

Division 38: Country High School Hostels Authority, \$6 762 000 —

Mr M.W. Sutherland, Chairman.

Dr E. Constable, Minister for Education.

Ms S. O'Neill, Acting Chief Executive Officer.

Mr J. Hopkins, Director.

Mr D. Smith, Finance Manager.

Miss A. Walker, Principal Policy Adviser, Officer of the Minister for Education.

[Witnesses introduced.]

The CHAIRMAN: Member for Victoria Park.

[12.30 pm]

Mr B.S. WYATT: I refer to page 431 of the *Budget Statements*. An amount of \$19.4 million has been allocated from the royalties for regions fund to the Esperance and Merredin Residential Colleges. Will that funding increase the bed capacity of each college; and, if so, by what amount?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: First, Esperance Residential College currently has 72 beds in its original design, and the boarding capacity will increase to 114 beds.

Mr B.S. WYATT: And Merredin?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I do not have those figures. In Merredin, old dormitories will be replaced; therefore, the number of beds will not increase. One thing that we are doing in both of these colleges is ensuring that a couple of small units—bed-sits, if you like—are incorporated into the design for teachers in training, so that we can encourage young people or others who are training to be teachers to do some of their practical work in country centres. We are using this opportunity of the upgrading of the buildings at these two colleges to make sure we have a couple of bed-sits so that student teachers can have the opportunity to gain experience in country centres. They are then more likely to go back to rural centres when they get their first teaching positions. It is really important for us to have a range of programs in place to encourage that.

Mr B.S. WYATT: On the same page of the *Budget Statements*, an allocation for \$29.5 million is listed for as yet unannounced capital works for regional residential colleges. I would have thought that at this stage the minister would at least know which residential colleges will receive that funding. Therefore, I ask: Which colleges will receive that funding? Will that funding increase the number of beds at each of those colleges, whichever ones there are? Is there any proposal within that funding allocation to have any residential colleges based in the metropolitan area?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: At the moment we are still in the planning stage, so the decisions about where that money will be spent have not yet been made. From the discussions that I have been involved in with the acting CEO and the director, I can say that there is no plan for a residential college in the metropolitan area to be built with this funding. Having said that, we currently have a 72-bed facility on the old City Beach Senior High School site, which was built by an international school some years ago and has been used by country students attending Perth Modern School and John Curtin College of the Arts, and occasionally a few students undertaking the music program at Churchlands Senior High School have been there. There are also places run by Rotary. I will ask Mr Hopkins to talk about those places that exist now.

Mr J. Hopkins: The Rotary Residential College is a boarding facility that was established utilising both commonwealth and state capital funding, with a contribution from the private sector. It provides almost entirely for students attending public sector schools in the metropolitan area. At present, it has 80 students boarding there, with a capacity for 96; it is a bit under capacity at the moment.

Dr E. CONSTABLE: That college is run by an independent board, not by the Country High School Hostels Authority.

Mr B.S. WYATT: I am familiar with that college. With respect to the \$29.4 million allocated for capital programs, do we not know whether that funding is for refurbishment or replacement of colleges at this stage; and, do we not know which residential colleges that is allocated to?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: No; planning has been done and recommendations are yet to be made.

Mr P. ABETZ: I refer to the first line item on page 430 of the *Budget Statements*, “Establishment, Operation and Maintenance of Residential Colleges”. What is the demand for use of these boarding facilities by Indigenous

students from places such as the Ngaanyatjarra lands? To what extent do Indigenous people make use of these facilities?

Dr E. CONSTABLE: I thank the member for the question; it is a very important one and grows in importance as more Aboriginal students stay on at school. I spoke to the people at the Broome Residential College recently, and they see years 10, 11 and 12 as being the ones in which we might attract more Aboriginal students to hostels, because Aboriginal students often want to stay in their remote communities until they are a little older than the usual age at the time of the change from primary school to secondary school. Over the past five years, the number of Aboriginal students enrolling in hostels has increased from 47 to 81; therefore, we are seeing an increase. That is probably tied to a lot of things, but it is very encouraging that more Indigenous students want to access the senior high schools close to them and to reside in these colleges. Eighty per cent of the students boarding at the Broome Residential College, which was established in 2007, are Aboriginal. I have had people say to me that we need to increase the capacity there as well. I think in the coming years we will see some pressure on the Broome college as more and more Aboriginal students want to take up places. An Aboriginal secondary hostel was established by the commonwealth government in Kununurra in 2008, and it provides 40 places. I am not sure whether it is full; we do not run it. When I visited it 18 months ago, very few students were there, but it had not been open for very long.

There are Country High School Hostels Authority residential colleges that attract Indigenous students in our eight regional centres, and there is some private boarding in Coolgardie, and also near Meekatharra and Esperance. The Aboriginal Student Accommodation Service is run by the Department for Child Protection, and the Catholic Education Office is looking to build an Aboriginal college at Clontarf. There is a lot of activity in this area to support Aboriginal students, which is remarkable and very important. I am also aware that quite a lot of Aboriginal students from the north of the state go to Darwin, and I have even heard of others going to Alice Springs and across to Queensland. There are a lot of opportunities for Aboriginal students, and we have to ensure that we provide enough opportunities for them.

The appropriation was recommended.