number of science teachers with an average of 5.59 teachers per

school, which is below the national average of eight, with a range of one to 11 teachers per school. The highest rating state, Victoria, has 13.55 teachers on average per school. Therefore, Western Australian schools are also lagging behind the rest of Australia quite badly in the number of science teachers they have. Up to 40 per cent of early career teachers of secondary science are uncertain that they will be teaching science in five years. We all know that, anecdotally, many graduates go into teaching, particularly in these areas, with a very uncertain view about their futures. From the day they start, they are looking around for other opportunities. That is a major concern and a pretty sad reflection of the situation.

Another report is the "Australian School Science Education National Action Plan 2008 - 2012". This report, which deals with teacher supply and demand, was prepared in 2007 for the Department of Education, Science and Training by Léonie Rennie of Curtin University of Technology and Denis Goodrum of the University of Canberra. This report once again contains familiar language. It states that teacher shortages in science and mathematics are becoming increasingly serious. The median age of science teachers is increasing, and minority groups are under-represented. Two consequences of teacher shortages are that some science classes are taught by teachers without appropriate pedagogical knowledge and with limited content knowledge, and finding relief teachers in order for current teachers to leave their classrooms to receive professional development is a problem, especially in rural and remote areas. I know that Hon Peter Collier has addressed that issue also. Professional development, in a rapidly changing technological world, is vitally important, and that seems to have fallen by the wayside also.

According to this report, science teachers also complained of frustration due to lack of time to prepare for practical science classes and insufficient physical resources. It also concluded that attracting new science teachers and retaining those we have are significant challenges, for without an adequate supply of teachers it will be increasingly difficult to maintain quality in the profession. All that is not new, but it is reiterated in report after report.

In trying to flesh out some of the detail as it applies in Western Australia, in the science area in particular, I have asked some questions in this house over a period about the number of science teachers and their qualifications. I must say that I have been pretty disappointed by the responses. To say that I have been disappointed is probably a bit of an understatement. However, on 29 August 2007, I asked the Minister for Education and Training -

- (1) How many, or what proportion of, science teachers in Western Australia have the qualifications that were outlined in the response to that question?

That was an earlier question that I asked on 29 May 2007, and that question related to the specific science qualifications that people might or might not have had. The question continues -

- (2) What is the current number of teachers teaching science at high school level in Western Australian public schools?
- (3) What is the current demand for science teachers in Western Australian public schools?

The answers to that question were -

1. The number of science teachers currently on the Department of Education and Training's secondary science establishment as of 15 August 2007 is 1021. . . .
2. Teachers are deployed by Principals according to student needs. There is no central database that keeps records of teachers and the learning areas that they are deployed to within schools.

There is no central database.

**Hon Peter Collier:** At least you got a response.

**Hon BARRY HOUSE:** Yes. This response probably poses more questions than it answers. The answer continues -

3. As of 14 August 2007 the Department is seeking to fill 11 science positions across the State.

I think we have seen that many more positions need to be filled.

I followed up that question with another question on 16 October 2007. I referred to the answers given previously and asked -

How many or what proportion of science teachers in Western Australian public high schools have either -

- (a) a three year or equivalent science degree with a major in one of the physical or biological sciences and a minor in a related field, plus at least one year of education studies;

- (b) a four year or equivalent double degree, Bachelor of Education and Bachelor of Science; and
- (c) four year or equivalent degree, Bachelor of Education (Secondary). The graduates are secondary teachers with a major and minor science speciality?

Following those reports, I was trying to get a handle on how many specifically qualified science teachers we had in our schools, how many science teachers we had with an education qualification but with science as a bit of an add-on, and, quite frankly, how many people were teaching science with no qualifications at all. The answer received by Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich, who was representing the Minister for Education and Training, states -

Whilst most science teachers employed by the Department of Education and Training possess either a Bachelor of Science degree together with a Graduate Diploma of Education or a Bachelor of Science degree and a Bachelor of Education, teachers hold a variety of qualifications, and in many cases, multiple qualifications from a variety of tertiary institutions.

That all sounds very nice. It continues -

These include specialist graduate diplomas, higher diplomas, certificates, masters, and doctorates.

The next bit of the answer gives an explanation. Although the first part of the answer is all very nice, the second bit of the answer is that the department either does not know or cannot put the figures together and tell me exactly what the figures are to back that up. The second part of that answer states -

A specific answer to this question would require a manual examination of the records of all 888 science teachers referred to in the answer to question 4711.

By the way, that is different from the other figure that I received. It continues -

This would require significant resources which would need to be redirected away from the task of staffing schools.

That indicates that there is no database of science teachers in the Department of Education and Training in Western Australia. I presume this applies to all the staff of the Department of Education and Training. There is no database that shows, at the push of a button, the specific qualifications of any of the teachers teaching in any of Western Australia's state schools.

**Hon Peter Collier** interjected.

**Hon BARRY HOUSE:** That is right, yes.

**Hon Barbara Scott:** How many cleaners do they have teaching?

**Hon BARRY HOUSE:** I really do not know, but that is a question that the member could ask. It would be pretty interesting to see what sort of answer she got. The Department of Education and Training is a major organisation in Western Australia. Alongside health and police, people would rightly claim that education is a major, core function of government in Western Australia. The Department of Education and Training is a major employer, and it plays a vitally important part in delivering a core function to the community of Western Australia, and particularly the children of Western Australia. However, the department administering that function does not have a database that shows what its teachers' qualifications are. That is pretty staggering. One would think that it would be an elementary requirement of any business. This is a very big business; it employs 20 000-odd teachers in Western Australian state schools, and there are 780 schools throughout the state. However, in this modern technological age, there is no central database that the department can draw upon so that it can indicate to people what an individual teacher's qualifications are or how many teachers in a certain grouping are on the books. No wonder there is a problem in the science and mathematics areas in particular. Firstly, the department does not know what resources are available and, secondly, it does not seem to have any answers to problems of recruitment and retention of staff. A host of other factors have been canvassed, such as professional development, housing, career opportunities, job satisfaction and morale. The list goes on and on. I wanted to add to this debate a specific reflection on the area of science education, which we know is a vitally important part of education per se, as well as being important for the development of the state.

**HON NORMAN MOORE (Mining and Pastoral - Leader of the Opposition)** [11.50 am]: I want to make a few comments on this motion, because, as members will be aware, I have had a long and abiding interest in education, and I was fortunate enough to be Minister for Education for three years. Before I became a member of this house, I spent 10 years as a teacher in Western Australian schools. As a consequence of that background, I have a particular interest in the teaching profession and where it is headed.

This motion referring to a teacher shortage raises some very significant issues about the profession of teaching. Ever since I can remember, I have been concerned that teaching is seen by some as a profession, and by others as anything but a profession. I have always held the view that if we are to encourage people to become involved in

teaching as a profession, we need to enhance the professionalism of teaching. In seeking to achieve that, we need to create a situation in which teaching as a profession is more attractive to young people contemplating their careers after they have left school. One of the reasons there is a problem developing professionalism in teaching in Western Australia - indeed, in every state of Australia and perhaps every other western country - is that there is generally only one major employer of teachers, which is usually the government. The government as an employer makes decisions about how teachers go about carrying out their functions, creating an environment in which teachers operate that is determined and regulated by the employer. There has been a move in recent years towards giving schools and teachers more autonomy and authority. This has occurred as part of the process of devolution in the education system. When I was a teacher, we lived in fear of the education department and its superintendents keeping an eye on us, making sure that we did the right thing. Their view of what we should be doing was what we did. It did not matter that our professional view may have been different from that, because we were working for the education department, and we were to do as we were told.

**Hon Barry House:** At least there was a personal relationship in those days; there is not one now.

**Hon NORMAN MOORE:** There certainly was, but the future of teaching as a profession lies in teachers making their own judgements about doing the job of teaching, based on the fact that, as professional individuals, they know what is best in the circumstances in which they find themselves. This will be an evolutionary process of giving teachers the capacity to make the sort of judgements they should be able to make about what they do in classrooms and in creating an educational environment in the schools.

Most other professions generally manage themselves. The legal profession has the Law Society, which is made up of members of the profession. Architects, accountants, engineers and doctors are the same, although doctors have a union, which is -

**Hon Sue Ellery:** The strongest union in Australia.

**Hon NORMAN MOORE:** Exactly right. It operates differently from the other professional organisations. Bear in mind that the doctors' union, the Australian Medical Association, is involved in politics in a big way, just as teachers' unions are involved in politics. A vast number of doctors and, as I explained, a vast number of teachers are employed by governments, so the teachers' unions and the doctors' unions tend to be very powerful in industrial relations issues. Other societies and associations that represent professionals tend to be involved not in industrial disputes and those sorts of issues but rather in professional development and the enhancement of the profession, and they are run by the professions themselves.

I have always held the view that teachers need to create their own professional organisation to look after their professional interests. When I was a member of the State School Teachers' Union of WA, for quite a number of years the union had a subcommittee that dealt with professional issues. I always found what that subcommittee did to be quite useful. However, over the years the fundamental role of the teachers' union has been industrial relations and working conditions, to the exclusion of any great interest in the professional development of teachers. There should be a professional body looking after the professional development of teachers and making sure that people who want to be members of the profession participate in the development required to maintain professionalism and carry out their duties in a professional manner.

**Hon Peter Collier:** Doesn't the Western Australian College of Teaching do that?

**Hon NORMAN MOORE:** That is what I will come to. WACOT was set up ostensibly to do that, but by giving it responsibility for the registration of teachers, the government has taken away what it should have been; that is, an independent teacher-managed and controlled professional body.

When I was minister I sought to create a professional body for teachers, initially to be called the centre for professional excellence in teaching. A lot of work was done to get that off the ground. I even made an offer to Edith Cowan University to reacquire the former Claremont Teachers' College on behalf of the government, and that building would have become the centre for professional excellence in teaching. That would have given the teaching profession and all the different subject associations a home, and a place that teachers could call their own, managed by a professional organisation of teachers. Regrettably, my successor did not proceed with the project and, also regrettably, when I was the minister, Edith Cowan University would not sell me the property. I gather it has now been sold to the University of Western Australia. At the time, the Edith Cowan council, half of whom I had appointed, told me to get lost when I wanted the property, because the university was using it for some professional development purposes of its own. It would have been a brilliant site for a professional organisation representing teachers, and would have given them a place where the accoutrements of a profession could be developed. I hope that the shadow minister for education, who will be the next Minister for Education and Training, will examine what was being done in the early 1990s, and see whether it can be progressed.

**Hon Peter Collier:** That is not the centre for excellence, but a separate project.



**Hon NORMAN MOORE:** What happened was that Colin Barnett then set up a centre for excellence in Fremantle. It was involved in professional development, but it was not run by an organisation or body of teachers managing their own profession. The problem is that, over the years, the Department of Education and Training, as the employer, has managed the teaching profession, and that is one of the reasons there is a problem.

An officer of the Department of Education and Training whom I knew quite well, having been at university with him, said to me one day that I had to stop looking at teachers as being one homogeneous group of people who are all professional educators. There are different sorts of teachers, who have different ways of going about doing business. He said that, on the one hand, there are those who are vocationally oriented and who can be seen to be professional educators, and who want to work in schools, teach children the particular subjects that they are involved in and also be involved in the pastoral care of students and in the development of the educational ethos of the school. In other words, they see their job as one that begins when the task has to begin and finishes when the task has been completed. Instead of people saying, "I'll start school at nine o'clock in the morning and finish at three-thirty in the afternoon and that is the end of my obligations", as professionals, they work the sorts of hours and for the number of weeks a year that are necessary to carry out their professional role as teachers. This officer said that there are teachers who see it as a vocation. However, there are others - I discovered plenty of them in my time in the education system - who want to work for wages and who just say, "I'd like to teach mathematics at the secondary school level and that is all I want to do. I don't want to be involved in coaching the footy team or in developing the school's educational ethos. I just want to teach mathematics for five hours a day and get paid so much an hour." Indeed, at one time I even thought of engaging physical education teachers on a contract basis to teach phys ed in a range of different schools because we could not get enough teachers in city schools. This officer said that we can look at teachers in two ways: there are those who want to be professionals and who see teaching as a vocation, a profession, and there are those who see it as a job and who want to carry out teaching functions either on the basis of a contract or for wages. I think there is a bit to be said for that proposition, because then we would not have to expect some teachers who are not good at providing pastoral care to be involved in that. However, those teachers might be really good at teaching science or mathematics, and that is all they want to do. That sort of thinking needs to be undertaken as well if we want to enhance the profession.

The greatest impediment to the development of professionalism in education has been teachers' unions, not only in Western Australia and the other states of Australia, and nationally with the Australian Education Union, but also, indeed, internationally in the western world. Because the body that represents the interests of teachers is generally a union, all the issues that are raised are industrial relations issues and are about working conditions and the so-called improvement of working conditions. That is anathema, in my view, to a profession.

**Hon Ljiljana Ravlich:** They did not like me either.

**Hon NORMAN MOORE:** Did the minister have the same view as I did? The Australian Education Union is running a significant political campaign that is blatantly one sided. The Australian Education Union advertisements offend me, and they should offend everybody in this country, because they are blatantly wrong. They show that a teachers' union that represents teachers is in fact just a political organisation, carrying out a highly party political exercise. When I think back to my days as the minister, the biggest problem I faced was trying to deal with the teachers' unions. I say "unions" because, when it suited teachers, I had to deal with the Australian Education Union on some occasions and the State School Teachers' Union of WA on other occasions. I had to deal with both unions even though they did the same thing. All the unions wanted to do was get involved in a political campaign, ostensibly to improve the quality of education, but it was more about making sure that teachers got paid more and did less. That is what the unions were all about.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.