

Division 62: Curriculum Council, \$10 091 000 -

Ms Guise, Chairman.

Hon Alan Carpenter, Minister for Education; Sport and Recreation; Indigenous Affairs.

Mr P. Albert, Acting Chief Executive Officer, Department of Education Services and the Chief Executive Officer, Curriculum Council.

Ms E. Iaschi, Manager, Finances, Department of Education Services.

Mr B. Parkin, Director of Non-Government Education.

The CHAIRMAN: The question is that in respect to division 62, appropriation be recommended.

Mrs EDWARDES: I have only one question in respect of this area. If I can refer the minister to page 1089 under "Major Policy Decisions", the maintenance and enhancement of the student record system, what is that all about? What is the maintenance going to include? What is the enhancement of it? Was there any reason why you were not going to be starting it this year because of it being in the middle of a school year?

Mr CARPENTER: I will allow Paul Albert to answer that but this was a bit of a sleeper for us and obviously it is something that did not come to my attention prior to the election, but had dire possible ramifications unless it was addressed urgently and so it has been.

Mr ALBERT: We have a very old student database. In fact it was devised in 1983 and it uses two old languages called COBOL and MAPPER. One of the key problems is that it is getting increasingly difficult to find people with those skills. Last year we had a real problem. We had to go to the US and it took five days to find somebody who was capable of resolving the problem. So it is that issue of a very old database. There are problems with the possibility of data leaking. Again last year we had to recalculate all of the scaling results because of a glitch. It was not a programming error. It was just a system glitch. We discovered the problem.

So there are real problems with the system, plus we have the problem of VET schools now which is very much a part of education and secondary certification and having to record student results. This has resulted in us doubling the amount of information that we have to keep on our database. We have put in a submission. We have done a preliminary analysis and that analysis has revealed what is required to give us a database that is capable of handling students records and the tertiary entrance examination and the VET in schools. We are going to use this financial year to develop it. We are then going to test it with next year's TEE.

Mrs EDWARDES: 2002.

Mr ALBERT: The 2002 TEE. We will keep the old database going for that because there seems to be always problems with new systems. Once we are happy that the new system is running fine, then we will let the old one go and we will run the new one.

Mrs EDWARDES: Minister, if it is \$1 million all up, you have not provided very much over the forward estimates. Is there money coming from elsewhere?

Mr CARPENTER: No, it is all to be accounted for in the one year. It is a replacement of the system, so basically buying a new system. That is the capital cost of replacing the system and buying it.

Mrs EDWARDES: So what is identified here are the running costs, not the capital costs.

Mr ALBERT: No, they have the capital costs in there. If you have page 1089, it is \$1 136 000 down at the bottom there.

Mr CARPENTER: Yes, I have it.

Mr ALBERT: It is the \$1 million in there and then there is a small amount for general upgrading of equipment in the office.

Mrs EDWARDES: Thank you.

Mr CARPENTER: That is really only the capital requirement they have but, as you can appreciate, something had to be done because there was a risk of major problems with the whole system. I am glad that we are able to twist the arm of the Treasury officials to provide us with the required funds. So it is a one-off.

Mrs EDWARDES: Thank you. No further questions.

THE CHAIRMAN: The question is that in respect of division 62, appropriation be recommended. That is carried.